

Consultation Response
Draft Leitrim County Development Plan 2023-2029
Planning Department,
Leitrim County Council,
Áras an Chonate,
St. George's Terrace,
Carrick-on-Shannon,
Co. Leitrim, N41 PF67

By email

Irish Bioenergy Association (IrBEA)

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To: cdp@leitrimcoco.ie

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IrBEA Response to Public Consultation on the Draft Leitrim County Development Plan 2023-2029

Dear Sir/Madam

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this consultation on behalf of our members. The Irish Bioenergy Association (IrBEA), as a representative body for the bioenergy sector on the island of Ireland, wish to acknowledge the inclusion of bioenergy as a renewable energy consideration within the draft Leitrim Development Plan 2023-2029. We welcome Leitrim County Council's stated policy in support of the bioenergy industry.

IrBEA, as part of the Renewable Energy Ireland umbrella body, released in 2021, a joint report "*40by30- A 40% renewable heat target by 2030*" which sets out a pathway for achieving 40% renewable heat by 2030¹. Many of the options for reaching this target appear to be articulated and supported by Leitrim County Council in the consultation documents.

¹ https://renewableenergyireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Renewable-Energy-Ireland_Renewable-Heat-Plan_-_Final.pdf

The draft outlines support for the use of wood fuels using locally derived forestry resources generated through sustainable forest management practices (thinnings). IrBEA manage and administer the Wood Fuel Quality Assurance Scheme (WFQA)², which provides certification of quality wood fuels in the form of firewood, wood chip, wood pellets and wood briquettes. Considering Leitrim’s forestry resource, we see significant potential for sustainable quality wood fuel from the management and utilization of the thinning and residue resources to provide renewable wood fuels to satisfy local demand and displace fossil fuels. The WFQA has a number of prominent members in the region with significant potential and capacity to grow and develop their businesses and with the potential for others to also join this market in the future.

IrBEA welcomes the draft plan’s support for production of biogas using anaerobic digestion technology. IrBEA and many of its members are involved in this sector. As part of a joint policy paper, developed along with CRÉ titled “Mobilising an Irish Biogas Industry with Policy Action³”, IrBEA clearly articulates through this document the supports and infrastructure required to mobilise a medium to large scale biogas industry. Biogas production can exist at many scales ranging from the micro, small to large industrial scale and the acknowledgement within the consultation document of the potential role micro or small-scale biogas can play not only in the provision of energy but for farm diversification is strongly welcomed and aligned with IrBEA’s own project work, through the European Innovation Partnership Small on Farm Biogas Demonstration Programme⁴. A biogas industry in Co. Leitrim would bring many benefits to a wide range of stakeholders including farmers, energy users, local authorities, and businesses to name but a few. A growing biogas sector could include the provision of locally generated and used heat, electricity, and a renewable gaseous transport fuel. In 2021, IrBEA also released a report titled “Transport in Ireland- a pathway towards halving emissions” which outlines the complimentary roles of biomethane, biofuels, electrification and efficiency measures can play in decarbonising transport.⁵

The draft consultation document also highlights the role of gasification, energy crops, district heating and combined heat and power plants and the role that bioenergy can play. All these inclusions are strongly welcomed by IrBEA, and the Association would be happy to engage with Leitrim County Council and provide assistance, guidance, and support to any potential developments in these areas in the coming years. Mention of the Support Scheme for Renewable Heat (SSRH) is also welcomed and IrBEA have been working alongside relevant stakeholders over the past number of years to try and help simplify this process and to

² <https://www.wfqa.org/>

³ https://www.irbea.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/IrBEA-Cre-Biogas-Policy-Paper-Final_1.pdf

⁴ <https://www.irbea.org/farmbiogas/#top>

⁵ <https://www.marei.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Irish-Bioenergy-Association-UCC-MaREI-Renewables-In-Transport-Report-Final.pdf>

encourage its uptake. IrBEA also operate and maintain a register of qualified biomass system designers and installers, many of which are involved in the roll out of the SSRH scheme.

The NWRA's Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy makes specific reference to "*Support and encourage the development of the bio-economy sector, and facilitate its development for energy production and storage distribution, in particular advocating combined heat and power units integrated into district heating networks, in combination with Pyrogenic carbon capture and storage(PyCCS) or Bio-energy carbon capture and storage(BECCS) all to be done in collaboration with EPA and other regulators*"(RPO 4.20)⁶. This specific objective largely covers the ambitions Leitrim County Council appear to have set out in the draft documents. The bioeconomy and bioenergy sectors are intrinsically linked and indeed complimentary.

Leitrim County Council's specific objectives to increase the penetration of bioenergy projects within the county, support their development, to repurpose brownfield sites and to promote and showcase bioenergy in general is largely aligned with IrBEA's own remit. The development of a specific multi agency group to oversee renewable energy development in the region is strongly welcomed and IrBEA would be willing to provide whatever assistance it can to this grouping regarding the various potential bioenergy options.

We look forward to engaging with, and, supporting and assisting where possible, Leitrim County Council's bioenergy related ambitions and developments in the coming years.

Yours sincerely,

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⁶ <https://www.nwra.ie/pdfs/NWRA-RSES-2020-2032.pdf>