

**Appendix 1 - National, Regional and Local Policies**

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## National, Regional & Local Policies







The last 10 years has witnessed significant planning and investment by key stakeholders in the development of outdoor recreation infrastructure across the Country. This investment is underpinned by an understanding of the value that outdoor recreation provision has in terms of social, economic and health gains. In turn the policy and stakeholder landscape has become increasingly complex with government departments, public bodies, landowners, communities and end users all having a vested interest in the ongoing management and development of outdoor recreation. The scale and scope of development brings both opportunities and challenges, and these issues of scale and scope cascade to local level.

*"Our Outdoors"* is Offaly's strategic response to this dynamic. It acknowledges national policy priorities and outlines the specific priorities at local level, which in turn will inform the development of appropriate actions for Offaly.

Embracing Ireland's Outdoors is the five year strategy for the development and management of outdoor recreation in Ireland. The strategy builds upon the Outdoor Recreation Plan for Public Lands and Water in Ireland, developed in 2017. The current strategy responds to the significant investment and development of the sector in the last five years. It places the natural environment at the centre. It acknowledges the complex landscape of stakeholders involved in the sector and provides a collaborative framework to encourage greater co-ordination and cohesion in terms of the planned use of resources at national and county level. It defines outdoor recreation and provides a detailed analysis of the policy areas that shape the rationale for the development of outdoor recreation strategy. The national strategy details the opportunities and challenges facing the all stakeholders in the development of a cohesive outdoor recreation strategy (see below).

## OPPORTUNITIES

- Outstanding natural landscapes and heritage
- Increased consumer demands for outdoor recreation experiences
- Increased investment by government departments, agencies and other stakeholders
- Economic impact in local communities driven by an increase in outdoor recreation participation
- Upcoming changes in land use (e.g. forestry and peatland could bring opportunities for outdoor recreation
- Growing wealth of trails, greenways and outdoor recreation infrastructure
- Physical and mental health benefits from participating in outdoor recreation
- Cultural Shift towards greater connectedness with nature

## CHALLENGES

- Protecting the natural environment, whilst meeting the rapid growth in demand for outdoor experiences
- Insufficient specialist expertise across the outdoor recreation sector
- Crosses a significant number of policy areas government departments and agencies
- Access to land for recreational use presents issues for landowners and participants
- Capacity issues at many of the most popular place
- Inconsistent practices by stakeholders to planning, developing and maintaining and promoting outdoor recreation
- Outdoor activities are not equally enjoyed by all sections of the community Responsible enjoyment of the outdoors not always practiced by users
- Users are unsure of where to find out information on outdoor recreation
- Lack of data to measure and evaluate the benefits and impact of outdoor recreation
- How we adapt to climate change

Embracing Ireland's Outdoors provides a thematic strategic framework for the implementation of the national level Outdoor Recreation Strategy, This framework, along with the identification of roles and responsibilities for stakeholders will inform the development of county level strategies and actions. The themes are as follows:

**Leadership**  
 To create a more coordinated, cohesive approach at national and county level to ensure best use of our resources

**Awareness**  
 To create awareness of our outdoor recreation opportunities and how to enjoy them responsibly

**Environment**  
 To protect the environment through better planning and development of outdoor recreation, in keeping with best practice management of landscape and habitats

**Access**  
 To protect and improve access to the outdoors, for the benefit of all

**Expertise**  
 To improve the knowledge, skills and expertise of stakeholders and partners

**Opportunities**  
 To increase and support the number of people active in the outdoors, especially young people and under-represented groups

The United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), are a set of 17 goals that aim to reduce inequality, improve health and wellbeing, whilst protecting the environment. The goals are mainstreamed across all policy and programme development both at national and local level. Embracing Ireland's Outdoors with the SDG's referenced in the strategic objectives and actions of the national outdoor recreation strategy.





**Project Ireland 2040** is the overarching policy framework for the National Planning Framework (NFP) and the National Development Plan (NDP). This is the Government’s long-term strategy to make Ireland a better place; and includes the specific outcomes relevant to the development of an outdoor recreation plan - '*Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities*' and '*Enhanced Amenities and Heritage*'. This policy framework gives recognition to the role that rural Ireland plays culturally, economically and environmentally. It recognises that i. investment is required for amenities in rural areas, ii. the development of activity-based tourism and iii. the development of trails including greenways and blueways.

**Our Rural Future, the Rural Development Policy 2021- 2025** asserts the pivotal role that rural areas play in our national economic, social, cultural and environmental wellbeing and development, *“Rural areas hold much of Ireland’s natural resources, biodiversity and visitor attractions, and rural communities are important guardians of our heritage, culture and natural capital”*. The commitment to the development of the national outdoor recreation strategy is referenced as a key deliverable of this plan, *“Through the implementation of the National Outdoor Recreation Strategy, develop Ireland’s outdoor activity sector in a strategic and coordinated manner to maximise tourism benefits and create employment opportunities in rural communities”*.

The **Climate Action Plan (CAP) 24** sets out a road map for Ireland’s ambition to transition to a carbon neutral economy by 2050. The plan sets out how as a society we can engage with the process of transition to climate neutrality in a way that is *‘fair’*. The plan acknowledges that certain areas and sectors will be disproportionately affected by the process of transition and in response identifies a range of actions to be implemented across the electricity, business, agriculture, public land use and built environment sectors. The Climate Action Plan utilises the Just Transition framework to support this change.

The **Climate Action Plan** and **Just Transition** outlines how the Midlands region is *“the first in Ireland to directly experience the negative impact of transition to zero carbon”*. The Government’s policy to support transition and simultaneously transform the region’s economic and competitive position are underpinned by strategic plans at national, regional and local level. Under the national Just Transition Fund and the EU Territorial Just Transition Plan, an anticipated €169 million is to be invested in the Midlands Region. These funds are currently supporting activity that has a direct impact on the development and implementation of outdoor recreation in Offaly. This includes the **Peatlands Restoration**, the restoration and rehabilitation of raised and blanket bog, fens, and other wetland types; along with the development of amenity and tourism. This project involves Bord na Móna developing and repurposing former industrial peatlands to support a network of universally accessible cycling and walking trails which will connect back to local towns and villages. Complimenting this is the **Regenerative Tourism and Placemaking Scheme 2023 - 2026** being delivered by Fáilte Ireland, which supports the development of tourism, and outdoor and recreation amenities in the Midlands, to include specific projects in Offaly.

