



LECP

Kildare Local Economic
and Community Plan

Consultation Report

November 2023



Comhairle Contae Chill Dara
Kildare County Council



Coiste um Fhorbairt Pobail Áitiúil Liathroma
Leitrim Local Community Development
Committee

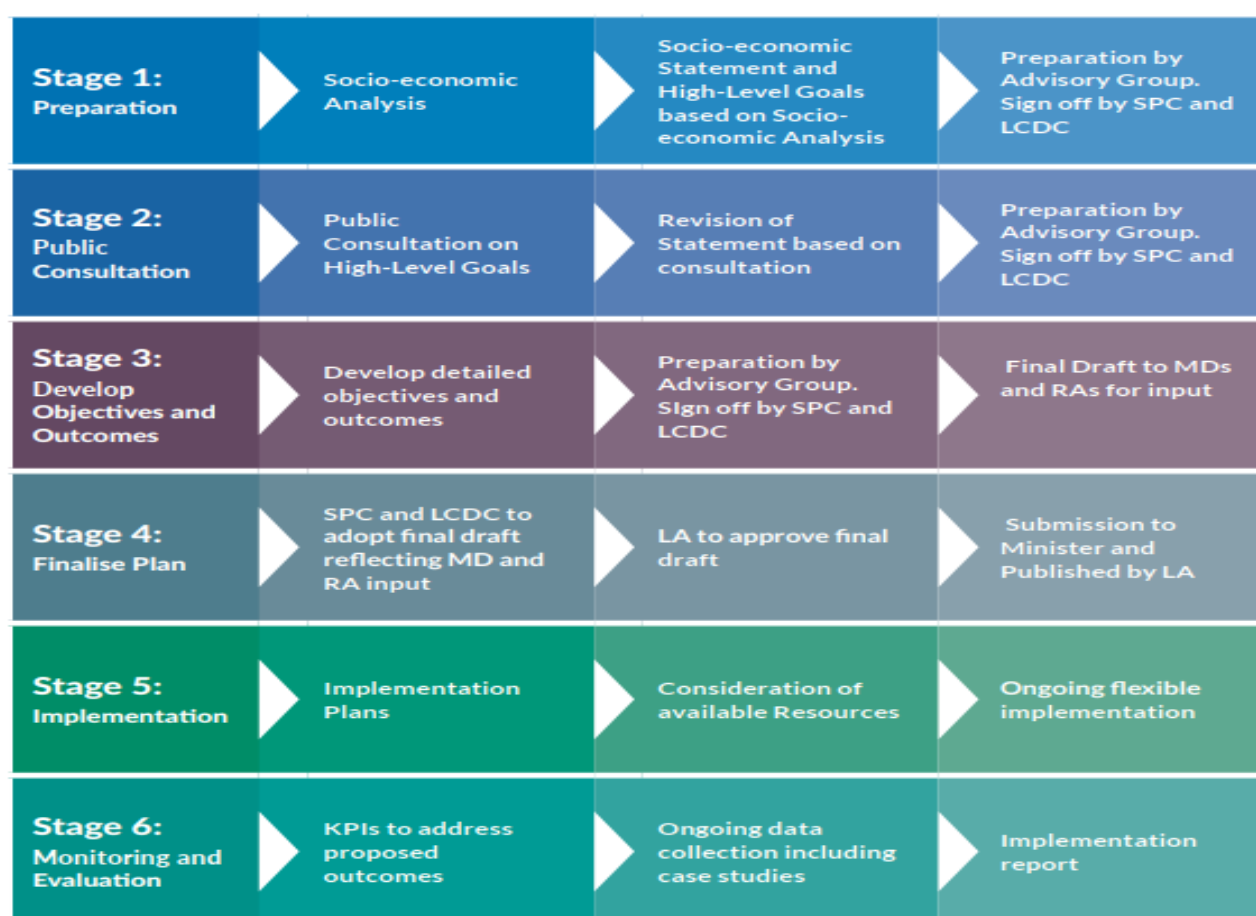


1. Introduction

In February 2023, Kildare County Council commenced the development of its' second Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP). This plan is a requirement of all Local Authorities under the Local Government Reform Act 2014. Its purpose is to set out for a six-year period the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic and local/community development of Kildare by itself directly and in partnership with other economic and community development stakeholders.

There are detailed national guidelines to underpin the LECP. In line with requirements a cross sectoral, representative Advisory Steering Group to oversee the development of the LECP was established.¹ The following table, taken from the guidelines, outlines the six distinct stages required to develop the LECP.

