

## 5. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ENTERPRISE & TOURISM



### AIM

To provide for the future well-being of the residents of the county and the region by facilitating economic development; to promote the growth of employment opportunities in all sectors including tourism in accordance with the principles of sustainable development; to achieve a reduction in the unsustainable levels of commuting from the county; to provide a greater focus on community building and improving quality of life.

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

Following a period of significant contraction between 2008 and 2014, the Irish economy experienced a return to economic growth in 2015. More encouragingly, this recovery is now evident at a local level through income growth and increased consumer spending.

Kildare is well positioned to benefit from economic recovery, with a relatively young and highly-educated population, an attractive environment and a strategic position within the Greater Dublin Area (GDA).

Kildare is strategically positioned to benefit from local, national and international markets owing to its location proximate to Dublin and the ports and airports of the GDA. There is also an excellent road and rail network through the county, linking Kildare to important centres of economic, sporting, and cultural activity throughout the State.

The county contains a number of employers of significant size including Intel, HP and Maynooth University in north Kildare, Kerry Group in Naas, Pfizer in Newbridge, Bord na Mona in both Newbridge and rural Kildare, the equine industry and the Defence Forces.

The county has a strong network of towns, villages and settlements that provide a diverse range of services including civic uses, retailing, professional services and hospitality and tourism related services.

Kildare also has a strong rural economy with equine, agriculture, energy production and tourism featuring strongly.



This chapter seeks to build on the current economic strengths of the county. The Plan sets out a framework for the spatial development of enterprise and employment that is consistent with and aligned to national, regional and local economic development policies. The policies and objectives seek to support and facilitate economic activity across a range of sectors, in accordance with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development.

## 5.2 REGIONAL CONTEXT

The Government's Action Plan for Jobs 2012 lays the foundations for building on the strengths of each region and developing their full potential for enterprise growth and job creation. A series of Regional Action Plans were prepared on foot of the national plan. The Plan for the Mid East Region (2015-2017) covers the counties of Kildare, Meath and Wicklow. The primary objective of the Regional Action Plan for Jobs is to increase employment in the region by 10-15% by 2020 and to ensure that the unemployment rate is within 1% of the State average.

The Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) provide the spatial strategy to support economic development at a regional level. The economic development strategy presented in the RPGs identifies key areas of enterprise development potential in the GDA. It focuses on enhancing strategically important aspects of the business environment so as to create the conditions for attracting investment by both foreign and indigenous companies, stimulating entrepreneurship and enabling companies to grow and target international markets. It focuses on a multi-dimensional economic role for the region in which the whole of the region can both contribute to and benefit from positive economic outcomes. The GDA economic strategy is based on the following principles:

- (i) Continued development of the Dublin Gateway as an international focus for economic activity.
- (ii) Development of economic clusters centred on strategic economic growth corridors and growth towns.
- (iii) A focus on economic growth along multi-modal growth corridors in the GDA, which connect the economic growth centres within the region both to the Dublin Gateway, to adjoining regions and to other key towns and NSS gateways, benefiting from national investment on these corridors.

## 5.3 COUNTY CONTEXT

In 2012 there were 7,774 active enterprises in Kildare. Fewer than 2% (14 enterprises) of these are large scale employers (more than 250 employees), and 92% (7,160 enterprises) are small scale (10 employees or fewer). The 14 large firms employed 27.5% of the Kildare workforce, while the 7,160 smaller firms employed 31.4% of the workforce. This profile reflects Kildare's success in attracting both foreign direct investment (FDI) by overseas multi-national companies, as well as the activities of a wide range of SMEs and micro-enterprises.

### 5.3.1 Kildare Local Economic and Community Plan, 2016 (LECP)

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 provides a stronger and clearer role for local government in economic and community development and includes a requirement that local authorities prepare Local Economic and Community Plans (LECP).

*"Local government will be the main vehicle of governance and public service at local level, leading economic, social and community development."*

The Kildare LECP 2016 presents a detailed overview of how Kildare is performing at local, regional and national level across a variety of indicators, culminating with a number of high level goals, objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic, local and community development of Kildare.

A key element of the LECP process has been the carrying out of detailed socio-economic analysis of the county by the All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO) in Maynooth University, which identified the following key findings in respect to the economy and employment characteristics of Kildare:

- The population in Kildare has increased by more than 71% in the last 20 years;
- Population density is highest in the north east of the county;
- Kildare's urban population (72%) lives on 5% of the total land area within the county with the remaining rural population (28%) living on the remaining 95%;
- Kildare's labour force was 104,226 persons in 2011 with a participation rate of 66%, the third highest in the State;

- Over 40% of the total workforce living in Kildare work outside the county, mostly in Dublin (73% of all commuters);
- Kildare is a significant employment destination, with 17% of its total jobs undertaken by inbound commuters; and
- Kildare has a well educated population, with 38% having a third level qualification, the fifth highest proportion in the State.

The LECP is complementary to the Core Strategy of the Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023 and the strategies and objectives of this chapter will provide the framework to support the delivery of the LECP.

It will be an action of the Council to seek to develop the LECP socio-economic baseline data into a Kildare Data Hub, to serve as an online socio-economic profile and information tool for the county.

### 5.3.2 Economic Development Strategy

The economic development strategy for the County is derived from the RPGs and the Core Strategy. Economic development will be focused into existing settlements where services are available and where economic diversification and networking can be fostered. The scale of future development in each settlement will have regard to a settlement's position within the overall settlement hierarchy and its capacity to facilitate development. The focus is on developing strategic economic growth centres that will act as engines for economic growth throughout the County.

In 2011 Kildare had a population of 210,312 persons. The labour force was 104,226 persons and of these, 85,587 persons were in employment. 60% of residents in employment worked in the county and over 40% commuted out of the county. There was a total of 55,918 jobs in the county.<sup>1</sup>

The labour force will continue to increase and it will be important to promote employment-generating activities that reflect the education and skills base of the County's population.

<sup>1</sup> Census 2011

**Table 5.1**  
Employment Requirements

Kildare	2006	2011	2023
Population	186,335	210,312	253,600*
Labour Force	97,719	104,226	126,800*
Jobs Ratio	0.62	0.54	0.70
No. Jobs	60,781	55,918	88,760*

Source: CSO

\* Denotes an estimate

The jobs ratio provides a good indicator of the balance that exists between the location of the labour force and the location of jobs. It is often used as an indicator to measure the sustainability of settlements, and it is suggested that it should not fall below 0.70. It is estimated that the labour force of Kildare could increase to as much as 126,800 persons by 2023 (50% of population) and that almost 33,000 new jobs will be required between 2011 and 2023 to achieve a jobs ratio of 0.70 (Refer to Table 5.1).



