

## Introduction

The Kildare LECP, 2023-2029 is informed by objective research and stakeholder consultations. It is tailored for County Kildare, as it articulates local needs and potential, and it responds to local challenges and opportunities. The initial research findings and preliminary stakeholder engagements confirm the significance of the wider policy milieu in enabling the LECP to attain its high-level goals. Additionally, the LECP offers a mechanism for the local-level delivery of EU and national policy objectives, while local-level experiences and feedback are integral to ensuring responsive and evidence-based policy development. Kildare County Council and other LECP stakeholders in County Kildare are cognisant of the interactions between the various policy tiers and how policy provisions and interfaces shape the development context.

## Sustainable Development Imperatives - linking the global to the local

EU and Irish (national) policies are evolving in response to needs and opportunities, and their orientation has become increasingly focused on enabling, promoting and delivering sustainable development objectives. The maxim '**think global - act local**' is probably even more relevant today than when it was first advocated in the 1980s, following the publication of Our Common Future. As evidenced by the ongoing COP gatherings and supported by a growing volume of independent scientific data, the attainment of sustainable development objectives requires global and supranational frameworks, and this realisation underpins the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs)**.

The UNSDGs provide the overarching global framework for the entire policy milieu in which the Kildare LECP is situated (Figure 1 below). The seventeen goals articulate a vision for humanity that requires more even economic development and equality of opportunity for all peoples regardless of geography, gender or other social factors. Their attainment requires a commitment to ecological conservation and the restoration of biodiversity - at

sea and on land. The UNSDGs also provide for improved social, health and educational services and better governance – at all tiers.



The realisation of the goals requires tackling so-called ‘wicked problems’, particularly climate change and biodiversity loss, and they advocate a just transition to a post carbon society. Given the transboundary nature of the issues the UNSDGs address and considering the growing inter-connectedness between peoples and places, the UNSGDs require geographical, sectoral and institutional collaboration. County Kildare shares ecosystems and natural habitats, including ecologically sensitive sites, with other counties. Their conservation and protection require cross-county, inter-agency and inter-community collaborations.

The Kildare LECP is underpinned by collaborative approaches – internally and with other counties - that enable us to realise a more sustainable development trajectory, thereby improving economic, educational and socio-economic outcomes for all its citizens, while protecting natural resources and making tangible contributions to our global responsibilities. The Kildare LECP is underpinned by collaborative approaches that enable the county to realise a more sustainable development trajectory, thereby improving economic, educational and socio-economic outcomes for all its citizens, while protecting natural resources and making tangible contributions to our global responsibilities.

# Policy Alignment and Complementarity

The principles and approaches articulated in the UNSDGs are reflected in the current iteration of EU policy frameworks, and they influence and shape national-level policy in Ireland as well as policy and practice in County Kildare. As the following diagram illustrates (Figure 1), the County Kildare LECP (2023-2029) refers and relates to a nested set of interlocking policies – in a holistic sense, rather than on discrete sectoral bases.

The UNSDGs provide the external global over-arching policy framework and vision, and these, in turn, shape and guide policy-making and outcomes at the EU and national levels. Moreover, the UNSDGs and the associated lower-tier policy frameworks provide reference points on which the LECP’s progress can be measured.

