

# ***Leitrim County Development Plan 2022-2028***

## ***Strategic Issues Paper***



**Leitrim County Council**  
Comhairle Chontae Liatroma



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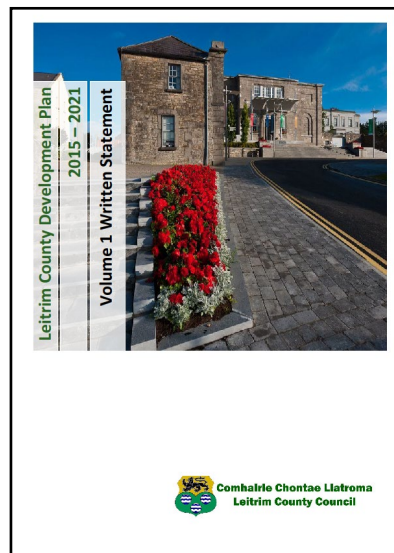
*“the best of life is life lived quietly, where nothing happens but our calm journey through the day, where change is imperceptible, and the precious life is everything.”*

**John McGahern, *All Will Be Well***

## 1. Introduction

### What is a Development Plan?

A development plan presents the overall strategy of our Council for the proper planning and sustainable development of Co. Leitrim over a six-year period. It consists of a written statement (policy framework) and accompanying maps including towns and villages showing how land uses will be arranged. The plan covers areas such as housing, infrastructure, community facilities, heritage, and the environment. The existing County Development Plan was made on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2015 and took effect on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2015. It covers the period from 2015 until 2021. The next County Development Plan will cover the period from 2022 to 2028.



### What are the main features of a County Development Plan?

As outlined above, the main features of a County Development Plan are the written statement and the maps containing the development objectives for the area, including (but not limited to):

- the **Core Strategy** (see Section 4), which gives spatial expression to housing, population, and employment elements of the plan.
- the **Housing Strategy** (see Section 4.3), which indicates anticipated housing requirements across various tenures and types for the plan period and informs the Core Strategy.

- the **Retail Strategy** (see Section 5.2), which indicates retail development requirements over the plan period and informs the Core Strategy.
- a **Strategic Flood Risk Assessment** (see Section 13.2) in line with guidelines published by the Minister in 2009; and
- **transportation** (see Section 7.1) and other infrastructural assessments.

A plan must include certain mandatory objectives, as set out in Section 10 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended) and may include a range of discretionary objectives as indicated in the First Schedule of the Act.

### Why get involved?

This presents an opportunity to citizens to shape their County and have their say when it comes to important issues such as housing, economic development, communities, and heritage. It is an opportunity which comes around only once every 6 years.

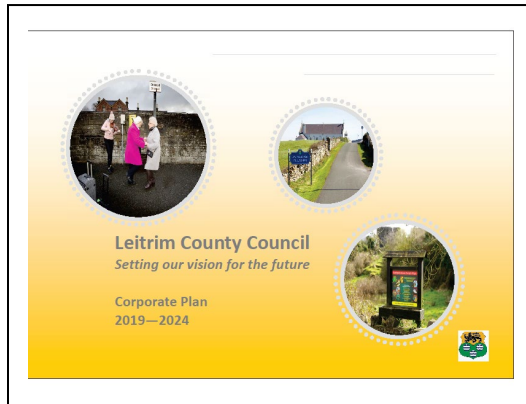
To initiate Stage 1 of the County Development Plan making process, a Public Consultation Strategic Issues Paper has been prepared by the Planning Authority. The Strategic Issues Paper is intended to stimulate discussion and to encourage public involvement at this early stage in the process so as to help identify what broad planning and development matters should be considered in the new County Development Plan. The intention of the Strategic Issues Paper is to present background and some key questions to prompt debate on the issues facing our county. It does not purport to cover all the issues but simply present some key topics. The way to make your views known by making a submission are outlined in at the end of this document in Section 15 – Have Your Say.

## 2. Leitrim's Vision

The vision for Leitrim set out in the current County Development Plan 2015-2021 is

*“County Leitrim to be a vibrant, socially inclusive, progressive and distinctive county, providing a good quality of life for all who work, live and visit the county and offering equal opportunities for employment to its people; while protecting, conserving and enhancing the best of the natural and built environment”.*

A new Corporate Plan to cover the period of the current Council (2019-2024) was adopted last year.



The vision simplifies that contained in the County Development Plan to:

*Our vision is to build an economically strong, creative and inclusive county making Leitrim the best place to live, to work, to invest and to visit.*

The Corporate Plan is developed around on 4 no. themes, 3 no. of which are relevant to the County Development Plan.

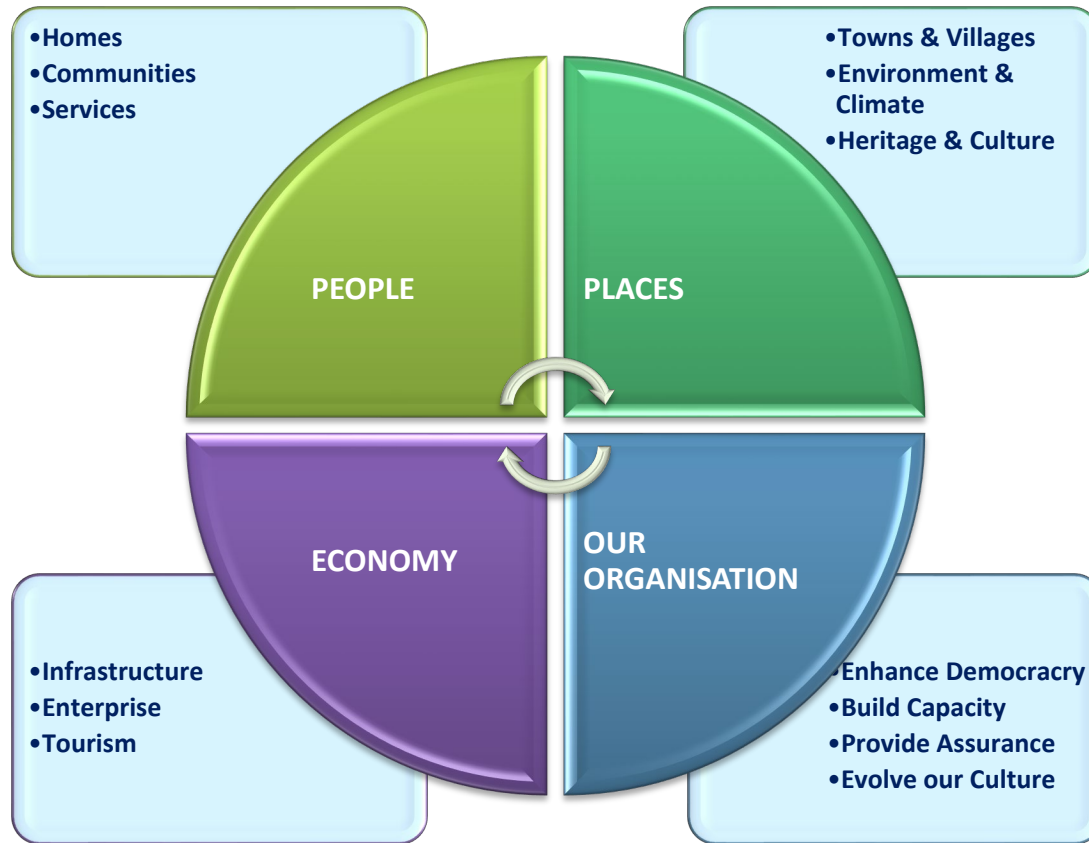
### 1. Delivering for our People

At the heart of County Leitrim are our **People**. We will focus on delivering outcomes for individuals, neighbourhoods and communities. We will continue to review and improve the services we provide to all residents. We will provide homes and help shape neighbourhoods. We will build and strengthen communities and groups, including a continuing investment in our young people, sport and recreation. We will support and provide opportunities for all our people to engage and shape local decision making. We will ensure we do it all with dignity, equality and respect.

### 2. Delivering for our Places

Shaping our landscape and creating our identity are our **Places**. We will continue to sustain and create great places throughout the county. We will support and develop our towns and villages so that they are vibrant and dynamic spaces today and into the future. We will tackle the challenges faced by environmental and climatic changes. We will seek to develop solutions and identify opportunities for our places that deliver access to services and facilities that meet the needs of our people and communities into the future. We will promote and celebrate the unique nature of individual places and the county as whole; protecting our heritage and providing opportunity and access to the arts, information, lifelong learning and cultural events.

