

9



# Our Rural Economy



## Chapter 9 Our Rural Economy

*Aim: To support and enable the provision of high-quality rural environments with an increased emphasis on the regeneration and renewal of our smaller rural towns and villages, sustaining the livelihoods of rural communities and promoting the development of the wider rural economy, all within the context of sustainable management of land and resources.*

### 9.1 Background

Kildare, the Thoroughbred County, boasts a range of distinguishing and unique natural and built features ranging from the two canals, the River Liffey, the magnificent Curragh Plains, the Bogs and Wetlands including Fens. The County is also home to a number of internationally renowned stately homes including Castletown House, Carton House, Kildoon House and Burtown House, many of which house tourist attractions and hospitality services.

Rural areas across the county are facing many challenges, ranging from urban generated pressures in some areas to a declining and aging population in other areas, coupled with lack of access to infrastructure and new technologies. Urban generated pressures such as significant pressure for one off housing in the countryside; with increased commuter traffic on rural roads, exploitation of natural resources – ranging from extractive industry, quarrying, in-fill with Construction & Demolition (C&D) waste, concrete batching plants, diversification of uses on former cut-away bogs and energy production and distribution – wind farms, solar farms, strategic energy infrastructure – expansion of sub-stations, new transmission lines, battery storage facilities. These uses, although in some cases absolutely necessary, represent competing demands on the rural resource and while there are economic opportunities associated with these it requires very careful management.

A key challenge is to ensure that in planning for rural places, responses are uniquely tailored to recognise the balance required between managing urban generated demand in the most accessible rural areas (i.e., north of the county) whilst supporting the sustainable growth of rural communities and economies, including those facing decline (i.e., south of the county).

Traditional sectors such as agriculture, extractive industries, and forestry will be important in helping Kildare reach targets in relation to climate change and will play a vital role over the coming years and the period of this plan to help Ireland reach its climate targets particularly in relation to food security, carbon storage, provision of renewable energy, reducing emissions, protection of water bodies and increasing biodiversity.

These sectors along with tourism will need to be complemented by diversification in areas such as food, renewable energy and opportunities provided from improved digital connectivity e.g., facilitating those in rural areas to work remotely.

The agri-food, forestry, and tourism sectors play a significant role in Ireland's rural economy. Kildare is well positioned to contribute more to the tourism sector with the development of Greenways, Blueways, and Peatways and the potential of a National Peatlands Park providing an alternative eco-tourism visitor experience.

Renewable energy production in the form of wind, solar, and biomass have to date been largely provided in rural areas and the location of future renewable energy production is likely to be met in rural areas. For further details in relation to renewable energy refer to Chapter 7 – Energy & Communications.

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

## **9.2 Planning Policy Context**

Development Plan policies and objectives must be consistent with national and regional planning policy as set out in the *National Planning Framework 2040 (NPF)*, *the Eastern Midlands Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031 (RSES)* and *Our Rural Future 2021-2025*.

### **9.2.1 National Planning Framework 2040**

There are several objectives within the *National Planning Framework (NPF)* which relate to rural development. These are referred to as National Policy Objective's (NPO's).

The NPF objectives of most relevance to this chapter primarily address climate change and sustainability whilst maintaining and protecting the natural landscape and built heritage which are vital to rural tourism and supporting / facilitating the delivery of the National Broadband Plan.

### **9.2.2 Eastern Midlands Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy 2019-2031**

Within the *Eastern and Midlands Regional Economic and Spatial Strategy (RSES)* there are several objectives which relate to rural development. These are referred to as Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs). In summary the RSES requires development plans to include policies that:

- Recognise the contribution that small towns, villages, and rural areas contribute to social and economic wellbeing, that support the rural economy and initiatives in relation to diversification.
- Support the longer-term strategic planning for industrial peatland areas.
- Support innovation in rural economic development and enterprise through the diversification of the rural economy into new sectors and services, including ICT-

based industries and those addressing climate change and sustainability.

- Facilitate the development of sustainable and economically efficient rural economies.

### **9.2.3 Our Rural Future (Rural Development Policy 2021-2025)**

Our Rural Future provides a framework for the development of rural Ireland over the next five years. The policy is forward looking and ambitious and addresses both the challenges facing rural areas and the opportunities which rural economies and communities can benefit from in the coming years.

