This is Offaly

Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021

Adopted December 2015, Offaly County Council

Working together to shape the future

Economic Plan

- Employment, Enterprise and Innovation
- Tourism and Promoting Place
- Green Economy & Sustainable Living

Community Plan

- Education, Training and Skills
- Local and Community Development
- Empowering Communities

This is Offaly

Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021

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

- LECP Socio-economic framework plan – Baseline Data & Information.
- 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

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List of Acronyms

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C&V	Community & Voluntary
CDP	Community Development Project
CEDRA	Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas
CIF	Construction Industry Federation
CYPSC	Children and Young People Services Committee
DES	Department of Education and Science
E&M Region	Eastern and Midlands Region
EGFSN	Expert group on Future Skills Needs
EI	Enterprise Ireland
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
ETB	Education Training Board
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDA	Greater Dublin Area
I LOFAR	Irish Low Frequency Array
IDA	Industrial Development Authority
JPC	Joint Policing Committee
LCDC	Local Community Development Committee
LECP	Local Economic and Community Plan
LEO	Local Enterprise Office
LOFFA	Laois Offaly Families for Autism
MRDAT	Midland Regional Drugs and Alcohol Taskforce

NFTE	Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship
TII	Transport Infrastructure Ireland - formerly National Roads Authority (NRA).
NWRA	North West Regional Assembly
OCC	Offaly County Council
OLDC	Offaly Local Development Company
OTM	Offaly Traveller Movement
PPN	Public Participation Network
RDP	Rural Development Programme
REDZ	Rural Economic Development Zone
SEAI	Sustainable Energy Agency Ireland
SFI	Science Foundation Ireland
SI	Social Inclusion
SICAP	Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme
SLMRU	Strategic Labour Market Research Unit
SPC	Strategic Policy Committee
STEM	Science, Technology Engineering and Mathematics
TUSLA	Child and Family Agency
WSP	Water Supply Project

Executive Summary

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This is the Offaly Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2016-2021.

The purpose of a Local Economic and Community Plan is to set out the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic, local and community development of an area, for a six year period.

This is an integrated plan containing an **Economic** Plan prepared by the Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) for Economic Development, Enterprise and Planning and a **Community** Plan prepared by the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC). Stakeholder engagement and public consultation has played an essential part in shaping this plan to work for communities.

The overarching vision for the LECP is based around Offaly's finest attributes in terms of **People, Business** and **Place**.
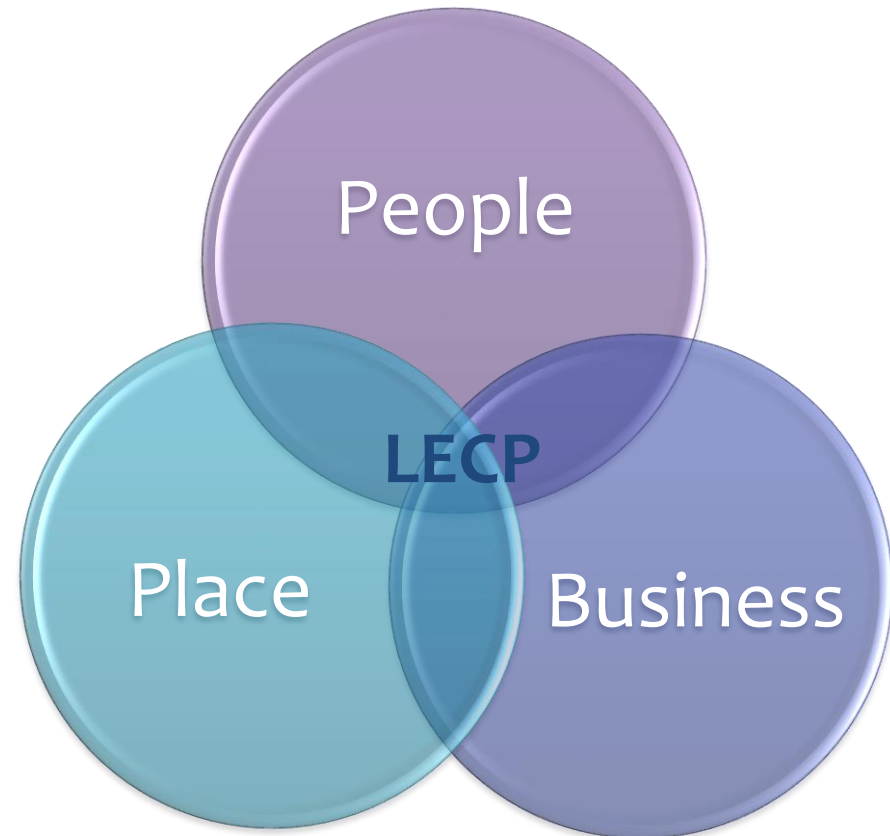
Strategic Vision for LECP

Offaly will be an attractive and distinctive place with vibrant and prosperous communities, making it a destination of choice for successful business where people have access to a wealth of opportunities while enjoying a good quality of life.

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

Economic Plan

Employment, Enterprise and Innovation
Tourism and Promoting Place
Green Economy & Sustainable Living

Community Plan

Education, Training and Skills
Local and Community Development
Empowering Communities

Supporting **people**, supporting **business** and supporting **place** are common threads throughout the six high level goals. These goals are underpinned by a range of actions that seek to address specific challenges. Stakeholder engagement and public consultation have been fundamental to the development of the strategic goals.

An implementation, monitoring, and funding framework will be developed formally to ensure the delivery of actions and throughout the lifetime of the plan, committees such as the LCDC and SPC will oversee, co-ordinate and guide. It is recognised that agencies and stakeholders in working on their own business and operational plans may contribute to the delivery of the six identified goals in addition to the actions set out in the LECP.

A key benefit of the plan is that it provides a "roadmap" for Offaly, a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities for the county. Agencies, stakeholders, community and volunteer groups can all use it as a reference for development. A shared focus on the six high level goals will make better use of resources, and yield better results.

1. Introduction, Background & Context

1. Introduction, Background & Context

1.0 Introduction

This is the Offaly Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2016-2021. This plan is central to the role of Offaly County Council in promoting and supporting economic development and local community development.

The plan has a focus of six years with a strong vision for the future of County Offaly that is centered around **People**, around **Business** and around **Place**. This vision is supported by six strategic goals contained in both the economic and community streams of the plan. The LECP has been developed to reflect the objectives of relevant EU, national, regional and local plans and strategies and to address challenges highlighted through analysis of data and from public consultation through a variety of actions set out under each goal.

To deliver the actions set out in both the economic and community streams of this plan, Offaly County Council will continue to work closely with local business, community organisations, educational facilities, public sector agencies and the voluntary sector. Work will also be undertaken in partnership where possible at regional and national level to attract inward investment and funding for infrastructure, enhancement of local communities and individual projects.

1.1 Background and purpose

The recent reform of Local Government has strengthened the role of Local Authorities with particular focus towards promoting and supporting economic, social and community development[1]. The driving force behind the increase in responsibility at local level is the promotion of well-being and quality of life for individuals and local communities. An important element for local authorities is the preparation of an integrated Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP).

The purpose of a Local Economic and Community Plan is to set out the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic, local and community development of an area, for a six year period.

The LECP encourages a community-centred approach whereby key local partners are drawn together to oversee the provision of more effective, efficient and sustainable services for communities.

The Offaly LECP builds on the strong foundations of work already underway locally in the areas of economic development and local community development by Offaly County Council and by many other organisations and community groups. The LECP sets about delivering and implementing newly agreed actions to focus on developing the economic and local community development dimensions further and into 2021.
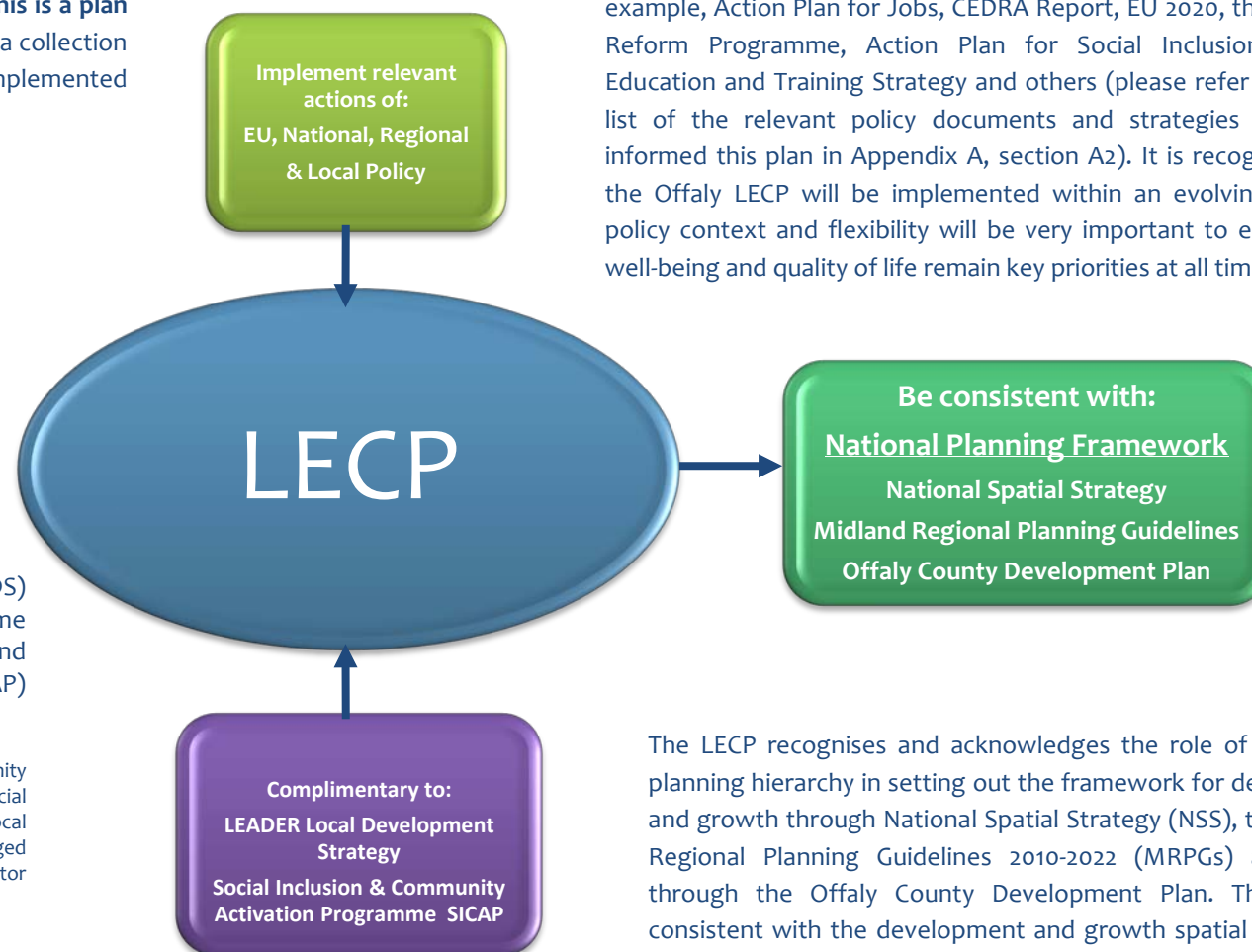
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[1] Directed by the Local Government Reform Act 2014. See Appendix A, section A1.

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1.2   LECP – Part of a bigger picture…

The LECP is part of a bigger picture for promoting economic and community development. **This is a plan for Offaly.** It sits within and is informed by a collection of plans and strategies developed and implemented at EU, national, regional and local level.

The LECP takes on the role as the primary mechanism at local level for bringing forward relevant actions arising from objectives and principles from government policy and strategies including for example, Action Plan for Jobs, CEDRA Report, EU 2020, the National Reform Programme, Action Plan for Social Inclusion, Further Education and Training Strategy and others (please refer to the full list of the relevant policy documents and strategies that have informed this plan in Appendix A, section A2). It is recognised that the Offaly LECP will be implemented within an evolving national policy context and flexibility will be very important to ensure that well-being and quality of life remain key priorities at all times.

Implement relevant actions of:
EU, National, Regional & Local Policy

LECP

Be consistent with:
National Planning Framework
National Spatial Strategy
Midland Regional Planning Guidelines
Offaly County Development Plan

Complimentary to:
LEADER Local Development Strategy
Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme SICAP

Both the Local Development Strategy (LDS) of the Rural Development programme (LEADER) and the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) are complimentary to the LECP.

[1] SICAP is the new Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme. It aims to tackle poverty, social exclusion and long-term unemployment through local engagement and partnership between disadvantaged individuals, community organisations and public sector agencies.

The LECP recognises and acknowledges the role of the spatial planning hierarchy in setting out the framework for development and growth through National Spatial Strategy (NSS), the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022 (MRPGs) and locally through the Offaly County Development Plan. The LECP is consistent with the development and growth spatial framework (see also section 1.6 below).

1.3 Mutually supporting Economic and Community Aspects

This is an integrated plan containing an **Economic** Plan and a **Community** Plan.

It is recognised and acknowledged that while economic development and local community development are distinct functions with varying challenges they interact and are both mutually supportive in building sustainable communities with strong local economies. This results in areas of common interest and action.

1.4 Key players in preparing the LECP[2]

The key players in preparing and making the LECP include the following:

- **Strategic Policy Committee (SPC)** for Economic Development, Enterprise and Planning prepared the Economic Plan.

- **Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)** prepared the Community Plan. With a defined role as per the Local Government Reform Act 2014, the LCDC maintain a responsibility in monitoring and implementing the LECP.

- **Advisory Steering Group:** An advisory steering group was established in Offaly County Council to assist in the preparation, drafting and adoption of the plan. This ensures proper co-ordination, avoids duplication and maximizes the use of available resources. Once the plan is adopted, this advisory steering group takes the role of advising and assisting on implementation and monitoring arrangements.

- **Local Authority:** The role of the Local Authority is to formally adopt the integrated LECP.

1.5 Helping to shape the plan

The earlier stages in the process of making this plan involved gathering and examining relevant data and information relating to County Offaly. This identified some of the key challenges that lie ahead for Offaly. However, it was feedback from stakeholder engagement and public consultation that provided immense insight into challenges experienced on a day to day basis for individuals and communities around the county. The feedback received plays an essential part in shaping this plan to work for communities.

The data analysis and topics raised through stakeholder engagement and consultation cover a vast and diverse range of issues. These have been instrumental in shaping high level goals which inform both the economic and community streams of the plan.

A socio-economic framework report contains the comprehensive evidence base which draws together the range of data and information gathered and examined earlier in the process and sets out the high level goals which forms the framework of the economic and community plans[3]. The socio-economic framework report is a separate accompanying document to this LECP.

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[2] Please refer to Appendix A, section A3, for background, role of the key players and various interest groups represented on the SPC and LCDC in Offaly.

[3] Please refer to the socio-economic framework report accompanying this plan for evidence base used to inform the high level goals of this plan.

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1.6   LECP and Spatial Planning:

In accordance with the Local Government Reform Act 2014 the LECP is required to be consistent with the core strategy of the County Development Plan[4]. The core strategy of the Offaly County Development 2014-2020 sets out a clear spatial framework for the growth of Offaly. This is consistent with the National Spatial Strategy and the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines in supporting balanced regional development[5].

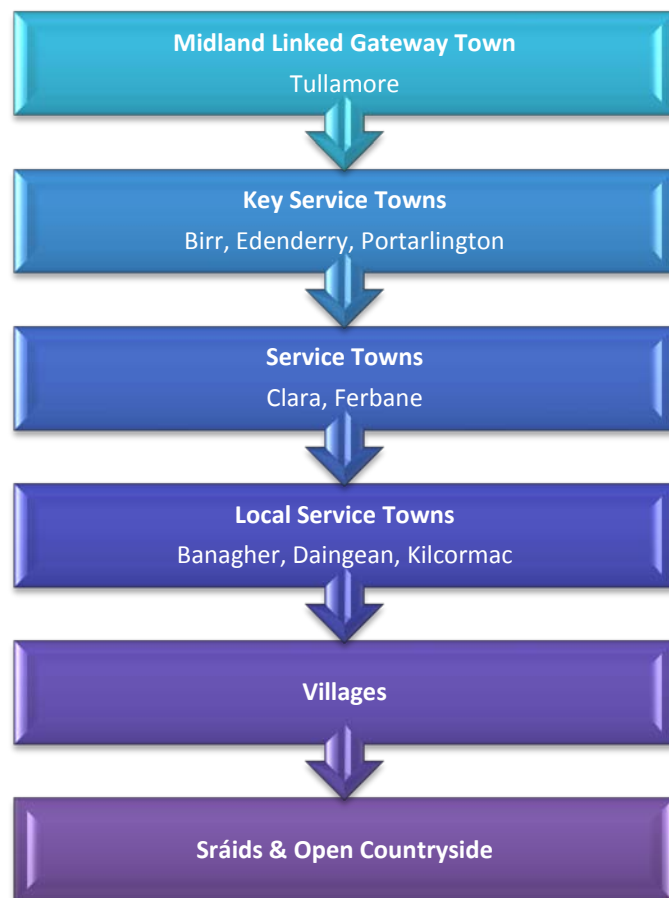Core Strategy Map – planned growth and development for Offaly 2014-2020

In co-ordinating future growth and development the core strategy includes:

- Strategic objectives focusing on key issues to be addressed over the lifetime of the development plan.
- The role of towns, villages and rural areas of the county by way of a settlement hierarchy
- Population targets aligned with housing land requirements in settlement areas.

