

4

Resilient Economy & Job Creation



Chapter 4 Resilient Economy & Job Creation

***Aim:** To provide for the future well-being of the residents of the county by creating a strong and resilient economic base, providing expanded opportunities for employment and facilitating a good quality of life within vibrant and attractive places to live, work, visit and invest.*

4.1 Introduction

The preparation of the 2023-2029 Development Plan takes place within a period of significant economic flux. The Plan takes in the context of major challenges – the Covid-19 pandemic and recession, Brexit and climate change. It has never been more important to plan and prepare a roadmap for a resilient, sustainable economy. The Plan's focus is on a smart recovery based on entrepreneurship and investment, climate action and exploiting new opportunities. According to the UN Sustainable Development Goals Charter, inclusive and sustainable industrialisation, together with innovation and infrastructure, can unleash dynamic and competitive economic forces that generate employment and income. They play a key role in introducing and promoting new technologies, facilitating international trade and enabling the efficient use of re- sources. Innovation and technological progress are key to finding lasting solutions to both economic and environmental challenges, such as increased resource and energy-efficiency.

Covid-19 has ushered in a digital transformation in the way we work and communicate. Working from home has the potential to make a permanent impact on regenerating communities and to some extent town centres. For countless businesses, remote working practices will be part of their new norm, and smart co-working hubs need to be positioned throughout Kildare to provide structured, well connected, professional working environments.

The Covid-19 pandemic has also altered the purchasing habits of many people. Businesses have had to accelerate the digitisation of their businesses or simply lose out. Many Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) have had to undertake transformative digitalisation of their enterprises to adapt to this new business landscape, and for many, this is very much seen as their new business model.

Notwithstanding the economic and global turmoil since March 2020, the Economic Social Research Institute (ESRI) Quarterly Economic Commentary Spring 2021 has concluded that the Irish economy is well positioned to recover strongly once the threat from COVID-19 recedes. The Development Plan must encourage this recovery through enabling businesses to operate more efficiently.

This Development Plan faces the challenge of responding proactively to circumstance and facilitating a built-in resilience and strength to the County's economy through providing for attractive places to work and a broad employment base.

4.2 Economic Development and Climate Action

Climate change, sustainable development and the green economy are now central policy concerns for the international and national community, forming a central role to the strategy of the IDA and Enterprise Ireland. The transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society is also a national strategic outcome of the National Planning Framework (NPF). It is therefore vital that the Development Plan realises its role in the delivery of the green economy. The compact growth approach taken in this Development Plan, with its potential for helping to achieve climate action targets at local and national level, applies not just to residential development but also to economic development within the County.

Lands zoned for uses related to employment and economic development account for a total of 1554.92 Hectares of zoned land in the County, not including the wide range of commercial and retail businesses which bring life to our towns and villages. Ensuring that we put the right employment in the right place, building on sustainable mobility and the potential for active travel will have a significant impact on the realisation of our local and national climate action targets.

The source of Greenhouse Gases (GHGs) from the industrial and commercial sectors is essentially from the activities and processes used in the manufacturing industries. These include combustion emissions from industrial and commercial activities, including processes used in food and drinks production. Fossil fuels are also used for the heating and cooling of industrial and commercial buildings. Energy efficient gains are achievable in this sector through innovative design, low-carbon technology, use of Combined Heat and Power (CHP) and roll out of district heating and other renewable energy projects. In addition, sustainable development requires that our economic strategy is resilient, adaptable and innovative.

4.3 Planning Policy Context

Development Plan policies and objectives relating to economic development, job creation and business innovation must be consistent with national and regional planning policy as set out in the National Planning Framework (2018) (NPF) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (2019) (RSES). National Strategic Outcome 5 of the NPF seeks a strong economy for the country supported by enterprise, innovation and skills. It is recognised that this fully depends on creating places that can foster enterprise and innovations and attract investment and talent. Similarly, Strategic Outcome 3 seeks strengthened rural economies and communities.

Nationally, there is an objective to 'regenerate and rejuvenate cities, towns and villages of all types and scale as environmental assets, that can accommodate changing roles and functions, increased residential population and employment activity and enhanced levels of amenity and design quality, in order to sustainably influence and support their surrounding area'. The role of funding under the Rural and Urban Regeneration and Development Fund in applying a tailored approach to development is set out in National Policy Objective 7.

County Kildare's Local Economic Community Plan (LECP) will be reviewed during the preparation of this Development Plan and a co-ordinated approach to policy and actions in both plans will be pursued. There are many other relevant national and regional policy objectives which will influence, nurture and promote the economic development of County Kildare. These are referenced within the individual sub-sections. The RSES supports the implementation of Local Authority Local Economic and Community Plans (LECP) in collaboration with Local and Economic Development Committees (LCDCs).

4.3.1 Kildare Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2016-2021

The Council is obliged under the Local Government Reform Act 2014 to develop a 6-year LECP for the County. This Plan is required to be consistent with the County Development Plan (and the National Planning Framework and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy). It provides economic and community objectives that promote and support the economic and local community development of the County. In addition to the Food Science, Equine and Technology sector for which Kildare is internationally renowned, Tourism and Recreation are noted as key sectors in both the economic and social development of the County. These provide noteworthy opportunities for employment and wealth generation, and also facilities and infrastructure that enhance the quality of life for residents. This is reflected within the policy framework of the Kildare LECP. The LECP is now required to be reviewed to ensure compliance with the adopted RSES. The review of the Local Economic & Community Plan will illustrate how strengthening community infrastructure could support the priority of achieving critical mass and moving people closer to enterprise support agencies such as LEO.

4.3.2 Kildare 2025 (Economic Development Strategy);

Kildare 2025 is the County's Economic Development Strategy, outlining a roadmap for attracting new investment, sustaining existing industry and enterprises, and ensuring long-term and sustainable growth for Kildare. It was adopted in 2021 and outlines a longer-term economic vision for County Kildare. It informs and provides a strategic policy framework for Kildare's Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) and County Development Plan. It is the intention of the Council to produce five-year strategic plans to guide economic development and investment up to 2040 commencing with this period up to 2025. The Kildare 2025 Economic Development Strategy aligns with the National Planning Framework (NPF) Project Ireland 2040 and the Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES).

The eight key focus areas in Kildare 2025;



These eight focus areas are underpinned by three enabling actions;



The focus will be on developing the County's Key Towns, in particular, to act as economic drivers and provide for strategic employment locations supported by the regionally important self-sustaining growth towns and self-sustaining towns. The future development of Kildare's Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) area, as outlined in the RSES, will support the future growth of the wider Metropolitan Area through the strategic development of the North-West corridor which has been identified through MASP along the Maynooth/Dunboyne commuter line/DART.

In 2016 Kildare had a population of 222,504 persons and the labour force was 106,849 persons. In the same census, Kildare had the 6th highest rate of outbound commuters in the State. Of the 95,345 workers residing in Kildare, 39.1% or 37,193 commute to areas outside the county. The top employment destinations for Kildare workers are: Dublin City (15,481), South Dublin (10,593), Fingal (3,324), Dún Laoghaire Rathdown (2,810) and Meath (969). 33% of Kildare's resident workers are employed in the Dublin Metropolitan Area. In total, 31,710 workers commute from Kildare into the Dublin Metropolitan Area. Highest rates are primarily located in the north-east of the county proximate to settlements; Naas, Celbridge, Leixlip and Maynooth, where many parts

have in excess of 50% of workers commuting into the Dublin Metropolitan Area. By comparison, in excess of 33% of all jobs in Kildare are occupied by persons living outside the county. Of the 62,985 jobs located in Kildare, 21,195 are filled by persons commuting into the county. The top worker origins are; Laois (3,189), South Dublin (3,141), Meath (2,480), Dublin City (2,462) and Offaly (1,607). Of the key employment settlements in Kildare, Naas (10,999) has the largest concentration of jobs, which accounts for 17.5% of all jobs in Kildare. Of this number, 8,115 persons commute into Naas, making it a key commuting destination in the county. Newbridge (6,526) has the second highest number of jobs followed by Leixlip (5,825). This 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.

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. The Plan seeks to foster employment creation and maximise the jobs potential in appropriate locations 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 1098 hectares of zoned undeveloped land available for employment purposes in the County. This offers significant potential for future economic development within these key centres.

Adequate infrastructure is essential to facilitate future economic development in the county. In this regard, 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 also a key component for investment and this Plan seeks to protect the attributes that make Kildare an attractive place to live and work. Indicators such as commuting times, availability of key services and recreation opportunities and the quality of the built and natural environment are important.

Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

RE O1	Facilitate and support the growth of the economy in Kildare and the Greater Dublin Area in a sustainable manner, and in accordance with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.
RE O2	Continue to promote Kildare, together with the Kildare Local Enterprise Office and national development agencies, as a strategically located economic and employment hub within the Greater Dublin Area and support and facilitate the development of an environment that fosters innovation, enterprise and entrepreneurship but also maintains a core focus on issues around climate change and biodiversity.
RE O3	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.

RE O4	Work with the business community and continue to develop, encourage and create an environment that supports innovation, enterprise and entrepreneurship within the county.
RE O5	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, and seek to address any deficit in social infrastructure, which would act as an impediment to a high-quality living environment.
RE O6	Support enterprises and industry, including employment-intensive international business and technology parks, small and medium enterprises (SME) and micro enterprise centres at appropriate locations throughout the county.
RE O7	Support the use of town centre locations for new service focused enterprises.
RE O8	Consult with Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) on an on-going basis, particularly through the preparation of the County's Local Area Plans, with respect to requirements regarding motorway building lines and ensure that zoning for employment uses will be carried out in a manner which protects the capacity of and investment in, the national road network.
RE O9	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.
RE O10	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.
RE O11	Facilitate the development of, and upgrade to, the broadband and fibre network of the county.
RE O12	Acquire suitable land (subject to the availability of funding), including where appropriate, disused sites in State ownership and town centre sites, for creative and innovative entrepreneurial initiatives and the provision of clustered incubator units and digital hubs.
RE O13	Support the provision of new postal facilities and the enhancement of existing facilities, including operational requirements, in the County and to facilitate the provision of postal infrastructure at suitable locations in the county.
RE O14	Work with EirGrid and ESB Networks to support the provision of a resilient electricity supply and distribution system to accommodate the future economic growth of the county and to facilitate the transition of heat and transport from fossil fuels to electricity.
RE O15	Ensure that economic development that is urban in nature should be located in urban areas and will not be permitted to re-locate to the countryside or to un-serviced rural areas.

