



# Offaly County Development Plan 2021- 2027

## Chief Executive's 2-year Progress Report

Comhairle Chontae Uíbh Fhailí  
Offaly County Council



October 2023



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Offaly County Council

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## 1.0 Introduction

The requirement to carry out a two-year Progress Report on the implementation of a Development Plan is set out in Section 15(2) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended, where it states that the Chief Executive (CE) is required to *'give a report to the members of the authority on the progress achieved in securing the objectives'* not more than two years after making the development plan.

Further, section 95(3) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended, requires the CE to include a review of the progress achieved in implementing the Housing Strategy in this report. Where the report indicates that new or revised housing needs have been identified, the CE may recommend that the housing strategy be adjusted, and the development plan be varied accordingly. The CE shall, where he or she considers that there has been a change in the housing market, or in the regulations made by the Minister under section 100, that significantly affects the housing strategy, give a report on the matter to the members of the authority and, where he or she considers it necessary, the CE may recommend that the housing strategy be adjusted and the development plan be varied accordingly.

Section 10.4 of the Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2022 states *'The Chief Executive's report must specifically include information in relation to progress on, and the results of, monitoring the significant environmental effects of implementation of the Development Plan. This report must include the results of SEA monitoring for the Development Plan, as well as variations to the Plan and the effects of implementing Local Area Plans'*.

The Development Plan Guidelines also state that:

*'The implementation of the development plan is a key strategic focus for the local authority and requires a concerted range of actions by the entire organisation in order to be successfully implemented'*.

Given the extensive number and nature of policies and objectives contained within the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027, it is not intended to repeat these throughout this report. This report provides an overview on the progress made in relation to headline topics dealt with in the development plan since its formal adoption on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2021. The Development Plan came into effect 6 weeks later on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2021.

Chapter 14 of the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 is titled Implementation and Monitoring. The following is a relevant extract from that chapter:

*'The Council is fully committed to securing and monitoring the implementation of the strategies, policies, and objectives of this Plan. The Council will continue to occupy a leadership role to progress and secure the Plan policies and objectives to achieve the sustainable development of the county. The successful implementation of a significant number of the policies and objectives of this Development Plan will necessitate on-going collaboration and a sense of good-will across a range of agencies and stakeholders. The implementation of this Plan will depend also on the economic climate, political support, Council funding and the availability of funding from other sources. It is considered that the implementation of the plan would be best focused on anticipated/proposed key, strategic and practical outcomes of the plan.'*

*The Planning Department of the Council is the main section responsible for monitoring and implementing the Plan, mainly through the development management function. However, it is important to note that this Plan coordinates the work and objectives of other key departments within Offaly County Council, such as Local Economic Office (LEO), Environment and Water Services, Roads, Housing, Tourism, Regeneration, and Local Community Development. In some cases, the body responsible for the implementation of certain Plan objectives may be external, such as Irish Water, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Waterways Ireland, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, and the Environmental Protection Agency'.*

## 2.0 Progress achieved in securing objectives

This section of the report will evaluate the plan in the following manner:

- Volume 1 – Written Statement
- Volume 2 – Settlement Plans
- Accompanying Strategies
  - (i) SEA Environmental Report
  - (ii) Natura Impact Report
  - (iii) Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
  - (iv) Wind Energy Strategy
  - (v) Housing Strategy
  - (vi) Record of Protected Structures

## Volume 1, Chapter 2 – Core Strategy, Settlement Strategy, Housing Strategy

## (i) Core Strategy Objectives

**CSO-01** It is an objective of the Council to monitor and manage the delivery of residential development in County Offaly through the development management process to ensure it is in line with the Core Strategy. In this respect, the Planning Authority shall maintain a record of residential development permitted in the open countryside, sráids and individual settlements in order to ensure compliance with the population allocations defined by the Core Strategy Table.

**Progress:**

It is recognised that such a record is a vital tool in ensuring that Offaly develops in an orderly fashion as set out in the County Development Plan Core Strategy Table. There are arrangements in place to address this.

**CSO-02** It is an objective of the Council to zone an appropriate amount of lands within the settlement areas to accommodate the projected population growth as set out in the Core Strategy, including the undertaking of variations or reviews of Portarlinton Joint Local Area Plan and Edenderry Local Area Plan which will be prioritised in view of legislation requirements to ensure consistency with the provisions of the Core Strategy.

**Progress:**

The Edenderry LAP 2023-2029 was adopted in 2023. The Joint Portarlinton LAP 2024-2030 is currently under preparation by Laois and Offaly Local Authorities.

**CSO-04** It is an objective of the Council to make Local Area Plans for Tullamore and Birr during the plan period of the County Development Plan 2021-2027. During the transition period between adoption of this County Development Plan and the adoption of the Local Area Plans for Tullamore and Birr, the objectives (including zoning objectives), policies and standards in this County Development Plan shall apply to Tullamore and Birr.

**Progress:**

Birr Local Area Plan 2023-2029 was adopted in 2023. Tullamore Local Area Plan 2024-2030 is under preparation by the Planning Authority.

(ii) Housing Objectives

**HO-01** It is an objective of the Council to procure vacant homes to ensure their continued use for residential purposes into the future and develop housing in infill and brownfield sites within town and village centres for social and affordable housing provision.

**Progress:**

A Vacant Homes Officer (VHO) has been appointed and works within the Housing Section. The VHO is available to provide information, advice, and support for owners of vacant homes and those considering buying a home that is currently vacant. The VHO also, working within the current legislative frameworks and various Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage approved Housing Schemes, is engaging with homeowners to address vacant homes.

Several measures have been implemented to address vacancy and bring properties back into use. Initiatives such as the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant and Ready to Build Scheme, under the Croí Cónaithe Towns Fund, provide financial incentives for people to buy and refurbish vacant properties and sites to be their principal private residence; while the Repair and Leasing and Buy and Renew Schemes involve the local authority leasing or buying the vacant property from the owner to assist in the provision of social housing.

On 14<sup>th</sup> April 2023 Housing Circular no. 14/2023 was issued to local authorities from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, titled 'Launch of CPO Activation Programme'. Under this Programme, local authorities are now required to adopt a proactive, planned, and systematic approach to the identification and activation of vacant and derelict properties. The main steps of the Programme include: - identification of vacant and derelict properties, - identification of and engagement with owners, - communication regarding the various schemes and measures in place to support bringing the property back into use, and - where owners of vacant and derelict properties cannot be identified or where they are unwilling to engage, use of available legislative powers to compulsory purchase or acquire such properties using either the Housing Act, 1966 or the Derelict Sites Act, 1990. The acquired properties may subsequently be used for social housing, made available for sale on the open market or used for other purposes e.g., community use. Within Offaly, the target set by Dep. for the number of vacant and derelict properties to enter the 2023 Programme is 65, and the number of CPOs to commence in 2023 is 8.

**HO-02** It is an objective of the Council to monitor the effectiveness of the Housing Strategy in meeting and resolving identified housing needs, and to review and revise the Housing Strategy as necessary should a variation to this Plan be made or if Part V planning legislation is amended during the lifetime of this plan.

**Progress:**

'Housing for All - a New Housing Plan for Ireland' is the government's housing plan to 2030. The plan supports the increase of housing supply to an average of 33,000 per year over the next decade. The delivery of new social and affordable homes is a key priority of the Housing for All Plan and forms an important element of the overall new housing delivery. Offaly County Council has developed a Housing Delivery Action Plan which provides details of social housing delivery. The plan also examines Offaly County Council's social housing need and sets out how the targets set by the Housing for All program will be achieved. It also sets out a commitment to explore the need for Affordable Housing

in the context of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage schemes currently available to fund same.

**HO-03** It is an objective of the Council to support the ongoing monitoring and review of the Housing Need Demand Assessment (HNDA) in accordance with a forthcoming HNDA methodology to be issued by Central Government. Furthermore, it is an objective of the Council to monitor and maintain a record of residential development permitted in the open countryside, sráids and individual settlements in accordance with forthcoming Departmental guidance around the establishment of a Housing Need Demand Assessment Coordination and Monitoring Unit and related implementation of a centralised spatial database for local authority housing.

**Progress:**

The advice from the department is for the Housing Section to carry out a report that examines a town/village at a local level considering house prices, income levels, demographics, projections etc., with such a report for Tullamore being prioritised. It is anticipated that such a report will support an application for an affordable housing fund for the town.

**HO-04** It is an objective of the Council to increase and effectively manage the stock of social housing within the county in order to meet the long-term housing needs of those households on the local authority housing list.

**Progress:**

Offaly County Council has developed a Housing Delivery Action Plan which provides details of social housing delivery between 2022 and 2026. The plan examines Offaly County Council's social housing need and sets out the social housing pipeline, areas for delivery, type of housing units that will be delivered to meet the need of households on the Local Authority's Social Housing Support List. It also outlines and identifies the various strands for delivery and the various stakeholders, Approved Housing Bodies, Leasing and Housing Assistance Payment landlords, etc. that the Council will engage with to deliver for qualified applicants.

**HO-05** It is an objective of the Council to provide suitable housing accommodation and living conditions for the Traveller community in accordance with the Offaly Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019 – 2024, and any subsequent programme adopted by the Council.

**Progress:**

Offaly County Council's Housing Section continues to engage with the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (LTACC) to oversee and assist with the delivery of the targets outlined in the county's Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024.

This five-year programme sets out the targets for the provision of various forms of accommodation such as:

- Standard accommodation in Local Authority/ Approved Housing Bodies/RAS/Leasing/HAP accommodation.



- Group Housing which allows for the accommodation of several Traveller families at the one location in small estates.
- Serviced Halting Sites – where Traveller's caravans/mobile homes can be accommodated on bays which have serviced units such as at Croghan Road and Roscrea Road, Birr.

**HO-06** It is an objective of the Council to secure implementation of the Part V Housing Strategy in accordance with Section 95(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), in particular, through the reservation of 10% of all land zoned solely for residential use, or for a mixture of residential or other uses, to be made available for the provision of social and affordable housing referred to in Section 94(4)(c) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and shall be provided in accordance with an Agreement referred to in Section 96 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and in accordance with Part V Ministerial Guidance or any future revised Guidance.

**Progress:**

Part V conditions are attached to relevant housing related permissions and Agreements entered between developer and Offaly County Council in accordance with planning legislation. The majority of Social Housing construction in the County has been undertaken by Council thus far in the Development Plan cycle. Supply chain issues and costs resulted in limited new housing developments progressing in the last two-year period. There are currently 57 Part V units in the pipeline with 11 delivered.

## Volume 1, Chapter 3 – Climate Action and Energy

**CAEO-01** It is an objective of the Council to implement the current Climate Change Adaptation Strategy for County Offaly.

**Progress**

Thematic Area	Action	Comments
<b>Local Adaptation Governance &amp; Business Operations</b>	Establish a Climate Change Adaptation Steering Group with representatives from across key functions of Offaly County Council to ensure the successful implementation of the actions of the Offaly Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and to report on progress. The Group will be tasked with managing and overseeing the effective mainstreaming of adaptation measures into all plans, programmes, strategies, and policies of Offaly County Council.	Steering group set up and have had monthly meetings, reviewed in Spring 2022 to ensure proper representation
	Include climate change adaptation policy in the Corporate Plan objectives providing for all Offaly County Council activities and the delivery of functions and services across the administrative area.	Included in 2019-2024 Corporate Plan
	Include climate change adaptation policy into the Service Delivery Plan and provide for its translation to team development plans and personal development plans to enable actions to be directly pursued per operational area.	This has commenced, but not all sections have yet included in their SDPs, reminder to be issued ahead of SDP for 2023
	Include climate change adaptation policy into the next County Development Plan and ensure it is fully informed in relation to climate change mitigation and adaptation measures.	CDP included Chapter's 3, 4, 8 & 11
	Liaise, collaborate, and work in partnership with the sectors identified in the National Adaptation Framework, subject to funding, in the delivery of the Government approved sectoral adaptation actions, where they relate and are relevant to the functions and activities of the Council at local level and /in local communities.	Review NAF

	Appraise the appointment of a Climate Change Adaptation Officer with responsibility for climate related activity within Offaly County Council to inform communities on local climate change issues and climate action measures, run awareness campaigns and manage funding for climate action projects.	Climate Action and Energy Officer has been appointed in a temporary capacity
	Appraise the appointment of an Energy Efficiency Officer with responsibility for the preventative and reactive maintenance for all buildings in Offaly County Council, implementing energy efficiency & renewable energy measures and driving initiatives to meet the 2020, 2030 and 2050 targets and promote Offaly County Council as a leader and exemplar in energy efficiency through workshops and events.	Climate Action and Energy Officer has been appointed in a temporary capacity
	Promote green procurement, for goods, services and works to support environmental and wider sustainable development objectives, to assist in balancing cost effectiveness and sustainable development and to represent both short-term and long-term value for money.	Procurement officer is running courses and raising awareness regarding GPP.
	Review the Major Emergency Plan to identify and address specifically, the impacts associated with extreme weather events on all functions/services of Offaly County Council including preparing for critical services disruptions, mitigating against the impact of service disruption, and improving the capacity to recover.	New Major Emergency Plan approved in July 2022.
	Review Offaly County Council's Health and Safety Statement to reflect climate related risks and ensure standard operating procedures are completed for job roles in each operational area taking into consideration the potential risks to workers from extreme weather events.	Severe weather plan in place, Flood emergency Plan in place, also Sever weather guidance and Risk Assessments for staff.
	Review operational plans for outdoor and indoor workers around times of extreme events	A review of operational plans and associated risk assessment is currently underway. Offaly County Council's Major Emergency Management Committee has recently been reconvened and this matter can be dealt with under the auspice of this group.
	Review Blue Light Policy with the aim of increasing resilience to extreme weather events	A review of this plan and associated risk assessment is currently underway. Offaly County Council's Major Emergency Management Committee has recently been reconvened and this matter can be dealt with under the auspice of this group.

