

Uisce Éireann Strategic Infrastructure Development

Water Supply Project Eastern and Midlands Region

Community Benefit Scheme

Document no: IE0001044A/F01
Version: Final

December 2025

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Appendix

Appendix A - Community Benefit Study (RPS)

1 WSP Community Benefit Scheme – Development

This document outlines a bespoke, project-specific, community benefit scheme (CBS) proposed as part of the application for development consent for the Water Supply Project, Eastern and Midlands Region (WSP). The CBS includes a proposed Community Gain Investment Fund developed from the findings of the accompanying WSP Community Benefit Study (Appendix A).

The community benefit scheme aims to deliver positive supports and benefits for hosting communities within the following counties which form the study area for the Water Supply Project, Eastern and Midlands Region:

- Tipperary;
- Offaly;
- Kildare;
- South Dublin;
- Clare;
- Limerick.

To understand how best to support hosting communities, Uisce Éireann commissioned specialist research and advice to inform the development of a bespoke community benefit scheme. The research examined available socio-economic and demographic information for communities in proximity to the proposed infrastructure and, in combination with stakeholder engagement, highlighted community development priorities and frameworks that Uisce Éireann can align with to ensure that the benefits of the WSP are maximised for local communities.

Aligned to Uisce Éireann’s mission of protecting the environment and enabling Ireland’s social and economic development, the study examined opportunities for supporting sustainable communities in the following areas:

- **Economy**

The economic dimension of the study highlighted policies that stimulate local economic development, support businesses, and create job opportunities. By integrating economic policies in the WSP CBS, Uisce Éireann aims to contribute to the prosperity of the hosting communities by seeking to maximise local employment and enterprise opportunities which contribute to the economic vibrancy of the region.

- **Education**

A skilled workforce stands to benefit from local employment opportunities which will accrue from the delivery of the WSP. Recognising the vital role of education in community empowerment, this project examined education attainment levels within the host counties and the policies which are being implemented that facilitate access to educational resources and skill development opportunities. These initiatives aim to help foster knowledge transfer and engaged communities, enabling individuals to actively participate in local decision-making processes and contribute to the overall vitality of their communities.

- **Environment**

This study delved into policies that advocate for sustainable practices and community involvement in environmental initiatives. It emphasises the importance of biodiversity conservation and proactive measures in combating climate change. By aligning the CBS with these environmental policies, Uisce Éireann intends to promote a greener future while encouraging and empowering community participation in sustainability efforts.

The research and engagement process which informed the development of the WSP community benefit scheme comprised:

- A socio-economic research phase to provide baseline data to further understanding of the host areas and areas in proximity to the proposed infrastructure
- A review of community development policies and prioritises in each of the hosting counties
- An aligned programme of stakeholder engagement with the host Local Authorities which was undertaken to affirm the research findings and seek inputs to inform the development of a bespoke community benefit scheme
- Consideration of feedback and suggestions for community benefits from individuals and organisations involved with community development, and
- A review of consultation submissions relating to community gain including those received during the non-statutory public consultation held from January to March 2025 plus feedback from external assurance reviews.

The emerging proposals aim to ensure that the WSP Community Benefit Scheme aligns with community development priorities and objectives, ultimately fostering sustainable growth and resilience.

1.1 Socio-Economic Baseline – Key Findings

This first part of the study considered the socio-economic and demographic baseline for a defined study area within 5kms of the proposed infrastructure and including urban centers within 10kms.

Referencing Census 2022, the Pobal HP Deprivation Index, and other data sources, it examined population demographics and the incidence of disadvantage to provide an overview of communities in each county in the study area.

In summary, the socio-economic and demographic baseline analysis found that:

- The study area is home to approximately 243,000 people, with 8.8% population growth between Census 2016 and Census 2022, higher than the national average of 8.1% over the same period.
- The study area covers a mix of rural and urban environments, with varying economic activities ranging from agricultural activity in the west of the study area, to industrial and commercial activities in the east of the study area.
- The Pobal HP Deprivation Index classifies the predominant levels of disadvantage and affluence in the study area as ‘marginally below average’ and ‘marginally above average’. There are several areas within the study area that are classified as ‘disadvantaged’ or ‘very disadvantaged’ and areas that are classified as ‘affluent’ or ‘very affluent’.
- The study area was broadly in line with the national unemployment rate of 8% (CSO, 2022), with the highest rate of unemployment in Co. Offaly at 9.26% for females, and 9.48% for males.¹
- In Co. Tipperary, the Electoral Divisions (EDs) in the southwest of the study area are predominantly marginally above average, compared to the Electoral Divisions in the northeast of the study area which are predominantly marginally below average. This area includes the CSO Urban Area of Roscrea which has pockets of extreme disadvantage marked by high unemployment rates (29.82% for males, 16.33% for females) with only 6.51% of the population advancing to third level education.
- The EDs of Nenagh West Urban and Nenagh East Urban are categorised as ‘marginally below average’, with two small areas within Nenagh categorised as ‘very disadvantaged’. These small areas have a high age dependency of over 38%, a high rate of population with primary education only, at 25.18% and

¹ The unemployment rate at April 2022 as recorded in Census 2022 was 8%. The seasonally adjusted monthly unemployment rate for persons aged 15-74 years in April 2022 as recorded by the CSO was 4.5%. Source: [MUM01 - Seasonally Adjusted Monthly Unemployment](#)

36.36% respectively. The areas both have high unemployment rates for males with 21.15% and 26.19% respectively.

- Co. Offaly features pockets of disadvantage in the urban areas Birr, Tullamore, Edenderry, and particularly Shinrone, which has unemployment rates of 12.9% for males and 18.52% for females, along with a high age dependency ratio of 44.87%. Offaly has the highest percentage of population with primary education only, at 12.95%.
- In Co. Kildare, the west, especially Rathangan, is rated as disadvantaged, with unemployment rates exceeding the national average (12.2% for males, 16.33% for females) and only 10.37% of residents having Third Level Education.
- In South Dublin, the Newcastle Electoral Division within the study area includes very disadvantaged areas, characterised by a high age dependency ratio of 64.86% and unemployment rates of 18.92% for males and 14.81% for females, both higher than the national average.
- The study area contains 29 designated environmental sites, including Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation and Natural Heritage Areas.

1.2 Community Development Policy Review – Key Findings

The second research phase comprised a policy review of the measures outlined in County Development Plans, Local Economic and Community Plans, and Climate Action Plans within the host counties, focusing on three primary areas: Education, Economy, and Environment which align with Uisce Éireann’s strategic purpose and objectives for community support.

The overarching goal of these plans is to create vibrant and sustainable environments that align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and national policies such as Project Ireland 2040. Key towns are designated within these plans to focus on sustainable transport and economic growth, highlighting the importance of integrating green and blue infrastructure to enhance quality of life and biodiversity.

- Economic development strategies across the counties focus on creating resilient and diverse economies. Policies aim to encourage innovation, attract investment, and support local enterprises, particularly in sectors such as renewable energy and green technologies. The plans highlight the importance of infrastructure, including water and energy utilities, to facilitate sustainable growth in rural areas. Additionally, community-led initiatives are promoted to enhance local economic strengths and provide essential services.
- Education is recognised as a cornerstone for community development and socio-economic progress. The County plans emphasise lifelong learning and collaboration with educational institutions to equip communities with the necessary skills for a changing economy. Various initiatives aim to support adult learning and address barriers to education, fostering social inclusion and empowerment. Particular emphasis is placed on ensuring a just transition for communities which are moving to more sustainable industries including the green economy.
- Environmental sustainability is a central theme in the reviewed policies, with a strong emphasis on climate action and biodiversity conservation. The plans outline strategies for transitioning to low-carbon economies, enhancing green infrastructure, and promoting community engagement in climate initiatives. Specific areas are designated as Decarbonising Zones to demonstrate local climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts, empowering communities to take action.

The integration of climate action across all policies underscores the commitment to addressing the challenges posed by climate change while ensuring the protection of natural and cultural heritage. The plans advocate for sustainable land use, effective biodiversity management, and the development of recreational amenities that contribute to active lifestyles and overall quality of life.

In summary, the reviewed policies reflect a comprehensive approach to sustainable development, emphasising the interconnectedness of education, economic resilience, and environmental stewardship. Each plan demonstrates a commitment to fostering vibrant communities while addressing the pressing challenges of climate change. This holistic framework aims to create inclusive, resilient, and sustainable environments for current and future generations.

1.3 Stakeholder Engagement – Key Findings

1.3.1 Engagement with Local Authorities

Uisce Éireann held WSP briefings with all relevant local authorities in 2024 to provide an overview of the proposed approach to formulating a community benefit scheme.

During this phase of the research study, a series of six meetings were held with the executive management teams of the Local Authorities in which infrastructure is proposed. The purpose of this engagement process was to provide updates on the development of the WSP community benefit scheme and to seek feedback on the research findings within the study area. As Local Authorities are engaged in planning and delivering services which underpin the development of sustainable communities, inputs, expertise and insights gained from Local Authority officials was invaluable in furthering the research team’s understanding of the host communities and priorities for sustainable social progress in these areas.

This process of engagement supported the development of the proposed community benefit scheme by affirming the research findings and providing the opportunity for the organisations most closely associated with service provision in the host communities to inform the development of the scheme. Stakeholder feedback confirmed that the approach adopted by Uisce Éireann aligns with the community development priorities for communities in proximity to the proposed infrastructure.

Table 1-1 Summary of Engagement with Local Authorities

Stakeholder	Meeting 1 Study Overview	Meeting 2 Socio-economic Baseline and Community Development Policy Analysis	Meeting 3 Opportunities for Community Benefit Supports	Meeting 4 Emerging Proposals & Governance Model	Meeting 5 Emerging Proposals & Governance Model	Meeting 6 Update on Emerging Scheme & Governance Model
Tipperary County Council	21/10/24	18/11/24	19/12/24	20/01/25	17/02/25	11/06/25
Offaly County Council	07/11/24	04/12/24	14/01/25	28/01/25	24/02/25	20/05/25
Kildare County Council	14/11/24	11/12/24	14/01/25	20/01/25	24/02/25	21/05/25

Throughout this engagement process, Uisce Éireann shared information with the Local Authorities on the proposed community gain investment fund and associated topics such as the fund objectives, community investment benchmarking, funding categories, and governance and administration model options. Feedback was welcomed on all aspects of the development of the community gain investment fund.

Meetings were also held with the Health Service Executive (National Environmental Health Service) and the Local Authorities Water Programme.

1.3.2 Emerging Themes and Topics

The following themes and topics emerged from the socio-economic and community development policy research findings. These were discussed with the hosting Local Authorities during the engagement phase of the study.

Sustainable Communities	Just Transition	Climate And Environment	Capacity Building
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy Placemaking • Environmental Protection and Enhancement • Opportunities to address economic rural decline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Midlands areas transitioning to sustainable enterprise • Levelling Up – equal opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowering climate action • Protecting and conserving water • Reducing emissions (unnecessary travel) • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational programmes and initiatives • Skills development • Engagement with businesses

Figure 1-1 Community Development Policy Review and Engagement - Emerging Themes and Topics

1.3.3 Consultation Feedback and Suggestions on Community Benefit

Uisce Éireann welcomed suggestions from stakeholders on possible benefits which could be delivered to support sustainable community development as part of the WSP community benefit scheme. Suggestions regarding the proposed Community Benefit Scheme were submitted to the Project Team by the public at various stages of project development including during the non-statutory public consultations. Uisce Éireann wishes to thank the individuals and organisations that provided feedback on community benefit throughout the pre-planning phase.

Most respondents welcomed the proposed community benefit scheme. Stakeholders expressed broad support for the proposed scheme structure which aims to provide economic, environmental and educational supports for hosting communities with many noting its potential to enable communities and the region to prosper. Some submissions recommended proactive community engagement and communication with local residents in relation to the proposed scheme.

Some submissions asked Uisce Éireann to ensure that benefits accrue both to rural and urban areas in proximity to the proposed project. Submissions advocated for opportunities to support economic activities based on sustainable tourism projects, environmentally friendly farm diversification, or other community-based initiatives. While the positive impact of a fund was acknowledged, concerns were raised that the fund themes appear more focused on construction rather than addressing the needs of the community at the point of abstraction. Furthermore, it was submitted that communities downstream from the extraction point should be included in the funding. Additional suggestions included creating educational and skills resources to prepare individuals to work on the project.

A number of stakeholders made suggestions for supports for specific projects and initiatives including projects which seek to enhance the local environment and visitor experience.² A public amenity or national water sports facility at the extraction point in the Parteen Basin area were suggested. Funding for habitat restoration and biodiversity initiatives was also suggested. A visitor centre at the Water Treatment Plant at Birdhill and an extension of a local woodland recreational area at the break pressure tank near Cloughjordan were also proposed. Some stakeholders suggested

² As an example see: [Lough Derg Visitor Experience Development Plan 2020_191120.pdf](#)

that further offtakes from the project would result in wider water supply benefits to communities.

The themes, topics and suggestions were considered in detail by the research team and underpin the proposed scheme as shown in Section 2. The Emerging Community Benefit Scheme proposes supports for projects and initiatives which seek to advance sustainable community development in alignment with the identified themes and topics.

2 WSP Community Benefit Scheme

2.1 Emerging WSP Community Benefit Scheme

Throughout Ireland, communities, businesses, the economy, and the environment depend on the delivery of safe, secure, and sustainable public water services to thrive. Uisce Éireann is committed to delivering safe, secure, and sustainable water services to support our growing population and as a key enabler for investment in Ireland's future. Uisce Éireann is working to transform our water infrastructure and services for communities all over Ireland.

The WSP has capacity to address water supply needs for up to 50% of the State's population through providing a new sustainable water source for the eastern and midlands region. While delivery of this vital water supply is a key benefit in itself, it is recognised that communities in proximity to the proposed infrastructure can be impacted during construction.

The research and stakeholder engagement undertaken during the formulation of the bespoke community benefit scheme identified opportunities to support socio-economic, environmental and educational progress in host communities. In this way, the proposed scheme aims to offset some of the social impacts of this major infrastructure development in a targeted, fair and proportionate way.

As part of the bespoke community benefit scheme for the Water Supply Project, Eastern and Midlands Region, Uisce Éireann is committing to funding sustainable community development projects and initiatives. Working in collaboration with the hosting Local Authorities, the WSP Community Gain Investment Fund aims to deliver support for community initiatives under the three broad categories described in Table 2-1. The categories for community support are aligned with Uisce Éireann's strategic objectives and the community development objectives identified in the research and confirmed during stakeholder engagement.

Table 2-1 WSP Community Benefit Scheme Overview

Category	Objective	Description
<p>Economy</p>	<p>To support sustainable economic development within the project area through the provision of employment opportunities and the application of social inclusion initiatives.</p>	<p>Providing local employment opportunities for jobseekers (including support for long-term unemployed persons returning to work, youth unemployed, or persons entering the workforce for the first time) through the use of social procurement / social inclusion initiatives.</p>
		<p>Providing opportunities for SMEs and social enterprises to benefit from the delivery of the WSP.</p>
<p>Education</p>	<p>To act as a thought leader and inspire students to pursue educational pathways in science, technology, engineering or maths (STEM).</p>	<p>Initiatives that support progression in education at all levels or which seek to encourage pathways in STEM. Support for initiatives which seek to reduce early school leaving in disadvantaged areas.</p>
<p>Environment</p>	<p>To encourage and empower thriving communities through environmental protection and enhancement.</p>	<p>Supports for local projects that seek to protect or enhance the natural environment including those aligned with the objectives of protecting and enhancing water bodies, water conservation and climate actions initiatives as per the objectives of the Water Action Plan, the Climate Action Plan, and the National Biodiversity Action Plan.</p>

3 WSP Community Gain Investment Fund

It is proposed that a Community Gain Investment Fund will be established by Uisce Éireann to support community-based initiatives. The community gain investment fund is a goodwill contribution for the benefit of the communities which will be hosting the Water Supply Project, Eastern and Midlands Region. The fund is intended to provide support for community initiatives during construction and allocations will take account of the longer term nature of the permanent infrastructure sites.

Community gain can take many forms including financial assistance for projects or initiatives, new or improved community amenities, education supports, volunteering and benefit-in-kind donations, or social procurement policies. Ultimately, it is the impact of the supported projects and initiatives that is most valuable, rather than the financial contribution itself.

Part 2 Section 3 Par 37G (7) of the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006 states:³

In granting permission, the Board may attach:

- a condition with regard to the proposed development;*
- a condition requiring payment of a development contribution or contributions;*
- a condition requiring further information to be submitted before commencing development; and*
- a condition requiring, in whole or in part, (i) the construction or the financing of a facility, or (ii) the provision or the financing of the provision of a service, in the area in which the proposed development would be situated, being a facility or service that, in the opinion of the Board would constitute a substantial gain to the community.*

It is Uisce Éireann's view that the WSP community benefit scheme (underpinned by the study area research and engagement process) including the proposed community gain investment fund ultimately constitutes a substantial gain to the communities hosting the pipeline and longer-term infrastructure sites.

³ [Planning and Development \(Strategic Infrastructure\) Act 2006, Section 3](#)

3.1 Research and Benchmarking

In forming the WSP community gain investment fund, Uisce Éireann commissioned specialist research to examine and benchmark community gain funds proposed for strategic infrastructure developments in Ireland and the UK. This research reviewed ten projects in total including strategic infrastructure developments in the water sector as well as projects in the energy, transportation and healthcare sectors which have proposed or implemented community gain investment. The purpose was to understand if common approaches could be identified and if the WSP fund could be benchmarked to ascertain an aligned level of funding and approach.

The research found that there is no standard or common approach to community gain investment in the water supply sector in Ireland or in the UK. Several major regional water supply projects researched in the UK did not have a project-specific community gain investment fund associated with project delivery.

Nationally important projects in the energy (electricity generation and grid infrastructure) and transport (aviation and rail) sectors did feature community funding initiatives which were usually associated with the construction phase and/or in some cases for a defined period of the operation stage. Some community funding schemes, mainly for commercial developments (energy generation and waste-to-energy in particular) were requirements of policy which were confirmed in project consents. Other initiatives, electricity grid developments or electricity cable projects for example, were proposed by the developers whether publicly or privately funded.

The amount of funding to be provided is usually determined based on the technology used and construction impacts. EirGrid's Celtic Interconnector project, for example - which involves delivering high voltage underground electricity cables in a rural setting and construction of substations - has implemented a €2.4m community fund during the construction stage. This represents approximately 0.15% of the projected construction project budget of €1.6bn.⁴

Having reviewed available data from the benchmarked strategic infrastructure developments, the findings of the socio-economic baseline, and the review of community development policies in each of the hosting counties, Uisce Éireann is proposing a community benefit scheme which is

⁴ Source: [Case Study: Financing the construction of the Celtic Interconnector - Goodbody](#)

bespoke to the Water Supply Project. The scheme includes a proposal for a community gain investment fund which is aligned with Uisce Éireann's corporate objectives and with Local Authority priorities for community development as explored during the stakeholder engagement phase.

Uisce Éireann proposes to use the Community Gain Investment Fund to support community-based initiatives, primarily in the economic, educational, and environmental areas, which meet specific criteria, to support the development of sustainable, thriving communities.

It fundamentally aims to support the sustainable growth of communities in proximity to the proposed project. The fund is weighted using a multi-criteria assessment of the identified impacts of the construction stage, permanent infrastructure within each hosting county, and the supply benefits that will be provided.

The proposed Community Gain Investment Fund has been developed in consultation with the Local Authorities in counties which are hosting the proposed infrastructure. Feedback from interested stakeholders including organisations and individuals received during the pre-planning phase of the project has also been considered by the project team and is reflected in the proposed scheme.

In formulating this proposal, Uisce Éireann is providing An Coimisiún Pleanála with a bespoke and proportionate community gain fund proposal, with an associated governance and administration structure, which can be considered as part of an overall planning application.

3.2 Governance and Administration

During the formulation stage of the community gain investment fund, a range of governance and administration options were examined in consultation with the Local Authorities. Four structure models were reviewed and assessed which included variations of governance and administration functions as shown in Figure 3-1.

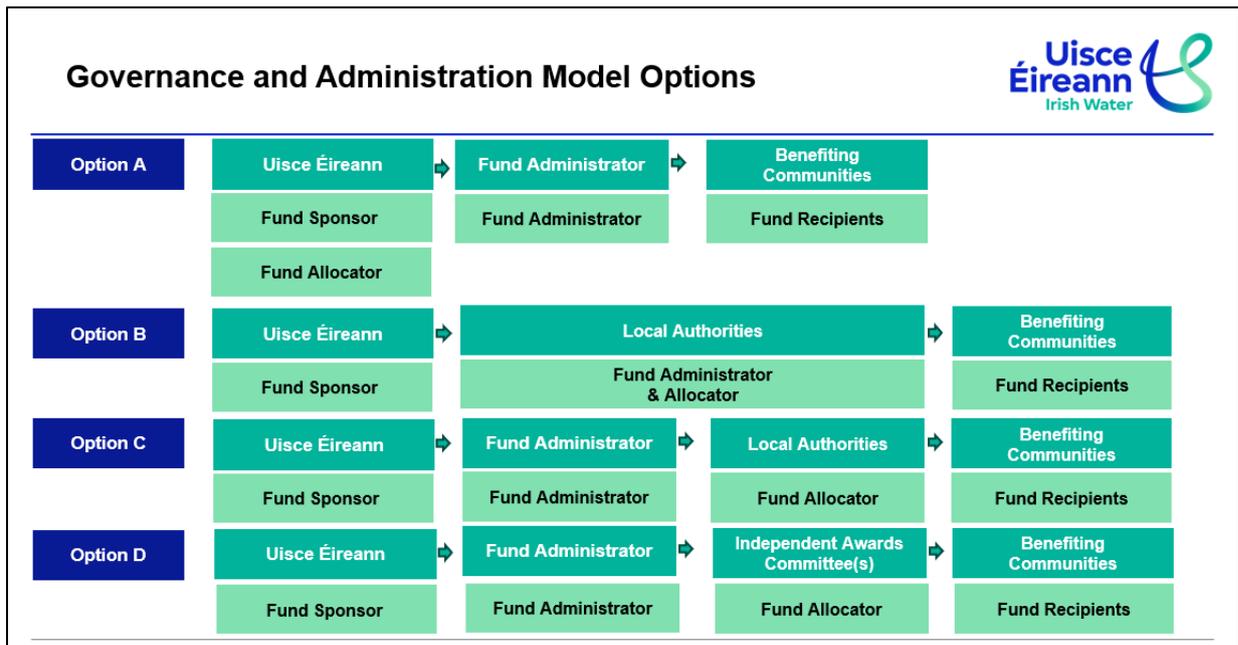


Figure 3-1 WSP-EMR Community Gain Fund - Governance and Administration Models

3.2.1 Preferred Governance and Administration Model

Following discussion and feedback from the Local Authorities, Option B emerged as the preferred governance and administration model and is detailed below.

3.2.2 Fund Sponsor

Uisce Éireann will be the Fund Sponsor and will provide funding, on an annual basis, to the Fund Administrator(s) (i.e. the Local Authorities) based on a budgetary provision similar to that outlined in the example in **Section 3.1**.

