

Local Economic and Community Plan 2023-2028

**Economic
Development
and Community
Development for
the citizens of
Westmeath.**



Coiste um Fhorbairt Pobail Áitiúil
na hIarmhi
Westmeath Local Community
Development Committee



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ACRONYMS

CARO	Climate Action Regional Office
CSO	Central Statistics Office
COC	Chamber of Commerce
CYPSC	Children and Young People's Services Committees
DEPT	Department
DHLGH	Department of Housing Local Government and Heritage
DRCD	Department of Rural and Community Development
DTCAGSM	Department of Tourism Culture Arts Gaeltacht Sport and Media
EU	European Union
FAI	Football Association of Ireland
HLG	High Level Goal
HSE	Health Service Executive
LCDC	Local Community Development Committee
LECP	Local Economic and Community Plan
LWETB	Longford and Westmeath Education Training Board
MEAG	Mullingar Employment Action Group
MNCF	Midlands Network of Co-Working Facilities
MRDATF	Midland Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Force
MREP	Midlands Regional Enterprise Office
NTA	National Transportation Authority
NDP	National Development Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NMS	National Monuments Service
NPF	National Planning Framework
NPWS	National Parks and Wildlife Service
OPW	Office of Public Works
RSES	Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy
SCO	Sustainable Community Objectives
SEDO	Sustainable Economic Development Objectives
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEAI	Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland
SICAP	Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
SPC	Strategic Policy Committee
TFI	Transport for Ireland
TUS	Technological University of the Shannon
WCC	Westmeath County Council
WCD	Westmeath Community Development
WPPN	Westmeath Public Participation Network
WSP	Westmeath Sports Partnership

FOREWORD

As Chairpersons of the Westmeath Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) and the Economic Development Enterprise and Tourism Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) we are delighted to be involved in the development of the second Westmeath Local Community Economic and Community Plan (LECP).

The plan represents the culmination of extensive research, policy analysis, public consultation, key agency workshops, and committee meetings. The development of the Framework Document and Implementation Plan was guided by the members of the LECP Advisory Steering Group along with members of the LCDC and the SPC.

This LECP enables us to embrace the arising opportunities and prepare for the challenges ahead by aligning the High Level Goals and Sustainable Objectives with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the Climate Action Plan 2024, Project Ireland 2040 and others as set out in this plan. This LECP represents our local response to these strategies, also reflecting the clarity now provided by the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) to realise the spatial objectives of sustainable economic growth. It will ensure that our businesses and communities are equipped to be resilient towards securing a better future for our community and our economy.

The Framework and Implementation plan sets out the six high level goals which were developed following extensive public consultation. Under each of the goals there are Sustainable Community Objectives (SCO's) and Sustainable Economic Development Objectives (SEDO's) which are complementary to each other. The delivery of this LECP will require leadership from the various agencies and we look forward to working with them. The LCDC and the Economic Development Enterprise and Tourism SPC members are committed to empowering and participating in the continued development of the county.

As Chairpersons of the LCDC and SPC we would like to sincerely thank all those who have participated in this process to date as we look forward to working with all in achieving our vision to create and facilitate sustainable economic and community development throughout the county whilst supporting the health and well-being of the people of Westmeath.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Shaw".

Cllr. John Shaw

Chairperson of the
Economic Development
Enterprise and Tourism SPC



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cathryn Whelehan".

Cathryn Whelehan

Chairperson of Westmeath
Local Community
Development Committee

1.1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Westmeath Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2023-2028 is a statutory plan required under the Local Government Reform Act, 2014. This LECP builds on and replaces the Westmeath Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021. The Westmeath LECP considered the framework included in the Local Economic and Community Plan Guidelines 2021 for the preparation, consultation, development of objectives and outcomes, finalisation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the plan.

The preparation stage involved the establishment of an Advisory Steering Group and the creation of the Socio-economic Statement which includes county profile data and High Level Goals (HLG's). The Westmeath LECP is the principal mechanism for translating national and regional goals at local level and is aligned to the Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and the Westmeath County Development Plan. Consultation with key stakeholders took place as it was considered vital for the identification of priority Sustainable Community Objectives (SCOs), Sustainable Economic Development Objectives (SEDOs), actions and desired outcomes. A detailed consultation report is provided in this LECP and includes the findings and analysis from the key stakeholders in addition to the strengths, challenges, opportunities and threats. This LECP includes an Action and Implementation Plan containing priority SCOs, SEDOs, actions, desired outcomes, lead agencies, supporting partners, key performance indicators and timeframes that will augment the delivery of the plan. Monitoring, evaluation and review will be overseen by the Advisory Steering Group. A review process is built into this LECP and commits to biennial reporting to the Westmeath LCDC and the Economic Development, Enterprise and Tourism SPC for their consideration.

The Westmeath LECP is guided by a commitment to enhance the well-being and the quality of life of the people of Westmeath through sustainable economic and community development over the six years of the plan through partnership with the key stakeholders.



1.2 POLICY FRAMEWORK

The LECP Guidelines 2021 require LECP alignment with a range of policies and strategies. The policies and strategies that were considered in the development of the Westmeath LECP 2023-2028 are set out in Appendix 1. These policies and strategies include:-

- UN Sustainable Development Goals
- European Green Deal (2019)
- National Planning Framework (2018) – Project Ireland 2040
- National Development Plan 2021-2030 – Project Ireland 2040
- Climate Action Plan 2024
- The Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2019-2031
- The Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027

These policies and strategies informed development of the High-Level Goals that are included in the Socio-Economic Statement and which were considered during the consultation process and subsequently the development of the Westmeath LECP 2023-2028. A synopsis of the key policies and strategies is outlined below.



United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 interconnected goals established by the United Nations (UN) in 2015. The SDGs are designed to address a range of global challenges and promote sustainable development by the year 2030. These goals cover a broad spectrum of social, economic, and environmental issues, aiming to create a more equitable, just, and sustainable world. The 17 SDGs are illustrated in Figure 1.1.

These goals are interconnected and recognise the need for collaboration to achieve sustainable development. The SDGs provide a framework for addressing the world's most pressing challenges and improving the well-being of our citizens.

The SDG's relevant to the Westmeath LECP are as follows:-

- | | | | |
|---------------|--|---------------|--|
| Goal 1 | No Poverty by ending poverty in all its forms throughout County Westmeath. | Goal 4 | Quality Education by ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all. |
| Goal 2 | Zero Hunger by ending hunger through the promotion of sustainable agriculture, achieving food security and improving nutrition. | Goal 5 | Gender Equality by achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. |
| Goal 3 | Good Health and Well-being by ensuring healthy lives and promotion of well-being for all at all ages. | | |

- Goal 6** *Clean Water and Sanitation* by ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
- Goal 7** *Affordable and Clean Energy* by ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
- Goal 8** *Decent Work and Economic Growth* by through the promotion of sustained, inclusive sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
- Goal 9** *Industry Innovation and Infrastructure* by building resilient infrastructure, promotion of inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and fostering innovation.
- Goal 10** *Reduce Inequality* by through reducing inequality within and among County Westmeath.
- Goal 11** *Sustainable Cities and Communities* by making our communities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
- Goal 12** *Responsible Consumption and Production* by ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns.
- Goal 13** *Climate Action* by taking urgent action to combat climate change and its actions.
- Goal 14** *Life Below Water* by conserving and sustainably using water resources for sustainable development.
- Goal 15** *Life on Land* by protecting, restoring and promoting sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably managing forests, combatting desertification, halting and reversing land degradation and halting biodiversity loss.
- Goal 16** *Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions* by promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all, building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
- Goal 17** *Partnerships for the Goals* by strengthening the means of implementation and revitalisation of Global Partnerships for Sustainable Development.



Figure 1.1 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

The European Union's (EU) Green Deal

The European Union's (EU) Green Deal is the EU's main new growth strategy to transition the EU economy to a sustainable economic model. Presented in December 2019, the overarching objective of the EU Green Deal is for the EU to become the first climate neutral continent by 2050, resulting in a cleaner environment, more affordable energy, smarter transport, new jobs and an overall better quality of life. There are a number of funding mechanisms in place to facilitate the EU Green Deal, totalling over €1 trillion. This investment will fund the delivery of the policy reform needed for the EU's economic growth and climate neutrality.

There is recognition in the EU Green Deal that transition can only succeed if it is conducted in a fair and inclusive way. As a result, a Just Transition Mechanism is proposed to exclusively focus on the regions and sectors that are most affected by the transition. This will be available for the regions and sectors that depend on fossil fuels or carbon-intensive processes.

Elements of the EU Green Deal

The main elements of the EU Green Deal are:

- Climate action
- Clean energy
- Sustainable industry
- Buildings and renovations
- Sustainable mobility
- Eliminating pollution
- Farm to Fork
- Preserving biodiversity
- Research and development
- Preventing unfair competition from carbon leakage

The Climate Action Plan 2024

The National Climate Action Plan 2024 provides a detailed plan for taking decisive action to achieve a 51% reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and setting Ireland on a path to reach net-zero emissions by no later than 2050, as committed to in the Programme for Government and set out in The Climate Act 2021.

The Climate Action Plan 2024 builds upon the 2023 Plan by refining and updating the measures and actions required to deliver the carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings.

The Climate Action Plan sets out the actions needed to deliver on Ireland's climate targets and sets indicative ranges of emissions reductions for each sector of the economy. It will be updated periodically to ensure alignment with Ireland's legally binding economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral ceilings.

The National Planning Framework (NPF)

The NPF is the overarching planning policy for the state (published in February 2018 under Project 2040) and contains 10 National Strategic Outcomes and 75 National Policy Objectives. This planning framework sets out where development and investment should be guided to shape the national, regional and local spatial development in economic, environmental and social terms to 2040. The 10 shared goals or National Strategic Outcomes prescribed in the NPF are as follows:



Figure 1.2 National Planning Framework – National Strategic Outcomes

Project Ireland 2040 – National Development Plan (NDP) 2021-2030

As part of Project Ireland 2040 the National Development Plan sets out the Government's over-arching investment strategy and budget for the period 2021-2030. It is an ambitious plan that balances the significant demand for public investment across all sectors and regions of Ireland with a major focus on improving the delivery of infrastructure projects to ensure speed of delivery and value for money.

A large proportion of this investment is directed at major national infrastructure projects relating to sustainable mobility, international and regional connectivity, transitions to a low carbon and climate-resilient economy, compact growth, enhanced amenity and heritage among others.

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) 2019¹

The RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region was made by the Members of the Assembly in June 2019 and is a strategic plan and investment framework to shape future growth throughout the Region. The overall vision of the Strategy is to create a sustainable and competitive Region that supports the health and wellbeing of our people and places, from urban to rural, with access to quality housing, travel and employment opportunity for all. The vision is supported by sixteen Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs) that are framed around the three Key Principles of Healthy Placemaking, Climate Action and Economic Opportunity.

A primary statutory objective of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) is to support the implementation of the National Planning Framework (NPF), alignment with the investment priorities of the National Development Plan 2021-2030 (and thus Project Ireland 2040), by coupling new development with the requisite investment in services and infrastructure. The RSES is of critical importance for the delivery of Project Ireland 2040, given that it is the succeeding tier of policy delivery in Ireland.

The RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region presents a Spatial Strategy, devised and informed by a complementary Economic Strategy, which provides a framework for future growth, ensuring the delivery of effective regional development through the realisation of viable and vital places. This includes championing the capital city of Dublin as a smart, climate resilient and global city region; identifying Regional Growth Centres which act as regional economic drivers and supports for their wider catchment areas; and promoting a network of large economically active Key Towns that provide employment and services to their surrounding areas. All of this is supported by Self-Sustaining Growth Towns, Self-Sustaining Towns and a network of multifaceted Rural Places. The RSES identifies Regional Growth Centres and Key Towns within the Region, and Self-Sustaining Growth Towns, Self-Sustaining Towns and Rural areas are to be defined by Development Plans.

The RSES identifies Athlone as a Regional Growth Centre and Mullingar as a Key Town, both of which are located in the Gateway Region as set out in Table 4.2 of the RSES – Settlement Hierarchy and Retail Hierarchy for the Region, as outlined in the RSES in Table 6.1. Athlone and Mullingar are identified as Level 2 (Major Town Centres and County Town Centres), and Castlepollard is identified as Level 3 (Town and/or District Centres) within the retail hierarchy.

Athlone is strategically located in the centre of Ireland as a gateway to the west between Dublin and Galway. The RSES states that it is a key node between Dublin and Galway on the River Shannon, with direct national connectivity to towns such as Longford, Mullingar, Tullamore, Maynooth, Portlaoise, Ballinasloe and Roscommon. Due to its scale of population, employment and services, Athlone acts as a key regional centre for an extensive catchment that extends into the Northern and Western Region. Athlone's employment and housing potential, historic centre and cultural assets, along with its attractive natural environment along the banks of the River Shannon, provide for significant tourism opportunities and an enhanced quality of life for both residents and visitors to the town.

The key priorities identified in the RSES for Athlone are to promote the continued sustainable and compact growth of the town as a regional driver, with a target population of 30,000 up to 2031, providing for an enhanced public realm and regeneration in the town centre along with significant employment growth linked to the further development of Athlone Institute of Technology (officially dissolved and succeeded by the Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest (TUS) on the 16th of July 2021) and building on the town's existing strong economic base and enterprise clusters. In order to enhance co-ordination of development in Athlone, where the town and its environs lie within the combined functional area of two local authorities and two regional assemblies, the RSES considers the preparation and adoption of a Joint Urban Area Plan (UAP) to be vital for Westmeath and Roscommon County Councils.

¹EMRA RSES 2019-2031

The Key Town of Mullingar, with a population of 20,928 in 2016, is located on the Dublin to Sligo rail line and M4 motorway. The RSES recognises that the town provides an essential role in supporting population and job growth and acts as a crucial economic centre for the surrounding hinterland.

The key priorities for the town of Mullingar, as outlined in the RSES, are the advancement of the town through the promotion of economic development and employment creation; the development of the town's assets in built and natural heritage; continued investment in arts, culture and outdoor recreational activities; and continued development of the tourist economy.

Section 3.1 of the RSES outlines the Growth Strategy for the overall Eastern and Midland Region which includes a number of measures relevant to County Westmeath as follows;

- Target growth of the Regional Growth Centres of Athlone, Drogheda and Dundalk as regional drivers.
- Support vibrant rural areas with a network of towns and villages.
- Embed a network of Key Towns through the Region to deliver sustainable regional development.
- Support the transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable Region.

Section 3.2 of the RSES identifies the key Growth Enablers for the Region which include a number of measures relevant to County Westmeath as follows;

- Promote global connectivity and regional accessibility as part of an integrated land use and transport strategy, with a focus on protecting national assets and enhanced inter-regional connectivity.
- Target significant growth in the Regional Growth Centres of Athlone, Drogheda and Dundalk to enable them to act as regional drivers, with a focus on improving local economies and quality of life to attract investment and the preparation of urban area plans (UAPs).
- Promote compact urban growth to realise targets of at least 50% of all new homes to be built, to be within or contiguous to the existing built-up area of Dublin city and suburbs and a target of at least 30% for other urban areas.
- Embed a network of Key Towns throughout the Region, which have the capacity to deliver sustainable compact growth and employment for their catchments in tandem with enabling public transport, infrastructure and services.
- Promote balanced growth in a limited number of economically active settlements which have the identified capacity and potential for self-sustaining growth.
- Promote targeted 'catch up' investment to support self-sustaining local employment, and in services, sustainable transport and amenities in places that have experienced rapid commuter driven population growth.
- Promote regeneration and revitalisation of small towns and villages and support local enterprise and employment opportunities to ensure their viability as service centres for their surrounding rural areas.
- Support rural areas by harnessing natural resources to develop renewables, recreation and tourism opportunities including green infrastructure planning and the development of an integrated network of greenways, blueways and peatways.

In addition to the above, Section 3.2 of the RSES specifies key Growth Enablers for the Gateway Region which include a number of measures relevant to County Westmeath as follows;

- Support continued growth of Athlone, with a focus on quality of life and securing the investment to fulfil its role as a key Regional Growth Centre and economic driver in the centre of Ireland.

- ‘Catch up’ investment to promote consolidation and improvement in the sustainability of those areas that have experienced significant population growth but have a weak level of services and employment for their residents.
- Regeneration of small towns and villages, with a focus on the identification of rural town, village and rural regeneration priorities to bring vibrancy to these areas.
- Diversification and growth of smart specialisation of local economies with a strong focus on clustering including sustainable farming and food production, tourism, marine, energy and renewables, bioeconomy and circular economy, with a focus on publicly owned peatlands in the midlands, to support a ‘Just’ transition and realise the benefits of green technologies.
- Promote the Region as a key destination for tourism, leisure and recreation activities and while ensuring that high value assets and amenities are protected and enhanced.

In relation to community development, the RSES outlines support for community and adult education providers who are already providing formal and non-formal education to targeted disadvantaged groups and who have already identified the barriers to participation in lifelong learning such as childcare, transport and rural isolation to increase participation rates and support progression into further education and employment. The RSES also highlights the importance of recreation and sporting facilities including blueways and greenways, including the development of the Old Rail Trail between Athlone and Mullingar, which highlights the potential to develop disused railway lines in the Region.

The Westmeath LECP supports the EMRA Regional Strategic Outcomes as set out below in Figure 1.3 below.

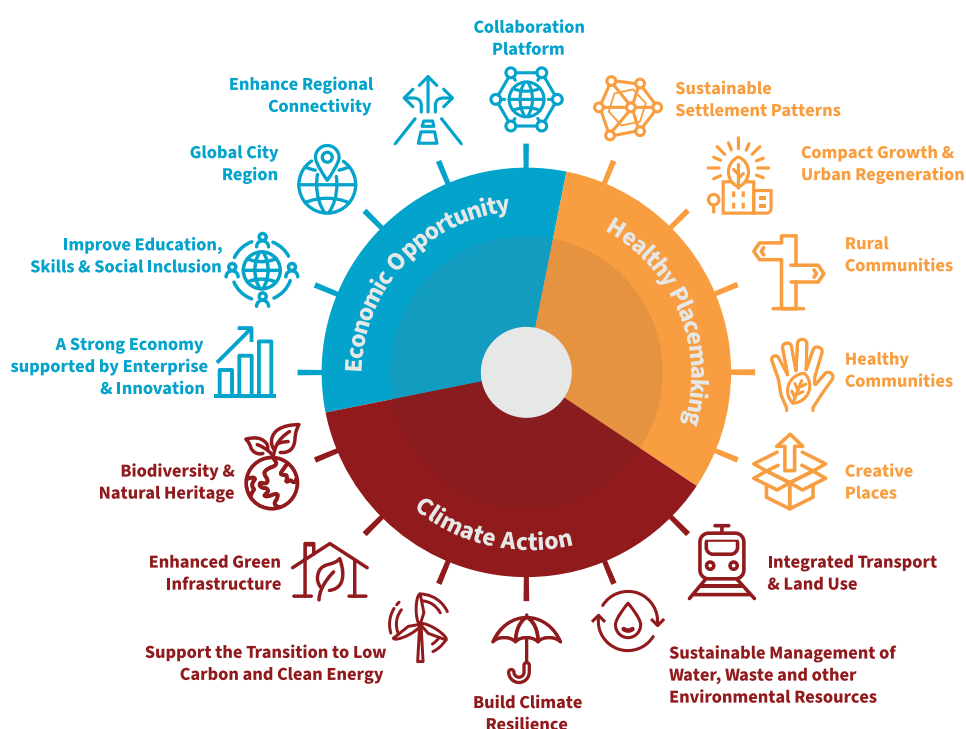


Figure 1.3 Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly Regional Strategic Outcomes

Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027

The Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027 (CDP) came into effect on May 3 2021. The Plan guides the future growth and sustainable development of the county over the plan period from 2021 to 2027. It sets out an approach centred on the core principle of sustainability with a focus on creating vibrant, liveable, climate-resilient communities. This plan is consistent with both the National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

At a high level, the Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027 aims *“To create and facilitate sustainable competitive growth throughout the County that supports the health and well-being of the people of Westmeath, providing an attractive destination, as a place in which to live, work, invest, do business and visit, offering high quality employment and educational opportunities within sustainable communities whilst safeguarding the environmental, cultural, heritage and tourism assets of the County”*.

The Plan is informed by six cross-cutting themes namely: Healthy Place-making, Sustainable Communities, Climate Action, Regeneration, Green Infrastructure and Tourism. These key cross-cutting principles reflect the three pillars of sustainability; Social, Environmental and Economic and positively align with Goals 1-6 of the Westmeath LECP 2024-2030.