The Corporate Plan is developed around 4 themes



### 3. Delivering for our Economy

Delivering opportunity for all our people and places is our local **Economy**. Economic development and sustaining economic growth are core to what we do and underpins and drives much of what we deliver, whether directly or indirectly. We will focus on building and sustaining the conditions that allow our economy to grow. We will lead, mobilise and support economic development across County Leitrim, maximising our potential. We will capitalise on our strengths, continuing to invest in the county’s strong entrepreneurial culture through the Local Enterprise Office. We will invest and build our Tourism brand, experience, and offer, expanding reach, appeal, and opportunity. We will seek out and attract inward investment potential by creating and marketing the county as an attractive and viable business location. We will identify and invest in the infrastructure that supports our growth aspirations through an ambitious Capital Investment Programme with outcomes for all.

#### Questions

- What kind of County would you like to see Leitrim become by 2028?
- What critical elements would need to be in place to achieve the kind of County we are striving for?
- What are the main challenges which would prevent this happening?
- How would you change the current vision statement for County Leitrim?

### 3. Strategic Planning – What has happened since the last County Development Plan?

#### 3.1 Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework

Project Ireland 2040, launched in 2018, is the Government’s framework to guide the development of the country in economic, social and environmental terms. Project Ireland 2040 comprises of a 10 year €116 billion capital investment plan, the National Development Plan, and a new National Planning Framework.



The National Planning Framework (NPF) is a 20 year high level strategic plan which seeks to guide development and investment to enable all parts of Ireland to accommodate growth and change by

facilitating a shift towards Ireland’s regions and cities other than Dublin, while also recognising Dublin’s ongoing key role. This is necessary as Ireland’s population will grow by a further estimated 1 million people over the course of the next two decades. In turn, this means approximately 550,000 new houses are going to be required and a further 660,000 jobs created to sustain this projected population growth. The NPF identifies ten National Strategic Outcomes and ten Investment Priorities which are presented graphically overleaf.

#### 3.2 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region

Leitrim forms part of the Northern and Western Region which consists of the province of Connacht and the 3 Ulster counties in the State. Regional Assemblies, amongst other functions, make Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, which co-ordinate both the development plans and local economic and community plans of local authorities in their region. The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Northern and Western Region was adopted on the 24<sup>th</sup> January 2020

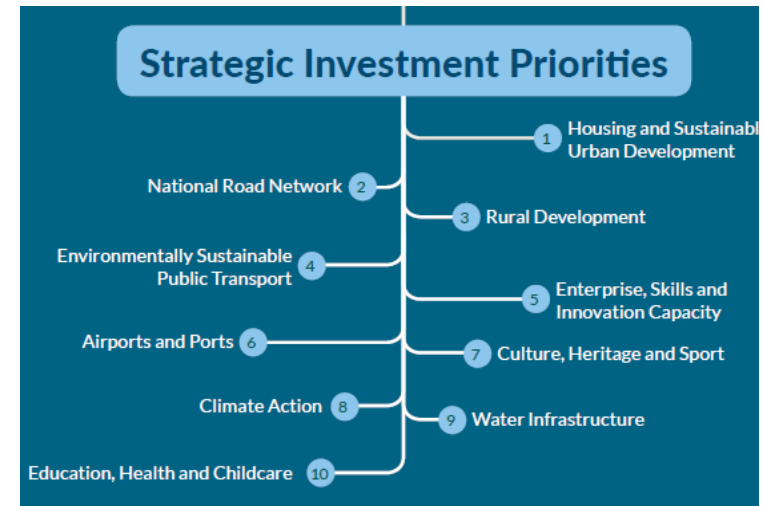
The RSES sets priorities and provides a regional direction for planning at County/City level. It focuses on new housing and jobs, and targets growth in strategic centres - Metropolitan Galway, Regional Growth Centres & Key Towns which includes Carrick on Shannon. Funding will be provided to growth areas for regional infrastructure for transport, housing, health, enterprise & innovation, education and for community / recreational / civic facilities through funding programmes which include the Urban and Rural Regeneration and Development Funds which Leitrim County Council has been successful in securing significant investment for Carrick on Shannon, Ballinamore and Manorhamilton. Priority investment is recommended over periods to 2026 and 2031 respectively.

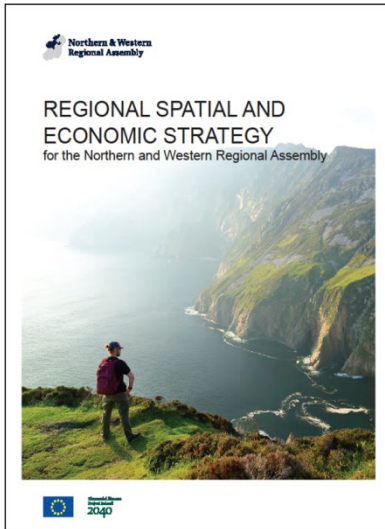


# National Planning Framework and its National Strategic Outcomes and Priorities of the National Development Plan



Above – National Strategic Outcomes  
 Top Right – Strategic Investment Priorities  
 Opposite – Configuration of Regional Assembly Areas





The RSES seeks to realize an ambition for our region that is Vibrant, Connected, Natural, Smart and a Great Place to Live, consolidated by a strong settlement strategy focusing on ‘People’ and ‘Places’. The intention is that it becomes a living framework, which will be supported as required by detailed action plans, investment proposals and delivery partnerships.

Compact growth will be pursued to ensure sustainable growth of more compact urban and rural settlements, supported by jobs, houses, services and amenities, rather than continued sprawl and unplanned, uneconomic growth. The NWRA believes that strong economic growth, supported by enhanced infrastructure, which creates permanent, sustainable jobs, is best achieved by building a competitive and productive economy. Focusing policies on scale, investing in connectivity (transport and digital) and our people whilst aggressively pursuing a low carbon approach to enhance our differentiation. A combined long term vision for the future of both energy supply and our ability to use renewable energy is advocated whilst considering the impacts on our natural resources, landscape and heritage.

Accessibility and mobility including emphasis on sustainable transport within the region have a direct effect on the region’s economic competitiveness and attractiveness. The Region aspires to

be one of the most livable places in Europe with a commitment to sustainable and inclusive growth.

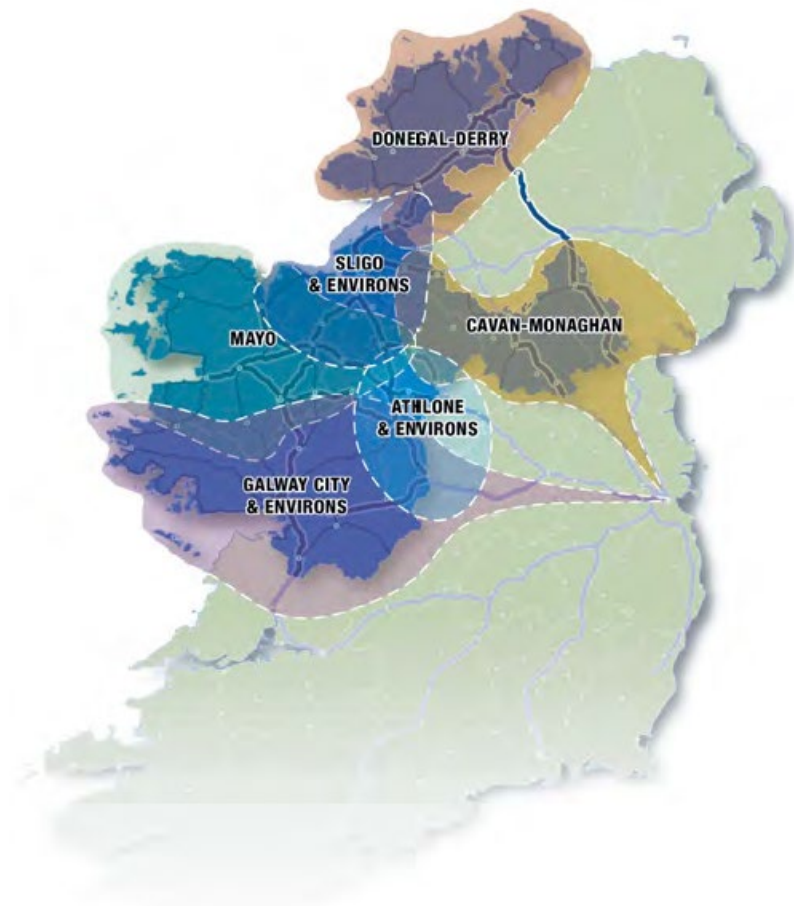


Figure 1: Sub Regions within Northern & Western Regional Assembly Area

### 4. The Core Strategy

As outlined in the Introduction, the Core Strategy provides a medium to longer term strategy for the spatial development of Co. Leitrim. It demonstrates how the County Development Plan is consistent with national and regional development objectives set out in the National Planning Framework and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for our region. This relates to issues such as the role of urban centres, the number of houses proposed to be located in each urban centre and in rural areas adhering to the targets provided in the higher level national and regional plans, how the amount of land zoned for houses has been determined and is adequate to cater for this growth, demonstrate how future development supports public transport / existing services, etc.

