

CHAPTER 10

Rural Development



Aim: *To support the provision of a high quality rural environment; encourage diversification and improved competitiveness of the rural economy; sustain the livelihood of rural communities and promote the development of the wider rural economy, all within the context of the sustainable management of land and resources.*

10.1 Background

In recent years the rural economy of County Kildare has experienced rapid change. While traditionally agriculture sustained much of the rural economy, the restructuring of this sector has resulted in a diversification of traditional farm practices, an increase in part time farming / off farm employment and a decrease in the number of individual farmsteads. In addition rural areas, particularly those close to the larger towns have experienced rapid population growth and have faced much pressure for non rural based development. The need to manage the demand for one-off rural housing is also recognised and is addressed in detail in Chapter 4.

The Council is committed to promoting balanced and inclusive rural communities, to achieving an appropriate scale of development supporting farming and other rural based economic activity, (such as equine development, forestry and boglands), as important sources of income, while also fostering sustainable economic diversification and development in rural areas.

10.2 National and Regional Policy

10.2.1 National Policy

The *National Development Plan 2007–2013* (NDP) outlines a framework for developing the rural economy with a number of interventions to support rural areas. These include physical infrastructure, improvement of transport services, promoting the diversification of the rural economy, the modernisation and competitiveness of the farming and food processing sector as well as enhancing the quality of the rural environment. It also seeks to tackle social exclusion and provide income support for low income farmers, together with the enhancement of rural amenities and services.

Ireland's *Rural Development Programme 2007–2013* forms part of the National Development Plan and is based on the EU framework for rural development and on the National Rural Development Strategy. The objective is to foster the development of rural areas through innovation, locally based, bottom-up development strategies. Rural development measures for the period between 2007–2013 are to be delivered

by, or in partnership with, statutory agencies and the local development sector. The programme has a particular focus on opportunities for indigenous small-scale enterprises, particularly in the food sector, rural recreation, diversification into non-agricultural activities, support for business creation, encouragement of tourism activities, basic services for the economy and rural population, village renewal and development, conservation and upgrading of rural heritage and training and information.

10.2.2 Regional Planning Guidelines (2010–2022)

The RPGs recognise the need to facilitate rural development by improving the overall viability of the rural economy together with the provision of improved Information and Communications Technology (ICT), particularly broadband. It highlights, in particular, the growth of the specialist food production sector in the region. It acknowledges that peri-urban areas and green belt zoned lands across the fringe of the Metropolitan area can exploit markets through offerings in specialised green oriented activities, rural tourism and leisure for both international and local markets alongside more traditional rural activities capitalising on strong connectivity to urban populations and markets.

10.3 Strategy

This strategy seeks to promote the achievement of the goals and objectives of European and National plans and strategies. The Council will continue to support the work of local agencies and groups responsible for rural development within the county. A number of elements of the county's rural economy will be promoted including agriculture, equine, horticulture, forestry and boglands together with the continued modernisation of the farming / food sector. In parallel, the quality of the rural environment will be enhanced and protected from inappropriate development and/or practices.

10.4 Kildare's Rural Economy

It is important to recognise that there is a role for rural employment in contributing to the general economic development of the county. The rural employment base should encourage diversification of the rural economy by promoting economic growth in key towns / villages and settlements to support local populations, by facilitating stronger rural based activities including tourism and leisure activities and encouraging more appropriate forms of rural development.

10.4.1 Agriculture

Over the past number of years there has been a significant fall off in agricultural employment. This is indicative of the changing nature of the rural economy. The total area of land farmed in Kildare is 112,518 ha comprising 66% of the overall area of the county. Since 1991 the number of farms²² has reduced from 3,300 in 1991 to c.2,700 in 2000 representing a reduction of 18% compared to a 17% reduction for the State as a whole. In addition, only 1,450 of the farms recorded in 2000, indicated farming as a sole occupation.

In terms of employment, the 2002 Census of Population recorded 3.7% of the labour force of County Kildare in the "farming, fishing and forestry" occupational group, with 2.9% of the labour force recorded in that group in the 2006 Census of Population.

²² Defined as a single unit, both technically and economically, which has a single management and which produces agricultural products. Source: CSO Census of Agriculture 2000

Table 10.1 Persons aged 15 years and over in the labour force, classified by occupational group

Census Year	Total in Labour Force (Persons)	Farming, Fishing, Forestry (Persons)	Percentage of Labour Force
Kildare 2002	79,220	2,947	3.7%
Kildare 2006	97,719	2,851	2.9%

Source: CSO Census of Population 2002 and 2006

Agricultural land use in the county generally follows the suitability and use of the soils. Specialised beef production is the most common type of farming accounting for almost 40% of the total farms in 2000. Beef farming is particularly strongly represented in the south west of the county around Athy. Mixed grazing livestock is the second most common type of farming. This is mostly associated with some of the best pastures, especially in the east of county. Specialised tillage farming accounts for 14.7% of all farms in Kildare in 2000.