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[4] Please refer to Appendix A, section A4 in relation to the statement of consistency with spatial planning hierarchy as required by Municipal District Members and the Regional Assembly in accordance with LGRA 2014.
[5] Please refer to the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020 (Volume 1) for more information on the core strategy for Offaly.

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Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020: Settlement Hierarchy

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│      Midland Linked Gateway Town         │
│                Tullamore                 │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                    ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│            Key Service Towns             │
│       Birr, Edenderry, Portarlington     │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                    ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│              Service Towns               │
│              Clara, Ferbane              │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                    ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│            Local Service Towns           │
│      Banagher, Daingean, Kilcormac       │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                    ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                Villages                  │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                    ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│         Sráids & Open Countryside        │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
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In delivering the core strategy for the county impetus is given to:

- Driving growth across the settlement hierarchy of the county with emphasis on Tullamore in its role as part of the Midlands Linked Gateway with Athlone and Mullingar as a driver of development for County Offaly and for the Midlands Region.
- Promoting and encouraging economic development in various sectors at appropriate locations.
- Potential for energy production and renewable energy.
- Protection of the Environment and Natural Resources.
- Provision of necessary infrastructure.
- Renewed focus on retail and town centre development.

It is important to note that the LECP is consistent with and respects the growth and development framework for Offaly and does not present competing proposals. Both the County Development Plan and the LECP share broad objectives relating to promoting economic development and enhancing quality of life for communities.

It is expected that the LECP will specifically inform public expenditure and the operational plans of organisations involved in carrying out actions within this plan. Consequently this may have the ability to bring forward objectives contained within the development plan aimed at promoting economic development and enhancing towns, villages and communities around the county.

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1.7   Environmental Screening – SEA and NIA

Screening Overview for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Under the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 435 of 2004 as amended by S.I. 435 of 2011), all plans which are likely to have a significant effect on the environment must undergo screening to determine whether a SEA is required. "Screening" is the process for making a determination as to whether a particular plan, would be likely to have significant environmental effects, and would thus warrant SEA. This plan has been screened for SEA and it is determined that full SEA is not required. The screening report accompanies this plan[6].

Screening overview for Natura Impact Assessment (NIA)

Screening of this plan for a NIA has been undertaken in accordance with the requirements of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (directive 92/43/EEC) to determine if the LECP is likely to significantly affect Natura 2000 sites (*i.e.* Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)) within or surrounding the plan area. It is determined that stage 2 Natura Impact Report is not required. The screening report accompanies this plan[7].

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[6] Please refer to Appendix A, section A5 for reasons behind the final SEA determination.
[7] Please refer to Appendix A , section A6 for reasons behind the final determination.

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2. This is Offaly

2. This Is Offaly

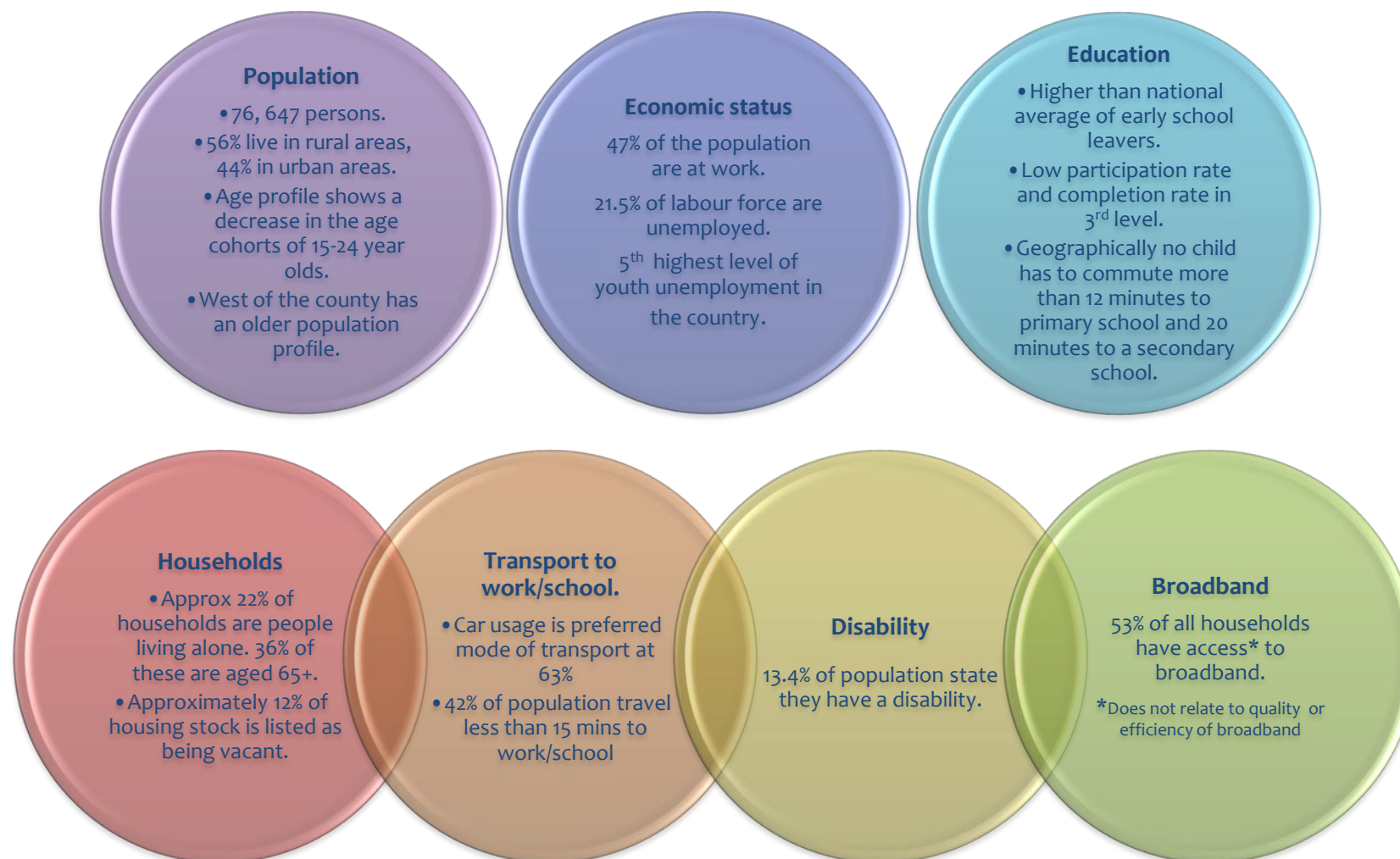## Our Environment/Geography

- Location within the midlands of Ireland bordering the seven counties of Galway, Roscommon, Tipperary, Laois, Westmeath, Kildare and Meath.

- Has an area of approximately 2,000 km2 (c. 800 sq. miles).

- 8% of land area is formally designated as being of European Importance for nature conservation - SPA, SAC, NHA[8].

- Peatlands comprise one fifth of the landuse in county.

- Primarily a flat county with the exception of the Slieve Bloom Mountains and their attractive foothills, located to the south west of the county.

- River Shannon (and Callows) flow along western boundary of the county.

- The Grand Canal traverses the county.

- Has a wealth of important archaeological and historical landscapes including Clonmacnoise and Durrow and Croghan Hill (extinct volcano).

- A comprehensive system of eskers, mainly concentrated in the northwest and centre of the county.

- Well-developed network of moderately scaled market towns and attractive villages.

- Internationally renowned Clara Bog (one of very few relatively intact raised bog in Western Europe).

- Lough Boora Discovery Park – winner of the Environmental Tourism Innovation Award 2015.
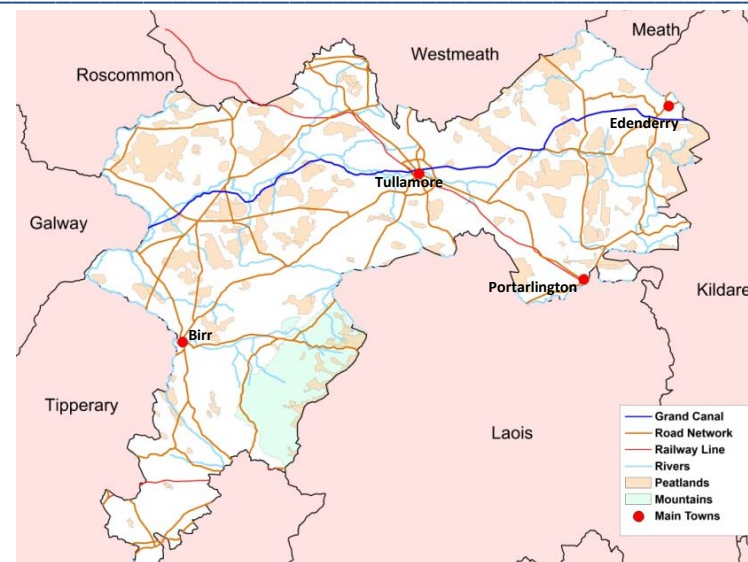
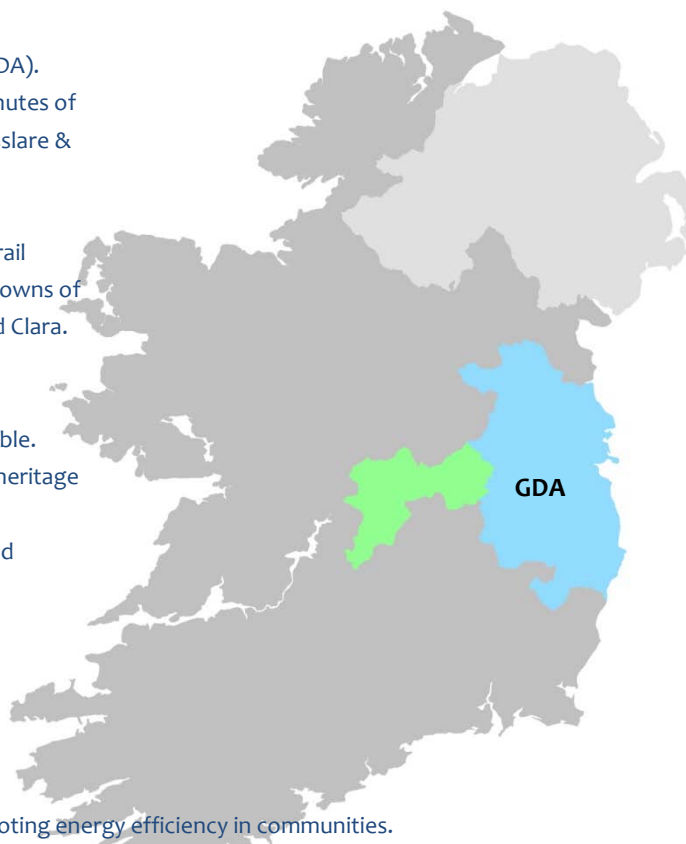[8] SPA – Special Protection Area, SAC – Special area of conservation, NHA – Natural Heritage Area.

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Our People

Population
- 76, 647 persons.
- 56% live in rural areas, 44% in urban areas.
- Age profile shows a decrease in the age cohorts of 15-24 year olds.
- West of the county has an older population profile.

Economic status
47% of the population are at work.

21.5% of labour force are unemployed.

5th highest level of youth unemployment in the country.

Education
- Higher than national average of early school leavers.
- Low participation rate and completion rate in 3rd level.
- Geographically no child has to commute more than 12 minutes to primary school and 20 minutes to a secondary school.

Households
- Approx 22% of households are people living alone. 36% of these are aged 65+.
- Approximately 12% of housing stock is listed as being vacant.

Transport to work/school.
- Car usage is preferred mode of transport at 63%
- 42% of population travel less than 15 mins to work/school

Disability
13.4% of population state they have a disability.

Broadband
53% of all households have access* to broadband.

*Does not relate to quality or efficiency of broadband

Source: CSO 2011

Location and proximity of Offaly to Greater Dublin Area

Our Strengths

- Strategic location close to the Greater Dublin Area (GDA).
- National corridor for road infrastructure within 45 minutes of Dublin airport and port, and 2 hours of New Ross, Rosslare & Bellview/Waterford ports.
- Steady Population growth.
- Located along the national interconnecting strategic rail corridor with train stations serving the county in the towns of Portarlington (station located in Laois), Tullamore and Clara.
- Large tracts of open and publicly owned lands.
- Tradition of serving global markets from Offaly.
- Significant business and development supports available.
- A rich quality of life, clean environment and a unique heritage that is valued and safeguarded.
- Internationally significant Peatlands, Lakeland & Inland Waterways and Monastic Sites.

GDA

Our Challenges

- Promoting the 'Offaly' Tourism brand – raising awareness and recognition.
- Ability to attract and secure **new** Foreign Direct Investment into the county.
- Ensuring Tullamore as Linked Gateway Town fulfils its role as a driver of balanced development within the county and the region.
- Vacancy rates of towns and villages.
- Provision of outreach education in the County.
- Facilitating employment growth and enterprise development where appropriate and possible.
- Increasing number of start ups in the county.
- Increasing the numbers of indigenous industries trading online.
- Achieving a balance between protecting and enhancing the environment.
- Meeting the social, community, healthcare and educational needs of citizens of Offaly.

Our opportunities

- IDA Regional Targets.
- Green economy - promoting energy efficiency in communities.
- Midland Regional Action Plan for Jobs – implementation opportunities including Regional Energy Hub.
- Rural diversification - small scale enterprises – agri-tech & food processing.
- Tourism – promoting the cultural and heritage assets of the county, its landscape, artisan food and drink.
- Quality of life – heritage, landscape, culture, International significance of Clara Bog.
- Life Long Learning - possibility of distance learning at designated centres, as an alternative to traditional outreach mechanisms.
- Strategic partnerships – community enterprises – inter / intra county.
- Maximising local competitive advantage – linking industry to education business incubation, science parks, extension of services.
- Combating social exclusion.
- Creative industries such as Design and Innovation, Film production etc.
- Access to funding streams for economic and community based projects.

3. Strategic Vision

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3. Strategic Vision

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Strategic Vision for LECP

Offaly will be an attractive and distinctive place with vibrant and prosperous communities, making it a destination of choice for successful business where people have access to a wealth of opportunities while enjoying a good quality of life.

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The Offaly LECP sets out to promote and support economic and community development all across Offaly. The overarching vision for the LECP is based around Offaly's finest attributes in terms of **People** (*skills, work ethic and community spirit*)**, Business** (*key sectors, diversity and innovation strengths*) and **Place** (environment, communities and quality of life). These three assets through this plan, will be encouraged further to function more effectively together.

People – *to ensure that local people have access to education, necessary services, amenities and facilities to enhance well-being and quality of life.*

Business – *to generate and grow employment and grow the economy of Offaly.*

Place – *to promote Offaly as an attractive place to live, work and visit.*

People

LECP

Place

Business

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Six strategic Goals have been identified across the economic and community streams of this plan that strive to achieve the overarching vision. Supporting **People**, supporting **Business** and supporting **Place** are the common threads throughout the six goals. These goals are underpinned by a range of objectives and actions that seek to address identified challenges. Stakeholder engagement and public consultation have been fundamental to the development of the strategic goals.

Strategic Vision

Offaly will be an attractive and distinctive place with vibrant and prosperous communities, making it a destination of choice for successful business where people have access to a wealth of opportunities while enjoying a good quality of life.

High level Goals Economic Plan	High Level Goals Community Plan
Employment, Enterprise and Innovation	Education, Training and Skills
Tourism and Promoting Place	Local and Community Development
Green Economy & Sustainable Living	Empowering Communities

Objectives	Objectives
Actions	Actions

4. Economic Plan

4.   Economic Plan

Introduction

It has been a remarkable number of years for Ireland. The economic downturn has had far reaching impacts within our homes, businesses and communities. Recovery is underway with government policy focusing on job creation, responsible management of public finances and returning stability to the economy.

One particular action directed by The Action Programme for Effective Local Government – *Putting People First* is the strengthening of the Economic Development role across all local authorities in an effort to become a mainstream function. Offaly County Council has embraced this with developments such as the:

- Integration of the Local Enterprise Office (LEO).
- Establishment of the Economic Development, Enterprise and Planning Strategic Policy Committee (SPC).
- Preparation of an integrated Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP).

Embedding and prioritising economic development into all relevant functions of Offaly County Council is a positive step in driving the agenda of recovery within Offaly.

The newly published Capital Plan, *Building on Recovery* – Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016-2021, issued by the Department of Public Expenditure

and Reform in September 2015 aims to invest or commit €42 billion Euro into infrastructure in the same timeline as the Offaly LECP. This plan aims to prioritise spending in areas of greatest need to further strengthen economic growth including providing facilities for people in the form of schools, public transport, healthcare and housing. It is envisaged that much needed infrastructural priorities in Offaly will be delivered under this capital plan.