The roles and duties of the Fund Sponsor are as follows:

- Formulation of the proposed scheme for SID application
- Provision of funding

- Setting of the governance and administration model
- Oversight and review of funding decisions annually
- Development of funding scheme criteria, terms and conditions
- Reporting to the Uisce Éireann Executive Management and Board.

Uisce Éireann will oversee the distribution of funding to the Fund Administrators but do not intend to have a role in accepting or evaluating applications for funding or the decision-making process.

3.2.3 Fund Administrator(s)

The proposal is that the hosting Local Authorities in Counties Tipperary, Limerick, Clare, Offaly, Kildare, and South Dublin will be the Fund Administrators with the primary responsibility of managing the distribution of funding to recipients in local communities in proximity to the proposed project.

The role and duties of the Fund Administrator are as follows:

- Management and implementation of community gain funding
- Administration of the funding rounds, the application, evaluation, and award processes
- Promoting the fund and funding rounds/calls
- Development of the application form
- Decisions on grant awards within LA area under the Economic, Education, and Environment categories (potentially via a grants committee or similar)
- Ensure that funding is apportioned appropriately and proportionately in line with scheme categories and timeframes
- Participate as part of an Inter-Authority Oversight Group

3.2.4 Inter-Authority Oversight Group

Uisce Éireann will establish an Inter-Authority Oversight Group with the objective of ensuring coherence, consistency, and efficiency in the administration of the WSP community gain investment fund. The membership of the group will comprise an Uisce Éireann Representative (Chair) and one nominated representative from each administering Local Authority. It is proposed that the group will meet annually to share information and learnings from the implementation of the WSP community gain investment fund and to optimise the approach to future funding rounds.

3.3 Fund Overview & Operation

3.3.1 Fund Amount

There is no statutory formula or standard practice to determine how a community gain investment fund for this type of public water infrastructure project should be formulated. Uisce Éireann, having commissioned specialist research and advice, and having engaged with key stakeholders, considers that the proposed approach in this emerging scheme reflects best practice principles in the formulation of a community gain investment fund. Uisce Éireann proposes that the investment fund amount is benchmarked against similar largescale infrastructure projects such as the case study highlighted in Section 3.1, Research and Benchmarking.

3.3.2 Weighted Allocations

The proposed fund is based on quantifiable aspects of the project and provides an objective basis to assess the scale of impacts during construction using the following criteria:

- Scale of permanent above ground infrastructure – the raw water abstraction, water treatment plant, break pressure tank, termination reservoir etc.
- Scale of construction - pipeline length, construction compounds, and access routes;
- Noise and temporary disruption during the construction stage;
- Landscape and visual amenity; and
- Duration of works at the location.

Where appropriate this has been adjusted to take account of the capital investment and reflect the positive gains to water supply and security of supply which the Water Supply Project will bring.

Table 3-1 WSP Community Investment Fund - Weighted Allocations

Local Authority	Proposed % Funding Allocation	Assessment Details
Tipperary	52	Significant landtake, 3 elements of permanent infrastructure (Raw Water Abstraction, Water Treatment Plant, Break Pressure Tank). 26% of total pipeline length. Increased water treatment capacity in county. Potential future beneficiary of new water supply.
Offaly	25	Small Landtake required for 1 item of permanent infrastructure (Booster Pumping Station) and 50% of total pipeline. Potential future beneficiary of new water supply.
Kildare	8	Small landtake for 1 item of permanent infrastructure (Flow Control Valve) and 22% of total pipeline length. No operational impacts. Moderate beneficiary of new water supply.
South Dublin	5	Moderate landtake to extend an existing water site for 1 item of permanent infrastructure. 2% of total pipeline length. Significant beneficiary of new water supply.
Clare	5	No landtake required. No permanent infrastructure sited in County. Ancillary ESB works, minor visual amenity impacted at Parteen Basin. No pipeline elements.
Limerick	5	No landtake required. No permanent infrastructure sited in County. Ancillary ESB works.

Note Table 3-1 refers to the main permanent land takes required

Uisce Éireann considers that the proposed weighting provides a fair and proportionate benefit to support communities in hosting this vitally important piece of national water infrastructure.

3.3.3 Eligible Communities

Following consultation with the Local Authorities, it is proposed that the funding is targeted to priority areas within 5kms radius of the proposed infrastructure. This is to ensure that communities experiencing the greatest impact during construction receive a proportionate amount of funding support. Should funding applications not be forthcoming from the prioritised areas, the Local Authority may consider applications received from other adjoining areas.

3.3.4 Fund Duration

The fund duration is aligned with the proposed project construction period anticipated to be five (5) years. It is proposed that subject to and in line with

development consent and the Government Infrastructure Guidelines⁵, Local Authority administrators could instigate a call for funding as enabling works commence as long as no legal or other challenge to planning consents was underway. Uisce Éireann proposes to close the fund at the end of construction.

3.3.5 Funding Drawdowns and Carryover of Unallocated Funds

Funding will be allocated on an annual basis by Uisce Éireann and will be released to the Local Authorities upon receipt of a funding draw-down request once specific criteria have been met. Further details of the draw-down process will be supplied to the fund administrators by the fund sponsor in due course. It is Uisce Éireann's intention that the maximum level of annual funding is allocated to applicants annually. Should funds remain unallocated at the end of the funding round, these can be carried over to the next funding round. If, at the end of the final funding round in Year 5, funds have not been drawn down by the Fund Administrator, the fund will close and no further drawn-down will be permitted unless instructed otherwise by the UÉ Board.

3.3.6 Terms and Conditions

A detailed Terms and Conditions document will be provided by the Fund Sponsor to the Fund Administrators in advance of commencement of the community investment fund. Uisce Éireann reserves the right to amend or replace the terms and conditions of the community gain investment fund at any stage of fund implementation.

3.3.7 Application Process

The fund administrators will be responsible for managing implementation of the funding rounds – including promotion of the fund, calls for applications, issuing application forms, assisting applicants with submissions, accepting and assessing applications, awarding funding, and issuing funds to recipients.

The Fund Sponsor (Uisce Éireann) wishes to ensure that the Fund Administrators (Local Authorities) have a high degree of flexibility in administering the fund. It was apparent from the pre-planning stakeholder engagement that different structures for grant making exist in local authorities and feedback suggested avoiding duplicate resources or systems. Therefore, Option B is viewed as the most appropriate administration model by Uisce Éireann and the partner Local Authorities.

⁵ Source: [Infrastructure Guidelines Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform](#)

3.4 Summary and Next Steps

Uisce Éireann wishes to thank all of the contributors who gave time, expertise and insights during the development of the WSP Community Benefit Scheme.

Uisce Éireann considers that this proposed community benefit scheme will provide a fair and proportionate benefit to support communities that will host this vitally important piece of regional water supply infrastructure.

Through the development of the proposed scheme and the proactive engagement undertaken to date with the Local Authorities and other interested organisations, Uisce Éireann has demonstrated its commitment to maximising the societal and environmental benefits that can accrue from the delivery of the Water Supply Project.

Uisce Éireann looks forward with enthusiasm to collaborating with key stakeholders during implementation of the WSP community benefit scheme.

Uisce Éireann Strategic Infrastructure Development

Water Supply Project Eastern and Midlands Region

(Appendix A) Community Benefit Study

Document no: IE0001044A/F01

Version: Final

December 2025

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Appendix A – List of Electoral Divisions within the Study Area

Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
ACP	An Coimisiún Pleanála (formerly An Bord Pleanála)
CAP	Climate Action Plan
CARO	Climate Action Regional Office
CBS	Community Benefit Scheme
CDP	County Development Plan
CIF	Community Gain Investment Fund
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DECC	Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications
DEHLG	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
DOE	Department of Education
DZ	Decarbonising Zone
ED	Electoral District
ETB	Education and Training Board
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign direct Investment
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
GDA	Greater Dublin Area
GHG	Green House Gasses
HLG	High Level Goal
JT	Just Transition
JTF	Just Transition Fund

Acronym	Definition
LA	Local Authority
LACAP	Local Authority Climate Action Plan
LCDC	Local Community Development Committee
LECP	Local Economic and Community Plan
LEO	Local Enterprise Office
LIT	Limerick Institute of Technology
NHA	Natural Heritage Area
NPF	National Planning Framework
pNHA	Proposed Natural Heritage Area
PPN	Public Participation Network
ROO	Register of Opportunities
RSES	Southern Region Spatial and Economic Strategy
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SCO	Sustainable Community Objectives
SEDO	Sustainable Economic Development Objectives
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SME	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
SPA	Special Protection Area
TUS	Technological University of the Shannon
UÉ	Uisce Éireann
UN SDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
WSP	Water Supply Project, Eastern and Midlands Region

INTRODUCTION

Water Supply Project, Eastern and Midlands Region

Today, just one source supplies approximately 85% of the water for the Greater Dublin Area – the River Liffey. This dependence on the Liffey (and the two main water treatment plants of Ballymore Eustace and Leixlip) results in a serious vulnerability to risks such as prolonged drought and / or contamination. Forecasted economic growth, population growth (including the demand for housing), and the impacts of climate change, suggest that the region will need 34% more water by 2044 than is available today. This combination of a growing water supply deficit and lack of supply resilience is not sustainable and a new source of water is urgently needed.

The proposed solution is the Water Supply Project, Eastern and Midlands Region (WSP). A critical national infrastructure project, it will have capacity to support water supply needs for up to 50% of our State's population. It proposes to bring treated water from the Parteen Basin in Co. Tipperary to Peamount in Co. Dublin via a 172km pipeline with the capacity for offtakes along the route in counties Tipperary, Offaly and Westmeath. It will also enable supplies serving Dublin to be redirected back locally to counties Carlow, Wicklow, Meath and Louth.

Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this report is to document and present the findings of a research study which was undertaken to inform the development of a bespoke Community Benefit Scheme (CBS) for the Water Supply Project, Eastern and Midlands Region.

In 2022, Uisce Éireann (UÉ) set the intention to develop a Community Benefit Scheme (CBS) for the Water Supply Project, to include a Community Gain Investment Fund, in order to identify and maximise the societal and environmental benefits which can accrue to local communities from the delivery of this critical infrastructure.

Uisce Éireann initiated consultations on the CBS with the hosting Local Authorities along the 172Km pipeline route in 2023. To understand how best to support hosting communities, in August 2024, Uisce Éireann commissioned specialist research by RPS to inform the development of a project-specific, needs-based community benefit scheme. Incorporating both research and stakeholder engagement, this study aims to inform the setting of parameters and proposals for community gain which align with UÉ and Local Authority objectives and priorities for supporting sustainable community development. Consultations continued in 2024 and 2025 and were expanded to cover a wider study area.

In January 2025, Uisce Éireann launched a non-statutory consultation which included a request for feedback or suggestions from the public on community gain. The feedback received has been considered in conjunction with the research findings, to inform recommendations for community benefit, which Uisce Éireann will propose to An Coimisiún Pleanála – the independent statutory planning authority – for assessment and consideration as part of the overall planning application.

Community Gain Investment

Community Gain Investment is the contribution of skills and / or resources which benefit the community and / or the environment. Community Gain Investment (CGI) may take many forms including financial assistance, benefit-in-kind donations (such as equipment or materials), amenity development, volunteering and sharing of expertise. Ultimately, it is the impact of contributions rather than their financial value that is most important.

CGI may be imposed by the Planning Authority for certain strategic infrastructure developments under Part 2 Section 37G (7) of the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006. UÉ is proposing a Community Investment Fund to support local communities based on the themes emerging from the research findings of this bespoke Community Benefit Scheme (CBS). The proposed Community Investment Fund (CIF) as described in Section 3 and in the accompanying Emerging Community Benefit Scheme document is considered by Uisce Éireann to be a fair and proportionate response to the proposed impacts of the scheme.

Eastern and Midlands Region

The Eastern and Midlands Region is the largest of the four regions defined in Uisce Éireann’s National Water Resources Plan, in terms of both land area and population size. The region includes 19 counties encompassing 24 Local Authorities. It covers approximately 20,900 square kilometres extending from the Shannon Estuary in the south west, towards the large River Boyne catchment and Greater Dublin Area (GDA) in the north east. The region is the primary economic region of Ireland containing Dublin and Limerick City which provides more than 1 million jobs.

The Water Supply Project is in line with the National Water Resources Plan (Framework Plan) and the Regional Water Resources Plan for the Eastern and Midlands Region.

The proposed WSP will be constructed over a large area in the Eastern and Midlands region. The 172km pipeline will travel from the Parteen Basin in Tipperary to Peamount in Dublin with capacity for future offtakes along the route in Tipperary, Offaly and Westmeath.

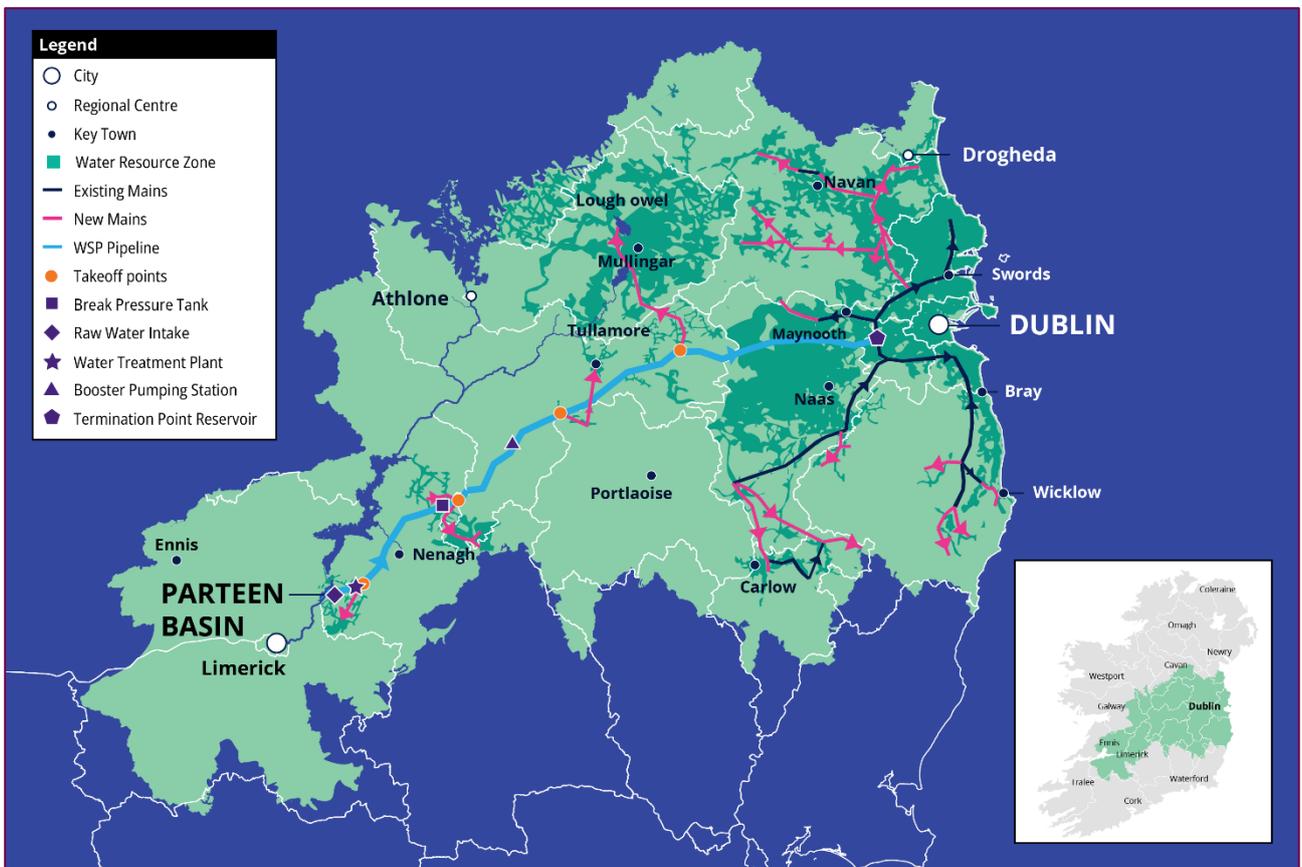


Figure 0-1 Water Supply Project, Eastern and Midlands Region Overview

Methodology for Defining the Study Area

The study area has been defined using a minimum five-kilometre buffer from the proposed WSP pipeline and the associated abstraction, treatment and storage infrastructure. This study area includes the Local Authority areas with direct impacts from hosting the proposed permanent infrastructure for the WSP:

- Tipperary
- Offaly
- Kildare
- South Dublin

Local Authority areas which do not feature direct infrastructural impacts from the proposed project but fall within the study area buffer are also included:

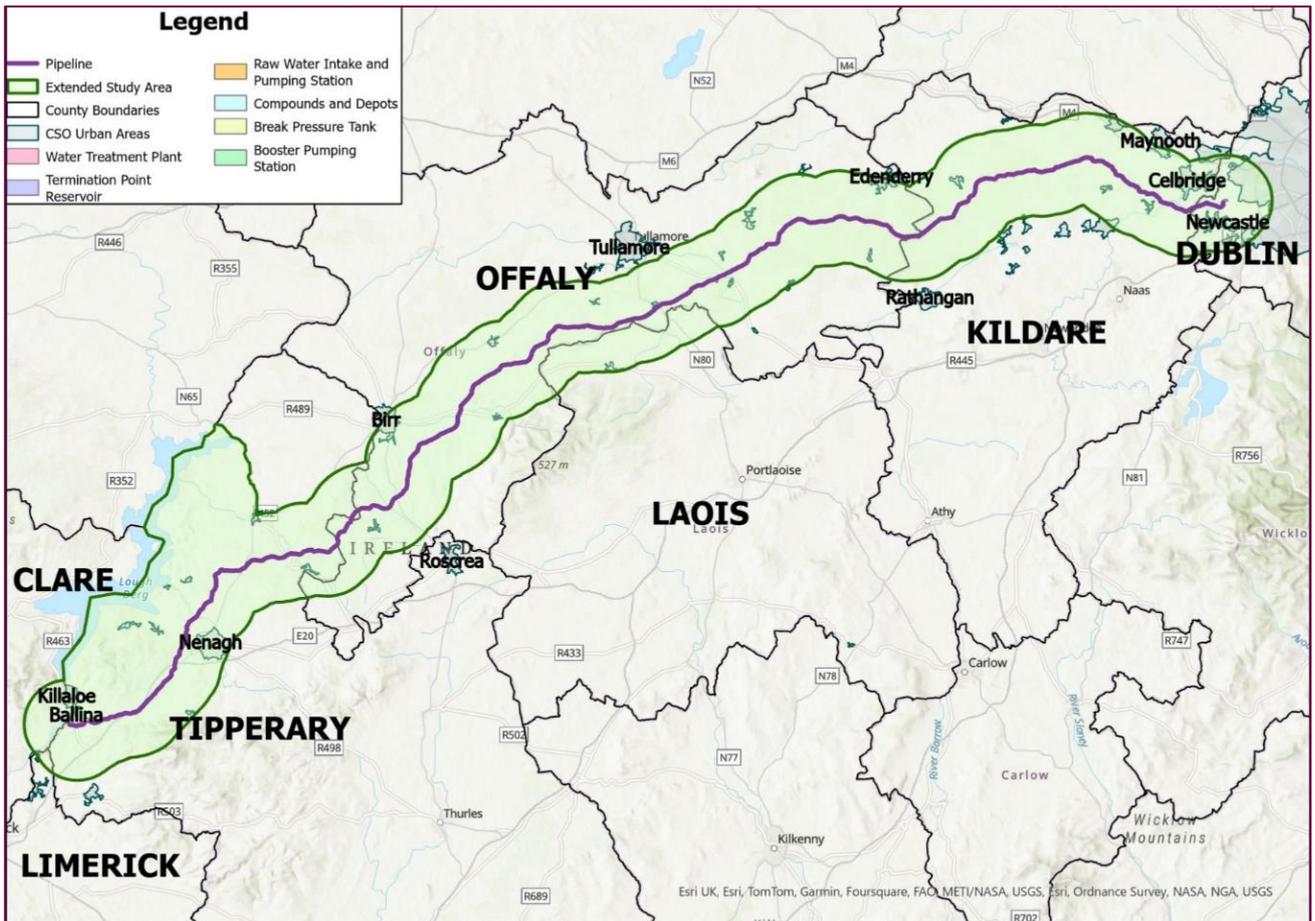
- Clare
- Limerick
- Laois

In addition, urban areas up to ten kilometres from the pipeline have been included in the assessment to gain accurate insights into the wider context of the study area and ensure key population centres close to the proposed infrastructure are considered. These have been identified using Central Statistics Office (CSO) Urban Areas. They are listed within their county descriptions along with the distance from the pipeline to the edge of the CSO Urban Area boundary.

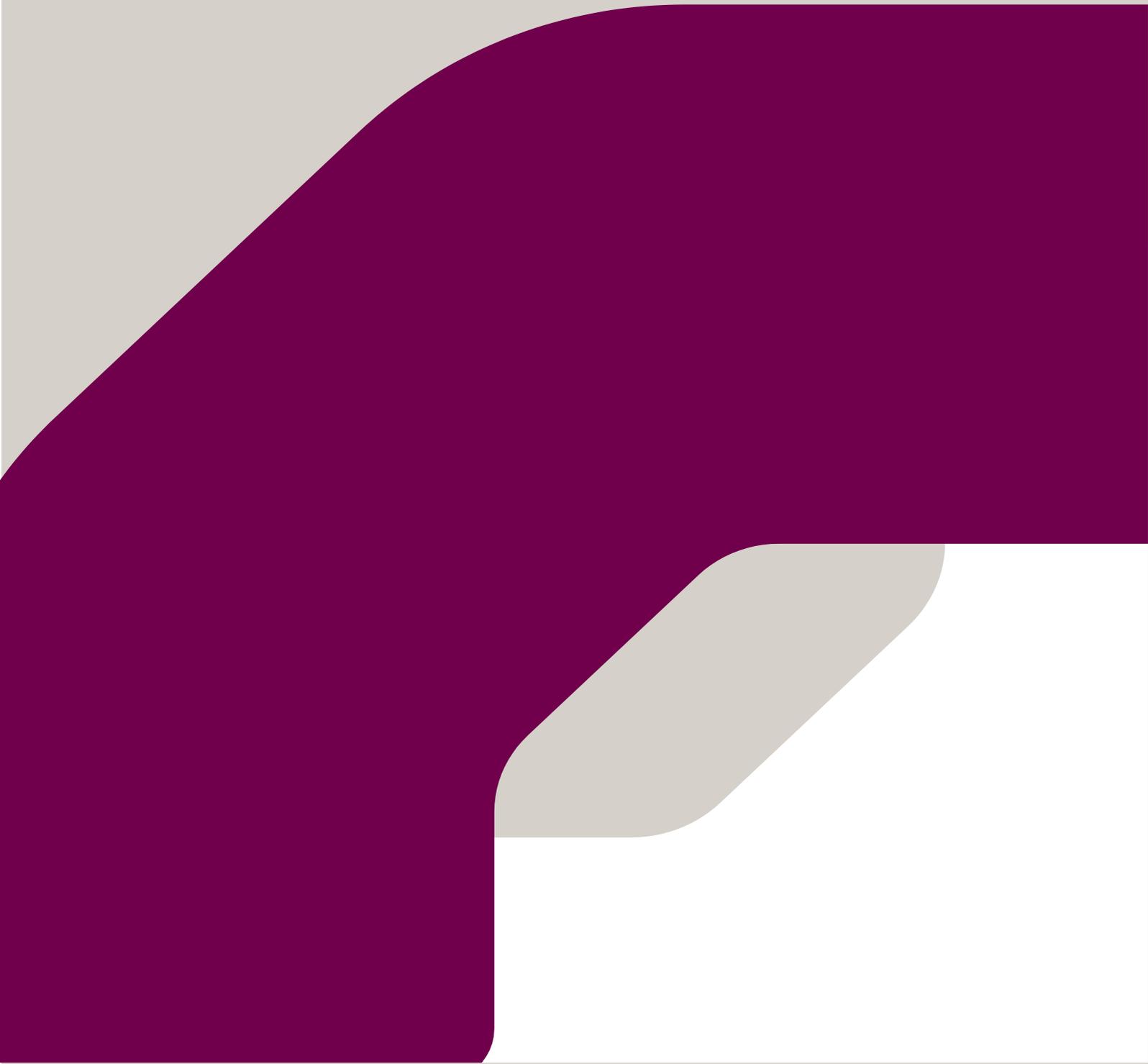
In Tipperary, the study area has been extended beyond the five-kilometre buffer to include the lakelands hinterland extending to the Tipperary county boundary at Lough Derg. This area has been included at the request of the Local Authority. The N65 road was used as a pre-existing boundary to rejoin the extended area with the five- kilometre buffer.