<p>Identify gaps in data or information from an assessment of previous experiences of dealing with severe weather events and explore ways to maintain a high level of understanding of the risks and vulnerabilities of Offaly County Council in dealing with the future impacts of climate change.</p>	<p>A review of this plan and associated risk assessment is currently underway. Offaly County Council's Major Emergency Management Committee has recently been reconvened and this matter can be dealt with under the auspice of this group.</p>
<p>Develop and manage a centralised repository for all information relating to climate hazards and extreme climatic events including reports of incidents, estimates of costs incurred in remediation works, no. of resources deployed during and post event, description of impacts on service delivery and funding recouped for remediation works, rapid response aerial survey / drone availability during or immediately after extreme events, GIS mapping of extent &amp; severity of extreme events.</p>	<p>A review of this plan and associated risk assessment is currently underway. Offaly County Council's Major Emergency Management Committee has recently been reconvened and this matter can be dealt with under the auspice of this group.</p>
<p>Evaluate and document resources deployed for the management, maintenance, repairs, and clean-up operations after extreme weather events taking full account of hours and costs involved and impact on service delivery and including increased operational, maintenance and contractor and out of hours costs and additional funding sought and received.</p>	<p>A review of this plan and associated risk assessment is currently underway. Offaly County Council's Major Emergency Management Committee has recently been reconvened and this matter can be dealt with under the auspice of this group.</p>
<p>Encourage and develop further inter agency and departmental collaboration to increase climate change resilience in County Offaly providing for emergency planning and coordination, sharing expertise and experience around adaptation actions, coordination around implementing adaptation actions and liaison with the relevant Departments and Agencies regarding the implementation of actions set out in sectoral climate change adaptation strategies.</p>	<p>A review of this plan and associated risk assessment is currently underway. Offaly County Council's Major Emergency Management Committee has recently been reconvened and this matter can be dealt with under the auspice of this group.</p>
<p>Make provision for a contingency in the budget of each service / operational area to ensure continued or improved capacity of service in face of the projected increase in climate event intensity.</p>	
<p>Provide climate change awareness training to staff, elected members, and communities.</p>	<p>Training has commenced for many indoor staff; it is now being developed for outdoor staff.</p>
<p>Review the mobilisation policy and staff transfers to benefit staff in the organisation and reduce travel time; Expand and encourage the use of Citrix and remote working subject to business case and operational effectiveness.</p>	<p>As of September 2020, 274 staff have remote access logins. While some can carry out their duties 100% remotely, others need access to physical records and need to attend the office occasionally. The need for users to have two</p>

		<p>devices (laptop and PC) is leading to greater energy consumption and IT support costs.</p>
	<p>Quantity Offaly's CO2 emission and establish a target for first and subsequent cycles of the programme. Opportunity to link with tourism strategy and strategic projects in the County such as wind farms, living bogs, constructed wetlands, public lighting LED retrofits. Promote carbon footprint savings within the County and potential future savings. Opportunity to promote Offaly as a Sustainable Energy County.</p>	<p>Work on going between Green Offaly, and Offaly Co. Co.</p>
	<p>Support the National Conference on Green Energy Jobs - Economic &amp; Business Opportunities of Climate Change.</p>	<p>200 attendees. Very positive feedback.</p>
	<p>Support the North Offaly Development Fund to promote Rhode Business Park – 13 serviced sites with access to National Grid and encourage energy companies and companies testing new technologies to avail of the facilities.</p>	<p>Head of Enterprise is Director of Company. Actively involved in funding applications and sale of sites. Over the past 12 months, there has been steady progress relating to Rhode Green Energy Park. Two separate feasibilities are underway and close to completion. These Feasibility Studies at Rhode Green Energy Park provide evidence-based research to enhance the development of green energy enterprises within Offaly and the Midlands, a region near the Greater Dublin Area. They raise the profile of the Rhode Green Energy Project and position Rhode, North Offaly, and Offaly in general as committed to cutting-edge green energy development. Preparatory and procurement work has been completed in advance of the infrastructural works at Rhode Green Energy Park.</p> <p>A further funding award of €49,640 was applied for and awarded to North Offaly Development Fund CLG. This grant will be funded through the Enterprise Ireland REISS (Regional Enterprise Innovation Scoping Scheme) Feasibility Grant Scheme and will be used to develop a Framework on how to facilitate an integrated eco-industrial park at Rhode Green Energy Park.</p> <p>Throughout the past year, Offaly County</p>

Council and the Local Enterprise Office have presented the Rhode Green Energy Park Project to several stakeholders. These include members of the Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan Committee, Midlands Regional Transition Team, overseas offices of Enterprise Ireland and IDA, and to Junior Ministers of Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. There has been considerable engagement with private sector promoters looking to develop green energy projects in and around the park.

In 2020, Offaly County Council and North Offaly Development Fund CLG commissioned RPS to undertake an Opportunity Assessment Report for Rhode in North Offaly. The full report, together with a recording of a briefing session outlining the key points are available from Offaly County Council.

In summary, the three strategic objectives emerging as the most promising ways to develop the Rhode Green Energy Park opportunity further are:

- a. Strand 1: Energy decarbonisation/ innovation hub built around renewable energy, hydrogen, and electricity system integration.
- b. Strand 2: Eco-Industrial Park model whereby large-scale energy intensive employment – for example data centres, agri-food, horticulture, bio-economy – develops around the electricity and heat resources available.
- c. Strand 3: Educational/ Innovation/ Centre of Learning for renewables and electricity grid: to improve awareness within the community of how the energy transition is happening, for collaboration with stakeholders across the Midlands Region and to create partnerships with Third Level Institutions.

## 2. Just Transition Funding Award to complete Rhode Green Energy Park

In 2021, Offaly County Council in association with North Offaly Development Fund received a funding offer to complete Rhode Green Energy Park's infrastructure. The funding also allows for a Feasibility Study on integrating a

		<p>Data Centre/large energy user with renewable energy and green hydrogen.</p> <p>3. Feasibility Study Funding Award from Gas Networks Ireland                  In 2021, North Offaly Development Fund CLG successfully applied for funding for a Feasibility Study to the project will investigate the feasibility of creating a green hydrogen demonstration hub at Rhode Green Energy Park, integrating energy from renewable electricity with the gas network. Project partners are NODF, SSE and Bord na Móna. The study will be carried out by RPS, NUIG and UCD.</p>
	<p>Support the Junction Business Innovation Centre, Tullamore – Coworking hub for businesses developing Green Energy Technologies, Software and Design businesses.</p>	<p>Local Enterprise Office representative Director of Company. Member of Midland Co-Working Hubs. The Just Transition Funding of €476,000 is to be used to convert warehouse portion of The Junction Office Suites and will include sustainable building materials and green energy heating systems as well as mechanical ventilation, LED lighting throughout the building, Solar PV panels (both to heat water and to return to the grid), triple glaze windows, resealing to minimise heat loss.</p> <p>A Green for Micro review was carried out by consultants and the findings of this report have been incorporated in the conversion plans. The project management contract was advertised on eTenders and was awarded to The Chancery Group in July 2022. Planning Permission has been obtained and fire safety and disability certs applied for. Other recommendations in the Green for Micro Report have been implemented and include installation of LED bulbs at replacement time, enhanced recycling, reduced use of air conditioning and upgrade of insulation levels of the current roofing system in Unit 19H in</p>

		<p>terms of air tightness and to deliver heat loss reduction.</p> <p>Good uptake in the national Connected Hub Voucher scheme phase 1 which encouraged those not familiar with remote working hubs to use them over the summer period. Phase 2 has just been launched and will be promoted by all hubs and LEO Offaly.</p>
	<p>Support Micro-LEAN Programmes, assisting micro-enterprises improve efficiencies and reduce waste in their businesses</p>	<p>LEAN for Micro programme is designed to help businesses strive to remove waste and reduce costs whilst increasing performance and competitiveness. Seven companies in Offaly have availed of this programme to date this year.</p> <p>Green for Micro programme offering businesses in Offaly the opportunity to access a green consultant to help them develop a more sustainable and climate friendly business. Seven successful Offaly applicants so far in 2022.</p>
	<p>Support the vision of Offaly as an alternative to Dublin, encourage green enterprise in Offaly, promote Offaly as a place offering a work life balance.</p>	<p>Local Enterprise Office Offaly are assisting businesses in Offaly to increase their digitalisation via the Digital Start programme, the Trading Online Voucher and the You're the Business scheme. The LEO supports Offaly businesses in enabling economic activities to go digital resulting in the reduced need for travel/transport, cutting carbon emissions. This further promotes Offaly as an attractive location to work and live in.</p> <p>The continued delivery of training using blended online/in-person methods is a climate-friendly policy assisting LEO Offaly clients in reducing their carbon footprint whilst continuing to upskill and network. LEO Offaly will be a key stakeholder in the delivery of the new Temporary Business Energy Support Scheme (TBESS) announced in Budget 2023 which will assist businesses with their energy costs. The increase of funding of €36m nationally will further assist LEO Offaly</p>



	to help businesses on developing their digital transformation, green agenda, and provision of jobs in all parts of Ireland.
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**CAEO-05** It is an objective of the Council to implement the Council's Wind Energy Strategy as follows: 1. In 'Areas Deemed Open for Consideration for Wind Energy Development' as identified in Map No. 10 'Wind Energy Strategy Designations', the development of windfarms and smaller wind energy projects will be considered; 2. In all other areas, wind energy developments shall not normally be permitted – except as provided for under relevant exemption provisions in the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended); and 3. Applications for re-powering (by replacing existing wind turbines) and extension of existing and permitted wind farms will be assessed on a case by case basis and will be subject to criteria listed in Development Management Standard 109 contained in Chapter 13 of Volume 1 of this County Development Plan and the Section 28 Ministerial Wind Energy Development Guidelines.

#### Progress

All planning applications received for wind energy developments have been assessed against the above documents.

**CAEO-06** It is an objective of the Council to source E.U. and national funding to support projects which assist the transition of the industrial peatlands to sustainable after uses.

#### Progress

In 2020, the National Just Transition Fund was made available to support communities transitioning to a low carbon economy. The focus was on retraining workers and generating sustainable employment in green enterprise across the region. Fifty-six projects were awarded funding of €22.1m, some of which were Offaly specific, while others included Offaly as part of the wider Midlands region. These projects are at various stages of progress. The applications were categorised under the seven headings of:

- Business Development
- Education, Training and Upskilling
- Development of Co-working and Enterprise Hubs
- Renewable Energies and Retrofitting
- Tourism, Heritage, and Restoration
- Community Development and Capacity Building
- Greenways and Walking

In November 2022, the EU Just Transition Fund Programme for 2021-2027 was approved by the Irish Government and formally adopted by the European Commission in December 2022. Ireland's allocation was announced as €84.5m which when matched by the Exchequer, totals €169m. The EU

JTF has the single objective *'enabling regions and people to address the social, employment, economic and environmental impacts of the transition towards the Unions 2030 targets for energy and climate and a climate-neutral economy of the Union by 2050, based on the Paris Agreement.'* The fund was officially launched in County Longford on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2023.

Three priorities have been identified:

- Priority 1      Generating employment by diversifying the local economy.
- Priority 2      Restoration of degraded peatlands and regeneration of industrial heritage assets.
- Priority 3      Smart and sustainable mobility options.

Approved projects must be completed, and funding drawn down by the end of 2026. Under Priority 1, Offaly County Council is collaborating with stakeholders in the Tourism area, in particular Fáilte Ireland. Investment in micro enterprises and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) will support the economic diversification of the local economy through the development of the regenerative Tourism sector. Under Priority 2, Offaly County Council is collaborating with Fáilte Ireland and Bord na Móna in relation to the regeneration and repurposing of industrial assets arising from the industrial peatlands industry.

**CAEO-08** It is an objective of the Council to carry out a feasibility assessment for district heating in County Offaly and identify local waste heat sources or renewable energy sources.

#### **Progress**

Due to resource constraints the local authority has not carried this out to date.

**CAEO-13** It is an objective of the Council to prepare Mobility Management and Travel Plans for Tullamore and Edenderry to bring about behaviour change and more sustainable transport use.

#### **Progress**

A Local Transport Plan has been completed for Edenderry town in 2023 as part of the making of the Edenderry Local Area Plan 2023-2029. An Area Based Transportation Assessment was compiled by consultants for Tullamore which will feed into the making of the Tullamore Local Area Plan 2024-2030. Both documents propose changes to the towns to support increased sustainable mobility.

**CAEO-14** It is an objective of the Council to introduce minimum standards in the Local Authority social housing stock as part of retrofit works being carried out on older stock or refurbishment of vacant dwellings.

#### **Progress**

87 social houses have been retrofitted since 2021, with 33 more to be completed by the end of 2023 (the total of 120 homes equates to 6% of Offaly's social housing stock). All retrofitted houses are now at B2 BER rate or higher. Prework BER's ranged between a G to a C3. The 87 retrofits have resulted in a reduction of 470 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year.

**CAEO-15** It is an objective of the Council to ensure LED luminaires display warmer colours (i.e., CCT values at or below 2700K) in future installations to avoid environmental impacts associated with bluerich LED light in keeping with Dark Sky Ireland Lighting Recommendations.

### **Progress**

Offaly County Council at present manage 9,291 lights in the county. All the lights are maintained/repared and upgraded on the network for various stakeholders such as Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII). Offaly County Council working in partnership with TII began in 2019 to retrofit and change public lights in Offaly to LED lighting units. To date 44% of all public lighting has been changed. There are now 4,054 lights changed to LED. The total cost to complete this retrofit is approximately €3.5 million. The Public Lighting Energy Efficiency Project (PLEEP) will begin in 2024 and will bring the retrofit lighting project to completion in the coming years. The project will achieve a significant improvement in energy efficiency assisting OCC towards our climate action targets while also significantly reducing the cost of running the lights.

## Volume 1, Chapter 4 – Biodiversity and Landscape

**BLO-02** It is an objective of the Council that no plans, programmes or projects giving rise to significant cumulative, direct, indirect or secondary impacts on European sites arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans, programmes, etc. or projects).

### Progress

All planning applications, Part VIIIs and exemption certificate applications are screened for the need for a Natural Impact Statement (NIS) as part of Appropriate Assessment procedures, and if required a NIS is carried out.

**BLO-03** It is an objective of the Council that all projects and plans arising from this Plan will be screened for the need to undertake Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive. A plan or project will only be authorised after the competent authority has ascertained, based on scientific evidence, Screening for Appropriate Assessment, and subsequent Appropriate Assessment where necessary, that:

1. The plan or project will not give rise to significant adverse direct, indirect, or secondary effects on the integrity of any European site (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects); or
2. The plan or project will have significant adverse effects on the integrity of any European site (that does not host a priority natural habitat type/and or a priority species) but there are no alternative solutions, and the plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature. In this case, it will be a requirement to follow procedures set out in legislation and agree and undertake all compensatory measures necessary to ensure the protection of the overall coherence of Natura 2000; or
3. The plan or project will have a significant adverse effect on the integrity of any European site (that hosts a natural habitat type and/or a priority species) but there are no alternative solutions and the plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons for overriding public interest, restricted to reasons of human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest. In this case, it will be a requirement to follow procedures set out in legislation and agree and undertake all compensatory measures necessary to ensure the protection of the overall coherence of Natura 2000.

### Progress

All planning applications, Part VIIIs and exemption certificate applications are screened for the need for a Natural Impact Statement (NIS) as part of Appropriate Assessment procedures, and if required a NIS is carried out.

**BLO-04** It is an objective of the Council to ensure that the impact of development within or adjacent to national designated sites, Natural Heritage Areas, proposed Natural Heritage Areas, Ramsar Sites and Nature Reserves likely to result in significant adverse effects on the designated site is assessed by requiring the submission of an Ecological Impact Assessment prepared by a suitably qualified professional, which should accompany planning applications.

#### Progress

Ecological Impact Assessments are sought in relation to projects likely to have significant impacts on the designated sites listed above.

**BLO-09** It is an objective of the Council to consider, in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Westmeath County Council, the Geological Survey of Ireland and others, the potential designation of the north Offaly esker landscape as a UNESCO Geopark, to promote the unique geological heritage of the area.

#### Progress

No change to date.

**BLO-10** It is an objective of the Council to require the preparation and submission of a Hydrological Report/Assessment for significant developments within and in close proximity to protected raised bogs and to take account of same in the assessment of impacts on the integrity of peatland ecosystems.

#### Progress

A request for a Hydrological Report/Assessment has not been found necessary to date.

**BLO-13** It is an objective of the Council to (a) investigate the feasibility of and cooperate with relevant agencies in providing a Linear Park based on the River Shannon from Banagher to Meelick, which takes account of the sensitive ecological nature of the Callows area and (b) to support the development of an overall vision/strategy for the Shannon Callows in co-operation with all stakeholders to ensure that the area is appropriately managed at a landscape scale.

#### Progress

No progress to date.