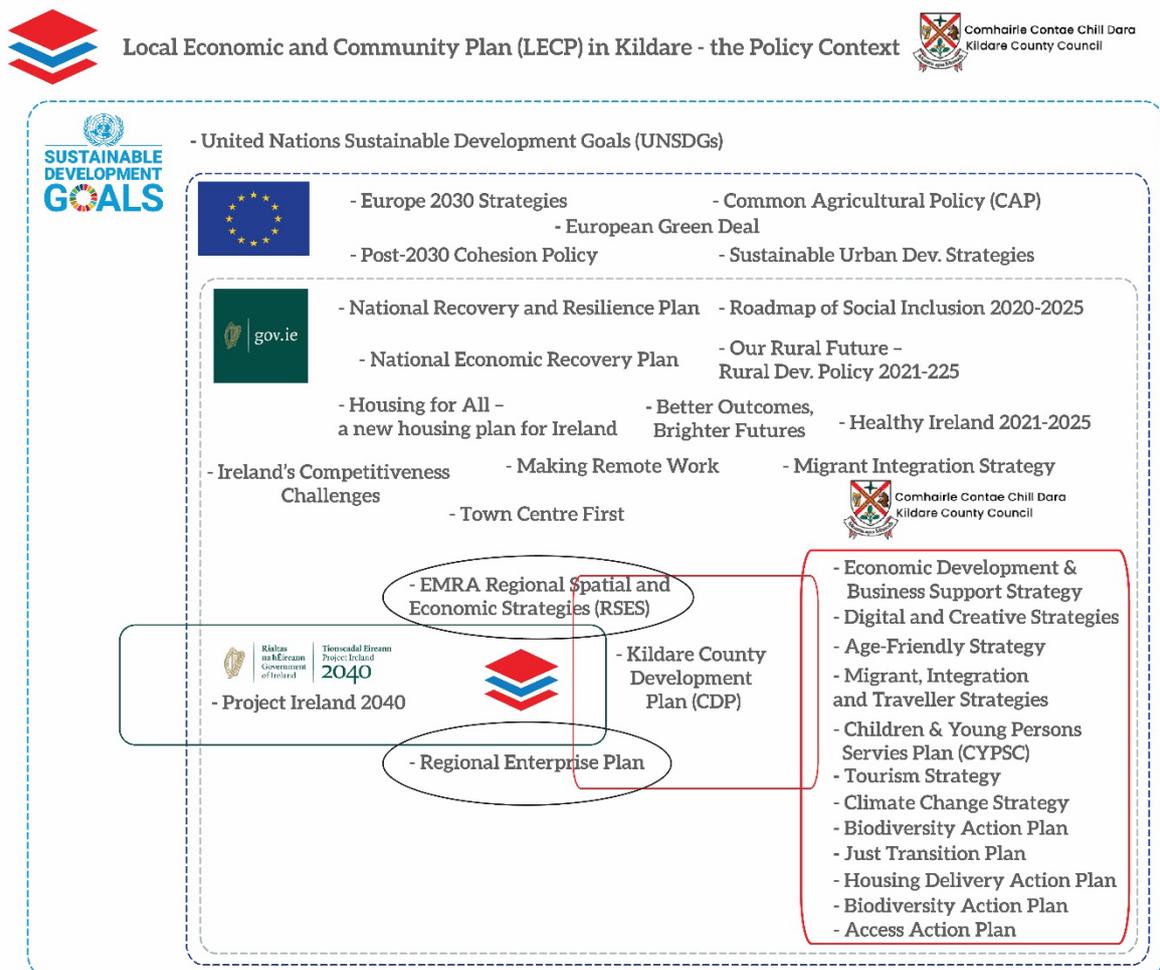


Figure 1: Kildare LECP Policy Framework

The policy context is relevant, not just to the LECP's formulation, but also to its ongoing implementation and monitoring systems.

The European Union (EU) has described itself as a 'natural partner' of the United Nations (UN) with respect to delivering the UNSDGs. The EU's statistics agency - Eurostat - monitors the EU's contributions to the realisation of the UNSDGs, and its reports help shape policymakers approaches to decision-making.

Similar approaches pertain at EU member state level; the Irish Government has committed to implementing the UNSDGs, and Ireland has a time-in-motion system in place that records and documents the country's progress in this respect. Statutory bodies, policy-makers and service providers (at all tiers), including regional and local authorities, have important roles to play in ensuring sustainable development, as they are the primary providers of social services, they are close to communities / citizens and they have both legislative and soft powers with respect to promoting partnership working, enabling economic development, fostering social progress and protecting the working, supporting community development, fostering social progress and protecting the natural environment. Their responsibilities and capacities in this regard are manifest in the various policies that are listed in the diagram here.

It should be noted that while policies are listed separately, they have several overlapping elements and shared objectives, not least with respect to ameliorating and averting further climate change. The range and scope of policies listed here will evolve over the lifetime of the LECP, but the fundamental structure and alignment that are articulated in this diagram (previous page) will be constant, along with policy and practice commitments to sustainable development.

## EU Policies and Frameworks

As the diagram shows, EU interface with and give effect to the UNSDGs, and while there are several areas of EU policy that impact on County Kildare and the LECP, the diagram lists the main and most extensive policies. Europe's strategy to 2030 acknowledges the scale of challenges in respect of climate change and the need for more inclusive societies. It seeks to build on awareness-raising actions and partnership-building in order to enable European society to address climate change, biodiversity loss, resource scarcities, geopolitics, the surge in transparency and privacy expectations, labour market transitions, an ageing population, rising protectionism, income inequality and the widespread adaptation of digital technologies.