RE O16	Support the implementation of the ‘Local Just Transition Plan for West Kildare, 2022’ a focus of which, through identified thematic actions, is to help communities benefit from new business, income and job creation opportunities in existing and emerging industries.
---------------	---

Actions

It is an action of the Council to:

RE A1	Undertake an evidence-based assessment, together with the LEO, Enterprise Ireland and the IDA, to inform the location of strategic employment sites throughout Kildare. The assessment shall ensure that sufficient land is zoned for economic activity through the Development Plan and Local Area Plans, in accordance with the National Planning Framework and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy. Such land will be protected from inappropriate development that would prejudice its long- term development for employment and economic activity.
RE A2	Undertake, within the first 2 years from the adoption of the Plan, an audit of business/enterprise/ industrial parks in Kildare to identify the existing range of facilities, as well as infrastructural and service deficits, in order to plan for current and future needs.

4.4. Economic Development Hierarchy

Hierarchy	Description	Locations	Sectoral Opportunities
Key Towns (Naas & Maynooth)	<p>Large towns which are economically active that provide employment for their surrounding areas and have a wide catchment.</p> <p>Key Towns have varying economies and sectors.</p>	Naas	<p>Naas – High quality high-density indigenous and Foreign Direct Investment within Millennium Park and the northwest quadrant of Naas town.</p> <p>Technology, IT and digital/tech sector including incubator units and shared space. Strengthen employment base through Tech Hub – MERITS Co-working space providing supports for technology entrepreneurs.</p> <p>High-tech manufacturing and research; Food processing and research including the development of food incubation units.</p>

Hierarchy	Description	Locations	Sectoral Opportunities
	High Quality transport links and the capacity to act as regional drivers to complement the Regional Growth Centres.	Maynooth	<p>Re-intensification of industrial lands in the northeast of the town. Exploit historic and amenity assets, regeneration of town centre to provide significant retail and commercial functions.</p> <p>Maynooth – knowledge-based employment focusing on ICT and manufacturing through the development of a research and technology campus. Further development of Maynooth University as a leading third level research and educational facility – potential synergies to large new and established employers.</p> <p>Development of St Patrick’s College Campus for a mix of uses.</p>
Strategic Development Areas in the MASP¹	<p>Leixlip – Former Hewlett Packard site and Collinstown site to Strengthen employment base for North Kildare.</p> <p>Maynooth - New Research & Technology Park adjoining Maynooth University.</p>	North-West Corridor (Maynooth/ Dunboyne commuter line /DART)	<p>Business Parks comprising knowledge- based economy focusing on high tech/biotechnology, research and development, ICT and manufacturing.</p> <p>Research and Technology</p>
Self-Sustaining Growth Towns	Moderate level of jobs and services.	Newbridge Leixlip Kildare Town Athy	Biotechnology, ICT, professional services, High-tech manufacturing and research. Bloodstock, tourism, manufacturing, logistics, food and beverage products.

¹ Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP)

Hierarchy	Description	Locations	Sectoral Opportunities
Self-Sustaining Towns	High levels of population growth and a weak employment base.	Celbridge Kilcock Monasterevin Clane	Biotechnology, knowledge based digital enterprise, tourism, food and beverage products.
Towns	Local service and employment functions near higher order urban areas.	Sallins Kilcullen Kill Prosperous Rathangan Athgarvan Castledermot Derrinturn	Small scale industry, diversification of the rural economy, new economic opportunities arising from digital connectivity and indigenous innovation and enterprise as well as more traditional natural and resource assets (e.g. food, energy, tourism)

Table 4.1 – Economic Development Hierarchy Table

The following sections, together with Table 4.1 above outline the hierarchy of employment centres, and the sectoral strengths for each settlement:

4.4.1 Strategic Development Areas in the MASP²

The MASP is a key policy driver which sets out an integrated land use and transportation strategy for the sequential development of the Dublin Metropolitan Area.

The Dublin Metropolitan Area includes the highly urbanised settlements of Maynooth, Leixlip, Celbridge and Kilcock which have strong connections to Dublin City and County. A Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan is included in the RSES. Strategic Development Areas have been identified at key nodes along high-quality public transport corridors in tandem with the delivery of infrastructure and enabling services. Maynooth, Leixlip, Celbridge and Kilcock are located along the North-West corridor. In Maynooth, a new research & technology park adjoining Maynooth University has been identified for strategic economic development. In Leixlip, the former Hewlett Packard site and Collinstown site have been identified as strategic employment areas.

The focus is on achieving critical mass in the Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) area (Maynooth, Leixlip, Celbridge and Kilcock).

² Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) of the Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for the Eastern Mid-lands Region

Objective

It is an objective of the Council to:

RE O17	Undertake, within the first 2 years from the adoption of the Plan, a Strategic Land Use, Employment and Transportation Study of north-east Kildare including the Dublin Metropolitan area towns of Leixlip, (and Collinstown), Maynooth, Celbridge and Kilcock. The preparation of the study will have regard to existing and emerging local area plans and any evidence-based assessments associated with same. Where LAPs are prepared after the completion of the study, such plans shall have regard to any relevant recommendations set out therein. It is envisaged that the study will involve the participation of all strategic stakeholders, including the National Transportation Authority, adjoining local authorities (i.e. Meath, Fingal and South Dublin County Councils), the Regional Assembly, transportation providers, Waterways Ireland, Government Departments and Environmental Agencies.
---------------	---

4.4.2 Key Towns

Naas and Maynooth are identified in the County's Economic Development Hierarchy as its two Key Towns. These towns are recognised as having the potential to accommodate commensurate levels of population and employment growth, facilitated by their location on public transport corridors and aligned with requisite investment in services, amenities and sustainable transport. The growth of these Key Towns will require sustainable, compact and sequential development and urban regeneration in the town core. The degree to which these 'Key Towns' can grow will have a notable bearing on the County's ability to attract additional multinational companies. The development of urban centres of scale is key to developing agglomeration benefits, which is considered an especially important factor in creating an appropriate economic environment for multinational companies.

As evident from the RSES, one of the key economic benefits of developing urban centres of scale within the region, is to ensure that we can accrue agglomeration benefits. Agglomeration allows for a variety of external benefits such as labour and knowledge spill overs, supplier concentration, and specialisation, which in turn contributes to increased productivity and regional economic growth. For this reason, and other factors, the IDA notes that clear trends are evident in the demands of multinational companies in selecting locations; with one of the main reasons being "regions of scale with appropriate urban centres". Therefore, ensuring investment priorities align with the growth ambitions of Kildare's designated key towns – namely Naas and Maynooth is imperative.

4.4.3 Maynooth

The Council is focused on developing the Key Town of Maynooth as an 'economic driver' and 'strategic employment location' within the Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP), it is important that the preparation of a joint local area plan (LAP) with Meath County Council is prioritised to ensure that the town can capitalise on opportunities for regeneration, consolidation and sequential growth and that infrastructural requirements to support sustainable growth are co-ordinated and delivered.

Employment uses for Maynooth shall focus on the development of Life Sciences, High Tech, Bio Tech, ICT, Research & Development and seek to benefit from synergies with third level institutions including Maynooth University (MU) and major employers already established in the sub region (Intel, Hewlett Packard). The area can become a centre of excellence in the knowledge-based economy. The objective is to foster a 'dynamic partnership' between multi-national companies, indigenous Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SME's), and third level institutions such as NUI Maynooth.

Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

RE O18	Support Maynooth as a Key Town to act as the economic driver for north Kildare and provide for strategic employment at key locations to improve the economic base of the town and provide for an increased number of local jobs.
RE O19	Co-ordinate the delivery of strategic infrastructure subject to appropriate route option selection processes and environmental assessments including pedestrian and cycle linkages within Maynooth and the Royal Canal Greenway, DART expansion and road linkages forming part of the Maynooth Outer Orbital Route in a manner which supports future development and population growth.
RE O20	Further key linkages and partnerships with Maynooth University (MU) including the branding of the area as a centre of excellence in the knowledge-based economy.
RE O21	Develop the Key Town of Maynooth as an attractor for Life Sciences, High Tech, Bio Tech, ICT, Research & Development employment. Kildare County Council will work with Irish Water and other agencies to ensure the delivery of key infrastructure to facilitate future development.

4.4.4 Naas

A key priority for the Key Town of Naas is the regeneration of the historic town centre with enhancement of retail and commercial functions and consolidation of strategic development areas. Other key economic considerations are the strengthening of the local employment base through the development of MERITS, Millennium Park including the broader North-West Quadrant area and the regeneration of under-utilised lands including industrial lands in the north-east of the town. The strategic aim for the Plan is to protect existing employment in the town and to create new employment opportunities for Naas to fulfil its role as a 'Key Town' in the region. It is also important to recognise Naas's role as the County town of Kildare, particularly as a hub for high quality employment.

Naas also benefits from a strategic location, proximate to the M9 motorway and rail connection in Sallins, which provides the town with great opportunities to avail of its proximity to the biggest market in Dublin and other cities throughout Ireland, as well as getting access to international markets via the connectivity provided by Dublin International Airport and Dublin Port.

Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

RE O22	Promote the Key Town of Naas as a primary centre of high-quality employment in the County so that its significant residential population will have employment opportunities within easy distance of their homes, thereby reducing outbound commuting.
RE O23	Strengthen and promote the local employment base through the development of MERITS (Mid-East Regional Innovation Thinkspace), Millennium Park in the North-West Quadrant and the regeneration of underutilised lands including industrial lands in the north-east of the town.
RE O24	Regenerate and consolidate the historic centre of Naas to improve the retail and commercial functions of the town core, with enhanced permeability and sustainable mobility within the town centre and improve links between the core and surrounding residential and employment areas through the further development of walking and cycling routes and improved public transport.
RE O25	Co-ordinate the delivery of strategic infrastructure including pedestrian and cycle linkages within Naas, in a manner which supports future development and population growth.

4.4.5 Self-Sustaining Growth Towns

Newbridge, Leixlip, Kildare and Athy are designated as Self-Sustaining Growth Towns in the County's Economic Development Hierarchy. The RSES defines these towns as those with a moderate level of jobs and services, which adequately cater for the people of its service catchment with good transport links and capacity for continued commensurate growth.

Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

RE O26	Continue to support and develop the Self-Sustaining Growth Towns of Newbridge and Leixlip as an attractor but not limited to Biotechnology, ICT, professional services, High-tech manufacturing and research employment. Kildare County Council will work with Irish Water and other agencies to ensure the delivery of key infrastructure to facilitate future development.
RE O27	Promote the town of Athy as a Food, Drink and Skills Innovation Hub and to support the regeneration and development of Athy to ensure that it provides an enhanced role in delivering economic growth and promoting sectoral interests, including the development of tourism within the south of the county while recognising the historic importance of the food and drink industry in the town and potential for future development.
RE O28	Continue to support and develop Kildare Town as a bloodstock, tourism and manufacturing location.

RE O29	Investigate the feasibility of proposals for the redevelopment of the Dry Dock along the River Barrow in Athy as a County Kildare tourism initiative, subject to all necessary environmental assessments.
RE O30	Co-ordinate the delivery of strategic infrastructure including pedestrian and cycle linkages within Leixlip and between Leixlip and the Greenway, Intel, Celbridge and Lucan in a manner which supports future development and population growth.

4.4.6 Self-Sustaining Towns

Celbridge, Monasterevin, Clane and Kilcock are designated as Self-Sustaining Towns in the County's Economic Development Hierarchy. The RSES describes these settlements as those with high levels of population growth and a weak employment base which are reliant on other areas for employment and/or services and which require targeted 'catch-up' investment to become more self-sustaining. Accordingly, these towns require contained growth, focusing on driving investment in services, employment growth and infrastructure while balancing housing delivery. Growth shall be focused on consolidation and inclusion of policies in relation to improvements in services and employment provision.

Objective

It is an objective of the Council to:

RE O31	Encourage job creation in the Self-Sustaining Towns of Celbridge, Monasterevin, Clane and Kilcock and with particular focus on the economic areas of biotechnology, digital enterprise, tourism, distilling and brewing industries and food and beverage products, in order for them to become more self-sustainable and balanced considering they have experienced rapid population growth with high levels of commuter focused residential expansion without equivalent increases in jobs and services. Also, encourage new businesses to develop and embrace the diversity of opportunities that exist in these locations.
---------------	---

4.4.7 Towns

Kilcullen, Kill, Athgarvan, Sallins, Prosperous, Rathangan, Castledermot and Derrinturn are designated as Towns in the County's Economic Development Hierarchy. Some of these Towns are proximate to larger urban centres while others provide local service and employment functions within a largely rural economy.

Objective

It is an objective of the Council to:

RE O32	Encourage and promote small scale industry, diversification of the rural economy, new economic opportunities arising from digital connectivity and indigenous innovation and enterprise as well as more traditional natural and resource assets (e.g. food, energy, tourism) in these Towns.
---------------	--

4.5 Economic Clusters

Economic clusters, according to the EU Commission, are defined as groups of firms, related economic actors and institutions located near each other and with sufficient scale to develop specialised expertise, services, resources, suppliers and skills. The potential for such clusters to become self-sustaining beacons for attracting further investment, industry, employment opportunities and institutional collaboration is acknowledged by the Council. Accordingly, the following two areas within County Kildare have been identified as economic clusters:

- The MASP (Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan) Economic Cluster in northeast Kildare, which includes the settlements of Maynooth, Leixlip, Celbridge and Kilcock.
- The Sallins-Naas-Newbridge Cluster which also incorporates the proposed Naas to Newbridge Strategic Economic and Employment Zone.

The designation of these clusters is in keeping with the provisions of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031 and Kildare 2025 Economic Development Strategy. It also acknowledges the existing relationships and synergies that have developed between settlements and in particular, the role that certain towns within these clusters have developed as strategic destinations for employment and education. It is considered that the focusing of sectoral growth opportunities, along with targeted infrastructural development, within these designated clusters will enable the development of economies of scale, thereby securing critical mass. The successful development of these clusters will not only provide the county with a competitive advantage but also help to safeguard its long-term economic wellbeing.

Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

RE O33	Promote and facilitate the development of the Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) Economic Cluster, encompassing the towns of Maynooth, Leixlip, Celbridge and Kilcock, by supporting identified key sectoral opportunities, including the development of synergies between Maynooth University, employers in the area, key stakeholders and community leaders, along with the requisite targeted infrastructural investment, in accordance with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031.
RE O34	Promote and facilitate the development of the Sallins-Naas-Newbridge Economic Cluster, including the proposed Naas to Newbridge Strategic Economic and Employment Zone, by supporting identified key sectoral opportunities along with requisite targeted infrastructural investment, in accordance with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031.

Action

It is an action of the Council to:

RE A3	Develop a strategy for the lands between the settlements of Naas and Newbridge, to consolidate existing development whilst also preventing the coalescence of these settlements.
--------------	--

4.6 Land Use and Economic Development

It is an objective of this plan to facilitate and support the growth of the economy in Kildare and the Greater Dublin Area in a sustainable manner, and in accordance with the Regional Spatial Economic Strategy. Good land use planning and economic development is recognised as a critically important factor in the attraction of businesses to an area. The Council recognises this and is continuously seeking to build a resilient economic base by means of promoting innovation and entrepreneurship, developing and enhancing accessibility and connectivity, providing a framework for collaboration and partnerships, improving education skills and social inclusion, and the promotion of creative places.

Policies

It is a policy of the Council to:

RE P1	Ensure that future economic and enterprise development in Kildare should be largely distributed in accordance with the county's economic hierarchy having regard to each individual areas (a) identified role within the hierarchy, (b) existing size, (c) existing function (d) capacity for sustainable growth (i.e. growth without detriment to its surroundings, its built or natural assets and/or its character) and (e) available infrastructure capacity. There is, however, a positive presumption in terms of employment creation and therefore it is Council policy to examine such proposals within other locations on a case-by-case basis for example employment related development in a location clearly linked to a rural re- source activity.
RE P2	Support and facilitate the economic development of the county in accordance with the Kildare 2025 (Economic Development Strategy); across a range of sectors. There will be a general presumption against development that would prejudice the achievement of the Economic Development Strategy.
RE P3	Ensure a co-ordinated approach to policy, objectives and actions as contained within the County Development Plan, Kildare 2025 (Economic Development Strategy) and the Local Economic and Community Plan through continued engagement with the relevant stakeholders including (but not limited to) Kildare Local Community Development Committee, and Municipal Districts.

4.7 Urban Growth, Regeneration and Placemaking

The role of placemaking in helping to enhance Ireland's attractiveness to investors has been highlighted by research carried out by the IDA and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government in recent years. The creation of urban environments that offer good quality of life is important in allowing investors to attract and retain the talent necessary to support their establishment and growth. Placemaking offers the opportunity to differentiate Ireland and County Kildare from other locations by delivering attractive, vibrant urban areas in which to reside and work.

Good placemaking is recognised as a critically important competitive advantage in the attraction of business to an area. The Council recognises this and is continuously investing in placemaking through various schemes.

Working from home or from a local hub provides options for employees and employers which are increasingly likely to be taken up. This provides an opportunity not just for a more balanced live-work environment but for the regeneration of spaces within towns and villages. Ground floor work-live units, where the residential component is ancillary to the workspace, will be encouraged within mixed use schemes to animate street frontages.

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 Elected Members of each Municipal District in devising and delivering plans and projects for regeneration. Town/Village Renewal Masterplans shall be informed by Town Centre Health Checks and shall incorporate public realm enhancement proposals that are bespoke to each settlement. Funding opportunities at both national and EU levels will be targeted to empower local communities to make a difference at a local level.

The Council has recently launched the 2021 Town and Village Renewal Scheme, which will prioritise tackling vacancy in towns and villages, remote working and supporting town centre living. Other projects which the Council is seeking to progress include regeneration projects that support, inter alia, active and vibrant town or village centres, upgrading shopfronts and street facades, and green spaces and parks. For further details on the Council's actions in the renewal and regeneration of the county's towns and villages refer to Section 14.5 Policy Responses.

Policies

It is the policy of the Council to:

RE P4	Support urban growth and regeneration through the promotion of good placemaking to attract employees and employers and to provide a competitive advantage to County Kildare.
--------------	--

Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

RE O35	Ensure that there is a sufficient supply of zoned and serviced lands at suitable locations to accommodate a range of enterprise and employment development types and to promote compact growth by strengthening the integration between employment, housing and transportation.
RE O36	Address derelict sites in towns and villages by invoking the powers of the Derelict Sites Act, 1990 (as amended) and by the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended).
RE O37	Continue to 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 (as amended), Vacant Site Levy ³ , on lands zoned for Town Centre, Regeneration and Residential uses.
RE O38	Promote the 2021 Town and Village Renewal Scheme (or any successor to same), which prioritises tackling vacancy in towns and villages, remote working and supporting town centre living.
RE O39	Encourage economic development that is urban in nature to locate on appropriately zoned lands within urban areas in the first instance.
RE O40	(a) Promote the Shop Front Improvement, Accessibility and Age Friendly Grant Scheme to financially assist and support independent business owners to improve the appearance of their shop fronts/commercial properties. (b) Financially assist and support independent business owners to improve accessibility to their commercial properties. (c) Promote the use of Irish language signage in the County through the Shop Front Improvement, Accessibility and Age Friendly Grant Scheme (d) Promote all signage both within and outside of all public buildings to be displayed in both the Irish and English languages.
RE O41	Direct significant employment uses such as major office developments into appropriately zoned lands and close to the strategic public transport network for the region that is outlined in the Draft Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022-2042 and other Regional Plans.
RE O42	Ensure that proposals to diversify or densify underutilised industrial lands support the overarching goals of placemaking, consolidating growth centres along public transport corridors in a planned and/or sequential basis, and ensure realisable, sustainable linkages with nearby services and amenities, that particularly includes walking and cycling.

³ Action 15.2 of Housing for All identifies the introduction of a new tax to activate vacant land for residential purposes as part of the pathway to increasing new housing supply, which will in time replace the Vacant Site Levy. The Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT) was introduced by the Finance Act 2021 and will come into effect from 2024. The principal purpose of the Residential Zoned Land Tax is to encourage the timely activation of serviced lands zoned for residential or mixed-use purposes.

RE O43	Support the provision of ground floor work-live units as part of mixed-use and residential developments in appropriate locations, as a means of enlivening streets as well as providing flexible accommodation for small businesses.
RE O44	Require that employment space provided as part of new mixed-use development is suitably designed to be a viable workspace to meet the needs of a broad range of different employment types and sizes, catering for a range of opportunities.
RE O45	Positively consider proposals and initiatives that seek to re-purpose and revitalise redundant or declining uses in important town centre locations and ensure that proposals for the reuse of buildings, introduces a greater diversity of daytime and night-time uses, while encouraging sustainable modes of transport/travel, and within the lifetime of the Plan, highlight the range of re-use achieved through the above proposals and initiatives.
RE O46	Review the possibility of an inland port at the strategic rail junction of Cork, Limerick and Waterford railway routes at Cherryville junction in Kildare Town.
RE O47	Support and prioritise the delivery of all projects funded under the Fáilte Ireland's Destination Towns funding programme to enhance public spaces and projects.

