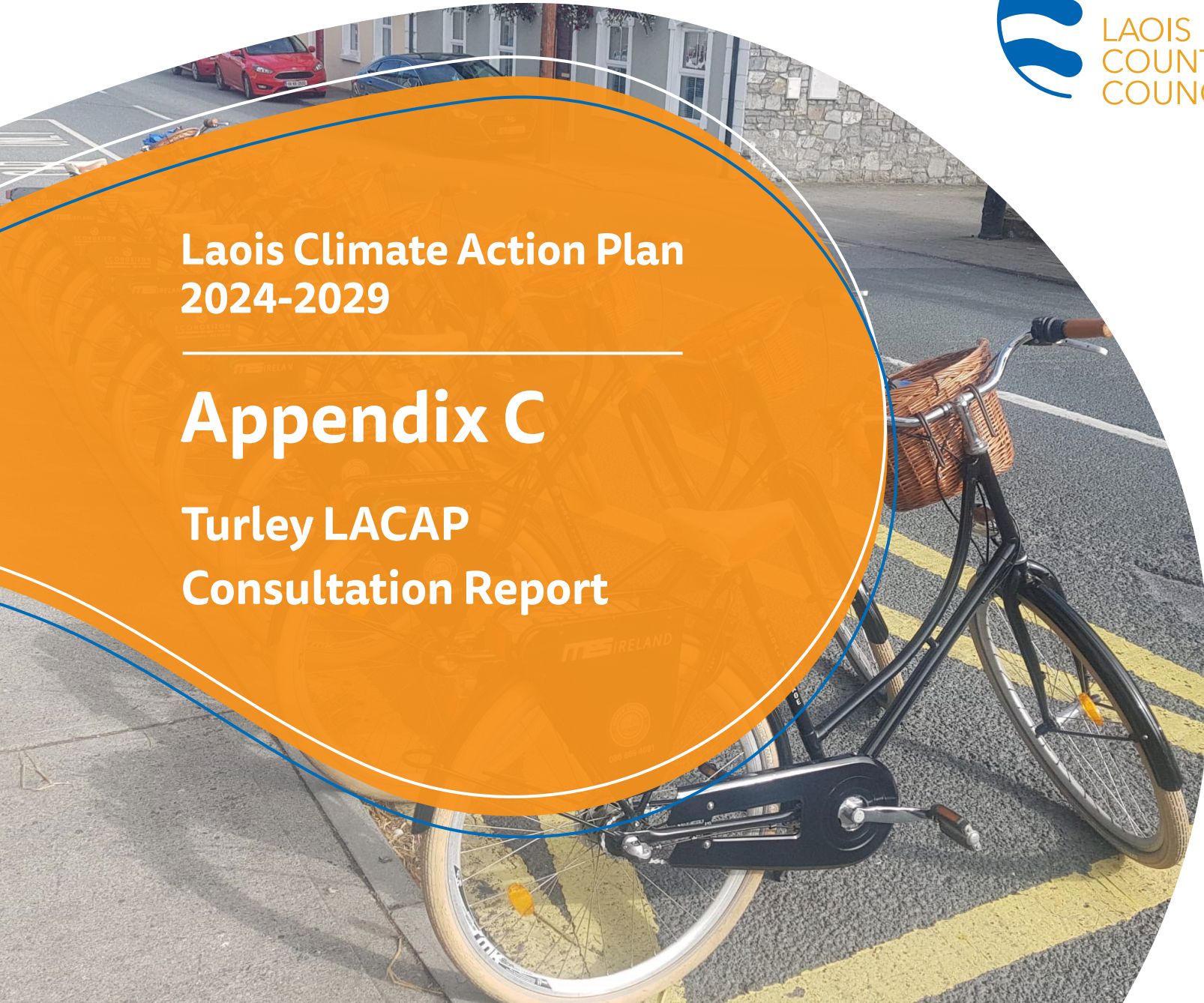




Laois Climate Action Plan 2024-2029

Appendix C

Turley LACAP Consultation Report



Laois LACAP - Further Research
County Laois Local Authority Climate
Action Plan 2023-2027

September 2023

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7 Aug 2023

Executive Summary

1. Turley ran a combined consultation exercise, designed to inform Laois County Council’s CLLD Strategy, Local Economic and Community Plan and Local Authority Climate Action Plan during May 2023. The consultation exercise was designed to be as inclusive as possible and to facilitate a range of opportunities and formats by which our communities could contribute.

2. The principal methods of engagement included:

- **Online Survey**

Hosted at www.laoisconsultation.ie, our consultation survey was live for two weeks, from 5-19 May 2023. It was responded to by 509 individuals, achieving a statistically representative sample of the county population (at 95% confidence and +-5 margin of error). The profile of respondents was distributed across Municipal Districts and captured a representative profile. Where almost two thirds of respondents were residents, just over 8% were representatives of a business and almost 11% were representatives of a voluntary or community organisation. The survey provided a comprehensive and contemporary insight into the issues and challenges perceived as facing the County as well as views on the success or otherwise of programmes delivered to date and perceived as impacting on communities around Laois.

- **Stakeholder Workshop and One-to-One Engagement**

A stakeholder workshop was held on the 19th May and attended by representatives of a range of local organisations, including the FRC, LEO, Laois Sports as well as officers from different departments within the Council. Further one-to-one meetings were held with 17 stakeholders, covering a broad range of interests and specialists, including those working with and supporting disadvantaged and harder-to-reach groups.

- **Community Workshops**

Turley ran a series of 6 in-person community workshops across Laois between 16 – 25 May 2023. The timing and location of these workshops were structured to allow as many people as possible to attend. In addition, we also ran a virtual workshop via Zoom on 20 May 2023. In total these workshops were attended by 113 local citizens who participated in a range of exercises (described fully in Chapter 4) that were designed to capture insights and ideas which have directly fed into this LDS and specially the SWOT, Local Objectives and Strategic Actions described in this and subsequent sections.

3. Our survey provided great insight into the climate action priorities of the people of Laois. We have provided separate reports providing summaries of the results. This report, however, presents a more detailed breakdown of the priorities of different sections of the Laois population. We have identified five in-groups: two geographical (results submitted by those from more deprived areas of the county and results submitted by those from areas that had not received LEADER funding) and three demographic (results from older people, results from younger people and results from those who had indicated they belonged to a potentially disadvantaged group).

In-groups

4. As part of this further analysis, we have identified five distinct in-groups from within our survey results. These are:
 - Responses from individuals who indicated they lived or worked in an area of above-average deprivation. We received 224 responses from individuals within this in-group.
 - Responses from individuals who indicated they lived or worked in an area not in receipt of LEADER funding. We received 86 responses from people within this in-group.
 - Responses from younger people (<35 years of age). We received 37 responses from people in this in-group.
 - Responses from older people (>55 years of age). We received 41 responses from people in this in-group.
 - Responses from those whose responses indicated they belong to a potentially disadvantaged group including those with disabilities, those from an ethnic minority background or LGBTQ+ people. We received 32 responses from people in this in-group.

Findings

Levels of Concern about Climate Change

5. Our survey showed that the majority of respondents across the county as a whole were very concerned about climate change, with 74.24% (147 individuals) selecting 7 or above on our 10-point scale (in which 10 was 'very concerned' and 0 was 'not at all concerned').

6. Within our in-groups, levels of concern about climate change are extremely similar across all respondent groups. While there were some small variations in the distribution of responses, the overwhelming response from each in-group was one of significant concern about climate change, with little significant deviation from the pattern established in the county-wide results.

Age Profile

7. Interestingly, there was a great deal of overlap between the priorities shown by our in-groups within this survey – in other words, breaking down the county-wide results into the in-groups outlined yielded only relatively minor differences in emphasis on the majority of survey questions. The one exception to this was our ‘older people’ in-group, which elicited results that were consistently distinct from those of the other in-groups. This suggests that, within Laois, age is the key determinant of one’s attitudes towards the climate and climate action.

Objectives and actions within the Local Authority Climate Action Plan

8. When asked what actions and objectives they would like to see in the Local Authority Climate Action Plan, respondents from more deprived areas and younger people were most likely to call for measures to support a transport modal shift. All other groups were most likely to call for more support for energy efficiency and the energy transition.
9. Among almost all in-groups, actions to address fly-tipping / waste issues, agricultural emissions and to improve public education on climate action were recurrent themes, albeit at a lower frequency than transport modal shift and energy efficiency / energy transition.
10. Respondents from more deprived areas:
 - Were most likely to cite measures relating to modal shift of transport, such as measures to encourage cycling, better public transport links and new blueways / greenways.
 - Also strongly supported measures to encourage energy efficiency and a shift to renewable energy, including energy efficiency grants for businesses and homeowners and exploring options for additional renewable generation within the county.
 - Prioritised waste and recycling measures, particularly with a view to addressing fly-tipping.
 - Called for support and protection for the natural environment in Laois.