The LECP has a commitment to promoting economic development across both the economic and community dimensions. However, the direct strategy for the promotion of economic development over the life time of this plan is centred around three high level goals. These goals work towards the overarching vision of this plan where **People**, **Business** and **Place** are core values.

Goal 1 Employment, Enterprise and Innovation

Goal 2 Tourism and Promoting Place

Goal 3 Green Economy & Sustainable Living

The high level goals identify a range of objectives which represent key issues to be addressed. Each objective has associated actions aiming to support the objective. Each action is time bound, whilst also identifying lead and supporting partners that are charged with delivering the action.

Economic Goal 1

Maximising economic activity and growth and ensure that County Offaly capitalises on its potential to create opportunities and a suitable environment for new business.

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With signs of an economic recovery, a sustained approach of government policy in driving the agenda of sustainable economic growth, and more recently the commitment for a Capital Investment Plan[1] in much needed infrastructure, the role of the local economic plan is crucially important. This economic plan represents a bottom up approach that identifies and understands the challenges facing Offaly for job creation and employment opportunities in general.

Key Challenges for our future

The unemployment rate in County Offaly at 21.5 per cent (as per live register figures March 2015) is over twice that of the state average at 10 per cent. Offaly has a skilled workforce with a strong labour force participation rate (i.e. the number of people aged 15 years and over who participate and are available for work). People want to work and are keen to see employment

opportunities develop locally. Every effort must be made to prioritise employment and enterprise through the county.

The national economy continues to transform in response to changing global needs. Knowledge based services require additional emphasis and so existing businesses and companies in Offaly must be supported to become more innovative and adaptable in order to continue to grow.

What you told us…

Through stakeholder engagement and public consultation feedback, you told us:

- That Job creation and economic development are crucially important.
- That youth unemployment is a real issue with impact on individuals and families.
- To concentrate on small and medium enterprises as core employment generators.
- That the quality of living, services and facilities in towns is an important aspect for developing companies and their employees.
- To explore ways of developing and encouraging diversity in employment across a range of sectors.
- To identify ways of using the county's assets and natural resources for economic benefit.
- That the cost of doing business is prohibitive and that there are complexities involved in setting up new business.
- To focus and promote Green Energy, Tourism, Design and Innovation, Culture: Creative Industries and Film, Agriculture and Manufacturing, Artisan Food and Drink for job creation.

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[1] Capital Investment Plan, *Building on Recovery* – Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016-2021, issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in September 2015.

In spite of the challenges presenting through the areas of economic development, Offaly has many strengths and opportunities for job creation and growth.

- The county's central location and proximity to the Greater Dublin Area is a key strategic advantage.
- Tullamore is part of the linked Midlands Gateway, identified as a 'driver' for regional growth.
- Offaly has a history of skilled workforce, particularly in the areas of engineering, agriculture and manufacturing.
- It has the resources to develop Tourism products of international significance, and
- It has the people skills to manage and grow local and export businesses.

An ambitious and coordinated effort by relevant agencies, local authority, the private sector and communities will achieve better opportunities for those seeking work in the county, increase the numbers of start-ups, enhanced competitiveness and growth of new and existing enterprises, improved attractiveness of Offaly for inward investment.

The objectives identified have been prioritised to make a significant contribution to achieving the Goal for Economic, Enterprise and Innovation and fulfilling the overarching vision for the county and include:

Objectives:

1. Sustaining and Expanding Existing Business and Enterprise in the County.
2. Build on and enhance the advantage that Tullamore has within the strategic context of the Midland Linked Gateway to promote economic activity for the region, county and town.
3. Promote Strategic Economic Locations around the county to secure substantial investment and new enterprise.
4. Targeting potential growth areas with emphasis on high value added, i.e. Design & Innovation, Software, Green Economy, R&D, Big Data Companies, knowledge based industries, research and innovation.
5. Supporting & Developing Entrepreneurship.
6. Promote rural areas for economic development by promoting diversification in rural based sectors including agriculture, peat extraction and tourism.
7. Strengthening the economic fabric of towns and villages and their capacity to progress rural economic regeneration and Promote Community Enterprise & Start-Ups.
8. Targeting Specific Sectors for Growth and development with the potential to contribute significantly to local economies including Artisan Food and Drink, Creative economy.
9. Maximise the opportunities for Offaly arising from strategic infrastructural projects/priorities (including Eastern & Midlands Water Supply project, I-LOFAR Birr, Energy Generation and Distribution Infrastructure).

Economic Goal 1

Employment, Enterprise and Innovation

Actions to deliver on objectives

Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Economic Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *****

	Objective 1: Sustaining and Expanding Existing Business and Enterprise in the County Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Economic Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *		
	Action	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
1.1	Co-operate and work closely with local, regional and national enterprise authorities, notably IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland, to attract local and Foreign Direct investment.	2016-2021	**LEO**, OCC, IDA, EI, OLDC
1.2	Identify infrastructural and service deficits in existing business parks.	2016-2021	**LEO** , IDA, OCC and Private Sector
1.3	Establish Offaly Economic Forum. Meet on six monthly basis for information exchange.	2016 -2021	**LEO** and OCC
1.4	Enterprise Agencies to meet on six monthly basis to co-ordinate activities and supports to maximise resources and avoid duplication.	2016-2021	**LEO**, EI, ETB, IDA, OLDC etc.
1.5	Prepare, publish and market a campaign to summarise the enterprise supports available from relevant agencies.	2017	**LEO,**OCC, EI, ETB, IDA, OLDC etc.
1.6	Create a business environment where industries want to locate and do business by ensuring adequate infrastructural needs are met.	2016-2021	**OCC,** National Stakeholders
1.7	Review and evaluate policies at Local Authority Level to ensure they are supporting existing and new business.	2016-2021	**OCC,** LEO Economic Forum
1.8	Map business sectors and clusters within the county to highlight synergies/opportunities to promote collaborative business gain and develop networking between businesses.	2016	**OCC,** LEO
1.9	Develop further & Market the Branding of Offaly as "the best place to live, work & invest".	2016 & 2018	**OCC,** LCDC

1.10	Develop and expand on active relationships with relevant agencies that are supportive to the work of the LCDC, inter alia, HSE Departments, Coillte, Waterways Ireland, Bord na Móna, Energy Companies.	2016-2021	**LCDC**

	Objective 2: Build on and enhance the advantage that Tullamore has in the context of the Midland Linked Gateway to promote economic activity for the region, county and town. Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Economic Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *		
	Action	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
2.1	Develop high level regional initiatives to promote the Midland Linked Gateway, 1 per year. These may include the following: • Design Showcase of 101 Industrial Designed Products from Irish Midlands • Procurement Seminars and Workshops (as per action 34, Regional Action Plan for Jobs) • Public Tendering Workshops for Small and Medium Enterprises. • Business Expo (as per action 34, Regional Action Plan for Jobs) • The new ACCELERATE local small business programme (as per Regional Action Plan for Jobs Action 22).	2016 -2021	**OCC with Midland LA's**, LEOs, EI, IDA, InterTrade Ireland, Midland Gateway and Tuulamore Chamber.
2.2	Establish and launch Midland Economic Forum comprising indigenous and foreign owned businesses and in other key sectors working in partnership with Local authorities and other relevant organisations to provide a strategic perspective for economic development and help drive economic activity at county and regional level.	2016-2021	**OCC with Midland LA's**, LEOs, EI, IDA
2.3	Develop and implement a promotional campaign for Tullamore as a place to set up business, trade and live.	2016 -2021	**LCDC** and Tullamore Chamber
2.4	Undertake and publish Cost of Living/Doing Business in Tullamore Guide – comparing costs to Dublin and Galway to include the database of Offaly property.	2016-2021	**LEO** and Chamber

| 2.5 | Support the development of a new enterprise/industrial park in Tullamore to attract major industry with ready to go sites, not available in the town. | 2016-2021 | **OCC,** EI and IDA |

	Objective 3: Promote Strategic Economic Locations around the county to secure substantial investment and new enterprise. Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Economic Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *		
	Action	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
3.1	Contribute and support the development of the Midlands Regional Energy Hub*.	2016-2021	**OCC with Midland LA's** , MEA, SEAI, BNM, ESB, Coillte, Waterways Ireland and OPW.
3.2	Develop, publish and promote e-marketing material for Business and Industrial Parks in Offaly – Ferbane, Rhode, Birr, Edenderry etc.	2016 - 2017	**LEO,** OCC with EI and IDA
3.3	Develop and market Offaly Property Database* to include all available industrial, industrial heritage and commercial sites, flagship buildings and those of an architectural nature.	2017	**LEO,** OCC with EI and IDA
3.4	Develop quarterly electronic newsletter for IDA and relevant partners and international businesses, showcasing Offaly potential for Foreign Direct Investment.	2016-2021 4 per Year	LEO
3.5	Promote expansion of Ferbane Food Campus in conjunction with AIT Catering & Hospitality faculty. AIT to act as a pipeline for new producers.	2016-2021	**Ferbane Technology Group,** LEO, AIT

3.6	Harness the potential of The Junction: Business Innovation Centre* targeting: • High potential start ups and existing businesses, • Design Graduate Programme with Design Hub Collaborative, • Tech Start-Ups and Tech employees of existing businesses.	2016-2021	LEO
3.7	**Cultural Infrastructure: Work to support the three major year-round Cultural centres in Offaly, for their cultural tourism potential, by carrying out the following:** • Develop supports and employment opportunities for Arts facilities, • Enhance existing Arts features at key visitor attractions.	2016-2021	**OCC** and OLDC
3.8	Maximise Offaly as a Supply and Sub-supply hub for the construction Industry.	2016-2021	**OCC,** EI and IDA

	Objective 4: Targeting potential growth areas with emphasis on high value added, such as, Design & Innovation, Software, Green Economy, R&D, Big Data Companies, knowledge based industries, research and innovation. Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Economic Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *		
	Action	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
4.1	Promote Design and Innovation, both as career opportunity and competitive edge for businesss.	2016-2021	**LEO,** OCC, The Junction, Design Hub and AIT
4.2	Pilot a Design Summer School to promote Design and Designers in Business.	2017	**LEO,** OCC, Design Hub Collaborative/AIT

4.3	Organise a Midlands Design and Manufacturing Group event.	2017	Design Hub Collaborative, AIT, Midland LEOs, LAs
4.4	Organise a Midlands Software Development Group event.	2018	**EI**, LEO, MIRC, 3rd level Institutes
4.5	Research the feasibility of a midland e-quarter hub in Tullamore targeting software companies.	2018	**Waterways Ireland**, EI, LEO, **OCC,** Private Sector, 3rd Level Institutes
4.6	Smart Ageing*****- explore opportunities for businesses to use technology and innovation in both the public and private sectors to produce products, services, solutions and systems to improve the quality of life of people aged 50 and over.	2016-2021	**Offaly Economic Fora,** OCC and Library Network
4.7	Internet of Things IoT***** – Link with The Task Force on Big Data who will review the opportunities for Ireland arising from the Internet of Things and develop specific policy actions to develop these opportunities particularly for Birr (LOFAR).	2016-2021	**Offaly Economic Fora** and OCC

	Objective 5: Supporting & Developing Entrepreneurship Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Economic Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *		
	Action	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
5.1	Working with enterprise partners in the region, Enterprise Ireland will pilot an Entrepreneurial Partnering Programme*.	2016	**Enterprise Ireland,** IDA Ireland, LEOs and Industry
5.2	Enhance Student Entrepreneurship Initiatives through Student Enterprise Programmes at primary and secondary levels.	2016-2021	**LEO/OCC,** ETB, OLDC, EI
5.3	Develop Female Entrepreneurship. Assess demand for a Female Entrepreneurship Network and/or Forum. Increase numbers participating in training, mentoring and promote the Acorns programme for emerging female entrepreneurs.	2016-2021	**LEO/OCC,** EI, OLDC
5.4	Develop Part-Time Entrepreneurship Initiatives; Highlight existing 5 PM-9 PM opportunties that exist locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.	2016-2021	**LEO,** OCC, EI
5.5	Work with the ConnectIreland Community Action Plan which focuses on the key role that communities can play in job creation through the use of the ConnectIreland* mechanism.	2016	**Connect Ireland ,** LEO, OCC and community sector

5.6	Support InterTradeIreland and Enterprise Ireland to deliver the actions identified in the Regional Action Plan for Jobs for Potential Offaly start up's and existing businesses for driving Entrepreneurship and growing business.	2016	**LEO**

Objective 6: Promote rural areas for economic development by promoting diversification in rural based sectors including agriculture, peat extraction and tourism.

Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Economic Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *

	Action	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
6.1	Expand the Teagasc Option programmes with an annual update on progressive agricultural diversification to support for farm famiies in the Midland region.	2016-2021	**Teagasc**, IFA
6.2	Advocate for a resource to support businesses and farms to achieve accreditation that will ultimately rank Offaly as the first Origin Green County – with the highest number of businesses and farms with accreditation.	2021	**LCDC**, Teagasc, OLDC, Bord Bia
6.3	Commission a report to ascertain the socio-economic impact of transition from traditional energy production.	2016	Midland LAs
6.4	Prioritise Micro-Enterprise and home based start ups in Rural Areas by extending the LEO Outreach service, providing online resources and showcasing micro-enterprise start-ups for ideas generation.	2016 -2018	**LEO/OLDC**
6.5	Deliver seminar and support mentoring to identify and develop tourism initiatives, especially add-ons to larger tourism attractions (e.g. B&Bs near Lough Boora, cafés near cycle ways etc.)	2016,2018,2020	**OTG,** OLDC, Failte Ireland, Mid Ireland, OCC

	Action	Timeline	Lead and Supporting Partners
6.6	Create awareness of tourism assets, visitor experiences and tourism opportunities in Offaly for locals to buy into the economic potential of the tourism brand for Offaly.	2016, 2017	**OTG,** OLDC, Failte Ireland, Mid Ireland, LEO, Tourism Providers, Businesses, PPN
6.7	Develop online resources to promote craft trails, food trails, on-farm experiences to generate visitors to more rural areas.	2016,2017	**OTG,** OLDC, Failte Ireland, Mid Ireland, LEO and OCC
6.8	Develop & Promote the Tourism Products of Offaly to a high standard for representation at National and International Levels including Clonmacnoise, Durrow, Birr Town & Castle, Tullamore DEW, Lough Boora Discovery park, Slieve Blooms, Grand Canal and the proposed cycling hub project.	2016-2021	**OTG** , Ireland's Ancient East
6.9	Utilise window space in towns and villages to showcase local producers and appropriate displays to capitalise on other activities.	2016-2021	**LEO,** OCC, OLDC
6.10	Prepare Outdoor Pursuits Prospectus to encourage private sector investment e.g. cycle hire facilities.	2016 - 2017	**OCC** with LEO and private stakeholders

	Objective 7: Strengthening the economic fabric of towns and villages and their capacity to progress rural economic regeneration + Promote Community Enterprise & Start-Ups. Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Economic Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *		
	Action	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
7.1	Promote and encourage social entrepreneur initiatives whereby relevant student enterprise projects are linked to and then adopted by communities*.	2018	**OLDC,** LEO, OCC, Community Groups

7.2	Encourage co-opetition*/ collaboration of sales of related products/services to promote towns and villages and/or similar sectors.	2018	**OLDC**, LEO, OCC, Community Groups
7.3	Encourage community groups to nominate Enterprise Ambassadors and attend Enterprise Network events etc.	2017	LEO/OLDC
7.4	Explore the opportunity to develop a Main Street Innovation Fund* - help businesses and community groups fill unused retail space in local retail centres.	2016-2018	**OCC**, Chamber of Commerce, Retail Excellence Ireland C & V Sector, PPN and LEO
7.5	Create an information resource for unemployed people that highlights all Agency supports in Offaly specifically for unemployed people.	2016	**DSP**, ETB and other agencies
7.6	Work with Waterways Ireland to maximise the Grand Canal as an asset and support Canal Communities to capitalise on their natural environment for economic benefits.	2016-2021	**OCC**, Waterways Ireland, OLDC

	Objective 8: Targeting Specific Sectors for Growth and development with the potential to contribute significantly to local economies including Artisan Food and Drink, Creative Economy and Manufacturing. Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Economic Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *		
	Action	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
8.1	Develop and Promote Midland Artisan Food & Drink Producers via a number of initiatives including; • Further development of the successful LEO/Super Valu Food Academy Initiative, • Midlands LEO Enterprise Supports, • Midlands Local Development Enterprise Supports. • Ferbane Food Campus.	2016-2021	**Midland LEOs**/LAs, Local Development Companies etc.