The policy context and central objective of the Westmeath County Development Plan is people focussed, recognising that ‘quality of life’ encapsulates strong economic output and stability, good environmental performance and a good standard of living for all, through the creation of healthy, sustainable and attractive places. Such an approach is consistent with the aims of the LECP.

Central to the County Development Plan is a Core Strategy which seeks to direct development in line with the settlement hierarchy and promote development at an appropriate scale that is reflective of the terms of the Core Strategy Table and zoning maps. A key component of the Core Strategy is to support the achievement of more self-sustaining towns and villages through residential and employment opportunities together with supporting social and community facilities. In this regard, the plan is consistent with the LECP which seeks to enhance the health and well-being of citizens through promoting economic and social infrastructure to create vibrant urban and rural communities. In addition, the LECP provides for co-working education facilities in Athlone and Kinnegad. This approach is consistent with CDP’s objectives to realise the role of Athlone as a Regional Growth Centre and Kinnegad as a self-sustaining town.

The CDP seeks to prioritise the development of housing in existing towns and villages in the Settlement Hierarchy to help reduce the need to travel and reduce transport carbon emissions. Higher densities will be encouraged to make more efficient use of land and energy resources, creating a consolidated urban form that supports the development of compact neighbourhoods which contribute to the viability of economic, social, and transport infrastructure. Aligned to the above is the provision in the LECP to develop serviced sites for housing in Castlepollard and Moate, which is consistent with CPO 8.17 and 8.19 of the CDP.

In addition, there is an emphasis in the LECP on promotion of public transport which aligns with identified CDP objectives to encourage and facilitate increased active travel and public transport.

Finally, with regard to the High Level Goal 6 of the LECP, which seeks to promote and protect our rich culture and heritage and realise our tourism potential, there are numerous objectives in the CDP which seek to promote tourism initiatives based on heritage assets, whilst safeguarding the nature of those assets.

Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024

Climate change is recognised as a global challenge with policy responses required in terms of both mitigating the causes of climate change and in adapting to the inevitable consequences of our changing climate.

The Climate Change Adaptation Strategy represents a proactive step by Westmeath County Council in the process of adaptation planning to build resilience and respond effectively to the threats posed by climate change.

The Climate Change Adaptation Strategy takes on the role as the primary instrument at local level to:

- (i) ensure a proper comprehension of the key risks and vulnerabilities of climate change
- (ii) bring forward the implementation of climate resilient actions in a planned and proactive manner
- (iii) ensure that climate adaptation considerations are mainstreamed into all plans and policies and integrated into all operations and functions of Westmeath County Council.

1.3 OVERRIDING STATUS OF THE PLAN

Implementing this LECP will involve Westmeath County Council helping to facilitate, promote, support and coordinate stakeholders in their activities in a way that is consistent with existing and emerging plans setting out public policy for sustainable development, relating to the economy, communities, infrastructure, land use, tourism, environmental protection and environmental management.

This LECP fully aligns with the provisions of the existing National Planning Framework, the National Climate Action Plan, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and the current County Development Plan, all of which have been subject to legislative requirements relating to public consultation, environmental assessment/screening for environmental assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment. As such, the Plan is wholly subject to the requirements of the provisions set out in these documents, including provisions relating to sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management that have been integrated into these documents, including through SEA and AA processes, and does not introduce any alterations or additions to those provisions.

It is a specific provision of this LECP to ensure that all of the provisions from the County Development Plan identified in the accompanying Screening for SEA and AA reports shall be complied with throughout the implementation of this Plan.

2. LECP PREPARATION

2.1 STAGES OF THE LECP

The LECP will be developed in six stages as set out in Figure 2.1 below:-

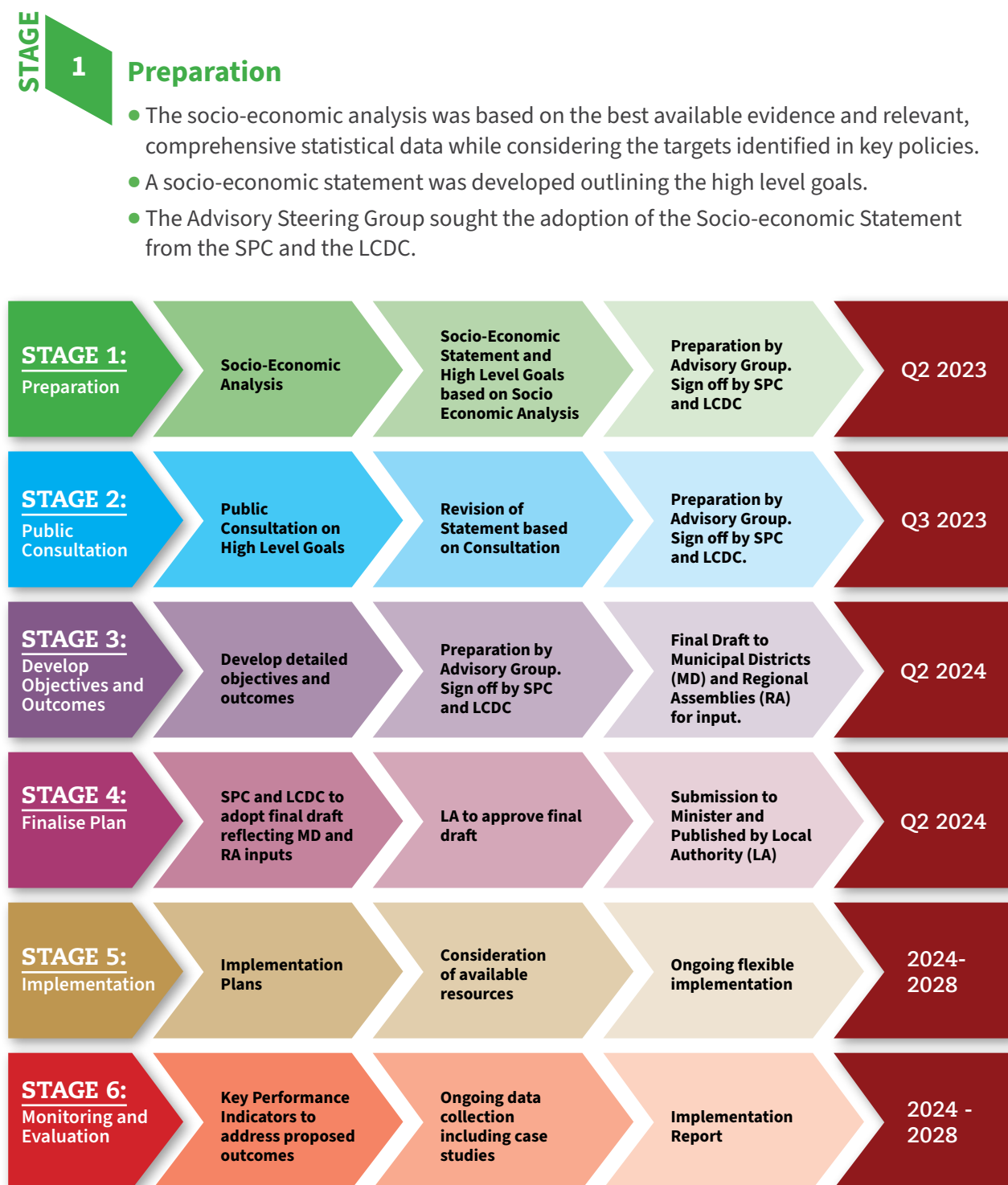


Figure 2.1 LECP Stages

STAGE**2****Public Consultation**

- The Socio-economic statement and high level goals were made available to the public for consultation. Every effort was made to carry out an inclusive consultation process by providing a variety of opportunities to engage with the process in accordance with the Guide for Inclusive Community Engagement in Local Planning and Decision Making and The Public Sector Duty - Section 42, of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014.
- The Advisory Steering group revised the socio-economic statement and high level goals based on the outputs of the consultation process and the revised statement was adopted by the SPC and LCDC.

STAGE**3****Develop objectives and outcomes**

- Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and sustainable actions were devised linking the high level goals to economic and community elements over a six year period which are supported in the implementation plan.

STAGE**4****Finalise Plan**

- The LECP was developed to include feedback from all stakeholders such as Economic Development Enterprise and Tourism Strategic Policy Committee (SPC), Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), Regional Assemblies, Municipal Districts, public consultation, agencies etc.
- Adoption of the final draft of the LECP by the Elected Members.
- The final LECP is then submitted to the Minister and published by Westmeath County Council.

STAGE**5****Implementation**

- Following adoption of the LECP, the lead agencies will progress the actions in accordance with the LECP Framework with appropriate participation from the LCDC and the SPC.

STAGE**6****Monitor and Evaluation**

- Ongoing monitoring and evaluation will be undertaken to ensure the achievement of the high-level goals and sustainable objectives by the Advisory Steering Group.

2.2 **ADVISORY STEERING GROUP**

While the adoption of the LECP is a reserved function of Westmeath County Council, the economic element of the plan was overseen by the Economic Enterprise and Tourism SPC and the community element was overseen by Westmeath LCDC.

In order to ensure that the preparation of the economic and community elements of the LECP are co-ordinated, an Advisory Steering Group was established. The Advisory Steering group assisted with the preparation, drafting, adoption, implementation and monitoring of the LECP.

The Advisory Steering Group consisted of nominees of Westmeath County Council, Westmeath LCDC, and the Economic Enterprise and Tourism SPC. The membership of the of the Advisory Steering Group are set out in Appendix 2 in addition to support provided by the staff in the Community Development, Westmeath County Council.

3. SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATEMENT AND HIGH-LEVEL GOALS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2023-2028 was developed to support the economic and community development of Westmeath over a six year period.

The aim of this report is to provide information on the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) to equip stakeholders to make informed decisions regarding the LECP.

The report will give an overview of the LECP, the stages involved, a County profile and High Level Goals to inform the Westmeath Local Economic and Community Plan 2023-2028.



3.2 BACKGROUND

The LECP is provided for by the Local Government Reform Act, 2014. The purpose of the LECP is to set out objectives and actions that support the economic and community development of Westmeath over the six year period of the LECP.

The first LECP was published from 2016-2021 and the new LECP provides an opportunity to reflect on the experiences of the last LECP and incorporate these learnings into the new LECP, thereby ensuring a robust plan for the next 6 years.

The LECP 2023-2028 is evidence based and developed in consultation with economic and community development stakeholders. In addition, the plan was informed by National, Regional, Local Strategies and statistical datasets. A key component to the successful development and implementation of the LECP is collaboration with internal and external stakeholders, thereby reflecting the goals and sustainable objectives of the citizens of Westmeath.

The LECP will consist of two components:-

- The Economic element – developed by the Economic Development Enterprise and Tourism Strategic Policy Committee (SPC).
- The Community element – developed by the Westmeath Local Community Development Committee (LCDC).

The LECP provided a means for all agencies to participate in economic and community development of Westmeath and to integrate their strategies and combine investment and resources to achieve common agreed SCOs and SEDOs.

An implementation plan is incorporated into the LECP which ensures that LECP is more agile and flexible facilitating emerging needs on an ongoing basis. The implementation plan also ensures improved reporting on the progress of the high level SCOs, SEDOs and outcomes.

3.3 VISION STATEMENT

The Vision of the LECP is to *“To create and facilitate sustainable economic and community development throughout the County that supports the health and well-being of the people of Westmeath, providing an attractive destination, as a place in which to live, work, invest, do business and visit, offering high quality employment and educational opportunities within sustainable communities whilst safeguarding the environmental, culture, heritage and tourism assets of the County”*.

3.4 MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of the LECP is to enhance the well-being and the quality of life of the people of Westmeath through sustainable economic and community development.

3.5 CORE VALUES

The following core values are applied throughout the LECP formulation, implementation and evaluation:-

Public Interest and Social Justice

All actions shall be guided by the needs of all the people of the county.

Consultation and Engagement

All actions will be identified through inclusive consultation and engagement with the stakeholders involved. The values and principles for collaboration and partnership working with the community and voluntary sector will guide the consultation process.

Co-ordination and Collaboration

Empowering communities through effective participation, co-ordination and collaboration to synergise the actions of all stakeholders including public, private and voluntary.

Maximising Outcomes and Value for Money

The LECP will be based on the management and deployment of resources in a manner that secures outcomes by maximising operational efficiency and value for money.

Equality and Human Rights

Ensure that the rights and dignity of all the people of Westmeath are considered throughout the consultation process, preparation and implementation of all of the actions identified in the Plan.

Sustainable Development Goals

The LECP will be closely aligned to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and informed by relevant legislation including national policies such as The National Planning Framework – Ireland 2040 Our Plan, The National Climate Change Action Plan and the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy. The UN Sustainable Development Goals are outlined in Figure 3.1 below:-



Figure 3.1 UN Sustainable Development Goals

3.6 COUNTY PROFILE

Located in the heart of Ireland, County Westmeath covers an area of 1,756 square kilometres and is historically known as the ‘Lake County’, rich in arts, culture, heritage and natural amenities.

There are four electoral areas in the County, Mullingar, Kinnegad, Moate and Athlone which in turn form the Mullingar-Kinnegad and Athlone-Moate Municipal Districts through which many of the local services are delivered.

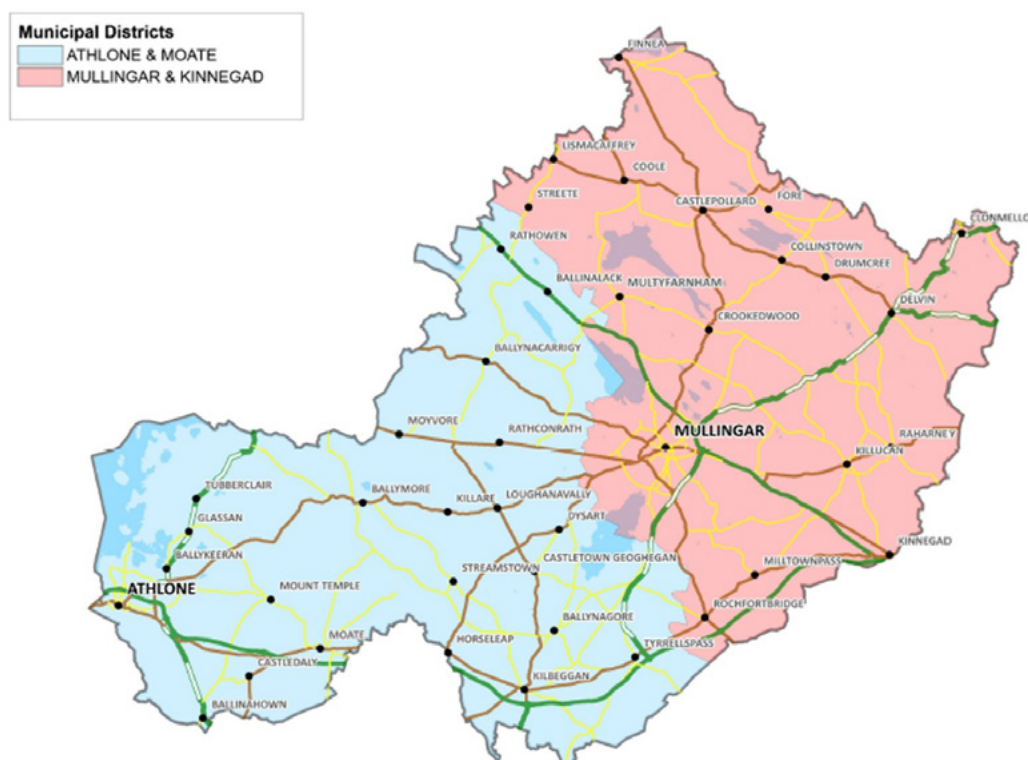


Figure 3.2 Map of Municipal District in Westmeath

Census 2016 recorded a population of 88,770 in Westmeath consisting of 44,688 females and 44,082 males, an increase of 3% since the previous census in 2011. 48.9% (43,435 persons) of the County’s population were recorded as living in urban areas and 51.1% (45,335 persons) living in rural areas.

During the period 2011-2016 the two main towns, Athlone and Mullingar, experienced a population increase of 5.9% (20,153 to 21,349) and 4.1% (20,103 to 20,928) respectively. Both settlements now exceed populations of 20,000. Although it should be noted that in the case of Athlone, this figure includes the population of Monksland. The combined population of Athlone and Mullingar represents a total of 47.6% of the County’s population. In 2011 this figure stood at 41.6%. Of the other larger towns in the County, a further two can be characterised as ‘urban’ – Moate and Kinnegad. During this period, these towns grew by 1.17% and 3.1% respectively.

Four more towns in the County recorded populations of more than 1,000 inhabitants (Rochfortbridge, Killucan-Rathwire, Kilbeggan, and Castlepollard). Of these, only Rochfortbridge experienced minor decline(-1.4%) between 2011-2016.

The remaining three settlements experienced growth rates of between 3.4% and 11.7%. The figure of 11.7% relates to Killucan / Rathwire, which grew by 144 persons during this period, reaching a total of 1,370 inhabitants. Castlepollard also experienced significant growth during this period, increasing by 11.6% to 1,163 inhabitants.

Population trends, economic trends and societal changes as outlined in the below infographic, influenced the decision-making process and outputs of the LECP. Having awareness and understanding of these societal changes is critical in determining future LECP sustainable objectives. As the main provider of local services, we must be aware of these changes and adopt strategies and plans to meet changing societal needs.

The Technological University of the Shannon (TUS) is the only third level institution in the County and was designated a Technological University on the 1st of October, 2021. TUS is now a QS 5 Star University having achieved the highest possible number of stars for exceptional performance and quality standards. TUS is unique in geographical reach and regional composition, bordering almost half of Ireland's 26 counties. Therefore, it has a national impact with a major regional focus delivering for all its stakeholders, in the Midlands and Midwest regions of Ireland which is significant for the overall economic development of the County and Region. TUS has considerable scale with circa 15,000 students and circa 1,800 staff. TUS offers a comprehensive programme portfolio with access points from Level 6 to 10 of the National Framework of qualifications and a broad range of educational opportunities for full-time, part-time, flexible and life-long learning, apprenticeship and international education.



A profile of the county of origin of students for the 2022-23 academic year is provided in Figure 3.3 illustrating that 31 Counties of Ireland are represented. The profile further illustrates the County of origin for both TUS Midwest and TUS Midlands and illustrates the different geographical areas that the respective campuses primarily draw students from. While TUS Midwest campuses draw from a wide geographic area, the importance of Counties Limerick, Clare and Tipperary is evident. Similarly, TUS Midlands draws students from a wide geographic profile and the importance of a broad range of Midlands Counties is evidenced.