There is also a requirement for the Core Strategy to provide estimates for the amount of additional retail development which is required based on the population targets provided. It must provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate such compliance which requires a series of tables to be produced; this is referred to as *'evidence-based planning'*.

The existing Core Strategy consists of an overview of the spatial development strategy for Co. Leitrim which is represented in the accompanying map opposite.



## 4.1 Settlement

Co. Leitrim's existing settlement hierarchy is set out below:

Level	Centre
Tier 1 - Principal Town	Carrick on Shannon
Tier 2A – Key Towns	Manorhamilton & Ballinamore
Tier 2B – Support Towns	Dromahair, Drumshanbo, Mohill & Kinlough
Tier 3 - Villages	Carrigallen, Dromod, Drumkeeran, Leitrim & Tullaghan
Tier 4 - Villages	Ballinaglera, Cloone, Dowra, Drumcong, Drumsna, Fenagh, Glenfarne, Jamestown, Keshcarrigan, Kilclare, Killarga, Kiltyclogher, Lurganboy, Newtowngore & Roosky
Tier 5 - Graigs	Askill, Gurteen, Largydonnell, Leckaun/Newtownmanor, Mullies, Aghacashel, Bellanagare / Carrowcrin, Derrintawy/Newbridge, Kilavoggy, Kilnagross, Tarmon, Tawneylea, Aghavas 1 & 2, Aughawillan, Aughnasheelan, Corrawaleen, Drumeela, Drumlea, Garvagh, Aghamore, Bornacoola, Efrinagh, Eslinbridge and Gortlettragh

- The Tier 2B towns of Mohill, Dromahair and Drumshanbo support the Principal Town of Carrick on Shannon and the Key Towns of Manorhamilton and Ballinamore within their respective Municipal District area. Kinlough was also included in this category based on the significant population growth experienced in the town and having a population over 850 people. The difference between a Tier 3 and Tier 4 village is based on having a population of approximately 250 people or

more. A Graig (Irish word derived from the equivalent of the hamlet) is an established rural node consisting of a community facility and a cluster or one off houses.

- The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy does not provide guidance to how the Settlement Hierarchy of Co. Leitrim should be arranged or what titles the different categories should be given.

## 4.2 Population Change

- County Leitrim has the lowest population of any county in Ireland. The population was recorded at 32,044 people in 2016. This represented a modest increase of 246 people from the 2011 recorded figure of 31,798 people.
- The population of the County is now at its highest since 1961.
- The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for our region project that the population of Co. Leitrim will increase to 35,000 – 35,500 people by 2026 and to 37,000 by 2031.
- The population growth to be accommodated over the 6 year period of the next County Development Plan is likely to be of the order of 1,800 – 2,100 people or 300 – 350 people per annum.
- At least 30% of this population growth must be delivered in Carrick on Shannon which is a Key Support Town in our Region. The population of Carrick on Shannon, including the village of Cortober, was 4,066 people in 2016.

## 4.3 Housing

As outlined in the Introduction, the Housing Strategy will examine anticipated housing requirements across various tenures and types for the plan period and informs the Core Strategy of the Development Plan. The County Development Plan will contain a new Housing Strategy which will set out to identify the housing needs arising in the County over the period of the plan. It will address issues such as future need and availability of zoned land for housing, provision of a suitable mix of unit types to cater for all

housing need requirements in all urban centres. It will seek to ensure sufficient, stable and sustained provision of housing that is affordable, in the right locations, meets peoples different needs and is of lasting quality is one of the greatest challenges facing the country at present.



Figure 2: Completion of Knockmacrory Heights, Roosky – A Local Authority Turn Key Development

In comparison to other counties, the extent to which County Leitrim is affected by the national housing crisis and housing shortages is modest. Whilst the period of the last development plan has seen significant progress made in completing houses within incomplete residential schemes, there has been no commencement notices submitted for any residential scheme for more than 10 no. houses in over 15 years. There is no effective multiple house construction sector in Co. Leitrim.

#### 4.4 Rural Housing

Leitrim County Council recognises the long tradition of people living in rural areas and promotes sustainable rural settlements as a key component of delivering balanced regional development. The Leitrim County Development Plan 2015-2021 identified three area types in the County in terms of their capacity to accommodate further rural housing – low, medium and high capacity areas. Rural housing poses a number of significant challenges for rural Leitrim owing to the poor percolation characteristics which are prevalent across most of the county. The continued demand for individual rural houses in the countryside needs to be balanced against the preservation and protection of the receiving environment.

The County Development Plan sets out the policy under which all applications for one off housing in the countryside are assessed. The National Planning Framework recognises that careful planning is required to manage demand for housing in the countryside and acknowledges that it will continue to be necessary to demonstrate a functional economic or social requirement for housing need in areas under urban influence i.e. the commuter catchment of large towns such as Carrick on Shannon and Sligo.

The poor soil percolation characteristics across much of our county make it extremely difficult for applicants from rural areas to satisfy the requirements of the EPA Code of Practice for individual wastewater treatment systems in order to build individual houses in the countryside. The result is a decline in rural population which is having a profound effect on the retention of services and in sporting organizations being able to field teams. The retention of sustainable rural communities will be a priority of the next County Development Plan.

## 4.5 Compact Growth

An efficient use of land is essential for sustainable development. The National Planning Framework (NPF) acknowledges that the physical format of urban development is one of our greatest national development challenges and identified compact growth as one of the National Strategic Outcomes. This requires delivering a greater proportion of residential development and other development within existing built-up area of towns and villages and moving away from reliance on greenfield development to meet our future development needs. Creating more compact development has been traditionally more difficult to achieve than a continuous process of pushing development onto greenfield locations.

It is now a requirement that 30% of all new homes will be delivered within the existing built up footprint of settlements. This applies to all scales of towns and villages within the County, from Carrick on Shannon to Tier 4 rural villages. This will require making better use of under utilised land including infill and brownfield sites. It is also a requirement of the Regional Economic & Spatial Strategy that 20% of all individual dwellings in rural areas consist of brownfield redevelopment. This will become a challenge as such opportunities diminish over time.

### Questions

- Other than Carrick on Shannon where at least 30% of population growth must be directed, what other towns and villages should be promoted for population growth and why?
- Do you think your town or village has the capacity to sustain more housing growth? If so, why?
- Do you think that the level of housing development in your town or village has been matched by adequate infrastructure and services?
- What are the service shortfalls in your area?

- What is needed to make your town or village a more desirable place in which to live?
- How should we deliver compact growth in each of the County's towns and villages?
- What is required to make our towns and villages more self-sustaining?
- What can we do to encourage the multiple house construction sector in our County to build homes where they are required?
- How can the Development Plan aid and facilitate the delivery of more homes in the right locations to increase supply?
- Why are rural areas experiencing pressure to accommodate rural housing whilst our rural villages are continuing to decline?
- If the Local Authority were to pursue sites in villages and smaller towns where people could build individual dwellings, would this be an attractive option?
- How do we balance the requirements of avoiding pollution of ground and surface water whilst allowing more people to build one off houses in rural areas?
- How can we improve the design of rural dwellings and buildings in County Leitrim?

## 5. Economic Development, Enterprise and Employment

Since the publication of 'Putting People First' Leitrim County Council has taken a very proactive approach to leading economic development in the County.

### 5.1 Economic Strategy

Leitrim County Council prepared an Economic Strategy to cover the period 2015-2021. The Strategy contained 13 no. key actions and recommendations designed to achieve an additional 1,029 jobs in the County by 2021.