The **National Sports Policy 2018 – 2027** provides a definition of sport that goes beyond the traditional understanding of sport as a competitive pursuit and validates the wider role that sport plays as a recreational activity, and its benefits in terms of health, wellbeing and social relationships. The policy outlines the impact that sport has on health outcomes, economic activity, community development, and education and learning. The National Sports Policy makes specific reference to the role that Local Sports Partnerships play in developing and sustaining participation in sport locally. Action 13 of the National Sports Policy states *“we will examine how the wider natural and built environment can facilitate participation in sport and physical activity. This consideration will also take account of the type of activities towards which adults are increasingly gravitating such as running, cycling, outdoor adventure pursuits, recreational walking”*.

**Healthy Ireland, A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing in Ireland 2013 - 2025** has a vision of Ireland *“where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential, where wellbeing is valued and supported at every level of society, and is everyone’s responsibility”*. The policy’s thematic action *“Empowering People and Communities”* proposes to create ‘activity friendly’ environments (e.g. cycle lanes, playgrounds, well-lit paths, etc). It envisages that local authorities will engage with local communities, schools and other stakeholders to plan facilities that are appropriate to the needs of the community.



The [Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways, July 2018](#) is the Government's policy statement on the development of a network of national and regional greenways of scale (greater than 20km long for regional greenways; and at least 100km long for national greenways) for walking and cycling. This strategy defines what a greenway is; and provides the economic, social and health rationale for the development of greenways making specific reference to the value of this infrastructural development on tourism as a driver for economic growth. The strategy outlines the issues that need to be addressed in the development of greenways including land access, purchase, permissive access, accommodation works, impact on agricultural land, responsible recreations and respect for the environment.

[People Place and Growing Tourism to 2025](#) highlights how tourism is a key driver for Ireland's ongoing economic development. It acknowledges the level of capital investment made in the development of outdoor recreation offerings across the country and provides a frame of reference for regional tourism strategies such as '*Ireland's Hidden Heartlands 2023 - 2027*'. The Hidden Heartlands is a regional tourism strategy, specific for the Midlands launched in 2018. It will act as a roadmap for the tourism industry and all stakeholders involved in tourism in the region to navigate the current challenges and steer a course towards a sustainable recovery and continued success. The plan sets out a strategic approach to unlocking the commercial potential of Ireland's Hidden Heartlands. It will ensure focus on tourism development is sustainable and regenerative and that the benefits accrue to local communities and to nature. Nationally, Ireland's Hidden Heartlands has 4.1% share of overseas visitors and 6.7% of domestic visitors, with Offaly accounting for 1% of the national tourism market. Ireland's Hidden Heartlands proposes to align itself with the '*Shannon Master Plan*' to provide an overarching framework for sustainable tourism in the region. The strategic objectives for the development of the region's tourism potential focus on the following areas - awareness and recognition, visitor experience (enhance the range and quality of visitor experiences), economic impact, regenerative tourism, industry and stakeholders. The Hidden Heartlands Strategy also clarifies that ongoing development in the Slieve Blooms will be managed in conjunction with '*Ireland's Ancient East Regional Tourism Strategy*', which has specific relevance to Offaly given that the Slieve Bloom mountains border the two regions. Fáilte Ireland will deliver the [Regenerative Tourism and Placemaking Scheme for Ireland's Midlands 2023 - 2026](#) as part of the EU Just Transition Fund. Through this scheme investment will be made in the sustainable development of tourism in the Midlands with the aim of diversifying the regional economy by creating jobs, supporting habitats and biodiversity and sustaining communities.

[Waterways Ireland - Tourism Master Plan for the Shannon Region 2020 - 2030](#) is a 10 year plan for the development of the Shannon as a major tourism destination to be aligned with the Ireland's Hidden Heartlands region. The Shannon provides a range of on-water activities from cruising to kayaking, and connects with peatlands, canals, villages and towns. The plan clearly identifies its international market as the "*culturally curious and great escapers*" whilst the domestic market will focus on "*connected families*" and "*indulgent romantics*". Offaly is part of Mid-Shannon Destination Zone and is described as "*the harmonious landscapes of the Shannon lowlands punctuated by lakes, wetlands and peat bogs; fringed by low ridges and islands; with Shannon's monastic and medieval heritage at the core; marked by crossings, canals, trade and refuge over centuries; and small rural villages, with population centres located at historic crossing points*". The plan has a suite of strategic considerations communicating a clear and consistent message around enhancing '*on-the-water*' and water side experiences; enhancing Shannon towns and villages; protecting and enhancing the environment; improving connectivity; building networks; and connecting community networks.

The overarching objective of [Ireland's Forest Strategy 2020 - 2030](#) is to increase the national forest estate and to deliver biodiversity, climate change, water quality, economic and quality of life benefits to all. Today, forests can be places of enjoyment and there is an increasing demand for activity-based pursuits particularly in public forests. Walking, cycling, orienteering, nature watching, fishing, horse riding and camping are just some of the activities people can enjoy in Ireland's forests. Additionally, our forests can and should become outdoor classrooms for citizens (young and old), providing education on how the forests interact with nature, climate and our economy.

The strategy makes specific reference to the role of landowners and farmers, and their cooperation shaping the future development of forests in Ireland. Increasing demands on forests mean increased complexity which requires a sustainable forest management approach, that keeps environmental protection front and centre. The strategy notes that future forestry development will require a skilled workforce with capacity building measures for new and existing workforce. Forests for People is one of the strategy's five goals and will focus on promoting forests for recreation, health and wellbeing, improving public access and facilities, building relationships with key stakeholders (owners, farmers, communities, etc), and delivering education and learning opportunities for adults and children.



The National Biodiversity Plan (NBP) 2023 - 2030 reflects on the growing understanding and importance of biodiversity and sets itself five strategic objectives: -

Objective 1: Adopt a Whole-of-Government, Whole-of-Society Approach to Biodiversity: Proposed actions include capacity and resource reviews across Government.

Objective 2: Meet Urgent Conservation and Restoration Needs - Supporting actions will build on existing conservation measures.

Objective 3: Secure Nature’s Contribution to People - Actions highlight the relationship between nature and people in Ireland.

Objective 4: Enhance the Evidence Base for Action on Biodiversity - This objective focuses on biodiversity research needs, as well as the development and strengthening of long-term monitoring programmes that will underpin and strengthen future decision-making.

Objective 5: Strengthen Ireland’s Contribution to International Biodiversity Initiatives - Collaboration with other countries and across the island of Ireland will play a key role in the realisation of this objective.

Offaly County Council have a legal requirement to report on the implementation of the NBP.

This section of the "*Our Outdoors*" plan looks at the regional and local level policy and programming priorities in Offaly.