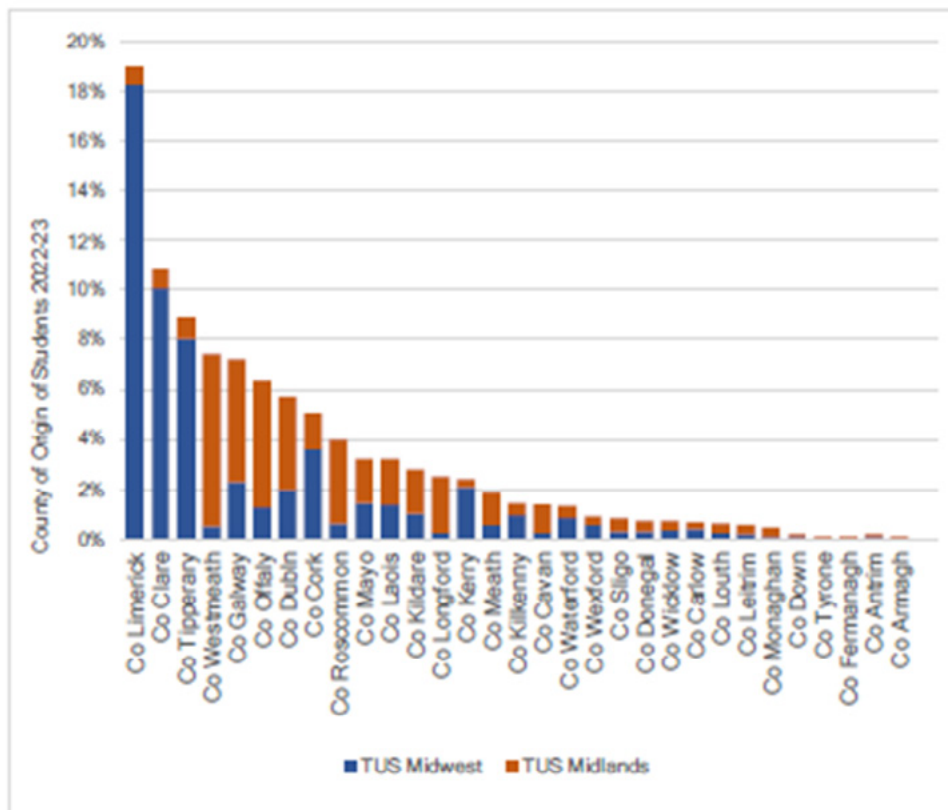
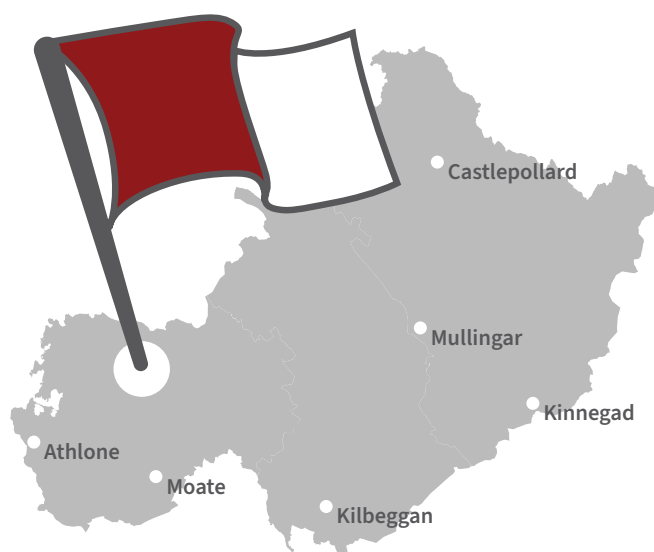


Figure 3.3 The Proportion of Student Attending TUS Midlands and TUS Midwest Campuses from the Counties of origin as indicated

(TUS Institutional Profile CINTE 2023-2024)

3.7 CENSUS DATA 2016



Population By Town

Town	Population
Athlone (Monksland/Bealnamullia)	21,349
Mullingar	20,928
Moate	2,763
Kinnegad	2,745
Kilbeggan	1,199
Castlepollard	1,163

Top 3 Non-Irish Nationalities in Westmeath



Population of Westmeath

88,770

Average Age of Population



31,813 Private Households in the county

Average no. of persons per household 2.8



Population By Geographical Area

48.9% living in town



51.1% living in rural area

Total persons living alone in the County in 2016 was 7,482



i.e. 8.5% of all those living in private households

11,370 aged 65 and over in Westmeath



Average disposable income of €18,430



the highest average in the midlands

87% of the Population recorded as having good and very good health as per the latest CSO figure



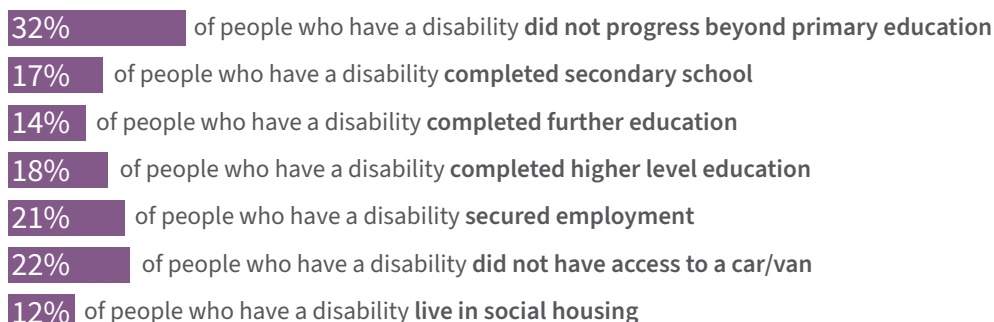
Deprivation Profiles based on 2016 Census total Population of 88,770



Disability Profile (based on 2016 Census)



13% of population in Westmeath have a disability*



*<https://www.disability-federation.ie/publications/disability-profile-westmeath/>

Health



% with **very good** health **58.6%**



% with **good** health **28.7%**



% with **bad or very bad** health **1.6%**



Disability



No of people with a disability **11,887**

as % of total population **13.4%**

No. of **females** **6,109**



No. of **males** **5,778**



Carers



No. of Carers **3,514**

Carers as % of population **4.0%**



No. of hours care provided per week **122,657**

Carers under 15 **83**



as a % of carers **2.4%**

WHERE WE WORK

34,935 persons resident in the county who were 'working'

A total of **4,786 businesses** in Westmeath*

5,154
Wholesale and Retail Trade

14.6%

4,203
Health & Social Work

11.9%



4,085
Manufacturing

11.6%



3,118
Education

8.8%



2,223
Public Administration & Defence

6.3%

*CSO 2017

COMMUTERS IN/OUT OF WESTMEATH

No. working in Westmeath

19,284

No. working outside Westmeath

8,481

No. commuting into Westmeath

9,867

Net gain/loss in working population

1,386

Average travel time of commuting workers

28.8 minutes



WALKED

8.4%



USED PUBLIC TRANSPORT

3.6%



TRAVEL BY CAR

72.9%



CYCLED

1.4%

GETTING TO WORK

EDUCATION ATTAINMENT

13.9%
Primary

16.4%
Secondary (lower)

30.9%
Secondary (upper)

38.8%
Third Level

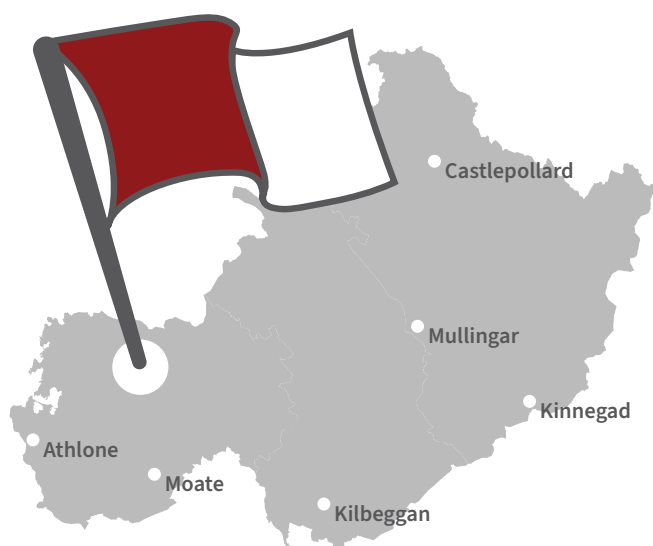


census 2016 RESULTS
www.cso.ie

Education figures relate to those over 15 years of age only

3.8 CENSUS DATA 2022 – PRELIMINARY RESULTS

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) published the Preliminary Results from Census 2022. The results provide provisional figures for Ireland's total population count on Census Night (3 April 2022), including the first breakdown of the number of females and males in the country. They also include a snapshot of the housing stock data.



Population

Population of Westmeath
95,840

An Increase of 8%
since 2016



31,813 Private Households in the county

Average
no. of persons
per household
2.8

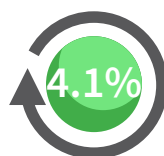


Housing

Westmeath
Housing Stock
38,411



An Increase of
4.1% since 2016



Westmeath
Total Housing
vacancies 3,193

A decrease of
14% since 2016

CSO June 2022

Homeless



50 adults which includes
families were in **Emergency
Accommodation** in January
2023



Westmeath
New Dwelling
Completions
Q4 2022 96

An increase of 67%
since
Q4 2016

Dept Housing, Local Government and Heritage 2022

Census 2022 preliminary data

Employment

Persons
resident in the
Westmeath
Working as per
2022 census
42,077

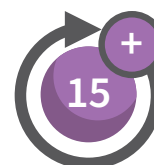


Population aged 15 and
over self-employed with paid
employees 2250

Population aged 15 and over self-
employed no paid employees 3455



An increase of 19% since
2016



Unemployed
Persons aged 15
years and over in
Westmeath 4,408



An decrease of 33% since
2016

CSO Labour Force Survey Q1 2022

3.9 CENSUS DATA 2022 – PRELIMINARY RESULTS CONTD...

In Westmeath the preliminary figures show that the population on the 3rd of April, 2022 was recorded at 95,840. The population included 48,318 females and 47,522 males. This is an increase of 7,070 (+8%) since 2016. This accounts for a natural increase (i.e. births minus deaths) of 3,721 and an estimated net inward migration (i.e. population change minus natural increase) of 3,349. The population in the state has grown from 4,761,865 in 2016 to 5,123,536 in 2022, which is an increase of +7.6%.

In accordance with the Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES) 2019 – 2031, the population projected growth is expected to increase to 102,500 by 2031.

By 2031 the National Planning Framework states that the population of Westmeath is predicted to be in the range of 100,000-102,500. At the higher projected growth rate, this means that the population of the County will grow by approximately 13,730 people from its 2016 base (or approximately 11,230 people at the lower growth rate). By 2026, it is envisaged that the population of Westmeath will grow by 9,730 people at the higher projected rate to reach 98,500 (or 7,730 people at the lower growth rate).

	Preliminary Results 2022	Census 2016	Change	Population Growth Target 2026 Low-High	Population
Population Westmeath	95,840	88,770	+8.0%	96,500 – 98,500	100,000 – 102,500

Figure 3.4 Census Updates 2016 – 2022 - Population

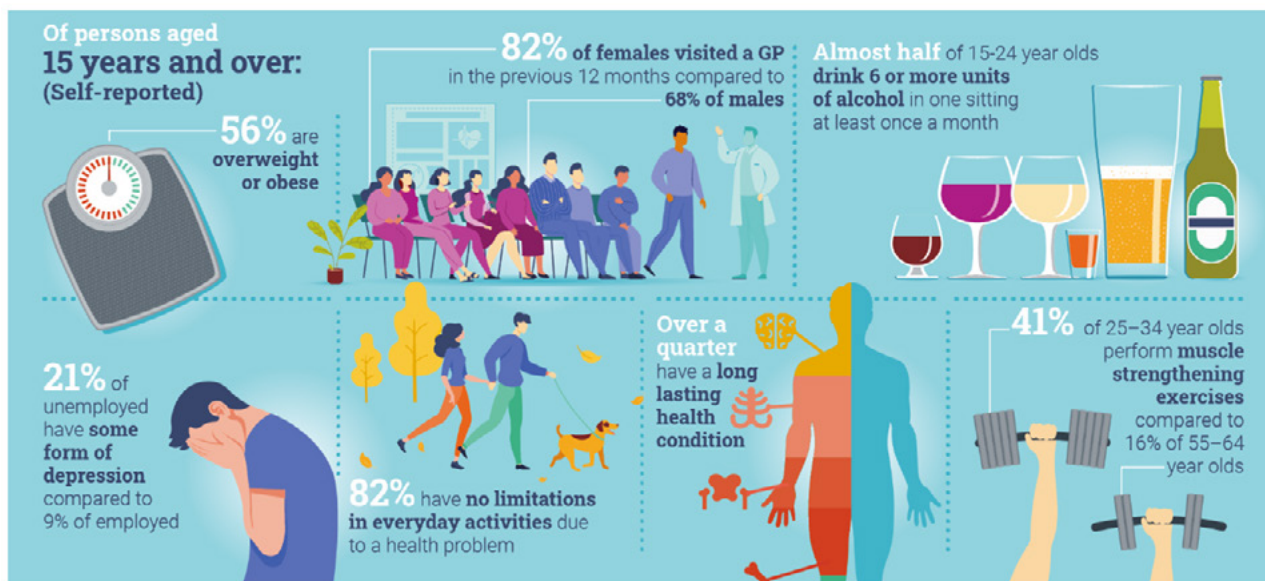
The total housing stock in Westmeath was 38,411 on the 3rd April, 2022. This shows an increase of 1,521 (+4.1%) since 2016. There were 3,193 vacant dwellings, which was 535 fewer than in 2016, (-14.4%). This does not include holiday homes, of which there were 334.

	Preliminary Results 2022	Census 2016	Change
Housing Stock Westmeath	38,411	36,890	+4.1%
Housing Stock State	2,124,590	2,003,645	+6.0%
Vacancy Westmeath	3,193	3,728	-14.4%
Vacancy State	166,752	183,312	-9.0%

Figure 3.5 Census Updates 2016 – 2022 – Housing Stock

Irish Health Survey 2019 - Main Results

Irish Health Survey 2019 – Main Results



CSO statistical publication, 11 December 2020, 11am

Poverty Indicators by Health Status - Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) 2022

Poverty Indicators by Health Status

Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) 2022



Persons aged 16 years and over, severely limited by a health problem in activities people usually do*

27.4%
are at risk of Poverty

compared with
10.1% not limited

24.0% are unable to
afford to buy new clothes
(not second-hand)

compared with
6.8% not limited

22.8% are unable to
afford to keep their
home adequately warm

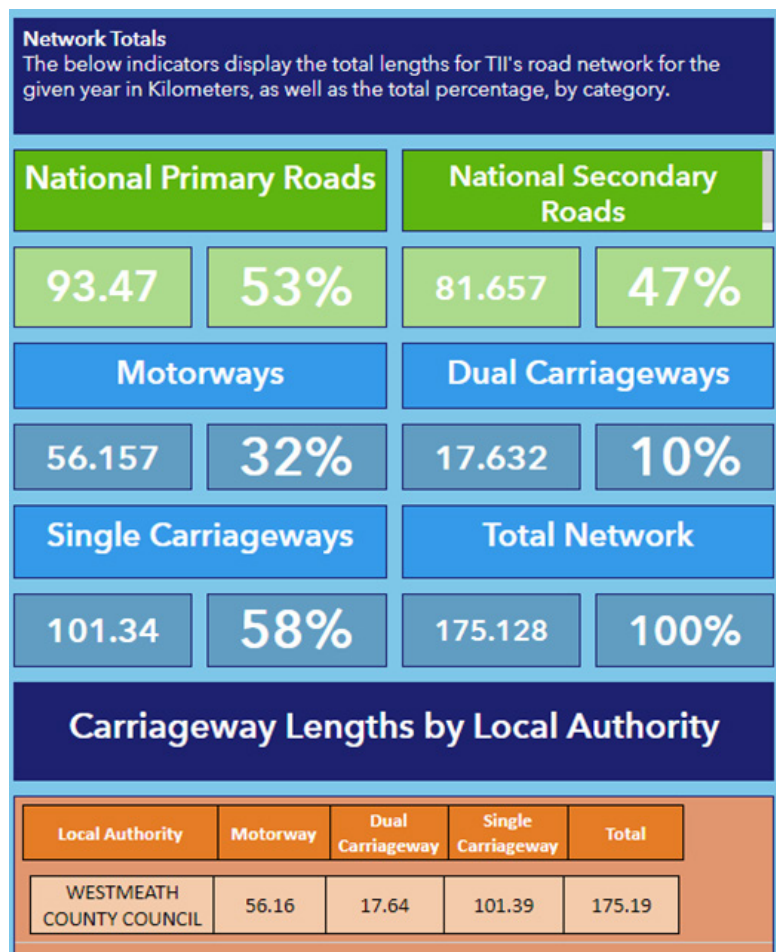
compared with
5.4% not limited

19.4% are unable to
afford to get together with
family or friends once
a month for a drink or meal
compared with
7.5% not limited

* Self-reported limitations in usual activities for at least six months prior to their interview date.

Statistics on this infographic do not reflect revisions made to population benchmarks due to the availability of Census 2022. It will be updated at some point in 2024. 07/03/2024

Westmeath Road Network



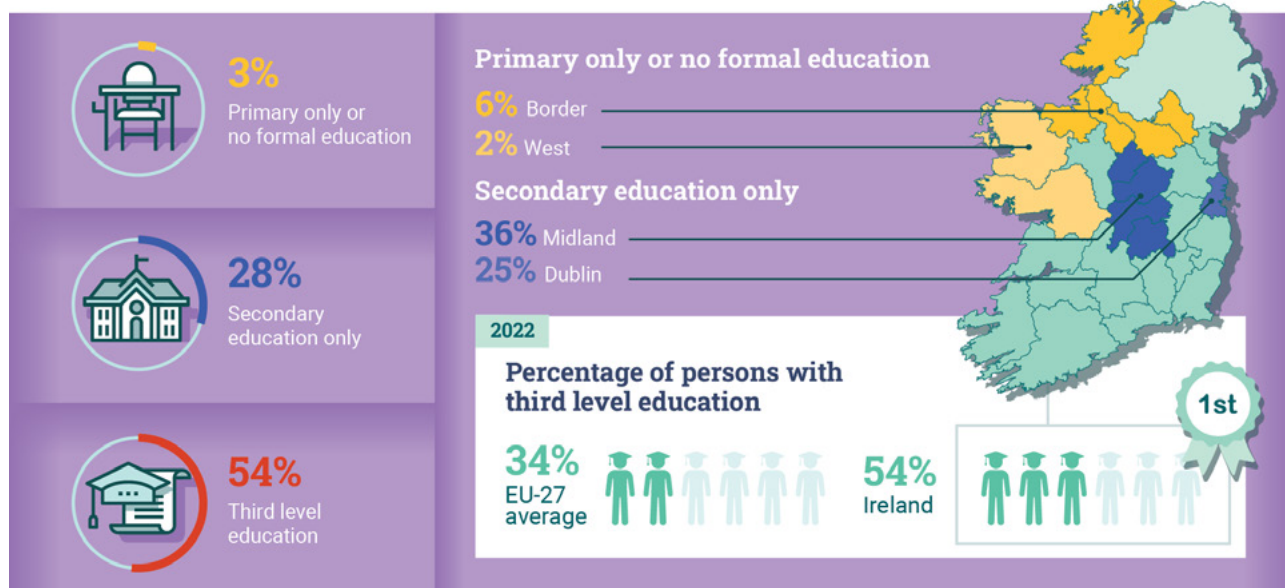
In Westmeath, there has been a 74% employment growth from 2014 to 2023 resulting in 4,582 direct jobs and 3,655 indirect jobs across a range of life science, manufacturing, tech, financial and business services. There are 28 IDA clients in Westmeath. Almost 3,200 people were employed by Enterprise Ireland backed companies in Westmeath in 2023 an increase of 84 (3%) net jobs on 2022. The Westmeath Local Enterprise Office financially supported over 270 small businesses employing 1,600 people and facilitated the creation of 208 new jobs in 2023 resulting in the formation of 145 net jobs.

Educational Attainment Thematic Report 2023



Educational Attainment Thematic Report 2023

Highest level of education attained by persons aged 25 - 64 years



3.10 HIGH LEVEL GOALS

The development of the LECP is informed by the vision for Local Government and is part of the overall process for national transformation set out in Project Ireland 2040 which includes the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the National Development Plan (NDP). The LECP will be the primary mechanism at local level to bring forward actions arising from local, regional, national and international policies and strategies as set out in Appendix 1. The LECP sits within the context of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), and is consistent with the County Development Plan.

The main features of the LECP framework results in High Level Goals (HLG) for the integrated plan which will be supported by specific Sustainable Objectives under respective economic and community streams. Each objective will in turn consider potential outcomes and high level indicators for the six year LECP.

In addition, the previous LECP goals have been reflected upon in order to assess ongoing work and to address matters including the prioritisation of goals where appropriate. The success of the plan will be determined by setting realistic, relevant, achievable and aspirational goals through a collaborative process. Stakeholder engagement ultimately provides for better outcomes where all citizens can enjoy a better quality of life to live, work and invest in the county.

The Advisory Steering Group, the Local Community Development Committee and the Economic Development Enterprise and Tourism Strategic Policy Committee, who have responsibility for the plan, have identified six high level goals for the county, to be addressed over the lifetime of the LECP.

The following High Level Goals reflects the vision statement and aims to promote and support economic development and local community development over the six year period of the LECP which are set out hereunder:

HLG 1: Support a proactive response to the challenge of **climate change**.

HLG 2: Develop an inclusive and equitable society that supports our **vibrant urban and rural communities**.

HLG 3: Improve **health** and **well-being** of our citizens.

HLG 4: Support sustainable **economic activity, employment** and **education** towards a smart green economy.

HLG 5: Enhance **economic and social infrastructure**, including housing.

HLG 6: Promote and protect our rich **culture** and **heritage** and realise our **tourism** potential.

**The
Vision
of the
LECP is...**

“To create and facilitate sustainable economic and community development throughout the County that supports the health and well-being of the people of Westmeath, providing an attractive destination, as a place in which to live, work, invest, do business and visit, offering high quality employment and educational opportunities within sustainable communities whilst safeguarding the environmental, cultural, heritage and tourism assets of the County.”



