



Laois Climate Action Plan 2024-2029

Appendix J

Climate Action Extracts County Development Plan

APPENDIX J: COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN, CLIMATE ACTION EXTRACTS

The Climate Action Plan does not seek to duplicate the focus of other plans produced by Laois County Council. However, the County Development Plan (CDP) contains policies and objectives relevant to climate action.

The following pages contain selected extracts from the County Development Plan. For proper context such policies or objectives should be read in their full context within the CDP. Nevertheless, the extracts in the following pages give an indication to the reader of the extent of such commitments in the CDP.

Laois is an inland county in the south midlands of Ireland covering an area of 171,990 hectares which equates to 2.4% of the national landmass. Occupying a strategic position near the centre of the country, County Laois is land locked and shares borders with five adjoining counties; Carlow, Kildare, Kilkenny, Offaly and Tipperary. Administratively, since January 2015 it is part of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly and in terms of travel patterns is increasingly under the influence of the Greater Dublin Area (GDA). The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA), has twelve constituent local authorities split into three Strategic Planning Areas as follows: Dublin Region, Eastern Region and Midlands Region, of which Laois forms part of (Figure 1.2).



Figure 1.2 Strategic Planning Areas for the Eastern and Midlands Regional Authority (Source RSES)

County Laois is approximately 70kms from the Dublin metropolitan area. This relative proximity to the capital has had a major effect on both the nature and extent of development and the associated traffic movements, particularly in the northern and eastern parts of the county. The travel time between Laois and Dublin continues to decrease because of improved road and rail infrastructure.

Laois has a population of over 84,6971 people living and working in a network of attractive towns and villages, ranging from the central key town of Portlaoise to the historic market towns of Abbeyleix and Stradbally. In physical terms, the landmass of County Laois consists of a central plain with productive agricultural land, surrounded by a number of upland areas including the Slieve Bloom Mountains in the northwest, Killeslin Plateau in the southeast and Cullahill Mountain in the south. Though not as extensive as in counties such as Offaly and Kildare, there are significant tracks of cutaway peatlands in the county, mainly situated between Portlaoise, Mountrath and Abbeyleix.

Approximately 0.01% of County Laois is covered by water. The principal rivers are the Barrow, Nore and Erkina which flow in a northwest-southeast trajectory and there are minor man-made lakes at Ballyfin, Grantstown and Heywood. The Grand Canal passes through the northeast of the county and links to the wider River Barrow navigation system. All of these watercourses offer much potential by way of natural and cultural heritage, tourism, leisure and recreational pursuits.

Table 2.1: Transitional Regional and County Population Projections to 2031 for the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly.

Regions and Counties	2016	2026	2031
MIDLANDS			
Westmeath	89,000	96,500-98,500	100,000-102,500
Laois	84,500	92,500-94,000	95,500-97,500
Offaly	78,000	85,000-86,500	88,000-90,000
Longford	41,000	44,500-45,500	46,000-47,000
Subtotal	292,500	318,500-324,500	329,500-337,000

Source: Extract from NPF Implementation Roadmap, p13

Table 2.5: NPF / RSES Population Targets to 2026 and 2031

	Census 2016	2026 NPF / RSES Target	2031 NPF / RSES Target
EMRA Region	2,329,000	2,566,500-2,619,000	2,668,000-2,740,500
Midlands	292, 500	318,500-324,500	329,500-337,000
Laois	84,647	92,000-94,500	95,500-97,500

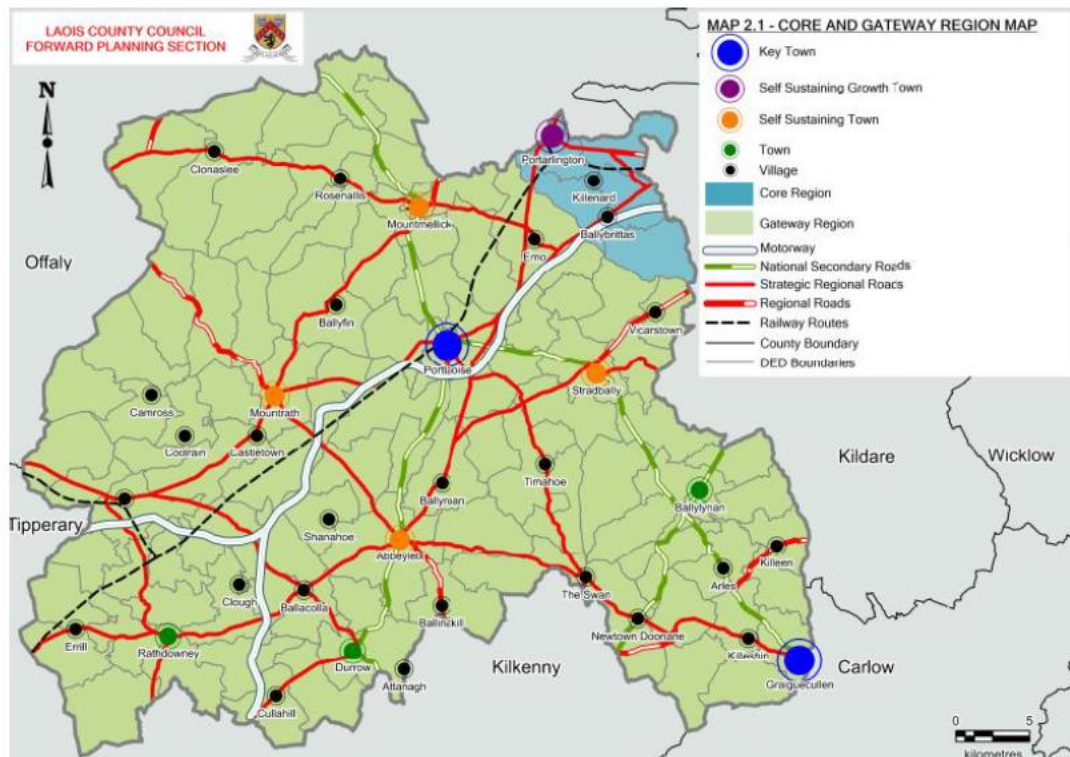
Source: Implementation Roadmap for NPF: Appendix 2