The [Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy \(RSES\) \(Eastern & Midlands Regional Assembly\) 2019 - 2031](#) is a regional level plan for the implementation of Project 2040. It addresses public policy areas including spatial, economic and climate actions and investment frameworks which will “*create a sustainable and competitive region that supports the health and wellbeing of our people and places, from urban to rural; with access to quality housing, travel and employment opportunities for all*”, The RSES identifies the Midlands as “*a relatively unspoilt landscape presenting a broad range of tourism related opportunities, however there is a need to improve skills and to ensure a just transition for the future use of Bord na Móna peatlands, while leveraging clean energy and green economy opportunities.*”

The [Offaly County Development Plan](#) is the overarching strategy for planning and sustainable development in Offaly. The plan focuses on a changing county and the impact that the transition to carbon neutrality will have on the county’s landscape, people and economy. It also sets out how the 80,000 hectares of peatlands can be used for amenity, tourism and biodiversity. It provides a strong economic argument for the development of Offaly’s natural assets particularly in terms of their tourism potential. The County Development Plan outlines the significant level of physical infrastructure available within Offaly for outdoor recreation and acknowledges that further development of recreational and tourism amenities should be balanced with environmental consideration. The plan also acknowledges the need for greater coordination amongst the stakeholders in terms of a sustainable land use strategy.

Offaly County Council recognises that the Grand Canal Greenway is a valuable recreational route used by walkers and cyclists with key infrastructure linking many of the tourism and recreations sites in the county and wider region. The key nodes along the Grand Canal Greenway have been serviced with free public wifi which is an innovative use of digital technology and infrastructure to deliver real tangible benefits for local communities and visitors alike. The Council recognises the importance of continuing to extend and link, in the form of a network, greenways and peatways in the interest of sustainable mobility, activity tourism, transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society, the strengthening of rural community economies and job creation.

It is Council policy to promote the ‘*Feasibility Study on the Development of a Major Cycling Destination in the Midlands of Ireland (2016)*’ in conjunction with Bord na Móna and Coillte in accordance with the ‘*Outdoor Recreation Plan for Public Lands and Waters in Ireland, 2017 - 2021*’; and in particular, to recognise Tullamore as a hub in this respect.

The [Offaly Local Development Strategy 2023 - 2027](#) identifies economic development, social inclusion and sustainable development as its priorities for the delivery of the LEADER programme over its timeframe. The actions associated with these priorities relate to capital investment and capacity building supports for: -

- new and existing regenerative tourism enterprises
- building healthy communities through animation
- engagement and investment in community led social and recreational projects
- tailoring actions to support the varying needs of communities across the county.
- providing specific investment to support the needs of young people
- providing training and capacity building measures to support community led environmental action that reinforce peoples' connection to place, along with actions that focus on landscape heritage capturing the knowledge of local people '*who are linked to their natural environment through memories, experience and cultural identity*'.





Developed by Offaly Local Community Development Committee (LCDC),the Offaly Local Economic and Community Plan 2023 - 2028 is a five year strategic framework to support collaboration in the areas of economic development and community development in Offaly. The plan refers to outdoor recreation and amenity development across its four high level objectives. The interface between these high level objectives and the development of outdoor recreation in Offaly are detailed below: -

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LECP STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND OUTDOOR RECREATION IN OFFALY

Sustainable place making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encourage inclusive and active sustainable communities based around a strong network of community facilities and amenities</li><li>• Reduce car dependency - increase use of sustainable mobility such as walking, cycling and public transport</li><li>• Provide and maintain outdoor spaces with free access for recreation, play and wellbeing for all</li></ul>
Economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support sectoral clustering development including green energy, ICT, tourism, craft and creative</li><li>• Deliver and market a targeted visitor experience in Offaly - outdoor activity, nature, food trails, culture and learning</li></ul>
Sustainable community development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support increased participation of people in physical activity</li><li>• Support communities to enhance their physical, social environment and amenities</li><li>• Support communities to engage in volunteering</li><li>• Support communities to maintain and restore natural and cultural heritage</li></ul>
Climate action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduce our car dependency and increase the use of sustainable mobility such as walking, cycling and public transport through planning for and encouraging integrated transportation and land use</li></ul>



The [Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024](#) identified three strategic objectives under which projects and initiatives for delivery across the four Midlands counties (Laois, Longford, Offaly and Westmeath) have been agreed: -

Strategic Objective 1: Climate Action - Transition to a climate neutral economy.

Strategic Objective 2: Build on achievements to date in sectors in which the region has a competitive advantage through Smart Specialisation and wider adoption of digitalisation within business, leveraging the new Technological University of the Shannon-Midlands Mid-West.

Strategic Objective 3: Placemaking - Position the Midlands as a community of choice in which to live, create, study, work, visit and invest.

- Action 3.1: Utilising [MidlandsIreland.ie](#), to promote and position the region as a community of choice, showcasing the value proposition of the region - centrality, access to talent, the existing enterprise base, regional recreational assets, arts and cultural assets.
- Action 3.2: Expand the Midlands Network of Co-Working Facilities (MNCF) in partnership with existing network members - Chambers of Commerce and Local Authorities to support and develop additional flexible office solutions throughout the region, including the exploration of and the development of vacant properties, through strategic partnerships and in co-operation with local communities.
- Action 3.3: The regional stakeholders will progress the implementation of visitor experience plans and deliver targeted experience economy projects across the region.
- Action 3.4: Deliver the Midlands Regional Food and Drink Strategy to 2024, including the resourcing and establishment of a Regional Food and Drink Cluster to progress sustainability goals, build resilience and grow exports.

The [Offaly Tourism Strategy](#) has identified many strengths and opportunities for Co. Offaly including the quality of its six key tourism attractions, and the potential to develop a range of outdoor recreational products on publicly owned lands and waters.

Offaly Tourism Marketing have invested in a new brand identity, soon to be unveiled, which will look to elevate the brand, help to modernise the identity, incorporating the county's unique selling points and allow for a more focused effort to market Offaly and its tourism offerings. Furthermore a newly designed website will also launch in 2025, [www.visitoffaly.ie](#) incorporating the new brand to enhance the country's visibility and appeal to travellers.





Active Offaly 2021 - 2025, Offaly Sports Partnership's strategic plan is a plan for the development of inclusive physical and recreational activity by all of the community in Offaly for enhanced physical and mental wellbeing.

The plan focuses on increasing participation levels for certain sections of the community and draws on national level research to underscore how gender, age, disability, educational attainment and socioeconomic status all have an impact on participation in physical activity.

To this end Offaly Sports Partnership's strategic objectives focus on supporting the development of fundamental skills, improving youth fitness, increasing adult participation, supporting the inclusion of those least active, celebrating those volunteering in sports activities and improving the capacity of sports organisations and other agencies to increase participation in physical activity in the county.