- Wanted more education and information for people in Laois to help them reduce their carbon footprint.
- Called for a reduction in agricultural emissions.

11. Respondents from areas that hadn't received LEADER funding:

- Were most likely to call for more support for energy efficiency and the energy transition, including investment in renewables and EV charging stations.
- Were also very likely to call for investment in waste and recycling facilities, particularly with a view to addressing litter and pollution.
- Also focused on agricultural emissions as an important consideration for the climate.

12. Younger people:

- Were keenest to see investment in transport modal shift, including additional cycling and walking infrastructure and improved public transport links.
- Were also very keen to see measures to further the energy transition and encourage energy efficiency, including grant funding and community partnerships with SEAI.
- Were concerned about the natural environment and were perhaps more willing to embrace potentially innovative approaches such as rewilding.
- Were also very positive about the potential of education and public information to make a meaningful difference to behaviour affecting the climate.

13. Older people

- Were most likely to focus on energy efficiency and the energy transition. In particular, comments focused on the need to improve energy efficiency of domestic and community buildings and improve energy efficiency of lighting and heating systems.

- Called for investment in public and active travel, to create safer town centres with lower levels of air pollution and fewer HGVs.
- Prioritised waste and recycling services, in particular through measures to make companies play a bigger role in ensuring their goods and packaging don't harm the environment.
- Called for changes to agricultural practice to make it more sustainable, including tree planting and ending peat / turf cutting.

14. Potentially disadvantaged groups

- Prioritised the need to support the energy transition and energy efficiency, in particular through support for renewable energy generation and insulation of public buildings.
- Called for investment in new active and public travel infrastructure, to give equal opportunity to residents to improve their physical health.

Outcomes of the LACAP

15. When asked what outcomes they would like to see as a result of the LACAP, all in-groups, with the exception of older people, were most likely to call for support for the energy transition and energy efficiency, including support for businesses and domestic properties to install new measures for energy efficiency and renewable generation. Only our 'older people' in-group bucked this trend, with respondents in this group being most likely to call for a reduction in pollution of the air and watercourses.
16. Support for biodiversity, transport modal shift away from private cars, and better education on climate issues were also important themes running across the responses from the different groups.
17. Those from more deprived areas:
- Were most likely to hope for investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency.
 - Were keen to protect the natural environment, in particular safeguarding water and air quality.
 - Wanted to see improved access to active and public transport.
 - Called for a greater range of waste products to be recyclable within the county.

- Wanted to see a normalisation of environmental practices and education programmes to inculcate positive attitudes and behaviours in young people.
18. Those from areas not in receipt of LEADER funding:
- Were most likely to call for support for the energy transition and energy efficiency.
 - Called for protections for the natural environment, in particular safeguarding and promoting biodiversity within the county.
19. Younger people:
- Were most likely to call for support for the energy transition and energy efficiency, in particular grant support for businesses and organisations to install energy efficiency / renewable energy measures.
 - They were also very keen on measures to encourage transition to sustainable transport methods.
 - And they were proportionately more likely than other groups to hope for the people of Laois to be better educated on how to behave in a more environmentally responsible way.
20. Older People:
- Prioritised the environment, calling for less pollution of air and watercourses.
 - They also called for measures to encourage the energy transition and energy efficiency.
 - And they were keen to encourage modal shift to both active and, particularly, public transport.
21. Potentially disadvantaged groups:
- Prioritised measures to support energy transition and energy efficiency
 - Were keen to see more done to encourage transport modal shift away from private cars.

Existing Support for Climate Goals

22. Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed that certain aspects related to addressing climate change were well-supported in Laois.
23. Our survey found that the people of Laois are genuinely quite pessimistic about existing levels of support for climate goals, with the majority of respondents disagreeing with the statements posed by our question. This trend is reflected in the in-groups, albeit with some differences.
24. Generally speaking, our in-groups were more likely to disagree with the statements posed in our question than the general population of Laois. The one exception to this was our 'older people' group, who were generally slightly less negative than the general population.
- Sustainable Development of the Environment (County-wide 43.15% disagreed/strongly disagreed that this was well-supported)
 - Respondents from areas of higher deprivation were 10.39% more likely to disagree that sustainable development of the environment was well supported. Similarly, those from areas not receiving LEADER funding were 13.61% more likely to disagree.
 - By contrast, older people were 4.11% less likely to disagree.
 - Respondents from potentially disadvantaged groups and younger respondents were generally in agreement with the overall survey findings.
 - Climate Change Capacity Building (County-wide 48.73% disagreed/strongly disagreed that this was well-supported)
 - Respondents from areas of higher deprivation were 4.33% more likely to disagree that this was well supported. Those from areas not receiving LEADER funding were 2.62% more likely to disagree and younger people were 5.32% more likely to disagree.
 - Older people again reversed this trend, being 5.2% less likely to disagree that this was well supported. Additionally, those from potentially disadvantaged groups were 2.99% less likely to disagree that this was well supported.
 - Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation (County-wide 47.96% disagreed/strongly disagreed that this was well-supported)
 - Respondents from areas not in receipt of LEADER funding were 10.37% more likely to disagree that this was well supported.

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- Respondents from areas of higher deprivation were 2.56% more likely to disagree and younger people were 3.39% more likely to disagree.
- Older people were 8.49% less likely to disagree that this was well supported.
- Results from those from potentially disadvantaged groups were broadly in accordance with the overall trend.

Projects that had Helped to Protect the Environment

25. There was less consensus between the in-groups when asked what projects they were aware of that had helped to protect the environment in their area in the last 5 years than on other questions, perhaps reflecting the overall findings of our survey that overall levels of awareness of LEADER or other progress in this area was quite low.
26. The most common responses among those from more deprived areas, younger people and older people was to cite projects relating to biodiversity or the protection of natural habitats. Those from areas not in receipt of LEADER funding and those from potentially disadvantaged groups seemed generally unaware of any relevant projects.
27. Those from more deprived areas:
 - Were most likely to point to projects relating to biodiversity, nature and pollinators. This group was particularly pleased to see initiatives aimed at improving biodiversity, such as the Abbeyleix Bog Project.
 - They were also keen to see projects aimed at improving farming practice.
 - And raised concerns about the affordability of energy efficiency or energy transition measures, such as retrofitting or domestic / small-scale renewables generation.
28. Those from areas not in receipt of LEADER funding:
 - Were most likely to complain that their area had not seen such projects, as was to be expected.

29. Younger people:

- Were most likely to cite projects such as the tidy towns initiatives and other efforts to clean up urban areas
- They were also aware of greening projects and other initiatives to improve biodiversity within the county, such as the Derryounce project and local tree planting projects

30. Older people:

- Were most likely to cite projects relating to biodiversity and nature, such as grass verging wildflower projects.
- Also pointed to efforts to encourage active and public transport, such as the new public transport links in Portlaoise and Graiguecullen.

31. Potentially disadvantaged groups:

- Were most likely to say they were unaware of any relevant projects.

Projects to Help Achieve Climate Goals

32. When asked to describe the projects they would like to see to protect our planet, combat the effects of climate change and support sustainable development, perhaps the most interesting observation to emerge was the similarity between the groups. The most popular theme among all our in-groups, with the exception of older people, related to actions to support the energy transition and energy efficiency, particularly retrofit, renewables generation and transport electrification. Similarly, ideas relating to biodiversity and nature were very popular throughout, in particular habitat regeneration and reforestation with native trees.

33. By contrast, older people appeared to be most concerned with facilitating transport modal shift away from private cars.

34. Again, on this question another very popular theme among the comments from all in-groups was the need to improve biodiversity / habitat for nature, with a particular emphasis on reforesting the county with native trees.

35. Those from more deprived areas:

- Were most likely to call for measures to support energy transition and energy efficiency, including EV charging, retrofit or home generation grants.
- Were also likely to call for support for biodiversity, pollinators, and the natural world, in particular calling for Laois to be substantially re-greened with native species of trees.
- Transport modal shift was a significant theme in their responses, through support for active and public transport.
- Landfill and litter were also priorities for this group, as were programmes to reduce the environmental impact of farming in Laois.

36. Those from areas not in receipt of LEADER funding:

- Were most likely to call for measures to support energy transition and energy efficiency, particularly renewable generation.
- Were keen to protect biodiversity and the natural world and again called for reforestation, alongside protection of waterways.
- Wanted to see action to minimise waste going to landfill.