Actions

It is an action of the Council to:

RE A4	Engage with the Local Enterprise Office to undertake an audit of infrastructural deficits that may be impeding economic development within the County and engage directly with the relevant stakeholders to address these deficits.
RE A5	Proactively engage with the members of each Municipal District in devising and delivering plans and projects for regeneration.

4.8 Remote Working / Co-Working Spaces / Digital Hubs

The increase in remote working as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic has brought the potential for blended work arrangements to the forefront of working life. Though the adoption of remote work was already increasing in Kildare, COVID-19 has notably accelerated this trend making remote work a central part of the workplace today and into the future. It is an objective of this Plan to ensure that remote working is a permanent feature and viable option in the Kildare workplace in a way that maximises economic, social and environmental benefits.

The Council recognises the need for remote working in the interests of flexible work arrangements, be it from home or from a designated hub / co-working space. Remote working reduces the need for commuting and accordingly contributes to lower carbon output. Kildare's co-working hubs are ideal for remote workers (working one or more days away from the main office) and for those setting up or growing their own business.

Funding has recently been granted under the Connected Hubs Scheme for a number of remote working hubs in Kildare including Ventura House (Crookstown House); The Hub @ Market Square, Ballymore Eustace; County Kildare Chamber 1 Hub, Naas; Osprey Business Centre, Naas and Allenwood Community Development Association, Allenwood.

The new Mid-Eastern Region Innovation Think Space (MERITS), which is near completion and located in Naas is an innovation hub developed to support digital and technology innovation in the Mid-East region of Ireland (Kildare, Meath and Wicklow). It is intended that the facility will provide co-working incubation and accelerator space for technology entrepreneurs and technology business and will work in tandem with the Kildare Local Enterprise Office

Policy

It is the policy of the Council to:

RE P5	Support the Government's National Remote Work Strategy and National Connected Hubs Network, which support the provision of appropriate IT infrastructure and facilities (including hubs at neighbourhood level) that enable a better life-work balance enabling people to live near their place of work.
RE P6	Facilitate home-working and innovative forms of working which reduce the need to travel.

Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

RE O48	Support remote working opportunities from designated hub/ co-working spaces, in the interests of mitigating long commuting times.
RE O49	Support the role of the new Mid-Eastern Region Innovation Think Space (MERITS) in providing a co-working incubation and accelerator space for technology entrepreneurs and technology business.
RE O50	Continue to develop North Kildare as a digital economic hub 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.
RE O51	Support the development of the Equine Tech Hub and other appropriately located projects of this nature.

4.9 Home Based Employment

Home-based employment activity assists in dispersing enterprise activity and sustaining smaller settlements within the county. While the economic benefits associated with the location of 'start-up businesses' within the home is acknowledged. This Plan also recognises that as businesses grow and activity intensifies to the level where they require additional employees, beyond the homeowner and immediate family, that such enterprises will be required to re-locate to more suitable premises within commercial areas of the county's settlements.

Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

RE O52	Co-operate with and facilitate Government agencies, and other bodies where feasible, in encouraging home-based employment including the provision of small-scale individual enterprises. Proposals which involve the change of use and/or new development for purposes of home-based employment will generally be considered favourably where it can be clearly demonstrated that a) the proposal is of an appropriate scale for its location; b) there are no adverse environmental, health and safety impacts, c) the proposal is without prejudice to residential amenity and d) the proposal will not detract from the vitality and viability of town or village centres.
RE O53	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 homeworking. Such development should be of suitable design so as to protect the amenity of adjacent residents.

4.10 Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

Kildare has a proven track record as an outstanding area to establish and develop a multinational business. The new gains will come from expansions of the existing base of foreign companies and new arrivals. Kildare is already an established base location for global brands seeking guaranteed and unfettered access to the EU single market, the largest market globally with 500 million.

The Council has a solid corporate base with Kerry Foods, Intel, Hewlett Packard, Pfizer and Green Isle all based in Co. Kildare however it is still committed to facilitating the County to be more attractive to further inward investors (FDI and indigenous) by working to ensure needs-based services and infrastructure around the County and a renewed focus on our skilled talent pool.

Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

RE O54	Support existing FDI large industrial companies in sustaining and expanding their businesses at appropriate locations.
RE O55	Promote and develop key land banks and business parks in conjunction with IDA and Enterprise Ireland throughout the County, to build more sustainable communities, which target key priority business sectors.

Action

It is an action of the Council to:

RE A6	Work with and support the LEO to develop a “Kildare” brand, which outlines the strengths of Kildare for FDI
--------------	---

4.11 Small-Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) relate to any business with under 250 employees. Kildare has a diverse SME sector which has very significant growth potential but has faced unprecedented challenges in the past number of years with Covid and Brexit. The Council acknowledges that the development of small-scale projects with long-term employment potential are important in sustaining both urban and rural settlements in County Kildare. The Council will work closely with the relevant agencies to actively promote and encourage the development of SME's throughout the county. The Council further encourages such development within its towns and villages in particular. The Council will, however, take a proactive and flexible approach on a case- by-case basis in the identification and location of employment activity, where appropriate.

Policy

It is the policy of the Council to:

RE P7	Work closely with the relevant agencies to actively promote and encourage the development of SME's throughout the county, with a particular emphasis on locating these within its towns and villages.
--------------	---

Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

RE O56	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.
RE O57	Support start-up businesses and small-scale industrial enterprises, particularly those that have a creative and innovative dimension, and which promote environmentally sustainable jobs.
RE O58	Facilitate the development of SMEs at appropriate locations in urban/serviced rural areas in accordance with Government Policy "Our Rural Future; Rural Development Policy 2021-2025" (2021) and other relevant government agencies including the NTA and TII.
RE O59	Only consider standalone coffee kiosks in limited circumstance where it can be demonstrated that; a) the proposal is of an appropriate scale for its location; b) there are no adverse visual, environmental and health and safety impacts, c) the proposal is without prejudice to residential amenity and d) the proposal will not detract from the vitality and viability of town or village centres.

4.12 Knowledge Economy

Investment in ongoing education, training and personal development is recognised by the Government as having a critical role in economic development and international competitiveness. Local authorities have an important role in working with other state agencies to promote this 'learning economy' in partnership with public and private sectors. Kildare has specific assets in the education employment sectors, which may benefit from clustering in locations around 'anchor' institutions such as Maynooth University (Maynooth Campus).

Policy

It is the policy of the Council to:

RE P8	Support an entrepreneurial environment to protect and enhance smart specialisations with a strong learning economy culture.
--------------	---

Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

RE O60	Support LEOs and local authorities to collaborate with the Regional Skills Fora managers, Higher Education Institutes, Education and Training Boards and local stakeholders to address skills shortages and life- long learning challenges.
RE O61	Promote the development of a Technology and Innovation Park with Maynooth University subject to all relevant and cumulative environmental assessments and planning conditions within the Key Town of Maynooth, that will act as an anchor, supporting incubator, innovation and business development initiatives that are located to build upon research and technology activities in Maynooth University; with supporting transport infrastructure; broadband infrastructure; and a diverse local sectoral mix.
RE O62	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, particularly in the area of green technologies and social innovations.
RE O63	Support and facilitate the development of a Centre of Excellence, which provides courses that support green and sustainable industries.
RE O64	Encourage third level education in County Kildare through the provision of outreach / campus facilities for the accommodation of courses.
RE O65	Support initiatives targeting unemployed people to access training, education and re-skilling that fits with business and employer needs.
RE O66	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, such as 'Start your own business' courses.
RE O67	Support UCD Lyons Farm as a centre of excellence and a third level teaching and agricultural research facility and to facilitate the delivery of key infrastructure, as appropriate subject to planning and environmental considerations.

4.13 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.

Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

RE O68	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.
RE O69	Provide supports, guidance and solutions (together with the LEO office) that equip entrepreneurs, owners and managers with the skills to identify and exploit business opportunities and compete successfully within a competitive business environment.
RE O70	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. Also provide the skills to identify and exploit business opportunities and compete successfully within a competitive business environment.

4.14 Prevention of Major Accidents

The Chemicals Act (Control of Major Accident Hazards involving Dangerous Substances) Regulations 2015 implements the SEVESO III Directive (2012/18/EU). Two firms in County 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 4.2 below. The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) has been designated as the central competent authority for the enforcement of the SEVESO III Directive (2012/18/EU) and has established consultation distances for these facilities.

Establishment	Address	Consultation Distances
Irish Industrial Explosives	Clonagh, Enfield	1,000 metres (subject to further consultation with the HSA).
Intel Ireland Ltd	Industrial Park, Collinstown, Leixlip	1,000 metres (subject to further consultation with the HSA).

Table 4.2 - Industries affected by the Seveso III Directive (2012/18/EU)

It is also noted that Dachser Ireland Limited in South Dublin located in Rathcoole, is also a designated SEVESO III site.

Policies

It is the policy of the Council to:

RE P9	Comply with the SEVESO III Directive (2012/18/EU), 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.
RE P10	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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEVESO III Directive (2012/18/EU) • The consultation distances and HSA technical advice in relation to the industries affected by the SEVESO III Directive (2012/18/EU). • Potential adverse impacts on public health and safety. • 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.

4.15 Retail and Commercial Development

The retail strategy for the county is set out in Chapter 8 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 8, while at all times having regard to protecting the vitality and viability of core town centre sites.

Pre Covid-19, Kildare's retail sector was employment-intensive. Covid-19 may serve to accelerate structural changes in the sector, including the move to digital and online.

Despite some retail activities (e.g. grocery) remaining open in the lockdown and experiencing an increase in demand, the sector as a whole has been badly affected, with over 60% of the national retail workforce, ca.180,000 people availing of income support at the peak of the restrictions

4.16 Data Centres (see also Data Centres & Energy in Chapter 7)

It is Government Policy as set out in the National Planning Framework and the Government Statement on “The Role of Data Centres in Ireland” to promote Ireland as a sustainable international destination for Information Communications Technology (ICT) infrastructure such as Data Centres. To date, some of the world’s best known companies including Microsoft, Google, IBM and Amazon AWS have chosen Ireland as the location for their European data centres.