Through its policies, funding streams and inter-governmental mechanisms, the EU is enabling, encouraging and obliging member states to become more resilient – so that societies and communities are better able to withstand current and anticipated shocks, such as those caused by climate change and evidenced by the recent COVID-19 pandemic and the arrival of persons fleeing conflict in Ukraine and other countries. EU goals in these regards relate to stakeholders in Kildare – striving to develop and implement the LECP, and we anticipate keeping abreast of EU research and policy trajectories. Moreover, we are committed to working with national and regional authorities to leverage opportunities arising from inter-territorial collaboration and support mechanisms.

While the EU policy frameworks listed here relate to specific sectors, in operational terms, they are bound together by a realisation that public policy needs to support firms, institutions, communities and citizens to become more ecologically responsible, innovative, adaptive and creative. The six Commission Priorities for the current programme period (up to 2024) are:

- i. EU Green Deal;
- ii. A Europe fit for the digital age;
- iii. An economy that works for people;
- iv. A stronger Europe in the world;
- v. Promoting our European way of life; and
- vi. A new push for European democracies.

The European values that transcend each of these, and which are explicitly promoted in priorities iv to vi, are among the hallmarks of the LECP's formulation and implementation processes - building partnerships and enabling participation.

The **EU Green Deal** seeks to incentivise all sectors of the economy to be more ambitious in reducing their ecological footprints and to embrace new technologies in maximising energy efficiency, while increasing productivity and generating new employment and training opportunities. The **EU's digital policy** seeks to empower citizens, businesses and service providers to make effective use of new technologies. The **EU's economic strategy** seeks to promote an attractive investment environment and to nurture growth that creates quality jobs, especially for young people and small businesses.

Spatial policies, such as the sustainable urban development strategies, are oriented towards improving the attractiveness of urban spaces - enticing and sustaining investment, strengthening local economies and networks and making neighbourhoods more accessible / walkable and self-contained.

Similar approaches pertain in respect of rural communities, and the EU anticipates further rollout of smart village approaches over the next decade. Digitisation and smart specialisation feature across policy domains as enablers of innovation and as offering means through which public service delivery can be enhanced. Society's ability to avail of the associated opportunities is contingent on improving digital literacy, and stakeholders in Kildare envisage investments in hard infrastructure and soft supports - training and capacity-building - as the county strives to avail of the economic, human resource and service delivery opportunities associated with smart technologies and our obligations in respect of environmental protection.

The forthcoming **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)** will have a significant impact on County Kildare, given the importance of the rural economy. The CAP endeavours to support farmers in continuing to produce high-quality food, while protecting the natural resources on which sustainable food production is contingent. This can be challenging, particularly for dairy and beef farmers, and the entire food industry will need to be particularly innovative and adaptive over the next decade. The CAP provides funding and

strategic signposts for **LEADER**, and the implementation of the next iteration of LEADER (2023-2027) will parallel the rollout of the LECP.

## National Policies and Frameworks

As illustrated in the diagram (presented earlier), the national-level policies that shape and relate to the County Kildare LECP are nested within the UN and EU frameworks, and there are several complementary, shared and over-lapping principles and provisions. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and in order to enable societies to recover from its adverse effects, each EU member state has prepared a recovery and resilience plan, and their implementation is being enabled by EU and Exchequer funds.

The plans' six pillars resonate with the UNSDGs, and they provide a set of reference points for stakeholders implementing the Kildare LECP. The pillars are:

- Green transition;
- Digital transformation;
- Smart, sustainable and inclusive growth;
- Social and territorial cohesion;
- Health, economic, social and institutional resilience; and
- Policies for the next generation

Ireland's **National Recovery and Resilience Plan** has three over-arching and inter-locking priorities as follows:

- Advancing the green transition;
- Accelerating and expanding digital reforms and transformation; and
- Social and economic recovery and job creation.

These strategic priorities embrace and give effect to the aforementioned over-arching EU policy trajectory, and the rollout of associated projects is impacting on firms, institutions and communities in Kildare.