37. Younger people:

- Were most likely to call for measures relating to energy transition and energy efficiency, particularly renewable generation.
- Called for transport modal shift, in particular investment in walking and cycling infrastructure.
- Were keen to see actions taken to protect nature particularly through creating safe habitat via sanctuaries and reforestation.
- Wanted to see action taken on litter and waste.

38. Older people:

- Were most concerned with facilitating transport modal shift away from private cars.

- Were keen to see action taken to protect nature, particularly environmentally-driven forest planting.
- Were keen to see funding go to support energy transition and energy efficiency, with a particular emphasis on retrofit/efficiency.
- Wanted to see more done to improve waste collection, processing and recycling.

39. Potentially disadvantaged groups:

- Were most concerned to see measures to support the energy transition and energy efficiency, particularly green energy, transport electrification and retrofit.
- Wanted to see more done to safeguard nature, including measures to protect air quality in towns.
- Were keen to see more done to promote modal shift away from cars.

Awareness of and support for climate action

40. Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with a series of statements relating to awareness of and support for climate action in Laois. On this question, the various in-groups produced similar trends, tending to disagree with the statements presented more strongly than the overall survey results. However, the 'older people' in-group was again a significant outlier, with respondents from this group tending to disagree with each of the statements less strongly than those from other in-groups.

- Awareness of the need to reduce carbon footprint / greenhouse emissions (43.15% disagreed/strongly disagreed that there was good awareness)
 - Respondents from more deprived areas were 12.14% more likely to disagree that there was good awareness of the need to reduce carbon footprint. Respondents from areas not in receipt of LEADER funding were 15.47% more likely to disagree, younger people were 6.85% more likely to disagree and those from potentially disadvantaged groups were 13.99% more likely to disagree.

- Only older people bucked the trend shown in our other in-groups, being 1.77% less likely to disagree that there was good awareness of the need to reduce their carbon footprint.
- Feelings of support / encouragement to reduce personal climate footprint (48.19% disagreed/strongly disagreed that they felt supported)
 - Respondents from more deprived areas were 8.15% more likely to disagree that they felt supported to reduce their own carbon footprint. Those from areas not in receipt of LEADER funding were 10.14% more likely to disagree and those from potentially disadvantaged groups were 5.14% more likely to disagree.
 - Again, older people were 3.19% less likely to disagree. Interestingly, on this question, younger people were 0.97% less likely to disagree.
- Laois County Council’s positioning to progress climate action (40.93% agreed/strongly agreed that the council was well-positioned)
 - Respondents from more deprived areas were 7.19% less likely to agree that Laois County Council was well positioned to progress climate change. Those from areas not in receipt of LEADER funding were 7.72% more likely to disagree, younger people were 9.87% more likely to disagree and those from potentially disadvantaged groups were 5.52% more likely to disagree.
 - Again, bucking the trend from the other in-groups, older people were more likely to agree that they thought the council was well positioned to progress climate action.
- Laois County Council’s actions in support of climate action (42.49% disagreed/strongly disagreed that the council was actively supporting climate action)
 - Respondents from more deprived areas were 3.43% more likely to disagree that Laois County Council was actively supporting climate action than the overall survey results. Those from areas not in receipt of LEADER funding were 17.47% more likely to disagree, younger people were 7.71% more likely to disagree and those from potentially disadvantaged groups were 7.51% more likely to disagree.
 - Older people once more differed from the rest of the in-groups, being 15.12% more likely to agree that the council was actively supporting climate action than the overall survey results.

1. Consultation Methodology

1.1 In May 2023 we undertook a significant consultation exercise to inform the CLLD strategy, including both virtual and in-person engagement. The consultation exercise was designed from the outset to be inclusive and to provide as many different opportunities and formats for Laois communities, businesses and organisations to contribute as possible.

1.2 The principal methods of engagement involved:

- **Online Survey**

Hosted at www.laoisconsultation.ie, the consultation survey was live for two weeks, from 5-19 May 2023. It was responded to by 509 individuals, achieving a statistically significant sample. The profile of respondents was distributed across our Municipal Districts and captured a representative profile. Where almost two thirds of respondents were residents, just over 8% were representatives of a business and almost 11% were representatives of a voluntary or community organisation. The survey provided a comprehensive and contemporary insight into the issues and challenges perceived as facing the County as well as views on the success or otherwise of programmes delivered to date and perceived as impacting on communities framed within the themes and sub-themes of this round of LEADER.

- **Stakeholder Workshop and One-to-One Engagement**

A stakeholder workshop was held on the 19th May and attended by representatives of a range of local organisations, including the FRC, LEO, Laois Sports as well as officers from different departments within the Council. Further one-to-one meetings were held with 17 stakeholders, with these listed in full in Appendix x and covering a broad range of interests and specialists, including those working with and supporting disadvantaged and harder-to-reach groups.

- **Community Workshops**

We ran a series of 6 in-person community workshops across Laois between 16 – 25 May 2023. The timing and location of these workshops was structured to allow as many people as possible to attend. In addition, we also ran a virtual workshop via Zoom on 20 May 2023. In total these workshops were attended by 113 local citizens who participated in a range of exercises that were designed to

capture insights and ideas which have directly fed into this LDS and specially the SWOT, Local Objectives and Strategic Actions described in this and subsequent sections.

- 1.3 This report is intended to provide additional, in-depth analysis of the findings of the Online Survey.
- 1.4 In addition, at the end of this report, we have extracted those comments from the community workshops that related to the environment.

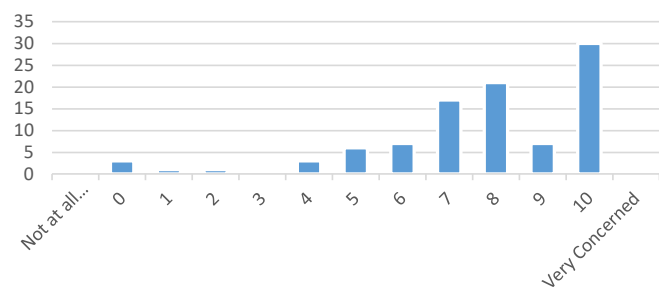
2. In-Groups

- 2.1 As part of this further analysis, we have identified five distinct in-groups from within our survey results. These are:
- Responses from individuals who indicated they lived or worked in an area of above-average deprivation. We received 224 responses from individuals within this in-group.
 - Responses from individuals who indicated they lived or worked in an area not in receipt of LEADER funding. We received 86 responses from people within this in-group.
 - Responses from younger people (<35 years of age). We received 37 responses from people in this in-group.
 - Responses from older people (>55 years of age). We received 41 responses from people in this in-group.
 - Responses from those whose responses indicated they belong to a potentially disadvantaged group including those with disabilities, those from an ethnic minority background or LGBTQ+ people. We received 32 responses from people in this in-group.
- 2.2 The first two in-groups (areas of above-average deprivation, areas not in receipt of LEADER funding) based on respondents' answers to questions near the start of the survey relating to their location within the county. The survey question gave a wide range of possible answers, allowing us to pinpoint the area in which individual respondents lived or worked. These areas were then compared against mapping undertaken by Turley Economics, allowing us to identify which survey responses fall within the identified in-groups.
- 2.3 The final three in-groups (younger people, older people and disadvantaged groups) were selected based on respondents' answers to the optional demographic questions at the end of the survey. Within the survey, we heavily stressed that these questions were entirely voluntary, in recognition of the fact that the answers to these questions dealt with potentially personally-sensitive information.
- 2.4 As such, many respondents did not complete this section of the questionnaire. The in-groups selected on the basis of these responses are consequently somewhat smaller. However, there is still value in interrogating these results, as they are at least suggestive of the true views of these sections of the population.

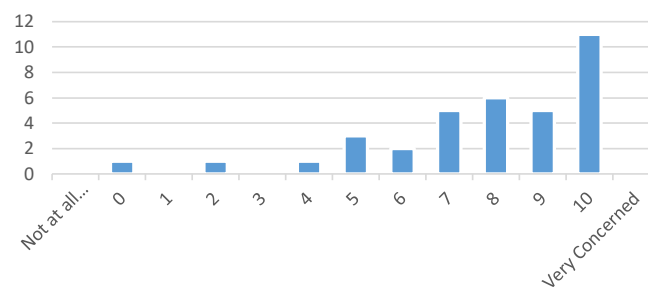
3. Analysis of Responses

How concerned are you about climate change?