A more recent update on the number of farm and farm sizes was conducted by the Irish Farmers Association in 2008. The key emerging trend from that study indicated that:

- The number of farms continues to decline both at county and national level, i.e. there has been an 11% decrease in the number of farms in the county and 9% nationally between 2000 and 2008.
- The average farm size in Kildare in 2008, was recorded as 42.9ha an increase on the 41.8ha recorded in the Census of Agriculture in 2000.

These figures show that whilst the number of farms may have declined over the period, their average size increased marginally, indicating that consolidation of farms may have taken place, to create larger, more viable / diversified landholdings.

The need for diversification from traditional agricultural practices is acknowledged. The Council will encourage farming practices and production methods that have regard to conservation, landscape protection, the protection of wildlife habitats, endangered species, flora and fauna and water quality.

10.4.2 Equine

The equine industry is hugely important to the economy of the county, generating significant foreign direct investment and attracting large numbers of tourists to the county each year. 145 stud farms are recorded in the county in the Irish Field Directory 2008 and it is estimated that Kildare has the highest concentration of licensed trainers at 13.4% and also has the highest concentration of registered breeders at 10.7% of the national total²³. The industry directly employs approximately 5,000 people in the county, with a further c.10,000 people working in associated industries and services.

Three premier racetracks are located in the county (i.e. The Curragh, Punchestown and Naas) together with training and educational facilities for the equine industry. In addition there has been significant growth in the sport horse industry. At present, in County Kildare there are 15 Association of Irish Riding Establishments (AIRE) approved equestrian centres, some of which are known internationally. An increasing number of establishments in the county are concentrating specifically on breeding, training and competing sport horses.

In recognising the importance of the bloodstock industry, both in land use and in terms of direct and indirect employment generated by it, the Council will continue to support and encourage the development of a vibrant bloodstock industry, which plays a major role in the rural economy.

²³ Source; Horse Racing Ireland Factbook 2008

10.4.3 Horticulture

It is estimated that horticulture generates €12.7 million each year from the activities of an estimated 35 nurseries in the county²⁴. Growth in the nursery stock industry is likely to continue with garden retailers continuing to increase purchases from the local nursery stock. The development of a well managed, sustainable horticulture sector which can capitalise on the proximity to the available markets in the Greater Dublin Area and beyond will be encouraged.

10.4.4 Agri Food Sector

The agri-food sector continues to be one of the most important and dynamic indigenous manufacturing elements in the Irish economy. In 2008 it accounted for 10% of the total exports from Ireland at nearly €8.6 billion and has significant potential to increase export capacity and create jobs.

It is likely that this sector will play a crucial role in the rural economy into the foreseeable future. The Council will endeavour to support this sector of the rural economy where appropriate. The growing trend of farmers markets for the sale of locally produced goods will be encouraged at appropriate locations subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

10.4.5 Forestry

In 2007, c.9,200 ha of the county was in forest cover²⁵, representing a 9.5% increase over the figure recorded in the County Development Plan 2005–2011. This accounts for only 6.4% of the overall landholding of the county. Of this forested area, c.48% is in public ownership, 13% in private grant aided ownership and 39% in other private ownership. All of the 9,200ha of forest is located at an altitude of between 50 and 99m. A majority of native species are planted in the forests (62%).

Currently only 10% of Ireland is forested. This degree of forest cover is below the national objective set out in the *Strategic Plan for the Development of the Forestry Sector in Ireland Growing for the Future (1996)*, which sets a target of 17% of the country's total land area to be under forest cover by 2030.

The Environmental Impact Assessment (Amendment) Regulations 2001, provided for the introduction of a new statutory consent system for forestry which is operated by the Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. While the Forest Service determines applications for initial afforestation and felling, it consults with the local authority in circumstances where the proposal relates to a designated scenic area; an area of high amenity; applications greater than 10 hectares within the catchment area of designated local authority water schemes; all applications for areas greater than 25 hectares and clear felling proposals at the end of rotation to ensure that felling is not incompatible with environmental protection.

Under the EIA (Amendment) Regulations 2001, forestry developments which require planning permission and the submission of an Environmental Impact Statement are:

- Initial afforestation which involves an area of over 50ha or more;
- Replacement of broadleaf high forest by conifer species, where the area involved is greater than 10 hectares; and
- Deforestation for conversion to other land use, provided the area deforested is greater than 10 hectares of natural woodland or 70 hectares of conifer forest.

The Council will seek to accommodate afforestation throughout the county where it is deemed appropriate. Forestry activities should be appropriate in terms of nature and scale so they are not visually intrusive on the landscape, cause damage to important habitats or the ecology of the area. The use of native species or broadleaf / conifer mixture and age class diversity can also enhance the visual impact

24 The Kildare County Development Board Report – *Kildare 2012 – An Economic, Social and Cultural Strategy*

25 National Forest Inventory, Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture and Food (2007).



and biodiversity of forests. The careful selection of areas for felling together with the size and shape will minimise landscape impact and create opportunities to introduce age structure diversity within the forest.