4. CONSULTATION REPORT

This Consultation Report provides the findings and analysis of the primary data collected from the focus group workshops and the online questionnaires. The focus group workshops were held in the six largest populated towns, as identified in the Westmeath (2023) Socio-economic Statement². This report also provides an outline of the results from the online questionnaire, which was available to the general public. The public consultation was based on six High Level Goals (HLG's) contained in the Socio-economic Statement.

A summary of the key priority objectives identified by the focus groups and the respondents to the questionnaire under each of the HLG's is provided. Results are presented in graph format. Finally, this report will conclude with the key findings from this primary data research that will form part of the basis of the outcomes.

4.1 THE FINDINGS FROM THE FOCUS GROUP WORKSHOPS

An overview of the results from the focus group workshops is provided underpinning the analysis section. To ensure the widest possible engagement, eight workshops were held over a one month period. The general public attended workshops held in the highest populated towns in Westmeath namely Athlone, Mullingar, Moate, Kinnegad, Kilbeggan and Castlepollard in addition to an online workshop. Following an analysis of the HLG's and the priority objectives which were highlighted by the attendees at public workshops, key agency stakeholders were identified and invited to attend a half-day Agency workshop on the 27th of June in Mullingar. Presentations were provided at each of the workshops to explain the purpose of the workshops and to highlight the need for the stakeholder's valued input (Appendix 1).

Six focus groups were each allocated one of the HLG's to consider and thereafter all groups were invited to comment on all of the HLG's. The focus groups were asked to prioritise their top three objectives under each HLG. Images from the focus group workshops are set out in Appendix 2.

The online focus group workshop was held on MS Teams on the 20th of June. Following the presentation, focus groups were assigned to breakout rooms, focussing on each of the HLG's.

The purpose of the agency workshop was to:

- highlight the HLG's
- outline the priority objectives that emerged from the public focus group workshops
- establish if the agencies would take the lead in delivering outcomes and,
- obtain the agencies' priority objectives.

² Westmeath Local Economic and Community Plan Socio-economic Statement, 2023.

The participation of all stakeholders throughout the complete process is considered essential for the successful development and implementation of the Local Economic Community Plan.

A total of 120 attendees participated in the focus groups. The prioritised objectives attained from the focus groups were collated and analysed. The highest-ranked priority objectives under each of the six HLG's are displayed below in bar charts presenting the categorical data.

HLG 1 – Workshop priority objectives to support a proactive response to the challenge of climate change

Under HLG 1 there were 34 objectives provided by the stakeholders that attended the eight workshops.

The five objectives below were the most requested under this HLG as illustrated in Figure 4.1.

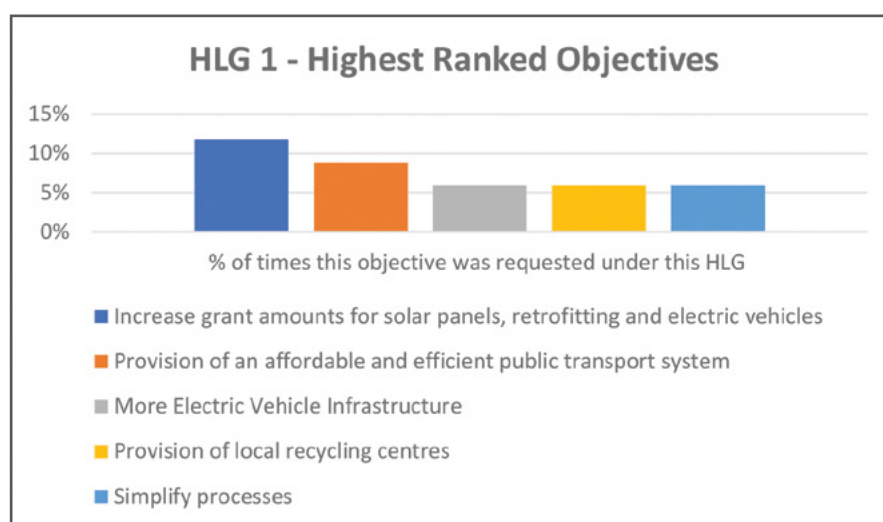


Figure 4.1 Workshop HLG 1 priority objectives

HLG 2 – Develop an inclusive and equitable society that supports our vibrant urban and rural communities

There were 31 objectives provided by the stakeholders under HLG 2. The following five objectives were the most in demand as indicated in Figure 4.2.

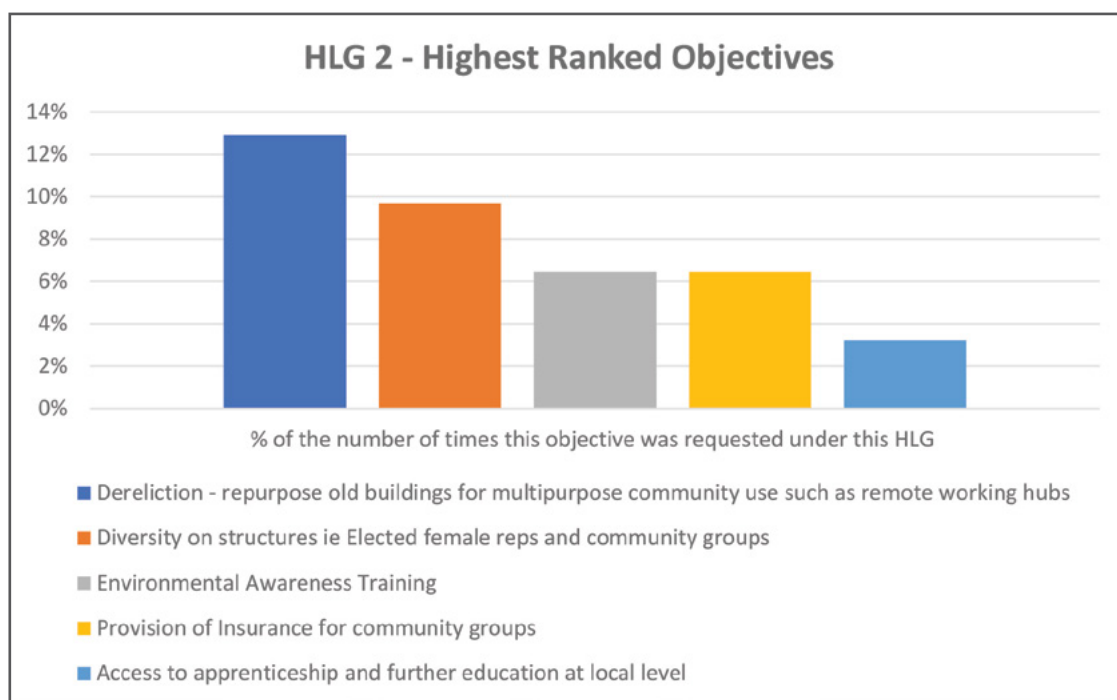


Figure 4.2 Workshop HLG 2 priority objectives



HLG 3 – Improve the health and well-being of our citizens

There were 48 objectives proposed under HLG 3. The following six objectives are those that were prioritised by the stakeholders as set out in Figure 4.3.



Figure 4.3 Workshop HLG 3 priority objectives



HLG 4 – Support sustainable economic activity, employment and education towards a smart green economy

Stakeholders at the workshops proposed 41 objectives under HLG 4 and prioritised the following five objectives as set out in Figure 4.4.

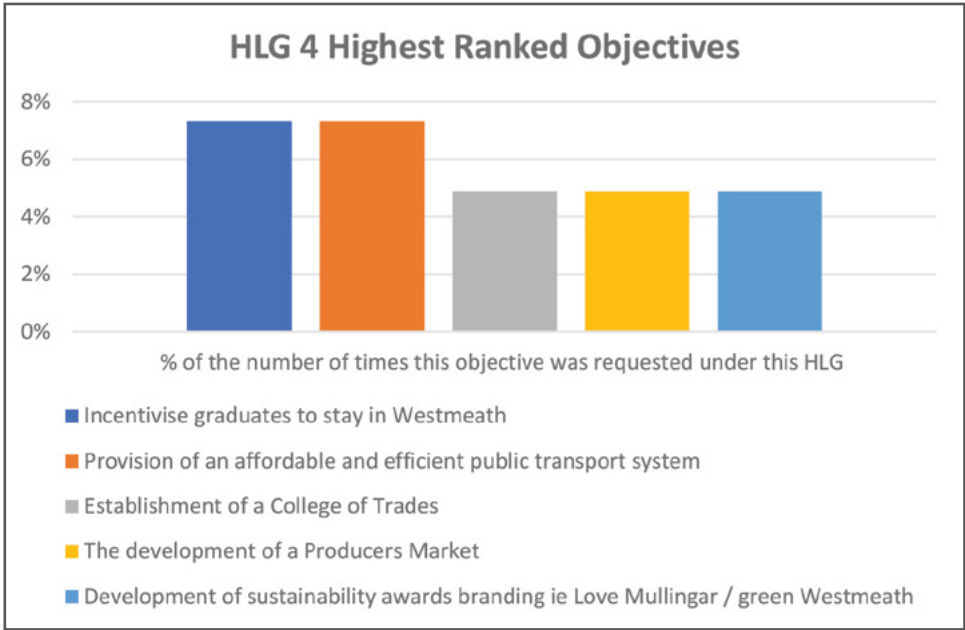


Figure 4.4 Workshop HLG 4 priority objectives



HLG 5 – Enhance economic and social infrastructure including housing

There were 34 objectives provided by the stakeholders under HLG 5. The following five objectives were prioritised as indicated in Figure 4.5.

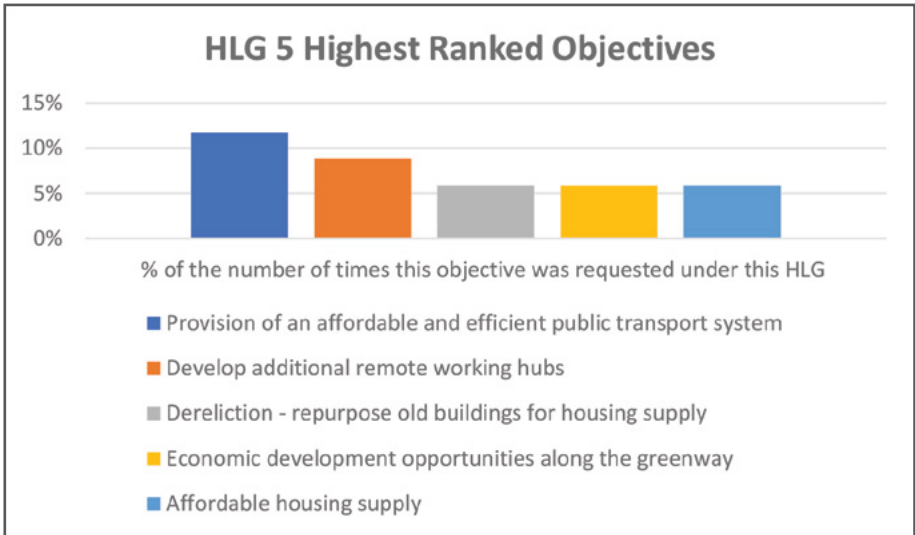


Figure 4.5 Workshop HLG 5 priority objectives



HLG 6 – Promote and protect our rich culture and heritage and realise our rich tourism potential

There were 37 objectives provided by the stakeholders under HLG 6. The following five objectives were the most in demand as indicated in Figure 4.6.



Figure 4.6 Workshop HLG 6 priority objectives



Overall, there was a total of 225 objectives provided from the eight focus group workshops. An overview of all the priority objectives is provided in Figure 4.7 below.

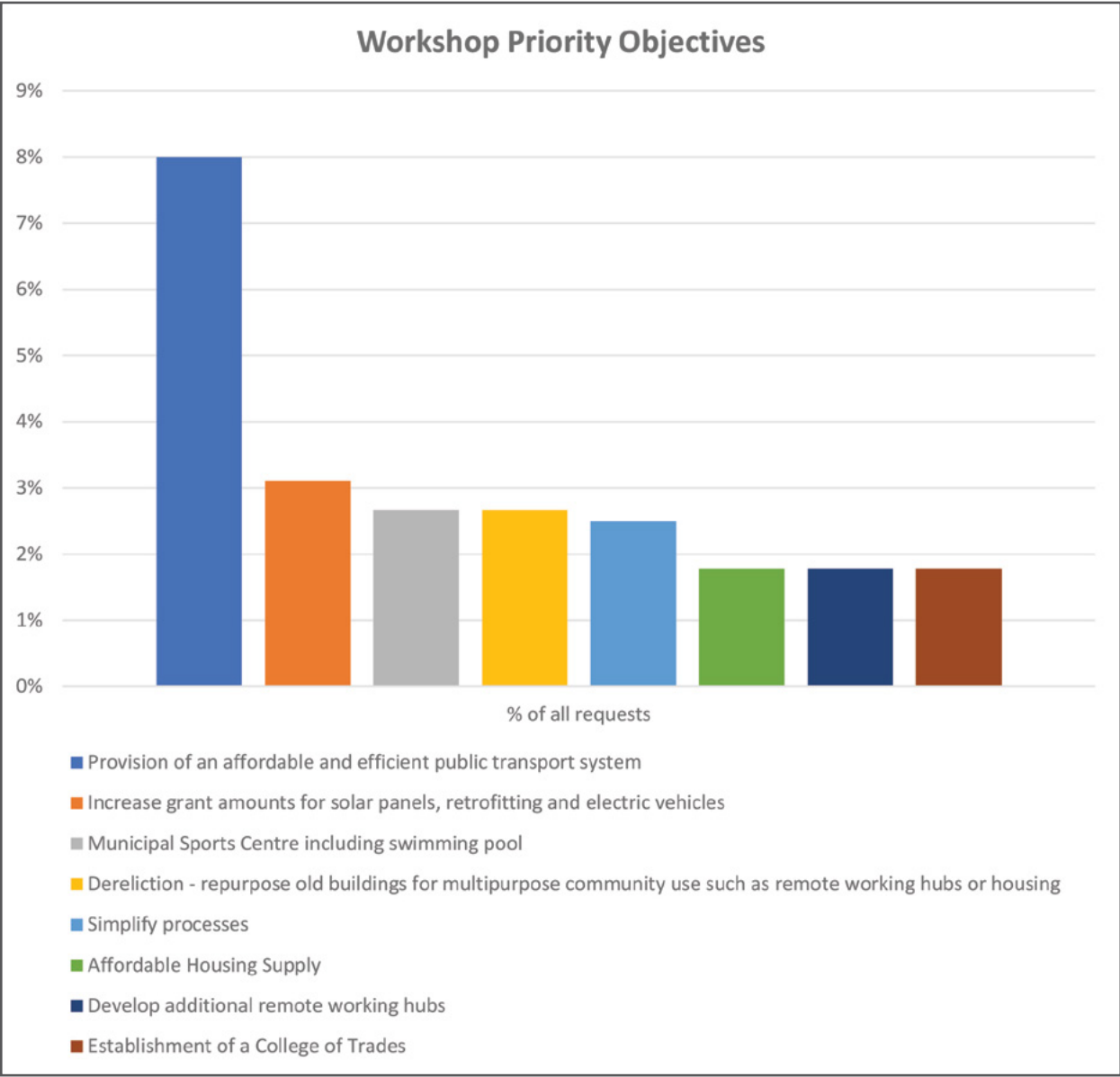


Figure 4.7 Workshop priority objectives

4.2 THE FINDINGS FROM THE PUBLIC ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

This section will provide an overview of the results from the public online questionnaire (Appendix 2) which was made available to the general public to engage with from the 30th May to the 30th June. The entire population of Westmeath including Statutory and Sectoral Interests were identified as the key stakeholders as indicated by the LECP Guidelines 2021³. The online questionnaire was regularly advertised on the Council's website, through the WPPN as well as all traditional media outlets. Participants voluntarily and anonymously completed the questionnaire. There was a total of 96 responses received from the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was to serve three purposes. Firstly, to ascertain if any actions in the previous plan needed to be carried forward to the new LECP. Secondly, to gain an understanding of the participant's socio-economic status and thirdly, to capture the views of the stakeholders concerning the six HLG's.

Section one of the questionnaire

Section one of the questionnaire specifically targeted lead agencies in the previous LECP and sought information on objectives and actions to be considered in the new LECP.

The first question enquired if the participant was completing the questionnaire on behalf of an agency.

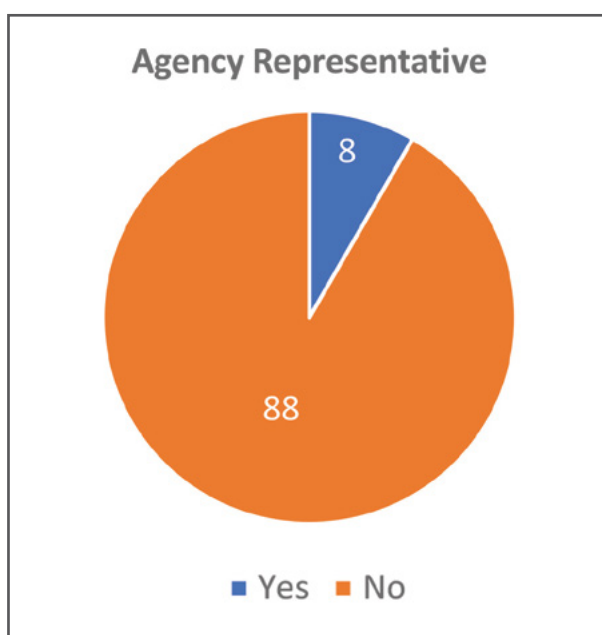


Figure 4.8 Number of Agency Representatives

Out of the 96 participants that completed the questionnaire, eight were representing an agency and two of the respondents indicated that their agency was involved in the previous LECP. The eight agencies highlighted the need for additional support for disability and mental health, charity activities, job opportunities for the Ukrainians, inclusion for the vision impaired and close alignment with the Midland Regional Enterprise Plan.

To gain a greater understanding of the objectives needed to enhance economic and community development further information was attained from stakeholders at the agency workshop.

³ gov.ie - Ministers Humphreys and O'Brien launch 'Local Economic and Community Plans Guidelines 2021' (www.gov.ie)

Section two of the questionnaire

Section two of the questionnaire sought information about the 96 respondents who completed the questionnaire as follows:

- Connection with Westmeath
- Respondent Age Category
- Gender
- Employment Status
- Working Arrangements
- Work Location
- Social Status

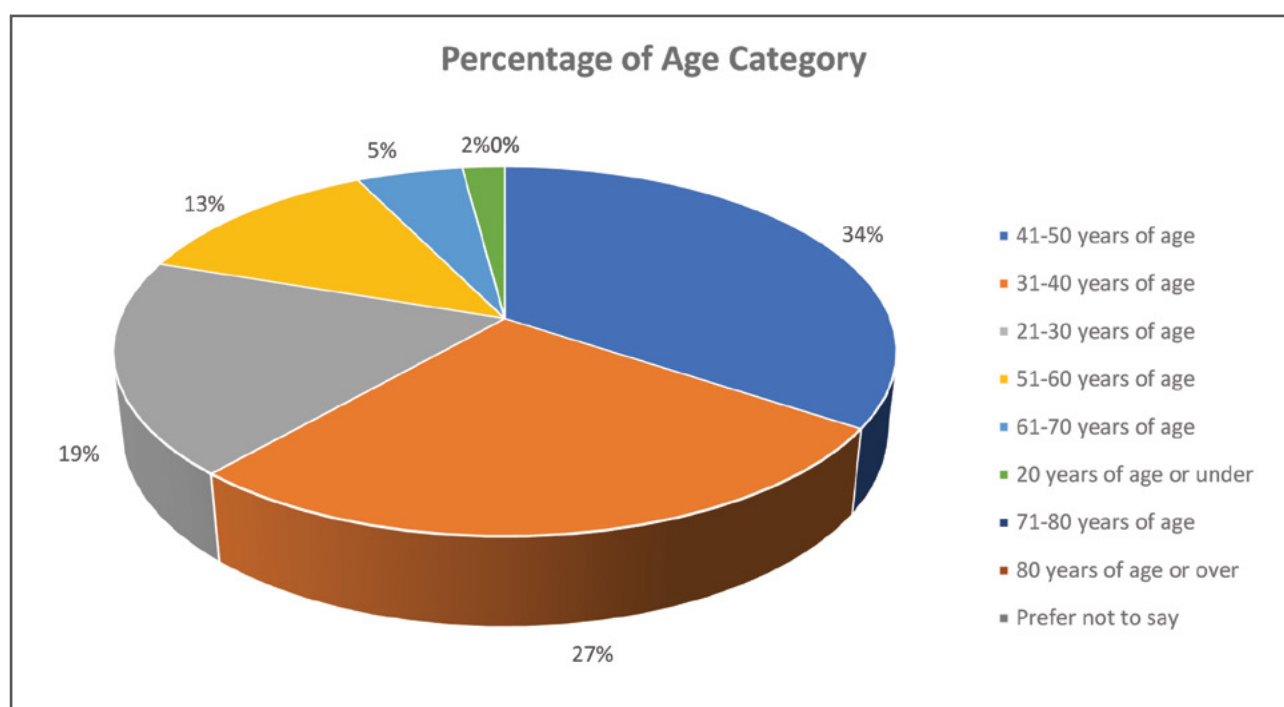


Figure 4.9 Percentage Age Category

Overall there was a good level of participation from people with connections to the county with a high percentage working in the county. There was also a good representation from both males and females of which the majority were in the 41-50 age category. The results also showed that the under-20 and the 80-plus age categories were poorly represented. In general, participants represented a good cross-section of the population of Westmeath in terms of close linkages to the county, age, gender, working status and minority groups.