The document focuses on the following thematic objectives:

- Optimising the opportunities for rural communities high-speed broadband.
- Supporting improved quality employment and career opportunities in rural areas.
- Assisting the regeneration, repopulation and development of rural towns and villages.
- Enhancing the participation, leadership, and resilience of rural communities.
- Enhancing public services in rural areas.
- Supporting a just transition to a climate neutral economy.
- Supporting the sustainability of agriculture, the marine and forestry.
- Nurturing our culture and heritage.

## **9.3 Rural Economy & Rural Enterprise**

It is important to recognise that there is a role for rural employment in contributing to the general economic development of the county. In rural areas of the county there is a need to balance social and economic activity with the protection of the environment and character of the rural landscape. The rural employment base should encourage diversification of the rural economy, by promoting economic growth in towns, villages and settlements to support local populations, by facilitating stronger rural based activities including tourism and leisure activities and encouraging more appropriate forms of rural development.

The development of rural enterprise and employment opportunities will be vital to sustaining the rural economy. Employment servicing the rural areas should in general be directed to local employment centres, small towns and villages catering for local investment and small-scale industry.

Other land uses such as housing while not encouraged may be considered in the rural countryside. If land is not within an identified settlement and is not otherwise zoned as part of this Plan, or any Local Area Plan, the use of such land shall be deemed to be primarily agriculture.

## Policy

It is the policy of the Council to:

<b>RD P1</b>	Support and promote rural enterprises and encourage appropriate expansion and diversification in areas such as sustainable agriculture, forestry, peatlands, peatlands rehabilitation and sustainable peatland related tourism, food, crafts, renewable energy at suitable locations in the county, particularly where they contribute to a low carbon and resilient economy.
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## Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

<b>RD O1</b>	Encourage the development of appropriately scaled alternative rural based small-scale enterprises that are appropriate in rural areas. All planning applications for one off enterprises in rural areas shall have regard to the criteria listed in Table 9.1 of the Plan.
<b>RD O2</b>	Facilitate agriculture, horticulture, forestry, tourism, energy production and rural resource-based enterprise within the rural settlements and in appropriate rural locations subject to relevant development management standards.
<b>RD O3</b>	Promote resource efficiency and support the shift toward a low-carbon and climate resilient economy in the agriculture (including signpost farms), food, and forestry sectors in County Kildare.
<b>RD O4</b>	Encourage and facilitate the sensitive re-use of vernacular houses or farm buildings for farm diversification, agri-tourism, and other appropriate rural-based development.
<b>RD O5</b>	Require new buildings and structures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be sited as unobtrusively as possible.</li> <li>• To be clustered to form a distinct and unified feature in the landscape.</li> <li>• To utilise suitable materials and colours.</li> <li>• To utilise native species in screen planting to integrate development into the landscape.</li> </ul>
<b>RD O6</b>	Encourage the conservation and promotion of biodiversity in all rural development activities whilst supporting the restoration, preservation, and enhancement of ecosystems dependent on agriculture and forestry.
<b>RD O7</b>	Support the development of renewable energy production in rural areas where appropriate.
<b>RD O8</b>	Promote the provision of broadband and other communications infrastructure in rural areas of the county through supporting the continued roll out of the National Broadband Scheme.
<b>RD O9</b>	Support the European Network for Rural Development's Smart Villages initiative to improve economic performance and quality of life in rural areas through digital and social innovation in co-operation with West Kildare SMART Rural Alliance and all other relevant stakeholders.

In general, existing commercial or industrial activities in towns and villages will not be permitted to re-locate to the countryside or to un-serviced rural areas. However, in specific circumstances, some commercial / industrial developments may be

acceptable in rural areas due to their dependence on an existing local resource or source material that is required for the carrying out of the process / activity or service. In such instances the local resource or source of material shall be situated close to the location of the proposed development.

Established authorised rural based enterprises seeking to expand beyond their existing capacity, where in the opinion of the planning authority, the expansion proposed would seriously affect the rural nature or amenity of the rural area and surrounding countryside, will be encouraged to relocate on nearby serviced zoned lands.

Uses that would attract significant customer draw, including non-farm related shops/retailing in un-serviced rural areas will not be favourably considered particularly where they negatively impact on the vitality and vibrancy of nearby established and serviced centres. One-off enterprises in the rural area may be situated in the open countryside only where the council is satisfied that there is a demonstrable need for the enterprise at the specific location in the first instance and where it complies with the criteria outlined in Table 9.1 below.