## Sports Participation - Facts

Only 13% of 10 - 18 year olds meet the guidelines for at least 60 mins of physical activity per day

At all ages more boys than girls meet these guidelines pointing to a gender gap in participation  
14% boys / 7% girls  
Children's Participation Rates  
"The Children's Sport Participation & Physical Activity Study 2018"  
Sport Ireland, Healthy Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland

Girls who get active in teenage years are more likely to establish a life long relationship with physical activity  
"Adolescent Girls Get Activity Report 2021"  
Sport Ireland

46% of adults take part in regular exercise





## Development







## Development & Investment

The graph overleaf presents the scale of outdoor recreation projects to date, alongside the current and future plans of key stakeholders in Offaly. These range from enhancing connectivity on the Grand Canal Greenway, to the delivery of the Midlands Cycling Destination and proposed feasibility studies for other large scale projects.

In addition to funding regenerative tourism projects, Just Transition funding will also be provided to enhance business development supports/network. Fáilte Ireland, Offaly Local Development Company and Offaly Local Enterprise Office also seek to facilitate sectoral clusters and business development support including support to social enterprise.

Investment and development opportunities are also highlighted within the Offaly Local Development Strategy in terms of interconnected tourism and recreational development opportunities across the region to include actions with adjacent counties such as Westmeath and Kildare.

Furthermore, communities will be supported through capacity building and capital investment to develop local recreational opportunities that build community cohesion and improve the public realm.

The scale of development across all stakeholders is significant, however the financial costs associated with the ongoing operational management and sustainable maintenance of trails needs to be addressed. The ongoing development of the physical infrastructure, along with ancillary services, mentioned across all policies presents challenges in terms of an available skilled workforce to support this demand.

## Tourism

- It is understood that Offaly is at a relatively early stage in its development of its tourism offering
- Tourism is seen as a potential driver for economic growth and employment, utilising Offaly's extensive natural, cultural and built heritage assets in a sustainable way
- More supports are needed to grow sectors - equipment hire, orientation, food and beverage provision, parking, and accommodation; along with developing outdoor recreation for families (e.g. equipment hire, local access to water, lessons, etc)
- Enhanced connectivity of the outdoor recreational offering in Offaly to towns and villages will benefit the tourism sector as well as enhancing healthy placemaking, and the viability of rural communities



## Environment & Sustainability

- All policies at local level make reference to the need to balance economic and social development with environmental sustainability;
- Stakeholders believe Offaly has the potential to '*reimagine itself*' as an exemplar in environmental regeneration. This will require significant capacity building across communities, stakeholders and businesses;
- We need an implementation plan for trail development, i.e. delivering Midlands Cycling Destination, Offaly (MCD-O).
- A collaborative approach looking at reviewing existing trails, employing a dedicated staff officer, rationalisation of signage and wayfinding, smart technology, clear and consistent messaging.
- A sensitive management strategy that balances safe access to landscapes and habitats alongside appropriate protections.
- All stakeholders have an inherent interest in protecting the natural environment, and seek to develop innovative and non invasive ways of enjoying this (e.g. pocket forests, elevated boardwalks, etc).
- Role of local communities in linking people to place - linking the local, social, creative and cultural to natural and built heritage - art installations, meaningful interpretation along walking and cycling trails.
- Role of community custodians in the active management and protection of '*last mile*' connections (i.e. the final link from newly developed peatland trails and off road trails to hubs, gateways, towns or visitor attractions), thus building understanding of biodiversity and enhancing local green infrastructure through active engagement and social responsibility.

## The benefits of Outdoor Recreation in a nutshell:

- Quality of life
- Health and wellbeing
- Supporting an aging population to be more active
- Sustainable communities - placemaking for rural and urban communities
- Creating awareness, education and learning
- Encouraging people to participate and have access to outdoor recreation
- Greater collaborative action around common operational issues such as signage, branding, interpretation, maintenance
- Addressing the issue of responsible recreation
- Education and upskilling of businesses - clustering and networking to enhance learning and skills

## Landscape & Environment



'Miles of level road through meadows and under autumn woods and past field where the yellow corn drank the falling dew'  
William Bulfin, 1907 Rambles in Éirinn





## Biodiversity

Offaly has a rich biodiversity and range of ecosystems including its geology such as the Slieve Bloom Mountains, Croghan Hill, extensive peatlands, wetland landscapes, rivers and canals, woodlands, grasslands, eskers, trees and hedgerows.

Protecting and enhancing our biodiversity and ecosystem is vital not only for our health and wellbeing, tourism, attractiveness of place and quality of life for our communities, but is also crucially important in adapting to climate change.

Offaly’s County Development Plan, provides the overarching policy framework for the planning and sustainable development in the County. From an environmental perspective, sensitive areas in Offaly are designated under the following legislative protections which have specific requirements in terms of how natural heritage is managed: -

1. Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)
2. Special Protection Areas (SPAs); and
3. Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs)

SAC and SPA sites are included as part of the Natura 2000 network, the largest network of protected areas in the world. These sites have been selected because they are locations for conservation and protection; and are covered under the EU Habitats Directive.

NHAs are other sites for environmental or ecological protection such as Wildlife Sites (including Statutory Nature Reserves), Ramsar Sites, Flora Protection Order Sites, Wildfowl Sanctuaries, Biogenetic Reserves and Sites designated for the protection of plant species and habitats.

## SACs in Offaly

- All Saints Bog & Esker SAC
- Charleville Wood SAC
- Clara Bog SAC
- Clonaslee Esker and Derry Bog SAC
- Ferbane Bog SAC
- Fin Lough (Offaly) SAC
- Island Fen SAC
- Lisduff Fen SAC
- Mongan Bog
- Moyclare Bog SAC
- Pilgrims Rd Esker SAC
- Raheenmore Bog SAC
- Ridge Road South West Rapemills SAC
- River Barrow and River Nore SAC
- River Shannon Callows SAC
- Sharavogue Bog SAC
- Slieve Bloom Mountains SAC
- The Long Derries, Edenderry SAC



## Special Protection Areas (SPA)

The '*Planning and Development Act 2000* (as amended)', requires that all planning authorities must have regard for SPCs and SACs; and undertake “*Appropriate Assessments* (AA)" when considering whether plans, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, are likely to have significant effects on the conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 site. The development itself does not have to be in the location of the Natura Site but in the vicinity of it.

It should be noted that he planning authority is not responsible for commissioning the AA.

### SPAs in Offaly

- All Saints Bog SPA
- Dovegrove Callows SPA
- Middle Shannon Callows SPA
- Mongan Bog SPA
- River Little Brosna Callows SPA
- Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA

## Natural Heritage Areas (NHA)

These are designated sites of national importance for habitats and species in Ireland. NHAs are established under the '*Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000*', but are conserved and protected under the '*Wildlife Acts 1976* (as amended)'.