While the National Recovery and Resilience Plan is primarily about delivering strategic actions, it also commits to structural reforms. These include adjustments to the carbon tax base, addressing the digital divide, reducing regulatory barriers to entrepreneurship, pension reform, increasing the provision of social housing and progressing the implementation of **Sláintecare**.

These policy domains have direct and indirect bearings on the implementation of the County Kildare LECP, and it will be important for stakeholders to be mindful of their consequences, particularly for vulnerable groups. Stakeholders will also need to be proactive in ensuring that firms, institutions and communities in Kildare avail of the opportunities that flow from the plan's implementation and the structural and legislative reforms that are expected to accompany it.

## Key National Policies

Since June 2021, the State has been driving Ireland's **National Recovery Plan** – seeking to support the resumption of economic activity (post COVID), and this plan focuses on the following: ensuring sustainable public finances; helping people back to work; rebuilding sustainable enterprises; and a balanced and inclusive recovery. While the main imperatives relate to economic re-adjustments, the plan recognises the importance of investing in education, training and social inclusion, among other domains, in order to enable and sustain economic development.

There are several national-level sectoral and inter-sectoral policies that relate to the formulation and implementation of the Kildare LECP.

Ireland's **Climate Action Plan** and the associated legislation, which commit us to significant reductions in our carbon emissions, will have far-reaching implications for all sectors of the economy and society. Underpinned by scientific data and driven by moral imperatives, the obligation to reduce our carbon footprints will pose short- and medium-term challenges in some sectors, most notably energy, transportation and agriculture. They will also place financial burdens on low-income households and will necessitate policy

and practice interventions, including actions at community level, to ensure a just transition to a zero-carbon society.

Climate change mitigation and amelioration factors underpin the principles, thrust and objectives of the Kildare County Development Plan (2023-2029), which will operate in parallel with and complement this LECP. The county development plan and its associated local area plans (LAPs) govern spatial planning, including land-use, transportation and place-making. While the LECP has a broader functional remit, its provisions need to comply with the planning policy objectives that are set out in the county development plan (CDP). At the same time, the CDP can provide supports and leverage to enable the delivery of the LECP's objectives, and there is potential for positive synergies between both sets of plans.

While there will be changes in EU and national-level policy, legislation and funding streams over the lifetime of this LECP, and it is not possible to list all the relevant policies let alone anticipate all changes, the framework of overarching policies presented in this report outlines the current landscape and milieu and it has signalled policy patterns and trends that are likely to shape the LECP's institutional context over the next six years.

The framework (Fig. 3 - above) references two government departments specifically, namely the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Department of Rural and Community Development, as these are the two departments that oversee the implementation of LECPs, and it was they who issued the LECP guidelines that we are following. In their guidance documentation, the departments note the relevance of their own policies and programmes, as well as those emanating from ministries and agencies, and they specifically list the following policies (i):

- Regional Enterprise Plans;
- Town Centre First;
- County Digital Strategies;
- LEO Strategies;
- Social Enterprise Policy;
- Climate Action;
- Healthy Ireland;

- Creative Ireland; and
- Age-Friendly Ireland.

These policies are already finding local-level expression and implementation in the various strategies that have been put in place in County Kildare, and the LECP can provide a mechanism to re-enforce, tailor, sharpen and strengthen these policies and strategies and to promote further collaboration among those who are delivering them.

- (i) For details, please see: <https://www.gov.ie/en/policy/d5adb8-community-supports>

**Housing for All** – a new housing plan for Ireland provides for significant investment in the construction of housing, and it behoves stakeholders in Kildare to avail of the associated opportunities and to work collaboratively in enabling place-making and community development. The LECP has the potential to provide tools to enable the construction of communities and social supports – that are necessary to accompany any investment in physical infrastructure.

Ireland's current rural development policy presents opportunities for sectoral interests in areas such as tourism, the social economy and digitisation, and its provisions in respect of remote working tally with, and accentuate, the provisions in other policies – thereby opening-up possibilities for transformative projects that would benefit rural economies, address rural decline and improve people's health and quality of life.



**Our Rural Future - Ireland's Rural Development Policy (2021-2025)** offers a supportive framework for improved physical and digital connectivity, and it commits to supporting further and accelerated rollout of broadband and the development of digital hubs. The policy takes stock of experiences and lessons that have been garnered from the COVID-19 pandemic, including the transformative potential - for individuals and communities - of remote / hybrid / connected working and the health and social benefits associated with access to green spaces and recreational amenities.