CSO and Pobal HP Deprivation Index data has been assessed for all Electoral Divisions (ED) included or partially included in the study area. These counties are assessed in the sections below in the order of most to least impacted based on a range of criteria, the most significant of which is the scale of permanent infrastructure proposed.

Figure 0-2 shows the defined Community Benefit Scheme study area with CSO Urban Areas.



SECTION ONE:
SOCIO-ECONOMIC BASELINE



1.1 Socio-Economic And Demographic Baseline

This section of the study considers the socio-economic and demographic baseline for the defined study area. It outlines population demographics, incidence of disadvantage using the Pobal HP Deprivation Index, and an economic and environmental overview for each county in the study area.

It first presents an overview of the entire study area for the proposed WSP and then provides a breakdown for each county within the study area.

1.1.1 Overview of Study Area

1.1.1.1 Demographics

CSO data, predominately from Census 2022, has been used to identify information relating to the demographics of the study area.

The study area is home to approximately 243,000 people. The population of the counties in the study area is growing, with 8.8% population growth in the study area from Census 2016 to Census 2022. This exceeds total growth nationally of 8.1% over the six years since Census 2016.

The average age in the study area is 38.1, which is broadly in line with the national average of 38.8.

These populations statistics were calculated using the data from the Electoral Divisions (ED) included / partially included in the study area. A list of these EDs can be found in **Appendix A**.

1.1.1.2 Incidence of Disadvantage

The incidence of disadvantage in the study area was assessed using the Pobal HP Deprivation Index. The Pobal HP Deprivation index is Ireland's most widely used social gradient metric, which scores each small area in terms of affluence or disadvantage. Small Areas generally comprise between 80 and 120 dwellings.

The index uses ten measures to calculate levels of affluence or disadvantage. A basic model of the Pobal HP Deprivation Index is illustrated in **Figure 1-1** below.

Across the study area, the level of disadvantage and affluence is predominantly 'marginally below average' and 'marginally above average'. There are however several pockets of both affluence and disadvantage throughout the study area.

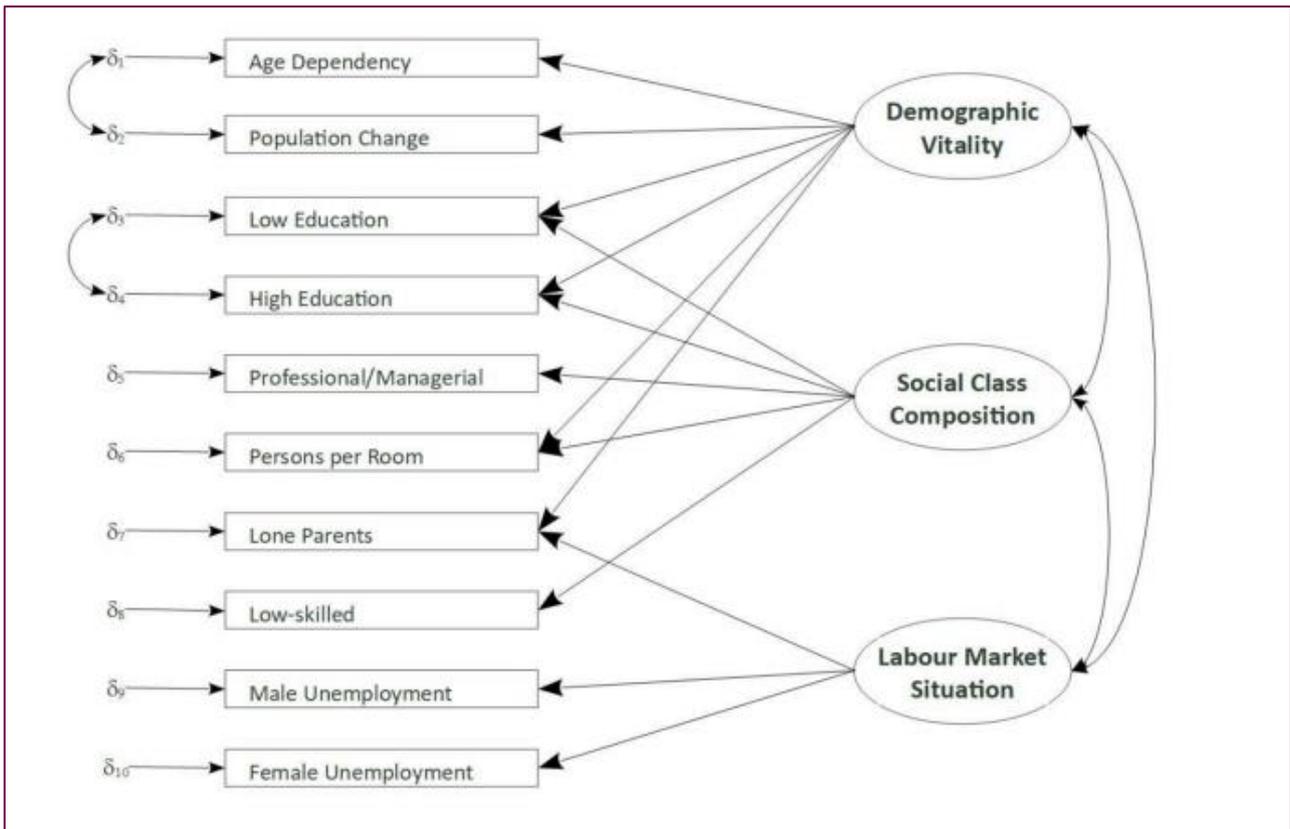


Figure 1-1 Basic Model of Pobal HP Deprivation Index

1.1.1.3 Economic Overview

The study area covers a mix of rural and urban areas.

In the southwestern section of the study area, agricultural activity is a key contributor to the economy while the northeast of the study area there is more industrial and commercial activity.

Across the study area the participation rate (i.e., the number of persons in the labour force expressed as a percentage of the total population aged 15 or over) ranged from 64.8% in the southwest of Ireland, to 69.1% in Dublin.

The study area is well connected by motorways including the M7, connecting County Kildare to County Limerick, and the M8, which forms part of the motorway between County Dublin and County Cork. The study area is serviced by the Dublin Heuston to Ennis railway.

1.1.1.4 Environmental Overview

The proposed project will abstract raw water from the River Shannon at Parteen Basin and pump it to a treatment facility near Birdhill, County Tipperary. It will then be transferred through a steel pipeline via Counties Offaly and Kildare to a new reservoir at Peamount, County Dublin.

The region is also home to areas of rich heritage and natural beauty that support a varied tourism and recreation offering. Key natural assets include the raised bogs and lakes in the Midlands, inland waterways such as the Royal and Grand Canals, and the Shannon corridor, which are a key focus for water-based tourism.

Across the study area there are 29 designated environmental sites including Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs), proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs), and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). These are shown in **Figure 1-2** overleaf.

Environmental sites by County	Total	SPAs	NHAs	pNHAs	SACs
Tipperary	9	1	2	3	3
Offaly	12		2	8	4
Kildare	2		1	1	
South Dublin	1			1	
Clare	4		1	1	2
Limerick	1				1

Table 1-1 Designated Environmental Sites by County

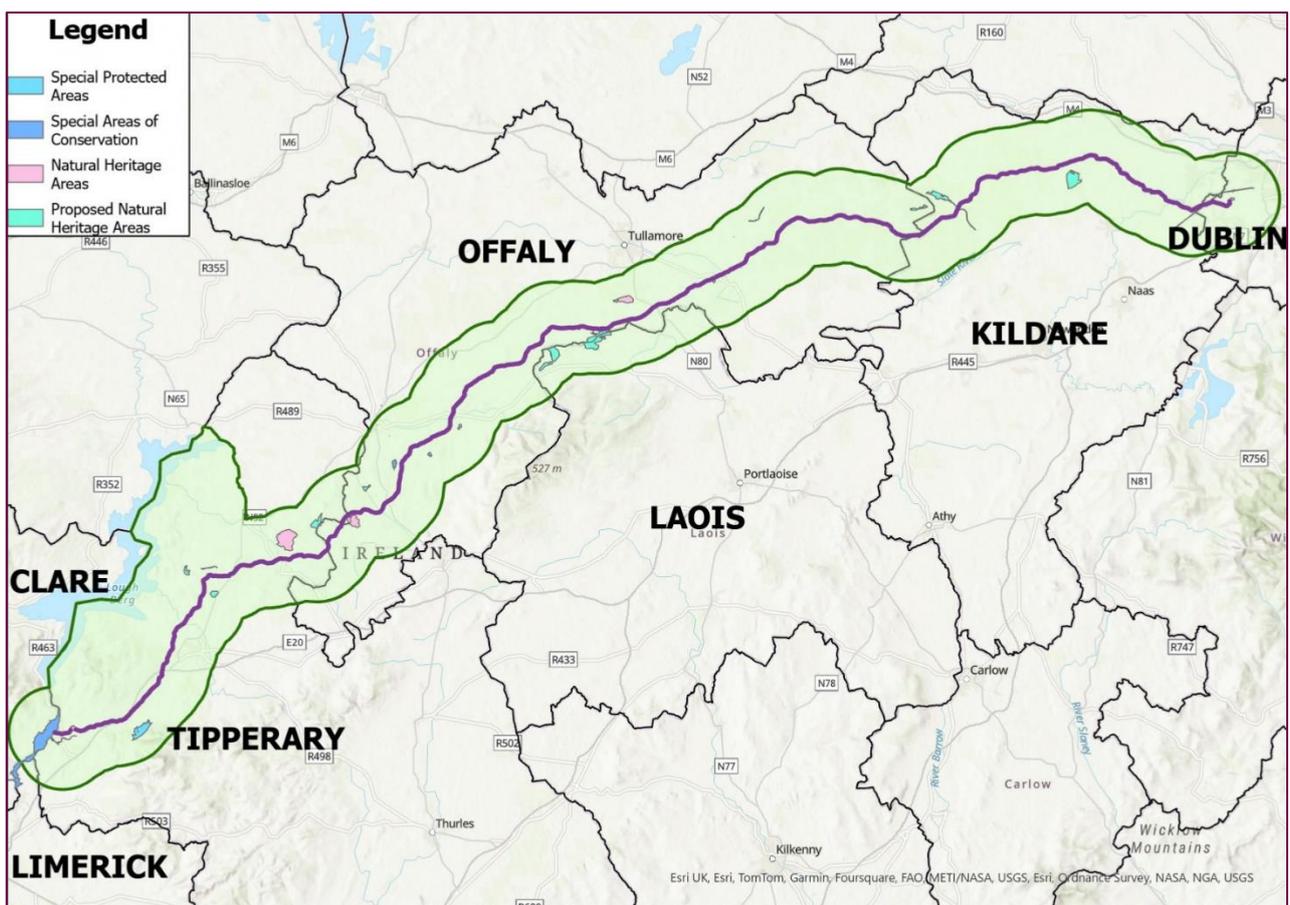


Figure 1-2 Environmental Sites within study area

1.2 Tipperary Study Area

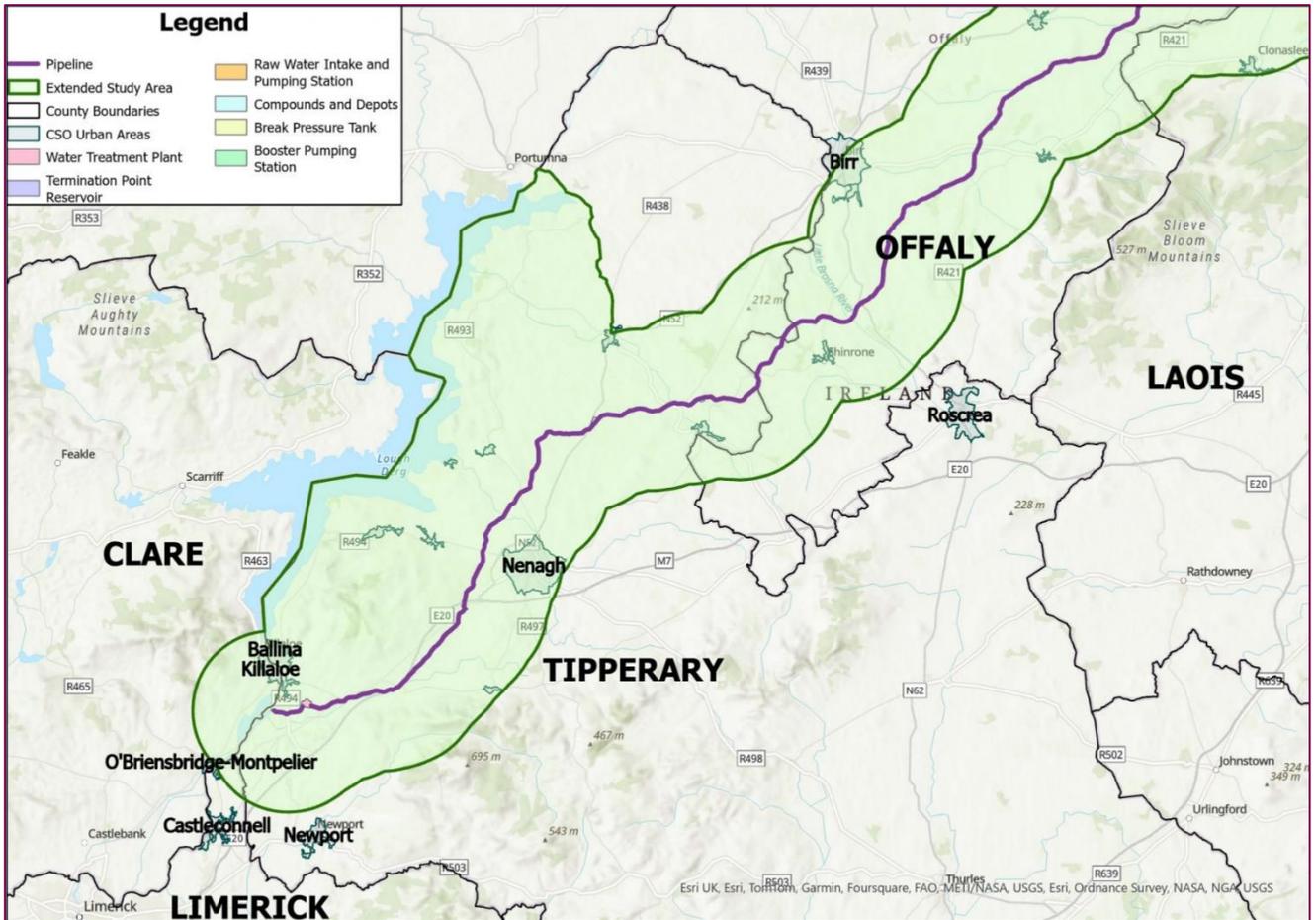


Figure 1-3 County Tipperary Study Area

1.2.1 Urban Areas

Urban Area	Population	Distance from Pipeline to edge of CSO Urban Area (km)
Ballina	2,959	1.1
Nenagh	9,895	1.3
Cloughjordan	701	1.5
Newtown	423	2.6
Puckaun	245	2.6
Silvermines	301	4
Borrisokane	1,117	4

Urban Area	Population	Distance from Pipeline to edge of CSO Urban Area (km)
Dromineer	94	4.3
Portroe	459	5.5
Newport	2,183	6.9
Roscrea	5,542	7.6

Table 1-2 County Tipperary CSO Urban Areas

1.2.2 Demographics

According to Census 2022, the total population of Tipperary is 167,895, which is a 5.23% increase from Census 2016. The population of the study area in County Tipperary is approximately 33,700.

- 31% of the population have third level education or higher, 21% have completed a Technical / Vocational Certificate / Apprenticeship. 2% of the population have no formal education.
- 85% of the population reported that they are in good or very good health.
- 56% of the population of the area are at work, 11% are students, and 17% are retired.
- 84% of the population of the study area were born in Ireland with 88% of the population holding Irish citizenship.

1.2.3 Incidence of Disadvantage

As seen in **Figure 1-4**, the Electoral Divisions in the southwest of the study area in Co. Tipperary are predominantly marginally above average, compared to the Electoral Divisions in the northeast of the study area which are predominantly marginally below average. This area includes the CSO Urban Area of Roscrea which has pockets of extreme disadvantage marked by high unemployment rates (29.82% for males, 16.33% for females) and only 6.51% of the population holding Third Level Education.

The EDs of Nenagh West Urban and Nenagh East Urban are categorised as marginally below average, with two small areas within Nenagh categorised as 'very disadvantaged'. These small areas had a high age dependency of over 38%, a high rate of population with primary education only, at 25.18% and 36.36% respectively. The areas both had high unemployment rates for males with 21.15% and 26.19% respectively.

15 of the 30 EDs within the study area had small areas that are categorised as marginally below average, disadvantaged, and very or extremely disadvantaged. There are two CSO Urban Areas outside the study area categorised as marginally below average and extremely disadvantaged.

The key measures contributing to incidences of disadvantage within County Tipperary include:

- 11.42% of the population have primary education only.
- 33.47% of the population have a third level education.
- The unemployment rate was 7.40% for females, and 7.98% for males.
- The age dependency rate was 37.31%.
- The lone parent rate was 19.65%.

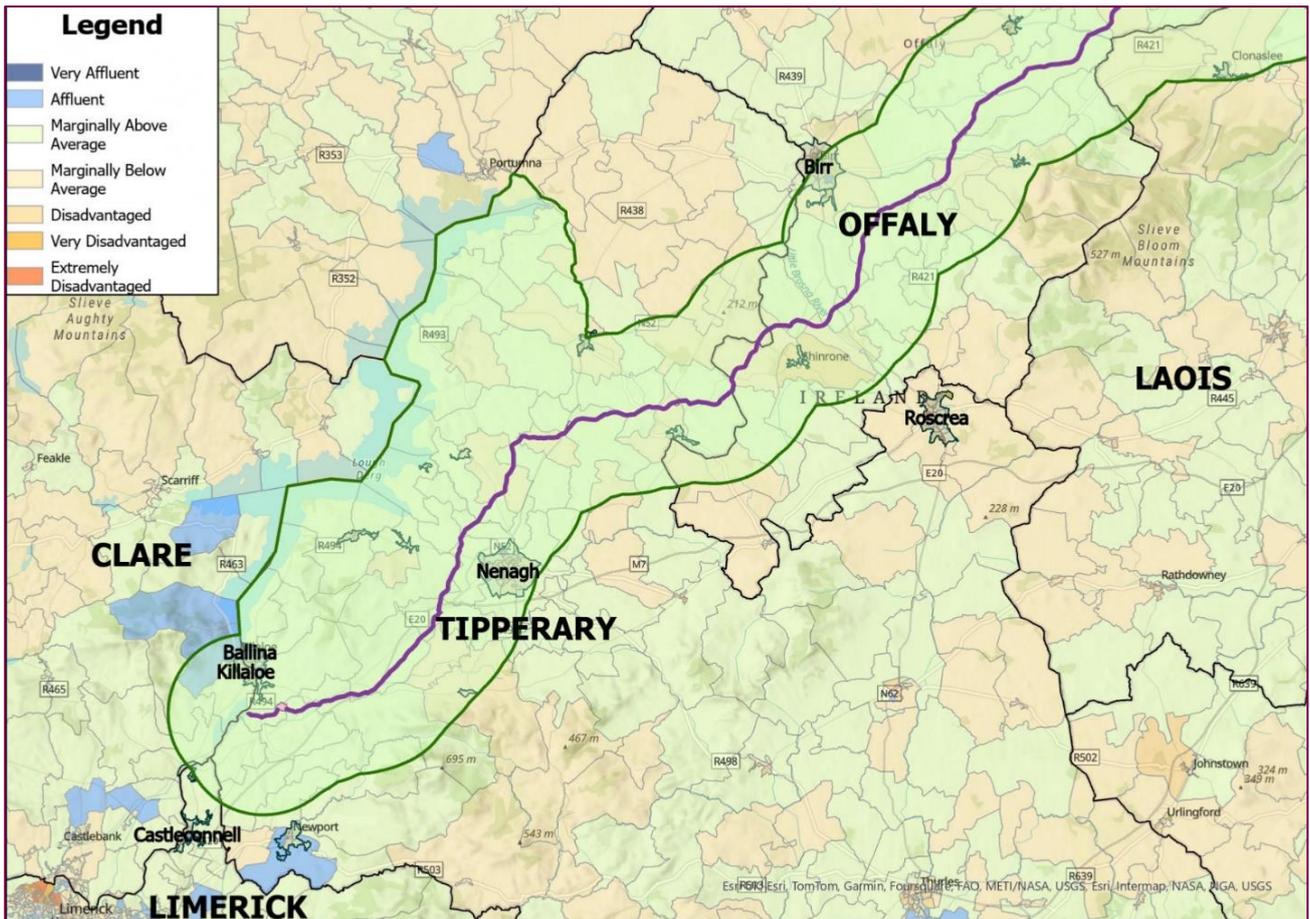


Figure 1-4 County Tipperary Pobal HP Deprivation Index

1.2.4 Economic Overview

Tipperary has a central location in the southern region, with a strong infrastructural base and is well connected to the metropolitan areas of Limerick, Waterford and Cork and Dublin by regional transport linkages, including the motorways, N24 and rail network.

At the time of Census 2022, there were 73,207 people (aged 15 and over) at work in Tipperary, an increase of 9,735 people (+15%) between 2016 and 2022. 17,665 people (aged 15 and over) worked from home at least one day a week in 2022. This represented 24% of the workforce.

Tipperary has a diverse range of economic assets, with approximately 7,900 enterprises in its private business economy in 2020. 26% of the county’s businesses operate in the construction sector, 22% of the businesses are in the wholesale and retail sector. 13% of Tipperary’s businesses involve professional, scientific or technical activities. 6,740 people were employed in the county’s agriculture, forestry and fishing sector as of the 2016 census.

Nenagh was identified by Tipperary County Council as a strategic employment zone, with the potential to deliver a financial / payments technology cluster.