Table 2.6 Population Growth in County Laois 1996 - 2016

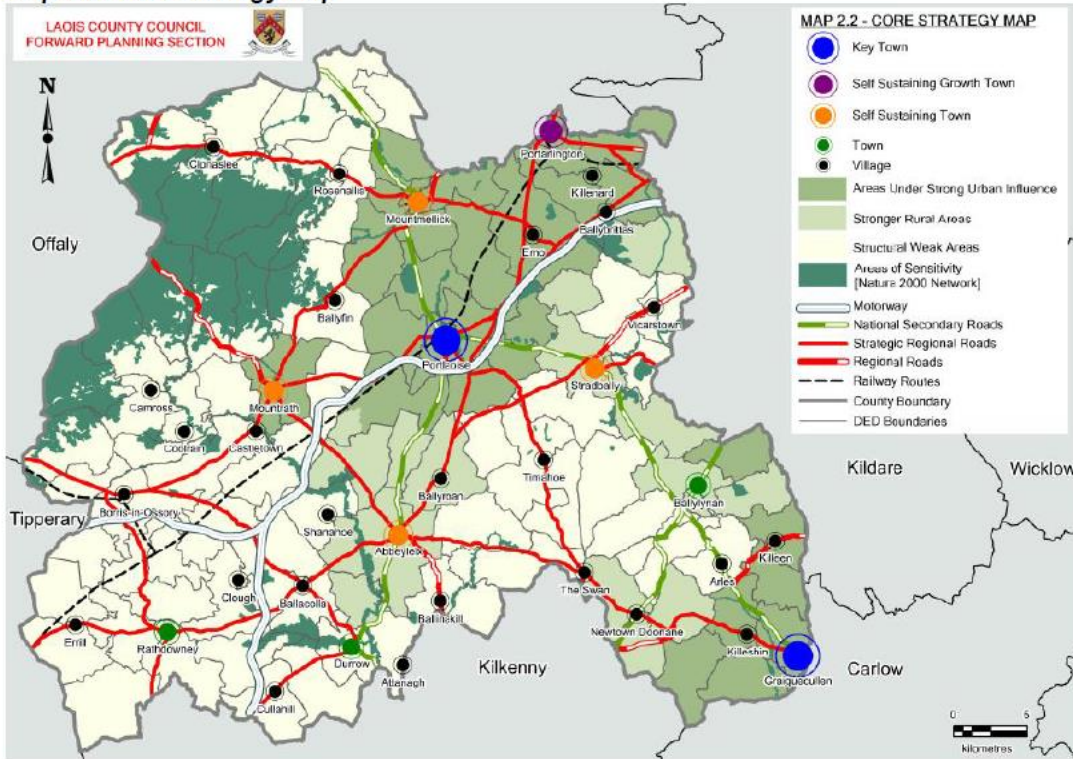
Year	1996	2002	2006	2011	2016
Population	52,945	58,774	67,059	80,559	84,697
Actual Change	-	5,829	8,285	13,500	4,138
% Change	-	11.0	14.1	20.1	5.1
Average Annual Increase	-	971	2,071	2,700	827

Source: CSO Statbank

Map 2.1: Core and Gateway Region within Laois



Map 2.2: Core Strategy Map



1. Compact Growth

In accordance with the principles of compact Growth, at least 30% of housing within settlements is to be within the existing built-up footprint area in conjunction with sequential development of settlements. The preferred choice for residential development is within town and village centres, however there are limiting factors which may be applicable e.g. the historic formation of many of the main towns in County Laois, flooding implications (as identified in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA), inadequate access, limited and fragmented land holdings and the requirement to facilitate retail development in these locations in accordance with the sequential test under the Retail Planning: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DECLG, 2012).

This Plan also recognises the social and economic benefits of the redevelopment of brownfield lands to promote urban regeneration and will continue to support the delivery of compact growth and regeneration of under utilised sites in towns and villages throughout Laois. The achievement of this, the NPF notes, has the potential to make a transformational difference. It can bring new life and footfall to existing settlements, contribute to the viability of services, shops and public transport, increase housing supply and enable more people to be closer to employment and recreational opportunities, as well as supporting a more sustainable transport mode shift. An analysis of the potential capacity of infill and brownfield lands zoned for residential, town/village centre, or mixed-use developments in all settlements indicates that approximately 1,709 units could be delivered on these lands. This equates to 33% of the household allocation for the County. The development of these lands will make an important contribution to the creation of more sustainable communities in the County and will support the implementation of the national and regional policy objectives of creating more compact settlements.

2. Climate Change and Environmental Sensitivity

Climate change has an increasing role to play in how we plan for the future. This Plan has a critical role to play in ensuring our communities develop having regard to sustainable infrastructure networks which build resilience to climate change. A key component is delivering housing in a compact, sustainable way which better integrates with sustainable transport modes to become less dependent on single vehicular use.

CORE STRATEGY

CS02 Implement all land use planning policy and objectives in a manner which takes account of and is consistent with the Core Strategy in order to accelerate a transition to a greener, low carbon and climate resilient county with a focus on reduced travel demand through the promotion of sustainable settlement patterns.

CS04 Promote the integration of land use and transportation policies and to prioritise provision for cycling and walking travel modes and the strengthening of public transport.

CS05 Support the regeneration of underused town centre and brownfield/infill lands along with the delivery of existing zoned and serviced lands to facilitate population growth and achieve sustainable compact growth targets of 30% of all new housing to be built within the existing urban footprint of targeted settlements in the County.