In a similar vein, the national policy - **Making Remote Work: National Remote Work Strategy** - seeks to mainstream best practices that came to the fore during the pandemic, and the Government has introduced a series of measures to support remote / connected working, including the right (among employees) to request remote working.

Our Rural Future's provisions in respect of heritage-based tourism and the creative economy are particularly relevant for County Kildare. The policy also notes the need to rejuvenate town and village centres, and in this regard, it complements the objectives of other national policies, including Town Centres First. The policy notes the changing profile and increased diversity of rural communities, and it advocates investment in social inclusion, capacity-building and the social economy.

In these respects, Our Rural Future complements other community-oriented policies including the **National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-2022** and **Our Communities: Framework Policy for Local Community Development in Ireland** along with **Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities- A five-year strategy to support the community and voluntary sector in Ireland 2019-2024**. Collectively, these policies note the importance of supporting volunteerism and citizen engagement in decision-making in both urban and rural contexts, and they refer to the ways in which social economy and community enterprises can engage citizens, promote economic development and provide local services, particularly for hard-to-reach cohorts.

In concert with the aforementioned over-arching national and regional spatial frameworks, sectoral policies in respect of rural development, volunteerism, the social economy, agriculture and tourism, among others, note the imperatives associated with the climate emergency and the need for concerted bottom-up and top-down strategic actions to ameliorate and mitigate climate change. Such actions imply increasing investment in public transport and active travel, encouraging more sustainable modes of food production, reducing food miles, arresting biodiversity loss and safeguarding and restoring natural habitats. These and other ecological endeavours are necessary in the context of the UNSDGs, and they also afford opportunities for economic diversification and an improved quality of life for communities. At the same time, however, the EU has consistently noted the need for targeted measures to support rural communities and low-income households, so that the transition to a post-carbon society is just and fair.

The County Kildare LECP (2023-2029) has the potential to add value to, and complement, the **Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan (2022-2024)** as well as successor regional enterprise plans. The current iteration operationalises national enterprise policy in a regional context. It affords a framework for regional-level collaboration and the plan sets targets in respect of job creation emanating from LEO and agency investments. In practice, the plan, which has been driven by regional stakeholders, affords a mechanism to leverage national funding into the region, and its five objectives are as follows: agri-food hubs, screen content creation sector, equine business, transition to low carbon economy, and development of a positive enterprise ecosystem.

At EU and national level, there are a number of policies and programmes in place to support particular population cohorts including young people, those with disabilities, migrants and older people, all of which are relevant to the Kildare LECP. Some are already reflected in, and given effect by, local-level strategies and initiatives in County Kildare, including the Age-Friendly Strategy, Children and Young People's Services Committee plan and Migrant Integration and Inter-cultural Strategy. These strategies are particularly relevant in the context of County Kildare's current and evolving demographics, and they represent important elements of a concerted approach to ensuring compliance with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Kildare's **Age Friendly Strategy 2023 – 2027** reflects, and gives effect to, the National Positive Ageing Strategy. Its overall vision is to create a more inclusive society for older people. The Kildare strategy identifies three cross-cutting themes that underpin its actions. These are as follows: supporting social inclusion; embedding age-friendly principles; and practicing good communications.

The Kildare CYPSC's **Children and Young People's Services' Plan 2023 -2025** outlines how the county has been delivering on, and how it will continue to give local-level effect to, the objectives set out in Better Outcomes Brighter Futures (the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People). It identifies specific priority areas in this regard namely: mental health and well-being, trauma-informed practice, substance misuse; educational opportunity and inclusion; parent support, family support, domestic violence and abuse, safety; community infrastructure; and youth participation. The Plan assigns roles and responsibilities to relevant agencies, and it envisages partnership-working across several policy domains including education, health, community development, ability / disability, equality and social inclusion.

Kildare CYPSC and Kildare LCDC are leading strands of **Healthy Kildare**, as part of the Healthy Ireland national drive to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for all. Actions are being rolled out that promote healthy lifestyles and provide bespoke supports for particular cohorts and communities.

Kildare's **Migrant Integration Strategy 2021 – 2026** aims to support the inclusion of people from ethnic minorities and new communities living,

working, or studying in County Kildare. It builds on previous strategies, and it outlines strategic actions in respect of the following: information, communication & services; language, education & employment; cultural awareness, anti-racism & gender justice; and developing inclusive communities.