Tipperary also boasts a number of large tourism attractions from both built and natural heritage. The county attracted approximately 470,000 visitors in 2019. Attractions within the study area include Lough Derg, Nenagh Castle and Roscrea Castle.

1.2.5 Environmental Overview

Tipperary’s environment comprises natural areas including mountains, water bodies, peat lands, and valleys. It also includes working landscapes and countryside including agricultural lands and urban areas. The environment provides services from which Tipperary citizens benefit, and use on a day-to-day basis, such as flood and climate regulation, recreation, culture and quality of life. Tipperary’s natural environment is also key to the activity-based tourism economy, and core amenities such as the Lough Derg Lakelands and Suir Blueway Tipperary.

There are a number of designated environmental sites within the Tipperary study area. These are listed in **Table 1-3** below.

Site	Designation
Clareen Lough	NHA
Lough Nahinch	pNHA
Lough Ourna	pNHA
Lower River Shannon	SAC
Scohaboy (Sopwell) Bog	SAC
Scohaboy Bog	NHA
Silvermines Mountains West	SAC
Slievefelim to Silvermines Mountains	SPA
Willsborough Esker / Ardcroney Esker	pNHA

Table 1-3 County Tipperary Environmental Sites

1.3 Offaly Study Area

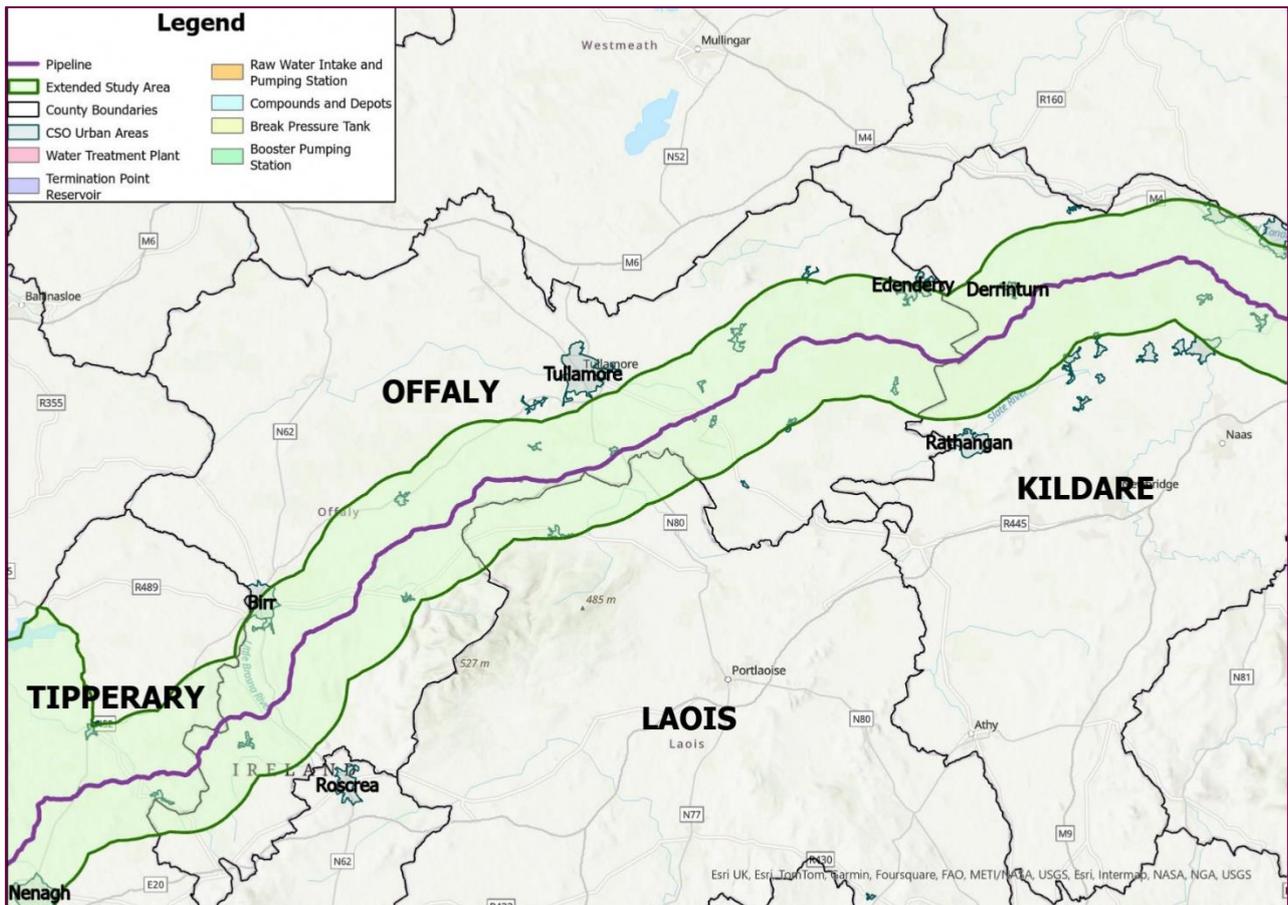


Figure 1-5 County Offaly Study Area

1.3.1 Urban Areas

Urban Areas	Population	Distance from Pipeline to edge of CSO Urban Area (km)
Killeigh	183	0.1
Geashill	392	0.8
Shinrone	707	1.4
Ballinagar	321	1.5
Crinkill	795	2.4
Kilcormac	1,051	2.4
Daingean	1,223	2.5
Killurin	167	2.6
Clonbullogue	401	3
Kinnitty	270	3.3

Urban Areas	Population	Distance from Pipeline to edge of CSO Urban Area (km)
Edenderry	7,888	3.3
Birr	4,726	3.4
Walsh Island or Coolagary	480	4.6
Rhode	841	4.8
Tullamore	15,598	5.3
Mucklagh	918	6.3

Table 1-4 County Offaly CSO Urban Areas

1.3.2 Demographics

According to Census 2022, the total population of Offaly was 83,150 which is a 6.66% increase from Census 2016. The population of the study area in County Offaly was approximately 34,307.

- 23% of the population had a third level education or higher, 21% had completed a Technical / Vocational Certificate / Apprenticeship. 3% of the population had no formal education.
- 84% of the population reported they are in good or very good health.
- 54% of the population of the area are at work, 11% are students, and 15% are retired.
- 86% of the population in the study area in Offaly were born in Ireland, while 88% have Irish citizenship.

The study area includes five electoral districts in north County Laois. The population of the study area in County Laois is approximately 3,144.

1.3.3 Incidence of Disadvantage

Most of the study area in County Offaly is categorised as marginally above or below average according to the Pobal HP Deprivation Index. There are several small areas categorised as affluent, disadvantaged or very disadvantaged.

19 of the 36 EDs within the study area have small areas that are categorised as marginally below average, disadvantaged, and very disadvantaged. There are two CSO Urban Areas outside the study area categorised as marginally below average and very disadvantaged.

Co. Offaly features pockets of disadvantage in the urban areas Birr, Tullamore, Edenderry, and particularly Shinrone, which has unemployment rates of 12.9% for males and 18.52% for females, along with a high age dependency ratio of 44.87% at the time of Census 2022. Offaly had the highest percentage of population with primary education only, at 12.95%. The parts of study area in County Laois are categorised as marginally above and marginally below average according to the Pobal HP Deprivation Index.

The key measures contributing to incidences of disadvantage within County Offaly include:

- 12.95% of the population have primary education only.
- 31.86% of the population have a third level education.
- The unemployment rate was 9.26% for females, and 9.48% for males.
- The age dependency rate was 36.23%.
- The lone parent rate was 18.04%.

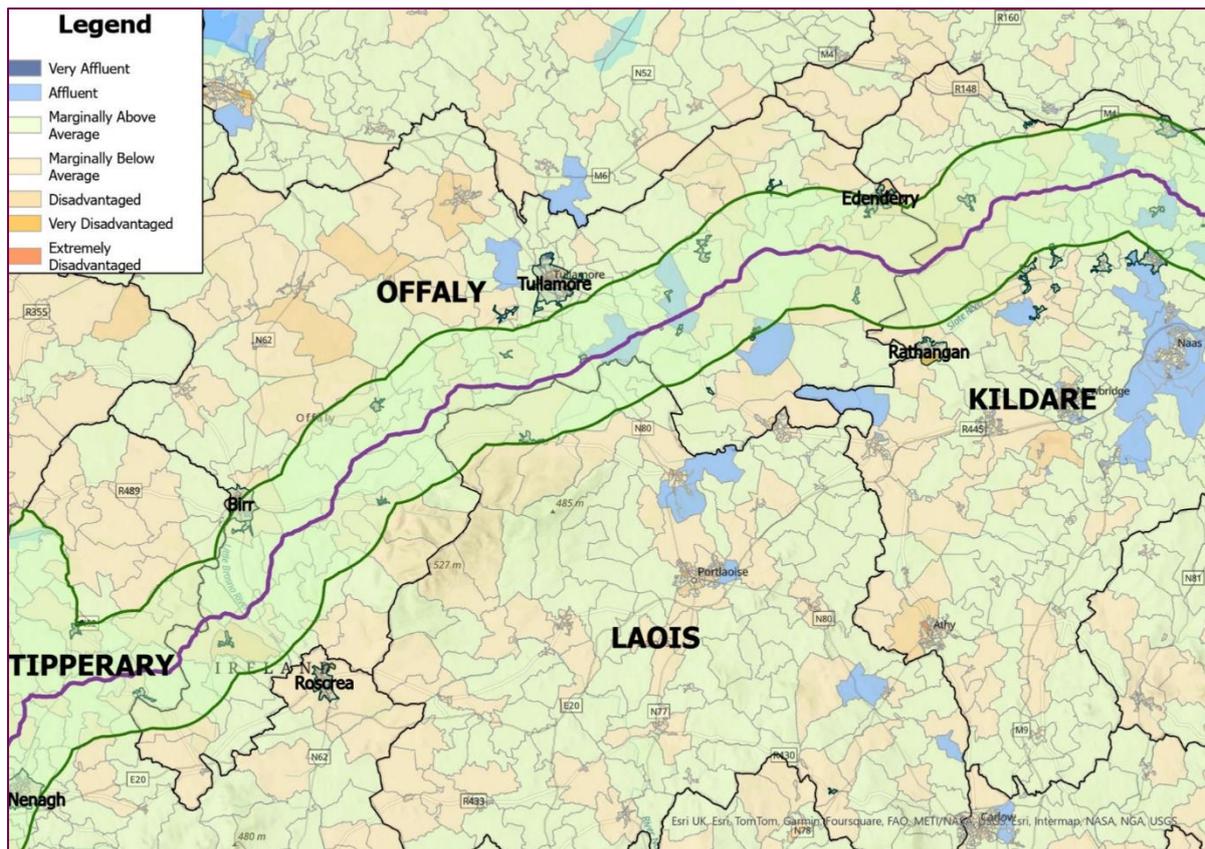


Figure 1-6 County Offaly Pobal HP Deprivation Index

1.3.4 Economic Overview

County Offaly is located strategically within the centre of Ireland and within the province of Leinster and shares boundaries with counties Meath, Kildare, Laois, Tipperary, Galway, Roscommon and Westmeath. Offaly is well connected by the M6 Dublin to Galway motorway and the M7 Dublin to Limerick motorway. The Dublin-Galway railway route also passes through the county.

There were 35,248 people (aged 15 and over) at work in Offaly, an increase of 4,961 people (+16%) between 2016 and 2022. In Offaly, 8,324 people (aged 15 and over) worked from home at least one day a week in 2022. This represented 24% of the workforce.

Tullamore is the county town and the administrative centre of County Offaly. It serves as a major employment hub with professional services, manufacturing and engineering being its largest industries. The Midlands Regional Hospital, which is the major hospital for the region, is located in Tullamore. The hospital has attracted an increase in medical-tech and biopharma companies locating themselves in Tullamore. Tullamore is also a growing hub for the food and drinks sector, with large employers like Tullamore Dew Distillery, Carroll Meats and Glenisk. Tullamore is home to the Midlands Skills Centre, which provides specialised training and upskilling for biopharma and medical-tech sectors.

Edenderry has significant employment in retail, and the Rosderra Meat factory provides significant employment. The east of the county was traditionally dependent on agriculture and peat production. Bord na Móna has provided significant employment in peat harvesting in the area. The Mount Lucas National Construction Training Centre is located within the study area and offers training in construction related areas.

The major industries in Birr are Industrial and Manufacturing. These are predominately based in Syngfield Industrial Estate, Roscrea Road and Crinkill to the south. The economy in the west and south of Offaly is heavily reliant on the primary sectors including agriculture, quarrying and tourism. Tourist attractions within the study area include Birr Castle and Tullamore Dew Distillery Visitor Experience tour.

A trend of commuting has emerged in the east of Offaly and north of Laois due to the areas proximity to the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) which is evident by the jobs-to-resident workers ratio for Edenderry (0.63), Portarlinton (0.43) and Daingean (0.35), indicating high levels of outward commuting.

1.3.5 Environmental Overview

Offaly is primarily a county of flat and undulating lands, with the exception of the Slieve Bloom Mountains situated to the south west of the county. Approximately one fifth of the county comprises peatlands, and the majority of the remainder of the land is in agricultural / forestry use. A comprehensive system of eskers also exists, mainly concentrated in the northwest and centre of the county; the most comprehensive and visually dominate being the Eiscir Riada which more or less runs in a continuous line from Shannonbridge via Clonmacnoise, Clara and Durrow and onwards into County Westmeath. Other significant landscape features include the River Shannon and its Callows which runs along the western county boundary, its tributary the River Brosna, the Grand Canal which traverses the county from east to west, important archaeological and historical landscapes such as Clonmacnoise, Durrow and the extinct volcano Croghan Hill. County Offaly also has a well-developed network of towns and villages.

There are a number of designated environmental sites within the Offaly study area. These are listed in **Table 1-5** below.

Site	Designation
Annaghmore Lough Fen	pNHA
Bracken's Dwelling, Near Whiteford	pNHA
Cangort Bog	NHA
Clonad Wood	pNHA
Derrykeel Meadows	pNHA
Grand Canal	pNHA
Hawkswood Bog	NHA
Island Fen	SAC
Lisduff Fen	SAC
Sharavogue Bog	SAC, pNHA
The Long Derries, Edenderry	SAC, pNHA
Woodville Woods	pNHA

Table 1-5 County Offaly Environmental Sites

1.4 Kildare Study Area

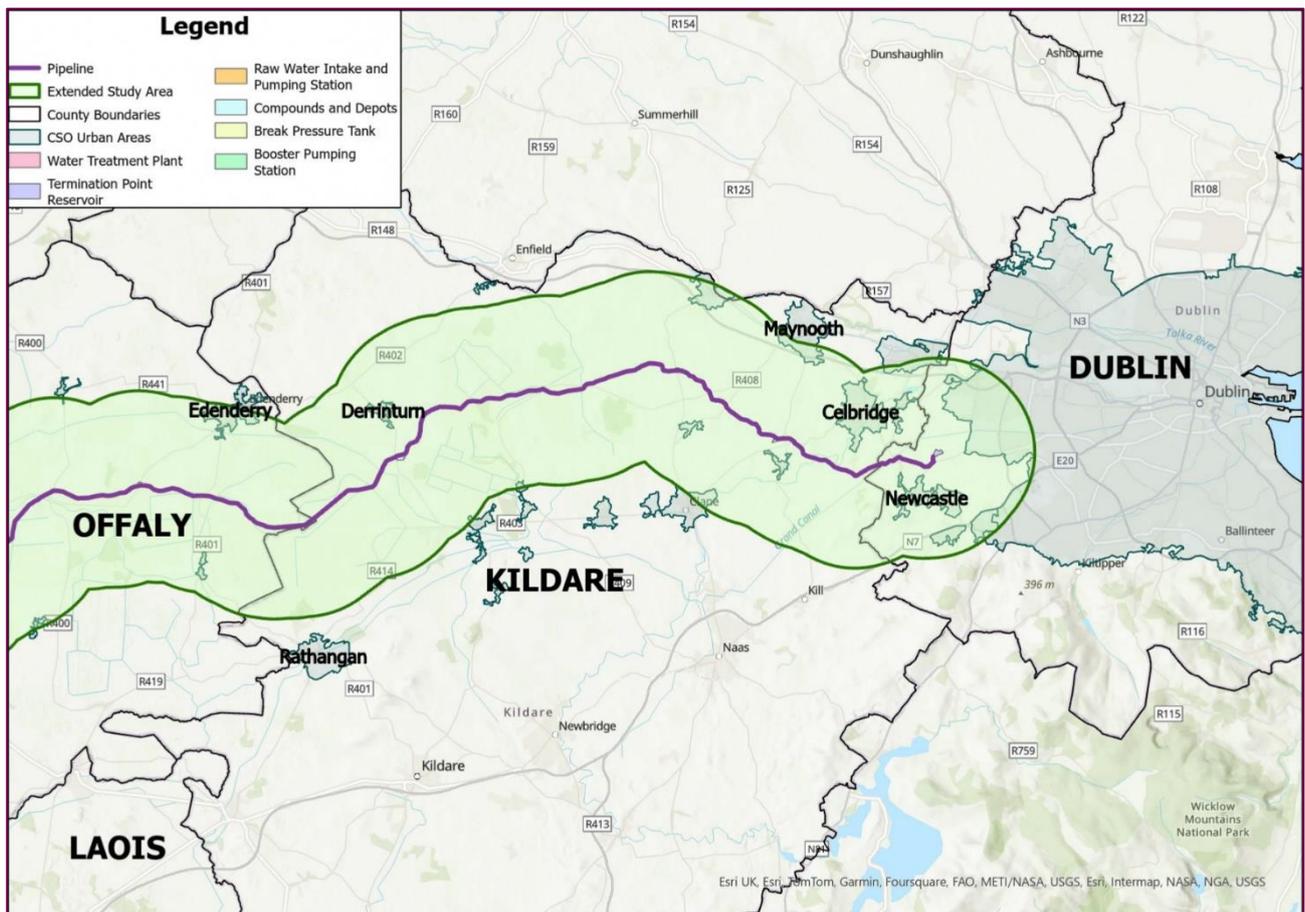


Figure 1-7 County Kildare Study Area

1.4.1 Urban Areas

Urban Area	Population	Distance from Pipeline to edge of CSO Urban Area (km)
Straffan	1,158	0.7
Celbridge	20,601	1.2
Ballyoulster	523	1.3
Rathcoffey	371	1.4
Derrinturn	1,837	1.5
Kilcock	8,674	3.8
Clane	8,152	4
Maynooth	17,259	4.3
Coill Dubh (Blackwood)	1,476	4.7

Urban Area	Population	Distance from Pipeline to edge of CSO Urban Area (km)
Leixlip	16,733	5
Johnstownbridge	677	5.7
Allenwood	1,685	5.7
Rathangan	3,263	6
Prosperous	2,413	6
Robertstown	771	8.4
Kilmeage	1,054	9.8

Table 1-6 County Kildare CSO Urban Areas

1.4.2 Demographics

According to Census 2022, the total population of Kildare was 247,774 which is an 11.36% increase from Census 2016. The population of the study area in County Kildare was approximately 71,808.

- 40% of the population had a third level education, 19% of the population completed Technical / Vocational Certificate / Apprenticeship and 2% of the population had no formal education.
- 60% of the population were at work, 13% were students, and 12% were retired.
- 86% of the population considered themselves in good or very good health.
- 81% of the population in the Kildare study area were born in Ireland, and 86% have Irish citizenship.

1.4.3 Incidence of Disadvantage

In Co. Kildare, the west, especially Rathangan, is notably disadvantaged, with unemployment rates exceeding the national average (12.2% for males, 16.33% for females) and only 10.37% of residents having third level education at the time of Census 2022. Towards the eastern portion of the study area, more sections are categorised as marginally above average with some pockets of affluence and disadvantage.

12 of the 19 EDs within the study area have small areas that are categorised as marginally below average or disadvantaged. There are EDs within the study area categorised as very or extremely disadvantaged. There are six CSO Urban Areas outside of the study area categorised as marginally below average, disadvantaged or very disadvantaged.

The key measures contributing to incidences of disadvantage within County Kildare include:

- 8.37% of the population had primary education only.
- 44.84% of the population had a third level education.
- The unemployment rate was 7.47% for females, and 7.10% for males.
- The age dependency rate was 33.54%.
- The lone parent rate was 15.62%.

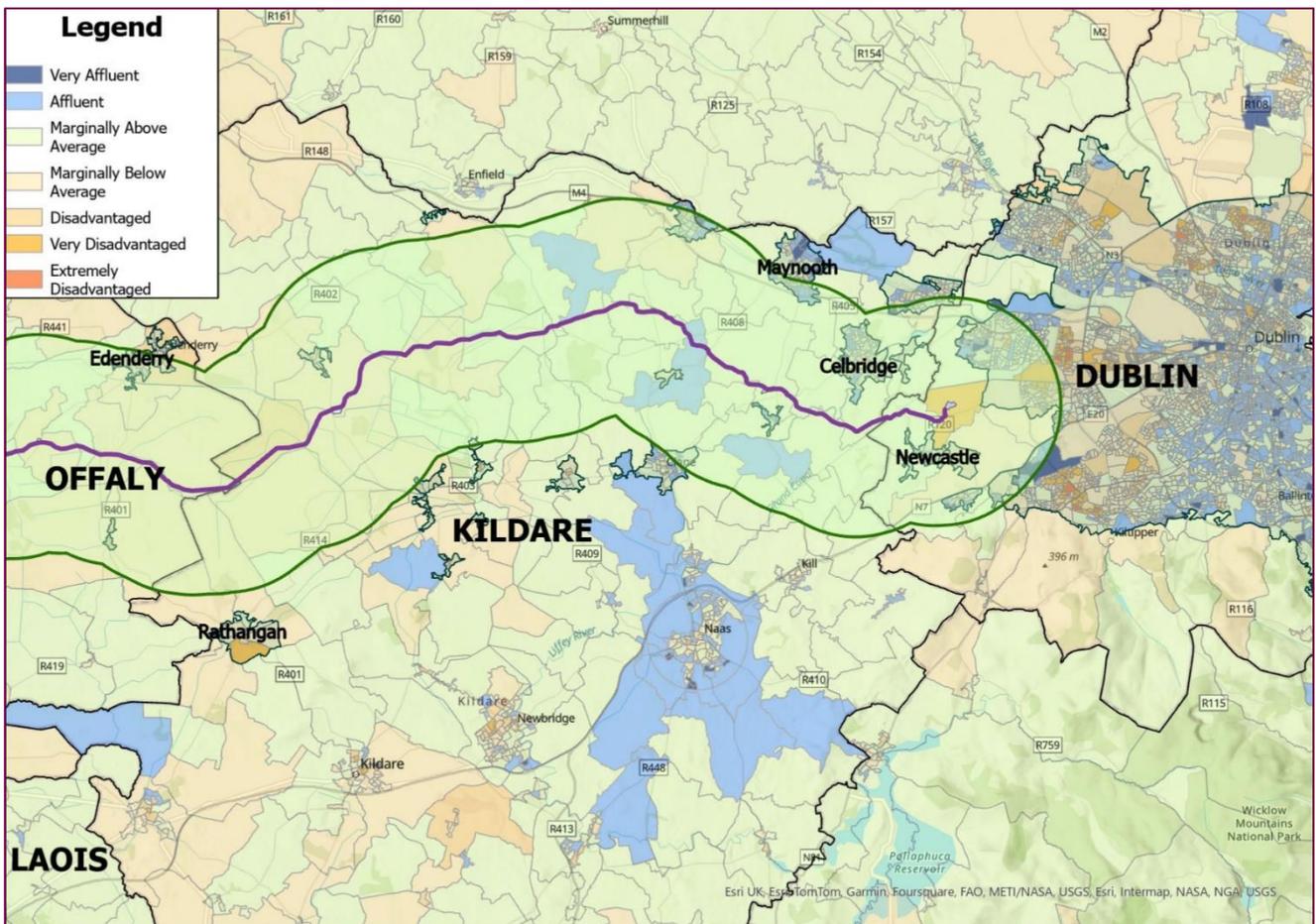


Figure 1-8 County Kildare Pobal HP Deprivation Index

1.4.4 Economic Overview

Kildare occupies a strategic position within the eastern region and also forms part of the Greater Dublin Area. Kildare is well connected to Dublin and the rest of Ireland by rail and by road via the M4, M7 and M9.