Section three of the questionnaire

Section three of the questionnaire requested information relating to the HLG's.

In accordance with the public consultation feedback the following HLG's were considered a priority.

- **HLG 1** - Support a proactive response to the challenge of climate change.
- **HLG 2** - Develop an inclusive and equitable society that supports our vibrant urban and rural communities.
- **HLG 3** - Improve health and well-being of our citizens.
- **HLG 4** - Support sustainable economic activity, employment and education towards a smart green economy.
- **HLG 5** - Enhance economic and social infrastructure, including housing.
- **HLG 6** - Promote and protect our rich culture and heritage and realise our tourism potential.

Question 15 enquired about the preferred measures under HLG 1 to combat climate change as set out in Figure 4.10.

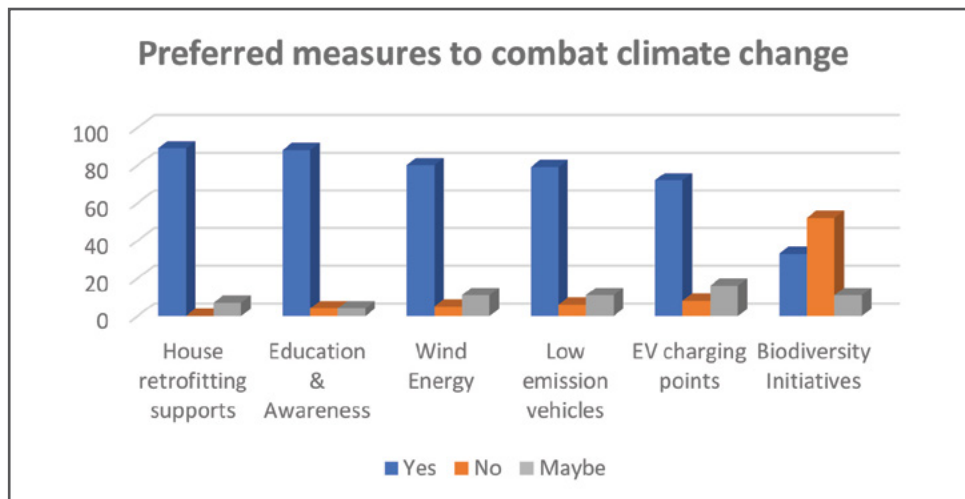


Figure 4.10 Preferred measures to combat climate change

Question 16 asked the participants to rate aspects in their community under HLG 2, from very good to very poor, as demonstrated in Figure 4.11.

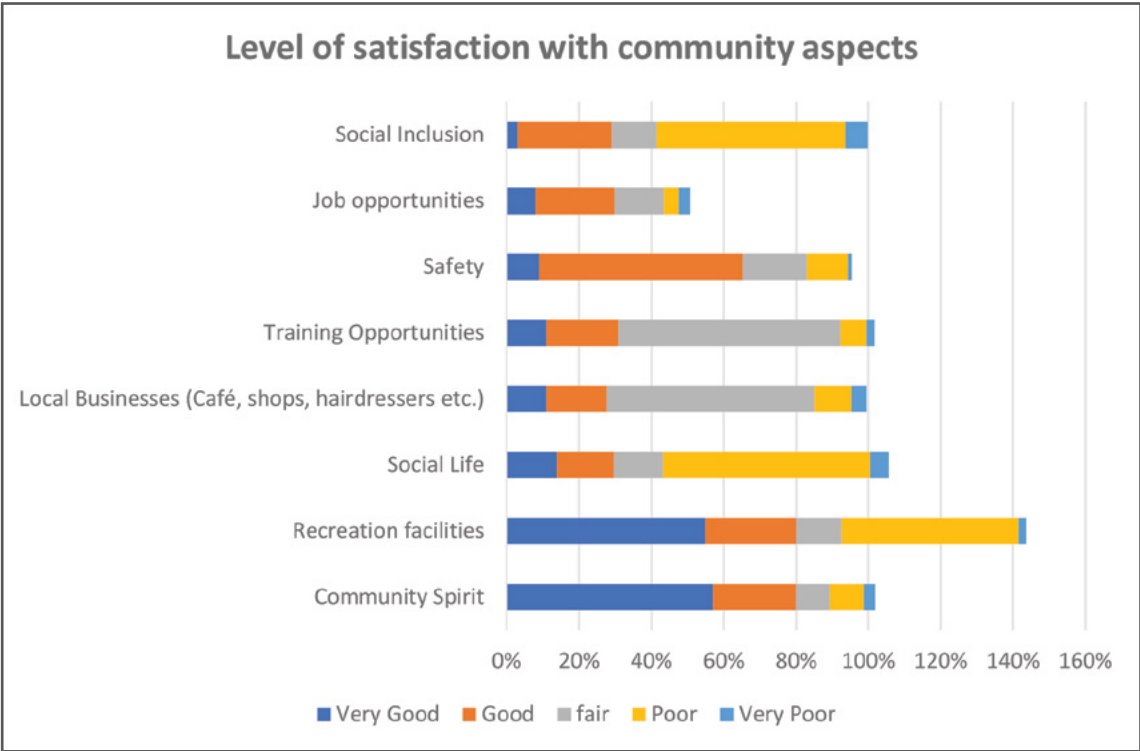


Figure 4.11 Level of satisfaction with community aspects

Question 17 sought to find out the preferred health and wellbeing initiatives under HLG 3 as outlined in Figure 4.12.

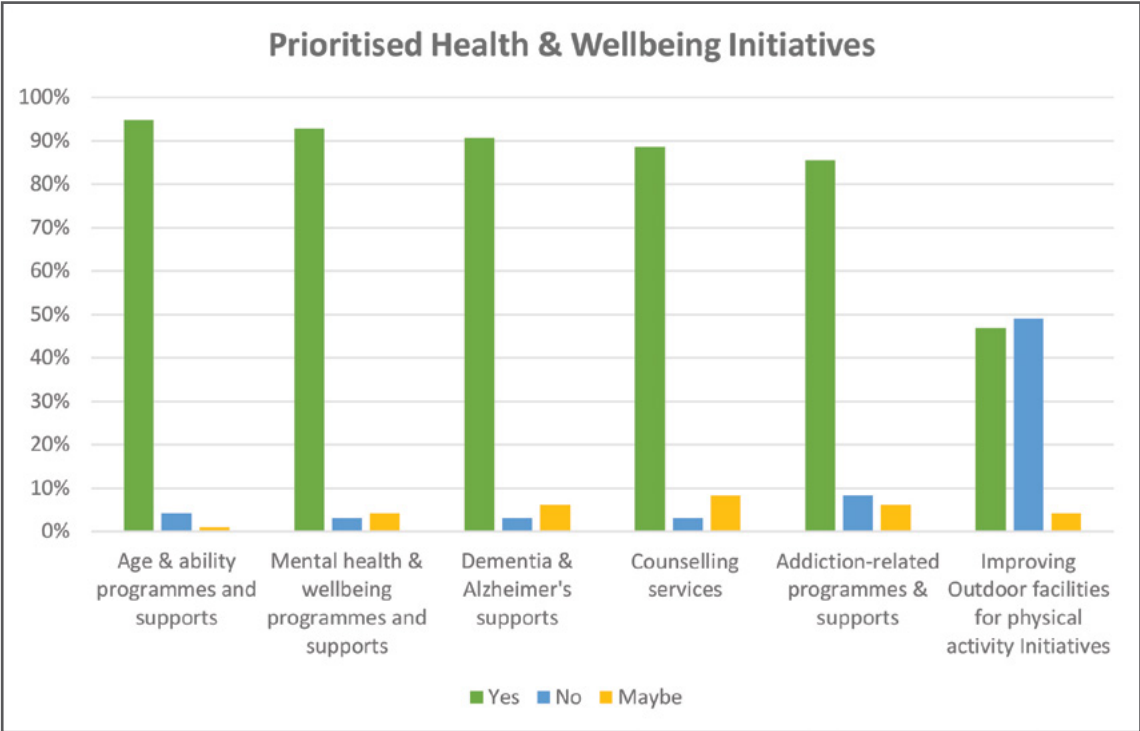


Figure 4.12 Priority health and well-being initiatives

Question 18 asked the participants to rank the HLG 4 priority objectives in order, in terms of supporting sustainable economic activity, employment and education towards a smart green economy as illustrated in Figure 4.13.

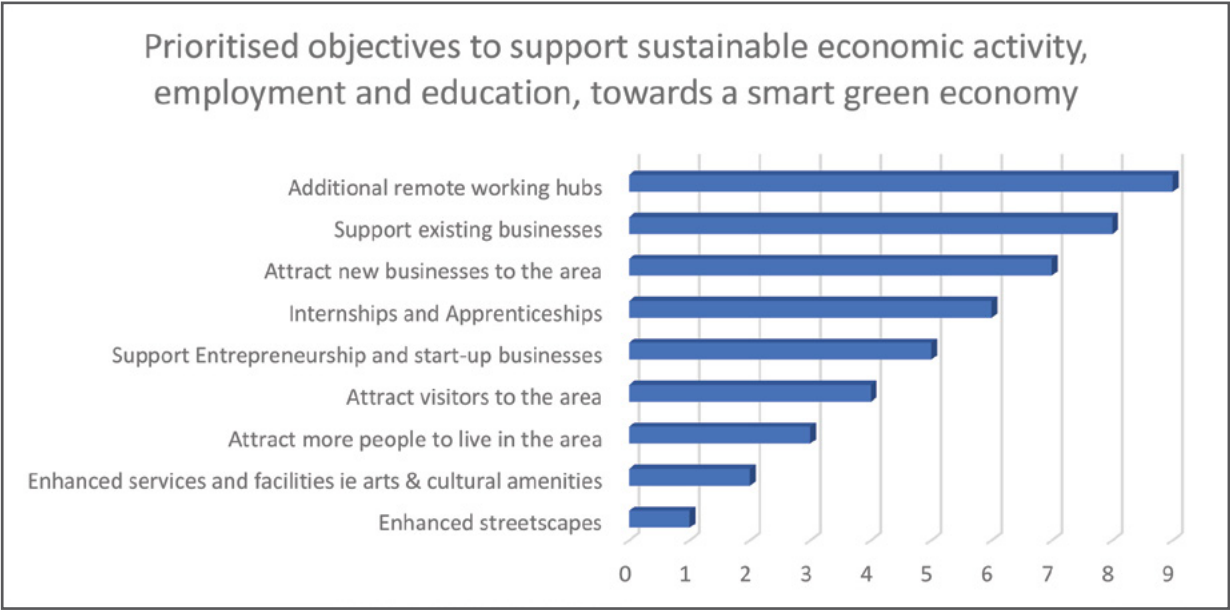


Figure 4.13 *Prioritised objectives to support sustainable economic activity, employment and education, towards a smart green economy*

Question 19 ranked the HLG 5 priority objectives to enhance economic and social infrastructure, including housing as depicted in Figure 4.14.

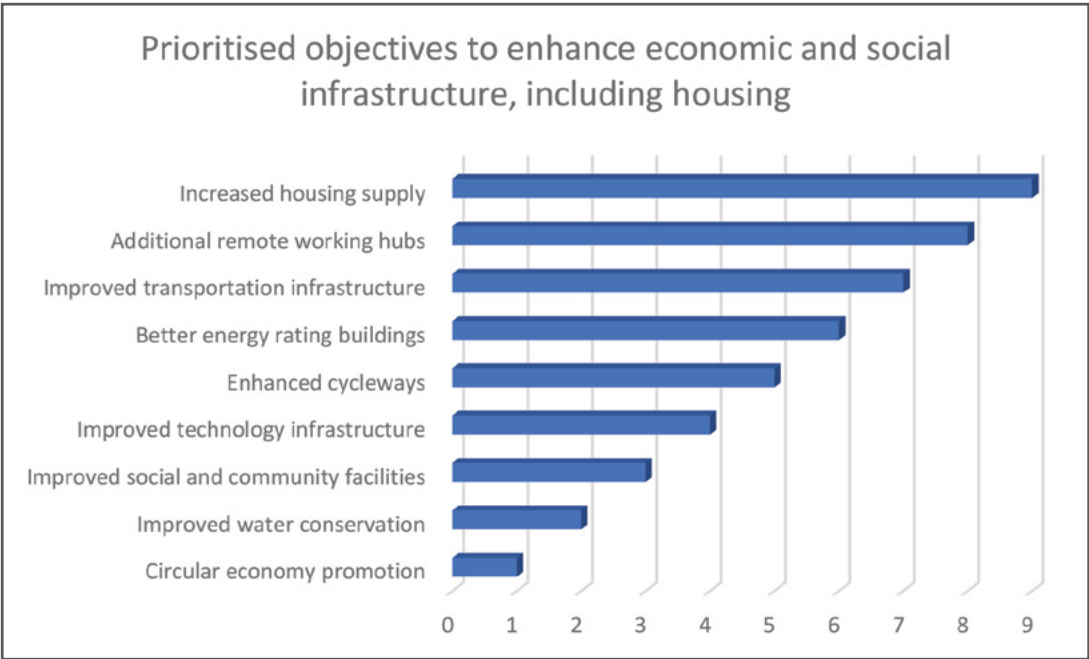


Figure 4.14 *Prioritised objectives to enhance economic and social infrastructure, including housing*

Question 20 asked participants to rank HLG 6 priority objectives to realise our heritage potential as set out in Figure 4.15.

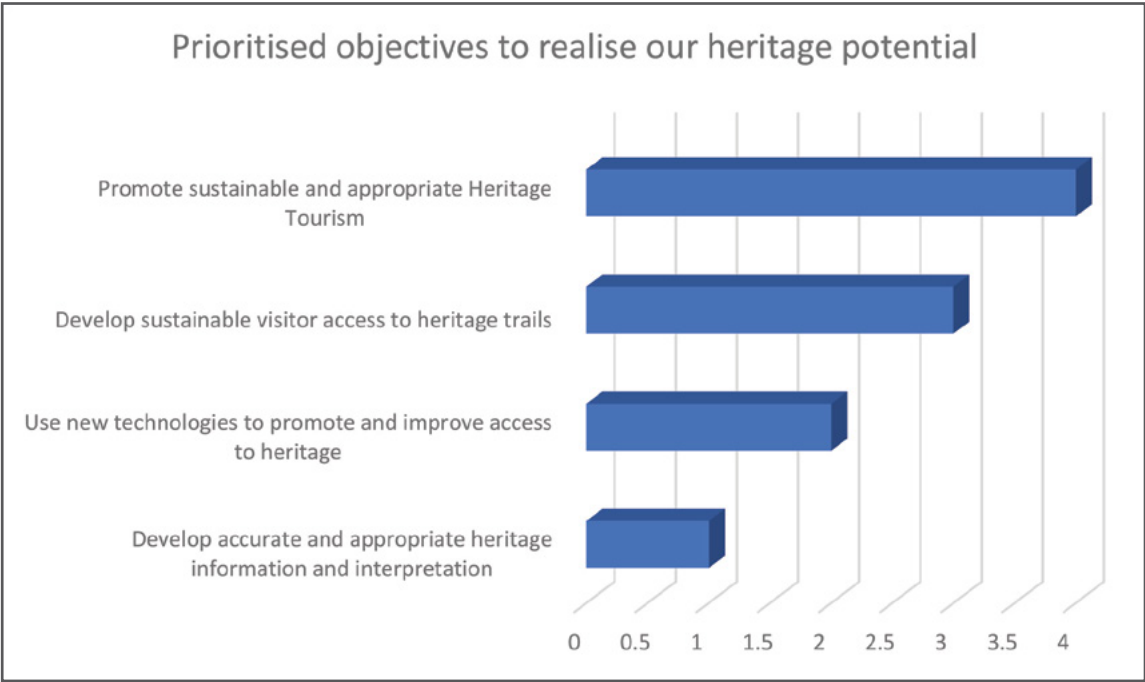


Figure 4.15 Prioritised objectives to realise our heritage potential

Question 21 also related to HLG 6. Here participants were asked to prioritise objectives relating to our tourism potential as portrayed in Figure 4.16.

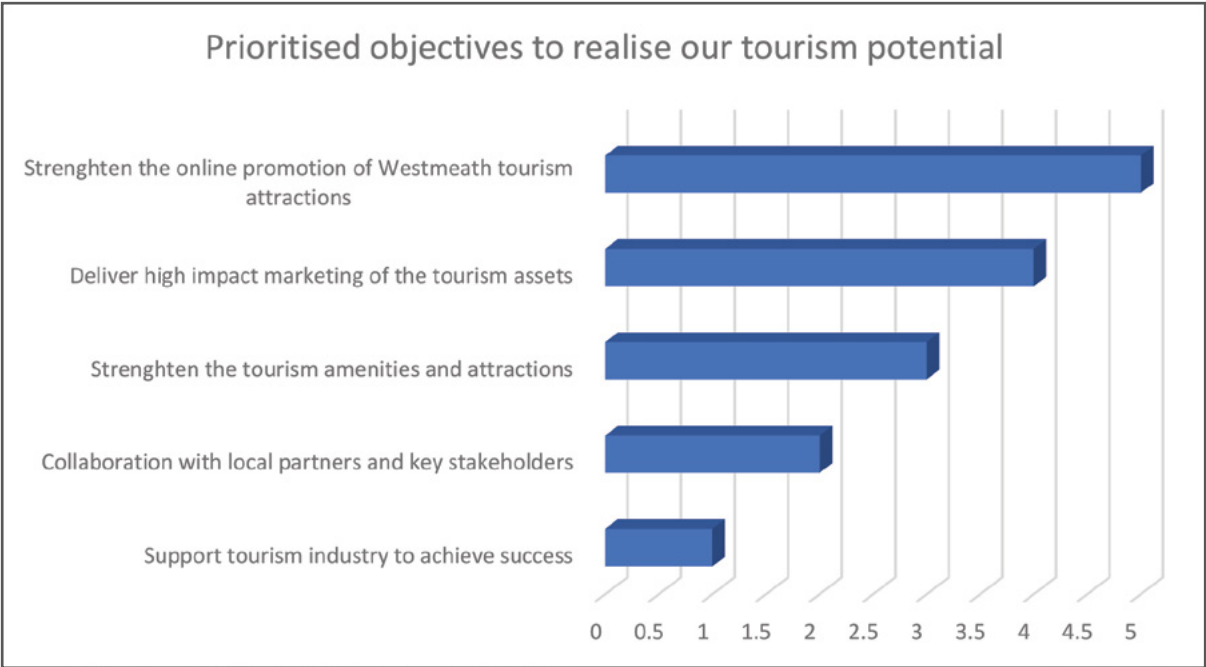


Figure 4.16 Prioritised objectives to realise our tourism potential

Question 22 asked participants to state their overall priority objectives for the LECP 2023-2028. 44% of respondents prioritised housing as their top priority. 10% suggested remote working. 6% prioritised enhanced transportation services. 3% prioritised support and access for differently abled people. The remaining 37% suggested various other priorities. The top priority sustainable objectives are illustrated in Figure 4.17.