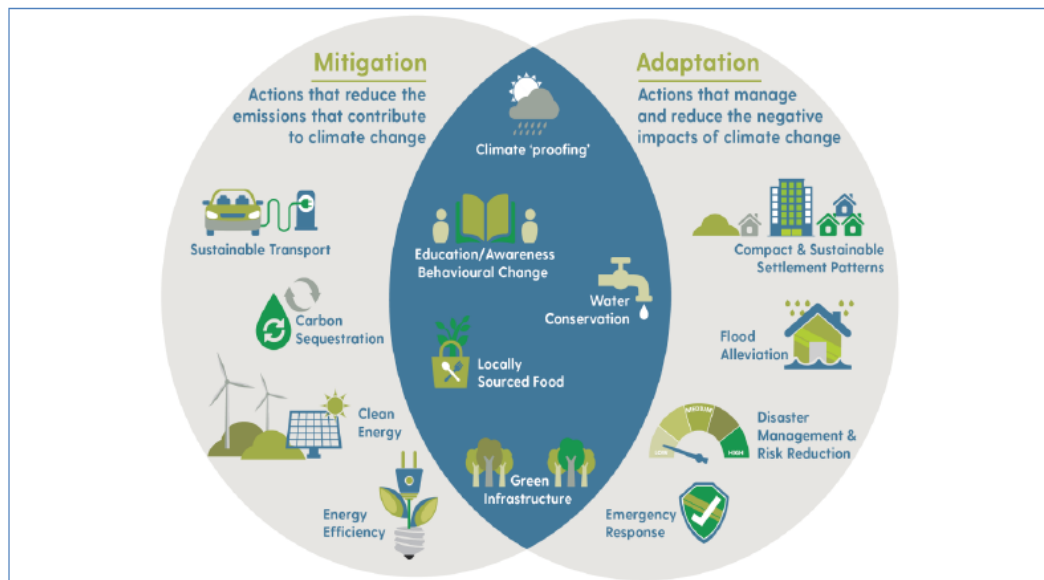
CS07 Incorporate, in the content of the County Development Plan, measures in accordance with Section 10 (n) of the Planning and Development Acts 2000 (as amended) for the promotion of sustainable settlement and transportation strategies in urban and rural areas including the promotion of measures to — (i) reduce energy demand in response to the likelihood of increases in energy and other costs due to long-term decline in non-renewable resources, (ii) reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, and (iii) address the necessity of adaptation to climate change; in particular, having regard to location, layout and design of new development.

CS36 Contribute, as practicable, towards achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which came into force in 2016.

3.1.1 CLIMATE ACTION = MITIGATION + ADAPTATION

Climate change is now recognised as the most significant global threat and its impacts are already having far-reaching economic, social and environmental consequences which can be seen in our rising sea levels, higher average temperatures, frequent weather extremes and flooding. ‘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.

Figure 3.2 Climate Mitigation and Adaptation Measures



Source: Climate Action Regional Office

3.2 CLIMATE CHANGE LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

3.2.1 INTERNATIONAL The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is an international environmental treaty adopted in May 1992, with an objective “to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system”. The framework outlined how specific international treaties may negotiate further action towards its key objective. Most recently, the Paris Agreement 2015 is a protocol set within the context of the UNFCCC and was ratified by Ireland on 4th November 2016 and it is aimed at limiting global warming to less than 2.0°C above pre-industrial level and pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.50°C along with building resilience and increasing the ability to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

3.2.2 EUROPEAN The European Union published a Strategy on Adapting to Climate Change in April 2013 the main focus of which was to build a more climate resilient Europe. The EU Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy is the mainstream European voluntary movement involving local authorities in the development and implementation of sustainable energy and climate policies. Laois County Council is working towards becoming a party to the Covenant of Mayors.

3.2.3 NATIONAL Ireland's first national policy to address the impacts of climate change was introduced in 2012 with National Climate Change Adaptation Framework (NCCAF) with the National Policy Position on Climate Action and Low Carbon Development 2014 reiterating the policy position.

The National Policy Position 42 establishes the fundamental national objective of achieving transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050, guided by a long-term vision based on:

- an aggregate reduction in carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions of at least 80% (compared to 1990 levels) by 2050 across the electricity generation, built environment and transport sectors; and
- in parallel, an approach to carbon neutrality in the agriculture and land-use sector, including forestry, which does not compromise capacity for sustainable food production.

Subsequently, the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act, 2015, provide the statutory basis for the national transition to a low carbon society by 2050 - the objective laid out in the National Policy Position. It also made provision for and gave statutory authority to both the National Mitigation Plan (NMP), published in 2017 and the National Adaptation Framework (NAF) published in 2018. Furthermore, the Government's 2019 Climate Action Plan sets out clear 2030 targets for each sector and the expected emissions savings that will result.

3.2.3.1 National Adaptation Framework (NAF) 2018 The NAF sets out the national strategy to reduce the vulnerability of the country to the negative effects of climate change and outlines a whole of government and society approach to climate adaptation in Ireland. Under the NAF a number of Government Departments are required to prepare sectoral adaptation plans in relation to the priority area that they are responsible for. Local authorities are also required to prepare local adaptation strategies, of which Laois County Council prepared the Laois Climate Adaptation Strategy in August 2019.

3.2.3.4 National Planning Framework (NPF) The NPF identifies planning as a 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. The NPF sets out 10 National Strategic Outcomes to guide the future development of Ireland over the next 20 years, of which 2 are related specifically to addressing climate action - NSO 8 'Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society' and NSO 9 'Sustainable Management of Water, Waste and other Environmental Resources'. It is stated that these objectives will shape investment choices over the coming decades in line with the National Mitigation Plan and the National Adaptation Framework and how the country will adapt to a new renewables focused energy production system such as from wind and solar sources.