Proposals for the development of one-off new small-scale enterprises in rural areas outside of designated employment centres will be assessed against the following criteria:

- Development proposals shall be limited to small-scale rural based business development with a floor area at circa 200 square meters and shall be appropriate in scale to its location.
- The development will enhance the strength of the local rural economy.
- The proposed development will normally be located on the site of a redundant farm building / yard or similar agricultural brownfield site.
- There is a demonstrable social and economic benefit to being located in a rural area.
- The proposal shall include a comprehensive planting plan of native species to screen the development.
- The proposal will not adversely affect the character and appearance of the landscape.
- The proposal will not be detrimental to the amenity of nearby properties, and in particular the amenities of nearby residents.
- The existing or planned local road network and other essential infrastructure can accommodate extra demand generated by the proposal.
- The proposal shall be accompanied by a mobility plan catering for employees' home to work transportation.
- Adequate proposals to cater for any waste arising at the facility.
- All advertising should be kept to a minimum and be suitable in design and scale to serve the business.
- Proper planning and sustainable development.
- The proposals should conform to all other objectives of the County Development Plan.

**Table 9.1 - Criteria for Assessment of One-off Enterprises in Rural Areas.**

## 9.4 Agriculture/ Agri-Food Sector

The plan recognises and supports the role of farmers as custodians of the natural resources of the countryside and of rural landscapes. Over the past number of years there has been a significant fall off in agricultural employment. This is indicative of the changing nature of the rural economy. The total area of land farmed in Kildare is 113,765 ha, comprising 67% of the overall area of the county. Since 1991 the number of farms has reduced from 3,251 to 2,578 in 2010. This represents a reduction of 20% compared to a 17% reduction for the state.

The 2010 Census of Agriculture has recorded Kildare’s average farm size as 44.13ha. This compares to the 2000 Census of Agriculture Figure of 2,694 farms with an average size of 41.8ha.

Labour Input 2010	Total Farms	2,578
Regular Labour	Family	2,853
	Non-Family	340
Non-Regular Labour	Contract	60
	Casual	62
	Relief	4

**Table 9.2** - Labour input including casual, contract, and relief workers on farms in county Kildare in 2010. Source: CSO Census of Agriculture 2010.

In terms of employment, the 2016 Census of Population recorded 3,190 persons of the labour force of County Kildare in the “farming, fishing, and forestry” occupational group. This represents only 3.3% of the County Kildare workforce, notably lower than the state average of 4.4%.

These figures indicate that whilst the number of farms may have decreased over the period, their average size increased marginally, suggesting that consolidation of farms may have taken place, to create larger, more viable / diversified landholdings employing larger numbers of people. Teagasc National Farm Survey 2019 shows that over half (52%) of all farm households have off-farm income.

### 9.4.1 Agri Food Sector

The Irish agri-food sector is Ireland’s oldest and largest indigenous industry. In 2020, the sector accounted for almost 7% of Gross National Income (GNI) and 10% of exports in value terms. The sector grew substantially over the past decade, with Irish food and drink exports increasing by 60% from €8.9 billion in 2010 to €14.2 billion in 2020.

The sector also employs approximately 164,400 people representing 7.1% of total employment. Outside of Dublin and the mid-east region, the sector provides between 10% and 14% of employment<sup>1</sup> The sector plays an increasingly crucial role in the rural economy and in the development of the county in general.

<sup>1</sup> Food Vision 2030

## Policy

It is the policy of the Council to:

<b>RD P2</b>	Support the future and continued development of agriculture and the agri-food sector in County Kildare.
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## Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

<b>RD O10</b>	Encourage the development of environmentally sustainable agricultural practices, to ensure that development does not impinge on the visual amenity of the countryside and that the quality of the natural environment (watercourses, wildlife habitats and areas of ecological importance) is maintained and protected from the threat of pollution to support the achievement of climate targets.
<b>RD O11</b>	Facilitate the development of alternative farm enterprises, and appropriate small scale start-up rural enterprise in the countryside with the intention to supplement existing farm incomes e.g., converting redundant farm buildings for other farm-based activities such as agri-food, tourism, crafts, and energy whilst balancing this with the need to protect, promote, and enhance the viability and environmental quality of the existing rural economy and agricultural land.
<b>RD O12</b>	Support the implementation of the objectives identified in the County Biodiversity Action Plan 2009-2014 (or as updated).
<b>RD O13</b>	Encourage farmers markets and local food Hubs for the sale of locally produced goods at appropriate locations in the towns and villages across the county.
<b>RD O14</b>	Preserve the open character of commonage land.