**BLO-28** It is an objective of the Council to work with stakeholders such as Bord na Móna, Coillte, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Waterways Ireland and Just Transition related groups to examine the feasibility of developing a Wilderness Corridor on rehabilitated peatlands linked to routes identified in Figure 6.13 'Midlands Cycling Destination, Offaly Network Map at;

- (i) Cavemount, Esker, Ballycon, Derrycricket, Clonsast North, Clonsast and Derryounce Bogs in East Offaly; and
- (ii) Blackwater, Ballaghurt and Belmont Bogs in West Offaly, from Clonmacnoise in the direction of Belmont village in West Offaly.

### **Progress**

OCC sought expressions of interest to complete an initial study into these two corridors to include precedent examples, stakeholder consultation, landscape, nature, and access proposals. Two expressions were submitted, with Cunnane Stratton Reynolds contracted to complete the report. The report is expected to be completed in Q2 2024.

## Volume 1, Chapter 5 – Economic Development Strategy

### **Enterprise Objectives**

**ENTO-01** It is an objective of the Council to encourage, in co-operation with Enterprise Ireland, the Local Enterprise Office, and other local development bodies, the development of further small / medium-scale industries and services. Further, to promote the establishment of a number of small incubator units, together with a county-wide support programme, within designated areas to accommodate new business start-ups.

#### **Progress**

The Local Enterprise Office within Offaly County Council has an expanded brief to provide supports to businesses employing up to 50 people. This is in addition to LEO Offaly's core focus on supporting the start-up and expansion of micro-enterprises employing up to ten staff. Offaly County Council provides co-working hubs in Tullamore, Edenderry, and Birr to facilitate entrepreneurs and business start-ups. Offaly County Council is also supporting enterprise development through the promotion and sale of serviced sites in Ferbane and Portarlinton. Offaly County Council continues to work with the North Offaly Development Fund CLG in the development of Rhode Green Energy Park.

**ENTO-02** It is an objective of the Council to continue to liaise and work alongside the enterprise agencies, ESB and Bord na Móna and the private sector, to develop enterprise space at various locations throughout the county, where feasible and appropriate.

#### **Progress**

Offaly County Council actively engages with Enterprise Ireland, IDA, ESB, Bord na Móna and the private sector, to develop enterprise space throughout Offaly. LEO Offaly provides advice and guidance to enterprises looking to develop or expand in Offaly.

**ENTO-03** It is an objective of the Council to work alongside IDA to identify appropriately sized land banks and business premises at suitable locations in Tullamore in order to attract foreign direct investment.

#### **Progress**

The management team engages with the IDA on an ongoing basis.

**ENTO-04** It is an objective of the Council to improve the cluster-specific business environment by putting in place a favourable business ecosystem for innovation and entrepreneurship that supports the development of new industrial value chains and emerging industries.

#### **Progress**

Offaly County Council works closely with Offaly Innovation & Design Centre CLG in the development of co-working hubs in Offaly. There is a specific focus in each of the hubs to develop key business clusters. For example, the focus in stream BIRR focuses is Big Data; the focus in The Junction in Tullamore is ICT, Fintech and Design and the focus in E-Hive is Green Energy. Separately, there is a

concerted effort to develop and promote Rhode Green Energy Park as a centre for co-located Green Technology Companies. In addition, LEO Offaly provides sector specific supports to enterprises in the areas of engineering, food and beverages, and craft.

**ENTO-05** It is an objective of the Council to support smart specialisation partnerships at a county and regional level.

#### **Progress**

LEO Offaly is represented on the Regional Midlands Enterprise Plan Committee. LEO Offaly is actively involved in Smart Specialisation Partnerships in ICT and Advance Manufacturing.

**ENTO-06** It is an objective of the Council to facilitate the development of Tullamore, a Key Town under the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, in accordance with regional policy. This will include measures to seek to reserve lands within Tullamore to make provision for potential nationally and regionally significant activities and to attract specialist large-scale enterprise development within the county.

#### **Progress**

The Zoning Objectives Maps for Tullamore in the County Development Plan includes two Strategic Employment Zones (SEZ), one at Ardan Road and one at Ballyduff. The purpose of this objective is to facilitate strategic large-scale employment. These zones have development capacity, good accessibility, availability of a land bank of at least 100 acres in size and potential to deliver significant economic development and employment creation. The proposed Ardan Road SEZ has potential to cater for the expansion of Midland Regional Hospital Tullamore and its continued development as a Teaching/University Hospital and/or to provide a Med or Biotechnology Park with linkages to the Hospital, whilst the proposed Ballyduff SEZ has the potential to provide a Business / Technology Park, leveraging its proximity to the Axis Business Park, Burlington Business Park, and Srah IDA Business Park in the area.

**ENTO-07** It is an objective of the Council to identify and quantify suitable locations in Tullamore for strategic employment development, for large scale employment and enterprise activity.

#### **Progress**

See above.

**ENTO-08** It is an objective of the Council to support leveraging opportunities in big data and data analytics from Irish Low Frequency Array (I-LOFAR), which is the Birr-based Irish station in a European wide network of state-of-the-art radio telescopes used to observe the universe at low frequencies, and in this regard facilitate the development of Birr as a technology hub.

#### **Progress**

Offaly County Council has supported Offaly Innovation & Design Centre CLG in the established of stream BIRR. Stream BIRR is designed and fitted out as a dedicated professional office space in Birr. It provides a hub for researchers, academia and businesses that utilise Big Data. Stream BIRR provides



unique opportunities for cross-sectoral collaboration between those involved in research and business sectors associated with everything from Astronomy to Animation, Fintech to Film, Robotics to Research, & Manufacturing to Machine Learning.

**ENTO-09** It is an objective of the Council to encourage job creation in the Self-Sustaining Towns of Edenderry and Portarlington in order for them to become more self-sustainable and balanced considering they have experienced rapid population growth with high levels of commuter focused residential expansion without equivalent increases in jobs and services.

#### **Progress**

The Joint Portarlington LAP will be adopted in 2024 which will address employment. The Edenderry LAP was adopted in 2023 and recognises the need to encourage increased employment growth. Substantial lands have been zoned in a manner as to encourage this.

**ENTO-10** It is an objective of the Council to require that developments within or adjacent to the area of the Blundell Masterplan, Edenderry, 2020 demonstrate adherence to the urban design, place making and connectivity principles for the masterplan area.

#### **Progress**

Any planning application / part VIII proposal located within or adjacent to the masterplan lands will be required to adhere to the masterplan.

**ENTO-13** It is an objective of the Council to facilitate the development / expansion of a further digital/e-commerce hub in Offaly to serve the county in improving and promoting the use of the internet as a key educational and business driver.

#### **Progress**

Offaly County Council continues to support the development and expansion of hubs within the county. Offaly currently has 9 hubs listed on ConnectedHubs.ie with 3 more to be added in 2023. ConnectedHubs.ie is operated by The National Hub Network, a Government of Ireland initiative that provides a vehicle for individual hubs to come together under a shared identity to maximise the economic opportunity of remote working.

**ENTO-14** It is an objective of the Council to support the national objective to promote Ireland as a sustainable international destination for Information and Communications Technology (ICT) infrastructures such as data centres and associated economic activities at appropriate locations. In this regard, the Council will support the provision of data centres at appropriate locations in the county subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process and the criteria set out in Policies CAEP-41 and CAEP-42 in Chapter 3 of this Plan.

#### **Progress**

A planning application has not been received to date for a data centre in County Offaly.

**ENTO-15** It is an objective of the Council to work with government agencies and telecommunication providers to facilitate the delivery of high-speed broadband to all premises in Offaly.

### Progress

Offaly County Council continues to work with all telecommunication providers to facilitate the delivery of high-speed broadband to all premises in Offaly. In Offaly, there are approximately 13,000 premises in the Intervention Area (IA) under the National Broadband Plan, which includes homes, farms, commercial businesses, and schools. In 2023, 1,671 of these homes, businesses, and farms can now order high-speed, reliable broadband. National Broadband Ireland is calling on people living in Offaly to visit [nbi.ie/map](http://nbi.ie/map) and enter their Eircode to see if they are ready to connect.

**ENTO-16** It is an objective of the Council to work with statutory undertakers to make the most efficient use of infrastructure in the delivery of broadband in the county, particularly encouraging the use of existing telecommunications ducting where it is available.

### Progress

Offaly County Council continues to work with statutory undertakers to make the most efficient use of infrastructure in the delivery of broadband in the county.

**ENTO-17** It is an objective of the Council to encourage the provision of Wi-Fi zones in public buildings and tourist destinations in the county.

### Progress

Offaly County Council continues to encourage the provision of Wi-Fi zones in public buildings and tourist destinations in the county. Offaly County Council supports over 100 locations in the county with free public Wi-Fi in our Libraries, Community Centres and Halls, Connected Hub Locations, Tourist Locations, Towns & Villages and Public Realm Spaces.

**ENTO-18** It is an objective of the Council to avail of funding opportunities for the provision of Wi-Fi and broadband in the county to support economic development and social inclusion.

### Progress

Offaly County Council continues to avail of funding opportunities for the provision of Wi-Fi and broadband in the county to support economic development and social inclusion.

**ENTO-19** It is an objective of the Council to support and promote the development of Rhode Green Energy Park for green energy, smart specialization and clustering and other complimentary green uses as outlined as 'Uses Considered Appropriate for the Rhode Green Energy Park' in Table 5.4. 'Uses not considered appropriate for the Rhode Green Energy Park' as outlined in Table 5.4 will not be encouraged.

### Progress

OCC engaged Siemens to conduct a feasibility report examining the potential synergies of various green energy technologies and other complimentary green energy uses. The report, entitled "Exploring Data Integration with Renewable Energy & Green Hydrogen in the Midlands" was launched on 14th June 2023.

**ENTO-20** It is an objective of the Council to ensure that proposed developments within the Rhode Green Energy Park adhere to the principles set out in Table 5.3: Guiding Principles for the Rhode Green Energy Park.

### Progress

OCC secured REISS (Regional Enterprise Innovation Scoping Scheme) funding to engage an external consultant to develop a framework for an eco-industrial park. Consultants (RPS) have been appointed and are developing the framework and guiding principles, drawing from best practise and integrating the outcomes of various studies completed to date.

**ENTO-21** It is an objective of the Council to support and facilitate the infrastructural upgrades and works outlined in Table 5.5 in conjunction with the development of the Rhode Business Park.

### Progress

OCC supported NODF to secure funding from JTF to complete and repurpose the partially complete Rhode Business Park into Rhode Green Energy Park. Works are expected to be complete by the end of 2023.

**ENTO-22** It is an objective of this Plan for the Council to prepare the following;

- a Design Statement showing the developers the preferred approach to materials, colours, boundary treatment, signage etc. in the Rhode Green Energy Park;
- a Green Infrastructure Masterplan for the Rhode Green Energy Park to advise developers of how to retain and enhance existing green infrastructure and to provide new green infrastructure within and around the Rhode Green Energy Park; and
- an Energy Efficiency and Climate Change Adaptation Design Statement for the Rhode Green Energy Park.

### Progress

OCC secured REISS (Regional Enterprise Innovation Scoping Scheme) funding to engage an external consultant to develop a framework for an eco-industrial park. Consultants (RPS) have been appointed and are developing the framework and guiding principles, drawing from best practise, and integrating the outcomes of various studies completed to date.

## Rural Economic Development Objectives

**REDO–01** It is an objective of the Council to support rural employment initiatives across the county, subject to the principles of proper planning and sustainable development.

### Progress

LEO Offaly has a county-wide remit and provides enterprise support services to enterprises throughout the county. These supports include business advice, enterprise training, business coaching, networking opportunities and financial support. Through networking and client engagement, LEO Offaly encourages collaboration and peer learning across the county. LEO Offaly's remit has been expanded to provide support to businesses employing up to 50 people. This increases LEO Offaly's reach and interaction with rural enterprises.

**REDO–02** It is an objective of the Council to support the progression and delivery of projects in the context of available National and European funding, that support:

- Community structural development;
- Local business and enterprise development;
- Infrastructure and capital development,
- Agricultural development; and
- Tourism and heritage development.

### Progress

Offaly County Council actively seeks funding opportunities for the strategic advancement of enterprise and economic development in Offaly. These include funding mechanisms from the Enterprise Ireland Regional Development Fund, the National Just Transition Fund, and the EU Just Transition Fund. Some key strategy documents have been commissioned by Offaly County Council to identify and confirm key priority goals and action plans. These include: Offaly Economic Strategy & Action Plan 2022-2027; Rhode Green Energy Park Opportunity Assessment Report; Offaly Tourism Strategy etc.

**REDO–05** It is an objective of the Council to support the longer-term strategic planning for industrial peatland areas, which should include a comprehensive after-use framework plan for the industrial peatlands and associated infrastructure including workshops, office buildings and industrial sites, which addresses environmental, economic, and social issues including employment and replacement enterprise reflecting the current transition from employment based around peat extraction. Examples of after use and re-purposing of workshops and production facilities could include outreach training centres, gravel extraction, bike-hire facilities, enterprise space / co-working facilities, aquaculture, birch water harvesting, herb growing, resource management / recycling centre, climate change mitigation (such as through renewable energy, carbon sink, data centres, battery energy storage, afforestation including native woodland, a Green Energy Hub, flood management), and tourism (such as through peatways, recreational forestry, wilderness, eco-tourism based on biodiversity, and a designation of a National Peatlands Heritage Park).

### Progress

There is a need for a comprehensive after-use framework plan for industrial peatlands and associated infrastructure to be made available. In Offaly, site specific after-use proposals have emerged including renewables, rehabilitation, bioeconomy, and amenity without the context of an overall framework. Council staff have raised it as a potential project of regional scale or as a project to be led by a government department given the scale of the industrial peatlands across the midlands, not just Offaly. OCC continues to positively engage with the energy industry in relation to the after use of peatlands for energy where projects are in accordance with CDP policy and objectives.

**REDO-06** It is an objective of the Council to support the Midlands Regional Transition Team in developing a 'Holistic Plan for Just Transition in the Midland Region' including an inventory of project proposals and actions to support just transition in the Midlands and to assist the region in identifying potential investment needs for inclusion in a programme of support under the new EU Just Transition Fund.

### Progress

The Midlands Regional Transition Team secured the support of Secretariat Technical Assistance to Regions in Transition (START) under the EU Just Transition Platform. Outcomes included the preparation of the Midlands Pathway to Transition and the supporting Engagement Process. Many of the projects identified through the Engagement Process (Stage 1- National Just Transition Fund, JTF) proceeded to Stage 2 with an application to the National JTF. Many of the National JTF projects have impact in County Offaly.

The Midlands Regional Transition Team (MRTT) through its thematic groups has supported National JTF projects throughout delivery and actively engaged through the public consultation process in preparation of the Territorial Plan for Ireland under the EU JTF. The MRTT is represented on the EU JTF Programme Monitoring Committee, and as programme calls are opened the opportunities are promoted across Offaly County Council and MidlandsIreland.ie social media channels.

**REDO-07** It is an objective of the Council to support the development of Lough Boora Discovery Park as a National Peatlands Centre and to support the development of further strategic linkages with the local and regional green infrastructure network.

### Progress

A greenway link opened in 2023 linking Lough Boora Discovery Park with the Grand Canal greenway. The Council secured a Just Transition project totalling €1.1m, including match funding of €176,000, to upgrade walking & cycling routes within the parklands. These works commenced in 2022 and continued in 2023.

**REDO-08** It is an objective of the Council to consider proposals for the potential re-purposing of both Shannonbridge and Edenderry peat powered electricity generating plants, and the appropriate rehabilitation of associated lands.

### **Progress**

The Shannonbridge plant is currently under development as a temporary emergency power generation facility, sanctioned by the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications under Section 4 of the Development (Emergency Electricity Generation) Act 2022.