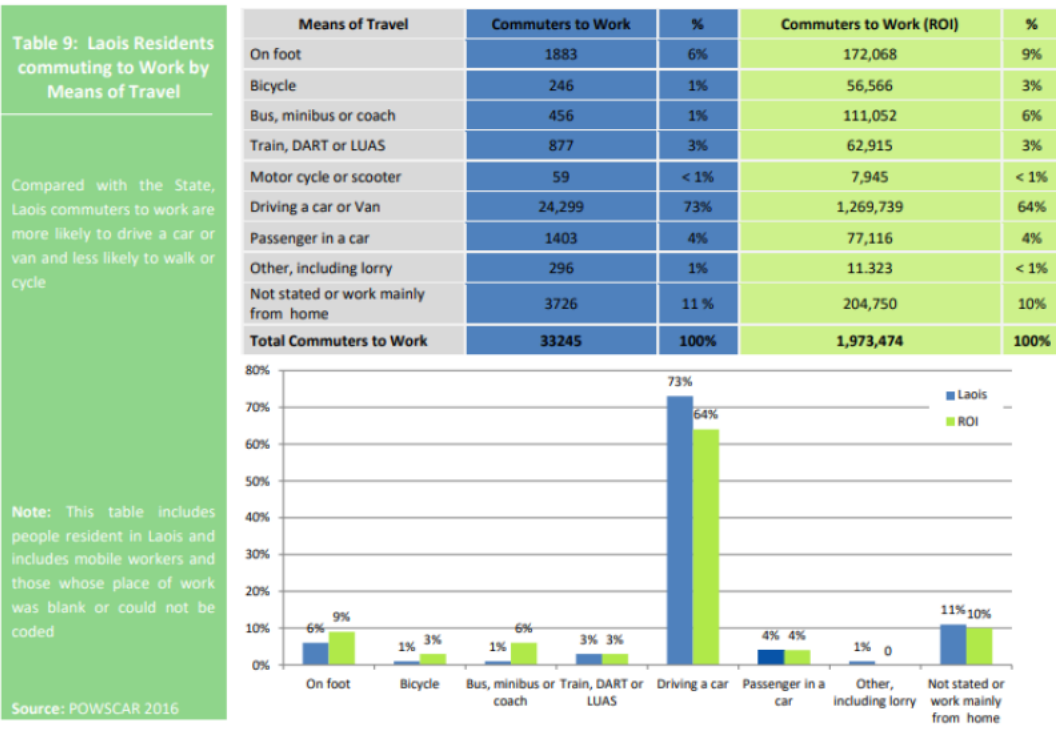
There are further National Policy Objectives noted within the theme of climate change and how mitigation and adaption measures are required. Of particular note, Laois County Council must demonstrate compliance with NPOs in areas such as densification, NPO 3 (C) 30% brownfield (role of URDF in

consolidation) integrating transport links, increasing permeability (both pedestrian and cycling) and connection to public transport (15min walk).

CAI Support and facilitate European and national objectives for climate adaptation and mitigation as detailed in the following documents, taking into account other provisions of the Plan (including those relating to land use planning, energy, sustainable mobility, flood risk management and drainage):

- Climate Action Plan (2019 and any subsequent versions);
- National Climate Change Adaptation Framework (2018 and any subsequent versions);
- Any Regional Decarbonisation Plan prepared on foot of commitments included in the emerging Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region;
- Relevant provisions of any Sectoral Adaptation Plans prepared to comply the requirements of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, including those seeking to contribute towards the National Transition Objective, to pursue, and achieve, the transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by the end of the year 2050; and
- Laois Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024.

P59 The majority of County Laois commuters drive accounting for 73 % of those who commute to work and 30% of those commuting to 3rd level study. The next most popular modes of transport for workers in walking (6%) and for 3rd level students on foot (23%) and bus (17%) were the next most popular. For primary and secondary students, the most popular mode of travel was as passengers by car (60%), bus (18%) and walking.



CMST1 Support construction of green routes/cycleways/pedestrian routes throughout the County

CMST2 To support and facilitate the integration of land use with transportation infrastructure, through the development of sustainable compact settlements which are well served by public transport.

CMST3 To promote higher residential development densities in settlement centres along public transport corridors, that are not located in areas sensitive to flooding, or will increase temperatures of urban areas.

CMST4 Strengthen public transport linkages and promote their use.

CMST5 Support localisation of jobs/shops/services to minimise the need for most common travel patterns.

CMST6 Support the provision of electricity charging infrastructure for electrical vehicles throughout County Laois, both on street and in new developments in towns and villages and also at key tourist destination such as Sliabh Bloom Trail Heads, in accordance with car parking standards and best practice.

CMST7 Promote and support the provision of Park-and-Ride facilities which improve public transport accessibility without exacerbating road congestion, or which cause increased car travel distances, at appropriate locations within the County.

CMST8 Deliver, in conjunction with the NTA and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport a Public Transportation Hub in Portlaoise to accommodate national, commuter, regional and local bus services.

CMST9 Promote more compact development forms that reduce overall demand for private transport and private transport infrastructure and support proposals that encourage modal shift towards sustainable travel modes.

CMST10 Specify baseline figures and targets for modal share in new / varied Local Area Plans in order to encourage a modal shift away from the private car to more sustainable forms of transport, such as public transport, cycling and walking. Set modal share targets within the county in cooperation with NTA, CARO, EMRA and other relevant stakeholders and in accordance with any relevant Guidelines that may come into effect'.

CA ST 1 Protect and enhance the County's floodplains subject to flooding as "green infrastructure" where appropriate and subject to compliance with the Habitats Directive.

CA ST 2 Support low emission vehicle development, infrastructure and use through improving the resilience of County's transport network to the impacts of climate change, in the areas connectivity and movement and concentrating on land use planning and a reduction in single occupancy vehicles, ensuring sustainability is a key consideration of future development.

CA ST 3 Ensure that existing Council critical infrastructure and services (particularly emergency services) are resilient to new climatic conditions.

CA ST 4 Ensure that applications for new critical infrastructure demonstrate resilience to new climatic conditions.

