

I would like to make the following observations on the draft county Development Plan.

### **Age Friendly Housing.**

I am glad to see the Council plans to support the provision of a mix of house types and to encourage developers to incorporate principles of universal design in new properties. The problems and difficulties with the current design of traditional nursing homes were clearly and sadly evident during the Covid outbreak. Emphasis must be put on supporting people in their own homes as they get older or, alternatively, a new type of supported housing should be available where the person has their “own front door” but live in an environment where help is available at all times.

### **Forestry.**

I note that afforestation is outside the control of the planning authority and that the Council would welcome a change in that situation. I think most people agree the many acres of sitka spruce and the many acres of clear fell in Leitrim are a blight on the landscape (as well as impacting on farmers’ ability to extend their holdings). It is truly depressing to drive along a road with massive trees on either side, cutting out light, birdsong and often mobile phone coverage. The open views which appear when areas are clear-felled only serve to emphasize the loss which will occur in a few years time when another generation of soulless forestry starts to grow again. I feel the Council should be encouraging farmers to plant areas of their land with appropriate native trees, including the planting of grazing land where animals can co-exist happily with trees.

### **Hedgerows.**

The Council considers hedgerows to be of major importance and “will seek to ensure that hedgerows and verges are maintained and trimmed in the interest of road safety”. I would argue that a lot of what happens every year to roadside hedges, particularly as the closed season for cutting approaches, is far from maintenance. In the best case the full length of a hedge is cut at a uniform height and all bushes and trees, except for those too strong for the machine to cut, are destroyed. In the worst case the hedge is flattened to its base and nothing is left standing. It is so sad to see these wonderful habitats and bird corridors being destroyed year after year. We all appreciate that road safety comes first but I don’t think it is good enough for the Council to simply notify land owners to trim their hedges without ensuring these precious biodiverse habitats are not simply being destroyed.

### **Renewable Energy.**

Re the following: *“Co. Leitrim has a longstanding record of promoting and accommodating the development of renewable energy technologies, principally wind energy, with the county containing excellent wind resources and grid infrastructure. This has been to the benefit of the local economy in terms of jobs sustained by the industry, either in construction or operational terms, but also in fostering the sustainable credentials of Co. Leitrim as a forward-looking, progressive and environmentally conscious county”.*

Firstly, I would question how much benefit wind farms bring to the local economy in terms of jobs. There is the community funding which the developers promote as evidence of their community support. But that is simply tax-payers money being returned to the people via the massive subsidies which the government pays these developers. Secondly, rather than showing the county as “progressive and environmentally conscious”, I fear it is evidence that these windfarm developers, whose only interest is profit, see the county as a “soft touch” where they are likely to face less opposition to whatever they propose.

I am heartened that the Council supports the possibility of small-scale renewable energy developments and for community-based proposals. It is vital that ordinary people are involved and invested in sustainable methods of generating energy on a local level. And in a county with so much slurry available surely the Council should be pushing the development of anaerobic digestors on both a small local scale and larger business models.

Míle buíochas,

**Christina Guckian**