Figure 6



In July 2023, **Stage 1: Preparation**, was completed and a draft socio-economic statement was approved. **Stage 2: Public Consultation** commenced. This report outlines the outcomes from the extensive public consultation process that took place from July until October 2023. It must be noted Kildare Advisory Steering Group agree that consultation is critical at all stages in the development and implementation of the LECP. Therefore, while this is a distinct stage in the process, consultation with stakeholders continues throughout the lifetime of the LECP.

¹ Appendix One outlines the membership of Kildare LECP Advisory Steering Group

2. Socio Economic Statement

It is recommended that this Consultation Report should be read in conjunction with the draft socio-economic statement which can be accessed on the Kildare County Council website or [here](#). The socio-economic statement outlines a draft vision and four draft high-level goals. These formed the basis of the public consultation and are outlined below:

Draft Vision LECP 2023-2029

“County Kildare; working together as a sustainable, fair, healthy, economically vibrant county for all.”

The Four Draft High-Level Goals of the County Kildare LECP 2023-2029 are as follows:

Draft High Level Goals LECP 2023-2029

HLG 1

County Kildare, is a **PLACE** with strong communities where people live full, healthy, integrated and inclusive lives.



HLG 2

County Kildare, nurtures its **PEOPLE** to reach their full potential to enjoy and live a high quality of life.



HLG 3

County Kildare, promotes and prioritises **CLIMATE ACTION and SUSTAINABILITY**.



HLG 4

County Kildare, attracts the **INVESTMENT** to realise its vision.



3. LECP Consultation Process

The Department of Rural and Community Development LECP guidelines state the importance of consultation with relevant stakeholders. This is to ensure that the plan is developed with an inclusive, participative process.

To ensure that the consultation process was well planned and delivered, the LECP Advisory Steering Group developed a consultation plan, approved by the LCDC and the Economic Development, Enterprise and Planning SPC. Significant consideration was given to a) who the stakeholders for engagement are and b) how engagement would occur.

Gathering the views of people who do not traditionally engage in consultations “unheard voices” e.g., children and younger people, people experiencing social exclusion was particularly considered. This ensures that the final LECP is built on firm foundations, engages people in the process from the outset and considers the broadest range of views possible. It also guarantees that we are working to embed The Public Sector Duty Code into the work of Kildare County Council.

3.1 Principles

An agreed set of values and principles were agreed to underpin the LECP consultation process.²

Principle 1: Respect

Commit to respect for the diversity of knowledge, skills, views and lived experience being brought to the LECP by all stakeholders. Every effort to maximise the potential this diversity brings while managing any conflict or disagreements that may arise in a positive and inclusive way. Respecting people’s time, preparing and conducting consultation in an organised and timely way to gather views is also agreed.

Principle 2: Subsidiarity

Recognise and facilitate the ability of communities, whether communities of interest or geographic communities, to participate in the consultation processes to develop the LECP. A range of consultation methods will be used to maximise participation.

Principle 3 Harmonisation

Ensure consistency with existing strategies, taking account of the extensive consultations that have taken place through recent planning processes such as the County Development Plan, Age Friendly Strategy, Children and Young Peoples Services Committee Plan, LEADER Rural Development Strategy, Economic Development Strategy, Open Space Strategy etc.

² Adapted from Department of Community and Rural Development, *Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities: a five-year strategy to support the Community and Voluntary sector in Ireland, 2019-2024*

Principle 4: Value for Money

Promote and facilitate value for money approaches to carry out consultations. Use low/no cost venues, technology and events already organised to engage with stakeholders.

Principle 5: Implementation

Make every effort to leverage the structures already in place locally and nationally seeking to maximise the potential of these structures to inform the LECP.