CLIMATE ADAPTATION OBJECTIVES

CA BE 1 Consider the effects of building density and mixed developments on energy consumption when preparing applications for development;

CA BE 2 Promote the repair and reuse of existing buildings particularly of underused upper floors in urban areas;

CA BE 3 Encourage the use of Green Roof technology particularly on apartment, commercial, leisure and educational buildings;

CA BE 4 Support enhancement of flood resilience of buildings, e.g. elevated work surfaces and storage facilities, raised sockets and electrical infrastructure, enhanced flood boards;

CA BE 5 Assess existing Council infrastructure for “fitness for purpose” under new climatic conditions;

CA BE 6 Promote the use of permeable surfaces to decrease run-off rates;

CA BE 7 Support grey-water recycling schemes that seek to decrease abstraction of potable surface water resources, thus reducing water stress during periods of low rainfall;

CA BE 8 Support efforts to maximise water conservation – i.e rainwater harvesting, etc;

CA BE 9 Require the use of SuDS in accordance with the Greater Dublin Regional Code of Practice for Drainage Works for new developments (including extensions);

CA BE 10 Plant drought-resistant plants/ trees in public amenity areas to provide shade and increase green infrastructure linkages;

CA BE 11 Support the European Commission’s paper on Circular Economy Principles for Building Design and advance the reduce-reuse-recycle policy of the Circular Economy in relation to demolition of building stock.

CLIMATE MITIGATION OBJECTIVES

CM BE 1 Achieve more compact growth by promoting the development of infill and brownfield/ regeneration sites and the redevelopment of underutilised land within and close to the existing built up footprint of existing settlements in preference to edge of centre locations;

CM BE 2 Ensure that new developments in Key Towns, Self-Sustaining Growth Towns and Self-Sustaining Towns are laid out so as to facilitate the provision of public transport;

CM BE 3 Support energy-efficient building design and promote building of energy efficient smaller homes/higher density homes appropriate to demographics and with greatest infrastructure available;

CM BE 4 Promote sustainable land use planning measures which facilitate transportation efficiency, economic returns on transport investment, minimisation of environmental impacts and a general shift towards the greater use of public transportation throughout the County;

It is important that Portlaoise progresses towards the 2040 Vision Statement, building upon the objectives for Portlaoise Low Carbon Town to:

- Remove the dominance of cars within the Portlaoise town centre
- Address the poor pedestrian experience of the area
- To adapt to lower emission vehicles
- Retrofit homes and businesses

CLIMATE MITIGATION OBJECTIVES

CM LU 1 Maintain a vibrant and healthy agricultural sector based on the principles of sustainable development whilst at the same time finding alternative employment in or close to rural areas to sustain rural communities;

CM LU 2 Ensure that peatland areas which are designated (or proposed for designation) as NHAs, SACs or SPAs are conserved for their ecological, climate regulation, archaeological, cultural and educational significance;

CM LU 3 Support the fulfilment of the vision of carbon neutrality in the agriculture, forest and land use sector through better sustainable agricultural, land management and resource efficiency;

CLIMATE ADAPTATION OBJECTIVES

CA LU 1 Support diversification of the rural economy to promote crop viability options;

CA LU 2 Encourage afforestation (where environmentally appropriate) to enhance interception and infiltration of precipitation within river basin catchments;

CA LU 3 Support restoration of peat bogs when turf cutting has ceased and take into account relevant recommendations from the National Peatlands Strategy when implementing the Plan.

CA LU 4 Support the creation and enhancement of ecological linkages and buffer zones from development;

CA LU 5 Support the creation and protection of ecological resilient and varied landscapes to help support a wide range of species;

CA LU 6 Increase the climate resilience of the built environment through natural greening infrastructure in new developments, such as the use of natural features (e.g. street trees, green roofs, rain gardens etc) and other materials such as permeable paving

CLIMATE MITIGATION OBJECTIVES

CM RE 1 Prepare a Renewable Energy Strategy (RES) for County Laois including to identify the target which County Laois can contribute in delivering its share of overall Government targets on renewable energy and climate change mitigation over the plan period, and in particular wind energy production and the potential wind energy resource (in megawatts), and commencement of the variation to the County Development Plan within 1 year of adoption of the plan. Once adopted this will be by way of a variation to the Laois County Development Plan.

CM RE 2 Promote and encourage the development of energy from renewable sources such as hydro, bio-energy, wind, solar, geothermal and landfill gas subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria in co-operation with statutory and other energy providers.

CM RE 3 Promote County Laois as a low carbon county as a means of attracting inward investment and to facilitate the development of energy sources which will achieve low carbon outputs.

CM RE 4 Protect areas of recognised landscape importance and significant landscape views from construction of large scale visually intrusive energy transmission infrastructure, alternative routing or transmission methods shall be used in this instance Ensure that the assessment of energy development proposals will have regard to the impacts on public rights of way and walking routes

CM RE 5 Promote and facilitate wind energy development in accordance with the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Wind Energy Development (Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government) and any update thereof and the Appendix 5 Wind Energy Strategy of this Plan, the Interim Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Statutory Plans, Renewable Energy and Climate Change, and subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria.

CM RE 6 Ensure a setback distance for Wind turbines from schools, dwellings, community centres and all public roads in all areas open for consideration for wind farm development as per the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Wind Energy Development (Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government).

CM RE 7 Promote the location of wind farms and wind energy infrastructure in the 'preferred areas' as outlined on Map 3.2 to prohibit such infrastructure in areas identified as 'Areas not open for consideration' and to consider, subject to appropriate assessment, the location of wind generating infrastructure in areas 'open for consideration' and as per the Laois Wind Energy Strategy 2021-2027.

CM RE 8 Promote solar energy projects at appropriate locations.

CM RE 9 Promote the application and uptake of technologies and solutions that utilise grass for energy extraction such as anaerobic digestion, subject to proper planning and environmental considerations.