## 9.5 Equine

The equine industry is hugely important to Kildare's economy, generating significant foreign direct investment and attracting large numbers of tourists each year. Known as '*The Thoroughbred County*,' Kildare has a world-renowned reputation for breeding and is home to three of the country's leading racecourses (The Curragh, Naas, and Punchestown) and many other training and educational facilities and other bodies and organisations established in County Kildare which support the equine industry such as such as Horse Racing Ireland, The National Stud, the Equine Innovation Hub (at the National Stud), Horse Sport Ireland, the Equine Centre, Goffs.

The industry provides over 4,700 jobs (direct, indirect, and secondary employment) in the county and over €420 million in annual expenditure<sup>2</sup>.

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

<sup>2</sup> Horse Racing Ireland report commissioned in 2019

## Policies

It is the policy of the Council to:

<b>RD P3</b>	Support equine related activities of an appropriate size at suitable locations in the county.
<b>RD P4</b>	Support and encourage the continued development of a distinguished bloodstock and equine industry in the County, including breeding and training, and seek to ensure appropriate environmental conditions for equine operations, insofar as is practicable.

## Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

<b>RD O15</b>	Encourage the expansion of the bloodstock industry by appropriately protecting the environment and amenity value of rural areas from encroachment by urban sprawl and incompatible development.
<b>RD O16</b>	Ensure that equine based developments are located on suitable and viable landholdings and are subject to normal planning, siting and design considerations.
<b>RD O17</b>	Protect the Curragh, Punchestown, and Naas racecourses from any development that would interfere with their amenity value and qualities while, at the same time promoting the enhancement of facilities as an attraction for visitors / attendees.
<b>RD O18</b>	Promote and encourage the development of activities that relate to the equine industry in the county such as riding schools, pony trekking and the development of bridle paths.
<b>RD O19</b>	To continue to promote Kildare's world-renowned reputation for breeding and racing at The Curragh, Naas, and Punchestown) and to support the ongoing operation of training and educational facilities and other bodies and organisations established in County Kildare.

## 9.6 Horticulture

The Irish Horticulture Industry was worth €477 million farm gate value (market value minus selling costs) in 2019. Horticulture Food output (i.e., mushrooms, potatoes, vegetables, and fruit) represented €410 million and Amenity Horticulture €67 million (i.e., nursery stock, Christmas trees, flowers, and bulbs).

While there has been a continual reduction in the number of produce growers over the past two decades those remaining in production have broadly maintained the same level of output. Across the industry there are approximately 1,000 growers currently in commercial production with an estimated 6,600 people working within the industry while another 11,000 jobs are in ancillary employment.<sup>3</sup>

Most of the horticulture output in Ireland is consumed in this country. However, a major challenge for the industry is the shortage of peat to assist in growing produce following restrictions on peat extraction and the closure of Bord na Mona facilities.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Agriculture

## Policy

It is the policy of the Council to:

<b>RD P5</b>	Support the horticulture and nursery stock industry in County Kildare.
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## Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

<b>RD O20</b>	Support and encourage the work of the horticultural sector and third level institutions in the development of peat free media/compost to assist growers, producers, garden centres and homeowners with a sustainable alternative to peat-based compost and the negative environmental impacts associated with peat extraction.
<b>RD O21</b>	Encourage the development of environmentally sustainable horticultural practices, to ensure that development does not impinge on the visual amenity of the countryside and that watercourses, wildlife habitats and areas of ecological importance are protected from the threat of pollution.

## 9.7 Forestry

Forests and woodlands have played and will continue to play an important role in terms of rural employment, climate change management / carbon sequestration and biodiversity. The forest sector provides around 12,000 jobs nationally most of which are in rural Ireland. Forests and forest products are playing an increasingly important role in mitigating the effects of climate change.

In 2017, 10,396ha of the county was in forest cover<sup>4</sup>. Coillte manages 2,050ha (c. 20%) of the forest cover in Kildare.