Principle 6: Collaboration

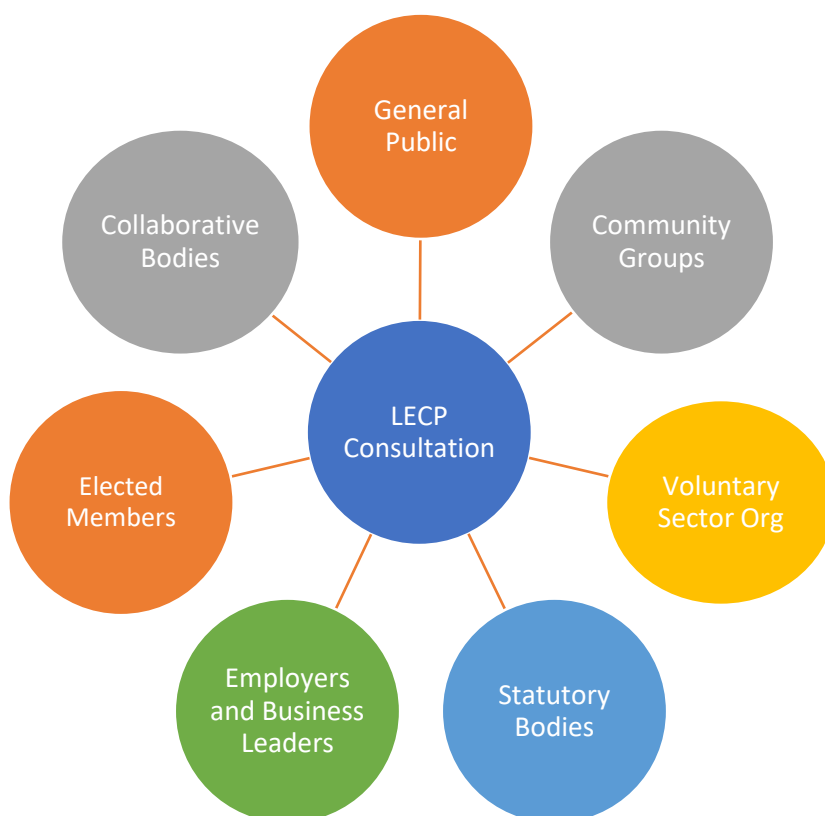
Work in collaboration with relevant stakeholders and communities to support sustainable approaches to policy, programme development and implementation to inform the LECP.

Principle 7: Climate Change

Engage with stakeholders using methods that minimise waste of materials, maximise the use of technology and promote climate action.

3.2 Stakeholders and Engagement

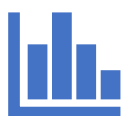
A broad range of priority stakeholders were identified to consult with to inform the Co Kildare LECP:



Over 1,300 individuals directly engaged in consultation as part of the LECP. The following methods were used to consult as part of the Stage 2 LECP Planning:

3.2.1 Review consultations of other recent plans

It was recognised that many stakeholders linked to community and economic aspects of the plan are experiencing consultation “fatigue”. A number of extensive consultation processes have taken place in recent years as part of Kildare based planning processes. These include: The County Development Plan 2023-2029, Economic Development Strategy 2025, Age Friendly Strategy 2023-2027, Kildare County Childcare Strategy 2023-2026, Children and Young Peoples Services Committee Plan 2023-2025, Open Space Strategy to name a few. It was agreed that the views expressed in recent planning processes (from 2020 onwards) would be reviewed as part of the consultation for the LECP. This provides an efficient and effective way to build on in-depth consultation processes to ensure that views expressed in recent aligned processes are captured as part of the LECP.



3.2.2

Online survey

A short online qualitative survey was developed to capture the views of all stakeholders, in particular the public. The approach to this survey, meant that views could be expressed freely and openly. This survey was broadly promoted through a variety of social media platforms, network organisations, communication channels, state agencies, community and voluntary bodies and elected representatives. Several reminders were sent to encourage completion of the survey, open for nine weeks, from 21st of July until 20th of September. There were 869 responses to the survey a very positive response rate.



3.2.3

Community and Voluntary consultation

Kildare Public Participation Network (PPN) was set up as part of the Local Government Act 2014. Its role is to act as an inclusive and independent structure that facilitates public consultation and participation in policy and decision making. There are 659 community and voluntary sector groups/organisations currently affiliated to Kildare PPN. Commencing in July, Kildare PPN held five in-person workshops across the Municipal Districts (MD) in County Kildare (one per MD). The purpose of these workshops was to consult with member groups/organisations to identify priorities to inform the LECP and PPN Community Wellbeing Plans. In total 94 community groups/organisations participated in the workshops. The approach taken by Kildare fits with the LECP guidelines, page 26, *engagement with PPN wellbeing statements is important in order to support the development of the High-Level Goals and Sustainable Objectives for the LECP*.³ The collaborative approach used in Kildare is working to achieve this and again maximises consultation by using the views expressed to inform both the LECP and PPN plans.