Figure 3: The Hive, Carrick on Shannon

The Strategy was reviewed following the making available of the 2016 Census of Population Results in 2017.

- The review contained the following headlines:
- **461** fall in persons employed in County Leitrim 2011-2016
  - **44%** outbound commuter rate 2016, up from 40% in 2011
  - **301** outbound commuters to the Dublin Region in 2016
  - **0.24** jobs-pop ratio for 2016, down from 0.25 in 2011 (0.41 State 2016)
  - **565** drop in workers in information and communication, financial, real estate, professional, administration and support service activities
  - **340** decline in the number of jobs in Carrick-on-Shannon
  - **416** fall in full time jobs in IDA Ireland client companies 2011-2016
  - **63%** decline in full time jobs in IDA Ireland client companies since 2010
  - **351** increase in full time jobs in Enterprise Ireland client companies in Leitrim during 2011-2016
  - **69%** increase in full time jobs in Enterprise Ireland client companies since 2010

Table 1: Employment in Co. Leitrim

Location	Persons Employed		Population		Jobs / Population Ratio		
	2011	2016	2011	2016	2011	2016	% Change
County Leitrim	8,042	7,581	31,798	32,044	0.25	0.24	-6.5%
State	1,770,644	1,970,738	4,588,252	4,761,865	0.39	0.41	7.2%

**Table 2: Relationship between Employment and Commuting in Co. Leitrim 2011-2016**

Categories of Persons Employed	Persons Employed			
	Census Year		Change 2011-2016	
	2011	2016	Absolute	%
Working and Living in Co. Leitrim	5,548	5,397	-151	-2.7%
Working in Co. Leitrim but living elsewhere – Inbound Commuters	2,494	2,184	-310	-12.4%
<b>Total Working in Co. Leitrim</b>	<b>8,042</b>	<b>7,581</b>	<b>-461</b>	<b>-5.7%</b>
Living in Co. Leitrim but working elsewhere – Outbound Commuters	3,771	4,208	437	11.6%



Figure 4: The completed W8 Centre in Manorhamilton

The review highlights the extent of the challenge to provide more jobs for the resident population. The 2016 Census figures indicated a significant fall in the number of jobs available in Co. Leitrim. The extent of residents commuting out of the county for employment is increasing whilst the number of people from outside the county who work here is falling reflecting the decrease in the number of jobs available. The challenge is to reverse these unsustainable commuter trends. The review also shows the continued relative strength of indigenous employers. Challenges such as the potential impact on Foreign Direct Investment resulting from international uncertainty surrounding the fall out over ‘Brexit’ needs to be met head on. The review revised downward the potential number of jobs which could be realistically provided by 2021 to 8,314 which would represent an increase of 733 no. jobs. The main sectors identified to provide this employment were Information & Communication, Financial, Real Estate, Professional, Administration & Support and Service Activities. The next Census of Population is scheduled for Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> of April 2021 with detailed results not available until 2022. The 2016 Census of Population will therefore remain the most up to date basis to inform the preparation of the next County Development Plan.



## 5.2 Retail

Leitrim experiences significant leakage of retail expenditure to other counties in the area of higher order comparison goods. It is necessary to develop a quality shopping and commercial environment in the County in order to combat dereliction and vacancy. Encouraging town centre vibrancy is a challenge facing the County today. The review also predated the onset of Covid 19, the long term economic consequences of which are unknown.

### Questions

- What are your views on economic development in the County?
- What measures can be put in place to ensure Leitrim is viewed as a more attractive employment base?
- How can the Plan promote / facilitate new economic opportunities?
- Where should new economic development be located?
- What of promoting brownfield sites for new development?
- Are there new ways of working that should be facilitated e.g. co-working hubs, working from home, live-work units, etc.?
- What type of economic development is appropriate for rural areas?
- How can the County's rural economy be diversified to sustain rural areas?

## 5.3 Tourism

With its lush landscape, grassy trails, tranquil waterways and lakes, unique rugged mountains and scenic shore, Leitrim is waiting to be explored. Tourism is a key sector contributing to the economic viability of our rural economy. In Leitrim, we are more dependent economically on tourism than many other counties or regions in Ireland.

Leitrim offers a unique, unspoilt, rural escape for the visitor and tourist. With a low population base, an unspoilt natural environment and geographic location close to the border with Northern Ireland, tourism is considered a key element of focus for County Leitrim.



Figure 5: Marina Hotel Development, Leitrim Village

### Questions

- How can the County Development Plan support tourism?
- What can Leitrim do to attract more domestic and overseas visitors?
- Are we making best use of our existing heritage sites?
- How can a balance be achieved between protecting natural landscapes of Leitrim as a resource for tourism and residents of the county whilst accommodating development necessary to sustain the rural community?

## 6. Rural Development

The CEDRA Report 2014 – ‘*Energizing Ireland’s Rural Economy*’, recognized that the changing nature of rural areas means that rural economic development is not amenable to single sector strategies but requires new integrated approaches to economic development. The report acknowledges that ‘there is an abundance of natural, physical, human and capital resources and a wide variety of high quality, including dormant assets in many rural communities that could be leveraged to support national economic growth and the development of these communities’.

*Realising our Rural Potential: The Action Plan for Rural Development 2017* aims to unlock the potential of rural areas through a framework of supports at national and local level which will ensure that people who live in rural areas have increased opportunities for employment locally, access to public services and social networks that support a high quality of life.

The County Development Plan will include policies and objectives to ensure that Leitrim’s rural areas capitalise on their potential while protecting the environmental assets that define their character and value. Rural diversification opportunities are vital for sustaining a viable rural economy. However, a balance needs to be maintained between facilitating appropriate forms of rural development and protecting the rural environment.

### 6.1 Agriculture

Rural areas within Leitrim are home to a diverse range of uses including agriculture, industries, centres of food production, recreational and tourist activities and established villages and one-off housing.

The total agricultural area of Co. Leitrim is 104,927 ha (CSO Agriculture Census 2010), the majority of which is grassland which is found on poorly drained soils of low fertility. Many of farms in the county are likely to include High Nature Value (HNV) farmland. The total number of farms for this county was **3,673**, the total area farmed (excluding commonage) was **92,154.9** hectares (58% of total area of county<sup>1</sup>) and the average farm size was **25.09** hectares. The extent of land devoted to agriculture has decreased since the last agricultural census was conducted in 2010 owing to the increase in afforestation with a new agricultural census is scheduled for 2020. Almost 8.6% of people were employed in agriculture, forestry and fishing, which was almost double the percentage employed in these sectors nationally (CSO 2016).

While agriculture remains an important economic activity in the County, diversification and other employment opportunities are being encouraged in order to sustain rural communities and ensure viability of existing community services.

### 6.2 Forestry

County Leitrim has now the highest ratio of planted area of any county in the state. The percentage forest cover in Co. Leitrim in 2017 was 18.9%. This is substantially higher than the national level of 11% with the Government policy on increasing this to 18% by 2046. Private forests account for just over half (51.3%) of the forest area in the county although this figure is now growing year on year with Coillte not extending their considerable land bank for the past decade or more. Conifers account for 70% of the total forest area in Co. Leitrim. Sitka spruce is the dominant species accounting for 61.3% of the total forest area. This is higher than the national figure of 51%. The growth rates of trees in the county are high; for Sitka spruce in private stands growth rates are estimated to be 20%

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<sup>1</sup> The total area of the county is 1,558 km<sup>2</sup> (158,885 hectares) or 614 miles<sup>2</sup>.

higher than the average in private stands nationally. Native species account for 30.7% of the forest area in Co. Leitrim which is slightly higher than the national figure of 26.6%.



Figure 6: Entrance to Glenfarne Forest Recreation Area owned by Coillte

Whilst forests and woodlands can have a significant recreational and amenity value in addition to sustaining 309 full time equivalent jobs associated with forestry/wood processing in Co. Leitrim in 2017, the introduction of large scale forestry areas can have negative impacts visually, socially and environmentally and thus must be appropriate in terms of scale and location. Leitrim County Council is commissioning a capacity assessment of the ability of the landscape to continue to absorb large scale afforestation.

### 6.3 Extractive Industry

Aggregates are a significant natural resource. By their nature, aggregates can only be worked where they occur. It is important that these resources are developed with the principles of sustainable development and environmental management in mind.