Kildare County Council acknowledges that data centres contribute to job creation during construction, maintenance and from associated areas such as research and development, data analytics, customer service, technical support, marketing and sales. Data centres generally need to be located in areas where there exists a significant and sustainable electricity supply, high powered fibre optic cables, good accessibility and on large land banks that are easily developable with future expansion possibilities. In addition, the Council is mindful that Data Centres should avoid sensitive landscapes and environments.

Policy

It is the policy of the Council to:

RE P11	Support the accommodation of Data Centres at appropriate locations in line with the objectives of the National Planning Framework and the principles for Sustainable Data Centre Development of the Government Statement on the Role of Data Centres in Ireland’s Enterprise Strategy (July 2022) subject to appropriate Transport, Energy and Environmental Assessments and all relevant planning conditions. The location of data centres shall be situated where they will not have a potential likely significant effect on a European Site. Such developments shall be subject to an AA Screening Report, and where applicable, Stage 2 AA. They shall have regard for any hydrological connection shared with a European Site and shall account for any potential likely significant effects and provide mitigation and monitoring where appropriate.
---------------	---

Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

RE O71	Require that any application for a data centre will be subject to all relevant and cumulative environmental assessments and planning conditions and shall take account of the cumulative visual impact of the proposed connections of the data centre with electricity transmission, renewable energy and broadband infra- structure in the area.
---------------	---

RE O72	Require data centres to consider the use of sustainable renewable sources of energy to fuel their operations in whole in the first instance or in part (minimum of 30%) where this is not possible and where it has been satisfactorily demonstrated not to be possible, subject to all relevant and cumulative environmental assessments and planning conditions.
---------------	--

4.17 Green / Circular Economy and Bio-economy

Climate change, sustainable development and the green economy are central policy concerns for global institutions and agencies including the UN, World Economic Forum, World Bank and EU. These themes are integrated into the strategies of the IDA and Enterprise Ireland and the NPF and RSES. It is therefore vital that the Development Plan recognises the importance of the green economy as industry mitigates and adapts to climate change.

As part of a modern economy with leading global companies, sustainability in all its forms is considered a competitive necessity for business in Kildare. The central focus of sustainable development and the green economy requires that our economic policies adapt to context, reflecting the need to be resilient, adaptable and innovative. Innovation not only refers to technological and organisational change but also how land use is managed to support the green economy. The core strategy and settlement strategy of this Plan reflect the need for orderly growth to support the green economy and innovation.

The bio-economy comprises ‘the production of renewable biological resources, such as crops, forests, fish, animals, and micro-organisms and the conversion of these resources and waste stream residues, by-products or municipal solid waste into value added products, such as food, feed, bio-based products and bioenergy’ (E.C. 2012). The transition to a more circular economy and bio-economy, where the value of bio-based products, materials and resources is maintained in the economy for as long as possible, and the generation of waste minimised, will provide an essential contribution to Kildare developing a sustainable, low carbon, resources efficient and competitive economy. The Council will support the development of the bio-energy industry in the county (including bio-gas) where appropriate. The green and circular economy agenda will also reduce the use of peat within horticulture and agriculture which will reduce pressure on the environment and lower greenhouse gases, improving the situation for biodiversity and moving us in a direction of sustainable production.

Policy

It is the policy of the Council to:

RE P12	Ensure that economic and enterprise related development is provided in a manner which facilitates a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and accelerates the transition towards a sustainable, low carbon and circular economy. The following measures shall be supported: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increase in employment densities within walkable distances of communities and on public transport routes. • Promotion of walking and cycling and use of public transport through increased permeability and mobility management
---------------	---

	<p>measures within and outside employment areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sourcing of power from district heating and renewables including wind and solar. <p>Additional native tree planting and landscaping on existing and proposed enterprise zones and development sites to aid with carbon sequestration, contributing to the green infrastructure network of the County and promoting quality placemaking.</p>
--	--

Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

RE O73	Ensure that climate action and sustainable development is central to economic development in the County through sustainable land use and orderly growth and a co-ordinated approach to the preparation and implementation of the Kildare County Council Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (2019-2024) and the Local Economic and Community Plan (2016-2021) and any successors thereof.
RE O74	Support the growth of business in the green and circular economy and use the European Green Deal as a roadmap, which promotes a sustainable framework for economic transition and development.
RE O75	Promote net zero-carbon and carbon reduction in economic development through innovative design, low-carbon technology, use of Combined Heat and Power (CHP) and roll out of district heating and other renewable energy projects. All these actions are outlined within the National Climate Action Plan 2021.
RE O76	Support the measures contained within Kildare's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (2019-2024), or any superseding plan, to integrate the Circular Economy approach with economic development initiatives.
RE O77	Support the promotion of skills, education and awareness raising in the energy efficiency sectors, promoting smart technologies and well-connected communities.
RE O78	Support and promote sustainable rural based enterprises particularly those that help in achieving climate action goals, and to move away from fossil fuels in favour of low and zero-carbon sources including renewable energy and secondary heat sources and to support the development of green technologies.
RE O79	Support Bord Na Mona with proposals for their headquarters at Newbridge to become a Green Energy Hub, which focuses on the higher order aspects of the renewable energy industry and a climate action training centre.
RE O80	Support the Local Enterprise Office and specifically the 'Green for Micro' programme which officially launched in March 2021. The main objective of this free service is to help small businesses prepare for a low carbon, resource efficient future.
RE O81	Support the development of a skills programme in tackling the economic impact of the transition to a carbon neutral economy by 2050 on local communities in Kildare.

RE O82	Promote and facilitate Kildare as a viable location for the development of materials and technology, which support green industries (e.g retrofitting materials/sustainable recycling industries etc.)
RE O83	Support and facilitate the development of a Green Enterprise Zone associated with the peat era in accordance with the provisions of Kildare 2025 Economic Development Strategy, subject to planning and environmental considerations.
RE O84	Support EMRA in undertaking a bioeconomy feasibility study for the region to identify areas of potential growth to inform investment.

4.18 Agri-Food and Beverage Sector

The importance of the food and beverage sector in Kildare is evident. With a strong agri-food base, the Kildare Food and Beverage Strategy 2021-2023 sets out the ambition to harness the strengths of the food landscape in the County and the actions needed to facilitate the growth of the sector in the throes of a Brexit and pandemic environment. The Kildare food landscape is diverse, typified by several very large food manufacturers, a modest number of small to medium producers and a strong cohort of farmers/growers.

It is the policy of the Council to enhance the County's food and beverage landscape. Pre Covid-19, our tourism and hospitality sectors were experiencing an upsurge, due in part to county Kildare's growing reputation as a hospitality and food destination. The emergence of the Athy Food, Drink & Skills Innovation Hub will be a transformational catalyst for sectoral regeneration. It will revitalise an underutilised building into a powerhouse of food sector learning, innovation and production and will create a legacy impact. By collaborating with best-in-class industry, academic and training partners in the country, Athy Food, Drink & Skills Innovation Hub will be a strategic economic driver for job creation and innovation.

It should also be noted that NOVA UCD were awarded €3 million for a collaborative project to develop an AgTech Connector Innovation Hub at the UCD Lyons Farm in Co. Kildare.

Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

RE O85	Support the development of the Athy Food, Drink and Skills Innovation Hub and other appropriately located projects of this nature in the wider Athy Municipal District Area.
RE O86	Support the development of an AgTech Connector Innovation Hub at the UCD Lyons Farm in Co. Kildare.
RE O87	Maximise the ability of communities to be self-sufficient in food production, energy savings and production, waste disposal etc.

RE O88	Create a strategy to develop and promote Monasterevin as a centre for Distilling and Brewing that builds on the history of Monasterevin (Cassidy Distillery and Brewing Co.) and the current investment at the Church of Oak Distillery.
---------------	--

4.19 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, the Census 2016 shows that some 3% of the labour force of County Kildare is engaged in the agriculture, 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 of full-time 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 3,190 persons in County Kildare are engaged in farming, fishing and forestry as their primary employment (Census of 2016). 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.

Policy

It is the policy of the Council to:

RE P13	Support and facilitate sustainable agriculture, horticulture, forestry and other rural enterprises at suitable locations in the County where there will be no potential for likely significant effects on a European Site or on a site that shares a hydrological connection to a European Site.
---------------	--

Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

RE O89	Protect agriculture and traditional rural enterprises from haphazard and/or incompatible development.
RE O90	Promote the 'Smart Farming' initiative, the 'Kildare Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (2019)' and the 'National Climate Action Plan 2021' to farmers across Kildare to inform them of environmental sustainability and resource management, so as to reduce CO2 production on farms in accordance with the National Climate Action Plan 2021.
RE O91	Support the provision of allotments, community markets and gardens within each municipal district in the county.

4.20 Equine

It is estimated that c.5,500 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. Racecourses at Punchestown, Naas and The Curragh, the State-owned National Stud Farm and Goff's Equine Auction Centre are all 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. Plans are also in progress for a new €3.2 million racehorse simulation attraction at the National Stud and Gardens. The first of its kind in Ireland, it sees the National Stud and Fáilte Ireland working together to increase visitor numbers to the Thoroughbred County.

Policy

It is the policy of the Council to:

RE P14	Actively promote and support the equine industry as an economic driver for Kildare.
---------------	---

Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

RE O92	Support the continued redevelopment and upgrading of the National Stud, Curragh, Punchestown and Naas racecourses and their associated facilities.
RE O93	Facilitate and support the development and expansion of equine pharmaceuticals/equine food businesses and other related industries in the County.
RE O94	Promote and support the redevelopment of the Irish Equine Centre in Johnstown as a new Irish Equine Health and Welfare Campus, ensuring world leading facilities and expertise are available in this critical research and diagnostic facility.
RE O95	Protect and nurture the environment which allows the equine industry to flourish in Co. Kildare and support the conserving and development of equine walking paths, bridle ways, tracks and trails.
RE O96	Promote and facilitate, at appropriate locations, commercial activities that are directly associated with the Horse Racing and Sport Horse industries.

4.21 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. 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.

Kildare's tourist attractions and tourism amenities are therefore important assets for the development of the county and are fundamental to the enjoyment by both visitors and residents. The important contribution that the community and the vast numbers of volunteers throughout the county make to the enhancement of Kildare as a place to visit is widely acknowledged and recognised. The key focus for the Midlands/INTO Kildare region will be the further development and promotion of the local culture and heritage product, including the development of 'the Ireland's Ancient East' brand as it relates to Kildare.