CM RE 10 Promote and prioritise utilisation of existing waste streams from agricultural and forestry sectors for renewable energy projects including anaerobic digestion, subject to proper planning and environmental considerations.

CM RE 11 Support the development of a Low Carbon Transportation Hub at Midway, Portlaoise to consist of a Compressed Natural Gas ('CNG') hub and Electric Vehicle fast-charging hub along with other national level pilot projects for other alternative and sustainable fuels e.g. Hydrogen facilities for the larger HGV's etc.

CM RE 12 Development proposals should demonstrate that sustainable design standards are integral to the proposal, including its construction and operation, and ensure that they are considered at the beginning of the design process.

CM RE 13 Development proposals should evaluate the feasibility of Combined Heat and Power (CHP) systems, and where a new CHP system is appropriate also examine opportunities to extend the system beyond the site boundary to adjacent sites.

CM RE 14 It is Council policy to facilitate micro-renewable energy installations and auto-generator installations where it is demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Council that they will not result in a significant adverse impact on residential, visual or environmental amenity.

CM RE 15 Promote the installation of community led renewable energy projects which has the support of the majority of the community, the development would subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria in co-operation with statutory and other energy providers, and would be owned in partnership between the community and developer.

CM RE 16 Favourable considerations will be given to the re-use, shared use (colocation), refurbishment, repair and repowering of existing renewable energy technology developments in order to prolong the life span of developments such as wind farms and solar farms providing that these do not result in unacceptable impacts on the: 1) Environment; 2) Residential amenity; and 3) Landscape and Visual Amenity. The development would subject to compliance with national, regional and local development plan policy, as well as other relevant environmental criteria.

CM RE 17 Promote the use of efficient energy storage systems and infrastructure that supports energy efficiency and reusable energy system optimization, in accordance with proper planning and sustainable development.

CM RE 18 Proposals for demolition of any existing building must include a full Whole Life Carbon calculation, which assesses the impact of renovation against proposals for new build.

SCPO 7 Increase accessibility to public transport and walking and cycling infrastructure within main residential areas with schools, community and sports facilities to encourage more sustainable modes of transport

SCPO 8 Seek to improve the energy efficiency of the County's existing building stock to promote energy efficiency in the design and development of all new buildings in the County, in accordance with the Building Regulations Part L (Conservation of Fuel and Energy).

SCPO 9 Encourage that new social infrastructure development proposals maximise energy efficiency through siting, layout, design and incorporate best practice in energy technologies, conservation and smart technology.

SCPO 10 Support and encourage pilot schemes which promote innovative ways to incorporate energy efficiency.

SCPO 11 Require, where feasible and practicable, the provision of Photovoltaic solar panels in new public and community buildings for electricity generation/storage and/or water heating purposes so as to minimise carbon emissions and reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels and reduce energy costs.

SCPO 12 Require the use of SuDS within Local Authority Developments and other social infrastructure projects in accordance with the Greater Dublin Regional Code of Practice for Drainage Works.

SCPO 13 Encourage the use of Green Roof technology particularly on leisure and educational buildings.

SCPO 14 Support and implement the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Communities

SCPO 16 Facilitate and support a more diverse and socially inclusive society that targets equality of opportunity and a better quality of life for all citizens, through improved integration of services and funding and greater accessibility in the delivery of sustainable communities and the provision of associated services.

EDPO 7 Increase the active school flag programme to at least another 20 schools in the County.

EDPO 8 Ensure new and existing school buildings are as self-sustaining as possible, endeavouring to avoid fossil fuel dependence and adapting to a lower energy society.

NRPO 8 Encourage community gardening, allotments and other use of open space to facilitate lower carbon living education and practice.

NRPO 9 Encourage and facilitate the development of green infrastructure that recognises the synergies that can be achieved with regard to the following: • Provision of open space amenities; • Sustainable management of water; • Protection and management of biodiversity; • Protection of cultural heritage; • Protection of protected landscape sensitivities.

NRPO 10 Identify and seek to implement a strategic, coherent and high-quality cycle and walking network across the County that is integrated with public transport and interconnected with cultural, recreational, retail, educational and employment destinations and attractions.

TM 6 Support in principle the development or expansion of a tourism around the Slieve Bloom Mountains, Laois' Inland Waterways, Laois' historic towns and villages, heritage-based tourism, activity-based tourism, geo tourism, eco-tourism, food based tourism, diaspora-based tourism and spiritual tourism. Proposals for sustainable tourism development will be required to demonstrate a need to locate in a particular area and demonstrate compliance with the Development Management Standards

CLIMATE CHANGE AND TOURISM POLICY OBJECTIVES

TM 12 Promote Laois as a hub for sustainable tourism and development of low impact activities including orienteering, angling, equestrian activities, bird watching, canoeing and kayaking, caving, paragliding, botany, photography, painting and yoga and meditation, in appropriate locations in order to diversify the range of tourist experiences available in the county and extend the tourism season

TM 14 Increase connectivity and accessibility to public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure and the provision of Electric Vehicle Charging Points to key tourist destination hubs to encourage more sustainable modes of transport.

TM 15 Encourage that all new tourism related development proposals maximise energy efficiency through siting, layout, design and incorporate best practice in energy technologies, conservation and smart technology.

TM 16 Strengthen resilience to climate change by ensuring all new major tourist developments provide a climate vulnerability assessment within sensitive and vulnerable sites.

CH 2 Take responsibility for the development of a more sustainable tourism industry which minimises adverse impacts on local communities, the built heritage, landscapes, habitats and species; leaving them undiminished as a resource for future generations, while supporting social and economic prosperity

RL 1 Maintain a vibrant and healthy agricultural sector based on the principles of sustainable development whilst at the same time finding alternative employment in or close to rural areas to sustain rural communities.

RL 6 Support in principle the appropriate expansion of the forestry sector and related manufacturing activities subject to environmental, traffic and planning considerations; support an increase in the broadleaf component of any planting programme to a minimum of 33%.