	• Food Trails.		
8.2	Expand the employment potential in the creative economy through Film Offaly and Music Generation as two established programmes with proven and identified potential for generating employment.	2016 -2021	**OCC,** LCDC , OLDC
8.3	Festivals: enhance the capacity of key festivals and events to generate greater economic impact increasing employment and visitor numbers by supporting a co-ordinated point of contact and resource for all festivals dealing with funding, scheduling, training, and investing in the professional programming of festivals, which can then be appropriately marketed as a cultural tourism product.	2016-2021	**OCC,** LCDC , OLDC
8.4	Establish and market a 'Pop Up' film studio in Tullamore to capitalise on the Irish & U.K. demand for film studio space in the context of Section 481 of the Finance Act for filming in Ireland.	2016-2021	**OCC,** Screen Ireland, Capital Investors
8.5	Manufacturing: Pilot a Skills transfer programme to build on the strong tradition of manufacturing in Offaly.	2017	**Bord na Mona,** EI, LEO
8.6	Manufacturing: Develop export sales capacity of Offaly manufacturers. Target 10 companies per year.	2016 -2021	EI/LEO
8.7	Manufacturing: Pilot an initiative for a contract manufacturing facility between similar industries where resources can be shared.	2017	EI/LEO
8.8	Promote the Midlands as a conference destination given its connectivity and proximity to attract the conference market.	2017 onwards	**Midland LAs,** Failte Ireland and Waterways Ireland

	Objective 9: Maximise the opportunities for Offaly arising from strategic infrastructural projects/priorities (including Eastern & Midlands Water Supply project, I-LOFAR Birr, Energy Generation and Distribution Infrastructure). Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Economic Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *		
	Action	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
9.1	Actively engage with Irish Water and relevant Departments to ensure Offaly benefits from The Water Supply Projects, Eastern and Midlands Region (WSP) * .	2016 onwards	OCC
9.2	When the Eastern & Midlands Water Supply Project is secured, position Offaly as ideal location for industries with strong water requirement including food processing.	2016 onwards	**OCC**, IDA, EI, LEO, Third Level University
9.3	In conjunction with 3rd level Institution consortium, support I-LOFAR* Birr. Once developed this will allow Offaly target Big Data Companies for location in Birr area.	2016	**3rd Level University,** IDA, EI, LEO
9.4	Set up Competitive Fund for Big Data Companies to establish in Birr pending the establishment of I-LOFAR. Birr.	2016	EI
9.5	Energy Generation – work with existing and new players to secure jobs for the county.	2016 onwards	**OCC/LCDC**, IDA, EI, Semi-States and Private Sector
9.6	Maximise Offaly's potential to act as a distribution hub for food and other industries by identifying a distribution hub facility and potential producers.	2016 onwards	Interagency

Economic Goal 2

Tourism and Promoting Place

Improving the tourism potential, experience and identity of County Offaly and to enhance our towns and villages as quality places to live work and visit.

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It is recognised that Offaly can benefit significantly from tourism in opportunities presented in 'People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025[2], with the publication of the new regional brand of 'Ireland's Ancient East' and in looking at ways to develop and promote assets distinctive to Offaly.

Offaly possesses a wealth of natural resources, unique heritage and a well developed network of market towns and villages that could be promoted at international, national and local level for increased tourism potential and create positive economic opportunities locally.

In conjunction with the promotion of tourism, efforts need to be maintained at making Offaly an attractive place not only to visit but also to live and to work. Positive image has a positive impact on enhancing the quality of life of the people who live in Offaly. Additionally, it encourages potential investors to commit to the county as they know that employees will want to live and engage with. Providing and maintaining quality urban spaces, vibrant towns

and villages and amenities for all to enjoy are crucial to how people relate to a place and contribute to quality of life.

What you told us...

Through stakeholder engagement and public consultation feedback, you told us:

- That Offaly should be guided by a tourism strategy.
- To promote and market the natural resources, assets and heritage of Offaly for tourism development including, Slieve Blooms, River Shannon, bog landscape (Lough Boora, Clara Bog etc), Grand Canal, Clonmacnoise, Seir Kieran, Croghan Hill, Durrow (High Cross) walking, cycling, fishing/angling etc.
- To identify and promote towns and villages of the county according to distinctive attributes and/or association with key tourist attraction to attract business and tourists.
- To promote and capitalise on eco-tourism and green tourism.
- That further tourist accommodation and facilities in suitable and relevant locations including accommodation and information facilities are required.
- To create and promote festivals/events and culture of Offaly to attract visitors.
- To work with communities to enhancing streetscapes and public realm to develop a sense of place.
- Address vacant commercial units – promote 'pop up' shops to reuse vacant units and promote business.
- Re-introduce town and village renewal scheme.

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[2] (Department of Tourism, Transport & Sport, 2015)

Achieving the Tourism and Promoting Place Goal requires full involvement, support and commitment from not only from a wide range of industry, agency and community interests in tourism but also from communities across the county who must share the sense of common purpose. Offaly County Council will have a pivotal role in drawing together the varying key groups and working with communities to achieve this goal. The following objectives set out the framework for achieving the goal:

Objectives:

1. To increase awareness of Offaly as a tourism destination and increase visitor numbers and revenue in Offaly through marketing and promotion
2. Building on and promoting attributes/strengths as key 'drivers' of an area.
3. Maximise Offaly's tourism products to reflect its rich natural & built heritage resources.
4. Increase the impact of and access to the Arts for all people and sectors and develop the cultural identity of County Offaly.
5. Enhancing and regenerating our towns and villages by improving streetscapes and public realm and creating attractive urban spaces to develop a 'sense of place'.
6. Supports for groups/organisations seeking to protect and enhance the physical fabric of towns and villages, undertake local improvement measures and/or organise place making activities.
7. Improving access to ICT/Broadband.

Economic Goal 2

Actions to deliver on objectives

Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Economic Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *****

	Objective 1: To increase awareness of Offaly as a tourism destination and increase visitor numbers and revenue in Offaly through marketing and promotion. Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Economic Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *		
	Action	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
1.1	Support Offaly Tourism Group (OTG) to co-ordinate the marketing and promotion of tourism in Offaly to identified markets in the context of Ireland's Ancient East.	2016	**OTG** with OCC and Ireland's Ancient East
1.2	Prepare and implement a multi annual Brand Management Strategy to create awareness of the Offaly Tourism Brand.	2016	**OTG** with OCC, Failte Ireland
1.3	(a) Develop a multi annual funding model for promoting and marketing tourism in Offaly. (b) Develop innovative marketing campaigns to promote Offaly's heritage, culture, attractions and festivals and events.	2016-2021	**OTG** with OCC, Failte Ireland
1.4	Strengthen and support Offaly's digital tourism marketing capability, online presence and social media platforms by; • Focusing on TripAdvisor updates for Offaly, increase the 40 things to do in Offaly, • Update and launch Visitoffaly.ie, • I Beacon pilot. • Wikipedia updates and new set ups for all areas, • Create a Highlight Reel of a week / weekend in Offaly from the eyes of the visitor.	2016-2017	**OTG** with OCC, Failte Ireland
1.5	Provide up to date promotional brochures for key attractions, accommodation providers and civic buildings.	2016	**OTG** with OCC, Failte Ireland

1.6	Support Welcome training (as a pilot) to Tullamore, and its features, attractions and areas of interest.	2016-2021	**OCC, Chamber, Failte Ireland.**

Objective 2: **Building on and promoting attributes/strengths as key 'drivers' of an area.**

Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Economic Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *

	Action	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
2.1	Identify and promote unique local tourism assets, distinctive attributes and characteristics, as drivers of local economies.	2016	**OCC /OLDC**
2.2	Identify and support local 'champions' and teams in areas for tourism promotion.	2016-2017	**OTG with OCC,** C & V Sector, PPN, Business Community
2.3	Provide businesses and communities with tourism education programmes to assist in marketing tourism products.	2016-2017	**OCC with OLDC ETB and Failte Ireland**
2.4	Develop 'Aires de Services'* motorhome parks for the self –drive holiday market in 5 locations in Offaly.	2016-2017	**OCC** with OLDC and location stakeholders
2.5	Collaborate with neighbouring counties to maximise the tourism assets of the region and linked tourism features e.g. Slieve Blooms, Clonmacnoise with Athlone.	2016-2021	**OTG** with other Tourism committees and LA's

| 2.6 | Support the development of a walking/talking APP for Tullamore. | 2018 | OCC, Chamber |
| 2.7 | Develop proposals to enhance the visitor experience at Charleville Castle and Estate. | 2016-2021 | OCC, Heritage Council, Owners. |

	Objective 3: Maximise Offaly's tourism products to reflect its rich natural & built heritage resources. Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Economic Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *		
	Action	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
3.1	Prepare a Tourism Product Development Plan which focuses on Offaly's many outstanding features and attractions.	2016	**OTG** with OCC
3.2	Development proposals to enhance the visitor experience at Clonmacnoise Monastic Site.	2016-2018	**OCC with OLDC** and location stakeholders
3.3	Develop proposals to enhance the visitor experience at Durrow Abbey & Demesne.	2016-2018	**OCC with OLDC** and location stakeholders
3.4	Improve access and interpretation at key heritage sites in the county.	2016-2018	**OCC with OLDC** and location stakeholders

3.5	Develop and implement innovative signage to inform and promote specific tourist attractions.	2016	**OCC with OLDC** and location stakeholders
3.6	Implement Offaly's Strategy for walking and cycling entitled *Connecting People-Connecting Places** and connect it to the wider national and regional networks.	2016-2021	**OCC with OLDC** and location stakeholders
3.7	Develop themed trails to showcase Offaly's rich monastic heritage, culture and food offering.	2016-2018	**OCC with OLDC** and location stakeholders
3.8	Support the development in a sustainable manner of a range of tourism accommodation options for visitors.	2016-2021	**OCC with OLDC** and accommodation providers
3.9	Promote Offaly Heritage Week.	2016-2021	**OCC with OHAS, Genealogy and CCE**

			Timeline	Lead and Supporting Partners
	Objective 4: Increase the impact of and access to the Arts for all people and sectors and develop the cultural identity of County Offaly. Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Economic Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *			
	Action			
4.1	Run 'free entry to attractions' events to highlight Offaly's tourism assets and attract new visitors building on the work of Culture Night.		2016-2017	**OTG with OCC** and attraction providers
4.2	Promote the value of community participation in arts and cultural activity among the lead agencies in Offaly, and ensure that quality and sustainable projects are recognised for investment.		2016-2021	**OCC**, OLDC, HSE
4.3	Work to ensure that cultural events and projects in Offaly, including festivals are programmed imaginatively and communicated effectively in order to build audiences and develop a stronger cultural identity.		2016-2021	**OCC**, OLDC, OTG
4.4	Continue to work towards the development of Tullamore Community Arts Centre as a much needed cultural and community space in the town.		2016-2021	**OCC** with agency support
4.5	Ensure that successive Offaly Arts Strategies are widely consulted upon and informed by artists, communities, agencies and the voluntary arts sector.		2016-2021	**OCC** with the C&V sector

	Objective 5: Enhancing and regenerating our towns and villages by improving streetscapes and public realm and creating attractive urban spaces to develop a 'sense of place'. Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Economic Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *		
	Action	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
5.1	Address derelict sites in towns and villages with the aim of encouraging a positive contribution by appearance and use to their immediate surroundings by invoking the Derelict Sites Act.	2016-2021	**OCC, OLDC**
5.2	Identify three Main streets (one per Municipal District) with derelict buildings, and put a plan in place to work with owners and the community where relevant, to improve the facades.	2016-2021	**OCC, OLDC**
5.3	Put in place a strategic team to oversee and promote the re-development of potential 'opportunity sites'* located within towns and villages to contribute to renewal, enhancement and regeneration of town/village centres.	2016-2021	**OCC**
5.4	Implement a collaborative policy that all Public Realm Projects will be carried out in consultation with the community in question and follows national guidelines and best practice for procurement and maintenance leaving a lasting cultural identity.	**2017**	**OCC**, OLDC, Chamber, other public bodies with access to the per cent for art scheme
5.5	Organise Community Place-Making* Conference/Workshops providing relevant information and advising on design, place-making and delivery of projects to equip communities in learning, sharing, designing and activating ideas for local enhancement works.	2016	**OCC**, OLDC
5.6	Develop specific streetscape improvement plans in conjunction with local communities to enhance specific challenging sites or areas and contribute more positively to the local area.	2016-2021	**OCC**

5.7	To develop a co-ordinated approach to enhancing the streetscape in Tullamore through the Tullamore Streetscape Enhancement Programme*.	2016-2018	**OCC**, Chamber, local businesses. Other stakeholders
5.8	Fulfil objectives and undertake actions serving to enhance all towns, villages and sráids in Offaly as per their settlement plans in included in Volume 2 of the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020.	2016-2021	**OCC** , OLDC
5.9	Capitalise on potential national and international funding mechanisms designed to deliver regeneration initiatives or programmes in towns and villages.	2016	OCC
5.10	Support local business' in Tullamore,Birr, Edenderry and Clara in enhancing their towns reputation as a place to work/live/visit in working towards accreditations in schemes such as Tidy Towns, Pride of Place, etc.	2017-2020	**OCC,** Chamber with local committees and An Garda Siochana
5.11	Develop a 'Revamp our towns initiative' to add a new dimension to small towns to renew the business in the area e.g. Improve town squares, market areas, reorienting the town centre to a natural physical feature, specialised shopping on a street, etc. Add a new attraction to increase footfall.	2016-2021	**Chamber of Commerce and OCC**
5.12	Explore the linkages with existing Community Support organisations to allows towns or villages to identify their strengths and weaknesses, and develop ways of improving the quality of life for the wider community.	2016-2017	**OCC & OLDC**, PPN Community groups

	Objective 6: Supports for groups/organisations seeking to protect and enhance the physical fabric of towns and villages, undertake local improvement measures and/or organise place making activities. Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Economic Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *		
	Action	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
6.1	Support the Tidy Towns Network with the provision of financial resources for project work.	2016-2021	**OCC and OLDC**
6.2	Create an Environmental Team: Provide a Gateway/Jobsbridge Team trained to work on environmental improvements in community areas and supporting other environmental projects/groups.	2016	**LOETB**, OCC, Heritage Agencies, DSP, and OLDC
6.3	Create a Fund for supporting community buildings for Premises upkeep and maintenance.	2017	**OCC, OLDC** and other funders

	Objective 7: Improving access to ICT/Broadband. Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Economic Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *		
	Action	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
7.1	Capitalise on the Connecting Communities National Broadband Plan for Offaly and promote user access.	2016-2021	OCC
7.2	Promote user access to public infrastructure already in place i.e. Business supports, open access Libraries etc.	2016-2021	OCC Library Service with targeted C & V sector

Economic Goal 3

Green Economy & Sustainable Living

Creating a high quality environment through sustainable development in business, community and at home.

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Sustainable living is a lifestyle that seeks to adopt alternative approaches to how we live and work by reducing the use of natural resources. Protecting our environment for future generations is a core value in sustainable development.

This goal through its various actions looks at the role of:

- Agencies and Business,
- Communities,
- Individuals/households.

Construction methods, energy efficiency, renewable energy, waste management, modal shift, supporting locally owned business and building communities are just some of the many ways in which individuals, businesses and communities can contribute to a greener economy, living, make a difference to the environment and save money.

Awareness about sustainable practices is crucial in order to champion the cause however, this as well as actively living more sustainably is essential if future generations in Offaly are to enjoy an environment equal to, or better than, that we experience today. There is an opportunity to enhance our reputation as a green unspoiled county by bring core sustainable principles into our homes and workplaces.

In respect of championing energy efficiency, Offaly County Council will be working very closely with the Midlands Energy Agency to achieve reductions in the amount of energy used to deliver local authority services and to demonstrate what is possible through strong, committed action. The target of a 33% energy saving in energy use by 2020 has been set by the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan.

What you told us...

Through stakeholder engagement and public consultation feedback, you told us:

- Sustainable living should be more widely promoted and encouraged in every aspect of life.
- Energy efficiency is a sustainable way for business and homeowners to save money – need to drive this agenda..
- Co-operative housing – renovation and retrofit – perhaps this could be a way of dealing with vacant and derelict housing.
- Pilot an eco-village at some location in Offaly.
- Community energy/ Community gardens/ Homescale bio-digestion – making communities

The objectives identified have been prioritised to make a significant contribution to achieving the Goal for Green Energy and Sustainable living and include:

Objectives:

1. Collaborate with all energy stakeholders and the Midlands Energy agency for the delivery of energy projects locally.
2. Improving the energy performance of dwellings in the county.
3. Maximise the ability of communities to be self sufficient in food production, energy production, waste disposal etc.
4. Promote best practice energy management, water consumption and conservation and sustainable transport in business and Public Buildings.