10.4.6 Boglands

24,300 ha (60,045 acres) of land in County Kildare is covered by bogs, which represents 14% of the total land coverage of the county. Most of the bogland resources in Kildare are located in the north-west and south-west of the county, the majority of which are raised bogs with smaller blanket bog areas. Bórd na Móna owns c. 8,500ha of peatlands in the county, representing c.10% of its national landholding. Extensive peat production takes place at various sites within the county including sites at Kilberry, Ballydermot/Lullymore, Timahoe, Gilltown bog, Prosperous bog and Allen bog for energy supply and to support the horticulture business. A further two bogs, Derrylea and Umeras to the east of Portarlington are on the Kildare/Offaly border.

Bórd na Móna is reviewing its peatlands with a view to developing a comprehensive plan for their future use after the peat production phase. Bord na Móna's Sustainability Report 2008/2009 states that it recognises its role and responsibility in the transition of the peatlands within its guardianship and to the rehabilitation and after care of such lands to an environmentally sustainable condition with a higher biodiversity value. The potential for eco-tourism based on the unique characteristics of the peatlands and the biodiversity habitats they provide is also being investigated.

Many of the county's peatland resources are designated Special Areas of Conservation and Natural Heritage Areas. Under the Habitats Directive, it is a legal requirement to protect bogs. It is an objective of the Government that domestic turf cutting on these designated raised bogs will be phased out over the coming years. The potential for the utilisation of protected peatland areas for tourist, amenity, educational and research purposes is acknowledged and promoted.

10.4.7 Tourism

Tourism is a growing sector within Kildare's rural economy. The natural environment and landscape of the county together with sport tourism linked to equine and golf amenities are significant attractions to a wide ranging consumer profile. Rural tourism has the potential to support and augment the county's economic profile. The Council will endeavour to facilitate the development of the tourist industry in rural areas in accordance with the policies and objectives outlined in Chapter 5.

10.4.8 Green Energy Projects

Rural areas have the potential to be harnessed for renewable energy projects – including wind, hydro and solar energy. In addition, waste to energy projects, such as bio-mass, anaerobic digestion and dry digestion may be suitable subject to planning and development considerations.

The Council will support renewable energy projects in rural areas. However, it is mindful of the need to protect landscape sensitivities, residential amenities, views or prospects, public rights of way, wildlife, habitats, special areas of conservation, protected structures, bird migration paths, etc.

Chapter 8 of the Plan outlines policies and objectives for renewable energy within the county, which includes rural areas.

10.4.9 Mineral Resources

Mineral resources are generally located within the rural area. The nature of the extractive industry is such that the industry must be developed where the resource occurs. The industry can have damaging environmental effects and permission will only be granted where the Council is satisfied that residential and natural amenities will be protected, pollution will be prevented and aquifers and ground water safeguarded. Section 10.7 outlines in more detail, considerations in relation to the sector together with appropriate policies and objectives.

10.4.10 Rural Enterprises

The Council acknowledges that the development of rural enterprise and employment opportunities will be vital to sustaining the rural economy. In accordance with the economic strategy for the overall county, employment, servicing the rural areas, should, in general, be directed to local employment centres, small towns and villages (see Chapter 5 Table 5.3 Economic Development Hierarchy, County Kildare), catering for local investment and small scale industry. Within the rural settlements / nodes and the rural countryside, agriculture, horticulture, forestry, tourism, energy production and rural resources based enterprise should be facilitated.

Key considerations for rural enterprise will include:

- In general, existing 'footloose' commercial or industrial activities in towns and villages will not be permitted to re-locate to unserved rural areas.
- Horticulture, forestry, tourism, energy production and rural resource based enterprises will be facilitated in the rural areas, subject to proper planning considerations.
- Where established authorised rural based enterprises seek to expand beyond their existing capacity and, in the opinion of the planning authority, the expansion proposed, would seriously affect the rural nature or amenity of the rural areas and surrounding countryside, it will generally be encouraged to locate in serviced zoned lands.
- One-off enterprises in the rural area may be located in the open countryside only where the Council is satisfied that the enterprise is suitable for that location in the first place and that it will comply with the criteria outlined in Table 10.2.
- Commercial / industrial developments in rural areas may be acceptable subject to proper planning considerations where the Council is satisfied that the proposed development requires to be located in the rural area due to its dependence on an existing local resource or source material that is required for the carrying out of the industrial process / commercial activity / service. The local resource or

source of material shall be from a source in close proximity to the location of the proposed development.