County **Kildare's Housing Delivery Action Plan 2022 - 2026** takes cognisance of the linkages between housing, community development and social inclusion. It includes pathways, specific actions and targets in respect of social housing in general and homes for specific population cohorts including Travellers, older persons and people with disabilities.

Over the course of the LECP (2023-2029) organisations will continue to implement these strategies, and some of them will come up for review and renewal within this timeframe. Their renewal will provide opportunities for maximising complementarity and the alignment of strategic objectives with one another and with respect to the priorities outlined by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission namely economic equality; justice; respect and recognition and futureproofing. The ongoing implementation of these strategies, their successors and other initiatives, as well as practices and approaches among service providers should espouse the principles of the public sector code - respecting human rights and equality, and ensuring that all public services:

- Stop discrimination;
- Ensure service users and staff are treated fairly and equally; and
- Protect and respect the human rights of staff and people using public services.

## **Regional and Local Policy Context and Interfaces**

The socio-economic statement that informs this local economic and community plan (LECP) along with our on-going research have identified several themes and issues that require integrated policy and practice responses at the regional, county and local levels. The following are among the most significant themes and issues:

- Rapid population growth, which is largely associated with spillover effects from the Greater Dublin Area;
- Environmental pressures and the need to manage growth in a sustainable manner; and
- Considerable levels of poverty and social exclusion.

As these themes are inter-related, it is essential that we avoid any policy and practice silos. Instead, we need to ensure a holistic and integrated set of approaches that are driven by inter-agency information-sharing, partnership and collective action.

The Regional Economic and Spatial Strategy (RSES) (2019-2031) for the Eastern and Midlands Region acknowledges the above-average levels of population growth that County Kildare has experienced over recent decades. It notes that these trends will continue, and it identifies most of County Kildare as forming part of a 'Core Region' that is strongly influenced by commuting to the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) and which has some of the youngest and fastest-growing towns in the country. The north east of the county, including Kilcock, Maynooth, Clane, Leixlip and Celbridge, is deemed to be part of the Dublin Metropolitan Area. Meanwhile, the extreme south-west of the county is classified as part of the 'Gateway Region' along with most of Laois, Offaly, Westmeath, all of Longford and parts of Meath and Wicklow. Geography has an influence on the functional roles played by, and assigned to, County Kildare, and it is important to take due account of local factors in delivering the LECP among other strategies.

Population projections, in Ireland's National Planning Framework (NPF) and the RSRS, envisage that the county's population could grow to 266,500 by the year 2031. Indeed, the results from Census 2022 indicate that Kildare is on course to achieve or indeed exceed the level of population growth that was envisaged when the RSES was formulated in 2019. Consequently, the county will need to accommodate significant numbers of new homes over the coming few years.

The RSES, the Kildare County Development Plan (2023 – 2029) and the current iteration of local area plans (LAPs) note the importance of promoting compact growth in respect of residential developments, and they re-iterate

the desirability of having locally accessible services, as set out in the '10-minute settlement' principles. Complementary to its spatial plans, Kildare County Council has formulated a specific Housing Delivery Action Plan (2022-2026). This strategy outlines how the Council will attain the objectives set out in Housing for All, including the provision of social and affordable housing, and reducing vacancy and dereliction. It makes specific provisions in respect of Traveller accommodation, and housing for older persons and those with disabilities. These spatial and housing strategies are not just about providing accommodation; they shape how communities are formed and nurtured, how residents exercise life choices and how environmental resources are safeguarded. The LECP has an important role to play in complementing and adding value to spatial planning, given its particular foci on local economic development and social inclusion. Furthermore, its implementation affords mechanisms through which stakeholders can pool their knowledge and expertise, thereby bringing expertise from agencies, NGOs and civil society to bear on decision-making.

The RSES outlines three inter-locking and theme-based sets of principles in respect of:

- Economic opportunity;
- Healthy place-making; and
- Climate action.

It envisages sustainable economic development associated with the GDA's role as an economic engine, and it advocates improving international and inter-regional connectivity, increasing inter-stakeholder collaboration, driving innovation and enterprise development and enhancing outcomes in education and social inclusion. The associated objectives are reflected in several county-level strategies including the following, and the LECP provides a framework through which synergies and collaborative partnership can be further promoted.