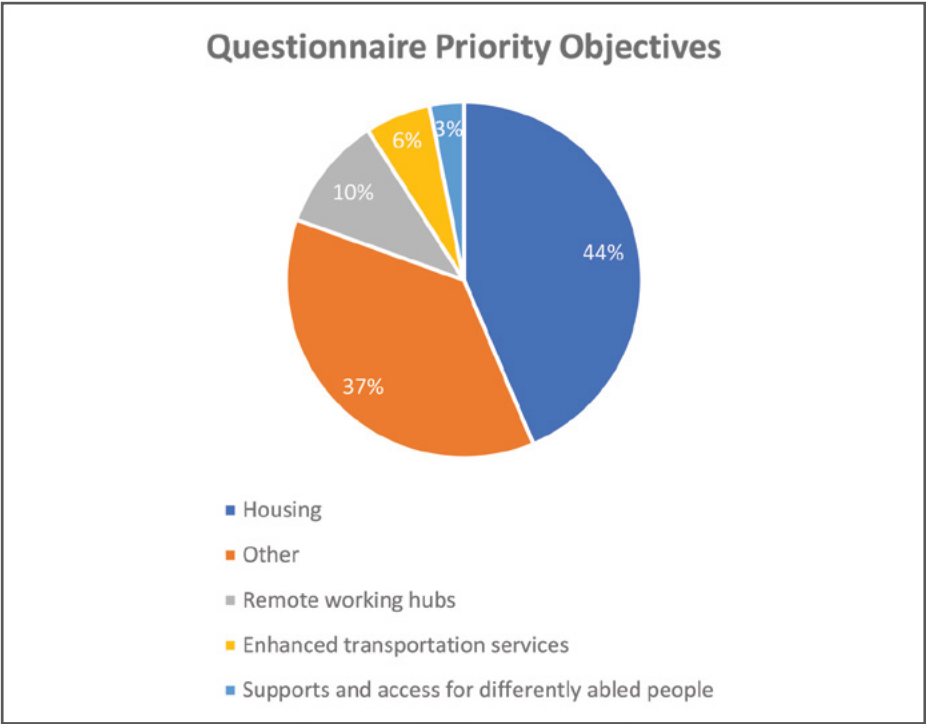


Figure 4.17 Priority Sustainable Objectives for the LECP 2023 – 2028

In summary, the participants considered all their objectives and proposed their top priority objectives for inclusion in the LECP 2023-2028. The majority indicated that housing was the main priority, followed by remote working hubs, enhanced transportation services and support for differently abled people.

4.3 AN ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS FROM THE PRIMARY RESEARCH

This section will provide the aggregated analysis of the priority sustainable objectives under the six HLG's, obtained from the focus groups and from the questionnaire which are needed to enhance economic and community development. It is fair to say that there was consistency in the priority objectives received from the focus groups and the questionnaire. Overall, there were 225 objectives provided by the focus groups while 96 people completed the questionnaire, thus a good representation of the people of Westmeath.

Under HLG 1 the main priority from the workshops related to increasing grant amounts for solar panels, retrofitting, electric vehicles and supporting infrastructure. This was supported by the responses to the questionnaire whereby the respondents stated that they were in favour of house retrofitting supports. The focus groups prioritised the provision of electric vehicle infrastructure throughout the county which was supported by the respondents to the questionnaire. The focus groups prioritised the need for the provision of an affordable and efficient public transport system which was supported by the questionnaire respondents who asked for enhanced transportation services.

The priority objectives under HLG 2 from the workshops and the questionnaire related to dereliction. The focus groups prioritised an objective for derelict premises to be repurposed for community use, for example remote working hubs. This was advocated in the results of the questionnaire, which highlighted the need for affordable housing and in addition the respondents stated the need for remote working hubs. The focus groups emphasised the need for more diversity in structures while the respondents to the questionnaire felt that social inclusion was poor in our communities. The focus groups highlighted the need for access to apprenticeships and further education at the local level while the questionnaire participants declared that training opportunities were poor in our communities.

There was strong support for health and wellbeing initiatives under HLG 3. The focus groups stated there was a need for more mental health services, which was supported by the respondents to the questionnaire who were in favour of mental health and wellbeing supports. The focus groups highlighted the need for the provision of an affordable and efficient public transport system which was supported by the questionnaire respondents who asked for enhanced transportation services. The focus groups emphasised the need to improve access to community centres and prioritised the need for Municipal Sports Centre including swimming pool. The focus groups indicated the need for the provision of drug and alcohol prevention support services and this need was reflected by the questionnaire respondents who agreed that addiction-related programme supports were required.

There was keen interest in supporting sustainable economic activity, employment and education towards a smart green economy under HLG 4. The focus groups highlighted the need to incentivise graduates to stay in Westmeath and indicated there was a need to establish a college of trades which was supported by the questionnaire respondents. The focus groups highlighted the need for the provision of an affordable and efficient transport system which was supported by the questionnaire respondents who emphasised the need for enhanced transportation services. The focus groups indicated the need for the development of a producers market which was supported by the questionnaire participants who highlighted the need to support entrepreneurship and start-up businesses.

The priority objectives under HLG 5 related to enhancing economic and social infrastructure including housing. The focus groups highlighted the need for the provision of an affordable and efficient transport system which was supported by the questionnaire respondents who emphasised the need for enhanced transportation services. The focus groups indicated the need to develop additional remote working hubs which was also requested by the questionnaire respondents. The focus groups prioritised affordable housing supply which was prioritised by the respondents to the questionnaire.

The objectives provided under HLG 6 related to promoting and protecting our rich culture and heritage and realising our tourism potential. The focus groups and the respondents to the questionnaire indicated the need for the provision of an affordable and efficient public transport in order to provide access to the amenities. The respondents to the questionnaire were in favour of the suggested objectives relating to heritage and tourism and prioritised the need for enhanced technology to support the marketing of the amenities.

The priority SCOs and SEDOs under each of the HLGs are illustrated in Figure 4.18 below.



Figure 4.18 Key priority SCOs and SEDOs under the six HLG's

Contribution of Findings

The concept of engaging with key stakeholders throughout the whole process is fundamental to the success of the implementation plan. The stakeholders provided tremendous knowledge and information on what is really important to the people of Westmeath. The public consultation process was found to be uncomplicated and helped to structure the results. This process allowed for all the stakeholder ideas to be considered. With the help of facilitators, the focus groups selected their priority SCOs and SEDOs for consideration by central management for the purposes of overall alignment, which ultimately supports funding. The facilitators were essential to help determine realistic sustainable objectives, to ensure that all voices were heard and to provide key information to the stakeholders as required.

In accordance with the LECP Guidelines 2021, the sustainable objectives and outcomes will form part of the Implementation Plan which will contribute to the delivery of the Sustainable Economic Development Objectives (SEDOs) and Sustainable Community Objectives (SCOs). To ensure follow-up the actions will be considered as part of the agency's operational plans and will contribute to the achievements of the SCOs and SEDOs. Reviews will be carried out to deal with unpredicted challenges and to help implementors with difficulties that may arise with the timebound actions and/or resources. The LECP Guidelines 2021 support the inclusion of key performance indicators in the LECP Implementation Plan to facilitate the monitoring, evaluation and review processes.

In summation, this consultation process has assisted in identifying key objectives that contribute to economic and community development in Westmeath. These findings will contribute to the development of the LECP 2023 – 2028.

Conclusion

The Local Economic and Community Plan Public Consultation was an extensive and inclusive process ensuring that barriers were removed and citizens were afforded opportunities to participate through a variety of ways in accordance with the 'Guide for Inclusive Community Engagement in Local Planning and Decision Making'⁴.

An integrated analysis from the focus groups and the questionnaire was provided highlighting the overall priority objectives, thereby capitalising on the strengths of quantitative and qualitative data collection. The results of this research have supported concepts in terms of frameworks to guide managers using mixed-methods research approaches. The findings and analysis informed the LECP Advisory Steering Group in the development and implementation of the LECP.

⁴A Guide for Inclusive Community Engagement in Local Planning and Decision Making (February 2023), Co-produced by the Department of Rural and Community Development with Pobal, Community Work Ireland and the Irish Local Development Network. gov.ie - A Guide for Inclusive Community Engagement in Local Planning and Decision Making (www.gov.ie)

4.4 ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY SCOT ANALYSIS

The SCOT analysis identified the economic and community Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities and Threats relevant to the development of County Westmeath. The High-Level Goals, Sustainable Community Objectives (SCOs) and Sustainable Economic Development Objectives (SEDOs) have been informed by the findings from policy review, socio-economic analysis, public and stakeholder consultation and SCOT analysis which provided guidance for the focus of the LECP.

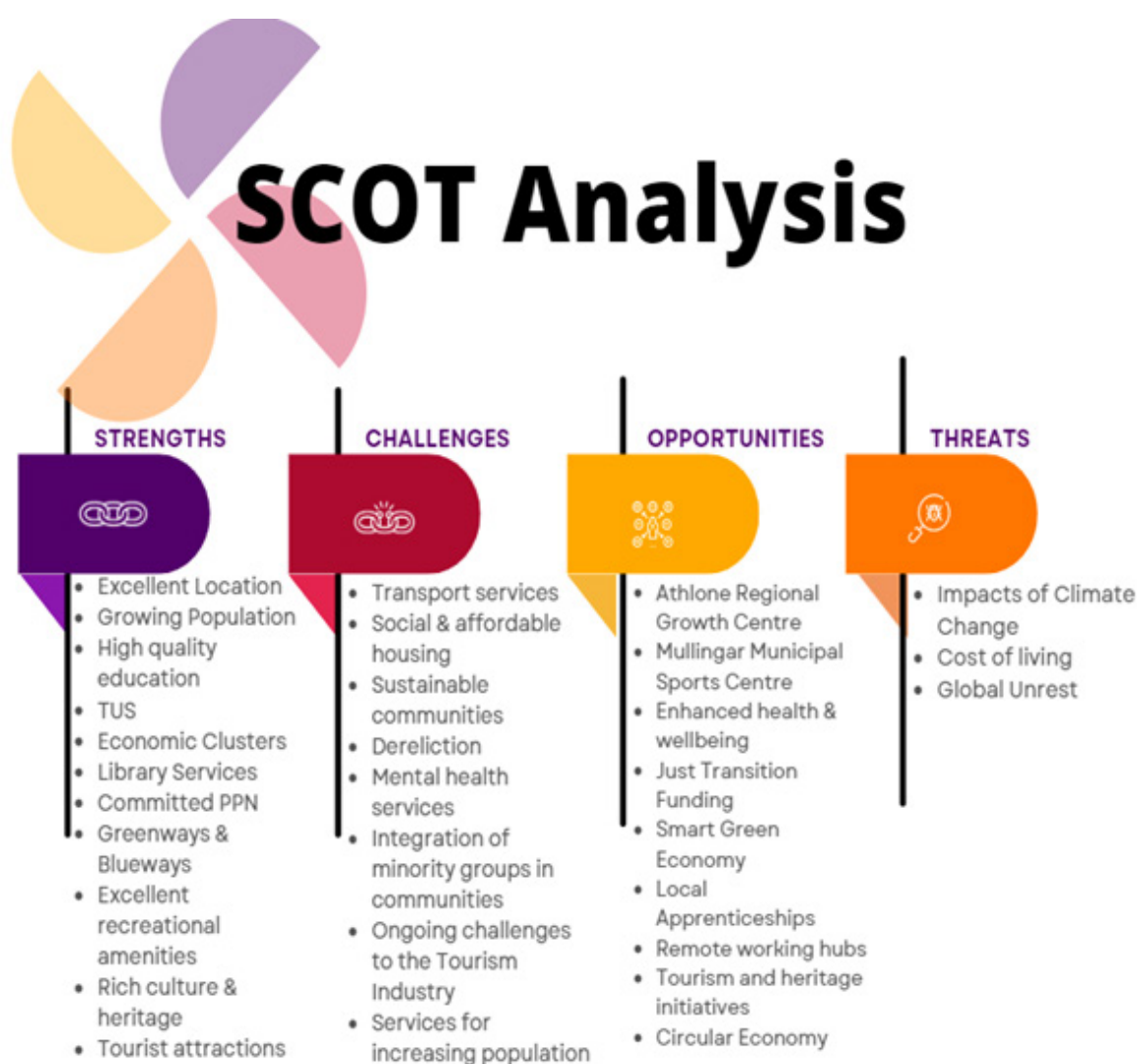


Figure 4.19 SCOT Analysis

5. ACTION AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The Implementation Plan has been formulated within a framework of fundamental Sustainable Community Objectives (SCOs) and Sustainable Economic Development Objectives (SEDOs) that have been prioritised to ensure the achievement of the community and economic development desired outcomes. The SCOs and SEDOs are set out below and include associated specific, measurable and time-bound actions assigned to Lead Agencies and Supporting Partners with key performance indicators (KPI's).

5.1 GOAL 1 -

Support a proactive response to the challenge of climate change

High Level Goal 1 – Support a proactive response to the challenge of climate change						
SCO 1.1 – Support, advise and assist local communities seeking to increase building energy efficiency and carbon reduction through retrofitting and installation of renewable energy sources.						
High Level Policy References (Appendix 1): P5, P9, P42, P45, P49, P54						
Action Ref	Actions	Desired Outcomes	Lead Agency	Supporting Partner	KPI's	Timeframe*
1.1.1	Arrange community workshops to provide energy advice to communities.	More energy efficient homes and buildings. Broad emission reductions.	SEAI	WCC, WPPN	Number of Workshops held per annum. Number of participants attending workshops. Toolkit for Communities developed.	ST/ Ongoing ST/ Ongoing ST/ Ongoing
1.1.2	Seek increased grant funding and endeavour to regulate costs associated with retrofitting.	Increased uptake on energy retrofitting projects through increased grant drawdowns.	SEAI	WCC	Number of interactions with applicable agencies.	LT

High Level Goal 1 – Support a proactive response to the challenge of climate change

SCO 1.2 – Provision of infrastructural resources to assist with reducing public dependence on private vehicle use and decreasing the number of high emission vehicles travelling on our roads.

High Level Policy References (Appendix 1): P5, P9, P42, P45, P49, P54

Action Ref	Actions	Desired Outcomes	Lead Agency	Supporting Partner	KPI's	Timeframe*
1.2.1	Increase awareness of viable local alternatives to private car transport.	Modal shift from private car transport.	WCC	TFI, Local Link, NTA, Dept. of Education	Number of media releases concerning transport alternatives.	MT
1.2.2	Assist, within our remit, the National Transport Authority and Transport for Ireland to provide our communities with an affordable, safe and efficient public transport system.	More routes serviced by public transport leading to road vehicle reduction.	Local Link, NTA, TFI	WCC, Dept. of Education	Number of journeys served by public transport options.	MT

High Level Goal 1 – Support a proactive response to the challenge of climate change

SCO 1.3 – Raise awareness of the intrinsic link between climate change and biodiversity. Support initiatives that have a positive impact on climate and biodiversity.

High Level Policy References (Appendix 1): P5, P9, P43, P49, P50, P54

Action Ref	Actions	Desired Outcomes	Lead Agency	Supporting Partner	KPI's	Timeframe*
1.3.1	Raise awareness of the link between biodiversity and climate.	Increased awareness and understanding of the link between biodiversity and climate.	WCC	NPWS, The Heritage Council, CARO, Waterways Ireland, LEADER, Communities.	Number of events and initiatives organised.	ST & Ongoing
1.3.2	Actively support initiatives that will deliver positive impacts on biodiversity and climate.	Communities and industry in the County taking positive actions for climate and biodiversity.	WCC	NPWS, The Heritage Council, CARO, Waterways Ireland, LEADER, Communities, Fáilte Ireland.	Number of actions and indicatives supporting positive impacts on climate biodiversity.	ST & Ongoing

5.2 GOAL 2 -

Develop an inclusive and equitable society that supports our vibrant urban and rural communities

High Level Goal 2 – Develop an inclusive and equitable society that supports our vibrant urban and rural communities						
SEDO 2.1 – Tackle Dereliction						
High Level Policy References (Appendix 1): P3, P7, P9, P35, P36, P42, P45, P54						
Action Ref	Actions	Desired Outcomes	Lead Agency	Supporting Partner	KPI's	Timeframe*
2.1.1	Ensure the Derelict Sites Register is updated with vacant and derelict premises.	Reduced number of derelict and vacant properties on the list.	WCC	Housing Agency	Ongoing monitoring and updating of the vacancy survey which was complete to establish current state. Use information from survey to tackle level of dereliction/vacancy using available schemes. No of vacant and derelict premises on the Derelict Sites Register.	LT
2.1.2	Promote uptake of the range of schemes available to help bring vacant / derelict properties back into use.	Increased awareness of the range of schemes to bring vacant / derelict properties back into use.	WCC	Housing Agency	Number of press releases / promotions on the available schemes through WCC social media outlets. No of applications to schemes. No of vacant and derelict properties brought back into use.	LT
2.1.3	Assess all applications in relation to the available schemes in a timely manner.	Reduction in the overall number of vacant/derelict properties throughout the county.	WCC	Housing Agency	No of applications received and assessed in relation to schemes. Number of queries answered. Number of grants drawdown.	LT

High Level Goal 2 – Develop an inclusive and equitable society that supports our vibrant urban and rural communities

SCO 2.2 – Increase representation of all communities on statutory bodies, agencies and committees.

High Level Policy References (Appendix 1): P1, P9, P12, P16, P17, P18, P19, P20, P45, P54

Action Ref	Actions	Desired Outcomes	Lead Agency	Supporting Partner	KPI's	Timeframe*
2.2.1	Deliver training programmes to build the capacity of those most excluded from decision making to engage in the decision making processes, and meet requirements under the public sector duty requirements.	Diversified structures on community groups where members have the right to be heard, listened to, participate and guide processes that affect their lives.	WCC	WPPN WCD SICAP	No of training programmes delivered. Number of participants attended.	ST / Ongoing
2.2.2	Host and promote a number of workshops in the community on how to influence policy and make submissions to local and national consultation processes.	Enhanced shared understanding on how to influence policy formations.	WCC	WPPN	Number of workshops hosted. Number of participants at workshops.	ST / Ongoing
2.2.3	Support the WPPN in carrying out its function as the voice of the Community & Voluntary Sector.	Additional events held to support the WPPN.	WCC	WPPN	Number of additional events held. Number of participants at events.	LT
2.2.4	Implement the Age Friendly Strategy.	Increased capacity of older people to engage.	WCC	WCD, LCDC, Age Friendly Ireland, Local Link	Number of older people on structures and committees.	LT
2.2.5	Develop and Implement a Westmeath Integration Strategy.	Effective Westmeath Integration Strategy developed and an inclusive Integration Forum established.	WCC	WCD LCDC	Number of agreed actions implemented.	LT

High Level Goal 2 – Develop an inclusive and equitable society that supports our vibrant urban and rural communities

SCO 2.2 – Increase representation of all communities on statutory bodies, agencies and committees.