RL 9 Plan and prepare for the future use of large industrial peatland sites when peat harvesting finishes in conjunction with NPWS, Coillte and ESB/Bord na Mona and other stakeholders.

RL 10 Support the longer-term strategic planning for industrial peatland areas, which should include a comprehensive after-use framework plan for the industrial peatlands and associated infrastructure which addresses environmental, economic and social issues including employment and replacement enterprise reflecting the current transition from employment based around peat extraction.

RL 11 Support the Midlands Regional Transition Team in developing a 'Holistic Plan for Just Transition in the Midland Region' including an inventory of project proposals and actions to support Just Transition in the Midlands and to assist the region in identifying potential investment needs for inclusion in a programme of support under the new EU Just Transition Fund.

TRANS 11 Integrate land use policies and transportation in a manner which reduces reliance on car based travel and promotes more sustainable transport choice and co-ordinates particular land uses with their accessibility requirements.

TRANS 12 Support sustainable travel in the tourism sector by the promotion of public transport use and by undertaking enhancements to overall accessibility thereby making the County easier for visitors to navigate. Integrate the County's transport and tourism strategies to promote increasingly sustainable travel patterns among visitors to the County. Support the construction of green routes/cycleways/pedestrian routes.

TRANS 13 Encourage transition towards sustainable and low carbon transport modes, through the promotion of alternative modes of transport, and 'walkable communities' together with promotion of compact urban forms close to public transport corridors to encourage more sustainable patterns of movement.

TRANS 24 (part) Ensure that the Council's own development and those of other developers and agencies has regard to the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DTTS and DHPLG, 2019). Proposals shall:

- Consider the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users ahead of the needs of private car drivers;

TRANS 31 Ensure that cycle Parking will normally be required in development schemes and the Council shall promote and encourage the provision of cycle spaces in public car-parks and appropriate locations in towns and villages throughout the county. Where appropriate, cycle spaces shall be provided in prominent and secure locations convenient to building entrances.

TRANS 32 Ensure that Age Friendly Parking spaces are provided in main towns, near strategic areas e.g. Post office, credit union, doctors' surgery, civic buildings, etc.

TRANS 33 Support the growth of Electric Vehicles with support infrastructure, through a roll- out of additional electric charging points in collaboration with relevant agencies at appropriate locations, both on street and in new developments.

TRANS 34 All developments should provide facilities for the charging of battery-operated cars at a rate of up to 10% of the total car parking spaces. The remainder of the parking spaces should be constructed so as to be capable of accommodating future charging points, as required.

TRANS 35 New residential development should accommodate at least one car parking space equipped with an EV charging point for every ten car parking spaces being provided for the associated development.

TRANS 36 Encourage walking and cycling through the provision of the necessary infrastructure and also provide a mix of land uses which generate short trip distances to combat sedentary transport patterns. All new development proposals shall be required to provide for well-integrated pedestrian and cycling networks.

TRANS 37 Support the installation of infrastructure measures (for example new/wider pavements, road crossings and cycle parking facilities), retrofitted, if necessary, which facilitates, and encourages safe walking and cycling.

TRANS 38 Promote cycling and pedestrian friendly development layouts, provide facilities at public transport nodes, towns and villages, plan for and make provision for the integration of cyclist and

pedestrian needs when considering new development proposals to promote Laois as a walking and cycling destination.

TRANS 39 Investigate the possibility of developing and utilising existing abandoned road/ rail and laneways infrastructure for the purposes of walking and cycling.

TRANS 42 Support the development of Town Based Bike Hire Scheme, similar to “Dublin Bikes”.

SWD 1 Support in conjunction with Irish Water the improvement of storm water infrastructure to improve sustainable drainage and reduce the risk of flooding in urban environments.

SWD 2 Implement policies contained in the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (GSDSDS) in relation to SUDS and climate change.

SWD 3 Ensure new development is adequately serviced with surface water drainage infrastructure which meets the requirements of the Water Framework Directive, associated River Basin Management Plans and CFRAM Management Plans.

SWD 4 Require that planning applications are accompanied by a comprehensive SUDs assessment that addresses run-off quantity, run-off quality and its impact on the existing habitat and water quality.

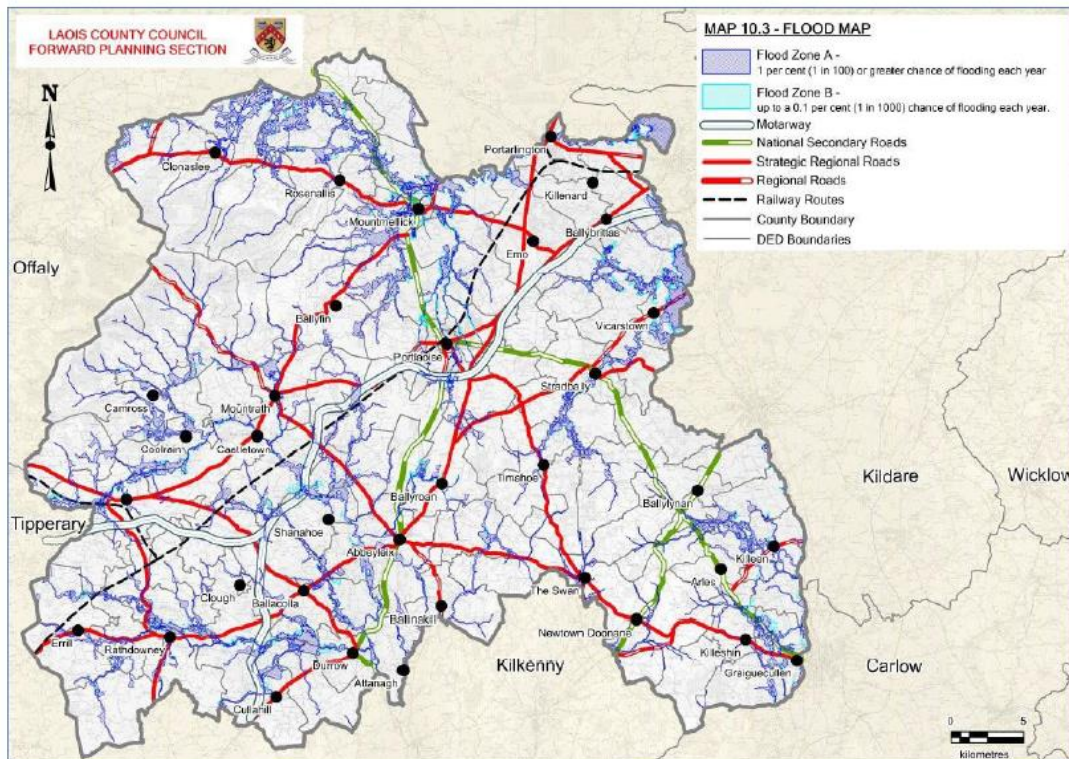
SWD 5 Ensure that in public and private developments in urban areas, both within developments and within the public realm, seek to minimise and limit the extent of hard surfacing and paving and require the use of sustainable drainage techniques for new development or for extensions to existing developments, in order to reduce the potential impact of existing and predicted flooding risks.