Table 10.2 Criteria for Assessment of One-off Enterprises in Rural Areas

Proposals for the development of one-off new small scale enterprises in rural areas outside of designated employment centres will be assessed against the following criteria:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a general guide, development proposals shall be limited to the small scale business development with a floor area circa 200 sq. m. and shall be appropriate in scale to its location,
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The development will enhance the strength of the local rural economy,
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed development shall be located on the site of a redundant farm building / yard or similar agricultural brownfield site,
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a social and economic benefit to be located in a rural area,
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposal will not adversely affect the character and appearance of the landscape,
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The development will not be detrimental to the amenity of nearby properties, and in particular the amenities of nearby residents,
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The existing or planned local road network and other essential infrastructure can accommodate extra demand generated by the proposal,
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposal should be accompanied by a mobility plan catering for employees home to work transportation,
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequate proposals to cater for any waste arising at the facility,
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proper planning and sustainable development,
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposals should conform to other objectives of the County Development Plan.

10.5 Rural Development Policy

10.5.1 Rural Development

It is policy of the Council:

- RRD 1: To support the implementation of the National Rural Development Programme 2007–2013.
- RRD 2: To liaise and co-operate with statutory, local development, sectoral community / voluntary agencies and groups to develop economic, social and cultural benefits for the rural community.
- RRD 3: To support and facilitate the work of Teagasc and other farming / local bodies within the county in the promotion of the rural economy, including agriculture development, rural diversification and in the development of initiatives to support farming, create inclusive rural communities and improve access and services in rural areas.
- RRD 4: To encourage the sustainable and suitable re-use of farm buildings in the county and to ensure that such works, where relevant, have regard to *Re-using Farm Buildings – A Kildare Perspective* produced by Kildare County Council in 2006.
- RRD 5: To require new buildings and structures:
- To be sited as unobtrusively as possible;
 - To be clustered to form a distinct and unified feature in the landscape;
 - To utilise suitable materials and colours; and
 - To utilise native species in screen planting in order to integrate development into the landscape.
- RRD 6: To encourage expansion and employment in local enterprises and industries such as agriculture, horticulture, forestry, peatlands, food, crafts, tourism and energy.

RRD 7: To encourage the development of alternative rural based small scale enterprises. The Council will consider the use, nature and scale of developments when assessing such applications. In addition, the Council will also consider the requirement to locate such developments in rural areas.

RRD 8: To encourage the conservation and promotion of bio-diversity in all rural development activities.

RRD 9: To support the development of renewable energy production including energy crops in rural areas where it is considered appropriate.

RRD 10: To promote the provision of broadband and other communications infrastructure in rural areas of the county.

RRD 11: Apart from rural housing as provided for in Chapter 4, there are other landuses which may be considered in the rural countryside. Where an area is not within an identifiable settlement, and is not otherwise zoned as part of this Plan, or of any of the town development plans, the use of such land shall be deemed to be primarily agricultural.

RRD 12: To support the improvement of existing community and recreational facilities in rural areas subject to compliance with the relevant environmental and planning criteria.

RRD 13: To ensure that applicants comply with all other normal siting and design considerations including the following:

- The ability of a site in an unserved area to accommodate an on-site waste water disposal system in accordance with the County Kildare Groundwater Protection Scheme, and any other relevant documents / legislation as may be introduced during the Plan period.

- The ability of a site in an unserved area to accommodate an appropriate on-site surface water management system in accordance with the policies of the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (2005), in particular those of Sustainable urban Drainage Systems (SuDS).

- The need to comply with the requirements of *The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities* published by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in November 2009.

10.5.2 Agriculture

It is policy of the Council:

AG 1: To support agricultural development and encourage the continuation of agriculture as a contributory means of maintaining population in the rural area.

AG 2: To encourage the development of environmentally sustainable agricultural practices, to ensure that development does not impinge on the visual amenity of the countryside and that watercourses, wildlife habitats and areas of ecological importance are protected from the threat of pollution.

AG 3: To ensure that all agricultural activities comply with legislation on water quality, such as the Phosphorous Regulations, Water Framework Directive and Nitrates Directive.

AG 4: To support agricultural activities which encourage bio-diversity as identified in the *County Biodiversity Plan* (adopted November 2008) and the *National Biodiversity Plan* (2010).

AG 5: To support local employment and training opportunities, particularly where existing farm income is in decline and requires alternative skills and enterprises.

AG 6: To support those who live and work in rural areas and who wish to remain on the land-holding. Favourable consideration will be given to on-farm based diversification, which is complementary to existing agricultural practices, is operated as part of the farm holding and is intended to supplement existing farm income.

Examples of such diversification includes:

- Specialist farming practices e.g. horticulture, equine facilities, poultry, mushroom growing and specialised animal breeding;
- Farm enterprises such as processing, co-ops, farm supply stores and agri-business;
- Production of organic and speciality foods to meet the increase in demand for such products; and
- Conversion of redundant farm buildings of vernacular importance for appropriate owner-run enterprises, such as agri-tourism.