<sup>2</sup> This figure represents what is available for employment uses in committed/uncommitted lands which have not been developed to date. Select brownfield/vacant sites have also been included in this figure.

The Economic Development Strategy of this Plan seeks to foster employment creation and maximise the jobs potential in growth towns and throughout the county, to achieve a greater alignment between population and employment opportunities.

It is important to ensure that there is an adequate supply of zoned land for employment purposes at appropriate locations to accommodate employment growth. There is a total of 802 hectares<sup>2</sup> of undeveloped land available for employment purposes in the large Growth Towns I and II and Moderate Sustainable Growth Towns. This offers significant potential for future economic development within these key centres.

Adequate infrastructure is essential to facilitate future economic development in the county and Kildare County Council will continue to work with infrastructure providers to secure adequate water services, effective public transport, energy, telecommunications, waste management and education facilities to support employment development.

Quality of life considerations are a key component for investment and this Plan will seek to protect the attributes that make Kildare attractive. Indicators such as commuting times, availability of key services and recreation opportunities and the quality of the built and natural environment are important.

This Plan seeks to support and facilitate the economic development of the county across a range of sectors whilst acknowledging in particular the growing importance of the knowledge economy, and the further development of the important primary and secondary economic growth towns.

The following paragraphs together with Table 5.2 outline the hierarchy of employment centres, and the sectoral strengths for each settlement:

### Primary Economic Growth Towns

Naas, Maynooth and Leixlip (including Collinstown) are identified as primary economic growth towns to be prioritised for local and regional enterprise. Critical mass is a core objective, supported by density levels which enable competitiveness and sustainability and create opportunities for economies of scale to justify strategic infrastructure provision. A total of 334 hectares of land is zoned and available for employment purposes in these centres. There is a shortfall of zoned employment lands in the three northern towns of Maynooth, Celbridge and Leixlip (outside of Intel, Hewlett Packard and Maynooth

University lands) and in Naas for additional foreign direct investment or smaller scale enterprises. This will need to be addressed in the forthcoming Local Area Plans (LAPs).

### Economic Clusters

Economic clusters are also promoted as part of the overall economic strategy. In this regard, Naas and Newbridge are clustered with Kilcullen, while Maynooth and Leixlip are clustered with Celbridge and Kilcock. Clusters are to be developed in a mutually dependent way, so that the amenities and economies of the whole cluster are greater than the sum of the individual parts. A total of 577 hectares of land is available for employment purposes in these centres.

### Secondary Economic Growth Towns

Athy and Kildare are identified as secondary economic growth towns, providing an important and complementary role in developing economic growth and sectoral interests in tandem with the primary economic growth towns. Athy has close linkages and interactions with the town of Carlow in the South East Region and is within the European Commission's Regional State Aid area 2014-2020. A total of 198 hectares of land is zoned for employment purposes in Athy and Kildare.



### Hinterland Towns

Monasterevin has been identified as a district employment centre to provide employment for its urban area as well as a large rural hinterland. A total of 36 hectares of land is zoned and available for employment purposes in Monasterevin.

### Small Towns & Villages

In the small towns of Clane, Prosperous, Rathangan, Sallins, Athgarvan, Castledermot, Derrinturn and Kill together with the villages of Johnstown, Straffan, Ballymore Eustace, Allenwood, Johnstownbridge, Coill Dubh/Coolearagh, Kilmeague, Caragh, Kildangan, Suncroft, Ballitore, Timolin, Moone, Crookstown, the Council will seek to encourage local employment opportunities that assist in reducing long distance commuting patterns and support sustainable communities.

### Rural Areas

In the rural areas there are rural settlements and rural nodes which provide opportunities for employment-generating uses including green energy projects, resource recovery, food production, forestry and agri-business, bloodstock, horticulture, rural based tourism and resource based enterprises.

**Table 5.2**  
Economic Development Hierarchy

Hierarchy of Employment Centres			Sectoral Strengths
Primary Economic Growth Towns / Clusters	<p><u>Metropolitan Area</u> Maynooth, Leixlip (including Collinstown) Both supported by Celbridge and Kilcock.</p> <p><u>Hinterland Area</u> Naas, Newbridge Supported by Kilcullen</p>	Identified for regional population growth and serve a pivotal role in employment and provision of goods and services.	<p>Knowledge based economy focusing on high-tech/biotechnology, research and development, ICT and manufacturing.</p> <p>High-tech manufacturing and research, ICT, food production, public administration, wholesale and retail trade, banking, tourism and bloodstock.</p>
Secondary Economic Growth Towns	Athy Kildare	Important supporting and complementary role in developing regional economic growth in tandem with the primary economic growth towns and large hinterland areas.	<p>Development of high value added manufacturing sectors, logistics and internationally traded sectors in tandem with IDA support, around transport corridors and routes such as rail stations, is advocated, together with continued investment in education and skills development.</p> <p>Kildare town also has the opportunity to develop and promote its economic base through capitalising as an important tourism destination.</p>
District Employment Centres	Monasterevin	Main town providing employment needs of the urban area as well as a large rural hinterland.	Innovation in indigenous enterprise (both high-tech and traditional) and business start-ups.
Local Employment Centres	<p><u>Small Towns</u> Clane Prosperous Rathangan Sallins Athgarvan Castledermot Derrinturn Kill</p> <p><u>Villages</u> Johnstown Straffan Ballymore Eustace Allenwood Johnstownbridge Coill Dubh/ Coolearagh Kilmeague Caragh Kildangan Suncroft Robertstown Ballitore, Timolin Moone Crookstown</p>	Small towns and key villages providing employment needs for local hinterlands.	Local investment, generally small scale industry.
Rural Employment Areas	Rural Settlements, Rural Nodes and Rural Countryside.	Rural employment in the countryside.	Agriculture, horticulture, forestry, tourism, energy production, rural resource-based enterprises.

### 5-3-3 Land-Use and Economic Development

#### Policies: Economic Development Strategy

It is the policy of the Council to:

- ECD 1** Facilitate and support the growth of the economy in Kildare and the Greater Dublin Area in a sustainable manner, and in accordance with the RPGs economic strategy (or the forthcoming Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy).
- ECD 2** Support and facilitate the economic development of the county in accordance with the economic development strategy of the County Development Plan, across a range of sectors. There will be a general presumption against development that would prejudice the achievement of the Economic Development Strategy.
- ECD 3** Ensure that sufficient land is zoned for economic activity through the development plan and Local Area Plans, in accordance with the Regional Planning Guidelines and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy. Such land will normally be protected from inappropriate development that would prejudice its long term development for employment and economic activity.
- ECD 4** Seek, in so far as is possible, to locate people intensive employment development close to the strategic public transport network for the region that is outlined in the Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035 and other Regional Plans.
- ECD 5**
- (i) Promote and facilitate regional scale employment development as a priority in the Primary Economic Growth Centres of Maynooth and Leixlip/ Collinstown supported by Celbridge and Kilcock in the Metropolitan area; and Naas/Newbridge in the Hinterland area supported by Kilcullen and the Secondary Economic Growth Towns of Athy and Kildare.
  - (ii) Recognise the supporting role of economic clusters (Celbridge and Kilcock to Maynooth and Leixlip, and Kilcullen to Naas and Newbridge) in the delivery of critical mass to deliver employment opportunities on a regional scale.