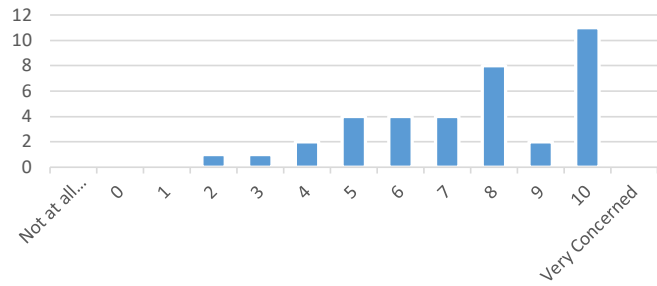
- 3.1 Our survey showed that the majority of respondents were very concerned about climate change, with 74.24% (147 individuals) selecting 7 or above on our 10-point scale (in which 10 was 'very concerned' and 0 was 'not at all concerned').
- 3.2 As the tables below show, while there are some slight changes the patterns, levels of concern about climate change are broadly similar across all of our in-groups. The vast majority of respondents across all in-groups indicated that they were very concerned about climate change.



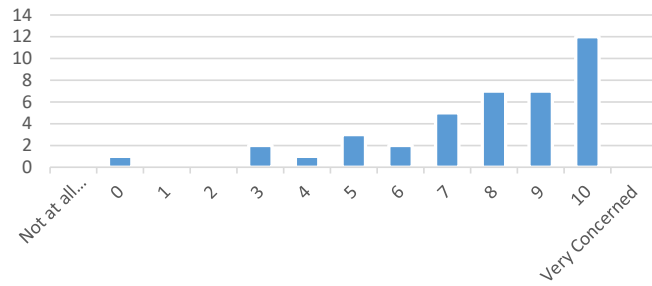
Responses: More deprived Areas



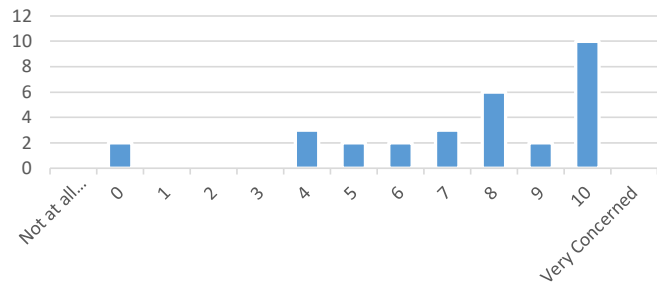
Responses: Areas not in receipt of LEADER funding



Responses: Younger People



Responses: Older People



Responses: Potentially Disadvantaged Groups

Attitudes towards current levels of support for environmental initiatives through projects such as the LEADER programme

3.3 Overall, the survey showed that a large section of the population do not believe that sustainable development, climate change capacity building and climate change mitigation are well supported in Laos.

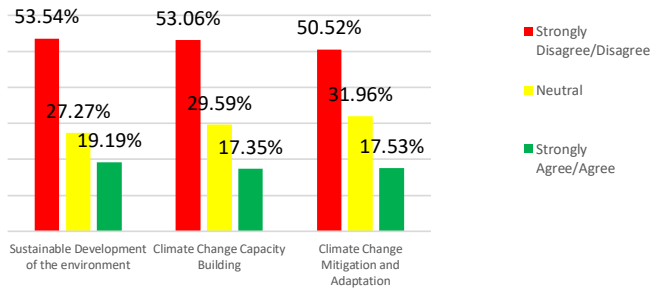
- 43.15% of respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed that sustainable development of the environment was well supported.
 - 32.43% were neutral.
 - 22.84 agreed or strongly agreed.
- 48.73% strongly disagreed or disagreed that climate change capacity building was well supported.
 - 33.33% were neutral.
 - 17.77% agreed or strongly agreed.
- 47.96% strongly disagreed or disagreed that climate change mitigation and adaptation were well supported.
 - 37.27% were neutral.
 - 18.37% agreed or strongly agreed.

When we look at the in-groups, there are some clear differences in perception:

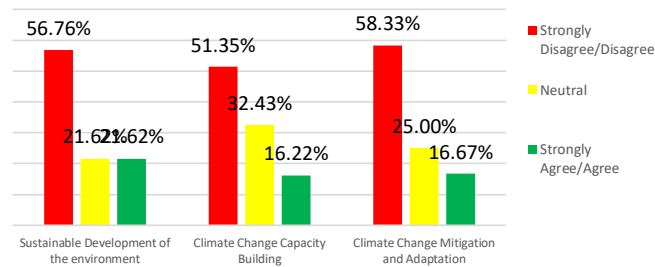
- Respondents from areas of higher deprivation were more likely to be critical, with 53.54% (+10.39%) disagreeing/strongly disagreeing that sustainable development of the environment was well supported, 53.06% (+4.33%) disagreeing/strongly disagreeing that climate change capacity building was well supported and 50.52% (+2.56) disagreeing/strongly disagreeing that climate change mitigation and adaptation were well supported.
- Similarly, areas receiving less LEADER funding were even more likely to be critical, with 56.76% (+13.61%) disagreeing/strongly disagreeing that sustainable development of the environment was well supported, 51.35% (+2.62%) disagreeing/strongly disagreeing

that climate change capacity building was well supported and 58.33% (+10.37%) disagreeing/strongly disagreeing that climate change mitigation and adaptation were well supported.

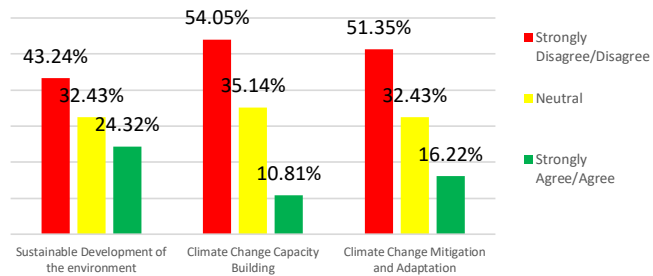
- Younger people broadly agreed with the overall results when it came to sustainable development of the environment. However, 54.05% (+5.32%) disagreed/strongly disagreed that climate change capacity building was well supported and 51.35% (+3.39%) disagreed/strongly disagreed that climate change mitigation and adaptation were well supported.
- By contrast while the overall trend was still negative, older people tended to be less critical of efforts to address climate change in Laos. 39.04% (-4.11%) disagreed/strongly disagreed that sustainable development of the environment was well supported, 43.59% (-5.2%) disagreed/strongly disagreed that climate change capacity building was well supported and 39.47% (-8.49%) disagreed/strongly disagreed that climate change mitigation and adaptation were well supported.
- The results for potentially disadvantaged groups were broadly similar to the overall results. However, 51.72% (-2.99%) disagreed/strongly disagreed that climate change capacity building was well supported.



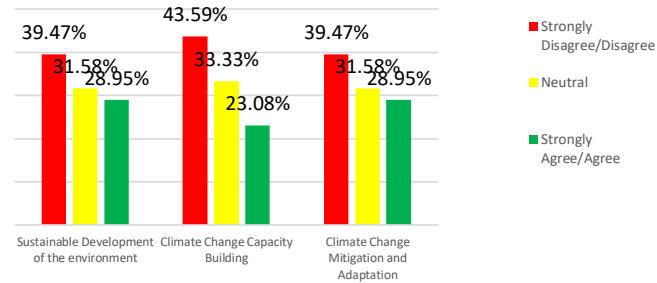
Responses: More deprived Areas



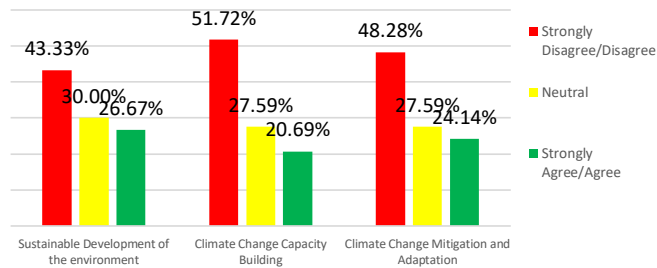
Responses: Areas not in receipt of LEADER funding



Responses: Younger People



Responses: Older People



Responses: Potentially Disadvantaged Groups

What objectives would you like to see the Local Authority Climate Action Plan (LACAP) address and what actions would you like to see proposed?