10.5.3 Horticulture

It is the policy of the Council:

- HT 1: To encourage the development of environmentally sustainable horticultural practices, to ensure that development does not impinge on the visual amenity of the countryside and that watercourses, wildlife habitats and areas of ecological importance are protected from the threat of pollution.
- HT 2: To support the horticulture and nursery stock industry as a means of diversifying agriculture and contributing to maintaining population in the rural area.

10.5.4 Equine Industry

It is the policy of the Council:

- EQ 1: To encourage the expansion of the bloodstock industry by protecting the environment and amenity value of rural areas, from encroachment by urban sprawl and incompatible development.
- EQ 2: To support equine related activities (e.g. farriers, bloodstock sales etc.) of an appropriate size and at suitable locations.
- EQ 3: To ensure that equine based developments are located on suitable and viable landholdings and are subject to normal planning, siting and design considerations.
- EQ 4: To protect the Curragh, Punchestown and Naas racecourses from any development that would interfere with their amenity qualities while, at the same time, promoting the enhancement of facilities for racegoers.
- EQ 5: To recognise and support the development of the Irish sport horse industry in the county, including breeding, competing and training.
- EQ 6: To support the relevant equine bodies / organisations in the county in the pursuit of their objective to maintain the position of the equine industry in the world's international markets.
- EQ 7: To support the role of Goff's facility at Kill as a horse sales facility, which plays an important role in the economic and social development of the equine industry at national, regional and county level.



10.5.5 Forestry

It is the policy of the Council:

- FT 1: To encourage the development of a well managed sustainable forestry sector in a manner that maximises its contribution to national economic and social well being and which is compatible with the protection of the environment.
- FT 2: To support the Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in:
- Implementing Sustainable Forest Management (SFM), with a view to ensuring that all timber produced in the county is from sustainably managed forests.
 - Implementing the suite of guidelines published by the Forestry Service to ensure that the environmental aspects of Sustainable Forest Management are achieved.
 - Implementing the guidance outlined in the *National Indicative Forestry Statement (2008)*.
 - Promoting research and development in forestry and forest products.
- FT 3: To increase quality planting and promote the planting of diverse species.
- FT 4: To encourage forestry and forestry related development, as a means of diversifying from traditional farming activity.
- FT 5: To promote forestry development of appropriate scale and character while ensuring that such development does not have a negative impact on the countryside, (including public access/rights of way and recreational facilities) or cause pollution or degradation of wildlife habitats, natural waters or areas of ecological importance.



- FT 6: To encourage the improved management of woodlands and to promote the Native Woodland Scheme under the NDP 2007–2013 which aims to protect and enhance existing native woodlands and to increase the total native woodland cover where appropriate, in forms that respect and enhance local character and local biodiversity.
- FT 7: To ensure that buffer zones or exclusion zones are applied to aquatic zones and sites of archaeological importance respectively as deemed appropriate by the planning authority.
- FT 8: To require the repair of any road damaged due to forestry work, by the forestry company responsible.
- FT 9: To actively partake in the Neighbour Wood Scheme (Dept. Communications, Energy and Natural Resources) and to identify areas at a local level that are suitable for woodland which are accessible and attractive to the local community.
- FT 10: To require all applications for new forestry developments to have regard to the policies and objectives for the landscape character areas of the county outlined in Chapter 14 of the Plan.
- FT 11: To encourage private forestry developers to provide access through their forests for walking routes, mountain bike trails, bridle paths plus other non-noise generating activities as part of an integrated development.

10.5.6 Boglands

It is the policy of the Council:

- BL 1: To ensure that a balanced approach is taken to the development of the county's peat resources and the restoration of cutaway bogs, in order to minimise the negative impact on biodiversity and the archaeological and cultural heritage of the county.
- BL 2: To seek a balance between maximising the peat extraction potential of the county, whilst ensuring protection and conservation of bogland habitats. Limiting extraction to those bogland areas currently under development will help to minimise impacts by localising effects and thus protect the bog landscape character areas within the county.
- BL 3: To take a balanced approach to the re-development of cutaway bogs. Large portions of cutaway bog should be developed as areas for wildlife, biodiversity, conservation and their amenity value, whilst other portions can be utilised for economic uses such as grassland, forestry and wind energy, subject to all planning and environmental considerations being met.
- BL 4: To liaise with Bord na Mona, the Irish Peatland Conservation Council, Coillte, National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, to ensure the sustainable use of cutaway bogland, with due consideration given to their ecological and amenity value.
- BL 5: To seek a Hydrological Report which will also incorporate Flood Risk Assessment in accordance with the Planning Guidelines *The Planning*

System and Flood Risk Management (2009) for significant developments within boglands so as to ensure that the quality of ground or surface water is assessed and mitigation measures identified. This assessment should address the issue of ground and slope stability.

- BL 6: To support the development of the peatlands within the county for appropriate alternative uses, subject to environmental considerations and nature designations.