Economic Goal 3

Green Economy & Sustainable Living

Actions to deliver on objectives

Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Economic Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *****

	Objective 1: Collaborate with all energy stakeholders and the Midlands Energy agency for the delivery of energy projects locally directed by SEAI. Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Economic Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *		
	Action	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
1.1	Link to a relevant 3rd level institution as a study site for innovation and energy production as part of the development of the Regional Energy Hub.	Ongoing	**LCDC,** LOETB/OCC/BnM
1.2	Promote biomass education for energy generation.	2016-2021	**Teagasc**, IFA, Bord na Mona
1.3	Run a Green Energy Summit Event in Offaly.	2019	**LCDC**, EI, AIT, 3rd Level Institutes, Bord na Mona, Private Sector
1.4	Establish Green Energy Committee to research, cost and drive Green Energy Sustainable projects- for tourism, transport, sustainable living.	2017	**LCDC**, Private Sector/Green Energy Activists/Bord na Mona/OCC
1.5	Support SEAI in the roll out of a regional energy forum and training in the Midland Region.	Ongoing	MEA/OCC
1.6	To develop a Countywide Public Lighting energy efficiency retrofit*.	Ongoing	**MEA/OCC**/Energy Service Provider

1.7	To support Midlands Public Lighting Community of Practice*.	Ongoing	**MEA/OCC**/Energy Service Provider, SEAI
1.8	Promote the public sector buildings as exemplars of Smart energy management.*	2016-2021	**MEA/ OCC** / Other bodies

	Objective 2: Improving the energy performance of dwellings in the county. **Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Economic Plan for explanatory note on items displaying ***		
	Action	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
2.1	Improve the energy performance of dwellings in the county through the Energy Efficiency Insulation (Phase 1) scheme * and any future programmes for retrofit.	Ongoing	**OCC**, SEAI, ETB, DSP
2.2	Implement the greener homes initiative in Offaly, promoting water harvesting for new builds, encourage retro fit and self sufficiency where possible in housing.	2017	**OCC**,SEAI, Community
2.3	Provision of information on energy saving technologies and integration of same at planning stage – making information available at planning counters.	Ongoing	MEA, OCC and SEAI

	Objective 3: Maximise the ability of communities to be self sufficient in food production, energy production, waste disposal etc. Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Economic Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *		
	Action	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
3.1	Work with SEAI to increase the number of communities/towns participating in the Sustainable Energy Community Programme* by developing a set of potential applications for the next round of funding.	2016 – 2021	**SEAI, OCC,** Community Projects, PPN
3.2	Support the Eastern and Midland Regional Waste Management Plan 2015-2021 in the 3 key target areas of: • Reducing household waste, • Recycling more, and • Directing less to landfill.	2016-2021	**OCC**/EMRA/ Community
3.3	Provide community awareness on: • how to develop small bio mass energy provision for communities, • future Better Energy Communities* funding through SEAI, • Community Food Initiatives through food production education and creating new allotments and suitable unused land for horticulture, • Household Food Waste Brown Bin Promotion* 2016.	2019-21	Collective -IFA, Teagasc, SEAI, OCC, Community groups, GIY, OLDC
3.4	Promote water conservation by encouraging communities to participate in the Tidy Towns 'Value Water Award'*.	2016	Tidy Towns/OCC

3.5	Expand the Green Schools Programme to increase the Green Flags obtained by Schools in Offaly.	2016-2021	OCC with Schools

	Objective 4: **Promote best practice energy management, water consumption and conservation, and sustainable transport in business and Public Buildings.** **Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Economic Plan for explanatory note on items displaying ***		
	Action	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
4.1	Promote the 'Smart Farming'* initiative to farmers across Offaly to inform them of environmental sustainability and resource management to reduce Co2 production on farms.	2016-2021	**IFA and** LCDC
4.2	Increase the number of people interacting with the Teagasc's BETTER (Business, Environment and Technology through Training, Extension and Research) farm programme to encourage satellite farmers to engage with new work practices.	2016-2021	**Teagasc**/LCDC
4.3	Supporting and implementing the programmes of the SEAI for promoting energy efficiency in the following key groups: Public Sector, Large energy users, SMEs.	Ongoing	OCC/SEAI
4.4	Participation in SEAI Communities of Practice Programme for Leisure Centre Managers etc.	Ongoing	MEA/OCC
4.5	Assist enterprises specifically targeting Green Energy Businesses to apply for Horizon 2020 and other green energy funds.	2016	EI, Public/Private Sector

4.6	Work with Enterprise Ireland to promote and deliver the Green Start Programme with business.	2017	OCC and EI
4.7	The Council support sustainable transport and accessibility in County Offaly and to be consistent with the goals of Smarter Travel – A sustainable Transport Future, A new transport policy for Ireland 2009-2020. This will be done by: • Seeking to improve access to and facilities for public transport, in particular bus and rail transport, • Reduce overall travel demand through consolidating our settlements with appropriate urban development as provided for in the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020, • Encouraging and promoting smarter business solutions including cooperation between businesses that reduce overall road transport requirements, • Maximise the efficiency of the transport network, • Encourage modal shift to walking and cycling by providing better, smarter urban environments designed around the specific needs of the pedestrian and cyclist.	Ongoing	OCC, Waterways Ireland and DoTSS
4.8	The Council support the Government's Electric Transport Programme 2008-2020 by facilitating the roll-out of battery charging infrastructure for electric vehicles where considered appropriate.	Ongoing	**ESB Networks,** OCC

Economic Plan: Glossary of Terms

Maximising economic activity and growth and ensure County Offaly capitalises on its potential to create opportunities and a suitable environment for new business.

Action	Term	Example /Explanation
1.8	Business Engagement Programme	E.G. Plato Dublin is a not for profit business development programme that helps SME's grow their business in a planned way. It provides the necessary tools to help you achieve your ambitions
3.1	Midlands Regional Energy Hub	The Midland Region is ideally located to become th ehome of a Regional Energy Hub as it contains a cluster of projects which when presented as a collective, provide a wealth of demonstration projects within close proximity to each other. The Midland Region has a strong history of energy generation and has embraced the renewable sector with the presence of co-fired peat and biomass, wind and energy storage. The Midland Regional Energy Hub, offers the potential to share the industrial and cultural heritage of the region related to canal development, peat extraction and energy generation, whilst linking with emerging renewable energy forms located throughout the Midland Region, and relevant third level centres.
3.3	Offaly Property Database	The Property Database contains full details of property solutions available in County Offaly. It includes sites, industrial and commercial buildings and retail premises for sale or let. This comprehensive database enables business owners to research and identify suitable properties in which to start up or expand their enterprise. The Local Enterprise Office (LEO) manages the database and is available to assist with any enquiries.
3.6	The Junction: Business Innovation Centre	The Junction Business Innovation Centre is a 4,200 sq. ft facility, designed and fitted out as a dedicated business innovation centre. Situated in Axis Business Park, Tullamore it is a multi-functional space, providing: hot desk facilities, office space, business training and mentoring, and facilities for people to develop ideas and business. This is supplemented by ongoing business supports from the Local Enterprise Office.
4.7	Smart Ageing	Smart Ageing is defined as using technology and innovation in both public and private sectors to produce

		products, services, solutions and systes to improve the quality of life of people aged 50 and over
4.8	Internet of Things	Based on the Taskforce on Big Data, implement the relevant policy actions to develop opportunities around quality and interoperability* that will have to be addressed with huge volumes of data through smart connected objects. Interoperability* the ability of different information technology systems and software applications to communicate, exchange data, and use the information that has been exchanged. E.g. of IoT- Take John Deere, for example. For decades, they've sold the tractors that make farming on a 21st century scale easier and more profitable. But since 2012, they've added data connectivity to their equipment, giving farmers information about which crops to plant where and when, when and where to plough, and even the best route to take while ploughing. They are essentially now in the business of selling data as much as they are selling tractors
5.1	Entrepreneurial Partnering Programme	This "Start up in Residence" type programme will match new entrepreneurs with leading enterprises in the region who will provide office/incubation space, support and mentoring on-site to the entrepreneurs.
5.6	ConnectIreland	ConnectIreland is an innovative way to create new jobs in Ireland by harnessing the power of the global Diaspora – at home and abroad.
7.1	Social Entrepreneur Initiatives	E.g. Where Student Enterprise and Social Enterprise Competition winners can no-longer sustain the business that there is a community alternative sought for worthwhile business' i.e. Edenderry discount card developed by students but not sustained.
7.2	Coopetition	Coopetition is the collaboration between business competitors, in the hope of mutually beneficial results e.g. agri-tech, food eg. Kerrygold sell Cashelblue internationally.
7.4	Main Street Innovation Fund	E.g. Landlords and tenants apply to match unused spaces to tenants business' with incentives for both Landlord and tenant to use the space. Create links to Business Incentive Scheme of OCC, explore the possibility of further Pop up shops, Retail for residential opportunities and alternative uses for derelict sites.
9.1	Water Supply Project	Finding a sustainable new source of drinking water to cater for population and economic growth in the Eastern and Midlands Region.
9.3	I-LOFAR* Birr	LOFAR (Low Frequency Array) is a next-generation radio telescope currently being deployed across Europe, with stations already operating in the Netherlands, Germany, Sweden, and the UK at an investment of €150M.

I-LOFAR refers to a proposal by a consortium of Irish universities and Research Institutes (which includes Athlone Institute of Technology and is led by Trinity College Dublin) to build and operate an Irish LOFAR radio telescope at Birr Castle, which will connect Ireland into the International LOFAR telescope and sensor network.

Tourism and Promoting Place

Tourism and Promoting Place- Improving the tourism potential, experience and identity of County Offaly and to enhance our towns and villages as quality places to live, work and visit.

Action	Term	Example /Explanation
2.4	Aires de Services	Site where motor home drivers can park up and visit local attractions while availing of a fresh water fill point, waste water emptying point , a chemical toilet emptying point and in some cases an electrical hook-up.
3.6	Offaly Strategy for Walking and Cycling - *Connecting People, Connecting Places*	The strategy outlines the vision for where walking and cycling projects can be improved and developed around the county with particular emphasis on improving existing routes in addition to creating new loops.
5.3	Opportunity Sites	Opportunity sites have been identified in various settlement areas in volume 2 of the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020. Such opportunity sites are considered suitable for re-development for a range of different reasons but in the main are considered to contribute to the enhancement of the vitality and vibrancy of particular town or village centre and will provide for the future retailing or commercial needs of the area.
5.5	Place Making	Placemaking is a multi-faceted approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces. Placemaking aims to identify a local community's specific assets and potential, in order to develop public spaces and promote their use, thus allowing these spaces to play an enhanced role people's health, happiness, and well being.

5.7	Tullamore Streetscape Enhancement Programme	Specific enhancement works to be carried out on Columcille/William Street, O'Connor Square and High Street; include to increasing pedestrian priority within O'Connor Sq. and throughout the town, and new pedestrian links, paving, lighting, street furniture, underground cabelling, wider footpaths. Also work with local businesses to ensure a coordinated approach to shopfronts, signage, planting and maintenance.

 Green Economy & Sustainable Living

Creating a high quality environment through sustainable development in business and at home

Action	Term	Example /Explanation
1.8	Public Lighting energy efficiency retrofit	Replacing old public lights with more energy efficient LED public lights. Funding is limited. There is a Government initiative to reduce energy costs in the Local Authority sector by 33% by 2020. In 2014 Offaly County Council carried out retrofit schemes in Moneygall, Mucklagh, Horseleap, Geashill and Kilcormac with the aid of SEAI and NRA funding. Offaly County Council are planning retrofit LED public lighting schemes in 2015 in Edenderry, Clara, Daingean and Ferbane with the aid of NRA and County Council own resource funding.
1.9	Midlands Public Lighting Community of Practice	The group is a forum for highlighting and sharing information on energy saving projects in the Midlands. OCC attend regular meetings of this group and makes an annual financial contribution towards the running costs of MEA.
1.11	Smart Energy Management	Set targets for achieving savings through energy efficiency, monitoring and control in line with EPBD (Energy Performance of Buildings Directive) S.I. 243 of 2012.
2.1	Energy Efficiency Insulation (Phase 1) scheme	Funded by European Regional Development Fund . My intention is to complete energy upgrades to over 400 units across the entire county. To date we have

completed over 200 units.

The works consist of pumped wall insulation, attic insulation, low energy light bulb fitting and Building Energy Rating certificates. Our role is to carry out initial and post works surveys, prepare contract documents, procure contractors, supervise works and claim the cost of works.

3.1	Sustainable Energy Community Programme	A Sustainable Energy Community (SEC) is a community in which everyone works together to develop a sustainable-energy system. To do so, they aim as far as possible to be energy-efficient, to use renewable energy and to develop decentralised energy supplies. This integrated approach allows for a balance of demand and supply, which gives the community greater energy autonomy. - See more at: http://www.seai.ie
3.3	Better Energy Communities	The 2015 programme incorporated Better Energy Communities, Warmer Homes Area Based type projects and a new Innovative Finance strand. www.seai.ie
3.3	Household Food Waste Brown Bin Promotion 2016	**Regulations on Household Food Waste and Bio-waste – S.I. No. 191 of 2015** By July 2016, brown bins will be rolled out to most towns and villages to promote the segregation of food waste and minimise the disposal of such waste.
3.4	Tidy Towns Value Water Award	Aim is to raise awareness of the importance of mindful water consumption in communities and encourage participation of members of the community to reduce consumption per household and per neighbourhood by promoting behaviours that conserve water.
4.1	Smart Farming	Improve your farm returns with better resource management, reducing farm bills and maximising output. www.smartfarming.ie

5. Community Plan

5. Community Plan

Education, Training and Skills

Local and Community Development

Empowering Communities

For some time now Local Authorities have an established responsibility for local and community development at local level. Offaly County Council has a long history of involvement in community initiatives and service provision including libraries, sport, leisure, recreation, arts and amenity facilities and services as well as estate management, urban and village renewal, tidy towns and the operation of Community Employment Schemes.

The Action Programme for Effective Local Government – *Putting People First* significantly strengthens and expands the role of local authorities in local and community development, with particular focus on promoting the well being and quality of life for individuals and communities. The newly established Local Community Development Committees (LCDC) have taken on the role of *… developing, co-ordinating and implementing a coherent and integrated approach to co-ordinate local and community action.*

The LCDC is a newly formed committee of the Local Authority. Their role as established by the Local Government Reform Act is:

… for the purposes of developing, coordinating and implementing a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development. The main responsibilities of the committee are to:

- Develop *six year economic and community plan*
- *Implement, monitor and review* community plan
- Co-ordinate, manage, oversee *local and community development programmes*
- Seek to ensure *effectiveness, co-ordination-avoid duplication*

- Responsible for *Local Community Development Programme* –social inclusion
- Responsible for local action group (LAG) to submit and oversee *Rural Development Programme*

The LCDC brings all of the relevant public-funded agencies and bodies together to target resources to deliver this community plan. They will do so by delivering on the objectives and actions set out supporting the following high level goals.

This community plan is devised with three high level goals, each identifying a range of objectives which represent key issues to be addressed. Each objective has associated actions aiming to support the objective. A timeline is attached to each action as well as the lead and supporting partners that are charged with delivering the action.

Goal 1

Goal 2

Goal 3

While these goals are explored in the community plan and guided by the LCDC, Improvement in the key subject areas of these goals will have a direct and positive impact on economic development of the county. These goals work towards the overarching vision of this plan where people, business and place are core values.

Community Goal 1

Education, Training and Skills

Improving educational participation, expanding initiatives to meet the further educational and training needs of people to address skills gaps and improve access to employment opportunities.

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Education, training and skills are essential requirements for accessing employment and developing the labour force. This would be a sufficient to see this goal being developed directly within the remit of the economic plan, however, its importance is experienced at so many levels in respect of local and community development. It is generally accepted that there are direct linkages between poor educational attainment and inter-generational disadvantage and poverty. Poor education attainment at an individual level, can give rise to increased likelihood of unemployment, low-skills level, poorly-paid employment, low levels of self-esteem and a tendency for disadvantage. For society, a wide range of social and economic inequalities results. A labour force with lower levels of education and a continued dependence on employment in sectors that have experienced long term decline are both characteristics that hinder successful economic growth. These have applied to Offaly previously.

Challenges exist for Offaly in particular areas of education. By comparison to the state average for example, Offaly has a high level of early school leavers, low levels of 3rd level education attainment, low levels of participation in 3rd level and a low level of participation in study areas of emerging importance (source CSO). While these outcomes need to be improved upon, other issues such as various barriers for students and their families in accessing and continuing on educational courses and programmes, also need to be addressed.

Availability and access to third level courses is a high priority for people living in Offaly. There are two areas of education and training required to respond to the needs of people; firstly, the promotion of STEM education for opportunities in the National economy and secondly healthcare, hospitality, food and business education for opportunities in the local economy. Apprenticeships and Traineeships are being developed to respond to the emerging growth areas for example green economy and green construction.

The short term objective of developing third level opportunities in Offaly will focus on expanding the availability of Access programmes at level 5 and 6. Currently this allows students a direct entry route to a third level institute. Offaly will work to maintain this and develop further Access courses.

Where possible Offaly will engage with third levels institutes to provide 'off-site' courses or part of a level 7 programme. While long term the objective is to formalise links with third level education providers for a third level centre in Offaly.

What you told us...

Through stakeholder engagement and public consultation feedback, you told us:

- Promoting access to education – addressing barriers including transport, ease of accessibility, cost of education and lack of affordable/flexible childcare.
- Lack of a 3rd level education facility in Offaly.
- Promote new Midlands Manufactoring Technologies Campus to support regional competitiveness and innovation in Midlands.
- Need for a location/venue in north east Offaly for ETB training.
- Investigate and Identify suitable locations in Offaly as education and training facilities.
- Key target groups for education or training, early school leavers, youth and long term unemployed, older age groups, traveller needs, parents in education, upskilling existing employees, young farmers etc.
- Specialised training for farmers to help maximise outputs, margins, support diversification and upskill for the business management aspect of farming.
- Developing links with Carlow, Maynooth & Limerick Colleges.
- Matching education and skills requirements to employer.