- (iii) To promote the development of the Moderate Sustainable Growth town of Monasterevin as a district employment centre.
- (iv) To promote small towns and villages as local employment centres where investment can be focused on creating additional employment opportunities that will sustain a local rural hinterland.
- (v) To promote rural economic development by adopting a policy framework that recognises the need to promote the long-term sustainable social and environmental development of rural areas, encourages economic diversification and facilitates the growth of rural enterprises.

- ECD 6** Support and facilitate the development of an environment that fosters innovation, enterprise and entrepreneurship.
- ECD 7** Support and promote proposals for SME business development in centres where existing infrastructural facilities are available or where they can be provided with services and good communications.
- ECD 8** Support start-up businesses and small scale industrial enterprises, particularly those that have a creative and innovative dimension.
- ECD 9** Encourage and facilitate small indigenous industries at appropriate locations, in recognition of their increasing importance in providing local employment and helping to stimulate economic activity within small communities.
- ECD 10** Co-operate with local and national development agencies to maximise job creation opportunities and to engage with existing and future large-scale employers in order to maximise job opportunities in the county.
- ECD 11** Encourage the provision of live-work units as part of mixed-use developments in appropriate locations (particularly at ground floor level) to provide accommodation for the creative sectors and small businesses and to facilitate home-working. Such development should be of suitable design so as to protect the amenity of adjacent residents.

- ECD 12** Facilitate the development of agriculture, bloodstock, horticultural and rural related enterprises in the county.
- ECD 13** Facilitate home-working and innovative forms of working which reduce the need to travel.
- ECD 14** Encourage mixed-use settlement forms and sustainable centres, in which employment and residency are located in close proximity to each other and strategic multi-modal transport corridors, and to reduce long distance commuter trends and congestion.
- ECD 15** Continue to develop, encourage and create an environment for innovation, enterprise and entrepreneurship within the county.
- ECD 16** Ensure a high quality living environment in Kildare which will help to retain the county's indigenous skilled population and to attract additional high skilled labour into the county.
- ECD 17** Identify and promote a range of locations within the county for different types of enterprise activity including international business and technology parks, small and medium enterprises (SME) and micro enterprise centres.
- ECD 18** Support the use of town centre locations for new service focused enterprises.
- ECD 19** Ensure that zoning for employment uses will be carried out in a manner which protects investment in the national road network, in accordance with Chapter 2 of the DECLG guidelines on 'Spatial Planning and National Roads'.
- ECD 20** Seek to ensure that any significant future employment developments in the vicinity of the strategic road network will be accompanied by a mobility management plan that seeks to provide for an appropriate level of non car based transport options, utilising the strategic public transport network.

### Objectives: Economic Development Strategy

It is an objective of the Council to:

- EO 1** Promote initiatives with relevant agencies, such as Solas and KWETB, to expand training and education services that will support business skills development in the county.

- EO 2** Work with Irish Water, to support the provision of water, wastewater treatment and waste management facilities to accommodate the future economic growth of the county and to seek to reserve capacity in water services infrastructure for employment generating uses.
- EO 3** Continue to promote Kildare as a strategically located economic and employment hub within the Greater Dublin Area.
- EO 4** Continue to develop North Kildare as a digital economy hub and leadership "hot spot" by:
- Building on an existing critical mass in the IT and digital sector and attracting further significant investment to further develop the sector to its maximum potential.
  - Developing Collinstown as an employment hub in northeast Kildare and ensuring that sufficient lands are zoned for enterprise and employment uses in this Plan and/or in Local Area Plans.
  - Capitalising on the other assets and resources of North Kildare, i.e. quality of life, education and skill set of its workforce.
  - Mobilising support for, and active involvement in, efforts to pursue these objectives on the part of leaders in the ICT and Education/Research sectors, and the economic development agencies by establishing a network or forum.
  - Promoting innovation and facilitating the development of advanced technologies across enterprises generally.
  - Promoting linkage between the ICT and Research sectors, and other relevant sectors and enterprises, to achieve synergy between these groups.
  - Availing of funding opportunities under all relevant programmes, particularly by maximising the potential to combine opportunities in a complementary manner that will better support relevant projects and initiatives.

- EO 5** Work closely with local, regional and national enterprise authorities, notably IDA and Enterprise Ireland, and establish a regular joint meeting on a six monthly basis to co-ordinate activities and supports, so as to maximise resources and avoid duplication.
- EO 6** Facilitate the development of, and upgrade to, the broadband and fibre network for the county.
- EO 7** Integrate relevant actions from the Mid Eastern Economic Development Action Plan (2013) into any economic development strategy for the county, including the forthcoming Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midlands Region.
- EO 8** Carry out an audit of business/enterprise/ industrial parks in Kildare to identify the existing range of facilities, as well as infrastructural and service deficits, and so plan for current and future needs.
- EO 9** Acquire suitable land (subject to the availability of funding), including where appropriate, disused sites in State ownership, for creative and innovative entrepreneurial initiatives and the provision of clustered incubator units.
- EO 10** Support the further development of Maynooth University as a leading third level research and educational facility, and work with Maynooth University and other third level institutes (e.g. Tallaght and Carlow IT) to develop and improve linkages between the third level sector and relevant employment providers in the surrounding sub region and the county in general.
- EO 11** Work in conjunction with Maynooth University and other third level education institutions, in the creation and fostering of enterprise, research and development.
- EO 12** Continue to work with key state agencies and other stakeholders to seek opportunities for employment creation in the county.
- EO 13** Support initiatives targeting unemployed people to access training, education and re-skilling that fits with business and employer needs.
- EO 14** Support the use of town centre locations for new service focused enterprises.

- EO 15** Support the development of the microbrewery industry in appropriate industrial areas and in town or village centre locations where it is directly associated with the sale of the product for consumption on or off the premises, subject to normal safeguards and the protection of the amenity of the area.
- EO 16** Carry out a strategic assessment of employment lands in the county to inform the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, and in particular to assess the need for new employment sites in the economic growth centres of County Kildare.