The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and Fáilte Ireland develops, promotes and invests in regional tourism through Regional Experience Brands. Kildare sits within the 'Ireland's Ancient East' regional experience brand. The strategic focus for Ireland's Ancient East is to refine and strengthen the destinations' brand proposition to embrace the broader offering of the destination and increase its consumer appeal to a wider audience, increase knowledge and awareness, and improve the 'navigability' of the region, alongside establishing iconic and signature visitor experiences and strong destination towns that have the potential to become key regional attractors to drive and disperse targeted domestic and overseas visitors.

4.21.1 Tourist attractions in Kildare

Tourism is an important sector of Kildare's economy and prior to Covid 19 had grown substantially over the previous 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 including horse racing, adventure activities, shopping, walking and cycling (including the Greenways and Blueways). 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, Barberstown Castle, the Wonderful Barn, Moone High Cross and Castledermot Round Tower.

There are a number of areas of strategic tourism potential in the county. These are highlighted in the Tourism Map at the end of this Chapter. 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, Lyons

Estate, Arthur's Way, the Wonderful Barn and St Patrick's College Maynooth and also in the south of the county including the Shackleton Museum, Barrow Blueway and Columbian Way.

Policy

It is the policy of the Council to:

RE P15	Support, 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.
---------------	---

Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

RE O97	Support and facilitate the erection of standardised signage for tourism facilities and tourist attractions in Irish and English as part of national and regional initiatives. Consideration should also be given to gateway signage at county boundaries in consultation with relevant agencies.
RE O98	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.
RE O99	Support the expansion and development of tourism in Kildare, investigating the feasibility of key opportunities such as those centred on the racing industry, motorsports, retail, heritage, historical heritage (both persons and places), geology, peatlands, golf and eco-tourism to include: Arthur's Way, the Dublin – Galway Greenway, the Barrow Blueway, the Shackleton Trail, Shackleton Museum, Mondello the Gordon Bennett Route, the Grand Canal Greenway, Brigid 1500, a Fitzgerald Family Trail, the Made of Athy Trail, Castledermot Town Wall, the Columbian Way and other opportunities. Such developments shall be subject to AA screening and where applicable, Stage 2 AA.
RE O100	Support additional and diversification of tourist accommodation and other types of tourism infrastructure such as motorhome parking and toilet facilities at appropriate, sustainable locations, where the vitality and vibrancy of nearby serviced centres is not compromised.
RE O101	Support INTO Kildare's County Kildare Tourism Strategy to maximise Kildare's potential to become a dedicated and recognised location for recreational and cultural tourism within the Greater Dublin Area.
RE O102	Identify all opportunities for funding, including LEADER, Urban and Rural Regeneration Development Fund, National and European funding schemes and seek to maximise the benefit of such funding opportunities to the county.
RE O103	Facilitate the implementation of the Kildare Local Economic Community Plan; Economic and Community Actions related to tourism development.

RE O104	Direct the provision of tourist related facilities such as Tourist Information Centres, self-service brochure units, kiosks, and cultural centres, into town and village locations to support and strengthen the existing economic infrastructure of such centres. Consider the potential for co-locating such facilities with existing facilities such as libraries and citizen information centres.
RE O105	Promote and facilitate the development of rural tourism inter alia open farms, on-farm craft villages and visitor centres and the reuse and refurbishment of vernacular buildings (houses or farm/industrial buildings) for tourist related facilities, including holiday home accommodation; subject to compliance with both the Rural Housing Policies and Development Management Standards of this Plan. It is important that such development does not have a detrimental impact on the residential amenities of rural residents.
RE O106	Encourage the clustering of tourism enterprise in town and village centres in the interest of sustainable tourism development and the enhancement of the public realms of town and village centres to maximise their tourism potential. In all cases, applicants must submit a robust assessment setting out the sustainability of any proposal with respect to economic, environmental and social sustainability.
RE O107	Continue to protect and enhance the unique landscape of the Curragh Plains and all its associated history.
RE O108	Encourage and support start-up enterprises in tourism across Kildare.
RE O109	Support the development of sustainable forest-based tourism facilities and accommodation at appropriate locations within the Coillte estate. Such developments shall be subject to AA screening and where applicable, Stage 2 AA.
RE O110	Support the preparation and implementation of a Conservation Management Plan and a Branding and Interpretation Plan, in partnership with the Department of Defence, for the Curragh Plains.
RE O111	Work with local community groups, schools and service providers to promote the establishment of community gardens.
RE O112	Support the provision of accessible tourism and to provide appropriate access for the disabled and appropriate changing places at all key tourist centres within the County.
RE O113	Examine the feasibility of establishing another tourist office (Kildare Town has a Fáilte Ireland approved tourist office) or visitor information point in the Key Town of Maynooth, which would serve the north of the County.
RE O114	Ensure that innovative tourism ideas are assessed on their merits on a case-by-case basis. In all cases, applicants must submit a robust assessment setting out the sustainability of any proposal with respect to economic, environmental and social sustainability.
RE O115	Liaise with Dublin Local Authorities and look at the feasibility of implementing the Liffey Valley Strategy.
RE O116	Support the development of tourist attractions at Mullaghmast Rath and Moone High Cross.
RE O117	Protect all landscape types from inappropriate tourism development by ensuring that developments and other activities associated with

	tourism or recreational activity are sensitively located so that they do not cause damage, are not detrimental to or detract from the traditional character or appearance of areas of scenic or visual amenities and ensure that the layout, design, and associated infrastructure are of the highest quality.
RE O118	Ensure the highest standards of design are used in the development of tourism related facilities to ensure that there are no significant adverse impacts on the landscape, including Natura 2000 sites and historic archaeological sites. Such facilities must be integrated into the landscape to take advantage of natural screening and topography.

4.22 Environmental Sustainability and Tourism

Environmental sustainability will be central to the development and protection of a viable tourism sector, and this is a key consideration in a County where many tourism attractions are located in environmentally sensitive areas and close to historic areas where the quality of the built heritage and environment must be protected from inappropriate development – whether tourism related or not. Tourism and recreational development shall be assessed against the nature and scale appropriate to the character of the area and shall be located to be visually sympathetic to its surroundings.

The direct and indirect impacts of climate change on our cultural, heritage and natural assets may present a threat to their value and integrity. The tourism sector itself is vulnerable to climate change. Threats include more extreme weather events, increasing insurance costs and safety concerns, water shortages and loss and damage to natural assets and attractions at destinations. Continued climate-driven degradation and disruption to cultural and natural heritage will negatively affect the tourism sector, reduce the attractiveness of destinations and lessen economic opportunities for local communities. In proposing measures to deal with the effects of climate change, it is important to consider any unintended consequences for heritage and tourism that might arise. Truly sustainable tourism development must manage issues of physical and cultural impacts, as well as addressing the urgent necessity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in this growing sector, especially from transport. At the same time, tourism should pay much greater attention to understanding and addressing the many and varied impacts of rapid climate change that will increasingly affect its operations and destinations.

The possibilities offered by environmental initiatives such as rehabilitated peatlands are examined in this section. Addressing climate change offers opportunities for themed educational tourism. Given the expertise of third level institutions within the county in the area of climate change, there may well be themed tourism opportunities in combining this and the environmental assets within the county in leadership initiatives around climate change.

Policy

It is the policy of the Council to:

RE P16	Support and promote environmental sustainability, which will be central to the development and protection of a viable tourism sector within the county.
---------------	---

Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

RE O119	Promote Kildare as a hub for sustainable tourism and the sustainable development of low impact activities including orienteering, angling, equestrian activities, bird watching, canoeing, kayaking, paragliding, botany, photography, painting, yoga and meditation, in appropriate locations in order to diversify the range of tourist experiences available in the county and to extend the tourism season.
RE O120	Encourage all new tourism related development proposals to maximise energy efficiency through siting, layout and design and incorporate best practice in energy technologies, conservation and smart technology.
RE O121	Require the preparation of 'Attraction Management Plans' for new developments/projects which may impact on areas of ecological or heritage sensitivity in County Kildare. These plans should consider (but not limited to) potential for loss of habitat and disturbance by increased visitor numbers. Applications or proposals will be accompanied by a management plan indicating projected numbers of users, hours of operation, seasons of operation, and an undertaking to protect the natural environment in the form of a risk assessment with proposed amelioration measures in respect of flora, fauna, hydrology, geology and soils. The Attraction Management Plans should have regard to any mitigation as detailed within a Stage 2 AA or EclA.
RE O122	Ensure the potential environmental effects of a likely increase in tourists/tourism-related traffic volumes in particular locations/along particular routes shall be considered and mitigated as appropriate. Such a consideration should include potential impacts on existing infrastructure (including drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) resulting from tourism proposals and should have regard to any mitigation as detailed within a Stage 2 AA or EclA.
RE O123	Strengthen resilience to climate change by ensuring that all new major tourist developments provide a climate vulnerability assessment within sensitive and vulnerable sites.
RE O124	Consider the following criteria in assessing tourism development proposals: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The need for the development and facility to be provided.- Justification for the proposed site location.- Details in relation to accessibility including pedestrian and cycle provisions and linkages to the proposed development.- Proposed developments should be modest in scale, sensitively located and designed having regard to existing buildings and

	<p>topography.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proposed developments must be adequately landscaped, serviced and suitably managed.
RE O125	Facilitate tourist-based developments such as information centres and cultural centres into existing settlements where there is adequate infrastructure to service these activities.

4.23 Fáilte Ireland Strategies / Ireland’s Ancient East

In March 2015, the Government published the Tourism Policy Statement; People, Place and Policy – Tourism to 2025 which sets out clear and ambitious targets for the development of Irish tourism. The ambition of this policy statement is to have a vibrant, attractive tourism sector that makes a significant contribution to employment across the country; is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable; helps promote a positive image of Ireland overseas and is a sector in which people want to work.

Fáilte Ireland’s Tourism Development & Innovation; A Strategy for Investment 2016 – 2022 is a broad strategy for investment in the tourism sector and seeks to identify the areas of investment that need focus on what will deliver sustainable growth in the Irish tourism sector resulting in higher revenue and more jobs.

The tourism sector’s best prospects for growth lie in generating increased levels of overseas revenue. The focus of the Government’s 2025 Tourism Policy is to increase the economic contribution of tourism to the Irish economy, by increasing the value of tourism service exports.

Fáilte Ireland, the national tourism development authority, aims to guide and promote tourism as a leading indigenous component of the Irish economy. Its current strategy for Kildare is encompassed in the ‘Ireland’s Ancient East’ programme.