More deprived areas

3.4 Within our responses from those from areas of above average deprivation, the most common response theme was in favour of transport modal shift. Most of these commenters called for increased public and active transport services. There were also some respondents who called for investment in new blueways, greenways or trails. Some representative comments included:

- *'The town would benefit greatly from a fit for purpose public transport link. Many would be able to cycle to work and school if it was safe to do so.'*
- *'Expansion and improvement of public transport (especially bus) links within Laois, and of walking/cycling infrastructure – support people to move away from using cars.'*
- *'Explore and actively develop a water trail/blueway on River Nore from Castletown Weir to Dunmore Demesne.'*
- *'Reduce rural one off housing would reduce reliance on private cars.'*

3.5 A similar proportion of those responding within this group also called for support for energy efficiency and to move towards greater reliance on renewable energy. Included among these comments are a number of individuals who called for greater investment in EV charging infrastructure, as well as those who wanted to see more support for domestic retrofitting and energy transition:

- *'Put solar panels on all public buildings. Put hydro plant on river.'*
- *'Green Funding for old dwellings to increase their efficiency ratings.'*
- *'Financial support to encourage home owners to address Climate Action.'*

3.6 Waste and recycling was also important to this group, with respondents calling for investment in recycling facilities and action to address fly tipping and littering:

- *'More recycling facilities including clothes banks. The few we have are always full.'*
- *'Educate on recycling. Marshalls for roadside dumping.'*

3.7 Respondents called for more support and protection for the natural environment in Laois:

- *'I would like to see locals encourage to plant Trees and shrubs and more community education by biodiversity officers on the benefits of same.'*

- *'Help local communities in their plans to manage public lawn areas as wildflower meadows through less intensive mowing regimes thus saving on both fuel and time whilst improving local biodiversity.'*

3.8 Education was seen as an important consideration in delivering meaningful climate action:

- *'Support consumers through the maze of climate friendly actions by sharing the independent expertise gathered centrally.'*
- *'.'*

3.9 Finally, some respondents were aware of the role of agriculture in emissions levels and called for action to inform and supervise farmers' behaviour:

- *'Farmers forced to leave a 2m edge around all fields review the use of weedkiller and fertiliser. Reduce the number of cows a farmer can keep.'*

Areas not in receipt of LEADER funding

3.10 Within this in-group, the most popular theme for comments was the need to support the energy transition and ensure energy efficiency:

- *'More sustainable energy sources used eg. Wind turbines'.*
- *'Car charging stations'.*

3.11 Waste and recycling were the next most popular theme, with the majority of respondents calling for action on littering, while a sub-set called for improved recycling facilities and awareness:

- *'Better local recycling facilities'.*
- *'Litter and pollution issues'.*

3.12 Agriculture was again considered to be an important focus for climate action:

- *'Actually employ farm inspectors as was promised. Clamp down on illegal dumping and farm pollution'.*

Younger people

3.13 Among younger people, encouraging transport modal shift was the joint most popular theme for comments:

- *'I would like to see an inclusive sustainable transport system such as a BRT system introduced in the county reducing the need for privately owned vehicles'.*
- *'Additional bicycle parking in Portlaoise and across the county. Improving cycling and walking infrastructure to encourage people to travel to work/education safely'.*

3.14 Seemingly equally important to younger people was the need to encourage the energy transition and support energy efficiency:

- *'SEAI sustainable energy community partnerships'.*
- *'Grants to public to fund renewable energy'.*

3.15 The protection of the natural environment was a significant concern for younger people based on the comments we received, with the responses showing a willingness to embrace potentially innovative approaches such as rewilding:

- *'Increase deployment of urban novel eco-systems, rewilding'.*
- *'Encourage local communities to get involved in biodiversity plans, and informing them of simple wins that they can be part of'.*

3.16 Younger people were quite positive about the potential for education and public information to make a meaningful difference to promoting more climate-conscious behaviours. While understandable this represents a clear opportunity for engagement with a cohort who are willing in affect change:

- *'Education and information for businesses and the community on the supports available to them, and ensuring availability of grants and supports to encourage a strong uptake'.*

Older People

3.17 For older people, the most popular theme was the need to support the energy transition and energy efficiency. In particular, this group was more likely to call for increased support for retrofitting – perhaps reflecting the priorities of a group statistically more likely to own real estate. Again this represents opportunity to engage in partnership with agencies like the SEAI on raising awareness of supports available:

- *'Completion of retrofit in local authority houses'*
- *'Access to funding to allow us address legacy issues. like retrofit old community buildings, replacing old energy inefficient lighting, heating, electrical goods. Funding for local charging points to support EV use'.*
- *'Ban all burning of coal and turf and offer alternative cheap electricity from other sources'.*

3.18 Older people were also keen for more investment in public and active travel:

- *'Create safer cycling and walking opportunities. Create town centres with cleaner air and less trucks. Fund More circular economy programmes that encourage creativity and good practice. Deliver a Laois Green way'.*
- *'Continued investment in Cycle lanes, paths for walking, and development of parks'.*

3.19 Waste and recycling was a priority for older people. In particular, several older people focused their comments on what could be done by institutions to make plastics more recyclable, or to reduce the miles that products have travelled before reaching the consumer:

- *'I would like to see cooperative structure encouraged so that goods (e.g. groceries) can be produced and distributed in substitution for current products that come through supermarket chains accumulating vast food miles'.*
- *'Packaging and refill policy for producers and traders. Government always target the householders'.*

3.20 Finally, agriculture was an area of focus for older people, with comments exploring the possibility of leaving land unproductive to encourage biodiversity and reducing peat/turf cutting:

- *'Encourage local landowners to plant native trees and make ponds. Financial incentives to leave land alone and not to farm it'.*
- *'Police agricultural malpractice stop turf cutting on the remaining bogs as opposed to rehabilitation of cutaway bogs. Reintroduction of the curlew corncrake and other species'.*

Potentially Disadvantaged Groups

3.21 Among potentially disadvantaged groups, the most common focus of comments was the need to support the energy transition and energy efficiency:

- *'Local businesses providing natural alternative solutions. Biomass. Sheepswool. Strawbale and sustainable timber'.*
- *'The reality of electric power take over. Lack of gas infrastructure'.*
- *'Funding to insulate public buildings and implement recommendations from energy audits and reports'.*

3.22 Transportation modal shift was again an important consideration for this group, perhaps reflecting the fact that a significant proportion of the in-group said they suffer from a disability, which might make them more reliant on public transport, or more appreciative of improved active travel infrastructure:

- *'Increase footpaths, cycle lanes & street lighting on outskirts of town to give equal opportunity to all residents to improve physical health'.*

What outcomes would you hope to see in the future, following the implementation of the Local Authority Climate Action Plan (LACAP)?

More deprived areas

3.23 Interestingly, while this group's responses to the previous question had suggested that transport modal shift was their most important consideration, in responding to this question the group's most popular theme was on the need to support the energy transition and energy efficiency. In particular, the group's responses focused on the need to reduce carbon emissions:

- *'Overall reduction in pollution and introduction of renewable energy to community's centres'.*
- *'Cheaper energy and green energy (nuclear power is green energy)'.*

3.24 The group's next most popular consideration was the need to protect the natural environment. Here a key sub-theme was water and air quality:

- *'Cleaner waterways, creating tourism opportunities'.*
- *'Reduction of greenhouse gases better air and water quality save the planet for future generations more wildlife'.*

3.25 Respondents from this in-group were also keen to see improved access to active and public transport:

- *'Safe walking and cycling tracks. Sufficient Public Transport linked to Ballybrophy and the Motorway and nearest major towns'.*
- *'Active travel plan built into each town plan (well designed and thought through)'.*

3.26 Waste was again a consideration, with respondents calling for a greater range of goods to be recycled:

- *'Council collections of brown waste / White goods / mattresses etc.'.*

3.27 Finally, this group was also keen to see education programmes used to enhance climate action within the county:

- *'More public transport, less reliance on cars, normalisation of forward-thinking environmental practices, children who grow up enthusiastically caring about their town and environment'.*

Areas not in receipt of LEADER funding

3.28 As with the deprived areas, the most popular theme within the responses to this question from those answering from an area of the county not in receipt of LEADER funding was the need to support the energy transition and energy efficiency:

- *'Charging car areas'.*

3.29 The next most popular theme in response to this question focused on the need to protect the natural environment:

- *'Increased tree, plant etc planting. Installation of habitats for bats, birds, bees etc.'.*

Younger people

3.30 Among younger people the most popular theme was again the need to encourage the energy transition and support energy efficiency:

- *'For businesses to avail of greener energy and make their buildings and facilities more energy efficient'.*

3.31 Almost as popular among the responses from this group was the need to encourage transport modal shift:

- *'Sustainable transport methods which make it easier for people to access education and employment opportunities and enjoy a safe social life'.*

- *'Greater public transport uptake, enhanced public transport options, reduced carbon footprint'.*