#### Questions

- What policies do you think should be included in the Plan to support rural diversification and industry?
- What policies would you like to see in the Plan to support indigenous rural and small scale industries?
- What type of development and services are required in rural areas in order to support existing rural communities?
- What is your 'vision' for rural Leitrim over the life of the next County Development Plan and beyond and how do you think this could be achieved?
- How do you think the countryside can be safeguarded in terms of biodiversity and habitats while accommodating development?
- How can the Council support sustainable agriculture, tourism and appropriate rural based industry to provide a viable alternative to forestry?
- What policies do you think need to be introduced or strengthened to protect the visual amenities of our rural landscape?
- What measures can best protect the amenities of the rural landscape while providing sustainable rural housing?

## 7. Transportation & Infrastructure

Land use planning, transportation and the provision of infrastructure are interdependent and require an integrated approach to deliver sustainable development.

### 7.1 Sustainable Transportation

The integration of good land-use planning with transportation is essential for delivering reductions in the extent of our overall carbon footprint. Reducing the need to travel long distances by private car and increasing the use of sustainable and healthy alternatives can bring multiple benefits to the environment and our communities. However, the County Council recognises that the delivery of public transport is difficult and possibly unviable from an economic perspective in such a dispersed rural county such as Leitrim. Nonetheless, whilst Leitrim County Council is not a public transport provider, the County Development Plan can put in place the necessary policy framework to encourage and facilitate sustainable transport including public transport. The continued improvement of transport infrastructure including footpaths, pedestrian crossings, cycle lanes, traffic management proposals, car parking and new roads and improvements to existing roads are important considerations for the County Development Plan.

### 7.2 Strategic Road Connections

Leitrim is served by three national roads - the N4 (connecting Dublin to Sligo), the N15 (connecting Sligo to Letterkenny) and the N16 (connecting Sligo to Enniskillen). The national road network in the County provides an essential means of access from the county to Dublin and other regional centres of scale.

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy seeks, in accordance with National Development Plan investment commitments, to progress the N4 Carrick on Shannon to Dromod scheme through pre-appraisal and early planning and shall thereafter proceed to

construction and be delivered to an appropriate level of service within the lifetime of the RSES.

The development of a transportation solution to the existing congestion on the national and regional road network is a critical element in the transportation strategy for the Carrick on Shannon. A solution is needed to address transportation issues which include congestion on the main routes approaching and in the town, unreliable journey times owing to delays and conflict between through and local traffic. In turn these are having an impact on the wider economic and social life of the town, county and region. The quality of life for those living and working in Carrick on Shannon is negatively impacted and accessibility to the town as a Key Town is compromised.

The development therefore of a transportation solution in conjunction with the TII will address these issues and will also include for consideration of opportunities to improve public transportation options and also facilities for cyclists and pedestrians. This is a Corporate priority for Leitrim County Council.

The N15 (Sligo to Bundoran) and N16 (Sligo to Blacklion) which includes the section of both roads in Co. Leitrim are indicated in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy as schemes that shall be pursued, in consultation with and subject to the agreement of TII, through pre-appraisal, early planning and to construction as priority projects to be delivered to an appropriate level of service in the medium-term. This is not envisaged as occurring within the 12 year life of the RSES.

The new County Development Plan will seek to promote, improve and develop a well-connected national, regional and local road and public transport infrastructure system, geared to meet the needs of

the County and enhance connectivity in the Northern and Western Region.

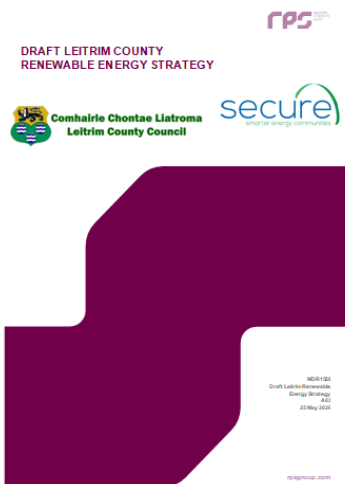
It will also support and facilitate the TII, statutory authorities and the relevant adjoining local authorities in the planning and delivery of a sustainable transport solution along the Carrick-on-Shannon to Dromod corridor.

### 7.3 Broadband and Telecommunications

Ireland continues to have a poor broadband performance relative to other European countries. Advancement in telecommunication infrastructure and performance represents one of the most critical steps in creating a more competitive economy. Leitrim County Council will endeavour to facilitate service providers in the development of key telecommunications infrastructure and assist in the roll out of the National Broadband Plan.

### 7.4 Renewable Energy

Development of alternative energy sources is a priority at National and European level for both environmental and energy policy reasons. The context in Ireland is set by Government policies for the provision of electricity from renewable and indigenous sources in line with official European and United Nations targets for reducing dependency on fossil fuels and emissions of greenhouse gases. To date, this has been primarily through the generation of wind energy in Co. Leitrim. Leitrim County Council has commissioned the



preparation of a Renewable Energy Strategy to identify the potential for further renewable energy production. This will form part of the draft County Development Plan.



Figure 7: Wind Farm in North Leitrim (Leitrim Photography – Breege Golden)

### 7.5 Water & Wastewater

The provision of an adequate supply of water and wastewater facilities is critical to facilitate and sustain the growth of the County. As of January 2014, Leitrim County Council no longer has any direct control in relation to the provision of such services with indications that the management and provision of surface water drainage systems may also be transferred to Irish Water. The delivery, integration and implementation of water and wastewater projects and infrastructural improvements are now the responsibility of Irish Water. Leitrim County Council will work closely with Irish Water to ensure that there are adequate water and wastewater facilities to

ensure that the projected growth in housing and economic development is facilitated.

### Questions

- What transportation improvements are needed throughout the County?
- How can we encourage more people to walk and cycle and use public transport particularly in our larger towns?
- How can we reduce the reliance on the private car as the dominant means of travel? Is this realistic in a rural county with a dispersed population such as Co. Leitrim?
- How can permeability in and between existing residential areas in our towns be improved?
- Are there any issues in relation to water or wastewater facilities in your area?
- How can this Development Plan improve and support the provision of essential services and infrastructure?
- Are there adequate public recycling facilities and services in the County? How can these services be improved?
- How can the Council assist the roll out of broadband and telecommunications services in your area?
- What improvements do you think can be made to improve access to Information and Communication Technology?
- How can the County Development Plan support the relevant agencies in the provision of Electricity, Gas, Water and Wastewater, Renewable Energy, Telecommunication and Broadband Infrastructure and Waste Management facilities?
- Are there adequate recycling facilities / bring banks in the County? If not, where should additional facilities be located?
- What do we need to do to promote waste reduction?

## 8. Amenities and Public Rights of Way

### 8.1 Blueways and Greenways

Blueways are a network of multi-activity recreational trails, based on or alongside lakes, canals and rivers. They provide scenic routes into the heart of rural Leitrim by walking, cycling, canoeing, kayaking or stand up boarding. Leitrim County Council in partnership with Waterways Ireland, have developed a valuable Blueway product over the past number of years between Battlebridge and Drumshanbo along the Leitrim Canal including the impressive floating boardwalk section at Acres Lake and onwards to connect to the Lough Allen Hotel, Lough Allen Centre and Blueway Waterpark at Currachuill, Drumshanbo. More recently, work has been completed on sections of the Ballinamore to Ballyconnell Canal between Leitrim Village and Kilclare along the former towpath. Carrick on Shannon and Drumshanbo form part of the Shannon Blueway with Leitrim Village and Ballinamore forming part of the Shannon Erne Blueway. The Council is currently undertaking environmental feasibility studies of options of linking Carrick on Shannon to Leitrim Village and Battlebridge. The Carrick on Shannon to Leitrim Village walkway project is now part of the approved Shannon Master Plan within the Hidden Heartlands area.

Greenways are off-road routes for walkers, cyclists and other non-motorized transport which are often created from abandoned Irish rail networks. There are proposals to develop the former Sligo Leitrim Northern Counties Railway (SLNCR) between Collooney and Enniskillen (through Dromahair, Manorhamilton and Glenfarne) and the Cavan and Leitrim rail line between Dromod and Belturbet (through Dromod, Mohill, Fenagh, Ballinamore and Garradice) as greenways. Demonstration stretches have been developed along the SLNCR at Dromahair, Manorhamilton and Glenfarne whilst one is under construction linking Ballinamore with Corgar Lake on the former Cavan and Leitrim rail line.