10.6 Rural Development Objectives

It is an objective of the Council:

- RDO 1: To continue to support rural development within the county as a contributory means of sustaining the rural economy.
- RDO 2: To ensure that all planning applications for one off enterprises in rural areas have regard to the criteria listed at Table 10.2 of the Plan.
- RDO 3: To support rural employment initiatives within the county where environmental impact and trip attraction are minimal and where supported by the necessary physical and communications infrastructure.
- RDO 4: To ensure that all new developments and practices do not undermine rural ecosystems, landscapes and conservation areas and are conducted in a manner consistent with the protection of the local environment and in line with national legislation and relevant guidelines.

10.7 Sand and Gravel Extraction

Aim: *To ensure that adequate supplies of aggregates are available to meet the future needs of the county and region in line with the principles of sustainable development and environmental management.*

Gravel resources are important to the general economy and provide a valuable source of employment in some areas of the county. The Department of the Environment and Local Government Report ‘*Preventing and Recycling Waste – Delivering Change*’ (March 2002) calls for the re-use or recycling of 85% of construction and demolition (C and D) waste by 2013. If achieved, this target, together with other national sustainable development objectives and a levelling off of construction activity, is likely to lead to a decrease in the rate of extraction of aggregates in the future. The nature of the extractive industry is such that the industry is required to be developed where the resource occurs and may give rise to land use and environmental issues that must be considered in the planning process. It is necessary to ensure that aggregates can be sourced without significantly damaging the landscape, environment, groundwater and aquifer sources, road network, heritage and / or residential amenities of the area.

10.7.1 Siting of Extractive Industries

The extractive industry depends on the locational siting of the resource. In County Kildare, these resources are concentrated in the slopes of the Eastern Upland Areas and the central uplands. They can also be found in some parts of the transitional lands to the east and south east of the county and also in the north western lowlands. Upland areas are considered sensitive in landscape terms, due to their elevated and conspicuous nature, particularly on the generally flat topography and open character of Kildare landscapes. The generally upland or elevated location of quarries has the potential for significantly affecting the local landscape by visual intrusion,

especially when the development reaches primary ridgelines. Major ridgelines (i.e. skylines) are visible over a wide area and consequently are vulnerable features because any development on or in the vicinity of skylines has the potential to affect the visual integrity of a wide area.

In some cases, visibility can be partially screened by occurring topography (i.e. the quarry will only be visible on one side of the hill, or screened by undulating lands) and vegetation (i.e. forestry and planting will screen the lower quarry faces). Nevertheless, the visual impact of quarry works is likely to be significant on the local landscape.

10.7.2 Layout and Design of Extractive Industries

In order to minimise visibility from the surrounding countryside overburden (topsoil, subsoil and waste) should be located to enclose and screen the proposed development. This objective must take account of the operation’s reasonable requirement to minimise the length of haulage routes and to avoid double handling of material within the site.