3.32 Younger people were also more likely to suggest that education should play a part in the positive outcomes derived from the LACAP:

- *'Environmental education and encouragement to engage in strategies for businesses and those in agriculture to commit to more environmentally friendly practices'.*

Older People

3.33 Among older people, the most popular comments related to protecting the natural environment, including safeguarding air and water quality:

- *'Less pollutants and littering, more forests and ponds'.*
- *'Reduction of greenhouse gases better air and water quality save the planet for future generations more wildlife'.*

3.34 This group was also concerned with the energy transition and energy efficiency:

- *'That our community becomes more sustainable, that people have access to warm, health homes that are not costly to run'.*

3.35 Finally, older people were also concerned to ensure modal shift to public and active transport means:

- *'Reduction of carbon footprint and better air quality with greater number of cyclists safety using our roads'.*

Potentially Disadvantaged Groups

3.36 Among potentially disadvantaged groups, the most common theme in response to this question was the need to support the energy transition and energy efficiency:

- *'That all towns and villages will have their own source of power and better quality water systems'.*

3.37 Respondents from this group were also concerned by the need to encourage modal shift away from private cars:

- *'More public transport, less reliance on cars, normalisation of forward-thinking environmental practices, children who grow up enthusiastically caring about their town and environment'.*

Attitudes towards current activity to address carbon emissions and climate change

3.38 There was criticism of both the attitudes of the people of Laois and the actions of Laois County Council towards reducing carbon emissions:

- 43.15% (85) strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement that *'there is good awareness in my area of the need to reduce our carbon footprint and other greenhouse gas emissions'*.
 - 31.55% (53) were neutral.
 - 23.21% (39) agreed or strongly agreed.
- 48.19% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement *'I feel supported and encouraged reduce my own carbon footprint and other greenhouse gas emissions.'*
 - 24.35% (47) agreed or strongly agreed.
 - 27.46% (53) were neutral.
- 42.49% strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement *'Laois County Council is actively supporting climate action across County Laois.'*
 - 25.91% (50) agreed or strongly agreed.
 - 34.23% (61) were neutral.

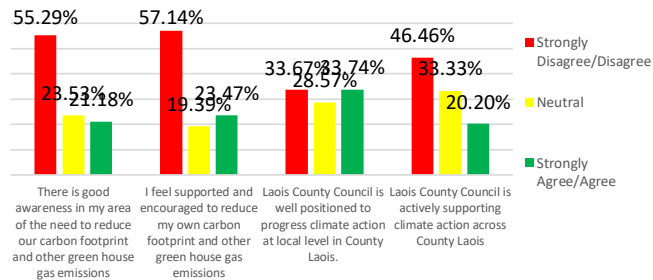
3.39 This sense of a lack of awareness and action may have been compounded by a sense that the council was in a good position to do more about this issue:

- 40.93% (79) agreed or strongly agreed that '*Laois County Council is well positioned to progress climate action at local level in County Laois*'
 - 29.02% (56) disagreed or strongly disagreed.
 - 30.05% (58) were neutral.

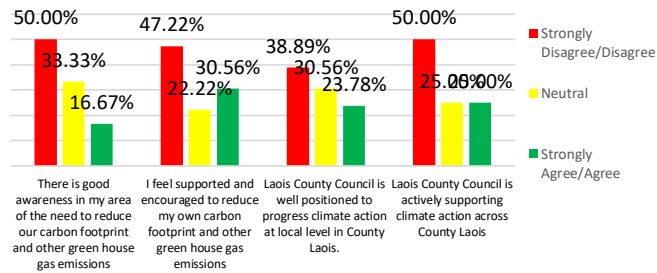
3.40 As before, the responses we received from our in-groups showed some marked differences when compared to our overall responses:

- Respondents from more deprived areas were again more critical. 55.29% (+12.14%) disagreed that there was good awareness of the need to reduce carbon footprint. 57.14% (+8.15%) disagreed that they felt supported to reduce their own carbon footprint. They were less likely to believe that Laois County Council was well positioned to progress climate change, with 33.74% (-7.19%) agreeing. And a slightly higher percentage disagreed that Laois County Council was actively supporting climate action - 46.46% (+3.49%)
- Respondents from areas not in receipt of LEADER funding were substantially more critical. 58.62% (+15.47%) disagreed that there was good awareness of the need to reduce carbon footprint. 58.33% (+10.14) disagreed that they felt supported to reduce their own carbon footprint. 48.65% (+7.72%) disagreed that the council was well positioned to progress climate action. And 59.46% (+17.47%) disagreed that the council was actively supporting climate action.
- Younger people were again generally more critical. 50.00% (+6.85%) disagreed that there was good awareness of the need to reduce carbon footprints. A slightly lower percentage of younger people (47.22%, 0.97% lower than the overall result) disagreed that they felt supported to reduce their own carbon footprint – albeit the percentages are very similar and well within expected margins for error. 38.89% (+9.87%) disagreed that the council was well positioned to progress climate action. And 50.00% (+7.71%) disagreed that the council was actively supporting climate action.
- As previously, the views of older people were closer to the overall trend than the views of the rest of the in-groups – and tended to look slightly more favourably on the actions that had been undertaken, albeit their expressed perception was still overwhelmingly negative. 41.38% (-1.77%) disagreed that there was good awareness of the need to reduce carbon footprints. 45.00% (-3.19%) disagreed that they felt supported to reduce their own carbon footprint. 47.50% (+6.57%) agreed that they thought the council was well positioned to progress climate action. And 41.03% (+15.12%) agreed that the council was actively supporting climate action.

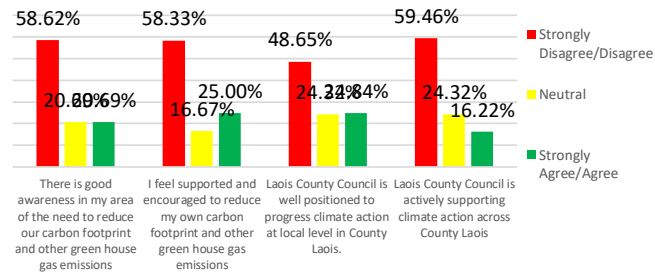
- Among potentially disadvantaged groups, the views expressed to these questions were again more critical than the overall trend. 57.14% (+13.99) disagreed that there was good awareness of the need to reduce carbon footprints. 53.33% (+5.14%) disagreed that they felt supported to reduce their own carbon footprint. 35.41% (-5.52%) agreed that they thought the council was well positioned to progress climate action. And 50.00% (+7.51%) disagreed that the council was actively supporting climate action.



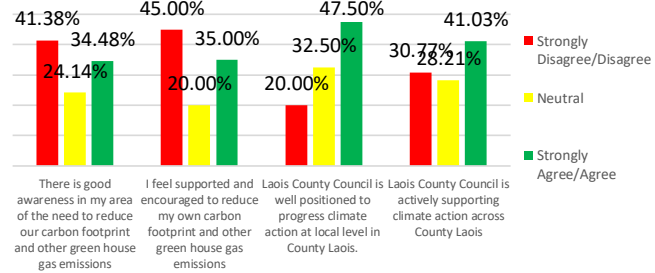
Responses: More deprived Areas



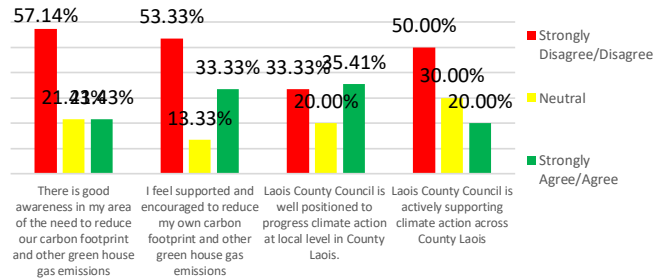
Responses: Younger People



Responses: Areas not in receipt of LEADER funding



Responses: Older People



Responses: Potentially Disadvantaged Groups

What projects, if any, have made a difference to protecting our environment, combating the effects of climate change or supporting sustainable development in your area in the past 5 years?

3.41 Reflecting the findings of the full survey results, the largest theme among the responses to this question was for respondents to say they were unaware of any such projects in their area over the past 5 years.