## Volume 1, Chapter 6 – Tourism and Recreational Development

**TRO-01** It is an objective of the Council to implement the actions and measures in Offaly Tourism Statement of Strategy 2017-2022 in conjunction with the community, businesses, state agencies, and Offaly Tourism Marketing CLG.

### Progress

The tourism team continue to implement the actions within the Offaly Tourism Statement of Strategy 2017-2022. The Tourism Team manage the systems and process of Offaly Tourism Marketing CLG and work closely with stakeholders and external agencies in order deliver on the objectives set out in the plan through collaboration.

**TRO-04** It is an objective of the Council to provide public Wi-Fi in proximity to tourist attractions in County Offaly.

### Progress

Offaly County Council provides public Wi-Fi in proximity to tourist attractions in County Offaly. The locations are: Alongside River Shannon in Banagher and Shannonbridge, Grand Canal Greenway at 5 locations, Clonmacnoise, Birr Castle and Slieve Bloom Mountains at Kinnitty.

**TRO-07** It is an objective of the Council to support and work with the Office of Public Works who manage Clonmacnoise Monastic Site on behalf of the National Monuments Service to conserve the site and present it appropriately to visitors.

### Progress

In 2023 the process of developing a Master Plan was commenced by the OPW as lead partners. Denis Byrne Architects won the tender process, and the programme is underway. Amanda Pedlow heritage officer and Andrew Murray senior planner are on the steering group.

**TRO-08** It is an objective of the Council to develop proposals in conjunction with the OPW for Durrow Abbey and Monastic Site to become a key tourist attraction in County Offaly and potentially become a UNESCO World Heritage Site by enhancing the visitor experience through the provision of signage, improved access, and associated infrastructure as appropriate and as resources allow.

### Progress

The County Council is in contact with the OPW who own part of the Monastic site and Abbey house at Durrow. Clarity is being sought on the OPW lease to a tenant before further works can take place.

**TRO-09** It is an objective of the Council to facilitate the development of a tourism resource using cutaway peatlands in conjunction with Bord na Móna and Fáilte Ireland, subject to environmental considerations and nature designations for example, recreational forestry, outdoor pursuits, peatways on the network of bogs and industrial railways and a designation of a National Peatlands Heritage Park.

### Progress

The Council continues to support Lough Boora Discovery Park which is owned & operated by Bord na Móna. €998,000 in Just Transition funding, in addition to OCC match funds has been secured to upgrade c.9km of trails within the parklands, which connect the Grand Canal Greenway to the Visitor Centre. Further enhancements are planned by way of an enhanced link from Leabeg, with funding by Transport Infrastructure Ireland.

Offaly County council has proposed several potential cycling & walking routes as part of the proposed *Strategic Trails Network for the Midlands*, a €30m Just Transition project being promoted by Fáilte Ireland.

**TRO-11** It is an objective of the Council to promote the existing educational and amenity facilities at Clara Bog Nature Reserve and Visitor Centre and Lough Boora Discovery Park and their expansion, subject to appropriate assessment and environment.

### Progress

Clara Bog Visitor Centre closed in 2020 due to COVID-19 and is scheduled for re-opening in early 2024. Therefore, the educational amenities within the centre cannot be promoted whilst it remains closed. The Nature Reserve is actively marketed to relevant markets by the tourism team in conjunction with Offaly Tourism Marketing CLG.

**TRO-12** It is an objective of the Council to investigate the feasibility of an Energy Park with educational and amenity facilities, relating to any future development of renewable energy projects of significant scale that comes forward over the lifetime of this plan. Any development of renewable energy on cutaway bog will be required to provide increased opportunities for amenity access and education facilities.

### Progress

The Council, in 2020, commissioned an Opportunity Assessment Report for the Rhode Green Energy Park. It concluded that there are three strands of opportunity:

- 1: Energy decarbonisation/ innovation hub built around renewable energy, hydrogen, and electricity system integration.
- 2: Eco-Industrial Park model attracting large scale energy intensive employment.
- 3: Educational/ Innovation/ Centre of Learning for renewables and electricity grid: the energy transition.

Subsequently, a report and action plan in relation to Data Centre Integration with Renewables and Hydrogen was completed in 2023. Further an application to the Gas Networks Ireland Innovation Fund was made in 2012 for funding towards a green hydrogen demonstration hub at Rhode Green Energy Park, integrating energy from renewable electricity with the gas network.

All the above fit within the *Rural Green* focus area of the Offaly Economic Strategy & Action Plan 2022 – 2027.



Bord na Móna has carried out initial public consultation in respect of a very large Energy Park on approximately 3,000ha directly to the north of the Rhode Green Energy Park.

**TRO-15** It is an objective of the Council to implement the 'Feasibility Study on the Development of a Major Cycling Destination in the Midlands of Ireland' (2016) in conjunction with Bord na Móna, Coillte, Waterways Ireland, the Office of Public Works, and the Product Development Group, in accordance with the Offaly Tourism Statement of Strategy 2017-2022.

### Progress

The Grand Canal Greenway is now complete from Tullamore to Edenderry in the east. Waterways Ireland are to complete the stretch from Edenderry to the county boundary and onto Ticknevin in late 2023 or early 2024. To the west, it is complete from Tullamore to Turraun and Offaly County Council, in partnership with Bord na Móna, have linked it on to Lough Boora Parklands by way of an ORIS funded project and further by a Just Transition-funded project between 2021 and the present. The Council plans to give an alternative route to the Lough Boora Visitor Centre via Leabeg by summer 2024. Funding from TII has been secured to complete the Grand Canal Greenway to Shannonharbour – this is planned to be complete by Q2 2024. The Grand Canal branch line to Kilbeggan is complete. OCC secured Carbon Tax 2020 to carry out a feasibility study for a greenway link from Kilbeggan to Mullingar *via* Lough Ennell in Co. Westmeath. This project has been taken over for further study by TII. This will be a major regional link. The Council is continuing to pursue a link from the Grand Canal Greenway *via* Mount Lucas Windfarm amenity trails south to the Barrow Blueway at Portarlinton / Monasterevin. Finally, links to Banagher (west from Shannonharbour) and Enfield east from Edenderry) are at the early stages of investigation, being promoted by local action groups in both cases.

The Council also secured Carbon Tax 2020 funding for a feasibility study for the *Shannon Monastic Greenway* – from Athlone to Meelick *via* Clonmacnoise, Shannonbridge and Banagher. This has been completed to a strategic options report stage.

OCC has made a strong submission in respect of the €30m Fáilte Ireland for the Midlands, a Just Transition project under the 2021 Territorial Plan.

**TRO-17** It is an objective of the Council to protect potential greenway, blueway and peatway routes (i) along and in proximity to abandoned rail lines and (ii) routes identified in Figure 6.13 'Midlands Cycling Destination, Offaly Network Map' from inappropriate development that could compromise the delivery of a cycling or walking route in the future.

### Progress

Ongoing through the Development Management process.

**TRO-18** It is an objective of the Council to work with the relevant stakeholders to examine the feasibility of developing the Kilbeggan to Ballycommon link of the Grand Canal, as a potential navigational route.

## Progress

None

**TRO-19** It is an objective of the Council to support the implementation of 'The Lough Ree and the MidShannon Spirit Level; Wet and Wild Lands; A Shared Ambition' (December 2017) Waterway Ireland's Tourism Masterplan for the Shannon, and any other future tourism initiatives by state or semi-state bodies.

## Progress

RRDF funding has been secured in respect of the Banagher Marina & Environs Masterplan. This is nearing completion.

OCC has part-funded a study on the re-purposing of the Dalton-Centre in Shannonbridge, which is being led by the Shannonbridge Action Group (SAG). A final report is expected in Q4 2023. The remaining funding was provided through Just Transition. The Council is co-operating with SAG as regards a report and associated design work for the re-use of the former School in Shannonbridge; with OPW on a masterplan for Clonmacnoise; and again, with SAG as regards its Just Transition-funded *Destination Shannonbridge* plan. Outputs and future funding applications for capital works from these will assist in achieving this objective.

The Council also secured Carbon Tax 2020 funding for a feasibility study for the *Shannon Monastic Greenway* – from Athlone to Meelick via Clonmacnoise, Shannonbridge and Banagher. This has completed to a strategic options report stage. If delivered it would be a major component in securing this objective.

**TRO-20** It is an objective of the Council to build on Birr's role as a Destination Town in particular having regard to its built heritage and proximity to key tourism attractions.

## Progress

The Birr Destination Town project is progressing with many elements completed to date, making the town a more attractive destination, whilst preserving its built heritage. The Tourism team and Offaly Tourism Marketing CLG work closely with stakeholders including the Birr festival collective on marketing the town as a year-round destination. Itineraries are currently being developed which will assist in linking various visitor attractions near Birr, and sites of similar appeal.

**TRO-21** It is an objective of the Council to explore the potential of Tullamore becoming a destination for Whiskey tourism based on the presence of the Tullamore Dew Visitor Centre in the town, and the potential of Tullamore forming part of a 'Whiskey Trails' linkage throughout the region and beyond.

## Progress

The feasibility of carrying out this body of work out has not taken place to date due to other work streams.

**TRO-22** It is an objective of the Council to examine the feasibility of identifying and mapping new Public Rights of Way in the recreational and amenity areas of the county in the context of emerging national guidance.

**Progress**

The feasibility of carrying out this body of work out has not taken place to date.

## Volume 1, Chapter 7 – Retail and Town Centre Strategy, and Regeneration

**RTCO-01** It is an objective of the Council to encourage the continued vitality and viability of town centres by:

- Identifying and promoting key town and village centre Opportunity Sites for development;
- Promoting the revitalisation of vacant and derelict properties/shop units;
- Promoting ongoing environmental improvements to the public realm;
- Preventing overdevelopment of particular non-retail uses such as fast-food outlets, amusement arcades / centres, off licences and betting shops in core retail areas;
- Promoting activities including events, festivals, street markets and farmer's/country markets in appropriate town and village centres in the county; and
- Facilitating sustainable mobility, accessibility, and permeability improvements.

### Progress

Clara Town Centre First Plan is now complete and identifies key opportunity sites with concept projects for future development under TCF funding streams.

A new Derelict Site Policy and Procedure was adopted by the Council in May 2023. This new policy sets out the process for progressing occupation of derelict and vacant properties through engagement with properties owners, awareness of grants available through the Vacant Homes Officer and Regeneration & Housing Section developments. A successful URDF grant of €2m was secured in June 2023 for tackling dereliction in Tullamore with a list of defined properties that have been vacant/derelict for some time.

An Active Travel Office was set up in the Roads Section which progresses active travel funding applications and has been liaising with consultants in the preparation of the Area Based Transport Assessment for Tullamore, Cycling Network, footpath & crossings improvements, safe school programmes, and bus stops.

A summary of Local Property Tax Projects in the period 2020-2024 and funding streams per Municipal District Area is provided below.

Local Property Tax Fund Project Proposals 2020-2024				
Projects by MD for 2020-2024 LPT funding	OCC LPT Funding €	Additional Funding €	Total Funds €	Funding Partners
Birr MD Projects	852,830	2,632,500	3,485,330	DRCD- RRDF
Edenderry MD Projects	850,545	3,984,015	4,834,560	DRCD- RRDF
Tullamore MD Projects	1,230,000	3,920,000	5,150,000	DHLGH – URDF & DRCD RRDF
Just Transition Projects	616,769	2,467,076	3,083,845	EMRA EU JT/DRCD
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,550,144</b>	<b>13,003,591</b>	<b>16,553,735</b>	
LPT (15%) for 2020-2024 (€742,378x3 + €661,505 x 2)	3,550,144			

Projects completed since 2021 under these funding streams include the following:

- Kinnitty Route to Mountain Bike Trails, Novice Mountain Bike Trail and bridge upgrades
- Edenderry Regeneration Phase II
- Tullamore Street Enhancement and Urban Regeneration projects
- Ferbane Regeneration Project – Design Team Appointed
- Banagher Rural Regeneration Masterplan
- Clara Town Centre First

**RO-01** It is an objective of the Council to encourage and facilitate, where appropriate, the development and renewal of areas throughout the county which are in need of regeneration and in particular to apply for funding under government urban and rural regeneration / renewal schemes.

### Progress

RRDF Edenderry phase II is currently ongoing for the design of a new community library on the Old Tesco Site (opportunity site) JKL Street, Edenderry; will be subject to a part VIII.

RRDF Banagher is currently progressing for an Architectural & Tourism Master Plan for Banagher Marina and Environs.

RRDF Ferbane is currently progressing for the Convent as a multipurpose community space through the design for a part VIII.

The Masterplan for the Rectory Lands in Birr is currently progressing to provide a new development precinct in the town and opening backlands within the town.

Tullamore Regeneration Framework and Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan are progressing to provide a template for the development for key sites within the town.

The aim of all the above project development RRDF projects is for a Category 1 project to be submitted 2023/2024 if a call permits.

**RO-03** It is an objective of the Council to promote the development and renewal of areas identified in need of regeneration in order to prevent (i) adverse effects on existing amenities in such areas, in particular as a result of the ruinous or neglected condition of any land, (ii) urban blight and decay, (iii) anti-social behaviour, or (iv) a shortage of habitable houses or of land suitable for residential use or a mixture of residential and other use.

### Progress

Above RRDF tackling areas at Old Tesco Site, Edenderry & Shannon Hotel Site Banagher.

**RO-06** It is an objective of the Council to identify derelict sites and vacant sites which are suitable for redevelopment and to maintain the respective registers.

### Progress

Following adoption of the CDP, legislation was introduced relating to Residential Zoned Land Tax. It involved mapping vacant mixed use zoned land /buildings and undeveloped serviced residential zoned

land, to encourage their development thereby avoiding tax. The tax will be administered in 2024 on applicable land / buildings by Revenue.

Offaly County Council has a Derelict Sites Register – There are currently 17 sites on this register as of October 2023.

Offaly County Council has a Vacant Sites Register, with no sites currently on the list.

**RO-07** It is an objective of the Council as per the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 (as amended), to use site activation measures such as the Vacant Site Levy in specific areas to bring forward vacant or underutilised 'Residential Lands' and 'Regeneration Lands' (which includes Opportunity Sites) into beneficial use where considered necessary for renewal and regeneration. Each year of the plan period the planning authority will assess the county's settlements for the purposes of identifying vacant sites for addition to the Vacant Site's Register and accordingly implement the statutory provisions for same.

### Progress

The Vacant Sites Levy is being replaced by the Residential Zoned Land Tax. The Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT) was announced in Central Government's Budget 2022 and was introduced into Part 22A of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 by the Finance Act 2021. The principal purpose of the RZLT is to encourage the timely activation of zoned and serviced residential development land for housing. The Ministerial Guidelines titled '*Residential Zoned Land Tax – Guidelines for Planning Authorities June 2022*' clarifies the requirements for planning authorities in relation to RZLT. To implement this tax measure, local authorities were required to undertake mapping to identify lands in-scope for the tax that satisfied relevant criteria, with provisions allowing those landowners identified as being within the scope to make submissions and appeal. The draft map of these lands was placed on public display 1<sup>st</sup> November 2022 until 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023, during which 19 no. submissions were received by Offaly County Council. Landowners received notification letters from Offaly County Council before 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 as to whether their lands should remain in-scope for the RZLT. A final map will be published by 1<sup>st</sup> December 2023. The administration of the tax will be undertaken by the Revenue Commissioners, with the tax in effect by 2024.

**RO-09** It is an objective of the Council to make a Place-Making Strategy for towns and implementation of Town Centre Renewal Plans.