Figure 8: North Shannon Blueway

The development of Blueways and Greenways presents valuable opportunities for rural communities to attract more visitors. These values lie not only in the recreational opportunities that they offer but also in their potential to stimulate local businesses and regenerate local areas. Leitrim County Council is committed to the development of further Blueways and Greenways during the life of the next County Development Plan.

## 8.2 Public Rights-Of-Way

The County Development Plan is required to include objectives for the preservation of public rights of way (PROW). A PROW is a type of easement of way that is in legal terms distinct from other

easements of way such as private rights of way and customary rights of way. A PROW or highway is a physically defined route over which the public have a right of passage which in legal terms is described as *'a user as of right'*. The form of PROW here is the type that is normally used for recreational purposes rather than for regular daily vehicular/non vehicular access-transportation purposes.

A public right of way is an important amenity providing valuable access to natural amenities and areas of natural beauty including the seashore, mountains, riverbanks and lakeshores. There are no existing public rights of way identified in the current County Development Plan. An objective was included to compile a list of existing rights-of-way, for formal protection, within the lifetime of the Plan and to vary the Development Plan accordingly. The Council recognizes the importance of maintaining established public rights of way but will require the help of the residents of the county to assist in identifying where they exist.

## 8.3 Green Infrastructure

Green Infrastructure refers to a network of green spaces that help conserve natural ecosystems and provide associated benefits to people. It can include varying land uses such as woodlands, formal and informal green spaces, waterways, wetland, and community/institutional lands. The Development Plan includes objectives to protect and enhance green infrastructure.

### Questions

- How can we encourage the use of green buildings or other green infrastructure as part of the built environment to enhance quality of life and adapting to climate change?
- Are there any outdoor tourism and recreation facilities that the County lacks?

- How do we progress the development of further Blueways and Greenways during the life of the next County Development Plan?
- Are you aware of any public rights of way that should be identified in the County Development Plan?

## 9. Heritage

Heritage permeates Leitrim’s identity and sense of place and makes a significant contribution to the County’s character and quality of life. The County has a rich and varied heritage encompassing natural and built heritage elements. These include landscapes, flora, fauna, seascapes, monuments, archaeology, architecture, geology, lakes and waterways. The National Planning Framework identifies enhanced amenities and heritage as a national strategic outcome. Heritage is afforded a high degree of protection through national legislation and local policy. The County Development Plan has an important role in safeguarding our heritage so it can be enjoyed by future generations. The Development Plan must identify objectives to balance the needs of the built, archaeological, cultural and natural heritage with the need to continue to develop Leitrim in a positive and sustainable manner.

### 9.1 Leitrim Heritage Plan 2020-2025

The Leitrim Heritage Plan 2020 – 2025 is the strategic approach to manage the County’s heritage. The Plan’s overall aim is *“to connect all Leitrim residents with their shared heritage and to work together to conserve and celebrate Leitrim’s unique heritage, for the benefit of both present and future generations”*.



The Heritage Plan provides the framework through which the Council works actively with other partner organisations on initiatives to further our understanding, protection and appreciation of Leitrim’s natural, built and cultural heritage resource. It was the culmination of an extensive public consultation programme which resulted in 124 no. submissions being received from members of the public which informed the preparation of this Plan. The Heritage Plan contains 4 objectives each with a series of actions to be undertaken over the life of the Plan. The Heritage Plan will guide the appropriate policies and objectives to be included in the new County Development Plan.

**Table 3: Objectives in Leitrim Heritage Plan 2020-2025**

Number	Objective
1.	Support the Conservation and Recording of Leitrim’s Heritage
2.	Raise Awareness of Leitrim’s Heritage
3.	Engage Communities with their Heritage
4.	Support Sustainable Heritage Tourism in Leitrim



## 9.2 Built Heritage

Built Heritage refers to all the man-made features, buildings and structures in the environment. This also includes a diverse archaeological and architectural heritage to be found throughout the countryside and in the County's historic towns and villages. Architectural and archaeological heritage contributes significantly to the distinctive character and sense of place of our towns and villages. The National Planning Framework recognises that *'Ireland's built heritage assets are a non-renewable resource that merit being nurtured in a manner appropriate to their significance as an aid to understanding the past, contributing to community well-being and quality of life as well as regional economic development'*.



Figure 9: Parkes Castle, Kilmore, Fivemilebourne

The current County Development Plan identifies 8 no. Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) throughout the County. The County Development Plan also includes a Record of Protected Structures. This is a list of structures that are of special architectural, historical,

archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest. There are 272 no. Protected Structures in the County at present.

## 9.3 Natural Heritage

Leitrim has an abundance of natural heritage including mountains, lakes, rivers, woodlands and a short coastline. These areas support a wide variety of plant and animal species. At a European level, certain habitats and species are legally protected within the Natura 2000 network, incorporating Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs). There are 8 SACs and 1 SPA within or partly within the County. At a national level, there were 9 Natural Heritage Areas listed in the existing County Development Plan, 5 of which are located immediately east of Dromod and Roosky. In addition, 35 proposed Natural Heritage Areas were identified in the existing County Development Plan which have not been designated and whose status now seems uncertain. These areas include habitats that are in need of protection. In many cases the boundaries of the SACs, SPAs and NHAs overlap. The importance of our biodiversity is not restricted to Natura 2000 sites, NHAs and proposed NHAs. The Council has an important role to play when it comes to promoting a reasonable balance between conservation measures and development needs, in order to avoid negative impacts on the natural environment, mitigate the effects of harm where it cannot be avoided and to promote the appropriate enhancement of the environment as an integral part of any development.

## 9.4 Views and Prospects

The County Development Plan identifies views and prospects that are considered to be of the highest amenity value and therefore worthy of protection. As part of the work in preparing a new draft Development Plan, the Planning Authority is reviewing the existing views and prospects which have been adopted in successive County Development Plans, the basis of which at this stage is not clear. To

assist, it would be useful if members of the public suggested views or prospects for inclusion in the new County Development Plan nor already identified.



Figure 10: Eagles Rock

## 9.5 Cultural Heritage

The historic story of the people of Leitrim is contained within the archaeological sites, monuments, and historic buildings that cover the county and formulate the cultural heritage of historic settlements in Leitrim. The survival of the cultural heritage of Leitrim is a priority for Leitrim County Council. Protection is provided for this by the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. Our cultural heritage is an important part of what makes Leitrim special and is an asset we should protect.



Figure 11: Joe Mooney Summer School, High Street, Drumshanbo

### Questions

- What aspects of Leitrim's heritage should be protected?
- How can we balance the need for new development against the protection of our natural environment?
- How can natural heritage and biodiversity be enhanced?
- Are there any buildings that should be added/removed from the Record of Protected Structures?
- How can the Plan encourage the reuse of historical buildings that have fallen into disuse?
- Should we change any of our existing Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) or can you identify any new ones?
- How can change to the quality, character and amenity value of our landscapes be managed?
- Are there any other assets such as views, trees or natural areas that should be afforded protection as part of the Plan?

- Are there particular views or prospects for inclusion in the new County Development Plan nor already identified
- How can greater access to heritage be facilitated, while having regard to the sensitive nature of many sites?

## 10. Regeneration and Placemaking

Town and village centres have experienced significant challenges to retain vibrancy and vitality. The reasons vary but among them are competition from larger centres that are more accessible, the rise in out of town shopping centres and the changing nature of retail and consequent rise in online shopping. The challenges facing town and village centres are evident in the number of vacant units in many of our towns and villages. It is a policy of the National Planning Framework to target the reversal of decline in the core of towns and villages through sustainable targeted measures that address vacant premises and deliver sustainable reuse and regeneration outcomes. These issues have been compounded in recent weeks with the closure of most of our commercial properties during the measures implemented to slow the spread of Covid 19. The economic recovery from the effects of and the legacy of Covid 19 is unknown at the time of writing.

Town and village centres throughout the county need to be dynamic and be able to evolve to accommodate new uses. This is essential for their continued vitality. The reuse and regeneration of vacant buildings is an essential catalyst to transform the capacity and potential of our smaller towns and villages.

The Development Plan has an important role in promoting good placemaking, for example ensuring new developments are designed with good connectivity and permeability for all. Attention should be on the quality of outcomes. There should be more engagement with communities rather than less. The creation of urban environments

that offer good quality of life is important in allowing investors to attract and retain the talent necessary to support their establishment and growth. Placemaking offers the opportunity to differentiate our towns and villages from other locations by delivering attractive urban areas in which to reside. The National Planning Framework states that the qualities and character of our national built heritage in rural areas, including towns and villages, can add distinctiveness to place-making and over time can acquire special interest through its intrinsic quality.