More deprived areas

3.42 Among those responses that cited examples of projects, the most common theme for those projects was biodiversity / nature / pollinators. Respondents were pleased to see initiatives designed to improve biodiversity in particular, with specific projects including the Abbeyleix bog project, Derryounce development and various local schemes:

- *'Increased forest planting and increased green/bee friendly gardening options'.*

- *'The Abbeyleix Bog Project - Rewetting and Conservation of Plants Work Along with the walkways and the regular sharing of information re the flora & fauna of the Bog. The meadow management at the Abbeyleix Church of Ireland field & graveyard. The Tidy Towns Project with its emphasis on protecting the environment & biodiversity awareness'.*
- *'Bord na Mona intention to rewet the local bog better rail service all Ireland pollinators initiative stricter planning regulations'.*

3.43 Respondents were also pleased to see projects to improve farming practice:

- *'Farmers being more conscientious about habitats and protection of water quality aided by Glas and new Acres schemes'.*

3.44 Finally, as in previous questions, respondents raised concerns about the affordability of energy efficiency or energy transition measures:

- *'The grants available to the average private householder are not enough to enable people to retro fit. It is just too expensive. Solar Panels also. The same with hybrid or E-cars. Too expensive'.*

Areas not in receipt of LEADER funding

3.45 As is to be expected, the overwhelming majority of responses to this question received from this in-group were to complain that their area had not seen such projects:

- *'There have been no projects in my area that support sustainable development. Even the promised farm inspections by the council have not materialised. Farmers are still spreading slurry by rivers and polluting rivers. No effort has been made to make the local community centre energy efficient'.*
- *'None. Absolutely none! Apart from Transport for Ireland having improved services to and from Mountmellick, there is not one single action that I can think of that has made a difference to protecting the environment, combat climate change or support of sustainable development'.*

Younger people

3.46 Among younger people, the most common theme within the responses to this question related to the tidy towns initiatives and other efforts to clean up urban areas:

- *'New bins have been put into place all around town'.*

- *'Tidy Towns in Abbeyleix and Portlaoise'.*

3.47 Younger people were also aware of greening projects and other initiatives to improve biodiversity within the county. The Derryounce project was again name-checked here:

- *'Derryounce is also very eco friendly and has supported the sustainable development in my town'.*
- *'The Local Government has supported planting of trees in the area, though these may be for harvesting at maturity, when they are harvested they will be replaced and that is a positive environmentally, also the particular area where they are now had no trees or much greenery there beforehand so its mostly positive'.*

Older People

3.48 Among older people's responses, the most common theme related to biodiversity and nature:

- *'We have engaged with a leader biodiversity enhancement programme but its sustainability is dependant on it being managed in a biodiversity focused manner. CES schemes, TUS and other groups that facilitate/ manage these programmes should be obliged to ensure their employees are trained and support biodiversity etc.'.*
- *'Development of Town Parks. Extra cycle lanes. Grass verges managed with wildflowers'.*

3.49 Respondents from this in-group also pointed to developments to encourage active and public transport, such as:

- *'The delivery of public transport in Portlaoise & Graiguecullen has been important as has the priority if pedestrian links and the creation of blueways/greenways at Portlaoise, Graiguecullen and Portarlinton'.*

Potentially Disadvantaged Groups

3.50 Few clear trends emerged among the comments left by respondents falling into this in-group. The largest single group of respondents said they were unaware of any projects:

- *'We were supposed to have flood wall at Barrow. Never happened. Crowe lane floods every year as stream never drained. More biodiversity on river for wildlife and birds. Meadows along river. Walkway along river Barrow in a loop'.*

What kind of projects to protect our planet, combat the effects of climate change and support sustainable development would you like to see in your area?

Perhaps the most interesting observation to emerge from a comparison of the groups responding to this question was the broad consensus on what needed to be done. The most popular theme among all our in-groups with the exception of older people related to actions to support the energy transition and energy efficiency, particularly retrofit, renewables generation and transport electrification. Similarly, ideas relating to biodiversity and nature were very popular throughout, in particular habitat regeneration and reforestation with native trees.

More deprived areas

3.51 The most common theme among responses from this in-group related to the energy transition and energy efficiency. Suggestions included car charging points, retrofit or home generation grants and investment in renewable generation:

- *'Grants to all households for solar panels the solar panels are costing €15k. Too expensive. No one can afford them'.*
- *'Up to 90% grants for private houses to be retrofitted, hybrid cars and solar panels'.*
- *'Practical solutions such as water conservation, rain collection, solar energy, echarging station, insulation to reduce heating energy usage, food waste workshops, recycling, upcycling, repair workshops'.*

3.52 The next most common response related to the theme of biodiversity, pollinators and other natural considerations. Respondents were keen to see Laois being substantially re-greened, in particular with native rather than commercial trees and the planting of wildflower meadows:

- *'Support to manage large grass areas in the public domain as native wildflower meadows through less intensive mowing. The local CE scheme attempted this but their lawn mowers broke or were damaged so this year it's back to short grass thus using more fuel and time and no biodiversity benefits'.*
- *'Sustainable planting has been achieved by the Tidy Tows it would be great to see this expanded to other organisations'.*
- *'Active support for biodiversity schemes (not cutting grass verges and hedges, not removing trees etc).'*
- *'I would like to see planting of local forest and green areas for individual communities'.*

3.53 Respondents in this group were also animated by the potential of transport modal shift to improve life in Laois:

- *'Improvement of public transport and walking/cycling infrastructure to support people to transition away from cars'.*
- *'Reduce the use of cars for short journeys through promoting other safe travel. Build the structures needed for active travel but keep in mind the needs of all'.*
- *'Proper bus service to train station'.*

3.54 The group also prized initiatives to address landfill and litter:

- *'The cloth nappy - initiative, a collection run by county council of brown waste / White goods etc.'.*
- *'More clean up initiatives to reduce fly tipping and rural dumping with increased frequency of localised collection dates for the likes of paint tin collections, mattresses amnesties days, electric recycling'.*

3.55 Finally, this group also suggested that more should be done by Laois's farmers to minimise their environmental effect:

- *'Employ farm inspectors to actually do something about farm related pollution'.*
- *'Incentivise farmers to reduce harmful activities to go organic Coilte to plant way mor native trees housing requirements surveys rather than build first'.*

Areas not in receipt of LEADER funding

3.56 Among this in-group's comments, the largest single theme related to supporting the energy transition and energy efficiency:

- *'Local support for solar collection, whether it is for electricity or heating'.*
- *'All form of projects such as wind power, solar power and plantation of trees are welcome in the area'.*

3.57 Biodiversity and protection of the natural world was the next most common theme, with respondents again calling for reforestation and for actions to be taken to clean the waterways:

- *'Protection of wetlands, protection of national monuments eg ringforts tree planting'.*

- *'We already have considerable forestry in the area but new planting needs to be environment advised rather than commercial'.*
- *'Our local river is polluted. My sister phoned the council regarding a smell of sewage coming from the river where our children were paddling and was told that there are currently no rivers in Laois suitable for swimming'.*

3.58 Respondents were also keen to see more being done to minimise waste going to landfill, or being dumped:

- *'Managing litter problem, pollution of local rivers by agriculture and litter'.*

Younger people

3.59 Younger people again prioritised the energy transition and energy efficiency in their responses to this question:

- *'Greater investment in green energy, increased public transport, more grants for electric vehicles'.*
- *'Wind, air and solar power projects are welcome in the area'.*
- *'Promote sustainable energy development'.*

3.60 Modal shift was called for, in particular greater walking and cycling infrastructure:

- *'More green lanes, reduced (and enforced) car speeds for lowering the emissions and incentives for people to cycle (better cycle lanes, more secure bike parking, etc.)'.*
- *'Better advertising of public transport'.*

3.61 Efforts to protect nature were prized by the younger cohort. As in previous questions, younger people were responsible for some of the more ambitious proposals in this area, including rewilding efforts and conservation:

- *'More grants for plantations and grants for exclusive wildlife/bird sanctuary areas of land would be good. To my knowledge some small patches of land that are not farmed and left to go into their natural state are marked as sanctuaries, more of that should be encouraged as its good for biodiversity'.*
- *'Conservation of our waters, regrowing forestry, preserving more land for native animal species'.*

3.62 Younger people also shared their neighbours' concerns around litter and waste:

- *'Signs to show that there will be a fine for people who litter, signs to alert children on how to recycle properly'.*

Older People

3.63 The most popular theme among the responses from older people concerned modal shift of transportation, including an idea for a retirement village that would allow its residents to go about their daily business without needing a car:

- *'Retirement village with small town houses, shops and transport. Encourage and train local to produce food for local shops and markets. Weekly markets a norm in other countries'.*
- *'Up to 90% grants for private houses to be retrofitted, hybrid cars and solar panels. Fit for purpose walking and cycling tracks around the townlands and in the town. Why not make Rathdowney a Pilot for other small towns in the country? By making it completely efficient for cycling to work and school, by widening the country roads and inserting proper walking and cycling tracks'.*