### Progress

A Town Regeneration Officer now in place, currently assessing the county for the next Town Centre First Plan.

The Clara TCF Plan is complete and with assistance from Town Regeneration Officer can project develop and apply for funding for projects and opportunities identified.

**RO-10** It is an objective of the Council to support the preparation of Design Guidelines to provide for improvements in the appearance of streetscapes and for revitalising vacant spaces for example with cost-effective, temporary uses that build on the longer-term vision for space.

**Progress**

The Offaly Streetscape Project 2022 was prepared by consultants and was part-funded by the Heritage Council under the County Heritage Plan funding stream. It concerns several streetscapes in Birr and Tullamore. The survey determined occupancy / use with consideration of possible uses of vacant floors, provided guidance on appropriate repair of elements of the façade and provided graphic illustrations of existing and possible future uses / facades.

## Volume 1, Chapter 8 – Sustainable Transport Strategy

**SMAO-02** It is an objective of the Council to prepare a Local Transport Plan in accordance with 'Area Based Transport Assessment Guidance' by TII and NTA, for the Key Town of Tullamore in conjunction with the National Transport Authority and in tandem with the Local Area Plan, and to prepare Transport Plans for other towns that are subject to Local Area Plans, namely Birr, Edenderry and Portarlington subject to the provision of funding and agreement with statutory agencies.

### Progress

A Local Transport Plan has been prepared for Birr and Edenderry as part of their respective Local Area Plans (LAPs) 2023-2029. An Area Based Transport Assessment is under preparation as part of the preparation of the Local Transport Plan (LTP) for Tullamore LAP 2024-2030. A LTP is also being prepared as part of the preparation of Portarlington LAP 2024-2030.

**SMAO-03** It is an objective of the Council to specify baseline figures and targets for modal share in new / varied Local Area Plans in order to encourage a modal shift away from the private car to more sustainable forms of transport, such as public transport, cycling and walking.

### Progress

Such targets are set out in LAPs and LTPs.

**SMAO-04** It is an objective of the Council to improve the baseline modal share figures for the county that are set out in this Development Plan, in particular a reduction in the percentage usage of the car which shall be informed by measures set out in Appendix 1 of this Development Plan including the improvement of rural accessibility through rural transport systems, improvements in inter-settlement and intra- settlement accessibility and improvements advocated by Local Transport Plans, all in conjunction with setting modal share targets within the county in cooperation with NTA, CARO, EMRA and other relevant stakeholders and in accordance with any relevant Guidelines that may come into effect.

### Progress

Offaly County Council's Active Travel section (within OCC Roads Dept.) was established since October 2021 to liaise with Municipal District Area Engineers & Councillors, to aid in the development of Active Travel schemes/projects (listed below) to promote modal shift, subject to receipt of NTA funding for OCC projects.



Offaly County Council - Active Travel Projects - Currently Underway		23rd August 2023	NOTE : All Amounts Based On Estimates At The Time - Final Costs & Funding Received Subject To Change As Projects Are Completed.				
Project Code	Project Name	Completion Date	Costs Estimate (To Date)	NTA Grant (To Date)	DoT / URDF Grant	Match Funding / GMA	OCC Comment
OY/21/0001	Tullamore Transport Plan	Q1 2024	€300,000.00	€249,865.00	€0.00	€0.00	DBFL Appointed - Works Ongoing.
OY/21/0002	Tullamore Cycle Network Phase 1	2026	€4,486,650.00	€358,231.00	€0.00	€0.00	AECOM Appointed - Design Ongoing.
OY/21/0003	Active Travel Footpaths Improvements : Birr & Crinkill	Q4 2023	€520,000.00	€470,000.00	€0.00	€0.00	Works Ongoing By BMD Crew.
OY/21/0004	Active Travel Footpaths Improvements : Clara	Q3 2023	€496,025.00	€496,025.00	€0.00	€0.00	OCC Contractor Works Ongoing.
OY/21/0005	Edenderry - Hare's Lane	Q3 2022	€312,037.00	€261,851.00	€50,186.00	€0.00	Complete.
OY/21/0006	Active Travel Footpaths Improvements : Cloghan	Q4 2024	€350,000.00	€40,000.00	€0.00	€0.00	At Preliminary Design Stage.
OY/21/0007	Tullamore - Spollenstown Road Active Travel Elements	Q2 2026	€573,000.00	€232,291.00	€0.00	€0.00	OCC Contractor Civil Works Underway. ATKINS - Design of Pedestrian Bridge.
OY/21/0008	Countywide Pedestrian Crossings	Q3 2023	€324,070.00	€324,070.00	€0.00	€0.00	Electrical Works To Be Completed.
OY/21/0009	Portarlinton Active Travel Scheme	Q3 2022	€194,617.00	€194,617.00	€0.00	€0.00	Complete.
OY/21/0010	SRTS Support Infrastructure - Frederick Street, Clara	Q3 2023	€118,690.00	€118,690.00	€0.00	€0.00	Electrical Works To Be Completed.
OY/21/0011	Junction Tightening Scheme : Edenderry	Q1 2024	€250,000.00	€118,000.00	€0.00	€0.00	At Design Stage - To Issue Tender. OCC To Seek Additional NTA Funding.
OY/21/0012	Light segregation Cycling Scheme : Edenderry	Q3 2022	€188,032.00	€188,032.00	€0.00	€0.00	Complete.
OY/21/0013	Tullamore Urban Greenway Project	Q2 2025	€2,853,845.00	€575,000.00	€2,278,845.00	€0.00	Tender Issued - August 2023. Note: Match Funding For OCC From NTA.
OY/22/0001	EDENDERRY - R402-1 Junction Upgrade	Q3 2023	€945,000.00	€240,000.00	€487,000.00	€0.00	Complete. OCC To Reallocate NTA Funds.
OY/22/0002	TULLAMORE - Collins Lane Junction - Advance Scheme	Q3 2023	€402,500.00	€200,000.00	€202,500.00	€0.00	Complete.
OY/22/0003	BIRR - Riverside Walk Upgrade/Link	Q2 2025	€285,000.00	€147,500.00	€0.00	€0.00	TOBIN Consultant Appointed - Design.
OY/22/0004	RHODE - Pedestrian Crossings & Footpath	Q2 2024	€360,000.00	€185,000.00	€0.00	€0.00	Civil Works Ongoing By OCC Contractor. OCC To Reallocate NTA Funds.
OY/22/0005	MUCKLAGH - Brocca Rd - Junction/Path	Q2 2023	€458,000.00	€191,083.00	€112,000.00	€25,000.00	Complete. OCC To Reallocate NTA Funds.
OY/22/0006	SHINRONE - CloughJordan Road	Q1 2024	€487,045.00	€140,000.00	€250,000.00	€47,045.00	Phase 1 Complete / Phase 2 - Sept 2023.
OY/22/0007	BALLCUMBER - Upgrade Footpath Links	Q4 2023	€380,000.00	€125,000.00	€55,000.00	€0.00	Civil Works Ongoing. OCC To Reallocate NTA Funds.

Projects proposed for within Tullamore town, include the Tullamore ABTA (Area Based Transport Assessment) / Local Transport Plan; this project is intended to identify projects to improve the permeability links in and around the town and promote modal shift. Traffic surveys have been completed and a transport model is being developed by the Consultant to aid in the analysis and assessment of future options for projects or upgrades to links in and around the town. This will then in turn identify active travel projects, which subject to receipt of NTA funding will help OCC set and hopefully achieve modal shift targets/reduction in car usage. The Tullamore Cycle Network Phase 1, currently at preliminary design stage, hopes to design/identify projects/phases for the provision of cycle lanes along existing roads linking the various estates, schools, business parks, etc. north of Tullamore in as far as the proposed Grand Canal Urban Greenway project route.

The Edenderry Local Area Plan 2023-2029 was adopted in July 2023. Appendix 2 to the Edenderry Local Area Plan 2023-2029, the Edenderry Local Transport Plan (LTP) was prepared as part of this process, considering various submission during the process including detailed submissions from interested parties such as the NTA on modal share target. Drawing on a range of information, including CSO data, the LTP establishes baseline modal splits and details future modal split ambitions to 2029. As a Local Transport Plan, it primarily focusses on intra-settlement trips (educations & works trips), however also considers inter-settlement trips (mainly work trips) originating from Edenderry. OCC / EMD have established a pipeline of projects to support this objective, delivering projects (since CDP was adopted) such as: as above under Active Travel - Edenderry Light Segregation Cycleway, Hare's Lane Footpath/Cycle Track Link & R402-1 Junction Upgrade project in Edenderry. Other projects also include the Edenderry Inner Relief (Phase 1) i.e., includes segregated cycle tracks upon either side of the new road and the installation of upgraded / Wheelchair Accessible Bus Stop recently completed on JKL St. Edenderry.

As listed above, there are also numerous projects based within the Birr Municipal District (BMD). Likewise, a LTP formed part of the Birr Local Area Plan 2023-2029. BMD and OCC Active Travel team continue to liaise to develop and deliver schemes that will deliver modal shift in accordance with the measures set out in Appendix 1 of the Offaly County Development Plan.

Offaly County Council & relevant Municipal Districts are also liaising with An Taisce & NTA with a view to developing/delivering various projects under Safe Routes to School initiative within Tullamore, Edenderry and Banagher, to again aid in the objective to encourage a modal shift from the car.

**SMAO-05** It is an objective of the Council to identify suitable areas in towns and villages for age friendly parking bays, in accordance with the Age Friendly Strategy for Offaly 2018-2021, and any future editions.

### Progress

Offaly County Council / Municipal District Area Engineers liaise to identify locations for age friendly parking bays when designing upgrades to public realm, streetscapes, or regularising parking along the streets of our town and villages. OCC is still awaiting guidance on statutory road markings for Age Friendly parking bays, with some Local Authorities taking different approaches regarding road markings. OCC / MDs are also reviewing the provision of age friendly parking spaces adjacent to priority amenities in town and villages, such as doctors, pharmacies and shops/post offices, etc., while not impacting on current levels of disability parking spaces already provided. Active Travel Projects, such as the Tullamore ABTA / LTP being developed by a consultant, should help identify locations for age friendly parking bays around Tullamore town, enabling the same rational then to be used in other towns and villages in Offaly to identify the locations for age friendly parking bays.

Birr MD is currently working with Age Friendly Ireland to develop a scheme/location along Mountrath Street and Kinnitty Road within Kilcormac. An audit was carried out on these streets in June 2023.

**SMAO-06** It is an objective of the Council to implement Connecting People Connecting Places: A Strategy for Walking and Cycling in Offaly September 2015.

### Progress

As tabulated under objective SMAO-04, several Offaly County Council Active Travel projects have been developed and are being delivered to aid in providing and improving pedestrian / cycling links within Offaly.

Within Edenderry MD, projects such as the Light Segregation Cycling Scheme, Hare's Lane, R402-1 Junction Upgrade, and the Edenderry Inner Relief Road (Phase 1) have helped to provide/improve links in line with this objective.

Within Tullamore MD, footpath improvements have been carried out in Heather Grove, Westwood Grove, Badgers Lane, and Frederick Street in Clara, along the Spollenstown Road in Tullamore and within the villages of Mucklagh and Ballycumber.

Other footpath upgrades/replacement works by Tullamore MD include works in Pearse Park, O'Molloy Street, Arden Road, Arden Heights, Clara Rd, Arden View in Tullamore and Railway View, Armstrong Grove, Main Street in Clara and within The Sycamores in Ballycumber, in Ballinamere and in Mountbolus.

Within Birr MD, footpath improvements along Military Road, Crinkill are completed and progressing along the Boherdeel Road. Schemes for the Riverside Walk in Birr and Cloghan are at design stage. Scheme for Shinrone at tender stage. Other footpath upgrades work delivered by Birr MD include a scheme in Ferbane along Ballylin Road connecting the Business Park to the Ballycumber road in 2022.

The Tullamore Cycle Network Phase 1, currently at preliminary design stage, with hopes to design/identity projects/phases for the provision of cycle lanes along existing roads linking the various estates, schools, business parks, etc. north of Tullamore in as far as the proposed Grand Canal Urban Greenway project route.

**SMAO-09** It is an objective of the Council to safeguard all existing rail infrastructure, to encourage the re-opening of rail stations, and to preserve disused stations / halts and tracks, appropriate to future strategic county public transport needs.

### Progress

Offaly County Council Roads Department / Municipal Districts are liaising with all relevant departments within Offaly regarding this objective. No existing rail infrastructure within Offaly has been impacted since the adoption of the CDP; thus, preserving it for possible future strategic transport needs.

The Edenderry LTP notes that *“The recent consultation by the TII on a National Cycle Network (NCN) outlined the potential for a cycle link along a similar route to the former Edenderry to Enfield rail spur. There may be potential to examine the options for a Greenway / Cycleway along this corridor.”* As the draft Strategic Rail Review did not include the reopening of this branch, there may be a benefit to exploring the possibility of a feasibility study for a greenway/cycle link along this route. OCC plans to liaise with the TII, NTA, Kildare and Meath County Council to explore the possibility of obtaining consensus and securing funding for same.

**SMAO-10** It is an objective of the Council to improve poor road alignment and junctions where incidents of collision are recorded, and funding is available. In general, the decision regarding which road section will be prioritised for improvement will be guided by the following considerations:

- The need to provide strategic links to National Road access;
- The elimination of traffic hazards;
- The development of industry, agriculture, forestry, housing, and commercial development wherever such development would be of substantial social or economic benefit to the county; and
- The need to provide for essential communications at an acceptable social and economic cost.

### Progress

Opportunities to improve poor road alignment and safety at junctions are considered and form an essential part of the annual roads programme. Wherever possible, traffic hazards are always removed.

Offaly County Council / MD's meet with An Garda Síochána, TII and RSA twice a year to discuss road safety issues. Road Safety is also addressed in planning applications through the Development Management process.

Collision data, visual and mechanical surveys are also used to inform road maintenance and improvement.

Since adoption of the CDP, Tullamore MD have completed works to upgrade junctions located at Whiteforge Cross, Blacklion and the Mellaghans.

**SMAO-11** It is an objective of the Council to facilitate the development of the national secondary road network in Offaly through the continued construction, upgrading and improvement of the national secondary roads in the county, the N62, the N52 and the N80 where on examination it is found to be feasible, including as outlined in the accompanying table:

Scheme Description
<p><b>N52:</b> To support the construction of a road between Tullamore and Kilbeggan (Link Road) in accordance with National Development Plan investment objectives taking into account environmental sensitivities as identified in the SEA Environmental Report and the policies and objectives of the County Development Plan relating to sustainable mobility. Where feasibility is established, the Council will seek to pursue and / or facilitate the relevant project, subject to other provisions in the Plan and in accordance with statutory processes and TII Publications subject to compliance with requirements of various TII Planning Guidelines for Assessment of Environmental Impacts that include headings such as "Constraints Study", "Route Corridor Selection" and "Environmental Impact Assessment".</p>
<p>To examine the feasibility of the provision of a Western Bypass/Relief Road to the west of Tullamore town linking the R420 to the north west of the town with the N52 to the south west of the town taking into account environmental sensitivities as identified in the SEA Environmental Report and the policies and objectives of the Plan relating to sustainable mobility. Where feasibility is established, the Council will seek to pursue and / or facilitate the relevant project, subject to other provisions in the Plan, including section 8.6.4 Corridor and Route Selection Process. The line on the map in Volume 2 is indicative only.</p>
<p>To co-operate with Transport Infrastructure Ireland in the examination of the feasibility of providing a bypass for the following towns and villages, taking into account environmental sensitivities as identified in the SEA Environmental Report and the policies and objectives of the County</p>

Development Plan relating to sustainable mobility. Where feasibility is established, the Council will seek to pursue and / or facilitate the relevant project, subject to other provisions in the Plan, including section 8.6.4 Corridor and Route Selection Process. Where lines are shown on the maps in Volume 2, they are indicative only.