INTO Kildare collaborates with Fáilte Ireland to promote County Kildare as a destination within Ireland’s Ancient East which has been developed as a branded visitor experience encompassing the rich heritage and cultural assets that Ireland has to offer in the eastern and southern half of the country.

The IAE visitor experience is based on Ireland’s rich built, natural and cultural legacy, made accessible and delivered through stories and interpretation at key historical sites, a significant number of which are owned and managed by the Office of Public Works.

Policy

It is the policy of the Council to:

RE P17	Continue to work in collaboration with other key stakeholders to implement the programmes and plans of the Ireland’s Ancient East initiative over the lifetime of the plan to maximise the tourism potential of the county.
---------------	---

RE P18	Continue to support and encourage increased co-ordination, cohesion and linkages between Fáilte Ireland, INTO Kildare and Kildare County Council.
---------------	---

Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

RE O126	Support the preparation and implementation of a Regional Tourism Strategy and to support the continued collaboration with Fáilte Ireland and all relevant tourism stakeholders.
RE O127	Support the preparation of Destination Experience Development Plans (DEDP) and other tourism masterplans both within County Kildare and also those which cross from County Kildare into neighbouring counties in collaboration with Fáilte Ireland and other tourism stakeholders.
RE O128	Continue to work with Fáilte Ireland and tourism stakeholders to implement the Thoroughbred Country Destination Development Plan and its key catalyst projects including, 'The New International Thoroughbred Trail' and 'The Thoroughbred County'.
RE O129	Continue to collaborate with Fáilte Ireland, the Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and other key stakeholders in the development and implementation of a signage programme associated with Ireland's Ancient East to include branded orientation signage and roadside signage in Irish and English.
RE O130	Facilitate the enhancement of appropriate visitor infrastructure and facilities in Kildare associated with Ireland's Ancient East sites and other places with tourism potential.
RE O131	Continue to work in collaboration with Fáilte Ireland and other key stakeholders on the development of the Ireland's Ancient East branding strategy, to implement the programmes and plans of the Ireland's Ancient East initiative over the lifetime of the plan and to maximise the tourism potential of the county
RE O132	Facilitate and promote Kildare Town's development as a National Tourism Hub, in conjunction with Fáilte Ireland and INTO Kildare.
RE O133	Investigate the feasibility of developing a Tourism Destination Centre within the Curragh which would focus on the equine and military history of the area, in conjunction with INTO Kildare and other tourism stakeholders.
RE O134	Continue to work with INTO Kildare to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Implement a tourism development strategy in the county and identify the particular role and competence of all partner agencies. (b) Develop an appropriate and compelling marketing proposition and plan for Kildare as a tourism destination. (c) Continue to develop a suite of training programmes that will ensure that tourism businesses in the county recruit staff with appropriate skills and provide for career development; and (d) Promote the Green Hospitality Programme.

4.24 Peatland Tourism

The development of both the Lullymore Heritage and Discovery Park and the proposed Umeras Peatlands Park has increased the access and educational value of the vast peatland network in the county. The uninterrupted expanse and biodiversity of these areas are a significant attraction. The Council will continue to seek to promote the existing facilities and their expansion.

The Council supports the longer-term strategic planning for industrial peatland areas, which should include a comprehensive after-use framework plan for the industrial peatlands and associated infrastructure including workshops, office buildings and industrial sites reflecting the current transition from employment based around peat extraction. This has potential for tourism resources, examples of which could include, peatways, bike-hire facilities recreational forestry, wilderness, eco-tourism based on biodiversity and a National Peatlands Park.

Policy

It is the policy of the Council to:

RE P19	Promote the tourist development potential of 'after use' peatlands, subject to proper planning, environmental protection and sustainable development whilst having regard to any mitigation as detailed within a Stage 2 AA or EclA..
---------------	---

Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

RE O135	<p>(a) Support and facilitate the development of Umeras Bog into a Peatlands Park.</p> <p>(b) Develop the tourism potential of peatlands and in particular support the proposed Umeras Peatlands Park and existing Lullymore Heritage and Discovery Park as tourist and ecological amenities subject to proper planning, environmental protection and sustainable development.</p> <p>(c) Explore what linkages could be created between raised boglands and fens and nearby blueways and greenways, whilst ensuring that the environment and nearby properties would not be negatively affected or where there will be no potential for likely significant effects on a European Site or on a site that shares a hydrological connection with a European Site.</p> <p>(d) Look at the feasibility of creating linkages between the proposed Umeras Peatlands Park and Monasterevin train station.</p> <p>(e) Look at the feasibility of creating linkages between Mouds Bog and the nearby town of Newbridge.</p> <p>Such developments shall be subject to AA screening and where applicable, Stage 2 AA, and should have regard to any mitigation as detailed within a Stage 2 AA or EclA.</p>
----------------	--

RE O136	Facilitate the development of a tourism resource using cutaway peatlands in conjunction with Bord na Móna and Fáilte Ireland, subject to environmental considerations and nature designations, for example, recreational forestry, outdoor pursuits, peat ways on the network of bogs and industrial railways and a designation of a National Peatlands Park. Such developments shall be subject to AA screening and where applicable, Stage 2 AA.
RE O137	Support in conjunction with Offaly County Council, Laois County Council and all other relevant stakeholders such as Bord na Mona, Coillte, the NPWS and environmental Non-Governmental Organisations, any proposal for a new National Peatland Park centred in Kildare on state-owned cutaway bogs in Kildare, Laois and Offaly having regard to other relevant land use plans where appropriate.
RE O138	Acknowledge the special status of Kilberry as an Industrial Village and to facilitate its tourism economic potential in conjunction with Bord na Móna, Fáilte Ireland and other relevant agencies.
RE O139	Require applicants to prepare a peatland stability assessment, carbon emissions balance assessment and hydrological and ecological impact assessments, as required, when developing project proposals for development on peatlands. ⁴

4.25 The Barrow Blueway

Waterways Ireland in conjunction with Kildare, Carlow, Laois and Kilkenny County Councils, LEADER Companies and INTO Kildare 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.

Policy

It is the policy of the Council to:

RE P20	Continue to work closely with key stakeholders in the tourism industry including Fáilte Ireland, INTO Kildare, Waterways Ireland, County Kildare Leader Partnership and the National Parks and Wildlife Services, in order to develop the Barrow Blueway for tourism and recreation and ensure ease of access to this amenity and that the Council works with Wicklow County Council, INTO Kildare, Fáilte Ireland and business stakeholders to promote the area both nationally and internationally as an area with a considerable number of tourist attractions and marketing potential.
---------------	--

⁴ Refer also to Objectives EC O58 (Chapter 7) & RD O41 (Chapter 9)

Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

RE O140	Support the development and marketing of the Barrow Blueway, including the Barrow Blueway Economic Plan, and facilitate related commercial opportunities throughout the county, subject to compliance with the Habitats Directive. Considering the River Barrow is a designated European Site, all developments within and adjacent to the Barrow Blueway should be subject to AA screening and where applicable Stage 2 AA.
RE O141	Support the development of a tourism masterplan for the River Barrow which sets out an integrated framework for tourism development along the River Barrow.
RE O142	(a) Recognise the importance of Monasterevin as a Blueway arrival town in Kildare and invest resources into developing the town into a heritage and nature tourism destination. (b) Seek to facilitate linkages between the Blueway and the nearby Ballykelly Mills and the proposed Umeras Peatlands Park.
RE O143	Support and facilitate the development of Athy as a Blueway destination based on the potential of the town's natural and built heritage assets.
RE O144	Support and facilitate the development of Rathangan and Robertstown as Blueway destination locations having regard to their natural and built heritage assets.

4.26 Greenways / The Barrow Blueway

Waterways Ireland in conjunction with Kildare, Carlow, Laois and Kilkenny County Councils, LEADER Companies and INTO Kildare 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.

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 riverbanks 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 (as part of the 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.

Policy

It is the policy of the Council to:

RE P21	Work with the National Transport Authority (in conjunction with relevant objectives in Chapter 5), INTO Kildare, 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 and region, subject to all relevant and cumulative environmental assessments and planning conditions. New trails and routes should first be subject to the undertaking of feasibility assessment. Where feasibility is established, a Corridor and Route Selection Process will be undertaken where appropriate, for relevant new infrastructure in two stages”, Stage 1 – Route Corridor Identification, Evaluation and Selection and Stage 2 – Route Identification, Evaluation and Selection.
---------------	---

Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

RE O145	Promote the development of existing and new walking and cycling routes throughout the county as an activity for both international visitors and local tourists, in a manner that is compatible with road safety, nature conservation and other environmental policies. Where developments of new and existing walking and cycling routes exist within 15km of a European Site, the project should be subject to AA screening and where applicable, Stage 2 AA.
RE O146	Liaise with Offaly and Meath County Council and explore the feasibility of a flagship greenway in Kildare between Edenderry in Co. Offaly and Enfield Co. Meath along the path of the former railway. This would form part of an outer loop between the Royal and Grand Canals. The loop could also connect with the River Slate at Rathangan.
RE O147	Investigate the feasibility of developing a walkway/cycleway along the former Tullow/ Harristown railway line/ Naas-Baltinglass Greenway and, where considered feasible, to initiate the delivery of this project within the lifetime of the Plan in conjunction with all relevant landowners.
RE O148	Continue to promote and develop the towpaths along the Grand Canal, the Royal Canal, the Barrow Line, the Milltown Feeder and the Corbally Line as cycleways and walkways, in co-operation with Waterways Ireland and neighbouring Local Authorities. Support the linking of these cycleways and walkways to the county’s towns and villages.
RE O149	Explore the potential of locating tourist services and facilities along the county’s greenways and blueways where these could be provided in an accessible, sustainable manner and where they would complement the offering of nearby service centres.
RE O150	Work with Waterways Ireland to progress the delivery of the (i) Naas to Sallins Greenway and (ii) Naas to Corbally Harbour Greenway and to develop the Naas Harbour and the Corbally Harbour for amenity purposes.

RE O151	Liaise with Wicklow County Council, South Dublin County Council and all relevant landowners to investigate the feasibility of a walking trail within Ballymore Eustace village, which spreads out along the River Liffey and connects to Golden Falls, Poulaphouca and Russborough House.
RE O152	Investigate the feasibility of developing walkways/cycleways to access raised bog lands and fens, particularly as an offshoot of the Royal and Grand Canal Greenways.
RE O153	Promote and support proposals, which maximise the connectivity of the Greenways and Blueways infrastructure, particularly through cycleways.
RE O154	Continue to work with Irish Waterways in order to remove 'Kissing Gates' which make canals inaccessible for many wheelchair users and cyclists.
RE O155	Support both the enhancement of existing and development of new access routes to water locations in the County for recreation purposes at appropriate locations and subject to all relevant planning and environmental considerations.
RE O156	Support and promote the adoption of the Government's 'Code of Best Practice for National and Regional Greenways (published in December 2021)' for all Greenway developments within the county.