3.64 The next most popular theme related to protecting nature. Again, a key sub-theme here was the planting of native trees, rather than the non-native conifers prized by commercial plantations:

- *'We already have considerable forestry in the area but new planting needs to be environment advised rather than commercial'.*
- *'Plant more trees, when planning permission issued for large housing developments , more greenspace'.*

3.65 Older people were keen to see funding go to support the energy transition and energy efficiency:

- *'Funding for retrofitting of old community hall, to allow us finish what we started on another grant. Funding to facilitate the planting of hedgerows and native trees'.*

3.66 Older people were also concerned around waste and recycling:

- *'A priority would be a proper regular local waste collection for harmful products i.e., unused medicines (pharmacies do not take them), paint & chemicals, duvets & any other product that requires a managed approach. [...] Think "Outside the Box" with much greater urgency re how we can reuse and continue to reuse so as to reduce waste to landfill e.g clothes, household items, white goods - even to the extent of creating sustainable jobs in the funding of the Circular economy'.*

Potentially Disadvantaged Groups

3.67 Among comments received from those belonging to potentially disadvantaged groups, the most common theme related to supporting the energy transition. Suggestions received included placing sustainability requirements on businesses and support for small-scale local measures:

- *'Make new business be responsible greener demand that they submit Green plan with their planning application'.*
- *'Practical solutions such as water conservation, rain collection, solar energy, e-charging station, insulation to reduce heating energy usage, food waste workshops, recycling, upcycling, repair workshops'.*

3.68 This in-group was also keen to see more done to safeguard nature, including measures to protect air quality in towns:

- *'It is so important that we use the Green agenda to include more greener spaces within the towns, Portlaoise is like tarmac hell!!!'.*
- *'Ban all solid fuel in the town. Air quality bad in wintertime. Local electric buses to Portlaoise daily so we don't have to drive'.*

3.69 Respondents from this in-group were also keen to see more done to promote transport modal shift away from cars:

- *'More cycle lanes, more promotion of cycling. Less parking spaces to discourage cars. Better public transport'.*
- *'Footpaths & cycle lanes starting on the outskirts of town so you don't need to drive into town to attend appointments, groceries etc.'.*

4. Workshop Outputs

4.1 During our series of community workshops, a number of points were raised relating to the climate and environment. These have been drawn out of our wider analysis of the workshops and presented below, for ease.

Rathdowney Workshop

- A community-owned energy project was seen as a potential positive, offering the potential of cheaper green energy
- More electric car charging infrastructure was felt to be needed in Rathdowney to support the rise of electric cars.
- The local bogs and rivers were seen as an excellent opportunity to create blueways and greenways, as well as potentially an eco-park

Mountmellick Workshop

- New walkways and greenways around the town were called for, helping to facilitate active travel and acting as an attraction for visitors. Participants also called for more cycle lanes to be introduced throughout the town, again to facilitate active travel
- A Parking / Traffic Plan was seen as necessary, to address private vehicle congestion within the town while still ensuring that those who needed to use a car could do so.
- Participants called for more bus stops & shelters and better signposting, to make it easier for people to use public transport

Abbeyleix Workshop

- Respondents called for the creation of new greenways and a blueway in the areas around the town
- There were calls for a sustainability plan for Abbeyleix, alongside the funding and personnel to help deliver it
- A community energy plan was called for, to help make energy costs more affordable and to help shift to sustainable energy
- Community bikes and dedicated cycle lanes were called for, to help normalise cycling as an everyday means of travel
- An electric vehicle hub where people can co-share electric cars and also benefit from charging points was suggested.

Virtual Workshop

- Respondents called for the creation of sustainable green corridors across the county
- There were also calls for investment in community gardens to help deliver more sustainable local produce

Portarlington Workshop

- Cycle paths along and bridges across the River Barrow
- Bus services and public transport are needed to better connect Portarlington to neighbouring villages and towns
- Some respondents suggested that public transport should be made free
- Public Rights of Way should be invested in, to encourage more people to get active
- Respondents suggested a pedestrianised town centre, with dedicated space and services to support artisanal/pop-up markets

Portlaoise Workshop

- Respondents said that public and active travel:
 - Must be affordable
 - Must be easier to use network for both younger and older people
 - Bus Depot / Travel Hub needed
 - Joined-up links

- Bike hire
- Accessible services
- Respondents called for investment in community gardens
- There were calls for a greening project for each village/town

Ballylinan Workshop

- Respondents called for the creation of a greenway/blueway on River Barrow
- Education re river quality was seen as a priority – enhancing use of rivers as outdoor and educational resource

Commented [JG2]: If it would be helpful, we could expand this into a conclusions and recommendations section.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 Our analysis has elicited a number of observations about the differing perceptions of existing climate action and aspirations for future action among various important sub-groups within the County Laois population.
- 5.2 Interestingly, there was a great deal of overlap between the priorities shown by our in-groups within this survey. The one exception to this was our 'older people' in-group, which elicited results that were consistently distinct from those of the other in-groups. This suggests that, within Laois, age is the key determinant of one's attitudes towards the climate and climate action.

Levels of Concern about Climate Change

- 5.3 Our survey found a high level of concern around climate change. Moreover, this is - as far as this survey is able to prove - a near-universal trait, with high levels of concern clearly evident both among Laois's population as a whole and among all in-groups identified within this survey.

Actions and Objectives of the LACAP

- 5.4 When asked what actions and objectives they would like to see in the Local Authority Climate Action Plan, respondents from more deprived areas and younger people were most likely to call for measures to support transport modal shift. All other groups were most likely to call for more support for energy efficiency and the energy transition.
- 5.5 Among almost all in-groups, actions to address fly-tipping / waste issues, agricultural emissions and to improve public education on climate action were recurrent themes, albeit at a lower frequency than transport modal shift and energy efficiency / energy transition.

Outcomes of the LACAP

- 5.6 When asked what outcomes they would like to see as a result of the LACAP, all in-groups with the exception of older people were most likely to call for support for the energy transition and energy efficiency, including support for businesses and domestic properties to install new measures for energy efficiency and renewable generation. Only our 'older people' in group bucked this trend, with respondents in this group being most likely to call for a reduction in pollution of the air and watercourses.

- 5.7 Support for biodiversity, transport modal shift away from private cars and better education on climate issues were also important themes running across the responses from the different groups.

Existing Support for Climate Goals

- 5.8 Our survey found that the people of Laois are genuinely quite pessimistic about existing levels of support for climate goals, with the majority of respondents disagreeing with the statements posed by our question. This trend is reflected in the in-groups, albeit with some differences.
- 5.9 Generally speaking, our in-groups were more likely to disagree with the statements posed in our question than the general population of Laois. The one exception to this was our 'older people' group, who were generally slightly less negative than the general population.
- 5.10 Notably, across all our in-groups and the county-wide statistics respondents consistently indicated that they felt that Laois County Council was well positioned to address climate change. However, the levels of support for the actions taken to date by the Council in addressing climate change are very low, with the majority across all in-groups and the county as a whole disagreeing/strongly disagreeing that the council was actively supporting climate action. These figures clearly demonstrate that the people of Laois both feel that their council can make a difference in the fight against climate change but do not believe that it is currently doing enough. There would therefore appear to be a clear mandate for more action on behalf of the council to address climate change.

Projects that had Helped to Protect the Environment

- 5.11 There was less consensus between the in-groups when asked what projects they were aware of that had helped to protect the environment in their area in the last 5 years than on other questions, perhaps reflecting the overall findings of our survey that overall levels of awareness of LEADER or other progress in this area was quite low.
- 5.12 The most common responses among those from more deprived areas, younger people and older people was to cite projects relating to biodiversity or the protection of natural habitats. Those from areas not in receipt of LEADER funding and those from potentially disadvantaged groups seemed generally unaware of any relevant projects.

Projects to Help Achieve Climate Goals

- 5.13 When asked what projects they would like to see to help achieve climate goals, there was again broad consensus among all groups with the exception of our 'older people' in-group. All groups barring older people were most likely to cite measures relating to energy efficiency and the energy transition. By contrast, older people appeared to be most concerned with facilitating transport modal shift away from private cars.
- 5.14 Again, on this question another very popular theme among the comments from all in-groups was the need to improve biodiversity / habitat for nature, with a particular emphasis on reforesting the county with native trees.

Awareness of and Support for Climate Action

- 5.15 On this question, the various in-groups produced similar trends, tending to disagree with the statements presented more strongly than the overall survey results. However, the 'older people' in-group was again a significant outlier, with respondents from this group tending to disagree with each of the statements less strongly than those from other in-groups.

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