A coordinated effort by relevant educational agencies and the local authority will achieve better educational and training opportunities and outcomes. The objectives outlined below have been identified have been prioritised to make a significant contribution to achieving the Goal for Education, Training and Skills and fulfilling the overarching vision for the county and include:

Objectives:

1. Promote education and training in key growth areas.
2. Develop relationships with all 3rd level institutions and other education service providers and research institutes to develop a local workforce to meet the identified needs of the business sectors.
3. Workforce development through improved educational opportunities to increase competitiveness.
4. Improve access and address barriers to education and training (including financial, transport, and social supports).
5. Identify and target key groups for education, training and upskilling.
6. Enhance education and training infrastructure.
7. Co-ordinate training between providers and promote. sharing of community facilities for provision of education programmes.

Community Goal 1

Education, Training and Skills

Actions to deliver on objectives

Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Community Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *

	Objective 1: Promote education and training in key growth areas. Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Community Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *		
	Action	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
1.1	• Target 3 priority skill areas for training to advance existing and potential enterprise in Offaly based on the EGFSN* guidance for Higher Education providers on current and future skills needs of enterprise. • Jobs clubs and ETB identify any learning that employers need locally and source the relevant accredited training. • Education providers, businesses and voluntary organisations to work in partnership to provide training/education to meet the identified skills deficit.	2016-2021	**ETB,** Solas, SLMRU, local partners
1.2	Engage with Local/Regional Employers and record a series of "TED" style talks that will be available to 2nd level students – highlighting the opportunities of working within a particular industry.	2017	LEO Careers Portal.ie
1.3	Pilot an initiative whereby 100 Offaly businesses list on their websites the courses/accreditations and skills they value in employees.	2017	LEO, Careers Portal.ie
1.4	Promote the Connectivation competition* by ConnectIreland.	2016	**Connect Ireland,** Youth Orgs with Schools and ETB
1.5	Develop outreach 3rd level training courses in Green Economy and other areas of potential employment, particularly focusing on options for existing farmers to diversify.	2017	**ETB**/Midland Energy Agency/ Bord na Mona

1.6	Atlantic Corridor will run its Science with Inspirational Mentors (SWIM) in partnership with SFI and Amber Centre in Trinity College Dublin to increase participation in STEM education and careers with a focus on Midlands Life Sciences sector.	2016	Atlantic Corridor
1.7	Support thecontinued development of Mount Lucas Construction Centre as a construction training centre.	2016-2021	**ETB**, OCC, CIF

<table>
<tr>
<td rowspan="2"></td>
<td><u>Objective 2:</u> Develop relationships with targeted 3rd level institutions and other education service providers and research institutes to develop a trained workforce to meet the identified needs of the business sectors.

Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Community Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *</td>
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<td>Action</td>
<td>Timeline</td>
<td>Lead and Supporting Partners</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>All agencies with an educational brief to meet twice yearly to maximise resources and minimise duplication. From this put together.

1. A working group to target 3rd level Institutions for outreach opportunities and third level linkages
2. Employer engagement group to avoid saturating employers</td>
<td>2016-2021</td>
<td>Interagency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Scope services/facilities that Offaly can offer to 3rd level institutes to assist developing outreach services.</td>
<td>2016-2018</td>
<td>LCDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Research additional access courses for Offaly at all levels from Access, PLC, Springboard converter courses and Momentum.</td>
<td></td>
<td>LCDC with ETB</td>
</tr>
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| 2.4 | Establish and run Industry Apprenticeships/ traineeships in line with FET Strategy 2014-2019* for eg.Green Construction. | 2017-2021 | **ETB**/ Industry |
| 2.5 | Highlight locally the 14 + national websites that are available to the public for education, upskilling, training and employment opportunities and link this with the Midlands Forum online portal. | 2016 | **ETB**, DSP, DES, OLDC, Libraries |

	Objective 3: **Workforce development through improved educational opportunities to increase competitiveness.** Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Community Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *		
	Action	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
3.1	Capitalise on the outcomes of the Strategic Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU) which highlights employment vacancies and growth areas per county.	2016-2018	**ETB** & LCDC
3.2	Look for opportunities to assist existing businesses become more competitive through targeted up-skilling of staff* and business owners from customer service training to tailored training.	2017	**ETB**, Skills net, Springboard, LEO
3.3	Explore ways to harness skills of Bord na Mona workers in transition and transfer to new generation.	2017-2021	**Bord na Mona,** LEO, OCC
3.4	Develop further links with Coillte for employment opportunities in Offaly.	2017-2021	**LCDC,** Coillte

	Objective 4: Improve access and address barriers to education and training (including financial, transport, and social supports). Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Community Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *		
	Action	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
4.1	Explore pilots to: • Assist with transition to college. • Highlight the Acccess Programmes and options in Colleges. • Examine transportation requirements of college goers. • Assist students at risk of dropping out early for financial, transport or social reasons.	2016	**LCDC** and relevant partners
4.2	Explore diaspora assistance for education, business and civic purposes e.g. Spacehive.com	2016 - 2021	**LCDC,** Diaspora, Education providers, Business , Sport and Community Networks
4.3	Utilise Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) to increase access to education for identified specfic target groups through the following Goal 2 measures of Offaly SICAP*: • Outreach Information Services. • Lifelong learning opportunities.	Ongoing	OLDC

	• Child/Youth education supports. • Collaborative education networks and actions.		
4.4	Support the 'Right to read'* Initiative through Public libraries where the experience of library staff in providing literacy activities in cooperation with other key agencies and offering accessible and community-orientated services will be increased.	2016 -2021	OCC, ETB

	Objective 5: Identify and target key groups for education, training and upskilling Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Community Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *		
	Action	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
5.1	Youth enterprise training: • Mapping of the level of entrepreneurship education in all Secondary Schools in Offaly. • Source funding for a talent development programme for young entrepreneurs. • Linking with entrepreneurs who can mentor and support youth in Offaly to develop their skills in a central space for youth innovation and creation at the Junction and other youth friendly/enterprise spaces in the county. • Summer workshops /camps for teenagers on developing entrepreneurial competencies* of young people.	2016-2021	**ETB**/ LEO/ OCC/ Youth Sector/Schools

	• Offer NFTE in Youth Clubs and promotion of enterprise in the youth work setting outside of School - Harnessing opportunities for creating entrepreneurial thinking and activities at community level through targeted youth and young adults in the County. • Explore social enterprise and the youth sector-are there gaps in Offaly where youth social enterprise could respond to a social need in a self- financing way e.g. Food Cloud. FET and Adult Education: • ETB's to deliver inputs on entrepreneurship to all participants and promote self employment.		**ETB**
5.2	Increase the number of work placements in Offaly under the various employment programmes to assist participants gain or update experience of the workplace, to learn new skills and return to the routine of work.	2016-2017	Collaborative of OCC/ OLDC/ Public Bodies/ Employers
5.3	Target early school leavers for training programmes --- with potential for employment opportunities e.g. Youthreach, NFTE.	2016	**ETB** Youthreach
5.4	Target 45+ year age groups for education, training and upskilling – i.e. those outside of mainstream employment and training provision with relevant opportunities to re-engage.	2016	**OLDC**
5.5	Utilise SICAP to increase employment supports for identified specfic target groups (i.e. Goal 3 of Offaly SICAP*) including: • Employment progression supports • Self employment supports	Ongoing	**OLDC**
5.6	Promote STEM in the community by developing the following; • Junior Midlands Web Summit.	2016-2019	Collaborative of Atlantic Corridor, LEO, ETB, Coderdojo's, Science

			Foundation Ireland, Minecraft, Ordnance Survey Ireland
	• Midlands Science Festival – Atlantic Corridor,Ericssons, Elan. • Offaly /Midlands Hackathon. • Space Camp and site specific locations for Science Projects, link with Sci Fest, Science Week. • Continue to support and develop Coderdojo and links to The Junction: Business Innovation Centre - Edenderry , Tullamore and Birr Coderdojo's. • Support Minecraft Project for Ireland when Ordance Survey Ireland create a Minecraft map of Ireland, similar to Minecraft Northern Ireland Project.		
5.7	Link Occupational Therapists and ETB to explore new opportunities to engage potential students to develop their education and learning, prior to those engaging with the New Start Programme*.	2016	**LCDC,** ETB and HSE OT's
5.8	Support education resources and opportunities* for Traveller Education.	2016-2018	**ETB**/LEO
5.9	Seek opportunities for additional farm diversification education training and courses for young farmers.	2016-2019	Teagasc , IFA and OLDC

	Objective 6: Enhance education and training infrastructure Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Community Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *			
	Action		**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
6.1	Support the establishment of a National Renewable Green Economy/Energy centre in Offaly (refer also to Action 3.1 of Goal 1: Employment, Enterprise and Innovation.		2016-2021	OCC, BNM, WI, OPW, ETB.
6.2	Promote and develop where possible outreach education centres in the key areas of energy (Daingean/Mountbolus) , creative arts (Tullamore), food (Ferbane), tourism, and constuction to targeted 3rd level institutions.		2016 -2021	LCDC, CIF, Interagency approach
6.3	Pilot online food related training for Food Campus in Ferbane.		2016	**Ferbane Food Campus,** ETB, LEO
6.4	Based on identified e-learning facilities, bring Offaly community locations for e-learning up to a standard level of usability access to distance learning opportunities and promote distance learning through these facilities.		2016-2017	**LCDC & ETB,** Libraries, Community Venues
6.5	Establish Fab Lab* in The Junction: Offaly Business Innovation Centre. This will enable businesses and designers avail of cost effective prototyping and product design.		2020	**LEO,** ETB, OCC
6.6	Work with the Department of Education and Skills to support education from primary to further education.		2016-2021	**LCDC,** DES

	Objective 7: Co-ordinate training between providers and promote sharing of community facilities for provision of education programmes. Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Community Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *		
	Action	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
7.1	▪ Identify and list all community training facilities with and without IT access. ▪ Identify the training agencies in the County. ▪ Co-ordinate the training programme of the training bodies every 6 months. ▪ Collate what each training agency is providing e.g. ETB, LEO, OLDC, West Offaly Training, Ballycommon TTC, Acorn Edenderry , ETB Community Education etc. ▪ Identify gaps in training provision and put in place new options.	2016-2021	**ETB** Community Education
7.2	Support community based learning **facilities in unemployment hotspots** for education and training programmes.	2016 onwards	**OLDC** with Jobs Club and community centres
7.3	Support the demand for study spaces with Wi-Fi access from students who are using the libraries for educational purposes – commuting some days to college and studying in the library on other days. Broadband and Fibre dependant.	ongoing	OCC

Community Goal 2

Promoting a stronger focus on Local and Community Development to address specific needs of communities.

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The potential of local communities to contribute to physical, social and economic improvements in Offaly is never more evident and important than now. Local communities are the pulse of this county and need to be supported further to build on their contributions to date. To create a favourable economic environment for Offaly, it will take aligning business, physical, cultural and social environment to support innovation and growth. Local and community development are key to all these areas.

Local and community development is an area where the potential and aspirations of local people can be matched with skills development and investment to create new sources of jobs.

The delivery of publicly funded projects by people in the towns and villages sees the county at an advantage to build on the work carried out to date by voluntary and community groups. Local development will be more important than ever as there is an enhanced need for local solutions that both manage change and deal with adversity.

Offaly is fortunate to have so many strong and vibrant local communities, however, some experience disadvantage and are deficient in essential supports and services that if provided would contribute to an improved sense of wellbeing and quality of life. Challenges exist in addressing the various distinctive needs of our local communities.

Regeneration is targeted towards the most deprived groups to build opportunities and reduce disadvantage. This section will identify targeted urban and rural centres for vital regeneration plans.

You told us...

Through stakeholder engagement and public consultation feedback, you told us:

- Maximising public services and spaces,
- Address the impact of derelict buildings in towns and villages,
- Improve transport and broadband to communities, how Prioritise physical improvements to areas
- Provide social supports for targeted populations and
- Promote tourism assets.

To support local and community development over the next 6 years, the following objectives will be focused on as key areas for support:

Objectives:

1. Supporting and investing in the capacity of local communities (urban and rural) to enhance their economic future (Enterprise, Education & Employment).
2. Promoting the development of appropriate infrastructure and facilities and investment in environmental improvements within communities.
3. Identify and address services and supports for local communities.
4. Regenerating the physical, social, economic and environmental fabric/ infrastructure of urban/rural areas experiencing disadvantage/poverty and social exclusion
5. Improve the well-being and quality of life for children, youth, families and older people.
6. Accessing and co-ordinating multiple funding sources from public, private, community and voluntary sectors to stimulate local development.

Community Goal 2

Actions to deliver on objectives

Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Community Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *****

	Objective 1: Supporting and investing in the capacity of local communities (urban and rural) to enhance their economic future (Enterprise, Education & Employment). Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Community Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *		
	Action	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
1.1	Promote rural/community enterprise by: • Providing information events on Community Co-ops. • Set up a collaborative pre-enterprise / community business development course. • Provide a collaborative space for working and further developing potential community business products or services.	2016-2021	**OLDC,** ETB, OCC and PPN
1.2	Create a fund for villages to reinvent a space or service as part of a Village SOS Scheme*.	2017	OCC, OLDC and other funders
1.3	Work with Mid Offaly Housing Association to explore opportunities for greater use of existing facilities at Mountbolus e.g. test food kitchen.	2018	Mid Offaly Housing with OCC and OLDC
1.4	Provide space for a Town focused community and business facility in Edenderry -link with the Library Service re. proposed multifunctional space.	2020	**OCC,** OLDC
1.5	Organise an annual community trade day, to allow pre-entry Farmers market producers to meet and trade as a step up to market trading.	2016-2021	OLDC
1.6	Develop and promote a Community Sustainability Centre at a suitable location in Offaly to hold workshops encouraging better community sustainability via Upcycling, energy and water conservation, food production etc. Link with Community Sheds and Maker Spaces for opportunities.	2019	**ETB, OLDC,** PPN
1.7	Set up a Community/rural Business Women's Network as an entrepreneurial development programme, the objective of which is to examine options and implement a Programme for Women and Employment.	2016	**OLDC** with C & V Sector and PPN

1.8	Support town international twinning initiatives where benefits can be identified to communities in Enterprise, Tourism, Green Economy, Educationa nd Local and Community Development.	2016-2021	**Chamber, OCC, Atlantic Corridor.**

	Objective 2: **Promoting the development of appropriate infrastructure and facilities and investment in environmental improvements within communities.** Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Community Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *	**Timeline**	**Lead and supporting partners**
	Action	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
2.1	Identify additional quality green spaces as part of the recreational resources of the county and develop these green spaces with appropriate design, landscaping and maintenance.	2016	**OCC** & C & V Sector
2.2	Implement a Tree Planting Programme for designated public spaces.	2016-2018	**OCC**, Coillte, C& V Sector
2.3	Prioritise new community play areas* for development.	2016	OCC & OLDC
2.4	Increase the Outdoor facilities in areas for sport and recreation for all ages and abilities by enhancing and adapting facilities and features for recreation. Work with the Sports Partnership on access and advice on the appropriateness of facilities, design, funding and budgeting, based on areas of demand and priority.	2016-2021	**OLDC** & Sports Partnership & C& V groups, Kilcormac Training Centre
2.5	(a) Increase the Indoor facilities available to groups across the county. (b) Where facilities exist but there are restrictions on access to facilities, explore and arrange suitable alternatives. (c) Support existing community centres with resources to provide a range of holistic supports for the community through these centres so that they are used to capacity for the widest range of users/residents.	2016-2021	**OLDC**, ETB, FRC's , HSE

	(d) Work with the centre owners to link in services to the communities.		