4.27 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

It is the policy of the Council to:

RE P22	Work with stakeholders including the OPW, the Heritage Council, the Arts Council, local communities and businesses to support and promote the development of heritage and cultural tourism in County Kildare.
---------------	---

Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

RE O157	Ensure heritage assets (built and natural) that are the focus for tourism development, are appropriately managed and their special interest conserved from potential adverse effects from visitors or development in general and that best practice standards in relation to the environmental management of tourism enterprises are adhered to.
RE O158	Support and promote, with the co-operation of landowners, public access to heritage sites and features at appropriate locations whilst ensuring heritage related development does not result in negative impacts on the fabric or setting of Kildare's heritage assets
RE O159	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.
RE O160	Protect and promote key sites and tourist facilities in the north of the county such as the Wonderful Barn, Obelisk, Arthur's Way and other key sites linked to the estates of Carton, Lyons and Castletown. Encourage the development of Leixlip and Celbridge as tourism gateways to these significant tourism sites and facilities.
RE O161	Support and facilitate the integration of greenways and blueways with Heritage/Tourist Trails.

Actions

It is an action of the Council to:

RE A7	To prepare an integrated public amenity park and tourism destination at The Wonderful Barn and associated lands, to be informed by a detailed conservation and management plan.
--------------	---

4.28 Arts and Culture

Arts and culture is a key aspect of maintaining local culture and identity. It also has the potential to stimulate economic development through providing a unique cultural tourism offering within the County.

Objective

It is an objective of the Council to:

RE O162	Support and promote the development of an arts and crafts hub within the County that will attract tourism.
RE O163	That an employment hub be established in Kildare town that promotes activities associated with its status as the county tourist town.

4.29 Events and Festivals

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. County Kildare hosts a wide range of festivals and events including the internationally renowned Punchestown and The Curragh racing festivals and a number of racing events at Mondello Park which provide a significant boost to the County's tourism industry.

Policy

It is the policy of the Council to:

RE P23	Support and promote existing festivals and sporting events to increase the cultural, heritage and lifestyle profile of the county, and, where appropriate, promote and facilitate the development of new festivals and events.
---------------	--

Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

RE O164	Identify existing local festivals within the county that have the potential to become national and international events and actively support them in exploiting this potential.
RE O165	Support Mondello Park as a tourism, leisure, and education centre and to support its development as a nationally significant automotive innovation centre subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
RE O166	Support and encourage the 'greening' of all festivals and events within the county. Guidance in this regard could be sourced from 'Green Hospitality', an Irish Hospitality, Travel & Tourism Resource for Sustainable and Responsible Tourism (https://greenhospitality.ie).

4.30 Agri-Tourism

Agricultural based tourism, more frequently described as Agri-Tourism is recognised as a key driver of the local and rural economy. Co Kildare is an area that is known for its farmland. There is vast fertile land that attracts good farming practices. These practises however sometimes cannot support these farmers solely and they have to expand their business. They do this by introducing different types of tourism to their farm. For example, in many farms in Kildare there are food shops on them selling their product 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. Activities such as visiting a working farm for the purpose of enjoyment and education can be key parts of the rural experience.

Policy

It is the policy of the Council to:

RE P24	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.
---------------	---

Objective

It is an objective of the Council to:

RE O167	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.
----------------	---

4.31 Sports, Recreation and Tourism

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.

Policy

It is the policy of the Council to:

RE P25	Support the sustainable tourist related development of the Bloodstock and Equine Industries. (b) Recognise the importance of angling and the golf industry to tourism in the county. (c) Promote the development of international class sporting facilities in County Kildare.
RE P26	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

It is an objective of the Council to:

RE O168	Support and encourage further appropriate development of tourism and recreational facilities (such as golf, angling and horse racing) at key sites of national and international significance.
RE O169	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.

4.32 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.

Policy

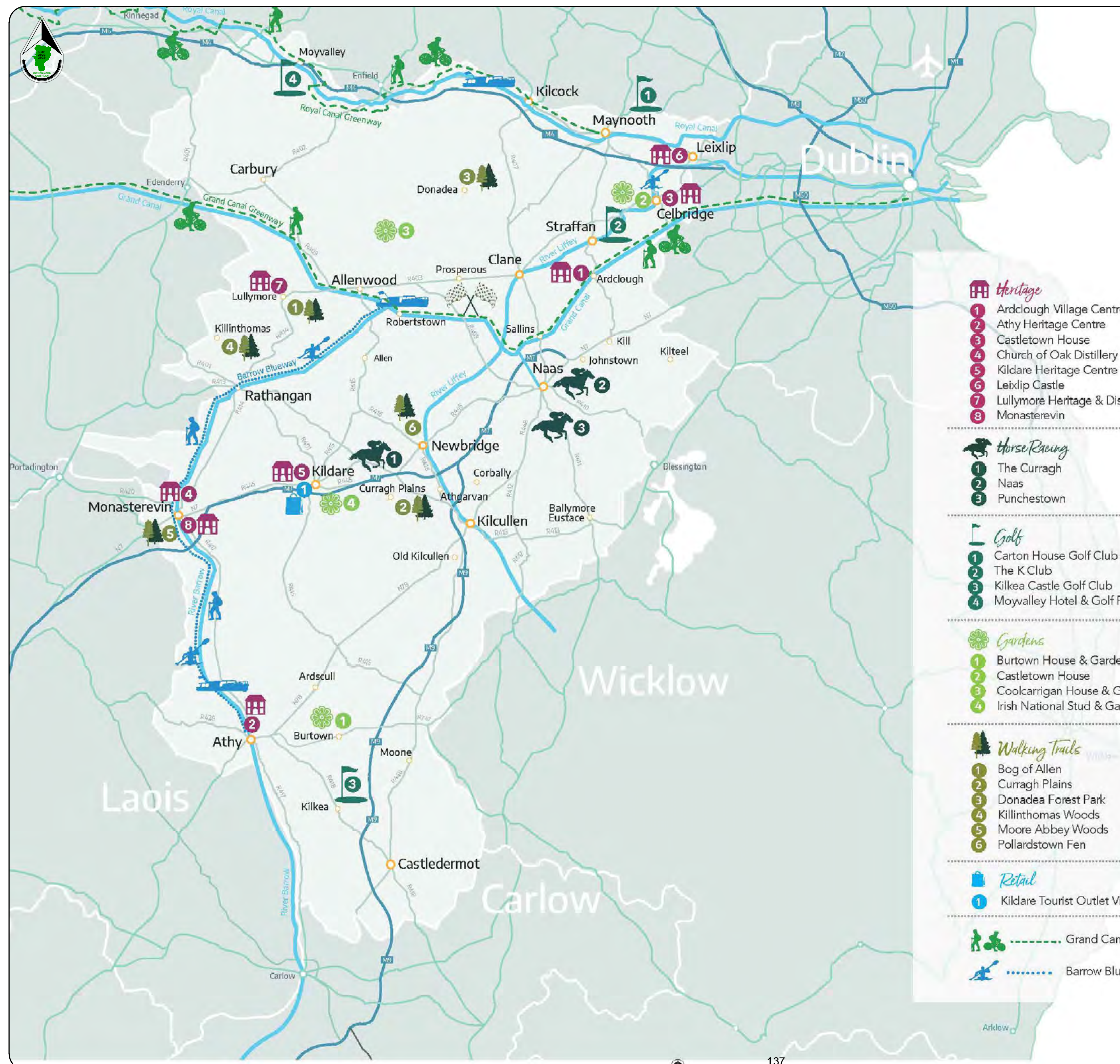
It is the policy of the Council to:

RE P27	Maximise opportunities for the use of canals and other waterways including the River Liffey and River Barrow as tourism and recreational amenities.
---------------	---

Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

RE O170	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.
RE O171	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.
RE O172	Support the only circular boating route in Ireland that links the Royal Canal, Shannon, Liffey and Grand Canal where it passes through Kildare.



- Heritage**
- 1 Ardclogh Village Centre
 - 2 Athy Heritage Centre
 - 3 Castletown House
 - 4 Church of Oak Distillery
 - 5 Kildare Heritage Centre
 - 6 Leixlip Castle
 - 7 Lullymore Heritage & Discovery Park
 - 8 Monasterevin

- Horse Racing**
- 1 The Curragh
 - 2 Naas
 - 3 Punchestown

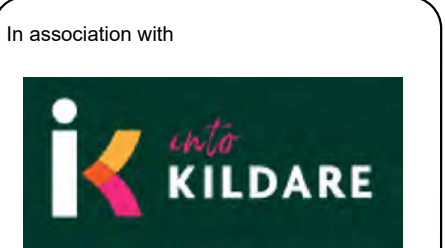
- Golf**
- 1 Carton House Golf Club
 - 2 The K Club
 - 3 Kilkea Castle Golf Club
 - 4 Moyvalley Hotel & Golf Resort

- Gardens**
- 1 Burtown House & Gardens
 - 2 Castletown House
 - 3 Coolcarrigan House & Gardens
 - 4 Irish National Stud & Gardens

- Walking Trails**
- 1 Bog of Allen
 - 2 Curragh Plains
 - 3 Donadea Forest Park
 - 4 Killinthomas Woods
 - 5 Moore Abbey Woods
 - 6 Pollardstown Fen

- Retail**
- 1 Kildare Tourist Outlet Village (KTOV)

- Grand Canal & Royal Canal Greenways
- Barrow Blueway



Stage	Date	Description
County Development Plan	28/01/2023	Date the Plan comes into effect
County Development Plan	09/12/2022	Plan Adopted By Elected Members

Kildare Tourism Map

Scale: N.T.S.	Map Ref.: V1-4.1
Date: January 2023	Drawing No.: 200/22/1344

Ordnance Survey Ireland data reproduced under OSL Licence number CHA5025073 © Ordnance Survey Ireland/Government of Ireland/Kildare County Council	Drawn by: intoKildare	Checked by: L Crawford	Approved by: C O'Donnell
	Date: 28/01/2023	Date: 28/01/2023	Date: 28/01/2023

This drawing is to be read in conjunction with the written statement