³ Department of Rural and Community Development and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, *Local Economic and Community Plan Guidelines*, 2021

3.2.4 Employer and Business consultation

In line with the overall principle of harmonisation and building on opportunities to engage with the employer/business community, a range of networking events were used to include consultation as part of the LECP. This included:



Employer Forum held in the Osprey Hotel engaged with 92 business owners to inform the LECP



FDI Round Table held in September engaged with six Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) companies that are located in Kildare.



Sectoral meetings were held to engage with 18 businesses

3.2.5



Agency and Collaborative Structure consultation

As outlined on page 3 the importance of engaging with representatives of the most vulnerable was critical for this consultation process. While the survey, community and voluntary workshops and reviews of consultations held for specific planning processes actively reached out to include representatives of the most excluded, a series of targeted one to one meetings took place throughout September/October. These meetings aimed to ensure that the views of the most excluded, largely through their representative groups, organisations and forums took place. This involved consultation with organisations/groups working directly with vulnerable children and young people, people with disabilities, Travellers, homeless people, immigrants including Ukrainians, unemployed, substance misusers, people with mental health challenges, lone parents and older people etc. 231 individuals through 21 organisations/networks were engaged. The organisations consulted and numbers of interviewees are outlined on the next page:



Comhairle na nOg
(145)



Kildare Age Friendly
(4)



Kildare Access
Group (4)



In Sync (1)



County Kildare
LEADER Partnership (3)



Kildare Traveller
Action (2)



McVerry Trust (2)



Southeast Regional
Age Friendly (1)



Children and Young
Peoples Services
Committee (3)



Kildare County
Childcare Committee
(8)



Kildare South Dublin
Local Link (1)



Department of Social
Protection (2)



Tusla (3)



HSE-(26)



Kildare Wicklow
Education and Training
Board (3)



Kildare County
Council (17)



South West Regional
Drugs and Alcohol
Task Force (2)



Family Resource
Centres (4)

3.2.6 Ongoing consultation

While the consultation stage is a distinct stage in developing the LECP, as noted earlier, continued engagement with statutory bodies, employers, community groups, voluntary sector organisations, elected representatives, representative structures and collaborative networks must form a part of the ongoing development and implementation of the Kildare LECP.



4 Consultation Outcomes

The main aims of Stage Two were to gather views to inform:

- A) The Draft Vision and Draft High-Level Goals, presented in the LECP Socio Economic Statement.
(The primary consultation method used was through the online survey).
- B) The objectives and actions of the LECP and Implementation Plan.

4.1 Draft Vision

The draft vision of County Kildare LECP presented in the LECP Socio Economic Statement is as follows:

Draft Vision LECP 2023-2029

**County Kildare; working together
as a sustainable, fair, healthy,
economically vibrant county for all.**

The survey and stakeholder interviews were largely positive and there was broad satisfaction with the vision presented, its clarity and how it fitted with the respondent's vision for the county. The following feedback was given through consultations on a number of occasions:

- Add "inclusive/inclusivity."
- Remove "fair"
- Add "community"
- Word "healthy" was queried as part of the vision.

4.2 Draft High Level Goal One

HLG 1

County Kildare, is a **PLACE** with strong communities where people live full, healthy, integrated and inclusive lives.



The consultations outlined that this goal was largely positive overall, and the survey outlined that this was the second most positively received goal. Consultations highlighted a strong fit with "placemaking" a key component of the current County Development Plan and a range of national policy frameworks (RSES) . While there was broad agreement and positive feedback on the goal, and its wording, the following suggestions were made on a number of occasions:

- There was some difficulty distinguishing “integrated” from “inclusive”.
- There were suggestions of adding “all” before “people”.
- “Flourishing”, “connected” or “resilient” instead of “strong”.
- “Full” was problematic for some people.

4.2 Draft High-Level Goal Two

HLG 2

County Kildare, nurtures its **PEOPLE** to reach their full potential to enjoy and live a high quality of life.



The consultations outlined that this goal was also largely positive overall with the following feedback given on a number of occasions:

- Questions over definition of “high quality of life”
- “Nurtures” was questioned as a word.
- Suggested to add to the end goal with *at all life stages*.

4.3 Draft High-Level Goal Three

HLG 3

County Kildare, promotes and prioritises **CLIMATE ACTION** and **SUSTAINABILITY**.



This goal was the most positively received. It was deemed to be relevant, clear and a critical goal for the LECP. It was noted that while climate action and sustainability is a goal in its own right, this is also a principle that transfers across the vision, other goals and future objectives/actions of the plan.