Currently only 11% of the country is forested which is the lowest in Europe compared to an average of over 40%. This degree of forest cover is below the national objective set out in the *Strategic Plan for the Development of the Forestry Sector in 'Ireland Growing for the Future'* (1996), which sets a target of 17% of the country's total land area to be under forest cover by 2030.

## Policy

It is the policy of the Council to:

<b>RD P6</b>	Increase forest cover in the county at appropriate locations while protecting sensitive landscapes, water bodies, all sites, habitats, and species of ecological importance including European sites and amenity areas.
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<sup>4</sup> National Forestry Inventory, 2017

## Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

<b>RD O22</b>	Encourage public and private owners to allow / provide public access to forests for recreational and amenity use e.g., walking, biking and equine trails to enhance health and wellbeing.
<b>RD O23</b>	Encourage appropriately located forestry and forestry related development, as a means of diversifying from traditional farming activity.
<b>RD O24</b>	Facilitate tourism infrastructure and visitor services including tourism accommodation at appropriate locations in forest estates in accordance with all relevant planning and environmental conditions.
<b>RD O25</b>	Support the use of sustainable timber products as a renewable raw material.
<b>RD O26</b>	Support new forestry plantation and works related to forestry, subject to protection of visually sensitive areas, ecology, water resources and abstractions, and compliance with national regulations with respect to protection of the environment.
<b>RD O27</b>	Support the development of forestry resources with several functions including, flood retention, biodiversity, water quality/catchment management, tourism, and recreation in conjunction with Coillte and other relevant stakeholders.
<b>RD O28</b>	Discourage monocultural forestry and encourage a greater range of tree species in forestry plantations and promote, in particular, more native, deciduous hardwood woodlands. Such forestry plantations shall be subject to best practice and appropriate biosecurity measures and protocols.
<b>RD O29</b>	Ensure that existing public rights of ways and walking routes are not obstructed during the planting of forests.
<b>RD O30</b>	Ensure that development is appropriate in scale and character and does not have a negative visual impact on the countryside including public access, rights of way, walking routes and recreational facilities or cause degradation of wildlife habitats, nature conservation areas or areas of ecological importance.
<b>RD O31</b>	Recognise the potential of forestry including Coillte's "open forest" policy and protect and encourage access to forestry and woodlands (including private forestry) in co-operation with all relevant stakeholders for walking routes, long-distance and looped walks, mountain trails, nature trails, bridle paths, orienteering and hiking.

## 9.8 Bogs and Peatlands

24,300 ha (60,045) of land in County Kildare is covered by bogs, which represents 14% of the total land cover of the county. Most of the bogland resources in Kildare are in the north-west and south-west of the county, the majority of which are raised bogs with smaller blanket bog areas. Bord na Móna owns 8,765 ha of peatlands in the county, representing c.10% of its national landholding. In January 2021, Bord na Móna announced the cessation of industrial peat extraction across all its landbank including lands in Co. Kildare. The council recognises the potential of these industrial peatlands

in relation to a variety of uses and functions including re-wetting, re-wilding, carbon sequestration renewable energy, biodiversity, tourism, amenity, recreation, and other appropriate after uses with job opportunities.

Many of the county’s peatland resources are designated Special Areas of Conservation and Natural Heritage Areas. Under the Habitats Directive, it is a legal requirement to protect bogs. The potential for the utilisation of peatland / protected peatland areas for tourist, amenity, carbon storage, biodiversity, and educational / research purposes is acknowledged and promoted.

Peatlands form a distinctive aspect of Kildare’s Landscape. They represent some of the counties last areas of wilderness. The former Bog of Allen is the largest raised peat bog in Ireland. At over 950 square kilometres, it spreads across nine counties, including Kildare, and is the source of the River Boyne. Contained within this bogland in Kildare are a number of protected sites, the former boglands of Bord Na Móna and a number of visitor attraction centres around the bogland heritage such as Lullymore. The National Peatland Strategy 2014 which set targets for the re-use of cutaway bogs in terms of environmental protection, forestry, energy production and recognises the importance of this peatland landscape and promotes the concept of a National Peatland Park to explore the rich natural, archaeological, and cultural heritage of this unique landscape. The Council recognises the importance of raised bogland as a major natural, archaeological and amenity resource and will liaise with the relevant Government departments and NGOs to try to secure the conservation of original peatland areas.