### 5.4 ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

Enterprise development is the term used to describe a broad range of economic activity that produces a range of goods and services. It also includes 'office-based industry' producing an end product or service such as call centres, telephone or web-based services.

Enterprise development uses should generally be provided in enterprise locations such as business or technology parks, or at town centre locations. It is important to ensure that there is adequate protection of the most suitable land for expansion in this sector with particular reference to the employment hierarchy. Appropriately zoned land will be identified in the relevant Local Area Plans/Development Plans so that opportunities can be exploited as they arise and a range of choice provided to the investor.

It is necessary to ensure that sufficient land is zoned for enterprise development, particularly in the primary economic growth towns/clusters in north Kildare (Maynooth and Leixlip (including Collinstown) with Kilcock and Celbridge in a supporting role), in central Kildare (Naas, Newbridge and Kilcullen), and in the secondary economic growth towns of Athy and Kildare. It is noted that strategic land banks have been zoned in the primary economic growth centre of Naas at the Northwest Quadrant/Millennium Park and in Leixlip at Collinstown. There is also a significant quantum of land (72 Ha) zoned for Research and Technology north and west of Maynooth University to provide for local and regional economic growth. Athy and Kildare, as secondary economic growth centres, have sufficient lands zoned to accommodate further employment opportunities.

## Objectives: Enterprise Development

It is an objective of the Council to:

- EO 17** Seek to ensure that the Councils planning and other functions support economic development, including business start-up companies, so as to maximise their business potential, and to promote a best practice enterprise culture that makes it easier to do business in Kildare.
- EO 18** Provide supports, guidance and solutions that equip entrepreneurs, owners and managers with the skills to identify and exploit business opportunities, and compete successfully within a competitive business environment.
- EO 19** Serve as a champion and advocate for the establishment of a best practice enterprise culture among start-ups, micro and small businesses, and promote enterprise and self-employment as a viable career option among the wider population, and particularly among school and college leavers.

## 5.5 PREVENTION OF MAJOR ACCIDENTS

- Two firms in Kildare fall within the terms of the SEVESO III Directive (2012/18/EU). The Directive seeks to prevent major industrial accidents that involve dangerous substances and to limit the consequences of accidents on people, property and the environment. In accordance with Section 10(2) (k) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), this Plan seeks to ensure that:
- Proposals for new industries at risk of causing major accidents;
- Proposals for the expansion of existing industries designated under the directive; and
- Other developments proposed near to existing SEVESO III industries;

take account of the need to prevent major accidents involving hazardous substances and safeguard the public, property and the environment.

The industries that are currently covered are outlined in Table 5.3. The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) has been designated as the central competent authority for the enforcement of the SEVESO III Directive and has established generic consultation distances for these facilities.

**Table 5.3**  
Industries affected by the Seveso III Directive

Establishment	Address
Irish Industrial Explosives	Clonagh, Enfield
Intel Ireland Ltd	Industrial Park, Collinstown, Leixlip

It is also noted that Johnston Logistics in South Dublin located in Rathcoole, is also a designated SEVESO site.

## Policies: Major Accidents

It is the policy of the Council to:

- ECD 21** Comply with the SEVESO III Directive, to reduce the risk of accidents and to limit the consequences of major industrial accidents by, where appropriate, taking into account the advice of the Health and Safety Authority and the Fire Authority where proposals for new developments are considered.
- ECD 22** Have regard to the following in the preparation of spatial plans and in assessing planning applications for new development, or the expansion of existing development involving hazardous substances:
  - The Major Accidents Directive (SEVESO III, 2012/18/EU).
  - Potential adverse impacts on public health and safety.
  - HSA Technical advice.
  - The need to maintain appropriate safe distances between residential areas, areas of public use and areas of natural sensitivity.
  - The need to minimise risk to strategic infrastructure.
  - The specialist advice of the Fire Authority.

## 5.6 RETAIL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The retail strategy for the county is set out in Chapter 9 and seeks to direct retail growth in accordance with a designated retail hierarchy and outline key considerations for the distribution of floorspace at each appropriate level.

Like the commercial sector, the retailing sector contributes significantly to employment and provides access to goods and services. It is important to ensure that this sector is allowed to expand with a choice of locations either in town centres or on appropriate sites elsewhere as outlined in Chapter 9, while at all times having regard to protecting the primacy of core town centre sites. In general, where a proposal involves the provision of goods or services to a significant number of visiting members of the public, it will clearly be appropriate for it to be located within a town centre.

## 5.7 REGENERATION

The Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 aims to incentivise urban regeneration and facilitate increased activity in the housing construction sector. Under the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015, the Planning Authority is required to identify vacant sites that fall within the definition set by the Act, maintain a register of vacant sites and apply a levy in respect of such sites. The sustainable development of vacant sites in Kildare will be promoted through the targeted application of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act, 2015 (Vacant Site Levy) in towns that are the subject of a statutory Local Area Plan.

In order to enhance the appearance and socio economic performance of the towns, villages and settlements in the county, Kildare County Council will proactively engage with the members of each Municipal District in devising and delivering plans and projects for regeneration. Urban Renewal Plans shall be informed by a Town Centre Health Check and shall incorporate a public realm enhancement plan. Funding at both national and EU Level should be targeted to empower local communities to make a difference at a local level.

The Council has established the Shop Front/Town Centre Improvement Grant Scheme to financially assist and support independent business owners to improve the appearance of their shop fronts/commercial properties. The scheme will operate in 2016. This funding is being provided in recognition of the significant impact that a building's facade has on our town centres.

## Objectives: Regeneration

It is an objective of the Council to:

- EO 20** Identify and implement flagship projects in conjunction with each Municipal District for urban renewal in the centres of towns and villages. These will seek to strengthen the economic and social fabric of these towns/villages and increase their capacity to support the economic and social well-being of their rural hinterland.
- EO 21** Address derelict sites in towns and villages by invoking the powers of the Derelict Sites Act.
- EO 22** Promote the sustainable development of vacant residential and regeneration sites in towns that are the subject of a statutory Local Area Plan, through the application of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015, Vacant Site Levy, on lands zoned for Town Centre, Regeneration and Residential uses.
- EO 23** Progress involvement in the EU funded, Urbact III Project "City Centre Doctor" and strengthen partnership with other European cities so as to inform future development strategies for retail innovation in Naas town centre. This project will be assessed as a pilot project with a view to adopting a similar approach in other towns in the county, as appropriate.
- EO 24** Manage and deliver the Shop Front/Town Centre Improvement Grant Scheme to financially assist and support independent business owners to improve the appearance of their shop fronts/commercial properties.
- EO 25** Establish a programme to work with property owners and the community to improve facades and streetscapes in towns and villages in Kildare.