High Level Policy References (Appendix 1): P1, P9, P12, P16, P17, P18, P19, P20, P45, P54

Action Ref	Actions	Desired Outcomes	Lead Agency	Supporting Partner	KPI's	Timeframe*
2.2.6	Support Westmeath Comhairle na nOg in its work as the Voice for Youth in the County.	Diverse Comhairle na nÓg.	WCC	Comhairle Executive Group, Youth Services, LWETB	Number of minority reps on Comhairle na nÓg structure.	ST / Ongoing
2.2.7	Manage the implementation of the SICAP programme as the main Social Inclusion Programme for the county of Westmeath.	Increased number and capacity of Community & Voluntary groups in disadvantaged areas in the County. Support to individuals to access training education and /or labour market.	WCD	WCC HSE SICAP Committee	SICAP KPI's achieved.	ST / Ongoing
2.2.8	Build the capacity of individuals in the community, with a focus on seldom heard voices.	Increased capacity and influence from seldom heard communities.	WCC	WPPN WCD LWETB	Number new community groups.	LT
2.2.9	Interagency Working – Strengthening of Collaborative Child, Youth and Family Services.	Strengthened delivery of Child, Youth and Family initiatives through an enhanced collaborative approach.	WCC / Tusla	Longford Westmeath CYPSC, Westmeath County Childcare Committee, Partner Agencies, WCD	Number of collaborative actions completed. Number of Agencies/ Services involved in programme development and delivery.	LT

High Level Goal 2 – Develop an inclusive and equitable society that supports our vibrant urban and rural communities

SEDO 2.3 – Provision of an affordable and efficient public transport system

High Level Policy References (Appendix 1): P9, P35, P36, P38, P42, P45, P54

Action Ref	Actions	Desired Outcomes	Lead Agency	Supporting Partner	KPI's	Timeframe*
2.3.1	Improve the bus route services and bus stop infrastructure.	All routes bus stops are identified and appropriate sheltered spaces available.	NTA	Local Link Bus Eireann & Private Operators WCC	No of bus shelters and sheltered spaces available.	MT / LT
2.3.2	Establish Public Transport Working Group.	Relationships with all stakeholders involved in the provision of public transport services in Westmeath developed.	WCC / NTA	Local Link Bus Eireann & Private Operators	Public Transport Working Group established. Annual meeting held.	ST
2.3.3	Provide sheltered spaces for communities close to bus stops at appropriate locations.	Sheltered Spaces for communities located close to bus stops in place.	WCC	WPPN	Number of community sheltered spaces.	MT



5.3 GOAL 3 - Improve health and well-being of our citizens

High Level Goal 3 – Improve health and well-being of our citizens						
SCO 3.1 – Create opportunities to improve health and well-being of our citizens						
High Level Policy References (Appendix 1): P9, P10, P11, P45, P51, P52, P54						
Action Ref	Actions	Desired Outcomes	Lead Agency	Supporting Partner	KPI's	Timeframe*
3.1.1	Identify Projects and actions under the Slaintecare Healthy Communities and Healthy Westmeath Programmes that support health and well-being actions in the county.	Improved health & well-being. Improve health literacy	Sláintecare Healthy Communities Westmeath & Healthy Ireland Westmeath	HSE NGOs	Number of health and well-being actions delivered per annum. Number of participants using services. Number of health literacy courses delivered per annum.	ST
3.1.2	Hold Annual Well Westmeath Expo.	Enhanced Information & activities to support Health & well-being.	Sláintecare Healthy Communities Westmeath & Healthy Ireland Westmeath.	HSE WCC WCD Gardai MRDATF WSP GAA Leinster Rugby FAI Mens Shed Other NGOs	Annual Well Westmeath Expo held. Number of participants attending the Well Westmeath Expo.	Annual
3.1.3	Review safety of public places.	Increased safety of public places.	WCC	Community Safety Partnership	Review completed. Number of actions identified and implemented.	LT
3.1.4	Identify and apply for resources to address new and emerging youth work needs.	Additional youth work programmes and services available.	LWETB	WCC Youth Services Comhairle na nÓg	Number of young people (10-24yrs) accessing youth work services and programmes.	LT

High Level Goal 3 – Improve health and well-being of our citizens**SCO 3.1 – Create opportunities to improve health and well-being of our citizens****High Level Policy References (Appendix 1): P9, P10, P11, P45, P51, P52, P54**

Action Ref	Actions	Desired Outcomes	Lead Agency	Supporting Partner	KPI's	Timeframe*
3.1.5	Development of youth friendly facilities.	Additional facilities for young people in towns and villages.	WCC	LWETB Youth Services Comhairle na nÓg	Number of new/ refurbished youth facilities.	LT
3.1.6	Provide a Community Hub/Centre in Athlone Town and in Mullingar Town.	Community centre to facilitate space for Community & Voluntary Groups including meeting and training rooms developed.	WCC	NGOs Community & Voluntary Groups	Number of Community Hubs/ Community Centres in Athlone and Mullingar in place.	LT



High Level Goal 3 – Improve health and well-being of our citizens

SCO 3.2 – Mullingar Regional Sports Complex to include a swimming pool

High Level Policy References (Appendix 1): P9, P10, P11, P35, P36, P44 & P45, P54

Action Ref	Actions	Desired Outcomes	Lead Agency	Supporting Partner	KPI's	Timeframe*
3.2.1	Submit a statutory planning application for the development of a Mullingar Regional Sports Complex.	To obtain Statutory planning approval.	WCC	Sporting Bodies or others	Planning Application submitted.	ST
3.2.2	Submit a funding application for the development of the Complex.	Funding secured from the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, sport and Media (DTCAGSM) or other available funding source for delivery of the Complex.	WCC	Sporting Bodies or others	Funding application submitted to the Department for a Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund or alternative funds as they become available.	ST
3.2.3	Construction of the Complex.	Delivery of the Complex.	WCC	Sporting Bodies, DTCAGSM	Delivery of the Complex.	LT
3.2.4	Ensure that the Complex complies with universal design and inclusion standards.	Accessible Complex that is used to the greatest extent possible by all people, regardless of their age, size, ability or disability.	WCC	Sporting Bodies	Complex constructed to universal and inclusion standard.	LT
3.2.5	Develop an affordable pricing structure.	Affordable access for all to sports centre.	WCC	Sporting Bodies DTCAGSM	Affordable Pricing structure in place. Number of people from disadvantaged areas using facilities.	LT

High Level Goal 3 – Improve health and well-being of our citizens

SCO 3.3 – Improve Physical Health and Well-being

High Level Policy References (Appendix 1): P9, P10, P11, P45, P54

Action Ref	Actions	Desired Outcomes	Lead Agency	Supporting Partner	KPI's	Timeframe*
3.3.1	Increase support to those suffering from Dementia.	Increased services for those suffering from Dementia and Alzheimer's and their families / carers.	WCC	HSE Alzheimer's association of Ireland	Number of services in place for those suffering from Dementia and Alzheimer's and their families / carers.	LT
3.3.2	Increase supports and awareness of the social determinants of health (i.e. the non-medical factors that influence health outcomes).	Increased understanding of Social Determinants of Health. Increased Health & Well-being supports in Slaintecare Healthy Communities Programme areas.	WCC	Westmeath Sports Partnership Sláintecare Healthy Communities Westmeath Healthy Ireland Westmeath Regional Sports centre(s) NGOs	Number of courses/activities/ programmes. Number of participants on courses / activities / programmes.	LT
3.3.3	Provision of accessible green & blue ways.	Accessible green & blue ways.	WCC	Waterways Ireland Coillte Bord na Mona	Number of accessible green & blueways.	LT
3.3.4	Review availability of Play & Recreation facilities.	Improved/ additional play and recreation facilities.	WCC	DRCD MD's Community	Number of play & recreation facilities enhanced or developed.	LT
3.3.5	Deliver Physical & Mental Health programmes under the Healthy Ireland fund.	Increase in Physical and Mental Health well-being programmes in communities & public spaces.	WCC	WSP Healthy Ireland Westmeath NGOs	Number of programmes. Number of community & public spaces used. Number of participants.	LT

5.4 GOAL 4 -

Support sustainable economic activity, employment and education towards a smart green economy

High Level Goal 4 – Support sustainable economic activity, employment and education towards a smart green economy						
SEDO 4.1 – Attract and retain graduates in Westmeath						
High Level Policy References (Appendix 1): P9, P27, P33, P37, P41, P42, P44, P45, P51, P52, P53, P54						
Action Ref	Actions	Desired Outcomes	Lead Agency	Supporting Partner	KPI's	Timeframe*
4.1.1	Promote uptake of the Gradstart (level 6 plus/manuf/ International Traded Services) Scheme for eligible businesses employing graduates.	Retention of Graduates in Westmeath.	WCC	Enterprise Ireland LWETB TUS COC	No of businesses offering Gradstart. No of graduates availing of scheme.	ST- MT
4.1.2	Promotion of Learning Gates in Co. Westmeath.	Opportunity for adult learners to participate in distance learning flexible programmes through our remote hubs.	TUS	WCC Community/private owned remote working facilities. MNCF Chambers of Commerce LWETB WPPN	No of students availing of flexible online distance learning through remote working hubs.	ST
4.1.3	Promotion of all Co-working facilities in the county.	Maximise uptake in Co-working facilities in Westmeath.	WCC	Private & Public co-working Hubs. MNCF Midlands Ireland Chambers of Commerce	Number of co-working places available % uptake of co-working desks in community and private facilitated.	ST

High Level Goal 4 – Support sustainable economic activity, employment and education towards a smart green economy

SEDO 4.1 – Attract and retain graduates in Westmeath

High Level Policy References (Appendix 1): P9, P27, P33, P37, P41, P42, P44, P45, P51, P52, P53, P54

Action Ref	Actions	Desired Outcomes	Lead Agency	Supporting Partner	KPI's	Timeframe*
4.1.4	Participate in the Midlands Social Enterprise Network to explore options for the establishment of social/community enterprises in the County.	Increase and support the number of social enterprises in the county.	WCC	MEAG WCD	Number of social enterprises operating in the County. Number of grants availed of from DRCD.	MT
4.1.5	Attract and retain graduates(level 6 +) in Westmeath.	Increase in graduate employment in Co. Westmeath.	Chamber of Commerce (COC)	TUS LWETB Education providers Midlands Ireland	Growth in employment figures.	LT
4.1.6	Develop a collaborative partnership amongst innovation stakeholders to support graduates.	Develop a suite of collaborative supports for graduates leading to the creation of an entrepreneurial ecosystem.	Mullingar Employment Action Group	TUS Education providers Enterprise Support Agencies	Suite of supports created.	MT
4.1.7	Promote new Kinnegad Community Library and Education and Training Centre -opening end Q4 2024.	Forge links with community groups, enhance access and social inclusion and establish the library as a community hub. Maximise footfall and engagement, provide access to study spaces and digital facilities, offer literacy and learning opportunities.	WCC	LWETB	Footfall, library issues, MOL use, events held, community use of space.	ST

High Level Goal 4 – Support sustainable economic activity, employment and education towards a smart green economy

SEDO 4.2 – Support & Promote Further & Higher Education & Training in Westmeath

High Level Policy References (Appendix 1): P6, P9, P30, P39, P41, P42, P45, P54

Action Ref	Actions	Desired Outcomes	Lead Agency	Supporting Partner	KPI's	Timeframe*
4.2.1	Establishment of a National Electric Vehicle (EV) Training Centre.	Establishment of a National EV Training Centre to train people to repair and maintain electric vehicles.	LWETB	Solas TUS National Apprenticeship Office National Territory Office	National EV Training Centre Established.	LT
4.2.2.	Promote partnership between Further Education and Higher Education towards the codelivery of programmes to school leavers.	Increase the number of school leaver's attending co-delivered programmes.	TUS	LWETB National Territory Office	Number of school leavers who access year one Higher Education programmes in Further Education Colleges.	MT
4.2.3	Increase participation rates in Further Education and Higher Education.	Increase in the number of Westmeath learners participating in Further Education and Higher Education.	TUS & LWETB	COC Education providers	Numbers in Further Education and Higher Education.	MT
4.2.4	Promotion and awareness of apprenticeship programmes in Co. Westmeath.	Increase in number of apprenticeship graduates in Co. Westmeath.	LWETB TUS	National Apprenticeship Office National Territory Office COC Solas Midlands Ireland	Increased numbers in graduates.	ST

High Level Goal 4 – Support sustainable economic activity, employment and education towards a smart green economy

SEDO 4.3 – Development of sustainability awards to encourage a smart green economy

High Level Policy References (Appendix 1): P9, P27, P31, P35, P37, P41,P42,P45, P54

Action Ref	Actions	Desired Outcomes	Lead Agency	Supporting Partner	KPI's	Timeframe*
4.3.1	Green for Business.	Increase in number of LEO Green for business grants awarded.	LEO Westmeath	Enterprise Ireland Chambers of Commerce	Number of business availing of Green for Business.	ST
4.3.2	Green Award.	Sustainability Awards.	LEO Westmeath	Enterprise Ireland Chambers of Commerce WCD Midlands Ireland	Green Award established for businesses.	ST
4.3.3	Digital Vouchers.	Maximise digitisation in small businesses.	LEO Westmeath	Enterprise Ireland	Number of businesses availing of LEO Digital Vouchers.	ST
4.3.4	Energy Efficiency Grants.	Increase in number of LEO Energy Efficiency grants awarded.	LEO Westmeath	Enterprise Ireland	Number of businesses availing of Energy Efficiency.	ST
4.3.5	Sustainability for Education.	Integrate sustainability concepts into Further Education/ Higher Education modules.	LWETB TUS	QQI	Number of programmes accessing sustainability. Number of participants on sustainability programmes.	MT
4.3.6	Just Transition Investment Grant- Aid Scheme for Private and Community SME's.	Maximum number of businesses availing of Just Transition Scheme.	Pobal	Fáilte Ireland WCC	Number of approved applications under Just Transition.	ST
4.3.7	Green Procurement element in procurement programmes.	Greater awareness and demand of green procurement Procedures.	LEO/WCC	LEO Enterprise Ireland LWETB TUS	Number of procurement programmes offering green procurement to businesses in the county.	ST

5.5 GOAL 5 - Enhance economic and social infrastructure, including housing

High Level Goal 5 – Enhance economic and social infrastructure, including housing						
SEDO 5.1 – Additional remote working hubs						
High Level Policy References (Appendix 1): P9, P8, P33, P35, P42, P45, P54						
Action Ref	Actions	Desired Outcomes	Lead Agency	Supporting Partner	KPI's	Timeframe*
5.1.1	Development of a Co-working & Education facility in Athlone.	<p>Outcome 1: Creation of new sustainable employment in the region.</p> <p>Outcome 2: Development and delivery of skills learning or social inclusion programmes that contribute to meeting an identified skills gap necessary for economic development in the region, enable people to return to work, take up new roles or to remain in employment. inclusion programmes.</p> <p>Outcome 3: Stimulation, growth and further development of enterprise or social enterprises in the areas of activity.</p>	WCC / TUS	<p>Athlone Chamber of Commerce</p> <p>Regional Skills Forum</p> <p>IDA</p> <p>Enterprise Ireland</p> <p>LWETB</p> <p>Midland Network of Co-working Facilities (MNCF)</p> <p>Midland Regional Enterprise Office (MREP)</p>	<p>Delivery of the facility.</p> <p>Number of new Sustainable jobs created.</p> <p>Number of people that have completed skills training.</p> <p>% Occupancy</p> <p>Number of enterprises or social enterprises supported.</p>	LT

High Level Goal 5 – Enhance economic and social infrastructure, including housing

SEDO 5.1 – Additional remote working hubs

High Level Policy References (Appendix 1): P9, P8, P33, P35, P42, P45, P54

Action Ref	Actions	Desired Outcomes	Lead Agency	Supporting Partner	KPI's	Timeframe*
5.1.2	Development of a Co-working facility in Kinnegad.	<p>Outcome 1: Creation of new sustainable employment in the region.</p> <p>Outcome 2: Development and delivery of skills learning or social inclusion programmes that contribute to meeting an identified skills gap necessary for economic development in the region, enable people to return to work, take up new roles or to remain in employment. inclusion programmes.</p> <p>Outcome 3: Stimulation, growth and further development of enterprise or social enterprises in the areas of activity.</p>	WCC	Regional Skills Forum IDA Enterprise Ireland LWETB MNCF MREP	Delivery of facility Number of enterprises or social enterprises supported. % Occupancy.	MT
5.1.3	Conduct a feasibility study into the development of Food Hubs in Westmeath.	Completed feasibility study.	Mullingar Employment Action Group	WCC Enterprise Ireland MREP	Completed feasibility study.	ST

High Level Goal 5 – Enhance economic and social infrastructure, including housing

SEDO 5.2 – Economic development opportunities associated with the greenways

High Level Policy References (Appendix 1): P9, P35, P40, P42, P45, P54

Action Ref	Actions	Desired Outcomes	Lead Agency	Supporting Partner	KPI's	Timeframe*
5.2.1	Promote and Support Businesses associated with the greenways.	Active businesses supporting visitors to the area.	WCC	Failte Ireland, Chambers of Commerce, Enterprise Ireland, Waterways Ireland destination steering groups (Athlone & Mullingar) MREP.	Number of greenway users. Number of enterprises. Economic impact study of greenways.	MT
5.2.2	Encourage new businesses to open along the Greenways (e.g. activity providers, bike hire, cafes etc).	Creation of new sustainable employment in the region.	WCC	Failte Ireland, Chambers of Commerce, Enterprise Ireland, Waterways Ireland, MREP	Number of greenway users. Number of enterprises supported. Economic Impact.	LT



High Level Goal 5 – Enhance economic and social infrastructure, including housing

SCO 5.3 – Social and Affordable housing supply as per targets in the Housing Delivery Action Plan 2022 – 2026.

High Level Policy References (Appendix 1): P9, P3, P42, P45, P47, P54

Action Ref	Actions	Desired Outcomes	Lead Agency	Supporting Partner	KPI's	Timeframe*
5.3.1	Provide affordable houses.	Occupancy of available affordable housing.	WCC	DHLGH	280 Affordable Units by 2026.	MT / LT
5.3.2	Provide social houses.	Occupancy of available social housing.	WCC	DHLGH	431 Social Units by 2026.	MT / LT
5.3.3	Provide Serviced Sites.	Purchase of Serviced Sites.	WCC	DHLGH	Deliver 9 serviced sites at Castlepollard and 10 serviced sites at Moate by 2026.	ST

5.6 GOAL 6 -

Promote and protect our rich culture and heritage and realise our tourism potential

High Level Goal 6 – Promote and protect our rich culture and heritage and realise our tourism potential						
SEDO 6.1 – Create compelling reasons for tourists to visit and stay in our county						
High Level Policy References (Appendix 1): P9, P40, P42, P45, P46, P48, P54						
Action Ref	Actions	Desired Outcomes	Lead Agency	Supporting Partner	KPI's	Timeframe*
6.1.1	Continue to develop the quality and range of recreation and heritage-based visitor attractions and experiences.	Enhanced visitor experiences available including but not limited to: Athlone Castle Visitor Centre, Belvedere House, Gardens and Park, a River Shannon Boardwalk in Athlone, further connections to and enhancements of our Greenways and trails, Visitor Interpretation at the Number One Gun Batteries site and enhancement of the visitor experience at Fore.	WCC	Fáilte Ireland, OPW, Heritage Council, Waterways Ireland, NPWS, NMS, Just Transition, owners and custodians countywide.	Number of visitor experiences enhanced.	ST/ Ongoing
6.1.2	Enhance visitor interpretation of tourism and heritage assets, utilising advanced technologies to create immersive experiences where appropriate.	Enhanced visitor interpretation.	WCC	Fáilte Ireland, OPW, Heritage Council, Waterways Ireland, NPWS, NMS, owners and custodians countywide.	New and enhanced visitor interpretation provided.	ST/ Ongoing

High Level Goal 6 – Promote and protect our rich culture and heritage and realise our tourism potential

SEDO 6.1 – Create compelling reasons for tourists to visit and stay in our county

High Level Policy References (Appendix 1): P9, P40, P42, P45, P46, P48, P54

Action Ref	Actions	Desired Outcomes	Lead Agency	Supporting Partner	KPI's	Timeframe*
6.1.3	Continue to work with all relevant partners and stakeholders to progress the Royal Sites of Ireland including The Hill of Uisneach towards nomination for inclusion on UNESCO's World Heritage List.	Royal Sites progressed towards nomination for inclusion on UNESCO's World Heritage List.	WCC	Meath County Council, Kildare County Council, Tipperary County Council, Roscommon County Council and Armagh Banbridge City Council, NMS, landowners.	Royal Sites progressed towards nomination for inclusion on UNESCO's World Heritage List.	ST/ Ongoing
6.1.4	Support the development of new and additional small-scale sustainable tourist accommodation, subject to compliance with legislative requirements and standards, including planning and environmental management.	Increased tourist accommodation supply / wider diversity of accommodation options available to visitors.	Fáilte Ireland (EU Just Transition)	WCC WCD (LEADER) Industry/ businesses Waterways Ireland	Number of new tourist accommodation offerings. Increased variety and quality of accommodation.	ST/ Ongoing

High Level Goal 6 – Promote and protect our rich culture and heritage and realise our tourism potential

SEDO 6.2 – Protect our rich culture and heritage and make it accessible to the public

High Level Policy References (Appendix 1): P9, P40, P42, P45, P46, P48, P54

Action Ref	Actions	Desired Outcomes	Lead Agency	Supporting Partner	KPI's	Timeframe*
6.2.1	Ensure appropriate care and management of our county's heritage and environment.	Heritage assets are appropriately cared for and managed.	WCC	Fáilte Ireland, OPW, Heritage Council, Waterways Ireland, NPWS, NMS, owners and custodians countywide.	Heritage sites and objects are managed appropriately to ensure no net loss. Any damage that occurs is recorded and reported to relevant authority.	ST/ Ongoing
6.2.2	Enable sustainable appreciation and enjoyment of our diverse culture and heritage.	Communities and visitors engaged with culture and heritage of the county while ensuring adequate protection of the environment.	WCC	Fáilte Ireland, OPW, Heritage Council, Waterways Ireland, NPWS, NMS, communities countywide.	Number of inclusive festivals and events delivered in line with green standards. Sustainable increase in attendance at events. Number of engaging initiatives delivered.	ST/ Ongoing



High Level Goal 6 – Promote and protect our rich culture and heritage and realise our tourism potential

SEDO 6.3 – Advance collaborative marketing and promotion of tourism and heritage assets

High Level Policy References (Appendix 1): P9, P40, P42, P45, P46, P48, P54

Action Ref	Actions	Desired Outcomes	Lead Agency	Supporting Partner	KPI's	Timeframe*
6.3.1	Support tourism industry to achieve success in growing the economic impact of tourism.	Strong and resilient tourism industry in place to achieve tourism growth potential.	WCC	Waterways Ireland, Destination Athlone and Destination Mullingar, Chambers, tourism businesses and communities. NTA Failte Ireland	Businesses supported to develop and grow to potential.	ST/ Ongoing
6.3.2	Lead a partnership approach to marketing with a focus on maximising alliances, collaboration and aligning destination communications activity.	High impact marketing of tourism assets delivered.	Failte Ireland	Destination Athlone and Destination Mullingar, Chambers, tourism businesses and communities. WCC, Waterways Ireland.	High level strategic alignment between FI and WCC.	ST/ Ongoing
6.3.3	Promote sustainable and appropriate heritage tourism.	Increased awareness of heritage and appropriate access to heritage sites that ensures protection of the environment.	WCC	Failte Ireland, Westmeath Heritage Forum, Heritage Council, OPW. Waterways Ireland.	Heritage events delivered, universal access where appropriate, sustainable increase in visitor numbers.	ST/ Ongoing

*Short term (ST) to be completed within 2 years / Medium term (MT) to be completed within 5 years / Long term (LT) to be completed by 2028.

6. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

The Advisory Steering Group as recommended in the LECP Guidelines 2021 will oversee the implementation, monitoring and review of the LECP.

Implementation of the actions will be monitored on an ongoing basis through engagement with the lead agencies and supporting partners. The inclusion of timebound economic and community key performance indicators, are clearly assigned to lead agencies and supporting partners for each of the specific actions in the Implementation Plan. The Advisory Steering Group are set out in Appendix 2 and will meet each quarter with the Lead Agencies to progress the desired outcomes by identifying appropriate and current funding schemes. This will facilitate the monitoring, evaluation and review processes, the achievement of the desired outcomes and the overall realisation of the LECP HLG's.

To ensure that evolving needs are included in the Implementation Plan and that there is no loss of momentum, reviews will be conducted every two years (2025 and 2027). Following the reviews a report will be submitted to the Westmeath LCDC and the Economic Development, Enterprise and Tourism Strategic Policy Committee for their consideration. This review process will facilitate the incorporation of new information or interventions and provide assistance to the implementors.

7. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - High Level Policy and Strategy Reference List

The following policies and strategies have informed the development of this LECP.

Policy Ref No.	Title
P1	Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities: A Five-Year Strategy to Support the Community and Voluntary Sector in Ireland 2019-2024
P2	Rural Development Policy 2021-2025 - Our Rural Future
P3	Housing for all: A New Housing Plan for Ireland
P4	Town Centre First Policy
P5	Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan
P6	National Action Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2021
P7	Programme for Government: Our Shared Future
P8	Making Remote Work: National Remote Work Strategy
P9	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
P10	Sláintecare Implementation Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2023
P11	Healthy Ireland Framework 2019-2025
P12	Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025
P13	National Positive Aging Strategy (NPAS)
P14	National Dementia Strategy
P15	National Carers Strategy
P16	Putting People First: Action Programme for Effective Local Government
P17	National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021
P18	National Migrant Integration Strategy
P19	National Disability Inclusion Strategy (2017-2021)
P20	LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy 2019-2021
P21	Building Future Skills: The Demand for Skills in Ireland's Built Environment Sector to 2030
P22	Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment's White Paper on Enterprise 2022-2030
P23	Enterprise 2025 Renewed - Building resilience in the face of global challenges
P24	Enterprise Ireland's Strategy 2022-2024, Leading in a Changing World
P25	Housing for All: A New Housing Plan for Ireland
P26	IDA Ireland: Driving Recovery and Sustainable Growth 2021-2024
P27	Ireland's National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Innovation (2022-2027)
P28	National Broadband Plan
P29	National Economic Plan (NEP)
P30	National Further Education and Training Strategy 2020-2024
P31	National Recovery and Resilience Plan

Policy Ref No.	Title
P32	National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-2022
P33	Pathways to Work Strategy 2021-2025
P34	People, Place and Policy - Growing Tourism to 2025
P35	Project Ireland 2040 National Development Plan 2021-2030
P36	Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework 2018
P37	Report of the SME Taskforce: National SME and Entrepreneurship Growth Plan
P38	Transport Infrastructure Ireland
P39	Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy
P40	Draft Westmeath Tourism Strategy 2023-2027
P41	Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan
P42	Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for EMRA 2019-2031
P43	Westmeath Biodiversity Action Plan 2014-2020
P44	Westmeath Corporate Plan 2020-2024
P45	Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027
P46	Westmeath Draft Heritage Plan 2024-2030
P47	Westmeath Housing Delivery Action Plan 2022-2026
P48	Ireland's Hidden Heartlands Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023-2027
P49	Westmeath County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029
P50	The National Biodiversity Action Plan
P51	LWETB Strategy Statement 2022-2026
P52	LWETB Youth Work Plan 2023-2027
P53	Engaging Communities: Westmeath Libraries- Library Development Plan 2024-2028
P54	National Climate Action Plan 2024

Appendix 2 - Public Consultation & Membership of Relevant Structures

This Appendix summaries the approach taken to the public consultation on the LECP. The full Consultation Report is set out at 4.0 of the LECP.

Stage 2 of LECP development as set out in Figure 2.1 of the LECP involved public consultation. As set out in Section 3.11 of the LECP, members of the public, businesses and community groups were invited to respond to an online public consultation questionnaire between the 30th of May and the 30th of June 2023. There was a total of 96 responses to the questionnaire. The questionnaire template is included at Appendix 2 of the LECP document and an overview of the findings of the questionnaire is included in the LECP at Section 4.2.

Seven public consultation workshops were organised between the 30th of May and the 20th of June 2023, six of which were in-person in Mullingar, Castlepollard, Athlone, Moate, Kilbeggan and Kinnegad, and one was held online. The LECP notes that a total of 120 attendees participated in the focus groups. An additional agency workshop was held on the 27th of June 2023.

The prioritised objectives attained from the focus groups were collated and analysed for the delivery of key outcomes under each HLG. The LECP also notes that the findings and analysis informed the LECP Advisory Steering Group in the development and implementation of the LECP.

Membership of relevant Structures

LECP Advisory Steering Group

Name	Organisation
Barry Kehoe	Chief Executive, Westmeath County Council
Jackie Finney	Director of Services, Westmeath County Council
Christine Charlton	Head of Enterprise, Westmeath County Council
Pat Murtagh	Senior Executive Officer, Westmeath County Council
Cllr John Shaw	Westmeath County Council Elected Member & Chair of the Economic Development, Enterprise and Tourism SPC
John Geoghegan	Mullingar Chamber of Commerce/SPC
Cathryn Whelehan	Chair of Westmeath LCDC & Social Inclusion Representative
Frank Murtagh	Westmeath LCDC/Westmeath Community Development
Annette Barr-Jordan	Administrative Officer, Westmeath County Council
Mary Goldsberry	A/Senior Executive Officer, Westmeath County Council

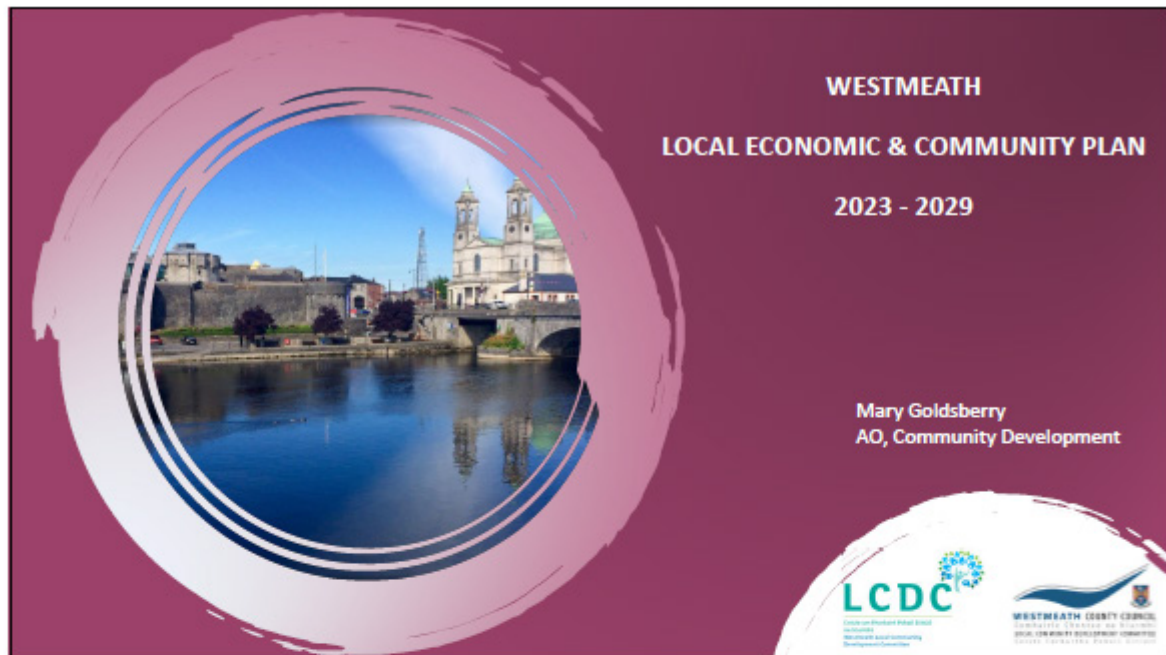
Economic Development, Enterprise and Tourism Strategic Policy Committee

Name	Agency
Cllr John Shaw (Chair)	Westmeath County Council Elected Member
Cllr Aengus O'Rourke	Westmeath County Council Elected Member
Cllr John Dolan	Westmeath County Council Elected Member
Cllr Emily Wallace	Westmeath County Council Elected Member
Cllr Bill Collentine	Westmeath County Council Elected Member
Gillian Murtagh	Development / Construction Sector
John Geoghegan	Business / Commercial Sector
Eilish McDonnell	WPPN Community & Voluntary Sector

Westmeath Local Community Development Committee

Name	Agency
Cllr Tom Farrell	Westmeath County Council Elected Member
Cllr Vincent McCormack	Westmeath County Council Elected Member
Cllr. Bill Collentine	Westmeath County Council Elected Member
Barry Kehoe	Westmeath County Council Chief Executive (Interim)
Christine Charlton	Head of Enterprise
Marie Flynn	Department of Social Protection
Maria Fox	Education & Training Board
Teresa Kennedy	Health Services Executive
Hugh Farrell	WPPN Community & Voluntary
Vincent Bagnall	WPPN Community & Voluntary
Cathryn Whelehan (Chair)	WPPN Social Inclusion
Anne Drury	WPPN Social Inclusion
Joe McEvoy	WPPN Environment
Frank Murtagh	Westmeath Community Development Ltd.
Bernie McCarthy	Farming/Agriculture
Daniel Boyne	Business/Employers
Noel Maguire	Trade Union

Public Consultation Workshop Presentations



LOCAL ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY PLAN 2023- 2029

LECP – the purpose is to set out objectives and actions that promote and support the economic and community development of Westmeath over the six year period of the plan.

Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP)



LOCAL ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY PLAN 2023- 2029

We want to hear your thoughts and ideas on how to improve
our communities for all who
live, work, invest and visit County Westmeath.

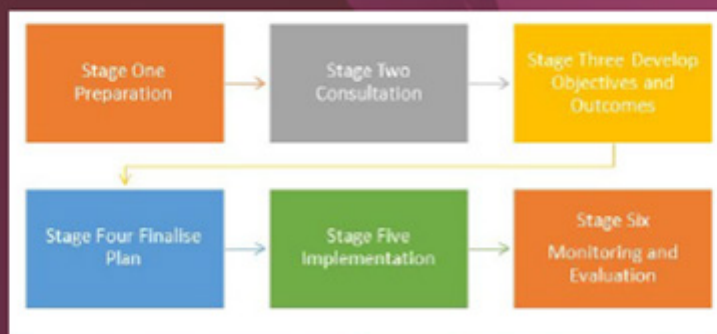
Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP)



FRAMEWORK LECP STRATEGIC OUTLINE



LOCAL ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY PLAN STAGES



THE VISION OF THE LOCAL ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY PLAN

The Vision of the LECP is...

“To create and facilitate sustainable economic and community development throughout the County that supports the health and well-being of the people of Westmeath, providing an attractive destination, as a place in which to live, work, invest, do business and visit, offering high quality employment and educational opportunities within sustainable communities whilst safeguarding the environmental, cultural, heritage and tourism assets of the County.”



Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP)



HIGH LEVEL GOALS

- HLG 1: Support a proactive response to the challenge of climate change.
- HLG 2: Develop an inclusive and equitable society that supports our vibrant urban and rural communities.
- HLG 3: Improve health and well-being of our citizens.
- HLG 4: Support sustainable economic activity, employment and education towards a smart green economy.
- HLG 5: Enhance economic and social infrastructure, including housing.
- HLG6: Promote and protect our rich culture and heritage and realise our tourism potential.

LOCAL ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY PLAN



16 Regional Strategic Objectives
Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (Source EMRA)

Do these capture our priority areas?



THANK YOU

Mary Goldsberry
AO, Community Development
044 9332258
maryg@westmeathcoco.ie







Local Economic and Community Plan 2023-2029 - Questionnaire

Westmeath Local Community Development Committee are working on the next Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) for Westmeath. This is an opportunity for all individuals, businesses, and community groups in Westmeath to express their views. We want to hear thoughts and ideas on how to improve our communities for all who live, work, invest and visit County Westmeath.

The Consultation process will be based on the draft Socio- economic Statement and will give you an opportunity to provide your views on the development of Westmeath over the next 6 years. If you require any additional supports to complete this survey or in relation to the workshops, please email dce@westmeathcoco.ie

Data Protection Notice

The outcome of this survey will assist in the development of County Westmeath's new LECP. It should be noted that all survey responses will be reported anonymously within LECP, and no information will be attributed to any one individual, company or enterprise in any reports stemming from this process. This anonymised data will only be used for the purposes of shaping the finalised LECP. Any personal data supplied on this form shall be processed in accordance with the principles laid out in the General data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. Your participation in this survey is voluntary. There is no penalty for refusal to participate and you will be free to withdraw from your participation at anytime.

If you are happy to participate in this survey, please continue. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. By participating you are indicating that you freely and voluntarily agree to participate and that you are at least 18 years of age.

Thank you.

Pat Murtagh
Chief Officer

Please tick ✓ whichever is appropriate

1. Are you representing a group / organisation?

Yes ☐

No ☐

If your answer is "NO" to question No.1 above, please proceed to Question 7, otherwise please continue to question No.2

2. Please state the name of the group / organisation

3. Was your group / organisation a Lead Agency in the LECP 2016 – 2022?

Yes ☐

No ☐

4. How satisfied are your group / organisation with the number of actions completed in the LECP 2016- 2022?

☐ Very satisfied

☐ Somewhat satisfied

☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

☐ Somewhat dissatisfied

5. What actions if any, would you like to be carried forward into the new LECP 2023- 2029?

6. While implementing the actions in the LECP 2016-2022 which of the following were the most challenging?

Please rank the following factors in order of importance to you (1 to 6). 1 is the most important, 6 is the least important	
Finance	
Human Resources	
Collaboration	
Timescale	
Expertise	
Other	

About You

7. How would you describe your connection with Westmeath?

- ☐ Live and work in County Westmeath
- ☐ Live in County Westmeath
- ☐ Work in County Westmeath
- ☐ From County Westmeath, but do not currently live or work there
- ☐ Other

8. Please select your age category

- ☐ 20 years of age or under
- ☐ 21-30 years of age
- ☐ 31-40 years of age
- ☐ 41-50 years of age
- ☐ 51-60 years of age
- ☐ 61-70 years of age
- ☐ 71-80 years of age
- ☐ 80 years of age or over
- ☐ Prefer not to say

9. Gender: How do you identify?

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Non-binary
- ☐ Prefer not to say

10. Do any of the following apply to you? Please select at most 3 options

- ☐ Employed full-time
- ☐ Employed part-time
- ☐ self- employed
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Retired
- ☐ Homemaker
- ☐ Other

11. If employed, where is your usual place of work?

- ☐ Work from home
- ☐ Work in the office
- ☐ Blended working
- ☐ No fixed location
- ☐ Other

12. If employed, where is your work location?

- ☐ In Westmeath
- ☐ Outside Westmeath

13. Do any of the following apply to you? Please select all that apply to you.

- ☐ Traveller
- ☐ Asylum seeker/ Refugee
- ☐ Migrant / Person born outside of Ireland
- ☐ Long term unemployed
- ☐ Living with addiction
- ☐ Serious health issues (mental / physical)
- ☐ Living with a disability
- ☐ LGBTQIA
- ☐ Single Parent
- ☐ None of these apply to me

Objectives for LECP 2023 – 2029

14. Which of the following High-Level Goals would you consider a priority?

Please rank the following factors in order of importance to you. 1 is the most important, 5 is the least important

Please rank the following factors in order of importance to you (1 to 6). 1 is the most important, 6 is the least important	
Support a proactive response to the challenge of Climate change	
Develop an inclusive and equitable society that supports our vibrant urban and rural communities.	
Improve health and well-being of our citizens.	
Support sustainable economic activity, employment, and education towards a smart green economy.	
Enhance economic and social infrastructure, including housing.	
Promote and protect our rich cultural heritage and realise our tourism potential.	

15. In your opinion will any of the following help combat climate change?

	Yes	No	Maybe
Education & Awareness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
EV charging point	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Housing retrofitting supports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Biodiversity Initiatives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wind Energy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Low emissions vehicles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. Please rate the following aspects in your community

	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Very poor
Recreation Facilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Local Businesses (Café, shops, hairdressers etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Job opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Training opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Safety	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social Life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Community Spirit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social Inclusion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

17. Would you consider the following Health & Wellbeing Initiatives a priority?

	Yes	No	Maybe
Improving Outdoor facilities for physical activity Initiatives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mental health & wellbeing programmes and supports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Age & ability programmes and supports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dementia & Alzheimer's supports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Addiction related programmes & supports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Counselling services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. What objectives would you prioritise to support sustainable economic activity, employment, and education, towards a smart green economy?

Please rank the following factors in order of importance to you (1 to 9). 1 is the most important, 9 is the least important	
Attract more people to live in the area	
Support existing businesses	
Attract new businesses to the area	
Attract visitors to the area	
Enhanced services and facilities such as arts, culture amenities	
Enhanced streetscapes	
Additional remote working hubs	
Support Entrepreneurship and start-up businesses	
Internships & Apprenticeships	

19. What objectives would you prioritise to enhance economic and social infrastructure, including housing?

Please rank the following factors in order of importance to you (1 to 9). 1 is the most important, 9 is the least important	
Enhanced cycleways	
Additional remote working hubs	
Better energy rated buildings	
Improved water conservation	
Circular economy promotion	
Increased housing supply	
Improved transportation infrastructure	
Improved technology infrastructure	
Improved social and community facilities	

20. What objectives would you prioritize to realise our heritage potential?

Please rank the following factors in order of importance to you (1 to 4). 1 is the most important, 4 as the least important	
Promote sustainable and appropriate Heritage Tourism	
Develop sustainable visitor access to heritage trails	
Use new technologies to promote and improve access to heritage	
Develop accurate and appropriate heritage information and interpretation	

21. What objectives would you prioritize to realise our tourism potential?

Please rank the following factors in order of importance to you (1 to 5). 1 is the most important, 5 as the least important	
Strengthen the tourism amenities and attraction	
Strengthen the online promotion of Westmeath tourism attractions	
Deliver high impact marketing of the tourism assets	
Collaboration with local partners and key stakeholders	
Support tourism industry to achieve success	

22. Are there any additional priorities that you would like to see addressed in the LECP 2023-2029?

Thank you for your time!



Coiste um Fhorbairt Pobail Aitiúil
na hIarmhí
Westmeath Local Community
Development Committee



WESTMEATH COUNTY COUNCIL
Comhairle Chontae na hIarmhí