**Policy**

It is the policy of the Council to:

<b>RD P7</b>	Support the appropriate and sensitive diversification of former cutaway peatlands, whilst ensuring the protection of their ecological, archaeological, cultural, and educational significance in line with the National Peatlands Strategy (DAHG 2015) the National Raised Bog Special Area of Conservation Management Plan 2017-2022 and the Peatlands & Climate Change Action Plan 2030.
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**Objectives**

It is an objective of the Council to:

<b>RD O32</b>	Encourage the re-wetting, restoring and/or re-wilding of former cutaway bogs and peatlands with an emphasis on maximising biodiversity and carbon sequestration to account for approximately 70% of cutaway bogs. Such projects shall be subject to Appropriate Assessment; shall have regard to any hydrological connection shared with a European Site and their qualifying interest species; shall not adversely affect drainage of surrounding lands; and shall account for any potential likely significant effects and provide mitigation and monitoring where appropriate.
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<b>RD O33</b>	Work with all relevant stakeholders including Bord na Móna to support the sustainable re-use and sustainable development <sup>5</sup> of up to approximately 30% of cutaway boglands (within County Kildare) for economic purposes, including <i>inter alia</i> renewable energy (wind and solar) in appropriate locations, subject to relevant environmental assessments. Such projects shall be subject to Appropriate Assessment; shall have regard to any hydrological connection shared with a European Site and their qualifying interest species; shall not adversely affect drainage of surrounding lands; and shall account for any potential likely significant, cumulative and in combination effects.
<b>RD O34</b>	Proposals brought forward for any development on the county's cutaway peatlands shall be accompanied by an independent biodiversity profile of the landholding, setting out how the proposed development was formulated having regard to the following step by step, biodiversity-led process: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identification of areas of greatest ecological value and how the proposal is compatible with peatland restoration.</li> <li>2. Identification of areas of greatest carbon sequestration value.</li> <li>3. Identification of areas of amenity value and potential, and incorporation of the Green Infrastructure Strategy (see Section 12.14.5).</li> <li>4. Identification of the subject site as a percentage of the overall landholding and justification for the proposed use having regard to Objective RD O33.</li> </ol>
<b>RD O35</b>	Support diversification and re-use of buildings previously associated with peat extraction to waste management and resource recovery infrastructure.
<b>RD O36</b>	Support the development of a National Peatlands Park in co-operation with Bord na Mona, NPWS, Inland Fisheries Ireland, local community groups and other relevant stakeholders as per recommendation 9 of the BOGLAND Report from the EPA in 2011, Action A28 of the National Peatland Strategy 2014 and the Local Just Transition Plan for West Kildare 2022.
<b>RD O37</b>	Recognise the importance of cutover and cutaway bogs in providing some critical ecosystem services such as potential carbon sinks. Cutover bogs should be identified for immediate management interventions to prevent further degradation, particularly the ongoing loss of their carbon store.
<b>RD O38</b>	Encourage, where possible, the return to a natural functioning peatland ecosystem in the first instance.
<b>RD O39</b>	Protect peatlands from inappropriate development having regard to the Wind Energy Strategy for County Kildare (see Appendix 2).
<b>RD O40</b>	Ensure that peatland areas which are designated (or proposed for designation) as NHAs, SACs or SPAs are conserved for their ecological

<sup>5</sup> 'Development' will be defined as that area that includes all structures, pylon bases, foundations, roads in, on or crossing over the land, solar PV panels, turbines, the area beneath any turbine blades and all lands measured from the outer edge of a turbine blade to the next or adjoining turbine blade where the distance is not greater than 1 km. Greenways/peatways/trailways/bridle ways or amenity spaces will not be included.

	and archaeological significance.
<b>RD O41</b>	When developing project proposals for development on peatlands, undertake a peatland stability assessment, carbon emissions balance assessment and hydrological and ecological impact assessments, as required. <sup>6</sup>

### Action

It is an Action of the Council to:

<b>RD A1</b>	<p>Promote and support the development and operation of a number of long distance peatways that traverse the Bog of Allen utilising former industrial peat railway tracks and lines at the following locations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From Ticknevin Bridge (Grand Canal) to Rathangan</li> <li>• Enfield (Royal Canal)/Kilshancoe (Raven’s Cross)/Killyon/Doogary through Timahoe Bog to Allenwood Community Development Association Ltd. and onto the Grand Canal and from there through Lullymore East and onto the Rathangan.</li> </ul> <p>These routes would also provide a loop walk comprising elements of the above two routes.</p>
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## 9.9 Mineral Resources & Extractive Industry

Mineral resources are generally located within the rural area. Reserves of suitable material are finite, and the nature of the extractive industry is such that the industry must be developed where the resource occurs. The industry can have damaging environmental effects and permission will only be granted where the council is satisfied that residential and natural amenities will be protected, pollution will be prevented, and aquifers and ground water safeguarded.

Whilst the environment must be protected, it is also important to ensure the availability of adequate supplies of aggregates and to facilitate the exploitation thereof to meet the future needs of the county and region in line with the principles of sustainable development and environmental management. Aggregate resources are important to the general economy with over 500 active quarries nationally in 2018, directly employing over 5,000 people. The industry provides a valuable source of employment in some areas of the county and the sector is vital to ensure provision of raw materials for the construction industry to facilitate the building of residential units, health care facilities, education facilities, social infrastructure and physical infrastructure to accommodate the existing and anticipated population growth in the county over the lifetime of the Plan and beyond.

Extraction sites have long term environmental impacts and can significantly alter the landscape therefore there is a need to manage this impact particularly in sensitive landscapes as outlined in *Chapter 13* of the Plan – *Landscape, Recreation & Amenity*. While siting is based on resource locations, the Council will protect high amenity / special / unique sensitivity areas and limit new and / or extending existing extractive

<sup>6</sup> Refer also to Objectives RE O139 (Chapter 4) & EC O58 (Chapter 7)

industries in these areas.

### **9.9.1 Post Closure of Extractive Industry**

#### **After-Use Strategy for Quarries**

The conditions of quarry after-use and rehabilitation frequently involves the restoration of quarries, as far as possible, to their original appearance. This may result in the loss of key features that may ironically, have some ecological benefit or rich biodiversity interest. For example, sand and gravel banks are sometimes used as nesting sites by sand martins; rock faces and cliff ledges can provide ideal nesting sites for ravens and peregrine falcons; their crevices have been known to provide nesting sites for jackdaws, kestrels, and barn owls. Duck species and waders (such as snipe and lapwing) have been known to frequent the ponds and wetlands at quarry sites. Some of these species are of high or medium conservation concern being listed as red or amber (Birds of Conservation Concern Ireland/International Union for the Conservation of Nature). Orchids and other wildflowers have colonized exposed areas while colonizing scrub vegetation provides a sanctuary for other birdlife and mammals.

Therefore, in developing any after-use strategy and/or restoration plan, there will be a requirement to prepare a detailed survey and assessment of the intrinsic ecological character first (by an appropriate ecologist), identifying the range and location of key species of flora and fauna on site. The rehabilitation plan should work around these habitats and species in a process known as Rehabilitation Ecology.

Ideally, the final restoration plan will provide for a mosaic of habitats, including, for example, cliff/sand or gravel banks, ponds, wetlands, open meadow (appropriately seeded), naturally recolonizing scrubland and planted woodland (i.e., saplings of native tree species). The interface of habitats will provide for a rich biodiversity network. Where obvious scarring and visual impact off-site is evident, infilling and backfilling may be desirable however rather than reverting to agricultural grasslands, in such instances it is recommended that the lands be given over to specific biodiversity and ecological benefit with, for example, wildflower meadows and native woodland planting. It should be noted that the importation of any materials for the purpose of restoration requires planning permission, similarly where planning permission is required for any proposed after-uses same should be obtained.

In order to achieve this, specific targets need to be established. It is a requirement, that quarry remediation plans provide for environmental benefit, biodiversity, and re-wilding in all instances. The 80% requirement for environmental/biodiversity may be waived at sites closer to urban areas where a significant portion of the site is being provided for sports, recreation and amenity uses.