- N52: Kilcormac
- N80: Killeigh

**N62:** To investigate the feasibility of upgrading, widening and reconstructing the N62 from Kennedy's Cross to the county boundary at Ballynahown taking into account environmental sensitivities as identified in the SEA Environmental Report and the policies and objectives of the County Development Plan relating to sustainable mobility. Where feasibility is established, the Council will seek to pursue and / or facilitate the relevant project, subject to other provisions in the Plan, including section 8.6.4 Corridor and Route Selection Process.

**N62:** To investigate the feasibility of constructing a Birr Relief Road and construction of Birr By-pass and Distributor Road Network (Birr LUTS), taking into account environmental sensitivities as identified in the SEA Environmental Report and the policies and objectives of the County Development Plan relating to sustainable mobility. Where feasibility is established, the Council will seek to pursue and / or facilitate the relevant project, subject to other provisions in the Plan, including section 8.6.4 Corridor and Route Selection Process. The lines on the map in Volume 2 are indicative only.

**N62:** To investigate the feasibility of carrying out Birr-Riverstown road improvements taking into account environmental sensitivities as identified in the SEA Environmental Report and the policies and objectives of the County Development Plan relating to sustainable mobility. Where feasibility is established, the Council will seek to pursue and / or facilitate the relevant project, subject to other provisions in the Plan, including section 8.6.4 Corridor and Route Selection Process.

### Progress

**N52 Tullamore To Kilbeggan (Link Road)** has been brought to option selection report stage.

**Tullamore Western Bypass/Relief Road** = No further progress to date.

**By Pass For N52 Kilcormac** = No further progress to date.

**By Pass For N80 Killeigh** = No further progress to date.

**N62 From Kennedy's Cross to County Boundary** = Ground Investigations have been completed in August 2023 for a 1.5km section of the N62 at Crancreagh. This information will inform the design for a widened N62 route in this area. No further progress outside this area.

**N62 Birr Relief Road / By Pass & Distributor Road Network**

The Birr Northern Distributor Road has Part 8 planning approval and is at detailed design stage with tender documents due to be completed by Q1 2024. This scheme, once complete, will link the N52 national route with the R439 Regional route.

The Birr South-eastern Distributor Road – Tenders have been sought to progress this scheme from Feasibility Stage through to Construction Stage. Awaiting Department approval to proceed to award tender.

**N62 Birr - Riverstown Road Improvements** = No further progress to date.

**SMAO-12** It is an objective of the Council to construct, upgrade and improve, where necessary, the regional roads in the county as outlined in the accompanying table, taking into account environmental sensitivities as identified in the SEA Environmental Report and the policies and objectives of the County Development Plan relating to sustainable mobility. Where feasibility is established, the Council will seek to pursue and / or facilitate the relevant project, subject to other provisions in the Plan, including section 8.6.4 Corridor and Route Selection Process. Where lines are shown on the maps in Volume 2, they are indicative only. The Council will have regard to national and regional transport plans and the Council's programme of works. The undertaking of any works will be subject to examination of its feasibility including the availability of finance and resources and will be subject to environmental assessments where necessary:

Scheme Description
<b>R402:</b> Examine the feasibility of the construction of Edenderry by-pass and relief roads.
<b>R420:</b> Examine the feasibility of the construction of by-passes and relief roads for both Portarlington and Clara.  To secure the provision and undertake upgrades of regional roads in the county where necessary, feasible and as funds allow.

**R420:** To examine the feasibility of providing a bypass for Cloneygowan and to protect from development any reservation bands / corridors so as to avoid compromising the construction of the road.

**R420:** To examine the feasibility of securing the provision of a bypass for Geashill, and, where feasibility is established, the Council will seek to pursue and / or facilitate the relevant project, subject to other provisions in the Plan, including section 8.6.4 Corridor and Route Selection Process.

**R420:** To co-operate with Laois County Council to examine the feasibility of providing the following:

1. Relief road from the Tullamore Road to Botley Lane, Portarlington.
2. Long-term bypass to the south of Portarlington.

### Progress

R402 = Edenderry Inner Relief (Phase 1) was constructed and opened in July 2022. Edenderry Inner Relief (Phase 2) commenced construction in Q3 2023, with construction due for completion within Q2 2024.

R420 = OCC is co-operating with Laois County Council in the development of Portarlington Local Transport Plan, within which it will consider the current need for by-passes and a relief road for Portarlington, in particular a river Barrow crossing at Riverside.

R420 = Clara / Cloneygowan / Geashill (Relief Roads / By Passes) = No further progress to date.

**SMAO-13** It is an objective of the Council to examine the feasibility of providing effective linkages between national and county roads taking into account environmental sensitivities as identified in the SEA Environmental Report and the policies and objectives of the County Development Plan relating to sustainable mobility.

### Progress

The Birr northern distributor road has planning permission and is at detailed design stage. This scheme once complete will link the N52 national route with the R439 Regional route.

**SMAO-14** It is an objective of the Council to facilitate the continued improvement and upgrading of all roads, should their status be re-graded, under the national roads programme and / or the Council's Road programme. The Council will seek and support the upgrading of the status of regional roads in the midlands which perform functions akin to National Secondary Routes for example the R420 Tullamore to Monastervin road and the routes that link Tullamore to the M6 at Enfield via Edenderry, namely the R420 and R402.

### Progress

In 2021 Birr MD secured funding from the Department of Transport that improved sections of the R445 (former N7) at Dunkerrin and Loughane.

In 2023 Birr MD secured a further €420,000 to improve another section of the R445 at Dunkerrin. This will be delivered by year end.

**SMAO-15** It is an objective of the Council to improve and maintain regional and county roads in line with the annual roads programme and allocated budgets.

### Progress

Offaly County Council / Municipal Districts, further to funding from DoT, develop and deliver various road reconstruction/overlay and improvement/surfacing schemes under the Annual Roads programme to improve and maintain the regional and county roads in Offaly.

Since adoption of the CDP, Tullamore MD overlaid 14km of roads and surface dressed 17km in 2021 and overlaid 18km of roads and surface dressed 20km in 2022.

Birr MD have maintained over 50km of regional and local roads in each of the years 2021, 2022 and 2023 utilising annual budgets in the order of over €6 million.

Edenderry MD overlaid 13.5km and surfaced dressed 14km in 2021, overlaid 13.8km and surfaced dressed 15km in 2022 and overlaid 17km and surfaced dressed 14km in 2023.

**SMAO-16** It is an objective of the Council to examine the feasibility of providing future relief / distributor roads adjacent to / within the following towns and villages, taking into account environmental sensitivities as identified in the SEA Environmental Report and the policies and objectives of the County Development Plan relating to sustainable mobility. Where feasibility is established, the Council will seek to pursue and / or facilitate the relevant project, subject to other provisions in the Plan, including section 8.6.4 Corridor and Route Selection Process. Where lines are shown on the maps in Volume 2, they are indicative only.

- Tullamore
- Birr
- Clara
- Ferbane
- Portarlinton
- Cloghan
- Killeigh
- Geashill
- Cloneygowan
- Edenderry



- Kilcormac

### Progress

- Tullamore No progress to date.

- Birr

The Birr northern distributor road has planning approval and is at detailed design stage. It is planned to deliver this scheme in the coming years.

The first section of the Southeast distributor road will be delivered as part of the new Birr Primary Care Centre.

OCC are progressing a strategic route assessment for the remaining section of the Southeast distributor route and the Northeast distributor route.

- Clara No progress to date.
- Ferbane No progress to date.
- Portarlinton The Portarlinton LTP is in development in partnership with LCC and will consider same.
- Cloghan No progress to date.
- Killeigh No progress to date.
- Geashill No progress to date.
- Cloneygowan No progress to date.
- Edenderry The Edenderry LTP (adopted July 2023) considered this for Edenderry town and it environs.
- Kilcormac No progress to date.

**SMAO-17** It is an objective of the Council to improve and upgrade bridges in the county as identified in the annual roads programme and budget allocation.

### Progress

Offaly County Council / Municipal Districts, further to funding from DoT, develop and deliver various schemes under the Annual Roads programme to improve and upgrade bridges in Offaly.

Since adoption of the CDP, within Tullamore MD, the bridge at Aghnananagh/Derries was replaced and upgrade works have been carried out on Barony Bridge (Erry), Kilclare Bridge, Ballycumber Bridge, Gorteen Bridge, Bridge at St. O'Haras, Clash Bridge, Bridge at Cloonagh East and Ballyboughlin Bridge.

Within Birr MD, in 2021 €159,500, in 2022 €104,000 and in 2023 €210,000 was invested in bridge maintenance and improvement works at various locations along the regional and local road network within Birr MD.

Within Edenderry MD

- 2021 - €62K invested in 2 Bridges in Cloncannon and Garryhinch
- 2022 - €104k invested in 3 No bridges at Millgrove, Rathvilla and Cushina
- 2023 - €77.5k invested in 3 No bridges at Boyne Bridge Edenderry, Ballycommon Bridge and Killeen Bridge

**SMAO-18** It is an objective of the Council to protect the study area, route corridor options and thereafter the preferred route corridor selected for the national road schemes being progressed in the Development Plan in accordance with National Development Plan Objectives and to prohibit development that could prejudice their future delivery.

### **Progress**

This objective is being achieved under the Development Management Function and monitored by Offaly County Council Road Department and the Municipal Districts through the planning referral process.

As an example, the route corridor for proposed N52 Tullamore to Kilbeggan (Link Road) is protected by not permitting new planning / developments within this corridor.

## Volume 1, Chapter 9 – Social Inclusion, Community and Cultural Development

**SICCDO-04** It is an objective of the Council to support the refurbishment of libraries at Banagher, Daingean, Ferbane and Kilcormac, in accordance with the Offaly County Library Development Plan, as resources allow.

**Progress**

Refurbishment works at Banagher, Daingean, Ferbane and Kilcormac libraries are all completed in accordance with *Offaly Libraries Interim Development Plan 2022 – 2023: Creating Collaborative Communities*. Further, My Open Library service upgrade works have been completed at Banagher and Ferbane libraries and are due for completion at Kilcormac Library by year end of 2023.

**SICCDO-05** It is an objective of the Council to develop a new purpose-built modern community library and arts space at JKL Street Edenderry.

**Progress**

The design process for the new Library and Arts Space in Edenderry is almost complete and it is intended to commence the Part VIII planning process in October 2023.

## Volume 1, Chapter 10 – Built Heritage

**BHO-03** It is an objective of the Council to investigate the designation of further Architectural Conservation Areas at appropriate locations throughout the county.

### **Progress**

A local community group are currently investigating the potential of developing an ACA in Clara.

**BHO-06** The Council acknowledges the nomination by the Government of Ireland, of two Monastic sites, Clonmacnoise in its own right and Durrow, as a suite of potential sites, on the tentative list for inclusion to the UNESCO World Heritage sites list. It is an objective of the Council to explore the potential of further designating the Monastic Sites at Clonmacnoise and Durrow as prospective UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

### **Progress**

Neither Clonmacnoise nor Durrow are on the Minister's current World Heritage tentative list.

## Volume 1, Chapter 11 – Water Services and Environment

## (i) Water Services Objectives

**WSO-02** It is an objective of the Council to support Irish Water's National Programme of Investment to reduce leakage minimising the demand for capital investment.

**Progress**

OCC are working with Uisce Eireann to implement their first fix programme, their find and fix programme and their watermain rehabilitation programme.

**WSO-03** It is an objective of the Council to co-operate with Irish Water in the delivery of the Eastern and Midlands Water Supply Project and to ensure the maximum benefit from this project to County Offaly, in particular with respect to economic development potential and security of supply.

**Progress**

OCC is engaging with Uisce Éireann on this Project and have met with the Project Team.

OCC have an agreement with UÉ that the Tullamore WSS main from the Clonaslee source will be interconnected with the new pipeline as it is constructed. This will be an interim measure in advance of any works to connect midland water supplies to the trunk main from the Shannon to Dublin.

**WSO-04** It is an objective of the Council to engage with Irish Water to examine significant raw water sources which may be made redundant by the Water Supply Project for the Eastern and Midlands Region with a view to reserving and protecting them for future back up or 'windfall' type economic development opportunities where high-water use is required.

**Progress**

The Water Supply Project has not been sufficiently advanced to commence this discussion.

**WSO-06** It is an objective of the Council to support appropriate options for the extraction of energy and other resources from sewage sludge subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process.

**Progress**

OCC is committed to working with UÉ in this regard.

**WSO-07** It is an objective of the Council to support the servicing of small towns and villages through the serviced sites initiative to provide an alternative to one-off housing in the countryside, in accordance with National Policy Outcome 18b of the National Planning Framework and Regional Policy Objective 4.78 of the Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

**Progress**

OCC continue to work with all the relevant stakeholders in this regard.

**WSO-08** It is an objective of the Council to improve surface water infrastructure and sustainable drainage and to reduce the risk of flooding, to facilitate the growth of settlements as per the county's settlement hierarchy.

**Progress**

OCC is progressing several flood protection and mitigation schemes in partnership with the OPW. The Council also avails of the Annual Climate adaptation funding from the Department of Transport to construct small scale flood mitigation schemes for roads.

**WSO-09** It is an objective of the Council to utilise, where appropriate, the provisions of Section 48 and 49 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) to generate financial contributions towards the capital costs of providing surface water infrastructure in the county.

**Progress**

In efforts to progress this objective, a contribution of €1000 per Residential Unit and €3 per m<sup>2</sup> Industrial/Commercial is included in the provisions of the current Development Contribution Scheme 2021-2025 for the following Urban Areas;

Tullamore, Birr, Clara, Portarlinton, Edenderry, Daingean, Kilcormac, Ferbane and Banagher.

Contributions will provide the necessary funding for the refurbishment, upgrading, enlargement or replacement of Surface Water Drains.

(ii) Environment Objectives

**ENVO-01** It is an objective of the Council to ensure, through the implementation of the River Basin Management Plan, and any other associated legislation, the protection and improvement of all drinking water, surface water and ground waters throughout the county.

**Progress**

Offaly Co Co continues on an annual basis to implement River Basin Management Plans to improve water quality and protect existing water bodies. The Environment Section carried out an annual water sampling and monitoring programme in conjunction with the EPA. 100% of the agreed sampling programme was delivered in 2022.

Offaly Co Co have also engaged and liaised with LAWPRO to meet the requirements of the Plan through investigating, monitoring, and following up on referrals from LAWPRO.

All new development is assessed through the planning process and technical reports are submitted to the Planning Department to ensure our water bodies are protected and water quality policies are implemented.

The Tullamore Wetlands began in 2019 and is currently complete and is the first phase of the Tullamore 'Living River Project'. It is located at Kilcruttin, Tullamore. The Tullamore Wetlands is helping to protect water quality, enhance biodiversity, encourage aquatic and riparian wildlife while restoring Tullamore River to its natural state. Hunting Grey Heron, Foraging Swallow and Sand Martins are just some of the species noted to be spending time here since developed.

**ENVO-03** It is an objective of the Council to protect both ground and surface water resources; to work with Irish Water to develop and implement Drinking Water Safety Plans to protect sources of public water supply and their contributing catchment; and to work with the National Federation of Group Water Schemes in respect of Source Protection Plans for Group Water Schemes to protect these sources.