	Objective 3: Identify and address services and supports for local communities. Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Community Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *		
	Action: Public buildings for social gain	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
3.1	Review all properties owned by Public Bodies and find opportunities for an extension of their existing usage at community level.	2016-2019	**LCDC,** OCC, OPW, HSE, Agencies and C& V Sector
3.2	Set up off site accessibility to Supports and Services e.g. Gardai in the Community where there is no Garda Station- linking with Post Offices, Primary care centres, Libraries, Credit Unions.	2016-2017	**LCDC,** Gardai, HSE, Library Service
3.3	Advocate for accessible out of hours/MIDOC service for Birr and South Offaly.	2016-2019	LCDC
3.4	Pilot Health Centres for alternative community uses to maximise the potential of their footprint e.g. Kilcormac.	2016-2018	**LCDC,** HSE , Local Community & OLDC
3.5	Develop Open Libraries pilot to all libraries in Offaly (see also objective 7.2 in Tourism and Promoting Place, Economic Plan).	ongoing	OCC

3.6	Upgrade key library facilities to large scale Multi-functional Library buildings with interconnecting supports available in house.	2016-2018	OCC
3.7	Provide additional day-care support and social services by way of facilities for the elderly across the County.	2016-2021	**OLDC,** HSE & DSP
	Action: Information deficits at agency and community level.		
3.8	Produce a cross agency guide to supports and contacts for children, youth, disability sector and the elderly.	2016	**OLDC,** TUSLA, HSE, ETB, OCC
3.9	Review how public information is delivered in expanding towns and provide an integrated communications system for greater community engagement.	2016-2017	**PPN,** OCC & OLDC
	Action: Seeing the ability (Disability support).		
3.10	Support the re-establishment of Offaly Disability Forum and links to the Sports Ability Forum via Offaly Sports Partnership.	2016	**LCDC** with HSE and C& V Sector
3.11	Provide training and information on how communities and public bodies can respond better to understand, support, interact and integrate the abilities in the community and workplace. Extend the Disability Inclusion training on sport and physical activity programme beyond clubs and service providers by Offaly Sports Partnership.	2016-2019	**LCDC,** HSE Disability Forum , Public Bodies, OSP
3.12	Disability –respond to the lack of supports for voluntary disability groups, space e.g. space requirements of Offaly Dyslexia group, LOFFA, carers support.	2016-2018	LCDC partners
3.13	Provide opportunities for greater accessibility and integration of people with disabilities in both a social and work environment by targeting key events and workplaces for integration opportunities.	2016-2019	**LCDC,** HSE ,Disability Forum , Public Bodies

	Action: Rural Transport		
3.14	Provide better services for older people to access towns and to interact socially.	2016-2021	LCDC with Laois Trip
3.15	Provide affordable services for teenagers within the County at weekends.	2016-2021	LCDC with Laois Trip
3.16	Highlight the need for more affordable and frequent service to third level colleges; making third level more accessible and affordable.	2016	**LCDC,** Laois Trip with LOETB
3.17	Highlight the need for Transport to Mountlucas education centre.	2016	LCDC
3.18	Support Hackney services to respond to the needs of older people seeking transport in remote areas.	2016	OLDC, Laois TRIP and OCC Licensing
3.19	Link existing organisations with private buses to operate a shared transport resource for greater and consolidated community usage.	2016	**LCDC,** Arden View, Offaly School of Special Needs, OCC

			Timeline	Lead and Supporting Partners
	Objective 4: Regenerating the physical, social, economic and environmental fabric/ infrastructure of urban/rural areas experiencing disadvantage/poverty and social exclusion. Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Community Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *			
	Action: Regeneration of deprived urban and rural communities		**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
4.1	Promote the regeneration of deprived urban and rural communities by implementing the following: • Identify 1 Rural and 1 Urban community for a holistic regeneration programme as identified by the community with agency support. • Target 2 key population cohorts within each community as key resources to empower in the community • Identify and audit existing infrastructure for development in each community. • Choose flagship projects within the regeneration area for either social, physical/landscape, health benefits for the community.		2016-2021	**LCDC,** OCC with OLDC and other stakeholders
4.2	Upscale existing Community Services Programme (CSP) projects* to extend the services of Home Fix to Home renovations teams and expand the services of other established CSP's.		2016-2019	**LCDC** with CSP's
4.3	To create a Social Fund for a DIY Upgrade* programme to 3 spaces i.e. one per Municipal District.		2017	**LCDC,** OCC, OLDC, C& V Sector and respective agencies for targeted Fund

	Objective 5: Improve the well-being and quality of life for children, youth, families and older people. Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Community Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *	Timeline	Lead and supporting Partners
	Action	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
	Support older people by undertaking the following:		
5.1	Prepare an Age Friendly County Plan consulting with older people and key stakeholders who engage with older people.	2016	**OCC** with HSE & TUSLA as main partners
5.2	Develop a care package to encourage independent living for older people which may be delivered by a social enterprise support project.	2016	**LCDC,** HSE , OLDC, OCC
5.3	Support the transport needs of older people with a local scheme of transport.	2016	OLDC , Laois Trip
5.4	(a) Work in partnership with statutory and voluntary agencies in assessing and addressing the special needs and requirements of individuals for housing. (b) Explore existing unfinished builds as alternative retrofit dwellings to suit the special needs/requirements of target groups.	2016-2019	Housing Associations with OCC
5.5	Provide better access to Technology for older people or isolated people (e.g. rural farmers).	2016-2017	**OCC libraries,** OLDC with ETB
5.6	Undertake a number of actions to promote safety and security as follows- ▪ Gardai & Security-Public Safety Seminar. ▪ Local Safety & Security Initiatives. ▪ Expand the Offaly Community Watch text alert system to link, IFA, Macra and other groups. ▪ Promote the different safety and security campaigns of organisations throughout the year e.g. phone	2016-2017	**JPC and Community Watch** , Gardai, Macra, IFA, PPN, Muintir ná Tire

	befriending services that operate countywide by a number of providers, warmer homes scheme, Macra know your neighbour week, IFA Farm Safety.		
	Supporting children and young people by undertaking the following:		
5.7	Establish the Children and Young People Services Committee and prepare a work programme for delivery by the CYPSC.	2016	**LCDC,** HSE & TUSLA with OCC, Library Services and partners
5.8	Focus on supporting children with disabilities with wraparound support programme put in place for a better customer experience from all agencies.	2016-2017	**LCDC,** HSE, TUSLA, Dept Ed., Youth Sector, CCC
5.9	Support awareness and interventions where substance misuse is having an impact on child well-being.	2016-2018	**LCDC** Link with MRDAT, TUSLA, HSE
5.10	Reducing child poverty – working with Family Support groups and Child and Youth services to assist in supporting families and children improve their circumstances e.g. to provide universal access to family support services and universal and targeted family support preventative intervention measures to include parenting programmes, early intervention initiatives, out of school activities and one to one support and counselling services for children and families.	2016-2021	**CYPSC,** Parents First, TUSLA, Family Resource Centres
5.11	Put in place and link up additional pre- intervention social resources to reduce early school leavers and young offenders entering the Justice system/Justice Projects. Offer restorative conference or caution as restorative justice re. the Garda Diversion Programme.	2017	**ETB,** Gardai, Justice Projects, Sports Partnership FRC's, School Completion Programme

5.12	Roll out new and innovation education diversification programmes as early intervention tools for young people e.g. Sport, Enterprise, Skills programmes.	2016	ETB
5.13	Provide accessible youth space that can offer young people opportunities to network, for better further education and job prospects.	2016	**ETB**, LEO, OLDC, MRYS
5.14	Supporting Teenagers- An opportunity for all engaged with Youth to share experience and support for a more empowered young people; County Youth committee.	2016	**ETB**, Foroige, MRYS, Gardai & Jigsaw
5.15	Improve access to youth facilities where there are gaps in accessibility in communities or where there are no spaces to provide designated youth space.	2016	**OCC , ETB, OLDC** and Local Communities, Youth Sector and Childcare Sector
	Supporting Well-being in the Community by undertaking the following:		
5.16	Seek funding for Physical Activity Plans for communities.	2016-2021	OSP
5.17	Provide an education and information programme directed at young men regarding substance misuse and the consequences and alternatives.	2016-2017	MRDAT & Jigsaw, Gardai
5.18	Promote indoor winter sports with community groups.	2016-2019	Sports Partnership
5.19	Support Jigsaw outreach and community engagement to promote positive mental health in the community.	2016	**Jigsaw,** HSE and C & V Sector
5.20	HSE Health Promotion and Offaly Sports Partnership to deliver wraparound wellbeing programmes in the community with quantifiable outcomes for a target group* or community.	2016	**OSP,** HSE communities

		Supporting parents and childcare by undertaking the following:		
5.21		Identify where lack of affordable childcare is a barrier to education and employment and seek to provide alternatives to enable a workforce re-enter the workplace.	2016-2019	**ETB** and CCC
5.22		Identify where the High Lone Parent rate in Offaly is having its greatest demand on social resources e.g. housing and how to respond to the Absent fathers issue as a social concern*.	2016-2019	**LCDC,** DSP , OCC and LOETB
5.23		Maintain a sustainable supply of childcare facilities in Offaly.	2016-2021	**CCC** , TUSLA & OCC
5.24		Identify if Primary Care Centres can have an expanded role in the community supporting children and parents holistic care needs e.g. need for space for child contact centres*.	2016-2017	**LCDC,** HSE, TUSLA, CCC, FRC's

		Objective 6: Accessing and co-ordinating multiple funding sources from public, private , community and voluntary sectors to stimulate local development. **Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Community Plan for explanatory note on items displaying ***		
		Action	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
6.1		Target EU, Departmental, and Philanthropic Funding for special projects to be pursued by the LECP/LCDC.	Ongoing	OCC
6.2		Channel to seek funding where Local Authority is exempt from applying by Setting up a SPV (Special Purpose Vehicle).	2016	OCC

6.3	Provide annual Funding workshops by all Countywide agencies to the business and C&V sector and promote local support to voluntary groups to apply for funding.	2016 -2020	**LCDC,** OLDC,LEO, PPN with all funding agencies

	Objective 7: Improving access to ICT/Broadband within communities. **Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Community Plan for explanatory note on items displaying ***		
	Action- Civic Spaces – Libraries and Public Buildings	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
7.1	Increase ICT points and WIFI accessibility in public buildings.	2016-2021	**LCDC,** OCC & other agencies

Community Goal 3

Empowering Communities to influence their own personal, social, economic and cultural development.

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Empowering Community refers to the process of enabling communities to increase control over their lives. All across Offaly work is undertaken by community, voluntary and charitable organisations seeking to improve people's lives. Their tireless work may not be fully appreciated at times in respect of its impact.

The challenges in achieving the goal of empowering communities lie fundamentally with motivating and encouraging people to get involved and setting about trying to:

- Maximise participation.
- Get recognition for the value of volunteering and the vital role it plays to creating healthy vibrant communities.
- Obtain the relevant supports needed for communities and organisations to do their work successfully.
- Promote the importance of active citizenship as being vital in making communities better places to live.

The actions in this section clearly respond to these challenges.

There are many successful examples of enhancement projects, valuable services and works throughout Offaly undertaken in local communities with inspiring initiatives by volunteer led community groups to make their towns and villages better and more attractive places to live, work and visit. However, efforts often struggle due to lack of co-ordination, lack of finance, and difficulties in gathering and mobilising community support.

The establishment of a new framework for public engagement called the Public Participation Network (PPN) has been developed within each local authority as part of national reform[1]. This is a renewed approach in which the community and voluntary sector connect with the Local Authority providing for greater community participation in local government and opportunities for input to policy and decision -making. This is an important and positive structure to have in place.

You told us…

Through stakeholder engagement and public consultation feedback, you told us:

- There is an issue with the lack of funding to support local communities.
- Volunteerism needs to be promoted more – need to motivate and empower communities more.
- Support the Tidy Towns groups and the wide ranging work they do.
- Promote active citizenship.

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[1] Local Government Reform Act 2014

This section of the plan will focus on the value of active citizenship to Offaly and what can be achieved from community co-operation and empowerment in the following areas;

Objectives:

1. Improve the level and quality of community identity, solidarity and civic pride.
2. Empower local leadership and activate local communities.
3. Stimulate active citizenship.
4. Enhance co-ordination between community development and economic development arising from closer alignment of local and community development programmes.
5. Promote the safety and welfare of people within their own communities.
6. Promote and support cultural diversification within communities.

Community Goal 3

Actions to deliver on objectives

Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Community Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *

	Objective 1: Improve the level and quality of community identity, solidarity and civic pride Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Community Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *		
	Action	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
1.1	Promote Pride of Place Competition - each Year certain communities are selected to represent Offaly in the National Pride of Place Competition which highlights civic pride in a place or project.	2016-2021	OCC
1.2	Buy Local- promotion campaign; identify certain times of the year where the value of buying local and buying quality is circulated throughout the county particularly for local food produce.	2016-2020	Chambers of Commerce with C & V Sector, Offaly Fayre
1.3	Recognise the role of festivals and events as a conduit to community solidarity by highlighting the work of a festival/event committee each year.	2016-2021	OCC
1.4	Link all the Offaly Credit Union and Chamber competitions for community groups to a Countywide level where there is another layer of recognition and award for volunteers to recognise community endeavours and the Annual Tidy Towns Competition.	2016	OCC, Chamber
1.5	Arrange Local Pilgrim /Camino type walks between Villages to allow communities to meet and support local spending.	2017	**OTG,** and Local groups
1.6	Develop Community Networks across all interest groups for greater solidarity.	2016-2021	**PPN** and OLDC
1.7	Utilise existing library resources to actively promote and support arts, heritage and culture, collaborating with historical societies and heritage groups and providing access to local history and archival material and programmes of events.	ongoing	Library Services

	Objective 2: Empower local leadership and activate local communities Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Community Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *		
	Action	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
2.1	Review opportunities for Gateway, Tus and Jobsbridge workers to support the voluntary sector as support staff for new and existing projects*****.	2016	OCC, OLDC, Chamber
2.2	Identify and implement Programmes to empower women to tackle community issues which may then link to Women and Social Enterprise opportunities.	2016	ETB and OLDC
2.3	Provide agency support with form filling, identifying funding opportunities, barriers and red tape issues re. Match funding, bridging loans.	2016-2018	**OLDC,** Sports partnership
2.4	Provide and maintain a match fund for voluntary groups who gain public funding.	2016-2021	**LCDC,** OCC and Local Funders

2.5	Activate local communities through SICAP Goal 1***** Actions to Empower Disadvantaged Communities in the following areas;
	  ▪ Planning for Healthy Communities.
	  ▪ Community group development.
	  ▪ Supporting inclusive decision making.
	  ▪ Collaborative community networks and actions.
		ongoing	OLDC

	Objective 3: Stimulate active citizenship Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Community Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *		
	Action	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
3.1	Promote the importance of voting, workshops on the political system and identify what youth related organisations offer positions for teenagers at National level.	2016-2017	OCC
3.2	PPN – increase membership of the PPN, hold regular PPN meetings, and develop the feedback mechanism to groups from decision making bodies.	2016-2021	OCC
3.3	Volunteer Centre - update the volunteer information system currently available for Offaly.	2016	OLDC
3.4	Residents Associations network and support – focus on Residential Associations as the basis of all Community and Voluntary activity to be developed across the county and supported with a small fund for physical or social improvements.	2016-2017	OCC & OLDC
3.5	Highlight the work of voluntary groups to attract new members to participate in an annual open week.	2016-2021	OLDC

	Objective 4: Enhance co-ordination between community development and economic development arising from closer alignment of local and community development programmes. Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Community Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *		
	Action	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
4.1	Monthly meetings where OCC & OLDC update on collaborative funding applications	2016-2021	**OCC,** LCDC,OLDC other agencies as relevant
4.2	Central County Data hub – where communities and agencies use this resource to co-ordinate and pursue funding applications.	2016	OCC
4.3	Indentifying areas that meet the possible funding criteria for Social Enterprise* and rural regeneration *.	2016	**LCDC,** OCC and OLDC
4.4	Advocate the value of co-ordination of resources in a community to avoid competition and possible duplication of resources in a community.	2016	OLDC & PPN

	Objective 5: Promote the safety and welfare of people within their own communities. Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Community Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *		
	Action	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
5.1	Community Watch-support for Community alert and Neighbourhood Watch groups to promote safety and security in communities.	ongoing	**Gardai** & OCC
5.2	Community CCTV- work with the Gardai to fund community groups to locate Community CCTV in key areas.	2016-2018	**Gardai ,** OCC & Local Funders
5.3	Engage with St Vincent de Paul on their recommendations for improving accommodation standards and winter fuel support to assist bulk purchase of winter fuels for those in need of fuel.	2016-2019	**St. Vincent de Paul** & OCC
5.4	Network and showcase all the services that provide safety and welfare support to older people in Offaly with stakeholder engagement.	2016	**OCC,** JPC OLDC and HSE

	Objective 6: Promote and support cultural diversification within communities Please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the Community Plan for explanatory note on items displaying *		
	Action	**Timeline**	**Lead and Supporting Partners**
6.1	Identify minority communities for greater social inclusion in the main towns via Public building access and engagement.	2016-2019	**LCDC,** Local Development groups & Public Service

			providers
6.2	**Traveller well-being** • Advocate for better access to Education support e.g. after-schools programmes and learning support for Travellers in mainstream education. • Support the Accommodation needs of Travellers by empowering a Traveller led Community housing scheme. • Support Health testing and awareness raising, on diet and primary care health via an integrated information resource for travellers that operates on a regular basis. • Employment- explore the possibilities for a Traveller enterprise project with designated space for product/craft/skill development.	2016-2021	**Interagency support,** OTM, ETB,OLDC, OCC, DSP, HSE, Traveller Voluntary Housing Association
6.3	Linking up with New communities- Monitor the emerging new communities across the county and where there are specific needs link the new communities to local supports based on the 9 target groups identified* as per SICAP.	2016-2021	**Interagency support,** OLDC, ETB, OCC, OTM, HSE, DSP and others

Community Plan: Glossary of Terms

Improving educational participation, expanding initiatives to meet the further educational and training needs of people to address skills gaps and improve access to employment opportunities.

Action	Term	Example /Explanation
1.1	EGFSN	Expert group on Future Skills Needs.
1.4	Connectivation competition	Connect Ireland project inviting third level students to share their ideas for the future development of the Succeed in Ireland Initiative (which aims to create 5000 jobs within five years by targeting international companies and business people, who would otherwise not be reached by the State enterprise agencies, for employment opportunities to Ireland).
2.4	FET Strategy 2014-2019	The overall aim of the Strategy is to develop a world-class integrated system of further education and training in Ireland, which will promote economic development and meet the needs of all citizens. The new strategy was developed by SOLAS with assistance from the ESRI which was commissioned to carry out evidence based research and assist in the development of the Strategy.
3.2	targeted up-skilling of staff	e.g. Level 5 Retail Sales Mgmt. Course with Elverys Sports Online for staff. Managers are course assessors, course is done online so employers dfont loose staff out of the shops apart from 3 to 4 facilitated workshops.
4.3	Goal 2 measures of Offaly SICAP*	**GOAL 2 - LIFELONG LEARNING:** To support individuals and marginalised target groups experiencing educational disadvantage so they can participate fully, engage with and progress through life-long learning opportunities through the use of community development approaches.