## Policy

It is the policy of the Council to:

<b>RD P8</b>	Support and manage the appropriate future development of Kildare's natural aggregate resources in appropriate locations to ensure adequate supplies are available to meet the future needs of the county and the region in line with the principles of sustainable development and environmental management and to require operators to appropriately manage extraction sites when extraction has ceased.
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## Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

<b>RD O42</b>	<p>Ensure that development for aggregate extraction, processing and associated concrete production does not significantly impact the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)</li> <li>- Special Protection Areas (SPAs)</li> <li>- Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs)</li> <li>- Other areas of importance for the conservation of flora and fauna.</li> <li>- Zones of Archaeological Potential.</li> <li>- The vicinity of a recorded monument.</li> <li>- Sensitive landscape areas as identified in Chapter 13 of this Plan.</li> <li>- Scenic views and prospects.</li> <li>- Protected Structures.</li> <li>- Established rights of way and walking routes.</li> <li>- Potential World Heritage Sites in Kildare on the UNESCO Tentative List, Ireland.</li> </ul>
<b>RD O43</b>	Consult with the Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI), with regard to any developments likely to have an impact on sites of Geological Importance listed in Chapter 12 of this Plan.
<b>RD O44</b>	<p>Require applications for mineral or other extraction to include (but not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An Appropriate Assessment Screening where there is any potential for effects on a Natura 2000 site (see Chapter 12).</li> <li>- An Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR).</li> <li>- An Ecological Impact Assessment may also be required for sub-threshold developments to evaluate the existence of any protected species / habitats on site.</li> <li>- A detailed landscaping plan to be submitted indicating proposed screening for the operational life of the site. The predominant use of native plant species in the proposed landscaping plan will be expected.</li> <li>- Detailed landscaping and quarry restoration plans. Habitats and species surveying shall be carried out and shall influence the restoration plan for the site.</li> <li>- Comprehensive Site Restoration Plan and/or After-Use Strategy having regard to the principles of 'Rehabilitation Ecology'</li> <li>- Transport Impact Assessment</li> </ul>

<b>RD O45</b>	Require, where permission is granted for quarrying / extraction of aggregates, the submission by the developer of a bond (cash deposit, bond from an insurance company or other security acceptable to the planning authority) to ensure the satisfactory completion and restoration of the site.
<b>RD O46</b>	Require road re-instatement work to be on-going during operations, in the interests of road and traffic safety. Works undertaken to re-instate/improve the public road should be undertaken by the quarry developer or paid by them and completed by the Council.
<b>RD O47</b>	Protect and safeguard the county's natural aggregate resources from inappropriate development.
<b>RD O48</b>	Manage the finite aggregate resources being mined by the extractive industries in the county to supply the future needs of our region while working to reach our climate change targets.
<b>RD O49</b>	Have regard to the following guidance documents (as may be amended, replaced, or supplemented) in the assessment of planning applications for quarries, ancillary services, restoration and after-use: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Quarries and Ancillary Activities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DEHLG (2004).</li> <li>- Environmental Management Guidelines – Environmental Management in the Extractive Industry (Non-Scheduled Minerals), EPA (2006).</li> <li>- Archaeological Code of Practice between the DEHLG and ICF (2009).</li> <li>- Geological Heritage Guidelines for the Extractive Industry (2008).</li> <li>- Wildlife, Habitats, and the Extractive Industry – Guidelines for the protection of biodiversity within the extractive industry, NPWS (2009).</li> </ul>
<b>RD O50</b>	Ensure the satisfactory and sensitive re-instatement and/or re-use of disused quarries and extraction facilities, where active extraction use has ceased. Future uses should include amenity, recreation and biodiversity areas shall be informed by an assessment of the specific site/lands and shall be subject to an ecological impact assessment or other environmental assessments as appropriate. Where it is proposed to reclaim, regenerate, or rehabilitate old quarries by filling or re-grading with inert soil or similar material, or to use worked-out quarries as disposal locations for inert materials, the acceptability of the proposal shall be evaluated against the criteria set out in Section 15.9.6 of this Plan. The Council will resist development that would significantly or unnecessarily alter the natural landscape and topography, including land infilling/ reclamation projects or projects involving significant landscape remodelling, unless it can be demonstrated that the development would enhance the landscape and / or not give rise to adverse impacts.
<b>RD O51</b>	Require that quarry remediation plans provide for environmental benefit, biodiversity and re-wilding in all instances. The 80% requirement for environmental/biodiversity may be waived at sites closer to urban areas where a significant portion of the site is being provided for sports, recreation, and amenity.