There were no reappearing wording suggestions during the consultation process for this goal.

4.4 Draft High-Level Goal Four

HLG 4 County Kildare, attracts the **INVESTMENT** to realise its vision.



While the consultations highlighted that this goal was positive, agency consultations were not completely clear if it highlighted the requirement for increasing public funding and resourcing. This was echoed in the survey responses as this goal was the least clear of all four presented. The following feedback was received as part of the consultation:

- Overall, the wording wasn't clear and the goal was seen by some as vague.
 - "Attracts" concerned some people who interpreted it as inwards. They wanted more of a focus on self-reliance.
 - Suggestion that resourcing is required as well as investment.

Next Steps:

- ❖ The LECP Advisory Steering Group will consider the feedback received on the draft Vision and draft High-Level Goals at their meeting on 6th November 2023.
- ❖ The final Vision and High-Level Goals will be presented to the LCDC and Economic Development Enterprise and Planning SPC at their meetings on November 29th and December 12th 2023.

4.5 Consultation Views to inform LECP Objectives and Actions

The second aim of consultation was to gather views to inform the LECP objectives and implementation plan. This engagement also served to secure commitment to long-term implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The following presents an overview of the most common themes that emerged during Stage 2 consultation:



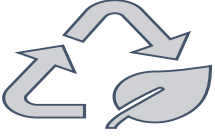
Place

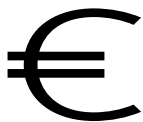
- **Accessible, local amenities** were identified throughout consultation processes as a critical need. This includes: community and family resource centres, parks, playgrounds, libraries, arts, childcare, youth, sports, recreational facilities. It was noted that amenity development is not keeping pace with housing development.
- These amenities in addition to **accessible public spaces, housing, services, businesses** were highlighted to support the full participation of people living and working in Kildare.
- **Public sector infrastructure** is also not keeping pace e.g., school building.
- Ensuring that **housing** meets requirements. Policy for smaller one-bedroom units is not always conducive to older people, growing families etc.
- **Housing** availability is consistently stated by business as the number one issue affecting competitiveness in Kildare.
- **Sustainable transport-** the need to invest and prioritise alternatives to car use to support the concept of the 10-minute town, improve health and aid commuting.
- The newly established **Kildare Innovation Campus** is an opportunity to become a centre of excellence in the knowledge-based economy in Kildare.
- The need to identify **potential sites** for repurposing, reducing vacancy and underutilised lands. These areas could be looked at for commercial and industrial development.
- The need to identify future **strategic energy zones and district heating initiatives** was highlighted.
- **Protecting and enhancing our historic infrastructure, heritage and natural assets** was raised as central to building healthy, happy, proud places to live.
- The need for **high quality broadband, telecom and digital infrastructure** was identified to support business development and remote working.
-



People

- Challenges to **access universal and specialist public services** are not keeping pace with population growth were strongly noted. In particular GP, mental health, childcare, disability, and access to alcohol/substance misuse services.
- There are increasing challenges experienced to access **school places** particularly in areas of high growth.
- Responding to increased **polarisation** between "rich" and "poor" experienced nationally, is a challenge for the county. How we develop, expand and promote social inclusion into the future was raised.
- Gaps in **educational supports** targeting children, young people and families particularly experiencing disadvantage was highlighted. Expanding DEIS schools (North Kildare), Family Resource Centres (North/West), Community Childcare (across), youth projects (North/West and high growth)
- Developing **cohesive, sustainable communities** was highlighted to support strong community and economic development and to support **integration**.
- Recognising, embracing and supporting **ethnic diversity** - Traveller, Roma, Ukrainian and other nationals was highlighted.
- Providing **opportunities for lifelong learning and skills development** was identified to support a strong economic base and to provide choices for young people, adults and older people to enhance employment opportunities. This is particularly important in our most socially excluded communities and areas in transition.
- Actively prioritise initiatives to reduce **youth unemployment**.
- Recognising the impact of **COVID 19** on all life stages particularly our children, young people and more vulnerable.
- The need to promote and support **healthy lifestyles** by targeting programmes at communities/groups with poor health outcomes, increase accessible space to engage in healthy activities and infrastructure to enable working/business development closer to home.
- Ensuring that people are not left behind in an increasingly **digital society** was raised especially the less educated, socially excluded and older people.
- The need to continue to **support and develop skills** for people to establish and expand micro and small enterprise was highlighted.
- **Ongoing engagement** with people, representative groups and networks is important for all decision making.
- Opportunities to engage and develop **arts, cultural activities and sports** as an important and effective way to develop sustainable communities and provide employment.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer led groups are finding it increasingly challenging to attract and retain leaders due to complex governance and increasing demands on time. • Ensuring that communities across Kildare are safe, secure places to live and run business.
 <p>Climate and Sustainability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was noted that Kildare's high-quality environment is recognised, maintained and promoted, with climate change mitigation and adaptation measures at the heart of community and economic development. • Increasing the choices people have in how they travel to school, work, childcare, recreation, shops -by moving away from car dependence was highlighted as central in progressing to a healthy, climate friendly Kildare. Progressing Active Travel measures was noted. • The need to ensure that people and communities are supported, educated and encouraged to move to a more carbon neutral Kildare. Concerns regarding the complexity of messages, costs associated were raised which may impact on progress and on engagement by the most excluded. • Policies and objectives to support enterprise development, the Green and Circular Bio-Economy, Agri-Food and Beverage, Agriculture and Equine Industry. In particular, objectives to support sustainable tourism and enhancing its potential in the County through heritage, Blueways/Greenways, peatlands, inland waterways and Agri-tourism. • The need to protect our boglands and have a longer-term plan for their strategic development was raised. • Assisting local businesses to become more competitive through the provision of energy efficiency training and supports was raised through consultations. • Build on initiatives to encourage accessible recycling.