**Progress**

Water Services are working with UE (Uisce Éireann) to develop and implement Drinking Water Safety Plans to protect sources of public water supply and their contributing catchment.

OCC is working with the Local Authorities Water Programme (LAWPRO) to monitor and protect water bodies. Additional resources are under recruitment to implement the Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters Regulations 2022.

OCC continues to work with the Group Water Schemes in the county, the NFGWS (National Federation of Group Water Schemes) and the Rural Water Unit, Dept. of Housing, to identify and remediate source protection issues in the rural water sector.

**ENVO-04** It is an objective of the Council to comply with the Blue Dot Catchments Programme.

**Progress**

OCC continues to deliver the blue dot catchment programme in conjunction with several government agencies, focusing resources on the protection and restoration of high-status water bodies. OCC continues to implement the programme through licencing, exchange of information across public authorities and Government Departments, monitoring and identifying areas for further study.

**ENVO-09** It is an objective of the Council to reduce harmful emissions and achieve and maintain good air quality for the county.

**Progress**

Offaly County Councils works with the EPA to implement an Ambient Air Monitoring Programme. The data collected is reported by the EPA and assists in identifying hotspots and to prioritise sites/areas for action. In 2023 local air quality data, including a map, has been made available to the public through a link on the council website. A register of solid fuel merchants operating within Offaly has been set up. Offaly County Council has also commenced an inspection programme following the implementation of the Solid Fuel Regulations 2022. In 2023, more than 20 solid fuel retailers were inspected. Tullamore, Birr, and Edenderry were prioritised followed by Clara, Cloghan, Banagher and Ferbane.

Details of the Solid Fuel Regulations 2022 has been made available on the council website to promote the implementation of regulations.

Development are assessed for the impact on air quality and where necessary, appropriate conditions or licences are recommended as part of grant of planning permission.

**ENVO-12** It is an objective of the Council to work with relevant agencies to support local data collection in the development of air quality monitoring.

**Progress**

Offaly County Councils works with the EPA to implement an Ambient Air Monitoring Programme through assisting EPA with locations for air quality monitoring station, liaising with EPA to troubleshoot issues at existing air quality monitoring stations as they arise including changing filters as part of a maintenance programme.

The data collected is reported to the EPA on a yearly basis and assists in identifying hotspots and to prioritise sites/areas for action. In 2023 local air quality data, was made available to the public through link on council website.



## Volume 1, Chapter 12 – Land Use Zoning Objectives

**LUZO-01** Ensure that development progresses in accordance with the land use zoning objectives as set out in Section 12.4 and the Land Use Matrix contained in Table 12.1.

### **Progress**

All planning applications are assessed in accordance with the land use zoning on the site and the related land use zoning matrix. The only material contravention of the Offaly County Development Plan passed to date was at the October council meeting 2023. It concerned residential development proposed on a site in Portarlinton that is zoned 'public / community / educational'.

## Volume 2 – Settlement Plans Objectives

Volume 2 comprises the suite of settlement plans for County Offaly (excluding the LAP towns of Tullamore, Birr, Edenderry and Portarlinton, but including a zoning map for Tullamore and Birr). These are divided according to their place within the settlement hierarchy set out in the core strategy of the plan. Each settlement plan has objectives specific to the vision, growth, and development of the area. The objectives of each settlement area are in progress through individual developments taking place, the fulfilment of work programmes of individual departments of the Council and of relevant departments, the efforts of community groups and organisations etc. The objectives serve as a local expression of the objectives set out in each of chapters of the written statement (Volume 1) and work to achieve the vision of the area.

The objectives for each settlement area continue to be progressed and implemented where possible and where resources provide.

## Accompanying Strategies

### (i) SEA Environmental Report

A SEA report was prepared for the preparation of the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027. The SEA Directive requires that the likely significant environmental effects of the implementation of a plan are monitored. Under Article 10 of the SEA Directive, monitoring must be carried out of the significant environmental effects directly related to the implementation of the Plan 'in order to, inter alia, identify at an early-stage unforeseen adverse effects and to be able to undertake appropriate remedial action'. The requirements for and types of monitoring is clearly set out in the SEA Report. It directs to base monitoring on a series of indicators which measure changes in the environment, especially changes which are critical in terms of environmental quality, for example water or air pollution levels.

Offaly County Council is responsible for the monitoring process, and requires information from several other state bodies with monitoring responsibility, e.g., the EPA, CSO etc. The use of indicators allows for quantitative measuring of trends and progress over time relating to the Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEO's) used in the evaluation. These objectives relate to several environmental parameters, including biodiversity, flora and fauna, population and human health, soil (and land), water, material assets, air, climatic factors, cultural heritage, and landscape. The SEA report outlines the objectives for each environmental parameter, together with associated targets, indicators the data source (i.e., responsible authority) and remedial action if required. Table 10.1 of the SEA Environmental Report (copy below) sets out the detail relating to the monitoring of each of the environmental components.

The development plan is two years into a six-year plan and therefore a complete and comprehensive monitoring assessment of the significant environmental effects of implementing the plan has not been completed to date. This will be undertaken in parallel with the review of the development plan and the making of the next development plan.

The Council will continue to collect the required environmental data as a matter of course and to work closely with the relevant state bodies on an ongoing basis, to monitor the significant environmental effects arising from the implementation of the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027. Should the gathering of data for the monitoring regime identify significant impacts (such as impacts on designated sites or pollution as an outcome of the implementation of policies) either early in the review process of the next development plan or while gathering monitoring data, this should trigger a review of the plan and monitoring regime. In addition, the identification of positive impacts from monitoring should also be reported as this will assist in determining successful environmental policies.

Regard has been had to Chapter 8 '*Monitoring the Significant Environmental Effects of the Implementation of Plans*' of the Section 28 Guidelines titled '*Strategic Environmental Assessment – Guidelines for Regional Assemblies and Planning Authorities*', 2022 in this SEA section of the Progress Report.

SEA Environmental Report for the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027

**Table 10.1 Indicators, Targets, Sources and Remedial Action**

Environmental Component	SEO Code	Indicators	Targets	Sources	Remedial Action
<b>Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna</b>	BFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Condition of European sites</li> <li>Number of spatial plans that have included ecosystem services content, mapping and policy to protect ecosystem services when their relevant plans are either revised or drafted</li> <li>SEA and AA as relevant for new Council policies, plans, programmes etc.</li> <li>Status of water quality in the County's water bodies</li> <li>Compliance of planning permissions with Plan measures providing for the protection of Biodiversity and flora and fauna – see Chapter 4 "Biodiversity and Landscape"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Require all local level land use plans to include ecosystem services and green/blue infrastructure provisions in their land use plans and as a minimum, to have regard to the required targets in relation to the conservation of European sites, other nature conservation sites, ecological networks, and protected species</li> <li>Implement and review, as relevant, the Biodiversity Plan for Offaly as incorporated into the Offaly Heritage Plan 2017-21</li> <li>For planning permission to be only granted when applications demonstrate that they comply with all Plan measures providing for the protection of biodiversity and flora and fauna – see Chapter 4 "Biodiversity and Landscape"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht report of the implementation of the measures contained in the Habitats Directive - as required by Article 17 of the Directive (every 6 years).</li> <li>Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht National Monitoring Report for the Birds Directive under Article 12 (every 3 years)</li> <li>Internal monitoring of preparation of local land use plans</li> <li>Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission (grant by grant).</li> <li>Consultations with the NPWS (at monitoring evaluation - see Section 10.4)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where condition of European sites is found to be deteriorating this will be investigated with the Regional Assembly and the DCHG (and the DHPLG for water) to establish if the pressures are related to Plan actions / activities. A tailored response will be developed in consultation with these stakeholders in such a circumstance.</li> <li>Where water bodies are failing to meet at least good status this will be investigated with the DHPLG Water Section, the Regional Assembly, the EPA Catchment Unit and, as relevant, Irish Water to establish if the pressures are related to Plan actions / activities. A tailored response will be developed in consultation with these stakeholders in such a circumstance.</li> </ul>
<b>Population and Human Health</b>	PHH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of Plan measures relating to the promotion of economic growth as provided for by Chapter 5 "Economic Development Strategy"</li> <li>Number of spatial concentrations of health problems arising from environmental factors resulting from development permitted under the Plan</li> <li>Proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above 2016 CSO figures</li> <li>Number of spatial plans that include specific green infrastructure mapping</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For review of progress on implementing Plan objectives to demonstrate successful implementation of measures relating to the promotion of economic growth as provided for by Chapter 5 "Economic Development Strategy"</li> <li>No spatial concentrations of health problems arising from environmental factors as a result of implementing the Plan</li> <li>Increase in the proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above 2016 CSO figures.</li> <li>Implementation of Green Infrastructure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal review of progress on implementing Plan objectives</li> <li>Consultations with the Health Service Executive and EPA</li> <li>CSO data</li> <li>Internal monitoring of preparation of local land use plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where planning applications in key growth towns are rejected due to insufficient capacity in the waste water treatment plant or failure of the waste water treatment plant to meet Emission Limit Values, the Council will contribute towards a response with the Regional Assembly, EPA and Irish Water to achieve the necessary capacity.</li> <li>Where proportion of population shows increase in private car use above CSO 2016 figures, the Council will coordinate with the Regional Assembly, the DHPLG, DCCAE and NTA to develop a tailored response.</li> </ul>
<b>Soil (and Land)</b>	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proportion of population growth occurring on infill and brownfield lands compared to greenfield</li> <li>Volume of contaminated material generated from brownfield and infill</li> <li>Number of AA determinations and environmental assessments undertaken to support applications for brownfield and infill development prior to planning permission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain built surface cover nationally to below the EU average of 4% as per the NPF.</li> <li>Achieve the 40% target for growth on infill as per the NPF.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Geoportal</li> <li>Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission (grant by grant)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where the proportion of growth on infill and brownfield sites is not keeping pace with the targets set in the NPF and the RSES, the Council will liaise with the Regional Assembly to establish reasons and coordinate actions to address constraints to doing so.</li> </ul>

Environmental Component	SEO Code	Indicators	Targets	Sources	Remedial Action
Water	W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Status of water bodies as reported by the EPA Water Monitoring Programme for the WFD</li> <li>Number of incompatible developments permitted within flood risk areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not to cause deterioration in the status of any surface water or affect the ability of any surface water to achieve 'good status'</li> <li>Implementation of the objectives of the second cycle of the River Basin Management Plan by 2021 (and subsequent iterations as relevant)</li> <li>Minimise developments granted permission on lands which pose - or are likely to pose in the future - a significant flood risk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EPA Monitoring Programme for WFD compliance</li> <li>Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission (grant by grant)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where water bodies are failing to meet at least good status this will be investigated with the DHPLG Water Section, the EPA Catchment Unit, the Regional Assembly and, as relevant, Irish Water to establish if the pressures are related to Plan actions / activities. A tailored response will be developed in consultation with these stakeholders in such a circumstance.</li> <li>Where planning applications in key growth towns are rejected due to insufficient capacity in the Waste water treatment Plant or failure of the plant to meet Emission Limit Values, the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly will coordinate a response between the relevant local authority, EPA and Irish Water to achieve the necessary capacity.</li> <li>The Council will engage, as relevant, with the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly and the OPW with respect to planning applications for development in areas of elevated flood risk.</li> </ul>
Material Assets	MA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programmed delivery of Irish Water infrastructure for all key growth towns in line with Irish Water Investment Plan and prioritisation programme to ensure sustainable growth can be accommodated</li> <li>Number of new developments granted permission which can be adequately and appropriately served with waste water treatment over the lifetime of the Plan</li> <li>Proportion of population within who report regular cycling / walking to school and work above 2016 CSO figures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To map brownfield and infill land parcels across the County.</li> <li>All new developments granted permission to be connected to and adequately and appropriately served by waste water treatment over the lifetime of the Plan</li> <li>Where septic tanks are proposed, for planning permission to be only granted when applications demonstrate that the outfall from the septic tank will not – in combination with other septic tanks – contribute towards any surface or ground water body not meeting the objective of good status under the Water Framework Directive</li> <li>Increased budget spends on water and waste water infrastructure</li> <li>By 2020 all citizens will have access to speeds of 30Mbps, and that 50% of citizens will be subscribing to speeds of 100Mbps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission (grant by grant)</li> <li>CSO data</li> <li>Consultations with Irish Water (at monitoring evaluation - see Section 10.4)</li> <li>Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government in conjunction with Local Authorities</li> <li>Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment</li> <li>Department of Public Expenditure and Reform</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where planning applications in key growth towns are rejected due to insufficient capacity in the waste water treatment plant or failure of the waste water treatment plant to meet Emission Limit Values, the Council will coordinate a response between the Regional Assembly, EPA and Irish Water to achieve the necessary capacity.</li> <li>Where proportion of population shows increase in private car use above CSO 2016 figures, the Council will coordinate with the Regional Assembly, DHPLG and NTA to develop a tailored response.</li> </ul>

Environmental Component	SEO Code	Indicators	Targets	Sources	Remedial Action
Air	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proportion of journeys made by private fossil fuel-based car compared to 2016 National Travel Survey levels of 74%</li> <li>NO<sub>x</sub>, SO<sub>x</sub>, PM10 and PM2.5 as part of Ambient Air Quality Monitoring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decrease in proportion of journeys made by private fossil fuel-based car compared to 2016 National Travel Survey levels.</li> <li>Improvement in Air Quality trends, particularly in relation to transport related emissions of NO<sub>x</sub> and particulate matter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CSO data</li> <li>Data from the National Travel Survey</li> <li>EPA Air Quality Monitoring</li> <li>Consultations with Department of Transport Tourism and Sport, Transport Trends and Department of Communication Climate Action and Environment (at monitoring evaluation - see Section 10.4)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where proportion of population shows increase in private car use above CSO 2016 figures, Council will coordinate with the Regional Assembly, DHPLG, DCCAE and NTA to develop a tailored response. See also entry under Population and human health above</li> </ul>
Climatic Factors	C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of Plan measures relating to climate reduction targets as provided for by Plan provisions including those provided for and referenced in Chapter 3 "Climate Action and Energy"</li> <li>Proportion of journeys made by private fossil fuel-based car compared to 2016 levels</li> <li>Proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above 2016 CSO figures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For review of progress on implementing Plan objectives to demonstrate successful implementation of measures climate reduction targets as provided for by Plan provisions including those provided for and referenced in Chapter 3 "Climate Action and Energy"</li> <li>Increase in the proportion of people resident in the County reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above 2016 CSO figures</li> <li>Decrease in the proportion of journeys made by residents of the County using private fossil fuel-based car compared to 2016 levels</li> <li>Contribute towards transition to a competitive, low-carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050</li> <li>Contribute towards the target of the Renewable Energy Directive (2009/28/EC), for all Member States to reach a 10% share of renewable energy in transport by 2020</li> <li>Contribute towards the target of aggregate reduction in carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions of at least 80% (compared to 1990 levels) by 2050 across the electricity generation, built environment and transport sectors</li> <li>To promote reduced energy consumption and support the uptake of renewable options and a move away from solid fuels for residential heating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EPA Annual National Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory reporting</li> <li>Climate Action Regional Office</li> <li>Consultations with Department of Communication Climate Action and Environment (at monitoring evaluation - see Section 10.4)</li> <li>CSO data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where trends toward carbon reduction are not recorded, the Council will liaise with the Regional Assembly to establish reasons and develop solutions</li> <li>Where proportion of population shows increase in private car use above CSO 2016 figures, the Council will coordinate with the Regional Assembly, DHPLG and NTA to develop a tailored response</li> </ul>

Environmental Component	SEO Code	Indicators	Targets	Sources	Remedial Action
Cultural Heritage	CH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percentage of entries to the Record of Monuments and Places, and the context these entries within the surrounding landscape where relevant, protected from adverse effects resulting from development which is granted permission under the Plan</li> <li>Percentage of entries to the Record of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas and their context protected from significant adverse effects arising from new development granted permission under the Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protect entries to the Record of Monuments and Places, and the context of these entries within the surrounding landscape where relevant, from adverse effects resulting from development which is granted permission under the Plan</li> <li>Protect entries to the Record of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas and their context from significant adverse effects arising from new development granted permission under the Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission (grant by grant)</li> <li>Consultation with Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (at monitoring evaluation - see Section 10.4).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where monitoring reveals visitor pressure is causing negative effects on key tourist features, the Council will work with Regional Assembly, Fáilte Ireland and other stakeholders to address the pressures through additional mitigation</li> </ul>
Landscape	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of developments permitted which result in avoidable adverse visual impacts on the landscape, especially with regard to landscape and amenity designations included in Land Use Plans, resulting from development which is granted permission under the Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No developments permitted which result in avoidable adverse visual impacts on the landscape, especially with regard to landscape and amenity designations included in Land Use Plans, resulting from development which is granted permission under the Plan</li> <li>To seek to align with the National Landscape Strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission (grant by grant)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where monitoring reveals developments permitted which result in avoidable adverse visual impacts on the landscape, the Council will re-examine Plan provisions and the effectiveness of their implementation</li> </ul>

The following table sets out the results of SEA monitoring to date.