SWD 6 Ensure appropriate maintenance of surface water drainage infrastructure to avoid flood risk.

SWD 7 Ensure that all storm water generated in a new development is disposed of on-site or is attenuated and treated prior to discharge to an approved storm water system.

SWD 8 Promote storm water retention facilities for new developments and to incorporate design solutions that provide for collection and recycling of surface water in accordance with Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems as recommended in the Planning System and Flood Risk Management: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG, 2009) and Laois County Council’s Roads and Drainage Standards, or as amended.

Map 10.3: Flood Map



FRM 7 Protect and enhance the County’s floodplains and wetlands as ‘Green infrastructure’ which provides space for storage and conveyance of floodwater, enabling flood risk to be more effectively managed and reducing the need to provide flood defences in the future, subject to normal planning and environmental criteria.

FRM 8 Protect the integrity of any formal (OPW or Laois County Council) flood risk management infrastructure, thereby ensuring that any new development does not negatively impact any existing defence infrastructure or compromise any proposed new infrastructure.

FRM 9 Ensure that where flood risk management works take place that the natural and cultural heritage, rivers, streams and watercourses are protected and enhanced.

FRM 10 Ensure each flood risk management activity is examined to determine actions required to embed and provide for effective climate change adaptation as set out in the OPW Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan Flood Risk Management applicable at the time.

ES 3 Promote circular economy principles, prioritising prevention, reuse, recycling and recovery, and to sustainably manage residual waste. New developments will be expected to take account of the provisions of the Waste Management Plan for the Region and observe those elements of it that relate to waste prevention and minimisation, waste recycling facilities, and the capacity for source segregation.

BNH 10 Support the objectives of the All Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015-2020 by encouraging the planting of pollinator friendly trees and plants within grass verges along public roads and existing and future greenways, new hedgerows, public parks and public open spaces in towns and villages, including part of mixed use and residential developments

BNH 12 Supports the efforts of the Midland Transition team to: • Pursue funding opportunities and actions to mitigate the impact of the Bord na Móna job losses on the individuals concerned, and the impact on the local and regional economy; and • Position the region to develop alternative forms of employment, attract investment and maximise existing employment opportunities and resources.

BNH 19 Ensure that areas and networks of Green Infrastructure are identified, protected, enhanced, managed, and created to provide a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits to communities.

BNH 20 Develop and implement a Green Infrastructure Strategy for Laois in partnership with key stakeholders and the public which reflects a long-term perspective, including the need to adapt to climate change. Ensure the Green Infrastructure Strategy for Laois protects existing Green Infrastructure resources and plans for future Green Infrastructure provision.

BNH 21 Require all Local Area Plans and Master Plans to protect, enhance, provide and manage Green Infrastructure in an integrated and coherent manner. Set targets for the provision of Green Infrastructure elements such as trees and green roofs as part of the preparation of Local Area Plans.

BNH 24 To identify and map Green Infrastructure assets and sites of local biodiversity value over the lifetime of the Plan.

BNH 29 Promote and develop urban forests in parkland and street trees in urban settlements to enhance public realm and increase tree canopy coverage and diversity.

POLICY OBJECTIVES FOR PEATLANDS

BNH 40 The County Development will continue to support the objectives of the Strategic Framework for the Future use of Peatlands which identifies new potential future land uses and also seek to progress opportunities under Just Transition Fund.

BNH 41 Protect the county's designated peatland areas and landscapes and to conserve and manage their ecological, archaeological, cultural, and educational heritage by promoting high environmental standards in conjunction with Bord na Mona, NPWS, IPPC, NGO's and local communities.

BNH 42 Work with relevant agencies such as Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, Bord na Mona, NPWS, Coillte and adjacent Local Authorities to prepare an integrated afteruse framework and management plans for the peatlands and related infrastructure,

BNH 43 Support the preparation of a Sustainable Holistic Management Plan for the future use of the Industrial Peatlands in the County, which recognises the role of peatlands in carbon sequestration.

BNH 44 Support the designation of a National Park for the peatlands area in the Midlands in conjunction with adjoining Local Authorities.

BNH 45 Undertake a feasibility study to identify peatways, where appropriate and examine the tourist potential of same such as a peatway link from Portarlinton to the Grand Canal and River Barrow Greenway.

BNH 46 Support relevant agencies to provide for the future sustainable and environmentally sensitive use of large industrial peatlands at Cuil Na Mona.

LCA 26 Support the restoration of peatlands on suitable sites.



Laois County Council
Áras an Chontae,
JFL Ave.,
Portlaoise,
Co. Laois
R32 EHP9

Tel: (057) 86 64000

www.laois.ie