Resources and Investment

- It was frequently raised that the size, growth, profile and service needs are not understood by **national policy makers and funders**. This impacts on the development of infrastructure, services and supports required generally in addition to more targeted requirements.
- The development of housing needs to be accompanied by **investment in the infrastructure and services** required for people to live full and active lives. Consultations highlighted concerns regarding lack of facilities in newly developing areas is impacting on economic and community development.
- Continued **economic investment** is required across a range of sectors to maintain and build Kildare's competitive position.
- Secure **philanthropic and diaspora** funding to promote and support economic and community development.
- Concerns were raised regarding the increasing **short-term nature of funding** to respond to the most vulnerable. Long term commitments are required to adequately resource and respond to inter-generational poverty.
- Grants are increasingly **complex to access**, with more vulnerable communities are being left further behind due to the requirement for funding up front, co-funding and complex regularity requirements often for relatively small funding allocations.
- Consultations highlighted that it is important to ensure that **resources are targeted** to promote and support inclusion and promote equality in the most deprived parts of the county and amongst the most excluded groups.
- It was also raised that while the **deprivation index** provides an important tool, other tools are required to identify and respond to deprivation in our fast growing, changing county.
- Continuing to develop our **natural resources**- Blueways, Greenways and heritage sites is important to promote and support healthy lifestyles, economic development and tourism was highlighted as being very important and critical to development.
- The need to continue developing **collaborative** approaches, to plan, work together and maximise resource allocation and targeting was highlighted.

5 Conclusion and Next Steps

The Consultation Stage is an exceptionally important in developing the LECP. Consultation ensures that views are sought, opinions listened to and there is ownership of the LECP. However, as noted earlier, ongoing consultation and engagement is required.

The next step is to finalise the plan, (Stages 3-4) and to complete the implementation plan. This will involve consideration of:

- The data sets available to support the plan.
- An assessment of national, regional and local policies and plans.
- Views expressed through consultation.
- Commitment of organisations and resources available.

Appendix One: Advisory Steering Group Membership November 2023

LECP 2023-2028

Advisory Steering Group Membership

Marian Higgins (Chairperson)	Director of Services Climate, Community, Environment & Water, LCDC Chief Officer-Chairperson of ASG
Alan Dunney	Director of Services Planning, Enterprise, Economic Development and Emergency Services
Cllr Suzanne Doyle	LCDC Chairperson
Cllr Rob Power	Economic Development Enterprise and Planning SPC
Alan Kerry	LCDC representative (PPN Social Inclusion rep)
Sinead Ronan	County Kildare Chamber of Commerce (also LCDC member)
Paula O Rourke	KCC- Climate Action Co-ordinator
Karl Duffy	County Kildare LEADER Partnership-Rural Development Manager
Paula O Brien	KCC- Senior Executive Officer- Community Section

Supported by: Susan Bookle, LECP Co-ordinator and Jacqui McNabb KCC Head of Enterprise