## 5.8 RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The maintenance of sustainable rural communities will require a parallel programme of economic development measures in order to support continuing employment and/or self-employment in those communities. These supports could include skills development or skills renewal working through agencies such as Kildare LEO and KWETB. To an increasing extent these interventions, if they are to be effective, must be innovative in terms of programme content, design and delivery. They must also be contemporary in terms of their fit with the needs of the modern economy, and they cannot simply be a rehash of interventions delivered over the past two or three decades.

Another support intervention required to develop the rural economy must be the availability of high-speed fast broadband to all homes and small businesses across the county. Recent research indicates that such internet connectivity is currently available to only 61% of Kildare's rural population.

In terms of a renewed policy focus on community and economic development in rural areas, further initiatives could be taken at sectoral level to explore employment opportunities in sectors that have a natural fit with rural areas. This could include business start-ups and job creation in sectors such as agri-business, renewable energy, rural tourism, and rural transport.

One of the most fundamental challenges facing rural economies is the impact of restructuring in agriculture and traditional industry, and the associated need for diversification and employment creation in the non-farm rural economy. In conjunction with facilitating innovative enterprise that is compatible with rural locations, key potential employment areas are outlined in the remainder of this chapter with further detail (including policies and objectives on each area) provided in Chapter 10.



## 5.9 AGRICULTURE

The changing nature and composition of Ireland's economy will impinge directly upon the economic viability of the agricultural sector. In terms of employment, some 4% of the labour force of County Kildare is engaged in the "farming, fishing and forestry" occupational group.

Another feature of the changing employment patterns in the sector is the growing number of part-time farmers. Despite the decline in fulltime agricultural employment, it is recognised that the agricultural industry is important to the Kildare economy and plays a major role in preserving and improving the natural environment. A total of 3,166 persons in County Kildare were engaged in 'farming, fishing and forestry' as their primary employment (Census of Population 2011). Important areas for future development are the agri-food and horticulture sectors, both of which represent higher value-added activity than traditional agricultural enterprises.

There is a need to recognise the economic value of agriculture and to protect productive agricultural land from inappropriate industrial, commercial or residential development.

### Objective: Agriculture

It is an objective of the Council to:

- EO 26** Promote the 'Smart Farming' initiative to farmers across Kildare to inform them of environmental sustainability and resource management so as to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> production on farms.

<sup>3</sup> [www.directoryoftheturf.com](http://www.directoryoftheturf.com)

## 5.10 ENERGY PRODUCTION AND THE GREEN ECONOMY

Living more sustainably is essential if future generations in Kildare are to enjoy an environment equal to or better than the one we experience today. Awareness about sustainable practices is a critical first step in supporting a sustainable county.

There is a considerable amount of policy direction from government in this area. Ireland's third National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (NEEAP 3) was published in 2014. The plan notes that "Ireland has maintained its commitment to a 20% energy savings target in 2020 and to achieving a 33% reduction in public sector energy use. These remain the central pillars of our national energy efficiency policy".

In support of this, the Green Economy Progress Report (2013) recognises that the 'Green Economy' is one of the most dynamic and rapidly growing markets in the world, with green goods and services predicted to grow globally at an average growth rate of nearly 4% per annum. Underlining this point, a recent report by the Irish business sector, *Unlocking Opportunity: The Business Case for Climate Action in Ireland* (Sept 2014) indicated that up to 90,000 new jobs could be created through climate action undertaken by Irish business and Government.

It is a priority of this Plan to support and capitalise on the employment and enterprise potential of the green economy. The plan also aims to support the development of a secure and affordable energy supply and renewable and efficient energy infrastructure (including buildings for business, public sector and the community) to improve competitiveness, security and reduce costs.

### Policy: Energy Production and the Green Economy

It is the policy of the Council to:

**ECD 23** Facilitate and encourage the development of the alternative energy sector and to work with relevant agencies to support the development of alternative forms of energy where such developments are in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

### Objectives: Energy Production and the Green Economy

It is an objective of the Council to:

- EO 27** Work with Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) to:
- Undertake energy master planning and compile a sustainable energy action plan and heat map for the county.
  - Develop a Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategy (LARES) incorporating EU guidelines and training.
  - Promote the SEAI publication "Passive Homes - Guidelines for the Design and Construction of Passive House Dwellings in Ireland".
- EO 28** Improve the efficiency of the residential housing stock in the county by promoting the take up of:
- The Energy Efficiency Insulation (Phase 1) scheme and any future programmes for retrofit.
  - The Better Energy Home Grants.

**EO 29** Support and promote the operations of Kildare County Council and public sector buildings as exemplars of energy efficient buildings, smart energy management and green procurement.

**EO 30** Investigate the establishment of an Energy Agency/Not for Profit Organisation for County Kildare and other adjacent counties e.g. Meath and Wicklow, to enable EU and Irish funding and financing to be obtained for the development of a sustainable economy and green infrastructure.

**EO 31** Explore the formation of a best practice learning network between Kildare County Council and the FDI sector in the county, many of which are leaders in sustainability.

**EO 32** Work with relevant stakeholders to understand the potential of rural Kildare to deliver services and employment to meet the county's urban demands (e.g. energy, food, natural resources) in line with a local development strategy.

**EO 33** Actively work with the LEO, EPA, SEAI, local and national business and social enterprise partners to support entrepreneurship and investment in innovation, technology and services for the development of a green economy in key sectors.

## 5.11 EQUINE

It is estimated that 5,000 people are directly employed in the equine industry within the county, with a further c. 10,000 people in associated industries and services. There are 104 stud farms in the county. Race courses at Punchestown, Naas and The Curragh, the State owned National Stud Farm, Kill International Equestrian Centre, and Goff's Equine Auction Centre are important economic contributors to the county. There are considerable opportunities to optimise these existing resources in order to increase employment and to further develop equine tourism and promote Kildare as a location for national and international equine events. There is also scope to further diversify the sports related horse industry which, given the proximity to Dublin, could be integrated with show jumping, eventing and general equine related leisure activities.

### Policies: Equine

It is the policy of the Council to:

- ECD 24** Actively promote and support the equine industry as an economic driver for Kildare.
- ECD 25** Support the redevelopment and upgrading of the Curragh, Punchestown and Naas racecourses and their associated facilities.

## 5.12 RURAL ENTERPRISE

This Plan supports innovation in indigenous industry (both high tech and traditional) and will encourage business start-ups in rural employment centres (i.e. villages/settlements). It is acknowledged that certain kinds of rural enterprises, especially those that involve natural resources and serve rural communities at an appropriate scale, have a role to play in rural development. Where appropriate locations are available, and subject to proper planning considerations including adequate infrastructure, these activities can be located in the rural area or where existing employment hubs exist.