- Kildare 2025 Economic Development Strategy;
- Kildare Digital Strategy (2022-2025);
- Kildare Culture and Creativity Strategy;
- Kildare Local Enterprise Development Plan (2021 - 2024); and
- Kildare Hub Strategy (2022-2025).

The **Kildare 2025 Economic Development Strategy**, which is already giving county-level effect to the RSES, emerged from, and builds on, our previous LECP. It is pursuing three enabling actions – investment in place, investment in people and strengthening our bidding capacity for funds – across eight critical areas as follows: indigenous industry / SMEs; foreign direct investment; knowledge economy; equine industry; agri-food sector; sustainable tourism, hospitality and leisure; retail; and climate action & green economy. Its continued implementation will be integral to delivering on the vision and high-level goals that are set out in this document.

The RSES places considerable emphasis on healthy place-making, which it associates with sustainable settlement patterns, compact growth, urban regeneration, rural community development, healthy communities and creative places. It defines healthy placemaking as follows:

“Placemaking is an essential link between spatial planning and economic strategy, facilitating improvements to the public realm and people’s quality of life and playing an increasingly important role in attracting talent and investment. The creation of healthy and attractive places requires improvements to both physical and social infrastructure and prioritises the incorporation of physical activity in people’s daily lives.”

Core elements of placemaking, as outlined in the RSES, include:

- Public realm – vibrant, attractive, safe and accessible public spaces;
- Sustainable travel – prioritising active travel;
- Recreation and open space;
- Sense of place – promotion of arts, culture, heritage;
- Strong, inclusive communities – good access to health, education and other services for all; and
- Physical infrastructure – good connectivity.

The RSES’ emphasis on placemaking and the core elements it has identified are highly relevant to the formulation and implementation of our LECP. Placemaking implies making investments in both hard and soft infrastructure, and the stakeholders who are represented on the LCDC and LECP Advisory Group, along with the wider civil society ought to be

furthered empowered and enabled to contribute to, and benefit from, placemaking.

The principles of placemaking imply a strong emphasis on community development and ensuring that communities are actively involved in shaping places. Service delivery, the development of facilities and the promotion of linkages and accessibility are integral to placemaking. While these responsibilities generally come within the remits of statutory bodies, agencies increasingly embrace the merits of citizen engagement in planning and in delivering services, amenities and infrastructure. The arts and creativity have been effectively applied in making places attractive and in engaging citizens, especially vulnerable groups, in making decisions that shape places and livelihoods, and there is potential to promote creative energies and innovation in placemaking and the wider delivery of the LECP's objectives.

Placemaking and participatory planning are useful tools in promoting social inclusion, and it is important to document the scale and manifestations of poverty and exclusion in County Kildare. Indeed, there is a need to ensure stakeholders, particularly policy-makers, are fully aware of the extent of social exclusion. The Pobal HP Index of Affluence and Deprivation and a recent spatial analysis of the distribution of incomes in Ireland identify particular challenges associated with poverty and inter-generational disadvantage in County Kildare. While there are undoubtedly areas of affluence in the county, there are significant areas of disadvantage. There is no ED south of a line from Rathangan to Ballymore Eustace (over 75% of the county) that registers as being 'affluent' on the Pobal HP Index. Moreover, the Index classifies all of Athy Town and most of its environs as 'below average', 'disadvantaged' or 'very disadvantaged', and it identifies several neighbourhoods in Monasterevin, Kildare Town, Rathangan and Newbridge that are 'disadvantaged' and 'very disadvantaged'. The evidence points, therefore, to the importance of policy and practice interventions that respond to current challenges and apply preventive approaches to addressing social exclusion.

Among the existing and evolving local policies, strategies and frameworks that are relevant to the promotion of place-making and social inclusion are:

- Children and Young Persons Services Committee – Children and Young People’s Plan (2023-2025);
- County Kildare Access Strategy (2020-2022);
- County Kildare Joint Policing Committee Strategy (2016-2021 and forthcoming);
- Culture and Creative Strategy (2023-2027) – Kildare;
- HSE - Dublin South, Kildare & West Wicklow, CHO 7, Delivery Plan
- HSE Connecting for Life (Suicide Prevention Action Plan) Kildare and West Wicklow;
- Kildare Age-Friendly Strategy (2023-2027);
- Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board Statement of Strategy (2020-2024);
- Kildare Arts Strategy (2023-2027)
- Kildare Childcare Committee Strategic Development Plan 2023-2026;
- Kildare Fáilte Strategic Plan (2021-2025);
- Kildare Integration Strategy (2021-2026);
- Kildare Library Service Interim Development Plan (2020 – 2022 and forthcoming);
- Kildare Local Development Strategy (2023-2027);
- Kildare Play Strategy (2018-2028);
- Kildare Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme Strategy (2018-2023 and forthcoming);
- Kildare Sports Partnership Strategy (forthcoming);
- Kildare Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (2019-2023); and
- Open Space and Outdoor Recreation Strategy (2021-231).

The coordinated delivery of these strategies and their successors, supported by LECP mechanisms, can ensure enhanced universal access to services and supports and the alleviation of poverty and exclusion, thereby giving effect to the European Charter of Fundamental Rights. Moreover, the LECP provides supportive mechanisms whereby endogenous and exogenous capacities are forged and through which we foster information-sharing and networking so that best practices are promoted and mainstreamed – in line with UNSDG 17.

As noted in the socio-economic statement, environmental data reveal significant challenges facing County Kildare. These include large volumes of greenhouse gas emissions associated with car-based commuting and high

levels of energy consumption. The RSES outlines an approach to climate action and climate change amelioration and mitigation that is based on integrated transport and land use, more sustainable management of water and other environmental resources, building climate resilience, transitioning to low carbon and clean energy, enhancing green infrastructure and improving biodiversity and natural heritage. County Kildare has a Just Transition Plan in place, and the Athy and Clane-Maynooth Municipal Districts are included within the EU Just Transition Fund, which has identified three priority areas for investment as follows:

- Diversification of the local economy;
- Restoration of degraded peatlands and regeneration of industrial heritage assets; and
- Smart and sustainable local mobility.

Kildare County Council is currently implementing a Local Just Transition Plan for West Kildare, and the LECP can provide enabling mechanisms for the development of projects that are consistent with the Just Transition Fund's objectives, thereby contributing to more sustainable livelihoods, a higher quality of life and cleaner environment in County Kildare.

County Kildare was one of the first counties to adopt a Climate Action Charter, and in 2019, the Council adopted a Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (2019-2024). The subsequent revision of Ireland's targets in respect of reducing greenhouse gas emissions accentuates the imperatives associated with this strategy's delivery. Moreover, in the light of the aforementioned challenges associated with social exclusion, it is important to ensure that the transition to a zero-carbon society is just – particularly for low-income households.

## Furthering Complementarity and Sustainability

Spatial planning and place-making are integral to the policy frameworks referenced here – in terms of ensuring they have positive impacts at county and community levels. **Project Ireland 2040 – Ireland’s National Development Plan** has been aligned with Ireland’s **National Planning Framework**, and the State has clear targets and timeframes in respect of promoting balanced regional and territorial development.



These targets are operationalised through three **regional spatial and economic strategies (RSESs)** and the RSES for the **Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA)** provides the frame of reference and parameters for the **Kildare County Development Plan (2023-2029)**.

The County Development Plan governs land use, and it guides the development of infrastructure in County Kildare for the entire period of the LECP. There is a need, therefore, for complementarity in respect of both strategies. The County Development Plan also includes provisions for environmental protection, the development of housing, the provision of connectivity, cultural resource development and quality of life. It impacts on all sectors of the economy, and while it regulates activities, the plan can be a significant enabler and stimulant of initiative across all sectors.

The seventeenth of the UNSDGs is entitled 'partnership for the goals'. On a global scale, this goal implies partnership between and across the Global North and Global South along and between governments and statutory bodies. It also implies capacity-building along with knowledge and technical transfers. Collaborations involve supranational bodies and governments, and they also involve the private sector and civil society. Indeed, civil society has been proactive in promoting linkages and solidarity between communities and citizens in Ireland / Europe and in the Global South. There is scope for County Kildare to further play its part in promoting solidarity with communities across the Globe - through, for example, the Fair-Trade towns, and the responsible sourcing of goods and services. Moreover, the partnership principles that underpin UNSDG 17 are transferable to the ways in which the LECP can be delivered - based on inter-agency and inter-sectoral collaboration, a fusion and integration of economic, socio-cultural and ecological objectives and a commitment to good governance.