Figure 12: Artists impression of the proposed Public Realm Improvements Works to the Market House, Manorhamilton

Regeneration and renewal is inherent in the proper planning and sustainable development of the county's settlements. An emphasis on high quality and well-designed development makes places more

attractive and so contributes to healthy place-making and quality of life. Urban place-making is about improving the attractiveness of the public realm. An erosion of the sense of place can occur due to urban sprawl and hollowing of town centres due to a focus on the quantitative aspect of building outwards rather than the creation of sustainable communities. Leitrim County Council have been successful over the past couple of years in securing significant funding for Carrick on Shannon, Ballinamore and Manorhamilton through the Urban / Rural Regeneration and Development Fund Schemes in addition to projects funded under successive Town & Village Renewal Schemes. The Council will continue to seek to maximize the availability of funding opportunities presented over the course of the next County Development Plan.

#### Questions

- How can we make our urban areas more attractive places to live in?
- What measures can be taken to improve the quality of public open space and public realm in your town or village?
- Why is it perceived that urban living is less attractive than living in the countryside?
- How can this Plan ensure that new developments, including provision of new housing, can provide for attractive, usable and safe public spaces and play areas?
- How can the County Development Plan improve the quality of our built environment?
- Are you satisfied with the provision of public and amenity spaces throughout the county?
- How can Leitrim County Council support community involvement in the development of our towns and villages?
- What can we do about vacant units in our towns and village centres?

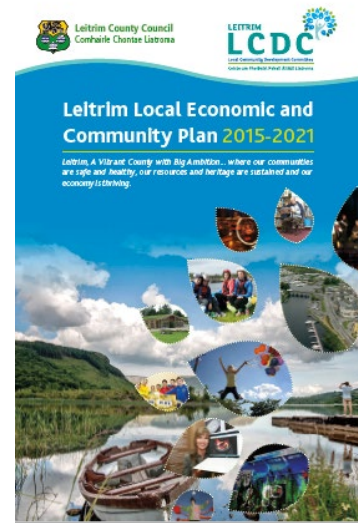
- What measures are required to make our towns and villages more vibrant and attractive as places to live in, work in, shop and visit?
- What facilities would you like to see provided in your community?

## 11. Community Development

### 11.1 LECP

The Leitrim Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) is a six-year plan (2015-2021) containing the measures necessary to promote

and support community and economic development in our county. The vision of our LECP is “*Leitrim, A Vibrant County with Big Ambition.....where our communities are safe and healthy, our resources and heritage are sustained, and our economy is thriving*”. The LECP then outlines a roadmap consisting of themes, objectives, targets and actions to realize this vision. The Plan sets out economic and community objectives that will promote and support the economic development and the local and community development of the county. The LECP addresses a wider range of community issues, including developing infrastructure to address social exclusion, poverty and disadvantage, reverse social and economic decline and to realise growth potential and the sustainability of communities.



The LECP process is about joining up our approaches to economic and community at a local level. A Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) is responsible for the preparation, implementation and monitoring of the community elements of the plan and to avoid duplication of Local Authority activities in the community. The LCDC is also responsible for monitoring and overseeing the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) and Leader programmes. There are 17 members on our LCDC. Leitrim County Council's Planning, Economic Development and Infrastructure Strategic Policy Committee is responsible for preparing the economic element of the LECP. There are 10 members in our SPC.

The LECP is required to complement the County Development Plan which sets the spatial planning framework for the County. The LECP must be consistent with the broad spatial planning, settlement and land use policies of the development plan. The LECP states that if a review of the County Development Plan is carried out at any time during the lifetime of the LECP, then the LECP will in turn be reviewed to ensure its ongoing complementarity with the County Development Plan.

The Leitrim County Development Plan assists in delivering the goals of the LECP:

- Facilitating the delivery of community infrastructure;
- Facilitating improved physical access to community infrastructure and services;
- Facilitating the maintenance, restoration and upgrading of cultural and natural heritage of communities, environmental upgrading and general actions to enhance the environmental, amenity and physical attributes of communities, and;
- Providing the policy framework against which individual economic and enterprise development proposals are assessed.

## 12. Community Infrastructure

### 12.1 Education and Childcare

Educational facilities have an important role to play in developing sustainable and balanced communities and encouraging families to live in the county. The Council will continue to work with the Department of Education and Skills and other stakeholders in the provision of educational facilities. The provision of childcare facilities is an important factor for economic and social wellbeing. While the Council is not directly involved in the provision of childcare services, the County Development Plan should ensure that sufficient facilities are provided particularly in newly developing areas and sustained where possible in existing towns and villages.



Figure 13: Gaelscoil Liatroma, Carrick on Shannon

## 12.2 Healthcare

Healthcare and medical facilities are provided by public, private and voluntary agencies within the County. The primary role of Leitrim County Council in relation to healthcare is to ensure that there is an adequate policy framework in place and that healthcare facilities are permitted subject to good planning practice.

## 12.3 Nursing Homes

For people in need of residential care for any number of reasons, the location of facilities is extremely important. Nursing homes for the elderly can be an important part of the community, and are encouraged to be located in built up areas close to other community facilities convenient for residents to avoid social exclusion and isolation.

## 12.4 Social Inclusion

Social inclusion is about the wellbeing of individuals, families, social groups and communities. Creating a more socially inclusive society by alleviating social exclusion, poverty and deprivation is a major challenge. The County Development Plan has a role in facilitating such initiatives through promoting good placemaking, for example ensuring new developments are designed with good connectivity and permeability for all. Social inclusion will continue to be a cross cutting theme within the new County Development Plan.

## 12.5 Arts, Crafts and Culture

Leitrim County Council published its new Arts Plan in 2019 which maintains the three strategies of the Arts Council Framework Agreement – Public Engagement, Professional Development and Children & Young People – while the mission statement restates the vision of the Council’s Culture and Creativity Strategy.

Leitrim is acknowledged as having one of the largest proportions of artists and craftspeople of anywhere in the country, the majority of

these are based in the north of the county. Manorhamilton is home to the Leitrim Sculpture Centre which is the largest art making facility in the country and the Glens Centre which focuses much of its programme on the professional development of performing artists in theatre and music. Similarly the Dock in Carrick on Shannon represents the single most significant point of contact for the public to engage with the arts in the county and is also home to the Leitrim Design House. Finally, Ballinamore is remarkable for its levels of involvement in the arts by Children and Young People. The proposed new Junction Centre in Ballinamore will contain a bespoke facility for young people to engage with the arts, the only such facility in the county.

The arts, crafts, and cultural sector in Leitrim is a vibrant one, which encompasses a broad range of activities and is of benefit to the diverse population of the County. The County Council, through the Arts Office, seeks to increase access to, awareness of and participation in the arts by all sectors and has a strong promotional role in events. The Development Plan has a role in terms of continuing to explore possibilities for the development of further cultural facilities across the county and to encourage the creative sector to continue to contribute to the prosperity of the County.

## 12.6 Libraries

Leitrim County Council manages and operates the county public library service from its headquarters in Ballinamore. In addition there are 9 branch libraries throughout the County at Ballinamore, Carrick on Shannon, Carrigallen, Dromahair, Drumshanbo, Kiltyclogher, Kinlough, Manorhamilton and Mohill. During 2019, Leitrim Library Service delivered on the strategic objectives as set out in the national library strategy ‘*Our Public Libraries 2022*’ aimed at establishing the library as the trusted ‘go to’ place in the community for guidance and support in areas such as reading and literacy, lifelong learning, business and employment, healthy living

and well-being. The library is a centre of community and cultural activity promoting a welcoming space for individuals and communities, celebrating diversity and fulfilling personal development.

## 12.7 Fire Service

Leitrim is served by a fully retained fire service. There are 5 fire stations located throughout the county; namely, Ballinamore, Carrick-on Shannon, Drumshanbo, Manorhamilton and Mohill. Three other fire stations, namely, Bundoran in Co. Donegal and Dowra and Killeshandra in Co. Cavan provide first attendance cover into parts of Leitrim on the basis that they are the nearest fire station to that area.



Figure 14: New Fire Station Building in Ballinamore

Leitrim Fire Service progressed and completed a number of capital projects during 2019. A new, state of the art, fire station was completed and opened in Ballinamore. A refurbishment and extension project was completed to Drumshanbo Fire Station providing a substantial improvement to the facilities available. Significant ground was also made on the Manorhamilton Fire Station project with the new site acquired and progressed to design and tender stage.