### Policies: Rural Enterprise

It is the policy of the Council to:

- ECD 26** Support the development of indigenous industry and business start-ups in rural employment centres (villages and settlements) in Kildare, subject to compliance with siting, design and environmental considerations.
- ECD 27** Support and facilitate sustainable agriculture, agri-food, horticulture, forestry, renewable energy and other rural enterprises at suitable locations in the county.

### Objectives: Rural Enterprise

It is an objective of the Council to:

- EO 34** Commence implementation of the Athy Regeneration Strategy as a Rural Economic Development Zone (REDZ).
- EO 35** Identify other potential REDZ zones across the county and assist them to prepare for future funding opportunities.
- EO 36** Commence implementation of the new LEADER Rural Development Strategy for the county.
- EO 37** Support a programme of Agri-Innovation/Agri-Tech, Agri-Green, Food Innovation, and Niche Food for consumers.





## 5.13 TOURISM

Tourism and recreation make a positive contribution to the economic and social wellbeing of the county. Kildare's close proximity to Dublin offers significant opportunities to expand the existing tourism offer and brand for the county. With Dublin being the sixth most popular city region in Europe for city breaks, Kildare's location, its rich built and natural heritage along with its horse racing and golfing attractions provide opportunities to attract spin-off tourism from the city region and neighbouring counties, including Wicklow.

Kildare's tourist attractions are therefore important assets for the development of the county and fundamental to the enjoyment by both visitors and residents. The key focus for the South East Fáilte Ireland region (in which Kildare is located) will be the further development and promotion of the local culture and heritage product.

There is strong potential for eco-tourism within the county. Eco-tourism unites conservation, communities and sustainable travel. It promotes enhanced awareness and positive appreciation of local resources, traditions and ways of life and generates opportunities to optimise the use of amenities and share benefits throughout the area. Activities and attractions based on local amenities and natural heritage, as set out below, contribute to the overall eco-tourism product and play an important role in supporting and diversifying the economy of rural communities.

## 5.14 THE COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND ITS ROLE IN TOURISM AND RECREATION

From a land use perspective the County Development Plan has an important role to play in the development of this key economic industry, with the overall aim of maintaining and facilitating the expansion of the tourism product within the county. In this regard the County Development Plan can influence the tourism product provided within the county by:

- Facilitating the expansion of the existing tourism product within the county;
- Identifying strategic sites capable of accommodating new tourism ventures while also ensuring the preservation of the natural landscape of the area;
- Ensuring the effective management and enhancement of the appearance of urban and rural areas through appropriate development;
- Setting out specific criteria for towns and villages in order to enhance the public realm and create more attractive places to visit; and
- Facilitating the development of alternative products such as eco-tourism, heritage tourism, craft and artisan studios and spaces.

## 5.15 TOURIST ATTRACTIONS IN KILDARE

Tourism is an important sector of Kildare's economy and it has grown substantially over the last number of years. Because of its proximity to the Dublin tourism hub, the tourism sector requires a particular strategic approach for success. This includes an emphasis on boutique and special character hotels offering an 'accommodation plus' product (e.g. leisure, recreation, outdoor pursuits, heritage and selected sports). Kildare currently has a varied tourism portfolio with a position of excellence in heritage, golf, equine and horse racing. Whether operating individually, within clusters, or along touring routes, these facilities and activities must be developed and marketed as attractive day visits or touring options that appeal to both domestic and international visitors.

In the context of tourism, the natural environment, landscape, built heritage and attractive towns and villages play a key role. Significant natural attractions include the Curragh plains, the bogs to the west, the rolling hills of the eastern uplands, the waterways of the River Liffey, the River Barrow and the Grand and Royal Canals. The rich architectural and archaeological heritage of the county is also acknowledged with many renowned structures and houses including Castletown House, Carton House, the Wonderful Barn, Moone High Cross and Castledermot Round Tower.

Sport activity in the county, particularly equine and golf play an important role in the local economy. In recent years tourism has included golf, angling and horse racing, and these activities have excellent potential for expansion and diversification. Both the Curragh and Punchestown racecourses hold festivals that attract international publicity and international tourists. Key golf clubs include the K Club which hosted the 2006 Ryder Cup, Carton and Palmerstown. It is important to protect and enhance the qualities of such areas so that they can continue to contribute to the growth in tourism visitors into the county as a whole.

There are a number of areas of strategic tourism potential in the county. These are outlined on Map 5.1. Concentrations of tourist attractions are located within the cluster around Kildare Town including; St Brigid's Cathedral and Round Tower, the Irish National Stud, Japanese Gardens, St Fiachra's Garden, Kildare Town Heritage Centre and Kildare Outlet Village. There is also a wide range of tourist attractions in the North Kildare Area including, Castletown House and Demesne, Carton House, Maynooth Castle, Conolly's Folly, Leixlip Castle and St Patrick's College Maynooth.

These areas have a sustainable and competitive tourism product and have the potential for future tourism growth based on a supply of resources and features around which the tourism product can be built. The relationship between tourism/recreation and the environment must be managed in a way that continues to support local communities and remains viable in the long term.



## 5.16 TOURISM AND KILDARE'S ECONOMY

Kildare is a major visitor destination within the eastern region. Visitors numbers and expenditure in the Mid East Region in 2014 reveal that of the 781,000 overseas visitors which visited the region, 183,000 (c.23%) visited Kildare. Overseas visitor revenue from tourism generated €291m in the Mid East region in 2014, with Kildare accounting for €70million (c.24%) of this figure. Notwithstanding the decline in tourism revenue in the region in recent years, numbers are recovering and Kildare holds a strong position from which to further develop, promote and expand the tourism industry within the county.

In recognition of this, Fáilte Ireland alongside Kildare and Wicklow Tourism prepared the “Kildare – Wicklow Destination Development Strategy”. This strategy sets out a number of strategic goals and objectives aimed at promoting linkages for tourism between the two counties and thus increasing the visitor numbers within each county.