10.7.3 Long Term Vision

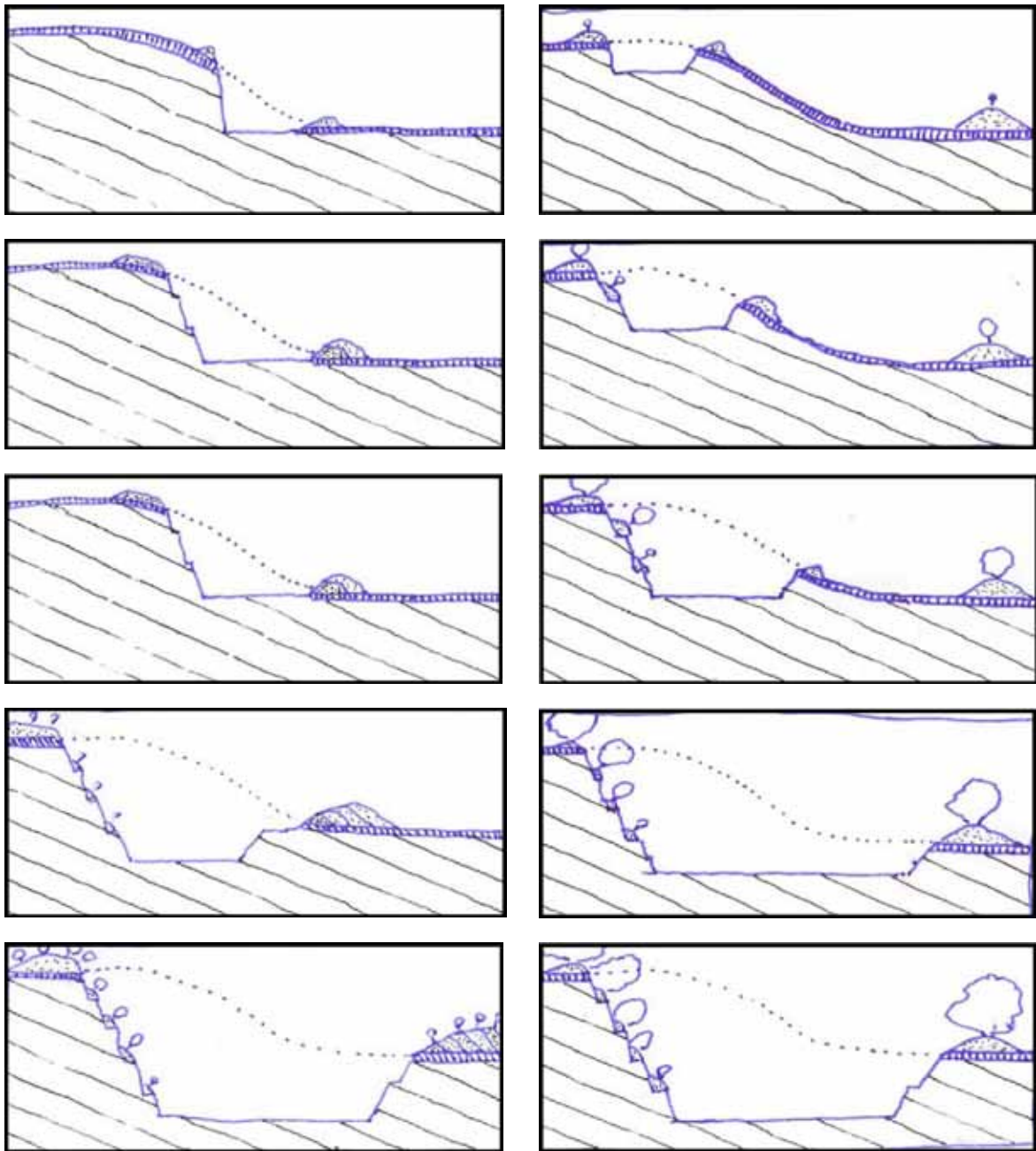
Extractive operations should outline a long term strategic vision with proposals to minimise a wide or long exposed work face, dispersed structures and incongruous spoil heaps. The principal cause of this problem is the tendency to begin working at the toe of the steepest face. A more appropriate alternative is to begin at the upper part of the resource and to gradually work downward (See Fig 10.1). This facilitates continuous restoration, minimises visibility and contributes to a significantly smaller environmental footprint.

Fig 10.1 also illustrates how the adoption of gradual and on-going restoration coupled with “top down” extraction allows extraction to continue with minimal visibility of either the working faces or the equipment. The resultant profile of the quarry illustrates how it will be much more easily assimilated into the form of the existing landscape, especially once planting becomes mature.

Figure 10.1 Rock Quarrying with Gradual Restoration

Scenario 2 (A) contrasts how traditional ‘bottom-up’ approach to extraction which results in the maximum areas of exposed working for the maximum period of time – with the least potential for ongoing restoration.

Scenario 2 (B) illustrates how ‘top down’ extraction allows the exposed vertical surface (‘the working face’) to be partially covered with soil placed on a ‘bench’. This forms a growing medium for trees and shrubs that can begin to establish and mature while the next, lower, layer of the quarry is being developed.



Scenario 2(A)

Scenario 2(B)

10.7.4 Post Closure of Extractive Industry

Rock quarries usually result in steep rock faces and a flooded pit. With reasonable and economic design, these can become valuable local habitats and even recreational amenities. Sand and gravel workings on the other hand can easily be restored to agricultural use. However, post closure uses must have regard to the likely land use context at the time of closure. Furthermore, allowing rehabilitation of quarry faces to take place parallel to extraction operations and providing planting on earth mounds at quarry entrances, significantly reduces visual impacts while allowing for ecological and habitat recovery. Road reinstatement should also be on-going during operations, rather than after the site has been exhausted, in the interests of road and traffic safety.

10.7.5 Registration of Quarries

Section 261 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, introduced a system of once off registration for all quarries (by April 27th 2005), except those for which planning permission was granted in the five years before Section 261 became operative. Section 261 of the Act came into effect on 28th April 2004. The registration system had two purposes, firstly, to give a snapshot of the current use of land for quarrying and sand and gravel extraction and to permit the introduction of new or modified controls on the operation of certain quarries / pits.

Kildare County Council received 67 valid registration applications and has compiled a register of all quarries within the county arising from this process. There are concentrations of Quarry Registrations in the north-west, the east, the mid-east and the south east of the county. A large number of quarries are located close to the Wicklow border at the east and south east of the county.

10.7.6 East Kildare Uplands Area

The East Kildare Uplands are designated as an Area of High Amenity and contain a number of sand and gravel extractive industries.