Kildare is both a significant population base and a significant residential base within the State with the eighth largest household stock nationally. There were 114,829 people (aged 15 and over) at work in Kildare, an increase of 18,882 people (+20%) between 2016 and 2022. In Kildare, 40,761 people (aged 15 and over) worked from home at least one day a week in 2022. This represented 35% of the workforce. 40% of Kildare’s workforce commute to work outside of the county.

Kildare has the second-highest rate of foreign direct Investment nationally. The small-to-medium enterprise (SME) and the micro-enterprise sector represents approximately 92% of all active business in Kildare. Large multi-national corporations such as Intel and Hewlett Packard are located within the study area in County Kildare, as well as indigenous companies including O’Brien Fine Foods. The equine industry is also a major industry in County Kildare, directly employing approximately 5,000 people. Several stud farms and equine centres are located within the study area.

Maynooth University is located just outside the 5-kilometre buffer of the study area within the Urban Area of Maynooth and has over 16,000 students.

1.4.5 Environmental Overview

As an inland county, Kildare is generally a lowland region. The county's highest points are the foothills of the Wicklow Mountains bordering to the east. The highest point in Kildare is Cupidstown Hill on the border with South Dublin, with the better-known Hill of Allen in central Kildare.

The county has three major rivers running through it: the Barrow, the Liffey and the Boyne. The Grand Canal crosses the county from Lyons on the east to Rathangan and Monasterevin on the west. A southern branch joins the Barrow navigation at Athy. The Royal Canal stretches across the north of the county along the border with Meath. Pollardstown Fen is the largest remaining calcareous fen in Ireland, covering an area of 220 hectares and is recognised as an internationally important fen ecosystem with unique and endangered plant communities, and was declared a National Nature Reserve in 1986.

The Bog of Allen is a large bog measuring 958 km² (370 sq mi) that extends across County Kildare, County Meath, County Offaly, County Laois, and County Westmeath.

There are two designated environmental sites within the Kildare study area. These are listed in **Table 1-7** below:

Site	Designation
Donadea Wood	NHA
Grand Canal	pNHA

Table 1-7 County Kildare Environmental Sites

- 83% of the population reported that they were in good or very good health.
- 76% of the population in the study area were born in Ireland and 80% hold Irish citizenship.

1.5.3 Incidence of Disadvantage

The incidence of disadvantage is mixed within the South Dublin study area. In general, the area is classified as marginally below or above average however there are sections of the area classified as both affluent / very affluent and disadvantaged / very disadvantaged.

All nine EDs within the South Dublin study area have small areas that are categorised as marginally below average, disadvantaged, or very / extremely disadvantaged.

The Newcastle Electoral Division within the study area includes very disadvantaged areas, characterised by a high age dependency ratio of 64.86% and unemployment rates of 18.92% for males and 14.81% for females, both significantly higher than the national average at the time of Census 2022.

The key measures contributing to incidences of disadvantage within County Dublin include:

- 9.20% of the population had primary education only.
- 50.24% of the population had a third level education.
- The unemployment rate was 7.83% for females, and 8.52% for males.
- The age dependency rate was 31.86%.
- The lone parent rate was 21.26%.

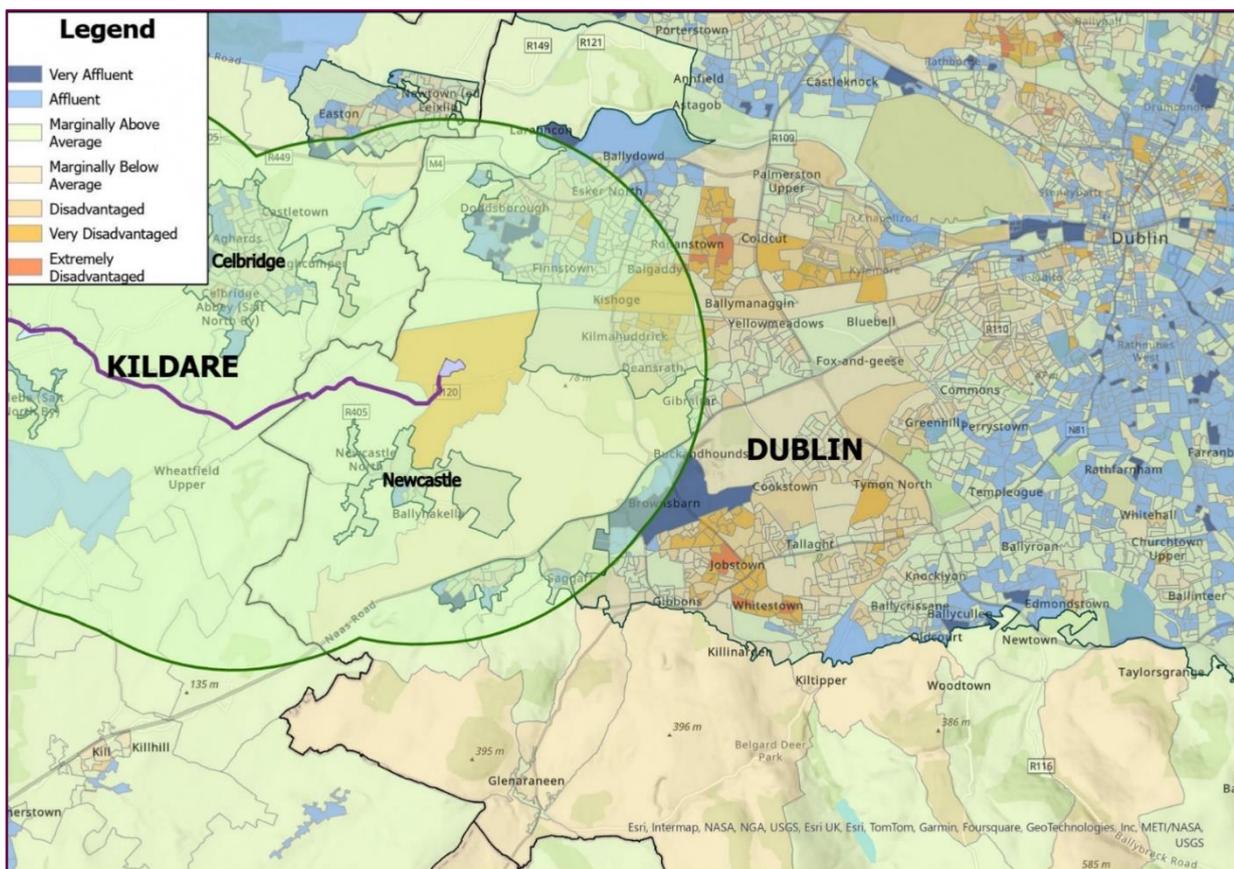


Figure 1-10 County Dublin Pobal HP Deprivation Index

1.5.4 Economic Overview

South Dublin County is an administrative area in County Dublin. It is situated on the edge of Dublin City and is well connected via road and train including the M50, N7, N4, the Luas Red Line, and the Kildare route railway line with stops in Clondalkin Fonthill, Kishoge and Adamstown.

At the time of Census 2022, in South Dublin almost 103,700 people were in full-time employment while over 18,700 were working part-time. The unemployment rate in South Dublin was 9% in the Census 2022.

A significant number of residents in South Dublin County commute to work outside of the area. However, enterprise in the county provides employment for a large number of residents from the GDA.

The study area covers a large part of South Dublin County extending from the Kildare border to the M50. There are several business and industrial parks within the study area including Citywest Business Campus, Kingswood Business Park and Grange Castle Business Park which host national and multi-national corporations including Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson, SAP and Kerry Foods.

There is agricultural land use in the west of the study area and Belgard Quarry is also located here, which is the largest limestone quarry in Ireland.

1.5.5 Environmental Overview

South Dublin County is one of four Local Authority areas in the Dublin region. The County extends from the River Liffey to the Dublin Mountains and borders the administrative areas of Dublin City, Fingal, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, Wicklow and Kildare. The county comprises consolidation areas, metropolitan towns and small towns / villages. Large sections of land in the south and south-west of the county are dominated by rural uses such as agriculture and in the upland areas, forestry and hill farming. There is an increasing demand for housing units in the county.

There is one designated environmental site within the Dublin study area. This is listed in **Table 1-9** below:

Site	Designation
Grand Canal	pNHA

Table 1-9 County Dublin Environmental Sites

1.6 Clare Study Area

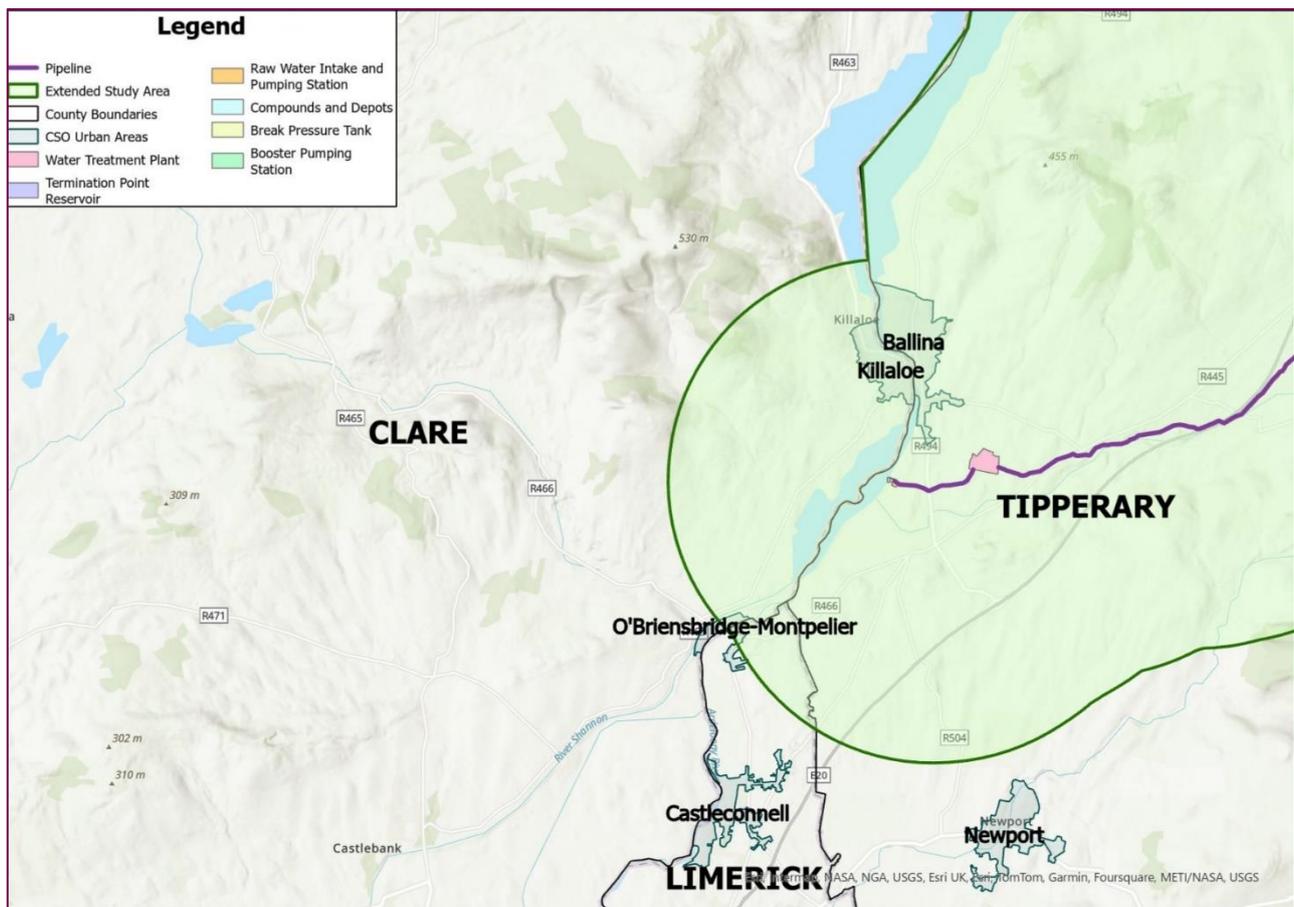


Figure 1-11 County Clare Study Area with CSO Urban Areas

1.6.1 Urban Areas

Urban Area	Population	Distance from Pipeline to edge of CSO Urban Area (km)
Killaloe	1,666	1.9
O'Briensbridge - Montpelier	451	4.7

Table 1-10 County Clare CSO Urban Areas

1.6.2 Demographics

According to Census 2022, the total population of Clare was 127,938 which is a 7.68% increase from Census 2016. The population of the study area in County Clare was approximately 3,106. The population of Killaloe, which is the Local Electoral Area the study area is in, grew by 8.8% between Census 2016 and 2022.

- Nearly half of the population of this area were educated to third level with 35% holding a degree or higher and 20% with a technical/vocational certificate or apprenticeship. Only 2% of the population have no formal education.
- 57% of the population were at work, while 12% were students and 16% were retired.
- 82% of the population considered themselves to be in good or very good general health.

- The population is primarily Irish, with only 14% of the population with birthplaces outside Ireland and 8% whose citizenship is outside Ireland.

1.6.3 Incidence of Disadvantage

The Pobal HP Deprivation Index categorises most of the study area in County Clare as marginally above average. However, the northern portion of the study area, near the urban area of Killaloe, is categorised as affluent with some small pockets of disadvantage along the eastern county boundary.

Two of the three EDs within the Clare study area have small areas that are categorised as marginally below average and disadvantaged.

The key measures contributing to incidences of disadvantage within County Clare include:

- 9.62% of the population had primary education only.
- 39.80% of the population had a third level education.
- The unemployment rate was 7.66% for females, and 8.54% for males.
- The age dependency rate was 36.47%.
- The lone parent rate was 16.64%.

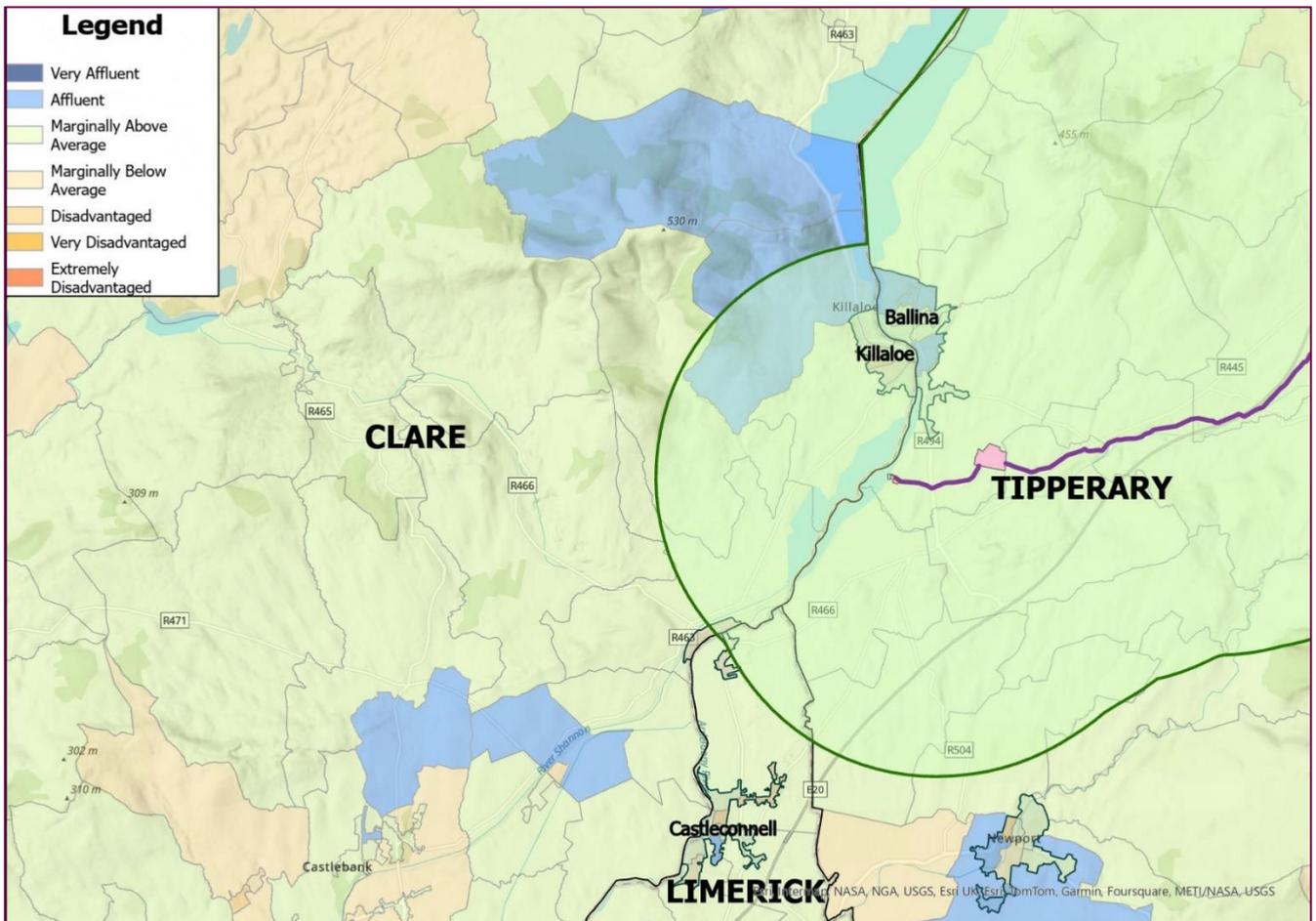


Figure 1-12 County Clare Pobal HP Deprivation Index

1.6.4 Economic Overview

The study area includes an area in the eastern part of County Clare. The area is located in close proximity to Limerick City and Shannon Airport and is a crossing point on the River Shannon. The population of the study area was approximately 3,100 at the time of Census 2022.

The majority of the land within the study area is agricultural land. The town Killaloe is included in this area. 25.6% of residents in Killaloe work in professional services and 17% work in commerce, trade and manufacturing. Killaloe is home to several hotels and the Kincora harbour marina. The study area also includes the village of O’Briensbridge.

There are several tourism and cultural attractions within the study area in County Clare, including the River Shannon, Lough Derg, Clarisford Park and Brian Boru’s Fort. The Aillebaun Walkway and Killaloe River cruises also attract tourists to the area.

1.6.5 Environmental Overview

County Clare has a rich and diverse natural and cultural heritage, vibrant towns and villages and contrasting landscapes. Some of Ireland’s most popular visitor attractions such as the Burren, the Cliffs of Moher, Loop Head, the Wild Atlantic Way, Lough Derg and Inis Cealtra (Holy Island) are located in County Clare. The diversity of its globally recognised landscapes is striking and the asset base for activity and nature-based tourism is considerable. County Clare is surrounded to the west, south and east by coastal, estuarine and freshwater systems which give the County a distinctive island-like geography that has in turn influenced its cultural heritage over the centuries. County Clare’s rural areas are home to a diverse range of activities including agriculture, tourism, residential, commercial and recreation.

There are four designated environmental sites within the Clare study area. These are listed in **Table 1-11** below:

Site	Designation
Cloonlara House	pNHA
Glenomra Wood	SAC
Knockalisheen Marsh	Candidate SAC, NHA
Lower River Shannon	SAC

Table 1-11 County Clare Environmental Sites

1.7 Limerick Study Area

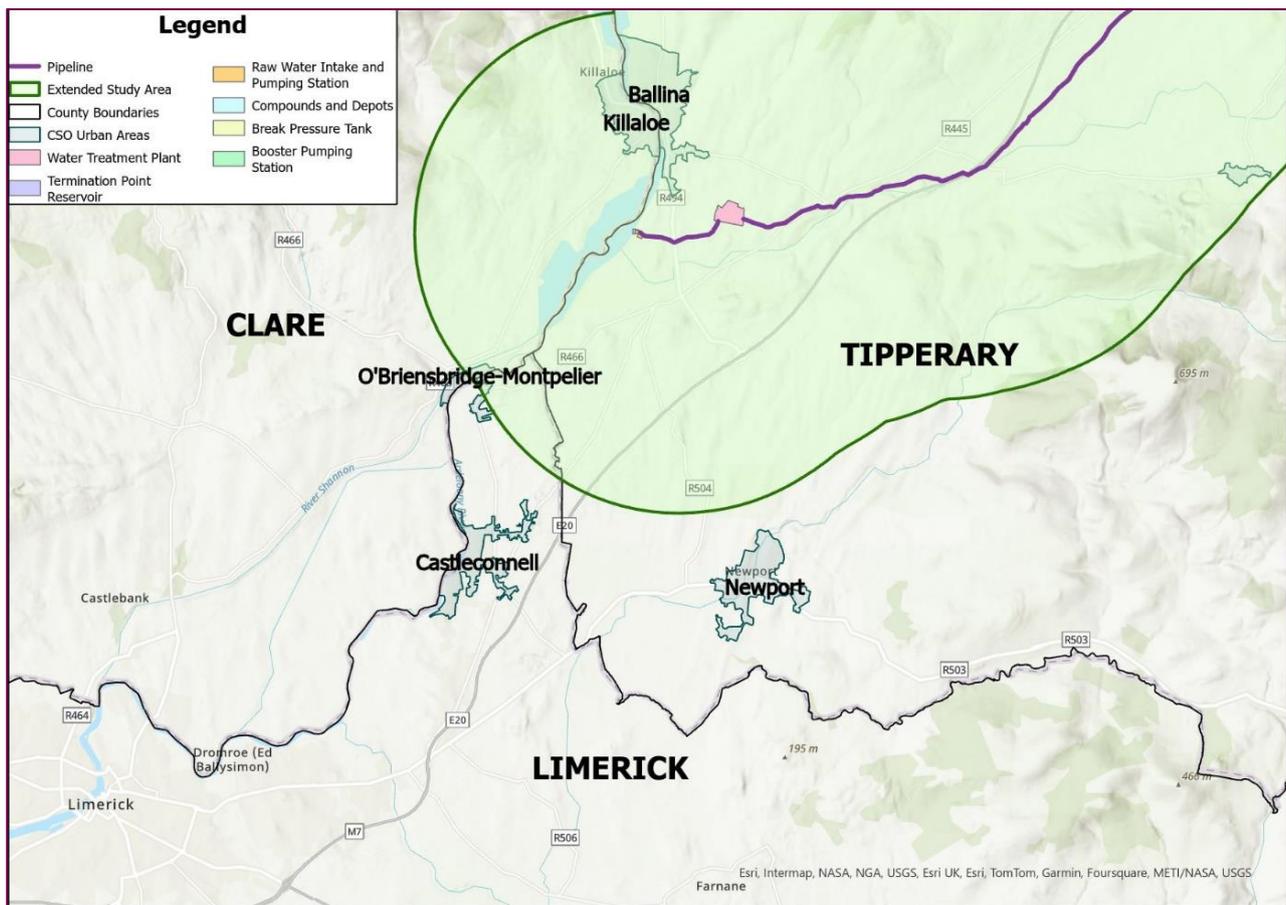


Figure 1-13 County Limerick Study Area

1.7.1 Urban Areas

Urban Area	Population	Distance from Pipeline to edge of CSO Urban Area (km)
O'Briensbridge - Montpelier	451	4.7
Castleconnell	2,488	6.8

Table 1-12 County Limerick CSO Urban Areas

1.7.2 Demographics

According to Census 2022, the total population of Limerick was 209,536 which was a 7.51% increase from Census 2016. The population of the study area in County Limerick was approximately 389 at the time of Census 2022. This was calculated using small area census data as only a small section of the study area extends into County Limerick.