4.4	Right to Read Initiative	Right to Read is a new national initiative which aims to greatly enhance literacy levels throughout the country. It will be delivered in all local authorities through a nationally coordinated framework for literacy support and development. The national framework for the *Right to Read Campaign* will be managed by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, Libraries Development, LGMA and local authorities. The cooperative effort will focus on providing effective and sustainable literacy support including the provision of services and resources, access to support, action planning, awareness-raising, monitoring and evaluation.
5.1	Entrepreneurial competencies	Engage in the shift from 'how to run a business' to how to develop a general set of competencies applicable in all walks of life. Conference and workshops on taking the initiative and being an entrepreneur-workshop will focus on creativity, innovation and risk taking.
5.5	Goal 3 of Offaly SICAP	**GOAL 3 –EMPLOYMENT:** To engage with marginalised target groups / individuals and residents of disadvantaged communities who are unemployed but who do not fall within mainstream employment service provision or who are referred to SICAP to move them closer to the labour market and improve work readiness, and support them in accessing employment and self-employment and creating social enterprise opportunities.
5.10	Education resources and opportunities	▪ Start your own business course by Local Enterprise Office ▪ ETB Literacy worker supports ▪ OLDC employment support workers and outreach one to one coaching services ▪ Projects seeking support include; After Schools Programme, Traveller Horse Project, Offaly Horse Project.
6.5	Fab Lab	A Fab Lab (fabrication laboratory) is a small-scale workshop offering digital fabrication equipment. It is generally equipped with a range of flexible equipment to allow technology enabled production. The Fab Lab will enable entrepreneurs carry out early stage prototyping, batch production and validation of new product designs. To carry out the service, it will contain digital fabrication equipment such as CNC Router, 3D Printer, Laser Cutter, CNC Milling machine, Tooling for Milling and Routers. The Fab Lab is a natural extension to The Junction, combining design with manufacture. It would be available to start-ups, inventors, and businesses in the region looking to diversify.

Local and Community Development

Promoting a stronger focus on local and community development to address specific needs of communities

Action	Term	Example /Explanation
1.2	Village SOS	Village SOS would be a new scheme, to support new community-led business ventures that will breathe new life into their areas, create new jobs and improve the quality of life for local people.
2.3	Community Playgrounds	e.g. Cloghan, Ballycumber, Geashill Previously funded playgrounds at Moneygall, Shinrone, Kinnity, Kilcormac, Shannonbridge, Clara, Daingean, Rhode and Edenderry
4.2	Community Service Programmes	North Offaly Dev Network, West & South Offaly Network, Ballycommon TTC, Kilcormac Development Association KDA, Ballycumber, Lemonaghan Community Developments BLC
4.3	Social Fund for a DIY Upgrade (DIY SOS)	Similar to spacehive.com in the UK. Spacehive.com is the UK's crowd funding website specifically designed for civic projects The projects would be led by an organisation with Agency support and in future the Fund could be considered to expand to services for a target group or age cohort e.g. elderly persons homes. Possibility to gain momentum across communities and be replicated with an overall award for the DIY SOS projects carried out each year. Materials could be purchased collectively and work carried out locally for better value for money.
5.20	Targeted supports	Co-ordinate the Arden View soccer programme with funding required based on demand.
5.22	High Lone Parent rate as a social concern	All three Municipal District (MD) areas have lone parent rates that are high by comparison to the E&M Region (22%) and nationally (25.8%) with Birr MD at 32%, Edenderry MD at 28% and Tullamore MD at 40%. Lone mother families account for 85% of Lone parents families across the county.
5.24	Child contact centres	If couples are separated that there is a family space to meet their children.

Empowering Communities- Empowering Communities to influence their own personal, social, economic and cultural development

Action	Term	Example /Explanation
1.7	Programme of events	Culture night, Hullabaloo Children's Arts festival, WB Yeats program and 1916 comemeration programme of events.
2.1	new and existing projects	PPN worker, Edenderry Information worker, supporting social projects in the community e.g. large neighbourhood watch project to have a Tus worker on site
2.5	SICAP Goal 1	**GOAL 1 - EMPOWERING DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES:** To support and resource disadvantaged communities and marginalised target groups to engage with relevant local and national stakeholders in identifying and addressing social exclusion and equality issues.
4.3	Social Enterprises	Help to expand some of the 13 Community Service Programmes* countywide and prepare them for future funding for Social Enterprises e.g. Dormant Accounts 2015. *13 CSP Programmes in Offaly are BLC Developments, Crinkle Sports and Rec., North Offaly Dev Network, West & South Offaly Network, West Offaly Training, Ballycommon TTC, KDA, Mid Ireland Tourism (O'Carroll Consultants Ltd.), Birr Swimming Pool, Clara Swimming Pool, Edenderry Swimming Pool,St. Mary's Youth Centre and Birr Theatre and Arts Centre.
4.3	Rural regeneration	Rural Economic Development Zones (REDZ) criteria and preparing a community from the bottom up to respond to the criteria for REDZ for future calls for funding.
6.3	9 Target Groups identified	• Children and families living in disadvantaged areas • People living in disadvantaged communities • The unemployed (including those not on the Live Register) • Young people • Lone parents • People with disabilities • New communities (including refugees/asylum seekers) • Travellers • Roma

6.   Monitoring, Implementation and Funding

6. Monitoring, Implementation and Funding

6.1   Monitoring and Implementation

On adoption of the LECP by Offaly County Council the next phase of the process commences immediately with the implementation of the actions identified in the plan. Monitoring, evaluation and review will be required to establish the level of progress being made in implementing the actions and striving to achieve the high level goals and work towards to overarching vision of the plan.

An implementation, monitoring, evaluation and review framework examining the objectives and actions in the economic and community elements of the LECP, will be developed for both elements of the integrated plan. In setting up a framework for review, regard will be had to targets set out in relevant International and National policy, baseline data for Offaly under various headings and further guidance on implementation and monitoring of the LECP pledged to be issued by the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government. It is the role of the Advisory Steering Group to advise and assist on the implementation and monitoring arrangements and framework to be established.

Both the LCDC and SPC looking after their respective streams will also have responsibility for monitoring and implementation of the actions. Co-ordinating the supporting partners, bodies and agencies with responsibility for the delivery of actions identified will also be agreed by the Advisory Steering Group.

Where actions identified in this plan refer or comprise projects of a regional scale, stemming in particular from the *Midland Region Action Plan for Jobs 2015-2017*, these will be developed, monitored and implemented at regional level.

6.2   Funding

One of the greatest attributes of the LCDC will be the better co-ordination of funding to the private and community and voluntary (non-private) sector.

National Grant schemes are designed to fit the policy objectives and programme outcomes of each particular department. A great deal of central government funding is available through a wide range of associated agencies, quangos or non-departmental public bodies. Offaly LCDC will focus on all policy updates and research possible projects in advance of funding announcements to significantly increase public funding over the next 6 years.

While the design, administration and quality of funding programmes will vary between and even within departments, there are some common aspects in central government funding that are consistent thus making the application process a constant process of preparation and application. Offaly LCDC will streamline all public funding applications on behalf of Offaly and expand on collaborative funding applications across LCDC stakeholders.

Offaly LCDC will also work with Access Europe who identifies funding opportunities and assists organisations apply for EU funding and The Europe for Citizens Programme. This programme offers funding opportunities for NGOs, local authorities, research institutes etc.

Appendix A

Appendix A

2. The requirement for each Local Authority to make an integrated six year Local Economic and Community Plan.

A1: Background to LECP

In 2012 a national policy document entitled *Putting People First – Action Programme for Effective Local Government* outlined the intention to continue the reform process of local government.

The recommendations of this report are aimed at –

- Providing a more central co-ordinating role for local government in local and community development;
- Achieving greater efficiency and effectiveness in local and community development programming; and
- Improving the delivery of services for citizens and communities.

The **Local Government Reform Act 2014** provides the legislative framework for the policies contained in Putting People First and provides a stronger and clearer role for local government in economic and community development. In advancing and strengthening the overarching purpose of Local Government with respect to economic and community development the legislative provisions of Act provide for:

1. The establishment of a Local Community Development Committee (as a sub-committee of the County Council) and,

A2: National, Regional and Local Policy that has informed the Economic Plan and the Community Plan

Economic Plan

- Action plan for jobs
- Food Harvest 2020
- Our Cities: Drivers of National Competitiveness
- Making it Happen – Growing Enterprise for Ireland
- Delivering our Green Potential – Government Policy statement on Growth and Employment in the Green Economy
- Developing a Green Enterprise
- Energising Irelands rural economy – CEDRA
- Local Government Sectoral Strategy to promote Employment and Support Local Enterprise – Supporting Economic Recovery and Jobs – locally.
- Supporting Enterprise, Local Development and Economic Growth
- Cost of doing business in Ireland 2014
- Evaluation of Enterprise Supports for Start-ups and Entrepreneurship
- Irelands competitiveness Scorecard 2014
- Construction 2020 – A Strategy for a renewed Construction sector
- Harnessing our Ocean Wealth
- National Reform Programme for Ireland
- Social Housing Strategy 2020
- Green Paper on Energy Policy in Ireland
- Regional Planning Guidelines
- Regional Operation Programmes 2014-2020
- Gateways and Hubs Development Index
- County Incomes and Regional RDP Reports
- Forfas Regional Competitiveness Agendas
- IDA Regional Strategy
- LEADER Rural Development programme

Community Plan

- OECD Report on Local Development
- Our Sustainable Future: A Framework for Sustainable Development for Ireland (2012)
- National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016
- Better outcomes, brighter futures - The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020
- Energising Irelands rural economy – CEDRA
- Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019
- Corporate Social Responsibility Plan, Good for Business, Good for Community 2014-2016
- Healthy Ireland – A Framework for Improved Heath and Well Being 2013-2015
- National Strategy for Traveller/Roma Integration
- Report on High Level Group on Traveller Issues 2006
- 20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030
- Supporting Enterprise, Local Development and Economic Growth
- National Reform Programme for Ireland
- National Action Plan for Social Inclusion

- National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020
- Midlands Regional Planning Guidelines 2004-2020
- Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020

A3: Function and Role of SPC, LCDC and Advisory Steering Group:

The **Strategic Policy Committee** (SPC) for Economic development, Enterprise and Planning are responsible for developing the Economic Plan.

SPCs were established by Local Government Act 2001. Their role is defined as to:

▸ Assist the Council in the formulation, development and review of policy;

▸ Assist and advise the Council in relation to functions of the local authority, e.g. preparation of a development plan, waste management plan, water quality management plan and now the LECP.

The **Local Community Development Committee** (LCDC) are responsible for developing the Community Plan.

The LCDC is a newly formed committee of the Local authority. Their role as established by the Local Government Reform Act 2014 is:

for the purposes of developing, coordinating and implementing a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development. The main responsibilities of the committee are to:

• Develop *six year economic and community plan*
• *Implement, monitor and review* community plan
• Co-ordinate, manage, oversee *local and community development programmes*
• Seek to ensure *effectiveness, co-ordination-avoid duplication*

• Responsible for *Local Community Development Programme –* social inclusion
• Responsible for local action group (LAG) to submit and oversee *Rural Development Programme*

Both the SPC and the LCDC has representation from various interest groups and members of the public including:

SPC: 11 Members

- 6 x Members of Offaly County Council.
- 1 x Agriculture/Farming Interest.
- 1 x Business/Commercial/Development/ Construction Interest.
- 1 x Community/Voluntary Interest.
- 1 x Environment/Conservation Interest.

LCDC: 18 Members

- Members of Offaly County Council.
- Chief Executive OCC.
- Head of Enterprise.
- State Agencies.
- Community and Voluntary Interests.
- Social Inclusion Interests.
- Environmental Interests.
- Local Development and Community Bodies and others.

The role of the **Advisory Steering Group** is also established by the Local Government Regulations 2014, to oversee the development of the LECP and ensure that there is integrated approach by:

(a) Recommend areas of activity to be covered separately by the economic elements of the Plan and the community elements of the Plan

(b) Co-ordinate the development of the economic elements of the of the Plan and the community elements of the Plan - reduce duplication and maximise use of available resources,

(c) Advise/assist Community Committee and Economic Committee on development of the vision for the economic and community development of the area and the development of the socio-economic statement setting out the priorities, high level objectives and goals, and targets for the area,

(d) Oversee development and management of integrated consultation process for the development of both the economic and community elements,

(e) Advise/assist on the integration economic and community elements of the Plan into a single, coherent and integrated LECP,

(f) Advise/assist on ensuring the Plan is consistent with the development plan,

(g) Advise/assist on ensuring the Plan is consistent with regional spatial and economic strategy, or RPGs as may apply, and

(h) Advise/assist on the implementation and monitoring of the Plan.

A4: Consistency with Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020 & Midland Regional Planning Guidelines

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 provides that the LECP must be consistent with the core strategy and objectives of the Development Plan of the area and the Regional Planning Guidelines[1]. During the display period of the draft LECP, Members of the Birr, Tullamore and Edenderry Municipal District considered the plan in the context of its consistency with the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020. All three Municipal District Councils adopted a formal statement to this effect as set out hereunder:

Birr MD – 12th October 2015: Statement of Consistency.

Pursuant to the provisions of Sections 66C(2)(b) and 66C(3)(b) of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 we, the Members of Birr Municipal District have considered the Economic and Community elements of the draft Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2016-2021 presented on 12th October 2015. We confirm that the draft Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021 is consistent with the Core Strategy and objectives of the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020.

Tullamore MD – 15th October 2015: Statement of Consistency.

Pursuant to the provisions of Sections 66C(2)(b) and 66C(3)(b) of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 we, the Members of Tullamore Municipal District have considered the Economic and Community elements of the draft Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2016-2021 presented on 15th October 2015. We confirm that the draft Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021 is consistent with the Core Strategy and objectives of the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020.

Edenderry MD – 20th October 2015: Statement of Consistency.

Pursuant to the provisions of Sections 66C(2)(b) and 66C(3)(b) of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 we, the Members of Edenderry Municipal District have considered the Economic and Community elements of the draft Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2016-2021 presented on 20th October 2015. We confirm that the draft Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021 is consistent with the Core Strategy and objectives of the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020.

Consistency with the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines

A copy of the draft LECP and accompanying documents was forwarded to the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly on the 7th October 2015 with a letter requesting the assembly to consider the consistency of the Offaly draft LECP with the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2012-2022. The Regional Assembly adopted a statement of consistency as required under the provisions of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 at their meeting of 13th November 2015 as set out hereunder:

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly considers, in line with Section 66C of the Local Government Act 2001, that the Offaly Draft LECP satisfies the requirements in terms of consistency with the core strategy and the objectives of the Offaly County Development Plan, consistency with the Midland RPGs and the integration and coordination of the economic and community elements of the plan.

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[1] Sections 66C(2)(b) and 66C(3)(b) of the Local Government Reform Act 2014

A5:   Determination for screening out requirement to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment:

Having had regard to the requirements of SI No. 435/2004 EC Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended by SI No. 200/2011), and having consulted with the Environmental Authorities and considered the submission received, it is the final determination of the Planning Authority that a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required in respect to the Offaly LECP. This determination is based on the following grounds:

- The LECP will be implemented in accordance with the principles of sustainable development and with the commitment to the enhancement and protection of the natural and man-made environment, as set out in the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020, which was subject to a full SEA and AA in 2014 and to which the LECP must be consistent.

- On the basis of the assessment and consideration of the criteria as set out in Schedule 1 of the Regulations, it is considered that the LECP is unlikely to give rise to significant environmental effects, once the environmental policies and objectives within the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020 are adhered to and implemented; and therefore does not require an SEA.

A6: **Determination for screening out requirement to undertake a Natura Impact Report or Appropriate Assessment:**

The principle trigger for a Natura Impact Report would be if the LECP was likely to have significant effects on a NATURA 2000 site. The LECP will be formulated in a manner that is consistent with the objectives of the core strategy and other objectives of the development plan. The polices and provisions of the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020 have been devised to anticipate and avoid the need for development that would be likely to significantly and adversely affect the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites or areas of high ecological value/interest.

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and a Natura Impact Report (in accordance with the Habitats Directive) were completed during the drafting of the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020 which examined the cumulative impacts of the plan's policies and objectives on the environment, including Natura 2000 sites. Mitigation measures were proposed and incorporated into the 2014-2020 Plan to ensure that no negative impacts would arise from its implementation.

Any developments (direct or indirect) permitted on foot of the actions/objectives of the LECP shall be required to conform to National and European regulations and legislation for the prevention of environmental effects which would adversely impact on the integrity and conservation objectives of Natura 2000 sites. This along with the natural heritage policies (Chapter 7), core strategy objectives and other objectives contained in the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020 will ensure that no development will be permitted that will significantly adversely impact on Natura 2000 sites.

Therefore, in accordance with the Methodological guidance on the provision of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, it is concluded that the LECP, does not require any further assessment i.e. A Natura Impact Report, to demonstrate compliance with the Directive.