In addition Offaly has 51 provisional NHAs which have been identified as important for wildlife and habitats but do not have a statutory protection. The Provisional National Heritage Area (pNHA) sites have a level of protection through inclusion in the '*Offaly County Development Plan*'.

### NHAs in Offaly

- Black Castle Bog NHA
- Cangort Bog NHA
- Daingean Bog NHA
- Hawkswood Bog NHA
- River Little Brosna Callows NHA
- Screggan Bog NHA





## Statutory Nature Reserves

There are four Statutory Nature Reserves in County Offaly which have been given a priority designation in association with the EU Habitats Directive.

Ireland presently has 45 sites designated as Wetlands of International Importance and four of these are located in Offaly covering a total area of 2,979 hectares.

### Statutory Nature Reserves in Offaly

- Slieve Bloom Mountains
- Clara Bog
- Mongan Bog
- Raheenmore Bog

## Non Designated Areas

Not all plant species and habitats have a designated area, however the '*County Development Plan*' asserts that they should be protected wherever they occur.

Offaly County Council have identified the following as areas for protection of plants, species and habitats: -

- Grand Canal at Tullamore
- Grand Canal at Kilbeggan
- Shannon Harbour near Bullock Island
- Camus Callows Clonmacnoise

These particular sites have specific relevance to the outdoor recreation plan, given that these sites are considered to be areas of high amenity and recreational value.





Geology & Eskers

The County Development Plan (page 115) notes that “*Offaly contains the most significant collection of Mushroom Stones in Ireland. Mushroom stones are solitary sentinels of limestone, shaped like mushrooms from prolonged exposure to lapping waves at the edge of postglacial lakes which have since vanished or retreated*”; and that there is some scope to consider if the eskers in Offaly and adjacent counties could be meet the criteria for a Geopark application with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

There are 20 esker systems in Offaly, spanning over 4,000 acres; of which the Clonmacnoise Esker is the largest covering 5.79 km². The study found that the Clonmacnoise Esker System is of international importance due to its high habitat and species diversity; and supports the designation of the Clonmacnoise Esker System as a pNHA.

The Council recognises the importance of increasing cycling and pedestrian access to esker sites, similar to the 'Pilgrim Path' walking route from Clonmacnoise to the River Shannon Callows and Mongans Bog, which have the potential to increase public awareness and appreciation of these sites.

Lakes, Waterways and Wetlands

Offaly boasts a rich tapestry of lakes, rivers, canals and wetlands that are both important amenities and wildlife habitats as they "*provide a rich mosaic of semi-natural habitats including open water, poor fen, scrub grasslands and heathland*". With the rewetting of the peatlands, it is envisaged that the number of wetlands in the county will increase.

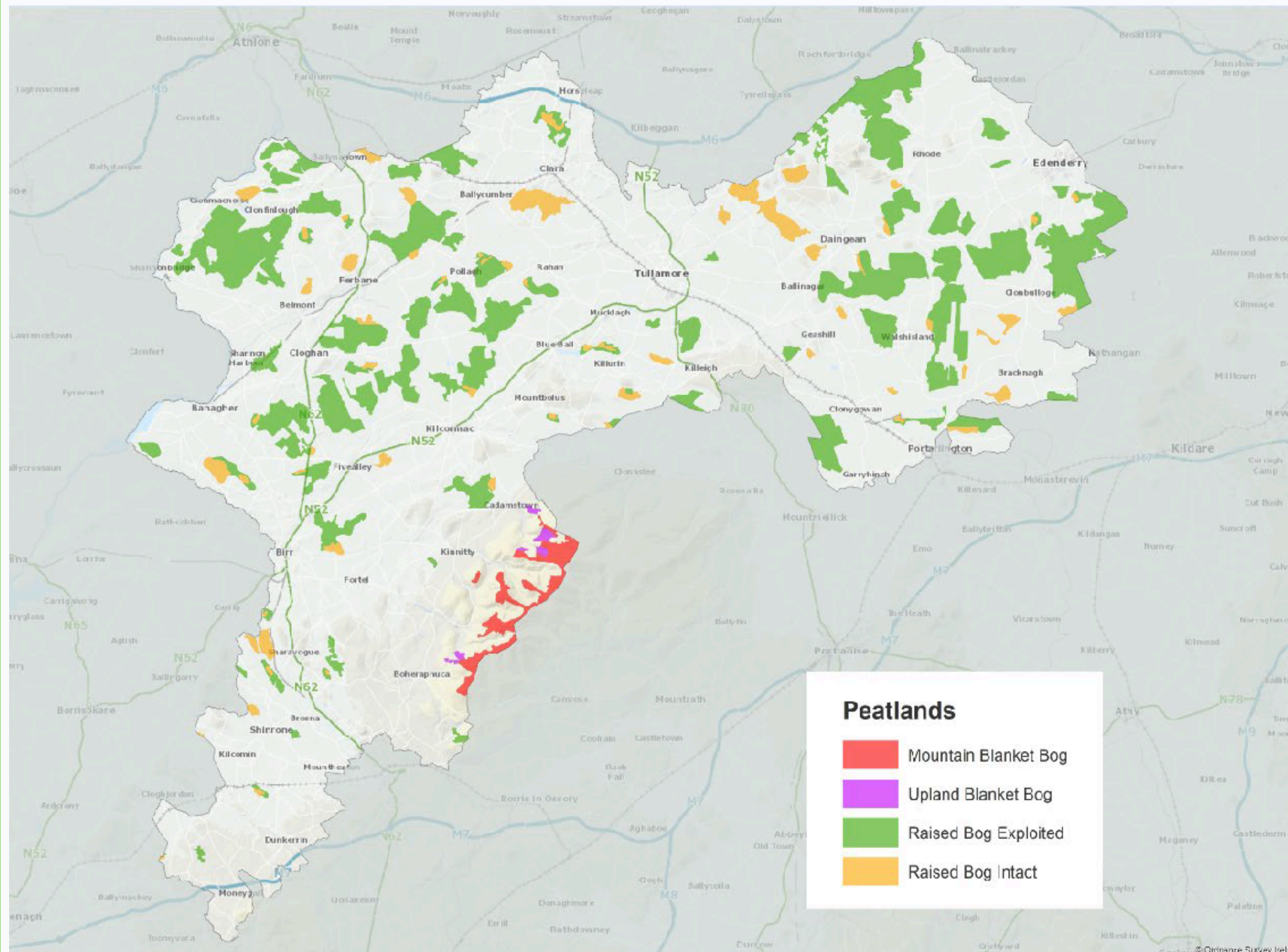
Woodlands and Forestry

Offaly has 293,300 hectares of forestry: -

- Slieve Bloom Mountains including mountain bike trails
- Garryhinch Woodlands, Portarlinton
- Glasderry Wood, Brosna, Roscrea
- Glenafelly forest recreation area in the Slieve Bloom mountains
- Glenregan forest recreation area in the Slieve Bloom mountains
- Durrow Abbey
- Golden Grove, Roscrea; and
- Knockbarron Wood, Kinnitty

Coillte, the Irish state forestry company, is responsible for growing, protecting and harvesting this asset along with the development and maintenance of walking trails within Ireland's forests.