- 40% of the population held a third level degree or higher, 18% had completed a technical / vocational certificate or apprenticeship, and just 2% of the population had no formal education.
- 85% of the population reported that they were in good or very good health.
- 56% of the population of the study area were at work, 12% were students, and 17% were retired.

- 84% of the population of the study area in County Limerick was born in Ireland, with 89% of the population holding Irish citizenship.

1.7.3 Incidence of Disadvantage

The study area in County Limerick is categorised as marginally above average, with a small section in the northwest of the study area categorised as marginally below average according to the Pobal HP Deprivation Index.

The one ED within the Limerick study area has small areas that are categorised as marginally below average and disadvantaged.

The key measures contributing to incidences of disadvantage within County Limerick include:

- 11.25% of the population had primary education only.
- 38.71% of the population had a third level education.
- The unemployment rate was 8.14% for females, and 9.04% for males.
- The age dependency rate was 34.87%.
- The lone parent rate was 19.61%.

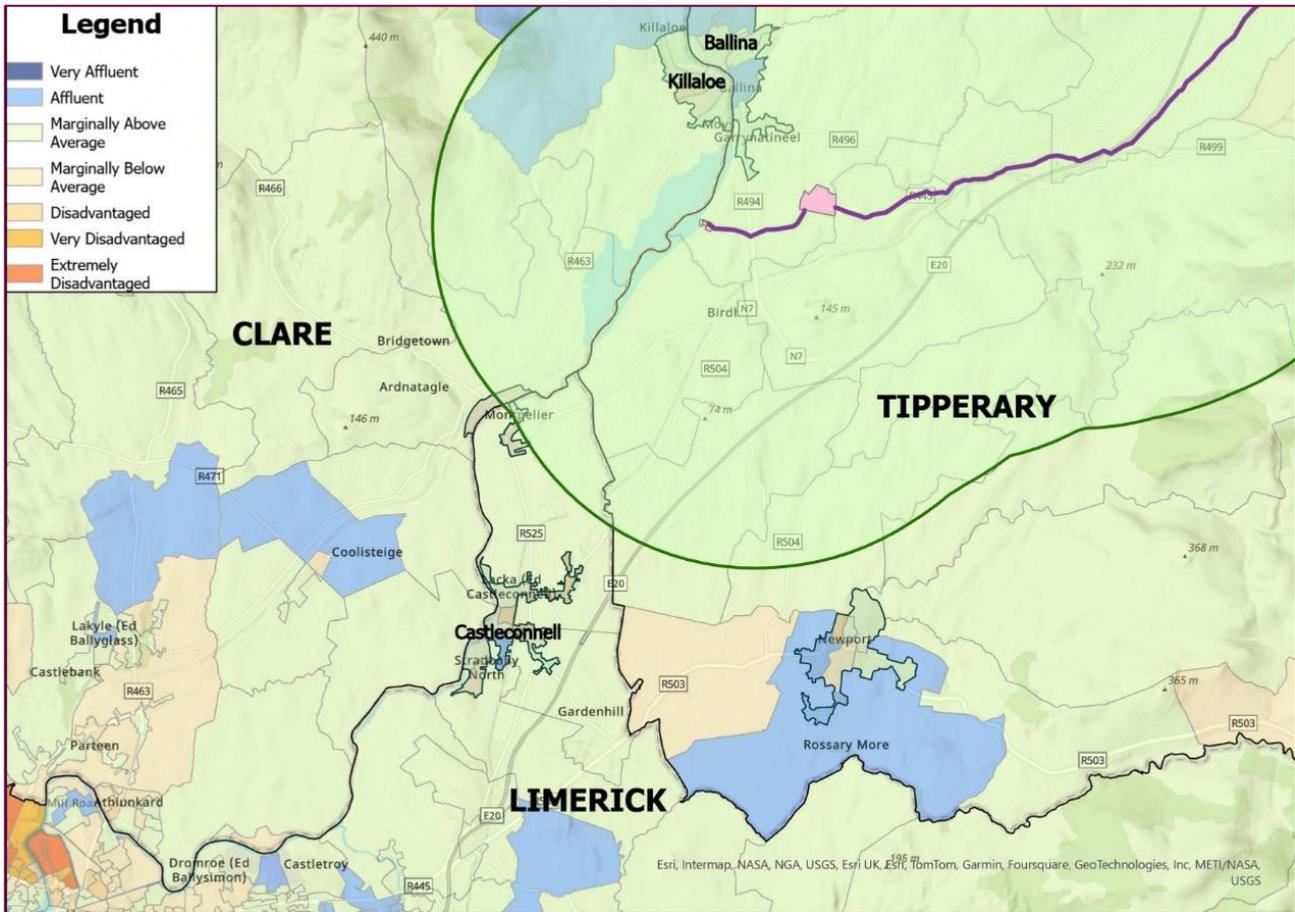


Figure 1-14 County Limerick Pobal HP Deprivation Index

1.7.4 Economic Overview

The study area covers a small area in the north of County Limerick. The study area includes the villages of Castleconnell and Montpelier. The population of the CSO Urban Area of Castleconnell is just under 2,500 people. The M7 runs close to the study area and connects Limerick and Dublin and the Dublin – Limerick via Nenagh train line passes through the study area, stopping in Castleconnell.

The study area predominantly consists of agricultural land. The River Shannon passes through the study area which attracts tourism to the area. There are several hotels and guest houses in Castleconnell, and the area is a popular fishing destination. Several other tourist attractions include the Castleconnell River Walk, the Fairy Woods and Castleconnell Castle.

1.7.5 Environmental Overview

Limerick borders four other counties: Kerry to the west, Clare to the north, Tipperary to the east, and Cork to the south. The River Shannon flows through the city of Limerick, then continues as the Shannon Estuary until it meets the Atlantic Ocean past the far western end of the county. Limerick City is the county town and is also Ireland's third-largest city. Newcastle West, Kilmallock and Abbeyfeale are other important towns in the county.

The county is ringed by mountains: the Slieve Felims to the northeast, the Galtees to the southeast, the Ballyhoura Mountains to the south, and the Mullaghareirk Mountains to the southwest and west. The eastern part of the county is part of the Golden Vale, which is well known for dairy produce and consists of rolling low hills. This gives way to very flat land around the centre of the county, with the exception being Knockfierna at 288 m high. Towards the west, the Mullaghareirk Mountains push across the county offering extensive views east over the county and west into County Kerry.

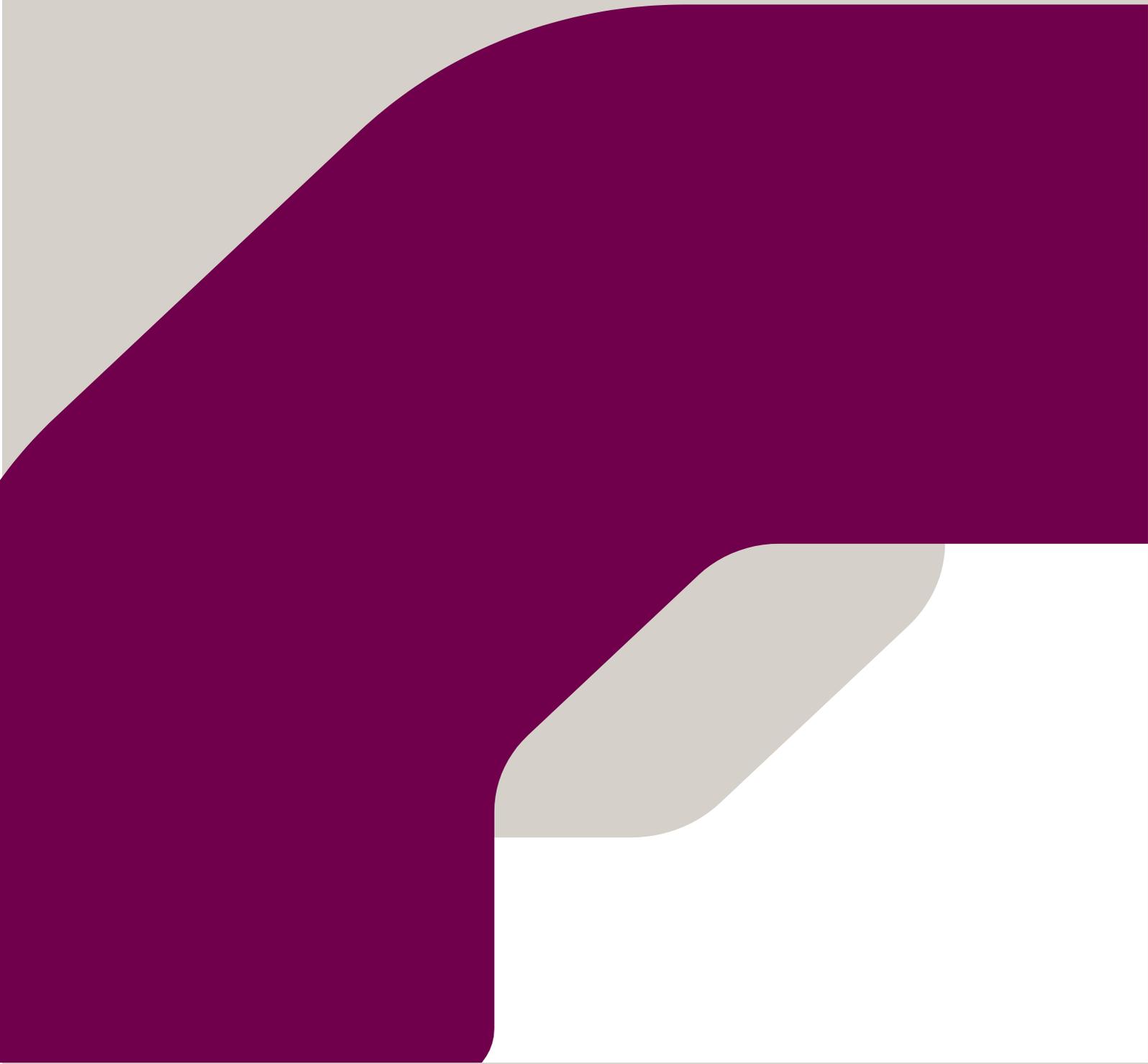
Tributaries of the Shannon drainage basin located in the county include the rivers Mulcair, Loobagh, Maigne, Camogue, Morning Star, Deel, and the Feale.

There is one designated environmental site within the Limerick study area. This is listed in **Table 1-13** below:

Site	Designation
Lower River Shannon	SAC

Table 1-13 County Limerick Environmental Sites

SECTION TWO:
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT POLICY REVIEW



2.1 Introduction

This section provides an overview of community development policies in the study area on a county-by-county basis for the Water Supply Project, Eastern and Midlands Region (WSP).

The review has been undertaken to inform the development of a bespoke Community Benefit Scheme (CBS) as part of the delivery of the WSP. By analysing existing policies, this document aims to identify and highlight frameworks that Uisce Éireann can align with to support community development and ensure that the benefits of the WSP are maximised for local communities – enabling them to thrive.

The policy review has been undertaken through a lens of three areas which are aligned with Uisce Éireann’s vision and purpose and which are vital for fostering community well-being and sustainability:

- **Environment**

This review delves into policies that advocate for sustainable practices and community involvement in environmental initiatives. It emphasises the importance of biodiversity conservation and proactive measures in combating climate change. By aligning the CBS with these environmental policies, Uisce Éireann can promote a greener future while encouraging and empowering community participation in sustainability efforts.



- **Education**

Recognising the vital role of education in community empowerment, this review examines policies that facilitate access to educational resources and skill development opportunities. These initiatives aim to help foster knowledge transfer and engaged communities, enabling individuals to actively participate in local decision-making processes and contribute to the overall vitality of their communities. A skilled workforce stands to benefit from local employment opportunities which will accrue from the delivery of the WSP.



- **Economy**

The economic dimension of the review highlights policies that stimulate local economic development, support businesses, and create job opportunities. By integrating economic policies in the CBS, Uisce Éireann aims to contribute to the prosperity of the hosting communities by seeking to maximise local employment and enterprise opportunities which contribute to the economic vibrancy of the region



The review comprises a detailed analysis of County Development Plans (CDPs), Local Economic and Community Development Plans (LECPs), and Climate Action Plans (CAP), providing insights into how these frameworks align with the objectives and development of the WSP Community Benefit Scheme.

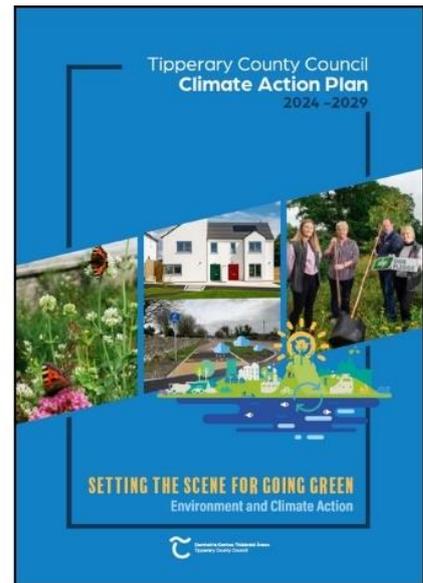
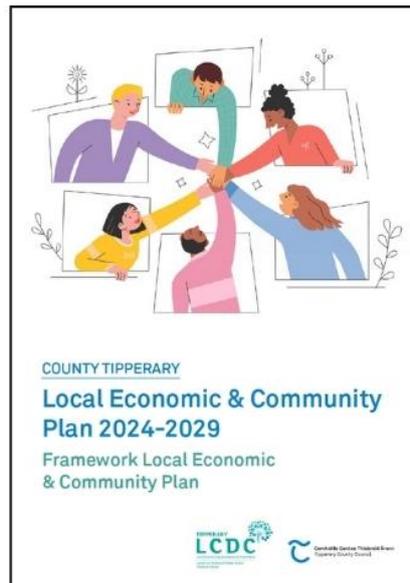
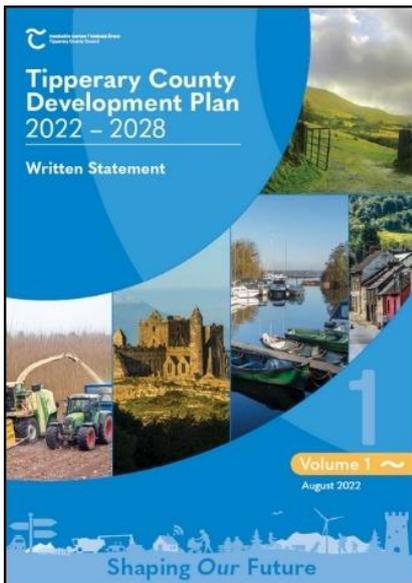
It aims to ensure that the WSP Community Benefit Scheme aligns with Local Authority priorities and community development objectives, ultimately fostering sustainable growth and resilience.

2.2 Tipperary

2.2.1 Overview

The following policy documents were considered for this review:

1. Tipperary County Development Plan 2022 – 2028.
2. Tipperary Local Economic and Community Plan 2024 – 2029.
3. Tipperary Climate Action Plan 2024 – 2029.



The review focussed on three primary policy areas: (i) Environment, (ii) Economy, and (iii) Education within these plans.

The Tipperary County Development Plan (CDP) incorporates the aims, objectives and policy of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as Project Ireland 2040, the National Planning Framework, the Southern Region Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), and the National Climate Action Plan (CAP).

The County Development Plan sets a vision for Tipperary as:

A vibrant place where people can live, visit and work in a competitive and resilient economy, a sustainable environment and an inclusive and active community.

The CDP aims to guide sustainable physical, economic, and social development in Tipperary while protecting the environment and promoting a transition to a low-carbon society. It outlines the counties social, economic, and environmental characteristics, provides guidance for the growth of towns, villages, and rural areas, and informs future investments. The CDP will influence decisions regarding public services, infrastructure, and amenities, impacting various aspects of daily life, including where people live, the availability of services, and job opportunities.

The development plan outlines a set of 'Core Ambitions' that integrate the principles of economic, social and environmental sustainability. The CDP sets out strategic objectives to be achieved over the course of the plan in relation to climate, communities, the environment, and blue and green infrastructure.

According to the County Development Plan, Nenagh and Thurles have been designated as Key Towns, with Roscrea being classified as a District Town. Due to their proximity to the WSP project, the towns of Nenagh and Roscrea have been discussed below.

The Key Towns are said to be strategically positioned and play vital roles in the provision of social and transport infrastructure, as well as in fostering employment and economic prosperity. District Towns as outlined in the Plan are similarly significant, as they support both their surrounding hinterlands and the Key Towns, particularly in enhancing local economic strengths and providing essential housing and services. It is anticipated that the District Towns will accommodate approximately 20% of the total population growth throughout the duration of the Development Plan.

2.2.2 Key Town: Nenagh

Nenagh is designated as a 'Key Town', where the Council aims to work with the community to promote sustainable transport, active travel, and a modal shift in transportation modes. The town serves as a strategic employment hub, hosting a diverse range of enterprises, significant research and development activities, and initiatives in heritage tourism, recreation, and renewable energy.

2.2.3 District Town: Roscrea

Roscrea is classified as a district town, the Town Profile Plan for Roscrea provides a detailed illustration of the town boundary, compact growth area, walking and cycling distances, as well as other relevant planning opportunities and constraints. The town's relatively compact nature highlights its suitability for supporting a '10-minute town concept' and facilitating active travel. The Council outlines in the Plan that it is committed to seeking and supporting new opportunities for strategic regeneration as they arise as well as exploring heritage-led regeneration opportunities.

2.3 Environment

2.3.1 Tipperary County Development Plan

The County Development Plan highlights an increased awareness and support for community-led initiatives focused on climate change and biodiversity enhancement. The plan places an emphasis on the importance of green and blue infrastructure in improving quality of life and supporting natural services, biodiversity, and climate action. Detailed discussions on these topics are found in Chapter 11 (Environment and Natural Assets) and Chapter 14 (Green and Blue Infrastructure).

The County Development Plan states that the Council will assist local communities in creating sustainable energy initiatives and biodiversity-focused amenity plans and actions. It states that it will support the establishment of community gardens and biodiversity initiatives in towns and villages, particularly encouraging pilot schemes that promote energy efficiency at the community level. The CDP states that the Council will also consult with local communities to integrate and support biodiversity and natural systems in new schemes in towns and villages.

The Plan emphasises Green and Blue Infrastructure in section 14.0, defining 'greenways' and 'blueways' as dedicated recreational or pedestrian routes that improve the environment and residents' quality of life in surrounding areas. It states that the Council will work to recognise, protect, and connect green and blue assets, especially in urban areas, where public spaces, private gardens, cemeteries, urban streams, and derelict land are often undervalued for their natural services. Policy measures include requiring new developments to include green infrastructure, and that greenways and blueways contribute to tourism, regeneration and the environment.

2.3.2 Tipperary Local Economic and Community Plan

The Local Economic and Community Plan sets a High-Level Goal (HLG) in relation to the Environment. The goal aims state that Tipperary aims to be rich in biodiversity and contribute to national greenhouse gas reduction targets. It outlines that the goal is for households, communities, and businesses to actively adapt

to climate change, with environmental impact considerations guiding all decisions. Climate adaptation and mitigation are essential for enhancing quality of life, environmental health, and sustainable economic development.

The LECP aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and highlights the role of the HLG in raising awareness of climate change impacts and promoting community-wide mitigation measures. It builds on Tipperary's growing reputation as a leader in climate action and recognises the importance of protecting the environment through sustainable development to facilitate a transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient society. The HLG also supports sustainable water waste management and other environmental resources. The HLG also supports sustainable water and waste management. Additionally, the LECP aligns with the County Development Plan by valuing the county's natural resources, including land, landscapes and water bodies. Section 7 of the LECP outlines objectives and anticipated outcomes, such as encouraging businesses and communities to enhance local biodiversity by supporting nature-based solutions and water quality and to ensure they can adapt to a changing climate through training and funding support.

2.3.3 Tipperary Climate Action Plan

The National Climate Action Plan (DECC, 2019) mandates that each local authority in Ireland identifies and develop plans for one Decarbonising Zone (DZ) to demonstrate climate change mitigation, adaptation, and biodiversity measures. In Tipperary, the designated area is the "Mid-Tipperary Decarbonising Zone", centred around the National Bioeconomy Campus at Lisheen and covering parts of the Thurles and Carrick on Suir Municipal Districts. This DZ, located in the EU Just Transition Fund area, was designated by the Council in 2021 and included as an objective in the Tipperary County Development Plan 2022-2028.

The Tipperary CAP sets out the goal for the Mid-Tipperary Decarbonising Zone as:

A unique, thriving low carbon rural community in a biodiversity rich landscape. Built on a foundation of sustainable bioeconomy, land use diversification, energy efficient and biodiverse agriculture, renewable energy, eco-tourism and connected, equal and vibrant communities. Where communities and businesses will be empowered to adapt to the impacts of climate change and embrace methods and technologies to reduce Green House Gas emissions.

The Council will seek, through the delivery of its own services, to collaborate with stakeholders and the community, to help co-ordinate opportunities for low-emissions, progressive and sustainable development with creativity and innovation in delivering climate action and the associated economic and social benefits.

The Climate Action Plan (CAP) states in Section 2 that elected members of Tipperary County Council will actively engage with the Climate Action Office to deliver and monitor the actions outlined in the CAP. The Council will collaborate with stakeholder groups to coordinate community and public outreach through existing networks and programmes. Section 3.3.10 details the Community Climate Action strategy, emphasising the Council's commitment to fostering climate awareness and encouraging practical climate action in communities. To support these efforts, a dedicated Community Climate Action Officer is appointed to assist with initiatives funded by the Community Climate Action Fund (CCAF).

The plan describes funding supports which enable community projects to access funding under the 'Community Climate Action Programme' notably including the theme of 'Local Climate and Environmental Action'.

The Council has established nine strategic goals across five themes for its Climate Action Plan (CAP). These goals provide a framework for developing climate actions and reflect the Council's services, functions, and its role in facilitating, advocating, and influencing climate action in other sectors and communities.