### Policies: Tourism

It is the policy of the Council to:

- ECD 28** Promote, protect, improve, encourage and facilitate the development of tourism throughout the county as an important contributor to job creation in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
- ECD 29** Direct tourism based development where appropriate, into existing settlements where there is adequate infrastructure to service activity and where it can contribute to the maintenance of essential services.
- ECD 30** Maintain a clean and attractive environment, to protect tourism amenities within the county from insensitive or inappropriate development, particularly any development that threatens the tourism resources and tourism employment in the county.
- ECD 31** Promote the sustainable development of the tourism sector in appropriate locations throughout the county, acknowledging that Ireland’s largest tourist market (i.e. Dublin) is highly accessible through the existing transport system.
- ECD 32** Support the development of new tourist facilities or upgrading/ extension of existing tourist facilities at tourist sites in accordance with proper planning and sustainable development principles. These facilities should avail of shared infrastructure and services where possible.
- ECD 33** Facilitate the development of tourism infrastructure such as accommodation, restaurants, car and coach parking and toilet facilities in the designated hubs throughout the county.
- ECD 34** Facilitate the expansion of existing tourism and recreation related development, and the development of new tourism and recreation related development, subject to the protection of the receiving environment.

- ECD 35** Facilitate the erection of standardised signage for tourism facilities and tourist attractions as part of national and regional initiatives.
- ECD 36** Consider suitable sites for caravanning, camping, and hostelling, in consultation with Fáilte Ireland.
- ECD 37** Identify strategic sites capable of accommodating new tourism ventures while also ensuring the preservation of the natural landscape of the area having regard to economic, environmental and social sustainability considerations.

### Objectives: Tourism

It is an objective of the Council to:

- EO 38** Introduce, develop, and support a rural “Tourism Cluster” (comprised of ten member micro-enterprises) that will trade on-line as an aggregated virtual tourism entity.
- EO 39** Encourage clustering of tourism products and services within identified hubs and nodes and to avail of shared infrastructure and services where possible, to increase linkages within and reduce leakage from the local economy.
- EO 40** Support the expansion and development of tourism in Kildare, investigating the feasibility of key opportunities such as those centred on the racing industry, retail, golf and eco-tourism to include: Arthur’s Way, the Dublin – Galway Greenway, the Barrow Blueway, the Shackleton Trail, the Gordon Bennett Route, the Grand Canal Greenway and other opportunities.
- EO 41** Develop innovative marketing campaigns to promote Kildare’s heritage, culture, attractions and festivals and events.
- EO 42** Strengthen and support Kildare’s digital tourism marketing capability, online presence and social media platforms.
- EO 43** Develop an implementation strategy to maximise Kildare’s potential to become a dedicated and recognised location for recreational and cultural tourism within the Greater Dublin Area.
- EO 44** Work with adjoining local authorities and tourism bodies to develop the tourism potential of the county and region.

## 5.17 FÁILTE IRELAND STRATEGIES

Fáilte Ireland, the national tourism development authority, aims to guide and promote tourism as a leading indigenous component of the Irish economy and has developed the following strategies.

### Ireland’s Ancient East

To offer visitors a compelling motivation to visit the east of Ireland, Fáilte Ireland has developed a new umbrella destination brand called Ireland’s Ancient East. The brand is rooted in the rich history and diverse range of cultural heritage experiences that are particularly prevalent in the East and South regions of Ireland. During the life-time of this Plan there will be a phased roll-out of the branding strategy, with investment in orientation signage and the enhancement of the visitor experience across the programme area.

### Kildare-Wicklow Destination Grand Tour

The counties of Kildare and Wicklow have been identified as one of 10 key destinations by Fáilte Ireland for the development of tourism. It is envisaged that this strategy will form a key element of the broader ‘Ancient East’ initiative with the destination containing the necessary concentration of product, attractions and accommodation to become a tourism destination of significance.

Kildare’s proximity to Dublin offers significant latent potential to grow and attract visitor numbers and revenue. The overall aim of the strategy is for Kildare and Wicklow to capitalise on their geographical location in order to draw more visitors into the area, staying for longer periods and experiencing the range of product on offer. The strategy aims to do this through a coordinated and cooperative approach with Fáilte Ireland as facilitator to enhance, develop and create new products, services and amenities that will result in new innovations and a competitive destination for overseas and domestic visitors.

The key actions set out in the strategy aim to:

- Maintain and improve existing infrastructure;
- Provide a high quality workforce with strong communication skills; and
- Develop a defined tourism product.



## Objectives: Fáilte Ireland Strategies

It is an objective of Council to:

- EO 45** Work with Fáilte Ireland on the development of Ireland's Ancient East, as well as any smaller scale plans or programmes that are prepared to give effect to the strategy. Kildare County Council will consult with Fáilte Ireland as required on the assessment of any such plans, programmes or policies to ensure that they are adequately screened or assessed in full compliance with Directives including the SEA Directive and the Habitats Directive.
- EO 46** Support and facilitate Fáilte Ireland and Kildare Fáilte initiatives for the development of tourism in the county including the Kildare-Wicklow Destination Grand Tour.
- EO 47** Work with Kildare Fáilte to:
  - Implement a tourism development strategy in the county and identify the particular role and competence of all partner agencies;
  - Develop an appropriate and compelling marketing proposition and plan for Kildare as a tourism destination;
  - Develop a suite of training programmes that will ensure that tourism businesses in the county can recruit staff with appropriate skills and provide for career development; and
  - Promote the Green Hospitality Programme.

## 5.18 THE BARROW BLUEWAY

Kildare Fáilte published the Kildare Strategic Tourism Development Plan 2013-2016. This strategy focuses on the core product of Kildare itself: its people, its places, its culture and experiences.

Arising from the objectives set out in this and other strategies, Waterways Ireland in conjunction with Kildare, Carlow, Laois and Kilkenny County Councils, LEADER Companies and Fáilte Ireland have set out a strategy to develop the existing track way along the Barrow Line of the Grand Canal and Barrow River as a 112 km shared-use trail for tourism and recreational purposes, branded the 'Barrow Blueway'.

This Strategy also proposes to open up the Canals across Kildare to link with Dublin, the Barrow River system and Mullingar to the west, so that visitors can enjoy walkways, cycle paths and navigational improvements for recreational purposes. The development of such greenways elsewhere in the country has stimulated and created significant new visitor activity and expenditure.

## Objective: The Barrow Blueway

It is an objective of the Council to:

- EO 48** Continue to work closely with key stakeholders in the tourism industry including Kildare Fáilte, Fáilte Ireland, Waterways Ireland and the National Parks and Wildlife Services, in order to develop the Barrow Blueway and Grand Canal for tourism and recreation.

## 5.19 GREENWAYS – WALKING/CYCLING

Combined off-road cycle and walking routes and recreational trails developed along abandoned rail lines, utility corridors or other natural linear open spaces, such as river banks and canals, are often referred to as Greenways.