## Peatlands

With the cessation of peat production in Offaly, the county's vast peatlands present a unique opportunity for Bord na Móna to take a holistic approach to land management that balances renewable energy projects, commercial development, community amenities and biodiversity enhancement.

The National Peatlands Strategy highlights how Offaly's peatlands, especially the emerging network of peatways can become a gateway for visitors to explore rural areas. These trails not only support tourism and local job creation but also help protect and celebrate the county's natural heritage.

A great example of this balance can be found in Lough Boora Discovery Park, where nature, recreation and conservation come together. Thanks to funding from the EU Just Transition Fund, further development is underway to expand walking and cycling trails, making the area even more accessible and enjoyable for locals and tourists alike.



Areas of High Amenity

Areas of High Amenity (AHA) are defined as areas worthy of special protection / enhancement due to their uniqueness and scenic amenity value. This designation is in addition to the national and EU statutory designations. This means that areas in Offaly that are designated as SACs, SPAs and NHAs may also be considered to have a high amenity value and are therefore important to the development of new, and the maintenance of existing outdoor recreation and amenities, specifically in terms of visitor management, maintenance and interpretation.

The following table charts the characteristics and landscape sensitivities for AHAs in Offaly: -

Waterways & Wetlands	Characteristics	Landscape Sensitivities
The River Shannon & Callow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Extremely liable to flood</li><li>Local scenic views</li><li>Tourism and recreational resource</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Sensitive to all development given its scientific, ecological and recreational value</li><li>View of special interest</li><li>Development should not damage the sensitive ecological habitat / archaeological elements of the river</li></ul>
The Grand Canal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Has a range of uses, especially tourism and recreation</li><li>Visual quality of Grand Canal key part of its attractiveness</li></ul>	Waterway Corridor Study 2002 should be referenced in terms of development
Lough Boora including Turraun wetlands, Finamore Lake area and Cloghan Lake wetlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Areas were previously cutaway bog; now nature reserves with a rich diversity of flora and fauna</li><li>A quickly evolving habitat changing from bare peat to birch woodland which will continue to change rapidly over the next decades</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Important habitat and wildlife shelter</li><li>Recreational value - “ a distinctive sense of place and peacefulness”</li><li>Development should be small and have minimum visual impact</li></ul>
Upland areas	Characteristics	Landscape Sensitivities
Slieve Bloom Mountains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Only upland area in County, offering a contrast to the county's otherwise flat landscape</li><li>Area identified as an environmental park - view, forest, walks and bike trails, picnic sites, archaeological and historic site</li><li>Largest unbroken area of upland blanket peat in Ireland</li><li>Tourism and recreational resource</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Sensitive to all types of development, including large agriculture, housing and afforestation proposals</li><li>Hen Harriers habitat</li><li>New recreational facilities associated with forestry should use natural materials</li></ul>
Croghan Hill / Raheenmore Bog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Raheenmore bog designated as a nature reserve under the Wildlife Act 1976</li><li>Croghan Hill - extinct volcano</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Area of archaeological, amenity, scenic quality and recreational value</li><li>Sensitive to new development</li></ul>

Raised and Blanket Bogs	Characteristics	Landscape Sensitivities
All Saints Bog, Sharavogue Bog, Slieve Bloom and Raheenmore Bog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Natural ecosystems that have scenic qualities</li><li>A quickly evolving habitat changing from bare peat to birch woodland, which will continue to change rapidly over the next decades</li></ul>	Conservation of a representative sample of peatlands for the protection of peatland habitats
Esker Landscape	Characteristics	Landscape Sensitivities
Eiscir Riada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Archaeological significance</li><li>Formed the early highways of Ireland</li><li>Ice-age and post ice-age geological feature</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Conservation of a representative scientific, historical and cultural site</li><li>Recreational value</li></ul>
Archaeological and Historical Landscapes	Characteristics	Landscape Sensitivities
Key early Christian monastic sites	Rich landscape of archaeological and historical sites	Any planning application for development, refurbishment and restoration works must be sensitive to the landscape

Conclusion

The Offaly outdoors offers a wide variety of landscapes for local people and visitors to enjoy. In most instances, these landscapes are also categorised as areas of high amenity which is in addition to their categoristiaon under national and EU statutory designations such as SAC (Special Areas of Conservation), SPA (Special Protection Areas), NHA (National Heritage Areas) and Statutory Nature Reserves. It is understood that existing planning and regulatory mechanisms will act as the necessary framework for future development in locations that are sensitive, whether that be from an ecological, historical, scientific or recreational nature.



## Consultation





## Shaping the Future of Our Outdoor Recreation in Offaly

As part of the consultation process, stakeholders were asked to consider the questions outlined below. The responses to these questions form the strategic priorities of the 'Our Outdoors', Offaly's Outdoor Recreation plan: -

1. Outdoor Recreation and Tourism - is it a driver or has it the potential to be?
2. Do we need additional amenities or should we concentrate on existing provision?
3. Do opportunities exist to provide outdoor recreation amenities that improve or restore biodiversity?
4. In relation to environmentally sensitive areas - should they simply be left to nature or should promoting opportunities for biodiversity restoration be identified and protected?
5. Do people in Offaly have adequate access to trails, green areas and blue spaces?
6. Are there any issues of current access and the good will of landowners that impact on the environment and the reputation of the county?

### Outdoor Recreation - a Driver for Tourism

- Stakeholders agreed that outdoor recreation has the potential to be a tourism driver. As a county with several new attractions and amenities, the continual development of visitor services, accommodation and food offering is required.
- There is a need to animate businesses and communities to explore the new economic opportunities that are *on our doorstep* ', This should be addressed by relevant agencies and organisations that support new business development, social enterprise and innovation.