The relevant themes are (i) Natural Environment and Green Infrastructure, (ii) Communities: Resilience and Just Transition (iii) Sustainability and Resource Management. The Climate action plan also sets out strategic goals to help achieve these goals.

2.4 Education

2.4.1 Tipperary County Development Plan

In Section 6.5 of the Development Plan, titled 'Education and Lifelong Learning,' Tipperary County Council emphasises its commitment to lifelong learning alongside its collaboration with the Department of Education for primary and secondary education. The section highlights third-level education facilities, including the Technological University of the Shannon (TUS) campuses in Clonmel and Thurles, the agricultural college at Gurteen, and the Tipperary Education and Training Board (ETB). The Council aims to support the education sector and enhance third-level campuses as part of its economic development and innovation efforts, while also promoting social inclusion and access to education for all individuals through various educational programmes.

2.4.2 Tipperary Local Economic and Community Plan

High-level goal No.4 is in relation to education and aims to ensure that the people of Tipperary would have the knowledge and skills necessary to be productive, supportive, and innovative members of society. The LECP states that the HLG aligns with the UN SDGs by reinforcing lifelong learning. It emphasises that enhancing the diversity of skills will empower the community to become active and informed citizens, thereby fostering greater social cohesion and vibrancy.

HLG4 supports the County Council's objective to reverse rural decline in the core of small towns and villages by empowering individuals to be more proactive.

This high-level LECP goal is accompanied by several objectives outlined in section 7 of the LECP along with its anticipated outcomes which include, that the community and volunteer sector should be adequately supported and that barriers to education and lifelong learning will be addressed through the lifetime of the Plan.

2.5 Economy

2.5.1 Tipperary County Development Plan

Section 8.0 of the Tipperary County Development Plan focuses on the economy, enterprise, and rural development. It aims to support a diverse economy in Tipperary by leveraging innovation to drive growth and enhance the region's unique characteristics. The plan emphasises placemaking strategies to attract investment by improving access to skills, talent, higher education, and various factors such as innovation capacity, infrastructure, services, amenities, housing solutions, quality of life, and market access.

It is outlined in Section 8.4 of the Plan that rural areas, including towns, villages, and open countryside, are essential for defining Tipperary's identity, sustaining communities, and driving economic growth. Improved connectivity and broadband access further enhance rural economic development opportunities. The Plan outlines that the Council will seek to protect high-quality agricultural lands and to support a diverse and sustainable rural economy.

On Water and Energy Utilities, it is stated that as a rural county, further investment in modern water and energy utilities will be important for rural towns, villages and communities, and is supported by the provisions of the NPF and the RSES, and national utility companies such as Uisce Éireann and EirGrid.

Section 15.2 and Section 15.3 is dedicated to water services includes reference to the Water Supply Project Eastern and Midlands Region.

"Irish Water have set out a number of benefits from the scheme including an opportunity to resolve needs across a number of water supplies in north Tipperary, which would be facilitated by a future new connection point from the proposed pipeline. Furthermore, it is proposed that a bespoke purpose-built interpretative / visitors' facility be provided at the proposed water treatment plant at Birdhill, which will represent a key community gain for Tipperary. Irish Water has also committed to providing a 'Community Gain Fund' with a

view to supporting community-based initiatives in areas affected by the project; a proposal in this regard will be included in the planning application to An Bord Pleanála”.

The Plan sets out specific policy in relation to the WSP notably 15-3 which states that the pipeline corridor will be protected from inappropriate development that would impact the project and 15-B which states that the Council will co-operate with Irish Water (Uisce Éireann) in the delivery of the WSP project to maximise the benefits of the project for County Tipperary.

2.5.2 Tipperary Local Economic and Community Plan

The LECP sets a high-level goal for the Economy of which No.2 is relevant for consideration. Goal No.2 aims to ensure that the county is a diverse, innovative and environmentally aware economy, and that the necessary education and training opportunities are easily accessible by all.

Aligning with UN SDGs, the LECP states that attracting quality enterprises and entrepreneurs to the county is essential to maintaining employment opportunities. It outlines that the nature of work is continually evolving, and the HLG is designed to encourage the development of new skills in the workforce.

This high-level goal also aligns with the County Development Plan in relation to the economy as it states that the LECP will underpin the CDP objective to reverse rural decline in the core of small towns and villages through regeneration. It also embodies support for new job opportunities in the green and digital economy whilst supporting a sustainable agricultural and food sector, with forestry, energy industries, the bioeconomy and diversification into alternative on-farm and off-farm activities.

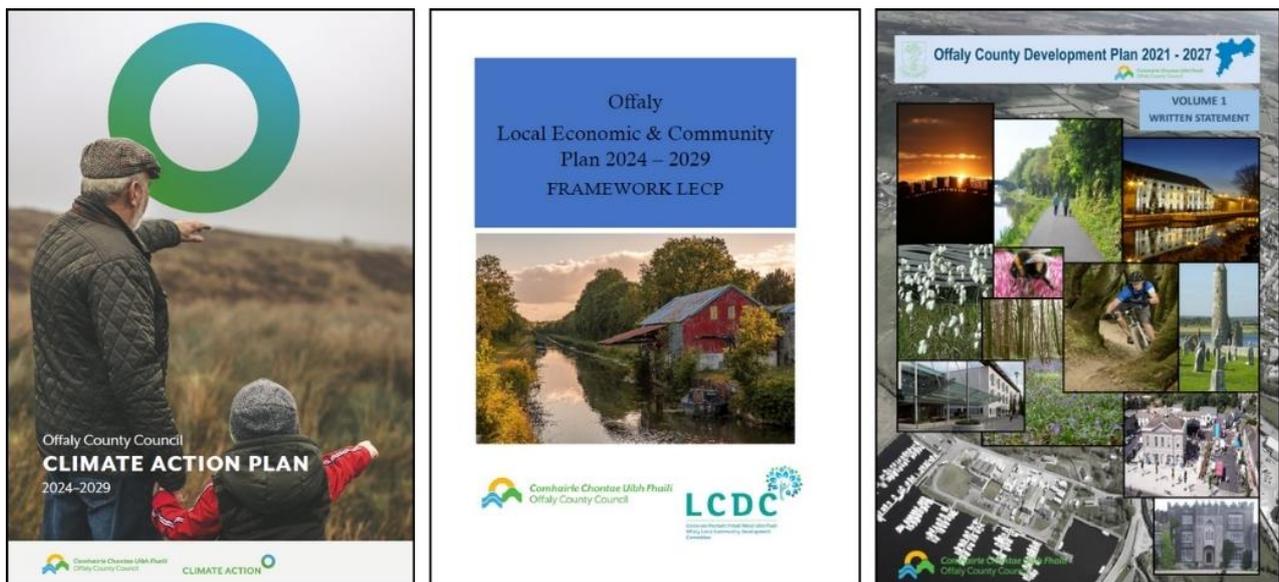
This high-level LECP goal is accompanied by several objectives and anticipated outcomes outlined in section 7 of the LECP. These include elements such as tourism, the green economy, social enterprises and agriculture.

2.6 Offaly

2.6.1 Overview

The following policy documents were considered for this review:

1. Offaly County Council County Development Plan 2024 – 2029.
2. Offaly Local Economic and Community Plan 2024 – 2029.
3. Offaly Climate Action Plan 2024 – 2029.



The review focussed on three primary policy areas: (i) Environment, (ii) Economy, and (iii) Education within these plans.

The Offaly County Council Strategic Vision is:

To create a sustainable and competitive county that supports the health and wellbeing of our people and places, from urban to rural, with access to employment opportunities supported by high quality housing and physical, social and community infrastructure for all, in a climate resilient manner and with respect for our biodiversity.

The development plan sets out three Key Principles and supporting County Strategic Outcomes: (i) Healthy Placemaking (ii) Climate Action and (iii) Economic Opportunity.

2.6.2 Key Town: Tullamore

Tullamore is identified as a large, economically active county town that offers employment opportunities for its surrounding areas and features high-quality transport links, enabling it to serve as a growth driver alongside the regional growth centre of Athlone. The town has the potential to support significant population and employment growth, thanks to its location on high-quality public transport corridors and the necessary investments in services, amenities, and sustainable transport.

The CDP outlines that Tullamore requires sustainable, compact, and sequential growth, along with urban regeneration in the town centre. This involves consolidating the built-up footprint by focusing on the regeneration and development of identified infill and brownfield sites. Additionally, there is a need to encourage the revitalisation of underutilised, vacant, and derelict lands in the town centre for mixed-use purposes, including residential development, to support population growth.

2.6.3 Self-Sustaining Growth Town: Birr (including Crinkill)

Birr is characterised as a sub-county market town with significant employment and service functions relative to its regional and local catchment. It boasts good regional transport links and has the potential for continued growth to become more self-sustaining. Supporting the regional driver role of Tullamore, Birr serves as an important local driver, offering a range of functions for its residents and surrounding areas, including housing, employment, services, retail, and leisure opportunities. The plan emphasises that the town should grow at a sustainable level appropriate to its position in the settlement hierarchy. The specific policy for Birr and Crinkill, outlined in SSP-08, states that it is Council policy for Birr, as a Self-Sustaining Growth Town, to continue growing sustainably and at a scale that aligns with the Core Strategy Table to enhance its self-sufficiency.

2.6.4 Self-Sustaining Town: Edenderry

Self-sustaining towns are defined as those that support the regional driver role of Tullamore and serve as important local hubs, providing various functions for their residents and surrounding areas, including housing, employment, services, retail, and leisure opportunities. These towns have seen rapid population growth, primarily driven by commuter-focused residential expansion, without a corresponding increase in jobs and services. As a result, they require consolidation and targeted investment to 'catch up' in areas such as services, infrastructure, transport options, amenities, and local employment, while balancing housing delivery to enhance their self-sufficiency. The specific policy for the Self-Sustaining Town of Edenderry, outlined in SSP-10, states that it is Council policy for Edenderry and Portarlinton - both of which have experienced significant commuter-driven population growth and weak employment bases - to develop in a manner that achieves sustainable population growth in line with the Core Strategy Table. This includes delivering consolidation and targeted investment in services, infrastructure, amenities, and local employment to foster greater self-sufficiency.

2.7 Environment

2.7.1 Offaly County Development Plan

The Offaly County Development Plan sets a strategic environment aim for the County:

To achieve a transition to an economically competitive, low carbon climate resilient and environmentally sustainable county, through reducing the need to travel, promoting sustainable settlement patterns and modes of transport, and by reducing the use of non-renewable resources, whilst recognising the role of natural capital and ecosystem services in achieving this.

The CDP notes that while Offaly has a long history of energy production primarily based on the commercial exploitation of peatlands, national environmental policies are driving the phase-out of traditional fossil fuel power stations in favour of diversifying energy production towards renewable sources such as wind, solar, and bioenergy. Offaly County Council acknowledges the potential economic benefits of transitioning from fossil fuel-based energy production to renewable energy investments, promoting the green enterprise sector, and creating green collar jobs, all of which contribute to a local "smart green economy". The CDP also outlines key principles for climate action, including the enhancement of green infrastructure, afforestation, and increased opportunities for walking and cycling, among others.

Section 3.8 of the County Development Plan, specifically addressing 'Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation,' outlines various policies related to climate change. Relevant to this study are several key policies: CAEP-09, which aims to raise general awareness of climate action and climate change mitigation and adaptation issues; CAEP-13, which supports the establishment of a Sustainable Development Trust through Green Offaly, a Public Participation Network Initiative that facilitates and assists in delivering green projects and programmes in partnership with local community sectors; and CAEP-15, which focuses on enhancing carbon sinks such as peatlands, forestry, and permanent grasslands, while considering other climate mitigation actions like the re-wetting and restoration of cut-away peatlands where appropriate.

In relation to Biodiversity and Landscape, Chapter 4 of the CDP sets out the strategic aim to:

Protect and enhance Offaly's natural assets of clean water, biodiversity, landscape, green infrastructure, heritage and agricultural land.

In Chapter 5, the climate action policy related to the economy is outlined in ENTP-46. This policy states that it is the Council's aim to support the development of enterprises, industries, agencies, and communities that utilise green technologies in their goods and services. Additionally, it emphasises the importance of taking measures to accelerate the transition towards a sustainable, low-carbon, and circular economy.

2.7.1.1 Water Services and Environment

Chapter 11 of the County Development Plan outlines the Council's policies in relation to Water Services and its integration and interaction with the environment around it. The Council's aim is stated as:

Offaly County Council is committed to working with Irish Water in the provision of water services for the sustainable growth of the county and delivering on the key principles of environmental protection and climate action as a backdrop to sustainable growth.

The policies directly related to the WSP project include WSP-13, WSO-03, and WSO-04. These policies aim to ensure that the Council supports Uisce Éireann in developing the Water Supply Project by protecting the project's pipeline corridor from inappropriate development. It emphasises cooperation with Uisce Éireann to maximise the project's benefits for the County and involved engagement with Uisce Éireann to assess significant raw water sources that may become redundant due to the Water Supply Project for the Eastern and Midlands Region.

2.7.2 Offaly Local Economic and Community Plan

The LECP document details the provisions outlined in Offaly County Council's Climate Action Plan 2024-2029, specifically addressing the emissions reduction and energy efficiency targets set for the Council. It states that the actions within the LECP are formulated as SMART objectives and concentrate on six key areas, including the Natural Environment and Green Infrastructure, Community Resilience and Transition, and Sustainability and Resource Management.

The LECP specifies that each local authority must establish a Decarbonising Zone (DZ) to serve as a testbed for new technologies, innovations, and ambitious strategies for climate mitigation, adaptation, and biodiversity enhancement at the local community level, with the potential for scaling up across the county and beyond. Tullamore has been designated as the DZ for Offaly, and the plan includes an initial Register of Opportunities (ROO) that will inform detailed implementation plans and stakeholder mapping and engagement to achieve emission and energy targets within the DZ.

In terms of Climate Action and Energy, the aim is to transition to an economically competitive, low-carbon, climate-resilient, and environmentally sustainable county by reducing travel needs, promoting sustainable settlement patterns and transport modes, and minimising the use of non-renewable resources, while acknowledging the importance of natural capital and ecosystem services.

Regarding Biodiversity and Landscape, the focus is on protecting and enhancing Offaly's natural assets, including clean water, biodiversity, landscape, green infrastructure, heritage, and agricultural land. The Sustainable Transport Strategy aims to improve regional accessibility, promote sustainable transport modes, integrate spatial and transport planning, transition to a low-carbon transport system, and develop a safer, more efficient, and connected transport network within Offaly. In the area of Water Services and Environment, Offaly County Council is committed to collaborating with Uisce Éireann to provide water services that support the county's sustainable growth while adhering to principles of environmental protection and climate action.

The LECP document presents a strategic vision for the plan, with goal number four emphasising that "Offaly will be proactive in addressing Climate Change and will work to reduce emissions by 51% by 2030, supporting the transition to a zero net carbon region by 2050". Sustainable Economic Development Objectives (SEDOs) 4.5 further states that the Council aims to achieve a modal shift towards public transport, walking, and cycling, as well as to implement electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure. The

expected outcome of this policy is an increase in active transport usage and the creation of safe and accessible walking and cycling routes.

2.7.3 Offaly Climate Action Plan

The Offaly Climate Action Plan details the Community Climate Action Fund, indicating that community projects eligible for guidance and potential funding will focus on five themes, including Community and Energy, as well as Local Climate and Environmental Action.

The plan emphasises that the actions outlined in the Climate Action Plan aim to equip all citizens and stakeholders with the necessary information to make informed decisions, thereby empowering them to contribute to the County's transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient region. By effectively communicating with citizens, businesses, and other sectors about climate action, the CAP highlights the potential to foster long-term, positive behavioural changes that can significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate the impacts of climate change through 2030, 2050, and beyond.

The Climate Action Plan identifies six key themes to be focused upon in the Plan. Among which the themes of Transport, Natural Environment and Green Infrastructure, and Community Resilience and Transition are particularly relevant to the development of the WSP Community Benefit Scheme. These themes play a vital role in shaping strategies and actions that promote sustainability and enhance the county's resilience to climate change.

Under the Transport heading, relevant policies within the council include T3.2.1, which focuses on the delivery of the Grand Canal Greenway and other greenways, along with associated trailheads, to facilitate a modal shift in transportation. Additionally, policy T3.3.5 aims to promote and support national campaigns such as Marchathon and Walktober to encourage and enhance modal shifts towards more sustainable transport options.

Policies under the Natural Environment and Green Infrastructure theme include NE4.1, which aims to enhance biodiversity, protect natural assets, and foster environmental sustainability. Additionally, NE4.1.8 focuses on developing citizen science projects to target climate-sensitive species, while NE4.1.9 seeks to increase climate-themed events during national initiatives such as National Heritage Week and National Biodiversity Week. Furthermore, NE4.1.11 promotes the use of Green Schools and Heritage in Schools programmes to raise awareness of biodiversity and climate issues within educational settings.

The policies under the Community Resilience and Transition theme focus on enhancing community engagement and capacity in relation to climate action. C5.1 aims to collaborate with communities to improve the effectiveness of climate-related programmes. To achieve this, C5.1.2 involves organising capacity-building training for community groups, which includes sharing experiences and utilising exemplar projects and demonstration sites. Furthermore, C5.1.6 seeks to raise awareness and provide climate action training and workshops through the Public Participation Network, targeting community, voluntary, and marginalised groups. In addition, C5.1.9 highlights the commitment of the Offaly Library Service to programme educational events and information sessions that promote awareness of climate action, the environment, and sustainable development. Complementing these efforts, C5.1.10 focuses on the Age Friendly Programme, which provides digital skills training for older individuals.

Moving to C5.2, the goal is to build climate action capacity within communities. This includes C5.2.6, which involves the provision of 300 native trees to Tidy Towns and community groups as part of the Annual National Tree Week, thereby fostering local environmental initiatives. Additionally, C5.2.8 aims to develop a project that combines heritage and creative arts to address climate anxiety, while C5.2.9 focuses on creating a citizen science project with communities on a climate-related subject, further engaging residents in climate action efforts.

2.8 Education

2.8.1 Offaly County Development Plan

Chapter 5 of the County Development Plan addresses the aims of higher education in relation to the economy. Relevant policies for the development of the Community Benefit Scheme include ENTP- 35, which states that it is council policy to encourage third-level education in County Offaly by providing outreach and campus facilities for course accommodation. Additionally, ENTP- 36 aims to support efforts, in collaboration with local, regional, and national enterprise authorities, to mitigate the effects of industrial decline through lifelong learning programmes, appropriate business supports, and upskilling initiatives to facilitate transitions to alternative sectors within the locality or region.

Section 9.7 of the Plan, titled 'Other Education/Skills Training/Third Level,' highlights the availability of various post-secondary level courses in Offaly that enhance education and training for candidates entering the workforce. Examples include courses offered by the Offaly Local Development Company, the Offaly Outreach Education Project, the Education Training Board, the Adult Education Centre, and Solas. The Plan states that the Council will encourage groups and providers to explore mechanisms to broaden access to existing community educational facilities and training resources for a wider segment of the population.

2.8.2 Offaly Local Economic and Community Plan

The Offaly Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) addresses its collaboration with the local third-level institution, Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Mid-West (TUS: Midlands Mid-West). The LECP outlines that a partnership agreement has been established between TUS, Offaly County Council, the Offaly Local Development Committee (OLDC), and the Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board (LOETB) to support Offaly in achieving a Just Transition through various research and development initiatives.

The LECP identifies several potential "areas of cooperation", including combined funding applications, targeted education and upskilling initiatives, community-specific capacity building and skills development activities, and the identification of Just Transition Fund (JTF) opportunities.

2.9 Economy

2.9.1 Offaly County Development Plan

Chapter 5 of the CDP outlines the Economic Development Strategy of the county with its aim stated as:

That Offaly County Council, within its capacity, will positively contribute towards the promotion of the maintenance and growth of employment across every sector in County Offaly that is sustainable, competitive, inclusive and resilient, so that the people of Offaly will have access to a range of quality employment opportunities enabling them to live and work in the county.

The CDP aims to significantly influence the attraction of residents and investors by ensuring a high quality of life for the county's inhabitants and by creating and maintaining appealing settlements. Additionally, the reliable and efficient provision of water, wastewater, and road infrastructure is identified as critical for potential investors, and the Plan includes specific policies and objectives addressing these essential areas.

The Plan recognises that potential investors in County Offaly want to make sure that they can attract employees with relevant skills who will want to work and stay in the local area and that these decisions are influenced by such factors as the availability of recreational amenities, good transport links, local schools, and attractive places.

Subsection 9.9 of the CDP, titled 'Co-Working Hubs,' outlines the potential of developing co-working hubs - such as digital, remote working, and creative spaces, to stimulate local economies and provide more flexible work options, thereby reducing commuting levels from towns and villages. Policy SICCDP-24 supports creative hubs, either as independent facilities or in conjunction with public buildings, libraries, and community centres in town and village centres.

2.9.2 Offaly Local Economic and Community Plan

The Offaly Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) references the Offaly Economic Development Strategy 2022-2027, outlining six areas of focus that are supported by three key pillars (i) becoming a national leader in innovation and creativity within key sectors, (ii) leveraging national connections and assets as a gateway from east to west, and (iii) creating stronger conditions for growth to spread opportunity and prosperity throughout Offaly society.

Under these pillars, various areas of activity have been identified, along with associated goals and outcomes, which inform the objectives and key performance indicators for the economic elements of the LECP.

The strategy aims to achieve three main objectives: (i) sustained enterprise growth and value, (ii) expanding business activity within the SME sector, and (iii) enhancing employment opportunities and skills. Additionally, the LECP aligns with the County Development Plan to promote sustainable, competitive, inclusive, and resilient employment growth across all sectors in Offaly, ensuring residents have access to quality job opportunities. It also seeks to position County Offaly as an attractive destination for visitors, offering a diverse range of high-quality tourist attractions and facilities.

2.10 Laois

2.10.1 Overview

A review of relevant sections of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 was also undertaken as part of this policy analysis.

The review focussed on three primary policy areas: (i) Environment, (ii) Economy, and (iii) Education within the plan.

The Laois County Development Plan sets the following vision for County Laois:

To improve the quality of life for all citizens in County Laois by creating sustainable communities and an environment that supports a vibrant, growing and well connected economy, making it a County where people want to live, work, visit and do business, without compromising the environmental integrity of the county”.

The plan outlines six objectives aimed at achieving its vision, including establishing a framework for the sustainable development of County Laois by defining acceptable development forms and their appropriate locations. It seeks to facilitate the transition to a low-carbon society and provide a detailed basis for managing development. Additionally, the plan aims to implement national and regional development policies at the county level, promote economic development opportunities, and enhance resilience within the county's enterprises. Finally, it emphasises the importance of supporting and respecting citizens' rights to public participation in the planning process, in line with EU and national legislation.

The Plan outlines three guiding and interrelated principles - Placemaking, Quality of Life, and Environmental Sustainability - that will be considered and integrated into each chapter and the development of every policy objective.

The Laois County Development Plan identifies four key areas of action: Sustainable Transport, Built Environment, Land Use, and Energy. The subsequent section details the relevant policies within these four action areas that are pertinent to consider as part of the development of the WSP Community Benefit Scheme.