SEO Code	SEA Monitoring Results
BFF	<p>It is a strategic aim of Birr and Edenderry LAPs 2023 to maintain ecosystem services, and the LAPs define the four main types of ecosystem services in Chapter 6. Green infrastructure (GI) strategies form part of both LAPs and it is stated that the term GI <i>'can be broadly defined as integrated and interconnected networks of green space and water capable of delivering ecosystem services...'</i>. A policy in both LAPs reads as <i>'Support the role that biodiversity and green infrastructure plays in the Plan Area in relation to ecosystem services along with climate change mitigation and adaptation'</i>.</p> <p>The Offaly Heritage Plan 2023-2027 was adopted September 2022. A Biodiversity Officer was recruited by Offaly County Council in 2023 who is undertaking the making of an Offaly Biodiversity Plan.</p> <p>€120,000 worth of funding was awarded to 18 no. biodiversity related projects in County Offaly for 2023 through the Local Biodiversity Action Fund.</p> <p>There is a targeted invasive species programme currently taking place in Offaly.</p> <p>All planning applications are assessed against GIS layers for referral to prescribed bodies e.g., the NPWS. All planning applications, part VIII applications and exemption certificates are screened for AA and EIAR which captures biodiversity. Ecological Impact Assessments may also be required. The LECP, which is currently under preparation, will be screened for SEA and AA.</p> <p>Offaly County Council in conjunction with EPA and the Local Authority Waters Programme Office are continuously working to improve the status of water bodies in the county.</p> <p>The condition of European Sites in the county is under constant review by the NPWS with ongoing initiatives to improve their condition.</p>
PHH	<p>2022 census figures on employment, occupations and commuting will not be available until November / December 2023, therefore comparison with 2016 census figures is not possible yet. The Birr and Edenderry LAPs 2023 both include green infrastructure mapping.</p>
S	<p>All planning applications are screened for AA and EIA whether the land is an infill or brownfield site.</p>
W	<p>There have been no incompatible developments permitted within flood risk areas since the CDP was adopted. According to the EDEN (Environmental Data Exchange Network) database for Offaly for the second cycle of the river basin management plan, 36% of surface waters are meeting high or good status (the requirement). The amount of moderate status waterbodies has increased by 10% and poor status waterbodies by 3% when comparing data to the previous cycle. Basically, water quality has deteriorated significantly in Co. Offaly and below the national average of 50% meeting their respective good or high ecological status. A nature-based solutions engineer has been advertised by LAWPRO (local authority waters programme).</p>
MA	<p>Uisce Éireann plans for the Key Town of Tullamore to ensure sustainable growth can be accommodated is set out in a completed Drainage Area Plan (commencing with an upgrade of the siphon at Tyrells Lane where it crosses the canal and extending to Kilbride St.), an Infrastructural Development Plan, and a southern interceptor is at design stage. The 2022 census figures on commuting will not be available until November / December 2023, therefore</p>

	comparison with 2016 census figures is not possible yet. Septic tanks are only permitted when not prejudicial to public health.
A	<p>2022 census figures on journeys made by private fossil fuel-based cars will not be available until November / December 2023, therefore comparison with 2016 census figures is not possible yet.</p> <p>Offaly County Council works with the EPA to implement an Ambient Air Monitoring Programme through assisting EPA with locations for air quality monitoring station, liaising with EPA to troubleshoot issues at existing air quality monitoring stations as they arise including changing filters as part of a maintenance programme.</p> <p>The data collected is reported to the EPA on a yearly basis and assists in identifying hotspots and to prioritise sites/areas for action. In 2023 local air quality data, was made available to the public through link on council website.</p>
C	<p>2022 census figures on proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work, and on journeys made by private fossil fuel-based cars, will not be available until November / December 2023, therefore comparison with 2016 census figures is not possible yet. An Offaly County Council Climate Action Plan is currently under preparation, which will set detailed measures to cut emissions and meet targets in each sector. Peat fired electricity generating stations have ceased in Co. Offaly. Local Transport Plans which make provision for integrated land use and transportation planning are completed for Birr and Edenderry, and under preparation for Tullamore and Portarlinton. Vacancy and dereliction being addressed by Regeneration Section (Vacant Homes by Housing Section) to encourage compact growth. Grand canal greenway built to encourage sustainable mobility. Electric vehicle (EV) charging points installed. OCC in collaboration with Laois, Westmeath, Roscommon, and Longford have commenced the Regional EV Strategy, with OCC the lead authority.</p>
CH	All planning applications lodged within the catchment area of RMP and within curtilage of protected structures are referred to relevant prescribed bodies and to the in-house Conservation Architect inviting a submission from them. Relevant conditions are attached to such permissions.
L	No planning applications have been granted permission which result in an adverse visual impact on the landscape.



(ii) Natura Impact Report

In terms of European Environmental Legislation under the Habitats Directive, the Council undertakes Screening for Appropriate Assessment of all plans and projects that may impact on a designated Natura 2000 site (SAC or SPA). A Natura Impact Report is prepared for plans and a Natural Impact Assessment for projects, likely to have a significant impact on such designated sites. Such practices have been and continue to be undertaken for example for planning applications, part VIII proposals, exemption certificate applications and local area plans.

(iii) Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

Flood risk policy and the approach to zoning of settlement areas to avoid flood risk in the development plan is fully informed by the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) in accordance with The Planning System and Flood Risk Management - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and Office of Public Works, 2009) and Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government Circular PL 2/2014. The SFRA considered all relevant and up to date flood risk information and data available at the time and this informed the approach to the zoning of all settlement areas (designating Flood Zones A and B as Constrained Land Use) and flood risk management provision.

## (iv) Wind Energy Strategy

Set out in the table below is the status of wind energy developments built / granted in County Offaly.

Location of Windfarm	Applicant / Developer	MD Area	Planning Application Status	No. of Turbines	Current Situation
Leabeg 10/130	Gaeletric	Birr	Granted	2	Built 5MW
Mountlucas 09/453	Bord na Móna	Edenderry	Granted	28	Built 84MW
Meenwaun (near Banagher) 15/44	Element Power	Edenderry	Granted	Up to 5	4 built 11MW
Cloncreen (near Clonbullogue) 75 MW SID PA0047	Bord na Móna	Edenderry	Granted	21	Operational 2023 75MW
Cloghan 14/188 & 19/404	Gaeltech / Stratkraft	Birr	Granted	9	Under const. est. 40MW
Yellow River SID PA0032	Greenwind, now SSE	Edenderry	Granted (ABP)	29	Under const. 104MW
Moanvane (near Walsh Island) 17/335	Stratkraft	Edenderry	Granted	12	Under const. est. 58MW
Cloncant 19/606	Stratkraft	Edenderry	Granted (ABP)	8	Under const. est. 56MW (+1 in Kildare)
Derrinlough SID 306706-20	Bord na Móna	Birr	Granted	21	Under const. est. 105MW
Ballydermot	Bord na Móna	Edenderry & Kildare	Preliminary public consultation	50-60	Scoping doc - no pre-plan. 47 # turbines
Lemanaghan	Bord na Móna	Birr	Preliminary public consultation	c.17	Pre-cons est. 60MW
Garryhinch	Bord na Móna	Edenderry	Preliminary public consultation	10-14	Pre-cons est. 60-90MW
Energy Park NE Offaly, Westmeath, Meath	Bord na Móna	Edenderry	Preliminary public consultation	N/A	N/A
Cush Wind Ltd., Gaeltech	Gaeltech	Birr	Preliminary public consultation	c.11 turbines	Est. 80MW
Ballincor, Offaly & Tipperary	RWE	Birr	Preliminary public consultation.	12	Stated 84MW

(v) Housing Strategy

A Housing Strategy formed part of the period of the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027. Under Section 95(3)(a) of the Planning and Development Act, the Chief Executive is required to include a review of the progress achieved in implementing the Housing Strategy in the two-year progress report on the Development Plan. The following sets out a review of the Housing Strategy;

**1) The provision of social and affordable housing and housing supports by the Council:**

'Housing for All - a New Housing Plan for Ireland' is the government's housing plan to 2030. The plan supports the increase of housing supply to an average of 33,000 per year over the next decade. The delivery of new social and affordable homes is a key priority of the Housing for All plan and forms an important element of the overall new housing delivery. A key action of Housing for All was that local authorities develop and publish Housing Delivery Action Plans (HDAP) to include details of social and affordable housing delivery. These Action Plans are to be consistent with the relevant adopted Development Plan for that area and any associated environmental assessments. The HDAPs include details of planned delivery of social and affordable housing for the period 2022-2026, including the locations at settlement level. In September 2021 targets for new build social homes were issued to Local Authorities for the period 2022-2026. The HDAP was published on Offaly County Council's website in 2022 and includes a projection for each year of the Housing for All plan. In 2022 Offaly County Council achieved 115 new build social units which fall short of the 180 units set by the department. However, it is envisaged in 2023 we will surpass our target of 67 and achieve our combined 2022 & 2023 target of 247 new social builds. The HDAP's also included details of the proposed delivery streams for housing, land available to deliver housing, and land acquisition requirements. In 2022, the Housing Delivery Coordination Office (HDCO) carried out an analysis of the land requirements in all HDAPs and identified a significant requirement for land acquisition in the period 2022-2026, and a more significant requirement to acquire land in the subsequent period from 2026-2030. To support local authorities to acquire land to deliver new build social housing schemes, the Department has established a dedicated land acquisition fund, which will be managed by the Housing Agency. Offaly County Council is actively seeking land to support delivery of housing HFA targets to 2026 and with a view to developing land banks for housing out to 2030. Offaly County Council is currently reviewing several expressions of interest from landowners willing to sell land to the housing department.

In relation to Affordable Housing the release of the official HNDA toolkit followed the publication of Offaly's Housing Strategy (The toolkit was not available to inform the current housing strategy). The purpose of the HNDA is to assist local authorities to develop long-term strategic views of housing need across all tenures, provide a robust evidence base to support decisions about new housing supply, wider investment, and housing related services, inform policies about the proportion of social and affordable housing required and to provide evidence to inform policies related to the provision of specialist housing and housing related services. In April 2021 the LA was advised of the availability of a specific Housing Needs Demand Assessment Guidance and tool and other resources that would allow for a standardised methodology to quantifying housing needs of a particular local authority area including in relation to requirements for different tenures. The LA has reviewed the results of the HNDA where it pertains to the entire County and will be progressing further work on a town specific analysis such that an application for an Affordable Housing Fund can be made to enable affordable housing developments. The local authority continues to support other affordable measures such as the Local Authority Home Loan & Croí Cónaithe Grants.

## **2) The use of the Private Rented Sector in the Provision of Social and Affordable Housing:**

Offaly County Council continues to avail of opportunities from the private rented sector through the Leasing, RAS (Rented Accommodation Scheme) and Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) schemes. There are currently 240 units leased to Offaly County Council with a further 664 units captured under the HAP scheme.

## **3) The Housing Needs of Persons with Specific Requirements:**

'Housing for All – A new Housing Plan for Ireland', launched in September 2021, includes a commitment to increasing Housing Supports for People with a Disability. It acknowledges the role of the Housing and Disability Steering Group within the Local Authority and its role in implementing both national and local policy on disability. Offaly County Council's Strategic Plan for People with a Disability 2022 – 2027 sets out the plan for the provision of housing options to support independent living for those persons with a disability. The Housing Disability Sub Committee has been established and have held several meetings. The subcommittee was established in accordance with objective two of the Offaly Strategic Plan for Housing People with a Disability. The subcommittee supports, facilitates, and encourages collaboration and partnership in housing delivery. The subcommittee comprised of Offaly County Council; Health Service Executive and their supporting service providers helps to ensure coordination and forward planning for clients.

*Disability Private Stock:* Requirements for adaptations or alternative accommodation due to disability arise in Owner Occupier properties. Offaly County Council administers grant options to assist older people and people with a disability in carrying out works which are necessary for the purposes of rendering a house more suitable for their accommodation needs. These include: Housing Aid for Older People Grant, Housing Adaptation Grant for a Person with a Disability and Mobility Aid Grant Scheme.

*Disability Council Stock:* Offaly County Council operates a programme of adaptations for Local Authority tenants with reduced mobility. The scheme is oversubscribed, and the number of applications vary from year to year. The Council endeavours to work with the tenant and the occupational therapist to facilitate to the greatest degree possible the applicant remaining in their home and to return to their home from hospital. This scheme is funded by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and part funded, 10%, by the Local Authority

*Traveller Accommodation:* There are a full range of housing options available in the provision of accommodation for Travellers, including: Standard Social Housing; Traveller Group Housing; Traveller Halting Site; Private House Ownership; Private Rented Accommodation with support of Housing Assistant Payments (HAP) & Leasing / Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS). The recruitment of a Traveller tenancy sustainment officer has helped to ensure the viability of tenancies in private accommodation such as leasing and HAP as well as council tenancies. Offaly County Council has attained planning permission for a four-unit group housing scheme in Birr and continue to explore other options for additional group housing in Birr and Tullamore.

*Age Friendly:* Offaly County Council facilitates Universal Design Features to include in a Lifetime Adaptable and Age Friendly Home in its new build social housing units to future proof housing for an aging population. Offaly County Council adopts a Universal Housing Design approach in the delivery of new housing units across all social housing delivery mechanisms. Offaly County Council also seeks to identify applicants who have very particular design needs at an early stage in the process to provide user specific design in consultation with medical and occupational therapist personnel. Age Friendly Ireland is an appointed shared service hosted by Meath County Council. At a local level Offaly County Council Housing section provides an age-friendly technical advisor and accommodates a regional and

local age-friendly managers to assist in the coordination of age-friendly supports and services in the housing function.

(vi) Record of Protected Structures (RPS)

The Record of Protected Structures (RPS) was updated through the development plan review. Outside of this process updates can be made using Section 55 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) if considered necessary. No such updates have been made since the making of the CDP.