### The Need for Additional Amenities; or Concentrate on Existing Provision?

- Yes, in a very targeted and structured way. Any new amenities need to be of very high quality.
- New amenity developments need to examine the potential for connecting amenities to towns and villages (e.g. 'Last Mile' connections - the final link from newly developed peatland trails and off road walking trails to hubs, gateways, towns or visitor attractions).
- There is widespread agreement on the need for a clear focus on the maintenance plans for all of our existing amenities and that this element needs to be recognised in local, regional and state funded programmes.
- The creation of local voluntary project champions / community custodians who will undertake some basic maintenance and oversight of local amenities - a model like the 'Tidy Towns' competition could be explored.
- The development of a common interpretative model / design for visitors.



### Do opportunities exist to provide outdoor recreation amenities that improve or restore biodiversity?

- Unanimous agreement - there are clear opportunities to provide amenities that improve and restore biodiversity. In our natural landscape, we can create a managed access to areas that will allow for an interpretation and appreciation of the unique beauty and biodiversity of Offaly.
- This will require greater cooperation between stakeholders who have different responsibilities and roles in terms of the management and maintenance of the outdoors.

### In relation to environmentally sensitive areas - should they simply be left to nature or should promoting opportunities for biodiversity restoration be identified and protected?

- Yes, we have an obligation to protect our landscape. While the development of amenities is important for the county, it must be done so in a balanced and sustainable way that reflects the unique biodiversity we have.
- All future amenity development especially in areas of significant environmental importance will have to be designed, planned and assessed appropriately.
- Where our biodiversity is being damaged or in danger of being damaged, we must take remedial action to re-route and redirect outdoor recreational activity.

### Do people in Offaly have adequate access to trails, green areas and blue spaces?

- There is significant choice and variety in amenity, green and blue space activity available throughout the county.
- There is no evidence at present of overcrowding or overuse of amenities. This may be as a result of the growth in the availability of new facilities in recent years.
- Awareness raising initiatives are the responsibility of all stakeholders. This could involve schools, community groups, active aged groups and sporting organisations hosting information days, fun days or outdoor adventure days targeting local residents. This can be delivered in association with a variety of partners including Offaly Sports Partnership, the Health Services Executive, Offaly Public Participation Network, Offaly Local Development Company, Laois / Offaly Education and Training Board, etc.

### Any issues of current access and the goodwill of landowners, the impact on the environment and the reputation of the county?

- Not a significant issue in / for Offaly. The impact of good consultation with landowners can be credited with this; however, it also cautioned that maintaining good lines of communication and early problem solving is vital to maintaining good relations. It was felt that the role of the County Outdoor Recreation Officer would be critical with regard to developing relationships, anticipating issues and problem solving, etc.
- A central point for communication within the county was suggested as a useful resource. This resource to include knowledge of amenities with quick response times.



## Stakeholder Landscape



Offaly County Council	
Role and Responsibilities relating to outdoor recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Statutory planning function</li><li>• Strategic development planning (e.g. Midlands Cycling Destination, Offaly)</li><li>• Outreach and coordination with stakeholders and providers</li><li>• Application for, and delivery of Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme across all measures (1 - small scale repair and promotion; 2 medium scale development; 3 - large scale development; and Feasibility Study for new projects)</li><li>• Some maintenance and upgrade works</li><li>• Will act as employer of the Outdoor Recreation Officer on behalf of the County Outdoor Recreation Committee</li></ul>
Organisational objectives for outdoor recreation in Offaly (please list)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Promote Co. Offaly as a quality place to visit and stay with a wide variety of high-quality tourist attractions, visitor facilities and infrastructure (County Development Plan, page 203)</li><li>• Prioritise walking, cycling and sustainable travel in the planning, layout and design of places (Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), page 11)</li><li>• Provide access to nature and green spaces, play and active recreation opportunities (LECP, page 11)</li><li>• Act as employer of the Outdoor Recreation Officer on behalf of the County Outdoor Recreation Committee</li></ul>
Who do you collaborate with	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Department of Rural &amp; Community Development</li><li>• Coillte</li><li>• Bord na Móna</li><li>• Waterways Ireland</li><li>• Fáilte Ireland</li><li>• Offaly Tourism</li><li>• Offaly Local Development Company</li><li>• Stakeholder communities</li></ul>
What do you collaborate on (projects, operational issues, etc. please indicate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Trail development, maintenance and promotion</li></ul>



Offaly Sports Partnership	
Role and Responsibilities relating to outdoor recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited to programme delivery and support of Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) Measure 1 applications to date</li> <li>Delivered urban outdoor adventure projects in the towns of Edenderry and Tullamore on the Grand Canal for children and young people, adults and older adults, women and girls, and youth at risk</li> <li>Deliver the '<i>Her Outdoors</i>' programme targeting women and girls each summer</li> <li>Deliver the Grand Canal Greenway Cycle Relay from Edenderry to Shannon Harbour during Bike Week</li> <li>Deliver school cycle activities in the outdoors in Lough Boora and along the Grand Canal during Bike Week</li> <li>Support delivery of '<i>Woodlands for Health</i>' programmes</li> <li>Will act as line manager of the Outdoor Recreation Officer on behalf of the County Outdoor Recreation Committee</li> <li>A member of the Slieve Bloom Outdoor Recreation Partnership</li> </ul>
Organisational objectives for outdoor recreation in Offaly (please list)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Act as line manager of the County Outdoor Recreation Officer on behalf of the County Outdoor Recreation Committee</li> <li>Support and participate as a member on the County Outdoor Recreation Committee</li> <li>Support and participate as a member of the Slieve Bloom Outdoor Recreation Partnership</li> </ul>
Who do you collaborate with	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department of Rural &amp; Community Development</li> <li>Area engineers in Offaly County Council</li> <li>Laois / Offaly Rural Recreation Officer (employed by Laois Development Company)</li> <li>Offaly Local Development Company's Rural Social Scheme supervisor in relation to trail maintenance in the county.</li> <li>Sport Ireland trail inspectors</li> <li>Stakeholders on the Slieve Bloom Outdoor Recreation Partnership</li> </ul>
What do you collaborate on (projects, operational issues, etc. please indicate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trail development, maintenance and promotion</li> <li>Trail inspections</li> </ul>

Offaly Local Development Company	
Role and Responsibilities relating to outdoor recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Outdoor recreation - Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) community projects</li><li>• Social Inclusion - community participation</li><li>• LEADER Programme - animation, capacity building and funding for outdoor recreation</li><li>• Rural Social Scheme (RSS) and TUS programmes - supporting environmental projects in the community</li></ul>
Organisational objectives for outdoor recreation in Offaly (please list)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Implementation of Local Development Strategy which has strong focus on outdoor recreation and community engagement Community based</li><li>• Community based ORIS Measure 1 projects</li><li>• Just Transition Projects</li><li>• Support and participate as a member on the County Outdoor Recreation Committee</li></ul>
Who do you collaborate with	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Offaly County Council</li><li>• Fáilte Ireland</li><li>• Waterways Ireland</li><li>• Laois / Offaly Education and Training Board</li><li>• Offaly Sports Partnership</li><li>• Coillte</li><li>• Slieve Bloom Walking Group</li><li>• Bord na Móna</li></ul>
What do you collaborate on (projects, operational issues, etc. please indicate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Trail maintenance - RSS and Slieve Bloom Mountain Trails</li><li>• Capacity building for communities in this area</li><li>• Recreation development</li></ul>