The East Kildare Uplands area has been reviewed in the context of Section 261 of the Planning and Development Act. A total of 14 pits were listed in the previous County Development Plan 2005–2011 as falling within the East Kildare Uplands Area. Of the 14 pits identified, the following is of note in the context of Section 261:

- Five pits have been registered under the Section 261 process.
- Nine pits have not been registered under Section 261 process – having either received permission for extraction or restoration in the five years prior to Section 261 coming to effect (three no.) or having failed to register, or had their use abandoned or altered to a different type of land use (six no.).

The policies and objectives for extractive industry in this Plan will apply to all existing and proposed quarries / sand and gravel pits in the county, including those in the East Kildare Uplands Area.

10.7.7 Landscape Impacts

In terms of location, Chapter 14 of this Plan in relation to landscape, identifies protected views, scenic routes and amenity areas in the county. In the assessment of planning applications related to the extractive industry, including restoration / rehabilitation of existing pits, the planning authority will have regard to the policies / objectives for the specific landscape character of the area within which the application site is located.

10.7.7.1 Archaeological Assessment

The Archaeological Code of Practice (Code of Practice between the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and the Irish Concrete Federation, June 2009) shall be among the guidelines used in the archaeological assessment of all extractive development applications, with best practice adopted in all cases.

10.8 Extractive Industry Policy

It is the policy of the Council:

- EI 1: To have regard to the *Quarries and Ancillary Activities Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2004)* published by the DoEHLG or as may be amended from time to time.
- EI 2: To continue to regulate the exploitation of natural resources of the county including the extraction of sand, gravel and rock.
- EI 3: To facilitate the sourcing of aggregates for and the operation of the extractive industry in suitable locations, subject to the protection of landscape, environment, road network, heritage, visual quality and amenity of the area.
- EI 4: To ensure that extraction activities address key environmental, amenity, traffic and social impacts and details of rehabilitation. In the assessment of planning applications for new development, intensification of use or diversification of activity, the Council will have regard to the nature of the proposal, the scale of activity proposed, the impact on the adjoining road network, the effect on the environment including important groundwater and aquifer sources, natural drainage patterns and surface water systems and the likely effects that any proposed extractive industry may have on the existing landscape and amenities of the county including public rights of way and walking routes.
- EI 5: To ensure that development for aggregate extraction, processing and associated concrete production does not significantly impact the following:
- Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).
 - Special Protection Areas (SPAs).
 - Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs).
 - Other areas of importance for the conservation of flora and fauna.
- Areas of significant archaeological potential.
 - The vicinity of a recorded monument.
 - Sensitive landscape areas as identified at Chapter 14 of the Development Plan.
 - Scenic views and prospects.
 - Protected Structures.
 - Established rights of way and walking routes.
- EI 6: To consult with the Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI), with regard to any developments likely to have an impact on County Geological Sites listed in the Development Plan (Chapter 12).
- EI 7: To require submission of an Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive where any quarry / sand and gravel extraction is likely to have an impact on a Natura 2000 site (see Chapter 14).
- EI 8: To require relevant planning applications to be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Statement. An Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA), may also be required for sub threshold development to evaluate the existence of any protected species/habitats on site.
- EI 9: To require a detailed landscaping plan to be submitted with all planning applications indicating proposed screening for the operational life of the site. The predominant use of native plant species in the proposed landscaping plan is encouraged.
- EI 10: To require detailed landscaping and quarry restoration plans to be submitted with each application. Habitats and species surveying shall be carried out and shall influence the restoration plan for the site.
- EI 11: To ensure that the full cost of road improvements, including during operations and at time of closure, which are necessary for the quarrying of sand and gravel, shall be borne by the industry itself and that the industry shall also contribute to the recreation and amenity of the county.



10.9 Extractive Industry Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

- EO 1: To support regional policy for the adequate supply of aggregate resources to ensure continued growth of the county and region.
- EO 2: To ensure that the extractive industry minimises and / or mitigates any adverse visual and / or environmental impacts on the built or natural environment through adherence to the EPA publication *Environment Management in the Extractive Industry (Non-scheduled minerals) 2006* and any subsequent revisions and the requirements of the Programme of Measures from the River Basin Management Plans.
- EO 3: To carry out a survey and examination of both existing pit areas and potential sand and gravel deposits in the county, subject to the availability of financial resources. It is intended that this survey will be carried out in conjunction with the Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) and that it will assess the interactions between the development of these resources and future land uses.
- EI 12: To ensure that all existing workings are rehabilitated to suitable land uses and that extraction activities allow for future rehabilitation and proper land use management.
- EI 13: To require, where permission is granted for quarrying / sand and gravel extraction, the submission by the developer, of a bond for the satisfactory completion and restoration of the site.
- EI 14: To consider, in certain circumstances, granting planning permission for quarrying / sand and gravel extraction for a temporary period. Such period to be decided by the planning authority, depending on the merits of the application.
- EI 15: To protect and safeguard the county's natural aggregate resources from inappropriate development, by seeking to prevent incompatible land uses that could be located elsewhere, from being located in the vicinity of the resource, since the extraction of minerals and aggregates is resource based.