International trends suggest that the walking and cycling sectors of the tourism economy have the potential to grow considerably during the lifetime of the Plan. County Kildare is ideally placed to exploit this trend. The fact that both the Grand Canal and the Royal Canal, the River Liffey and the River Barrow all pass through the county, offers significant potential to expand on green routes to and from the main tourist market in Dublin. Kildare has a wealth of trails; along the Royal Canal (Dublin to Galway Greenway), Heritage Trails (Arthur's Way), Slí na Sláinte routes and Historic Walking trails, all of which need to be supported and enhanced around a coherent active tourism strategy.

## Objectives: Greenways – Walking/Cycling

It is an objective of Council to:

- EO 49** Work with the National Transport Authority (in conjunction with relevant objectives in Chapter 6), Kildare Fáilte, Fáilte Ireland, Waterways Ireland and all stakeholders to develop a co-ordinated approach to the selection, delivery and servicing of future greenways, blueways, trails and routes throughout the county.

- EO 50** Promote the development of walking and cycling routes throughout the county as an activity for both international visitors and local tourists, in a manner that is compatible with nature conservation and other environmental policies.

- EO 51** Investigate the feasibility of developing a walkway/cycleway along the former Tullow railway line in County Kildare.

- EO 52** Promote and develop the towpaths along the Grand Canal, the Royal Canal (including from Maynooth to the Dublin County Boundary as part of the Dublin to Galway Greenway project), the Barrow Line and the Corbally Line as cycleways, in co-operation with Waterways Ireland and neighbouring Local Authorities.

- EO 53** Investigate the feasibility of a River Liffey Greenway from the Dublin to Wicklow borders.

## 5.20 HERITAGE TOURISM

Heritage Tourism is a branch of tourism that involves visiting historical, industrial or natural sites, and which is oriented towards the cultural heritage of the location where tourism is occurring. It is recognised as one of the most important and fastest growing aspects of the tourist industry. County Kildare with its array of heritage sites including historical garden demesnes, military, architectural heritage, interpretive centres, archaeology and historic town centres is well positioned to benefit from this form of tourism.

Tourism based on the heritage assets of a destination can provide an additional opportunity to increase the length of time visitors stay in the county, as well as reinforcing cultural identity by creating revenue to conserve built heritage and support cultural heritage. County Kildare has a rich and varied culture and heritage which forms the basis of much of the county's tourism industry.

## Policy: Heritage Tourism

It is the policy of the Council to:

- ECD 38** Work with stakeholders including the OPW, the Heritage Council, the Arts Council, local communities and businesses to support the development of heritage and cultural tourism in County Kildare.

## 5.21 EVENT AND FESTIVALS TOURISM

Festivals can be a key driver of local economies and a means of revitalising and maintaining local culture. Festivals are important in terms of attracting visitors to the county during the off-peak season and encouraging dwell time. County Kildare hosts a wide range of festivals and annual events including the internationally renowned Punchestown and The Curragh racing festivals which provide a significant boost to the County's tourism industry.

## Policy: Events and Festivals

It is the policy of the Council to:

- ECD 39** Support and promote existing festivals and sporting events to increase the cultural, heritage and lifestyle profile of the county, and where appropriate to promote and facilitate the development of new events and venues to host these events.

## 5.22 AGRICULTURE BASED TOURISM

### Policies: Agriculture Based Tourism

It is policy of the Council to:

- ECD 40** Support agri-tourism initiatives including but not limited to visitor accommodation and supplementary activities such as organic farmers' markets, health farms, heritage and nature trails, pony trekking, boating, walking, eco tourism, open farms and pet farms, ensuring that all built elements are appropriately designed and satisfactorily assimilated into the landscape.
- ECD 41** Facilitate and encourage the re-use of redundant farm buildings of vernacular importance for appropriate owner-run agri-tourism enterprises subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

## 5.23 SPORT AND RECREATION

### Policies: Sports and Recreation

It is policy of the Council to:

- ECD 42** Support the sustainable tourist related development of the Bloodstock and Equine Industries.
- ECD 43** Recognise the importance of angling and the golf industry to tourism in the county.
- ECD 44** Promote the development of international and Olympic class sporting facilities in County Kildare.
- ECD 45** Support the development of tourism activities on and adjacent to waterways, subject to normal planning and environmental criteria and in accordance with the requirements of the Birds and Habitats Directive, Water Framework Directive and all other relevant European Directives.

### Objectives: Sports and Recreation

It is an objective of the Council to:

- EO 53** Support the development of appropriate Integrated Tourism/Leisure facilities in Palmerstown Demesne.
- EO 54** Recognise the importance of the Kildare Hotel and Country Club Straffan as a tourism facility of national and international significance. The Council will support and encourage further appropriate development of tourism and recreational facilities at the Kildare Hotel and Country Club.
- EO 55** Recognise the sensitive and unique quality of Carton House as a tourism facility of national and international significance and to ensure that its integrity is protected. The Council will support and encourage further appropriate development of the tourism and recreational facilities at Carton House, having regard to its status as a house and demense of international heritage importance.

- EO 56** Recognise the sensitive and unique quality and importance of Castletown House and its demesne and history as a unique element of heritage, tourism and educational potential, to ensure that the integrity of the house and its demesne, as well as its collection of buildings, artefacts, landscapes, views and prospects, is fully protected, and to ensure that any future development within or without the demesne and its environs which impacts on it, is appropriate to its status as a house and demesne of national and international significance.

## 5.24 INLAND WATERWAYS

The waterways of County Kildare include the River Liffey, the Barrow River System, the Grand Canal and the Royal Canal and are rich natural resources that attract many visitors to the County each year. In addition to their scenic beauty they offer opportunities for a wide range of activities such as angling, boating, bird-watching, canoeing, and other water based interests.

### Policies: Inland Waterways

It is policy of the Council to:

- ECD 46** Maximise opportunities for the use of canals and other waterways including the River Liffey and River Barrow as tourism and recreational amenities. In this regard the Council will co-operate with Waterways Ireland, National Parks and Wildlife Service and community groups to develop the infrastructure, quality and amenity of these waterways.
- ECD 47** Facilitate infrastructure for water based activities such as boating, canoeing, angling, cruising, bathing and other sustainable water based interests.
- ECD 48** Facilitate Waterways Ireland in the restoration of the Grand Canal and Royal Canal.
- ECD 49** Preserve the undeveloped sections of the Liffey Valley as a resource for tourism and to develop paths and walkways where appropriate, subject to environmental and other constraints and considerations.



- ECD 50** Reserve, where feasible, land adjacent to river banks and lakes for public access and to facilitate the creation of linear parks to accommodate walking/cycling routes.

### Objective: Inland Waterways

It is an objective of the Council to:

- EO 57** Develop, in conjunction with the relevant authorities, berthing and other ancillary infrastructure at key locations along the canal systems, particularly in areas where tourism is underdeveloped at present.