Fáilte Ireland	
Role and Responsibilities relating to outdoor recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Achieving recognition for the sector and working directly and in partnership with other stakeholders to provide the necessary infrastructure (product development) that will facilitate the growth of new business opportunities to provide a wider range of tourist experiences in destinations.</li><li>Promote outdoor recreation amenities to domestic tourists.</li></ul>
Organisational objectives for outdoor recreation in Offaly (please list)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Working with stakeholders and industry to support further development and promotion of outdoor amenities including the Grand Canal Greenway and Blueway, and the Slieve Bloom Mountains.</li></ul>
Who do you collaborate with	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Waterways Ireland</li><li>Coillte</li><li>National Parks &amp; Wildlife Services</li><li>Bord na Móna</li><li>Strategic Partnership Agreement with Offaly County Council</li></ul>
What do you collaborate on (projects, operational issues, etc. please indicate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Domestic and Overseas tourism promotions</li><li>Projects</li></ul>

STAKEHOLDER LANDSCAPE

Coillte	
Role and Responsibilities relating to outdoor recreation	Land manager and provider of recreation sites and facilities including, car parks, trailheads, walking trails, mountain bike trails, etc
Organisational objectives for outdoor recreation in Offaly (please list)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Continue to maintain and improve our recreational offering in Offaly</li><li>Support and participate as a member on the County Outdoor Recreation Committee</li><li>A member of the Slieve Bloom Outdoor Recreation Partnership</li></ul>
Who do you collaborate with	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Local authority</li><li>State agencies</li><li>Local communities</li></ul>
What do you collaborate on (projects, operational issues, etc. please indicate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Trail development, maintenance and promotion</li><li>Trail inspections</li><li>Just Transition projects</li></ul>



Waterways Ireland (WI)	
Role and Responsibilities relating to outdoor recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Navigation authority for inland waterways with responsibility for the Shannon and Grand Canal navigations</li><li>• Operator of multi activity recreational Greenway and Blueway trails along these navigations.</li></ul>
Organisational objectives for outdoor recreation in Offaly (please list)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Manage, Maintain, Develop and Promote the River Shannon and Grand Canal waterways</li><li>• Manage, Maintain, Develop and Promote the Shannon Blueway and Grand Canal Greenway</li><li>• Development of new WI depot in Tullamore, thereby freeing up the existing depot for urban upgrade.</li><li>• The development of enhanced and new mooring destinations throughout Offaly.</li><li>• Improved access to the navigations for recreational users.</li><li>• Continue to work with other stakeholders in a collaborative manner where objectives and remits align.</li><li>• Continued expansion and improvements to recreational Blueway and Greenway trails along the navigations.</li></ul>
Who do you collaborate with	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Local Authorities</li><li>• Fáilte Ireland</li><li>• Inland Fisheries</li><li>• Bord Na Móna</li><li>• Local Community Groups</li><li>• Coillte</li></ul>
What do you collaborate on (projects, operational issues, etc. please indicate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Projects, developments and initiatives relating to shared objectives such as outdoor recreational infrastructure, offerings and products. Through collaboration a greater impact can be seen across a wider network of offerings.</li></ul>

Bord na Mona (BnM)	
Role and Responsibilities relating to outdoor recreation	BnM is a renewable energy provider supporting Ireland’s journey to net zero. Working with our landbank, strategic partners and local communities we are developing a pipeline of renewable energy projects to decarbonise key industries. BnM’s integrated land use strategy adopts a holistic approach to land management that balances various uses with our renewable energy projects, including commercial development, amenities, and biodiversity enhancement, with activities subject to internal approval. Our strategy also emphasises the creation of amenities, recreational facilities, and initiatives for habitat rehabilitation and restoration in the appropriate areas within the estate. By fostering a multifunctional landscape, BnM aims to promote public good offerings and support local ecosystems, ensuring community engagement is prioritised and reinforcing our commitment to responsible and sustainable practices that address local needs alongside our renewable energy projects.
Organisational objectives for outdoor recreation in Offaly (please list)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop universally accessible rollable cycle trails through the EU Just Transition Fund Regenerative Tourism and Placemaking Scheme for the Midlands on available and suitable former industrial peatlands; alongside the upgrade of existing trails, subject to required consents and funding availability.</li><li>• Continue to provide and improve outdoor recreation opportunities at Lough Boora Discovery Park including upgrade of trails through the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme and the delivery of the Velo Rail project.</li><li>• Continue to collaborate and engage with Offaly County Council on the Lough Boora Sculpture Park.</li><li>• Continue to engage with local communities and stakeholders regarding amenity provision as part of Renewable Energy developments.</li><li>• Support and participate as a member on the County Outdoor Recreation Committee</li></ul>
Who do you collaborate with	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Offaly County Council</li><li>• Fáilte Ireland</li><li>• Waterways Ireland</li><li>• Coillte</li><li>• Comhairle na Tuatha</li><li>• Department of Rural &amp; Community Development</li><li>• Sport Ireland</li></ul>
What do you collaborate on (projects, operational issues, etc. please indicate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Projects</li></ul>



Glossary of Abbreviations

- AHA: Area of High Amenity
- CAP: Climate Action Plan
- CDP: County Development Plan
- CSO: Central Statistics Office
- GDA: Greater Dublin Area
- HSE: Health Service Executive
- LCDC: Local Community Development Committee
- LOETB: Laois Offaly Education & Training Board
- NDP: National Development Plan
- NFP: National Planning Framework
- NPWS: National Parks and Wildlife Service
- OCC: Offaly County Council
- OLEO: Offaly Local Enterprise Office
- OLDC: Offaly Local Development Company
- OOR: Offaly Outdoor Recreation
- OORC: Offaly Outdoor Recreation Committee
- OPW: Office of Public Works
- ORIS: Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme
- OSP: Offaly Sports Partnership
- pNHA: Provisional National Heritage Area
- PPN: Public Participation Network
- RRO: Rural Recreation Officer
- SAC: Special Areas of Conservation
- SDG: Sustainable Development Goal
- SPA: Special Protection Area
- SWOT Analysis: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats analysis