### Questions

- Are there adequate community facilities in your area? If not, what additional facilities are needed?
- Are there adequate facilities in the County to cater for an ageing population particularly in terms of residential and day care facilities?
- Are the educational needs of our population being met? What additional facilities are needed and where?
- How can the County Development Plan assist the library service to continue to play an active role in all communities?
- Are the needs of different cultural, ethnic, youth, elderly and persons with a disability being accommodated in our community?
- Are there adequate healthcare facilities in your area, readily accessible to the people that they are intended to serve?
- What policies can the County Development Plan include to encourage the arts and creative sectors to continue to contribute to the prosperity of the County?
- Where do you think new open space facilities should be provided?
- What methodology should be used to deliver active open space and recreational facilities?

## 13. Climate Change and Adaptation

### 13.1 Climate Change

Climate change will be a cross cutting theme in the new County Development Plan. Climate change refers to a significant change in global or regional climate change patterns such as temperature, rainfall or wind. The term climate change is now generally associated with changes in our climate due to the buildup of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere as a result of human activities. Adapting to the now inevitable consequences of our changing climate is required by Leitrim County Council.

‘Climate Action’ includes the two approaches necessary to tackle climate change – Mitigation and Adaptation. Mitigation refers to efforts that will reduce current and future greenhouse gas emissions including reductions in energy use, switching to renewable energy sources and carbon sinks. Climate adaptation consists of actions that will reduce the impacts that are already happening and those that are projected to happen in the future. These include flood protection, reduced impact of rising sea levels, increased resilience of infrastructure and emergency response planning.

In 2014, the Government adopted the National Policy Position on Climate Action and Low Carbon Development which establishes the national objective of achieving transition to a competitive low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050. The National Planning Framework identifies planning as an established means to implement and integrate climate change objectives at local level and recognises that in order to meet this national target, it will be necessary to make choices about how we balance growth with more sustainable approaches to development and land use.

Leitrim County Council under the guidance of the Climate Action Regional Office (CARO) have in 2019 adopted a Climate Adaptation Strategy for County Leitrim which is a response to the impacts that climate change is having and will continue to have on the County. The most immediate risks to Leitrim are those which are due to changes in extremes such as floods which are becoming more frequent in recent years, precipitation, storms and higher sea levels affecting our coastal communities.

In terms of climate change and land use planning, the County Development Plan plays an important role in influencing a reduction in GHG emissions by guiding the sustainable growth of the County, encouraging more compact mixed-use development and greater use of sustainable transport options such as cycling, walking and public transport, restricting development in areas that are at risk of flooding and protecting the natural landscape and biodiversity. The new County Development Plan will have to demonstrate how the plan has integrated climate change mitigation and adaptation into its policies and objectives.

### 13.2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)

The EU Floods Directive (FD) 2007/60/EC on the ‘Assessment and Management of Flood Risks’ requires member states to assess and manage flood risks. The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG) & Office of Public Works (OPW) prepared the ‘The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities’ (DECLG & OPW, 2009) in order to integrate the assessment and management of flood risk into the planning process. A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) will be prepared as part of the new development plan. This assessment will inform the SEA process. The purpose of the SFRA is to assess all types of flood risk within the County so as to inform land use planning decisions in the development plan. The



objective is to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding and avoid new development increasing flood risk elsewhere. The Development Plan will include robust flood risk policies against which development proposals will be assessed against.



Figure 15: Flooding adjoining Landmark Hotel car park, December 2016

**Questions**

- How do you think the County Development Plan can address the impact of climate change?
- What measures do you think the Council needs to undertake to promote climate change awareness?
- Can a rural county with a dispersed population such as Leitrim effectively transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society? If so, how do we achieve this?
- How do you suggest that the Council co-ordinates and integrates land use and transport in order to reduce the

- demand for travel and dependence on private car transport? Is this realistic in Co. Leitrim?
- How do you suggest we reduce car dependency, and increase the use of sustainable mobility such as cycling, walking and public transport in our larger towns?
  - Are you aware of any areas that are liable to flooding not captured by data on the OPW Floodinfo.ie mapping in existing studies such as the Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management Plans that should be identified in the SFRA?
  - How should the Council manage pressure for development in flood risk areas?
  - Are the policies in the current development plan adequate to protect Leitrim’s coastline?

**14. Environmental Assessments**

As part of the County Development Plan review, Leitrim County Council is required to carry out a number of environmental assessments in order to comply with our legal obligations.

**14.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)**

SEA is required to be carried out under EU Directive 2001/42/EC. The objective of the Directive is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans. Accordingly, an evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the County Development Plan will be carried out in tandem with the preparation of the Plan. This process, known as SEA, ensures a high level of protection for the environment.

## 14.2 Appropriate Assessment (AA)

The new County Development Plan will also be subject to Appropriate Assessment as is required by the European Habitats Directive. AA is a focused and detailed impact assessment of the implications of the Plan, alone or in combination with other plans and projects, on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites in view of the conservation objectives of these sites. Natura 2000 sites include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) along with any site proposed under either designation.

SACs are wildlife conservation areas, identified to protect certain habitats and species. SPAs are identified to safeguard the habitats of migratory birds and certain threatened bird species.

**Table 4: Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) in Co. Leitrim**

	Site Name	Site Code
1.	Arroo Mountain	001403
2.	Ben Bulbin, Gleniff and Glenade Complex	000623
3.	Boleybrack Mountain	002032
4.	Bunduff Lough and Machair / Trawalua / Mullaghmore	000625
5.	Cuilcagh - Anierin Uplands	000584
6.	Glenade Lough	001919
7.	Lough Gill	001976
8.	Lough Melvin	000428

**Table 5: Special Protection Areas (SPAs) in Co. Leitrim**

	Site Name	Site Code
1.	Sligo/Leitrim Uplands	004187

### Questions

- What environmental considerations should be taken into account in the Strategic Environmental Assessment?
- Have you any information that would assist in the assessment of the implications of the Plan on the listed Natura 2000 sites?

## 15. Have Your Say

The Planning Authority would like to know your views and opinions on the issues affecting planning in County Leitrim. This stage of the Plan review process is strategic in nature. Therefore submissions or observations may be made regarding policies and objectives to deliver an overall strategy, including a Core Strategy, for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Leitrim



This Strategic Issues Paper represents the first step in preparing the new County Development Plan. It presents a broad overview of the main issues of consideration and poses a number of questions. The Strategic Issues Paper is intended to provoke thought and encourage discussion and involvement from the general public as

we plan for the future development of the county. Your input from this early stage onwards is an important part of the plan preparation process.

### 15.1 Making a Submission

Leitrim County Council hereby invites any interested parties to **make submissions or observations** regarding objectives and policies to deliver an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of Co. Leitrim, in writing or electronically, to the Planning Authority between **Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> June 2020 and Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> August 2020** (both dates inclusive).

Children or groups or associations representing the interests of children are entitled and encouraged to become involved and to make submissions or observations.

Submissions or observations may be made either, in writing to the Planning Department

By **email** to: [cdp@leitrimcoco.ie](mailto:cdp@leitrimcoco.ie)

or

In **writing** to: Planning Department, Leitrim County Council, Áras an Chontae, St. Georges Terrace, Carrick on Shannon, Co. Leitrim N41 PF67

**The deadline for receipt of all submissions is 4.30pm on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> August 2020.**

Late submissions received after 4.30 p.m. on the 12<sup>th</sup> August will not be accepted.

The Planning Authority intends to review the zoning of the area of the development plan, other than Carrick on Shannon which has a separate Local Area Plan, as part of the preparation of the new plan. **Requests or proposals for the zoning of particular land for any purpose will not be considered at this stage as the legislation does not permit same. Any such submissions received will be returned.**



#### Data Protection

In accordance with Section 11(3A) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, written observations or submissions received by Leitrim County Council will be published on the Council's website within 10 working days of their receipt. All submissions should include your name and a contact address, and where relevant, details of any organization, community group, etc., which you represent. To assist Leitrim County Council in complying with data protection legislation, you are asked to provide this information on a separate sheet. This processing of your personal data is lawful under Article 6 (1)(e) of the GDPR Regulations.



**Leitrim County Council**  
Comhairle Chontae Liatroma

Planning Department, Leitrim County Council

June 2020