The relevant policies under Sustainable Transport include CM ST 1, which supports the construction of green routes, cycleways, and pedestrian pathways throughout the County, while CM ST 4 advocates for the localisation of jobs, shops, and services to reduce common travel patterns. Additionally, CA ST 1 focuses on protecting and enhancing the County's floodplains as "green infrastructure", where appropriate, and in compliance with the Habitats Directive.

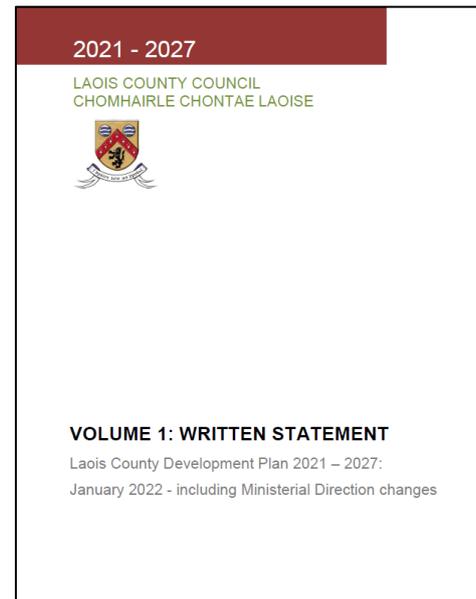
The relevant policies under the Built Environment include CA BE 8, which supports initiatives to maximise water conservation, such as rainwater harvesting. Additionally, CA BE 10 encourages the planting of drought-resistant plants and trees in public amenity areas to provide shade and enhance green infrastructure linkages.

Finally, the relevant policy under Land Use is CA LU 5, which supports the creation and protection of ecologically resilient and diverse landscapes to promote the habitat of a wide range of species.

2.10.2 Environment

2.10.2.1 Laois County Development Plan

The Laois County development plan acknowledges that climate change is a significant global threat and is already having consequences on society. The Laois County Council Climate Change Adaptation Strategy



Sport and Recreation Provision is also discussed in chapter 5 of the development plan. It is outlined that the Local Sports Partnership (LSP) initiative aims to increase participation in sport and optimise the use of local resources. The plan notes that many of the sports facilities within the County are in private ownership. Laois County Council will continue, where appropriate, to facilitate the provision of further facilities to which public access will be available, where possible.

The Laois County Development Plan includes several policies aimed at enhancing sports and recreational facilities. NRPO 1 supports local sports and community groups in developing and expanding facilities for all ages by reserving suitable land and providing funding when possible. NRPO 3 promotes collaboration with Laois Sports Partnership to explore the establishment of a regional sports centre and develop County Laois as an Outdoor Activity Hub. NRPO 7 focuses on investigating the feasibility of specific recreation projects, including the development of an athletic track in Portlaoise, strategic greenways, and additional handball facilities, all subject to the Habitats and Birds Directives. NRPO 8 encourages community gardening and allotments to promote lower carbon living. NRPO 10 aims to implement a cohesive cycle and walking network integrated with public transport and connected to various destinations. NRPO 15 supports the development and upgrading of inclusive playgrounds and park infrastructure, while NRPO 17 seeks to improve public playgrounds to include recreational areas with workout stations and seating for all ages, particularly in areas of greatest need.

The County Development Plan addresses the establishment of Remote Working Hubs and Digital Hubs, highlighting their successful implementation across the county and outlining its support for the development of further hubs. It also emphasises the importance of rural and agricultural businesses in the local economy. Relevant economic policies include ED 5, which supports entrepreneurship and jobs-focused education and training programmes in County Laois, and ED 14, which aims to foster entrepreneurship among children and provide jobs-focused further education and mentoring for business owners in collaboration with various local organisations, including the Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board, LEO Laois, Laois Partnership Company, the Department of Social Protection, and the Laois library network.

2.10.5 Clonaslee

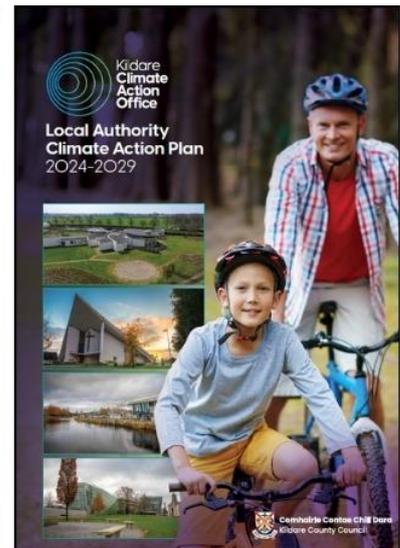
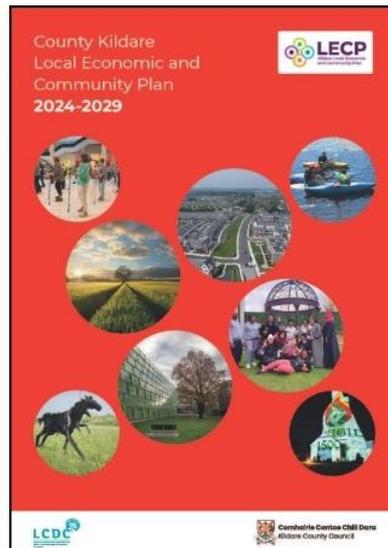
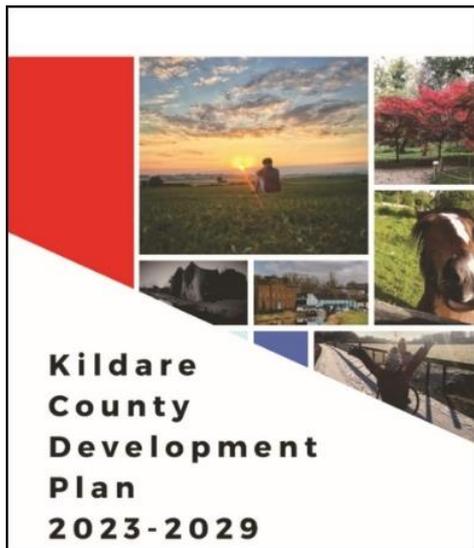
The Laois County Development Plan designates Clonaslee as a village, highlighting its important role in providing local residential, retail, social, and leisure functions, as well as essential services to the surrounding rural area. Villages are said to have attractive streetscapes, heritage buildings, and a strong visual character, offering opportunities for future expansion and the provision of services such as community centres, local shops, pubs, and petrol outlets, which can attract residents seeking a rural lifestyle. It is outlined that development growth in the village should be low density and located as close as possible to the core area, with statutory zoning in place to designate specific land uses. Relevant policy CS32 aims to facilitate the expansion of villages and small towns to create employment, retail, and social opportunities at an appropriate scale, subject to standard planning requirements.

2.11 Kildare

2.11.1 Overview

The following policy documents were considered for this review:

1. Kildare County Development Plan 2023 - 2029.
2. Kildare Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP) 2024 - 2026.
3. Kildare Climate Action Plan 2024 - 2029.



The review focussed on three primary policy areas: (i) Environment, (ii) Economy, and (iii) Education within these plans.

The Kildare County Development Plan sets out a strategic vision for the county:

To build on the strengths of the county in order to improve the quality of life of all residents, through the creation of high-quality job opportunities, by the provision of high-quality residential development supported by adequate community infrastructure, through the provision of a high-quality sustainable transport network, by healthy placemaking and transformational regeneration, by supporting the transition to a low carbon climate resilient environment, by embracing inclusiveness and by enhancing our natural and built environment for future generations.

The county development plan also aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

2.11.2 Key Town: Maynooth

In the Kildare County Development Plan (CDP), a Key Town is described as a large, economically active service or county town that provides employment for surrounding areas, features high-quality transport links, and has the capacity to drive growth in conjunction with Regional Growth Centres. The CDP identifies Naas and Maynooth as the primary focus for employment growth in Kildare. The Plan outlines that the further development of Maynooth University as a leading third-level research and educational institution, along with potential synergies with large employers, presents considerable opportunities, as does the development of St. Patrick's College Campus for a variety of uses.

2.11.3 Self-Sustaining Growth Town: Leixlip

The Kildare CDP defines Self-Sustaining Growth Towns as characterised by a moderate level of jobs and services, including sub-county market towns and commuter towns with good transport links and capacity for continued commensurate growth to become more self-sustaining.

The self-sustaining growth towns of Newbridge, Leixlip, Kildare Town and Athy are said to continue to attract a moderate level of jobs and services through a range of employment types including biotechnology, ICT, high-tech manufacturing and research, bloodstock, tourism and food and beverage products.

2.11.4 Self-Sustaining Growth Towns: Celbridge & Clane

The Self-Sustaining Growth Towns of Celbridge and Clane are described in the Kildare CDP as characterised by high levels of population growth and a weak employment base which are reliant on other areas for employment and/or services, and which require targeted 'catch up' investment to become more self-sustaining.

These towns have the potential to improve their employment offering through biotechnology, knowledge based digital enterprises, logistics, tourism and food and beverage products in order to strengthen their overall economic offering.

2.12 Environment:

2.12.1 Kildare County Development Plan

The CDP highlights environmental priorities, particularly in Chapter 7, where the Council commits to reducing its carbon footprint in accordance with national climate policy mitigation and adaptation targets, as well as greenhouse gas emission reduction goals. In terms of biodiversity, Section 12.8 identifies several sites of biodiversity value that meet the criteria for international or national designation but are not currently designated. The Plan states that the significant importance of these sites at regional, county, and local levels and establishes the policy BI P5, which aims to identify and conserve locally important biodiversity sites that contribute to the overall ecological network of County Kildare.

The plan emphasises the significance of trees, woodlands, and hedgerows in Section 12.9, establishing a Council policy to recognise their important contributions to the county's biodiversity, climate mitigation, resilience, and adaptation. It highlights the extensive hedgerow network in County Kildare as an asset for agriculture, landscape, wild flora and fauna, wildlife, water quality, carbon sequestration, and employment. The section notes that trees, woodlands, and hedgerows enhance the landscape and visual amenity of the county while providing broader environmental benefits, including carbon storage. Additionally, forests are acknowledged as crucial habitats for wildlife, with Coillte's forests playing a significant role in biodiversity protection and enhancement in the County.

Section 13.2 on Recreation and Amenities highlights that the county's recreational and amenity areas encompass natural, recreational, and sporting facilities, along with social and community infrastructure. It outlines that these amenities offer numerous cultural, social, economic, and environmental benefits, positively contributing to the overall quality of life. The plan emphasises the importance of providing a diverse range of amenities that can meet the needs of a growing population and ensure accessibility for all demographics and age groups, which is essential for fostering sustainable communities.

2.12.2 Kildare Local Economic and Community Plan

High Level Goal 3 of the Kildare Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) focuses on promoting and prioritising climate action, climate justice, and sustainability. The context for this goal underscores the urgency of addressing climate change and accelerating the transition to a low-carbon economy and society, which is a key priority across national, regional, and local plans. The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031, the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029, and the Economic Development

Strategy 2025 all emphasise these priorities. The Kildare Climate Action Plan 2024-2029, developed alongside the LECP, provides a clear analysis to align relevant strategies and objectives with Kildare's climate priorities. While climate action and justice are central goals of the LECP, it is intended that all goals and actions consider climate change. Consultations for the LECP highlighted the importance of addressing climate justice, particularly the need to ensure that vulnerable communities, individuals experiencing poverty and exclusion, and businesses are not left behind or disproportionately affected during the transition to a more carbon-neutral county.

2.12.3 Kildare Climate Action Plan

The Kildare Climate Action Plan outlines the Climate Action Vision for Kildare:

Kildare County Council will deliver climate action across all council functions and will lead the community of County Kildare in the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral local economy.

To support this vision, a mission statement has been devised as an action-oriented focused statement that establishes the overarching priorities of the Council in delivering the vision and the ambition of this Plan. The key themes of this mission outline action for the Council to undertake within its remit, for example, mitigation of emissions within the Councils direct control, ensuring climate resilient public infrastructure and open spaces, engaging with citizens and businesses amongst others.

The five key themes identified as strategic goals in the CAP are supported by specific objectives, many of which are pertinent to the development of the WSP CBS.

Under the Natural Environment & Green Infrastructure theme, several objectives are outlined that are relevant to the development of the WSP CBS. Objective N1 focuses on creating a green infrastructure plan for the county. Objective N6 aims to support citizen science initiatives, while N12 seeks to promote biodiversity and climate issues in schools through the Green Schools and Heritage in Schools programmes. Additionally, Objective N27 explores the feasibility of developing allotments and community gardens in the county to encourage sustainable food production. Lastly, Objective N28 aims to support the tourism industry, particularly in promoting sustainable and green eco-tourism.

The Communities: Resilience and Transition theme includes several objectives that are relevant to the development of the WSP CBS. The objectives under this theme can be categorised into separate headings of Environment, Education, and Economy, allowing for better alignment with the development of the WSP CBS.

Under the Environment heading, several objectives are pertinent to the development of the WSP CBS. Objective R1 aims to organise climate clinics and volunteer days in collaboration with local NGOs to raise awareness about climate change and engage in practical actions. Objective R11 focuses on showcasing effective examples of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) that enhance amenity and biodiversity through nature-based solutions, such as swales or rain gardens, as part of the Council's developments. Additionally, Objective R20 supports Just Transition projects with a climate focus, such as the Midlands Bioenergy Development Project, while advocating for these initiatives to promote climate action co-benefits and ensuring they comply with environmental protection criteria to avoid significant negative environmental impacts.

Under the Economy heading, objective R2 aims to incorporate 'Sustainability and Climate Change' scoring into relevant grant assessments, ensuring that community groups and stakeholders consider and integrate climate mitigation and adaptation into all their grant-funded activities. Objective R21 focuses on supporting innovation in rural economic development and enterprise by diversifying the rural economy into new sectors and services, particularly those that address climate change and sustainability.

Under the Education heading, several objectives support climate action and sustainability. Objective R3 aims to provide training and information for community groups on climate measures such as water conservation and sustainable mobility. Objective R5 encourages community engagement to enhance biodiversity and

water conservation through initiatives with groups like 'Tidy Towns.' Objective R7 supports artists and organisations in adopting best practices for global challenges of climate, water and the environment, utilising library and educational resources. Objective R22 explores a local authority apprenticeship programme focused on traditional skills for conserving structures and raising awareness of their importance. Lastly, Objective R23 involves capacity-building training on climate and biodiversity for community groups and staff, promoting the sharing of experiences and exemplary projects.

Under the Sustainability & Resource Management theme relevant objectives include S14 which outlines that the Councils aims to implement and promote equipment sharing hubs for seeds, toys, garden equipment, power tools, etc. within the County to support community ownership and reduce consumption.

Decarbonising Zone (DZ)

The development of decarbonising zones is mandated through the Climate Action Plans and specifically the Climate Action Plan 2019 Action 165. This was further supported by the Climate Action Plan 2021 Action 80.

A DZ is described a spatial area identified by the local authority in which a range of climate mitigation, adaptation and biodiversity measures and action owners are identified to address local low carbon energy, greenhouse gas emissions, and climate needs to contribute to national climate action targets.

Maynooth was the town selected to be the Decarbonising Zone for Kildare. The Plan outlines that Maynooth was chosen as the DZ for several reasons whereby the town is best placed to achieve the required levels of decarbonising.

The Climate Action Plan indicates that establishing a vision for the DZ provides an opportunity to clearly define its purpose through an aspirational yet realistic statement. To this end, the vision for the implementation of the DZ in Maynooth is presented as follows:

To make our Maynooth Decarbonising Zone climate neutral together by 2050 for a sustainable tomorrow.

The Mission for Maynooth's DZ aims to implement a range of ambitious sectoral actions to reduce emissions in line with established targets, striving for a 51% reduction in emissions within Maynooth by 2030. Additionally, the plan seeks to apply these effective actions in other 'Fast Follower' towns across the County. The DZ encompasses priority areas, objectives, and actions aligned with five key themes identified in the Climate Action Plan (CAP): Governance & Leadership; Built Environment and Transport; Natural Environment & Green Infrastructure; Communities: Resilience and Transition; and Sustainability & Resource Management.

2.13 Education:

2.13.1 Kildare County Development Plan

Section 10 of the County Development Plan (CDP) details the educational facilities in Kildare, including the number of schools and other educational institutions, as well as initiatives aimed at improving pupil-teacher ratios. The Plan highlights that Kildare is one of only five counties in Ireland with a university, which serves as a key centre for international, national, and local lifelong learning and development, playing a significant social and economic role in the county and region. The CDP outlines that the Kildare Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB) provides a range of courses across both counties. It states that these courses cater to various levels, from hobby and elementary levels to degree level and professional qualifications and are offered through the ETB's schools and adult education centres.

2.14 Economy:

2.14.1 Kildare County Development Plan

In CDP Chapter 4 'Resilient Economy & Job Creation' it states that the aim for the county is:

To provide for the future well-being of the residents of the county by creating a strong and resilient economic base, providing expanded opportunities for employment and facilitating a good quality of life within vibrant and attractive places to live, work, visit and invest.

In Section 4.2 of the plan, it is noted that climate change, sustainable development, and the green economy have become central policy concerns for both the international and national communities. Kildare 2025 serves as the County's Economic Development Strategy, outlining a roadmap for attracting new investment, sustaining existing industries and enterprises, and ensuring long-term sustainable growth for Kildare. This strategy provides a strategic policy framework for Kildare's LECP and CDP. The Kildare 2025 Economic Development Strategy aligns with the NPF under Project Ireland 2040 and the RSES. The strategy emphasises the development of the County's Key Towns as economic drivers, aiming to establish strategic employment locations supported by regionally significant self-sustaining growth towns and self-sustaining towns.

The plan emphasises that adequate infrastructure is crucial for facilitating future economic development in Kildare. To this end, Kildare County Council is committed to collaborating with infrastructure providers to ensure the availability of sufficient water and wastewater services, effective public transport, energy, telecommunications, waste management, and educational facilities to support employment growth in the county.

The plan highlights that environmental sustainability is essential for the development and protection of a viable tourism sector in Kildare. It outlines that this is particularly important in a county where many tourism attractions are situated in environmentally sensitive areas and near historic sites, necessitating the protection of the quality of built heritage and the environment from inappropriate development, whether related to tourism or not. Any tourism and recreational development will be evaluated based on its nature and scale to ensure it is appropriate for the character of the area and is "visually sympathetic" to its surroundings.

The development plan states that the Council aims to enhance the existing track along the Barrow Line of the Grand Canal and Barrow River by creating a 112 km shared-use trail for tourism and recreational purposes, known as the 'Barrow Blueway'. This strategy also proposes to open up the canals across Kildare to connect with Dublin, the Barrow River system, and Mullingar to the west, allowing visitors to enjoy walkways, cycle paths, and navigational improvements for recreational activities.

The council policy highlights the significance of sports activities, particularly equine sports and golf, in contributing to the local economy of Kildare. Policy P26 states that the Council will support the development of tourism activities on and near waterways, provided they adhere to standard planning and environmental criteria, as well as comply with the requirements of the Birds and Habitats Directive, the Water Framework Directive, and other relevant European Directives.

Chapter 10 of the Plan outlines the Council's approach to Community Infrastructure and Creative Places, with the aim of fostering healthy, sustainable, and socially inclusive communities. The Council aims to facilitate the timely development of a diverse range of community, social, educational, recreational, and cultural facilities that are accessible and promote social inclusion. This approach is intended to ensure that County Kildare evolves into a location that enhances the quality of life for both its citizens and visitors.

In Section 6.5.1, the County Development Plan (CDP) references the WSP project, outlining its objectives and key details, including the project's aim, water source, and termination point. It specifies several policies related to the project, including IN 01, which focuses on collaborating with Uisce Éireann to protect existing water infrastructure, reduce leakage, improve water quality, and upgrade water supply infrastructure throughout Kildare. IN 02 supports Uisce Éireann in delivering essential water service projects in the county, as outlined in the Water Services Strategic Plan (2015), including the Eastern and Midlands Regions Water Supply Project, while also preserving the corridor for this scheme free from development. Additionally, IN 09

aims to actively implement the provision of public water fountains in town centres to help reduce plastic waste.

2.14.2 Kildare Local Economic and Community Plan

High Level Goal 1 of the Kildare LECP states that "County Kildare is a place with resilient communities where all people live full, healthy, and inclusive lives". High Level Goal 2 asserts that "County Kildare nurtures its people to reach their full potential and to enjoy a high quality of life at all stages". The context for both goals emphasise the importance of creating an environment where residents, employers, and employees can thrive. This aligns with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031, which prioritises placemaking and acknowledges the role of social infrastructure in fostering strong, inclusive communities with economic opportunities. The LECP outlines that the National Planning Framework further highlights the significance of education, childcare facilities, and related infrastructure in addressing poverty and social exclusion. Additionally, these goals are closely linked to the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029, particularly its focus on the concept of the 10-minute town.

High Level Goal 4 of the Kildare LECP focuses on attracting the resources and investment necessary for County Kildare to become a sustainable, inclusive, and economically vibrant community for all. The LECP acknowledges that the ongoing population growth in Kildare poses significant challenges in providing adequate services, facilities, infrastructure, and staffing to support sustainable community and economic development. It emphasises the need for resources and investment to implement the agreed actions for Kildare over the lifetime of the Plan. It acknowledges that securing, appropriately directing, and maximising both public and private sector funding is deemed crucial for the future community and economic development of the county.

2.15 South County Dublin

2.15.1 Overview

The following policy documents were considered for this review:

1. South Dublin County Development Plan 2022 – 2028.
2. Newcastle Local Area Plan 2012.¹



The review focussed on three primary policy areas: (i) Environment, (ii) Economy, and (iii) Education within these plans.

The South Dublin County Council Vision statement is:

In 2028 South Dublin will be a place that our communities are proud of, that our businesses can thrive in and that will help us to live greener and healthier lives.

The County Development Plan applies a 'layered approach' to promote future growth in South County Dublin while aiming to safeguard the County's natural, cultural, and built heritage. It aims to enhance the Green Infrastructure network, ensure high-quality urban design, and create healthy environments for living, working, visiting, socialising, and investing. The Plan outlines that a central element of this approach is the incorporation of Climate Action as a fundamental theme throughout the Plan.

2.15.2 Key Town: Newcastle

Newcastle is designated as a Self-Sustaining Growth Town in the County Development Plan, with the main goal of enhancing social and physical services for its growing population. The plan outlines that development in the town will follow a phased approach, expanding from the village core to the north and south, in line with ongoing construction and key infrastructure outlined in the Newcastle Local Area Plan (LAP). The Plan outlines that Newcastle currently has limited public transport and social services, which is outlined

¹ Newcastle Local Area Plan 2012 was reviewed due to the unavailability of an updated LAP for Newcastle or Clondalkin Local Electoral Area. This is in accordance with the County Development Plan 2022-2028 which references the Newcastle Local Area Plan (2012).

necessitates gradual development that aligns with the provision of necessary infrastructure and services. Policy CS9 in the County Development Plan aims to support Newcastle's sustainable growth by concentrating development within the existing settlement boundary and ensuring local services can accommodate this growth. This policy includes various objectives to achieve this.

2.16 Environment

2.16.1 South County Dublin Development Plan

The County Development Plan integrates Climate Action as a central overarching theme for all the aspects of the Plan. It highlights the South Dublin Climate Action Plan which details 130 ongoing or planned actions by the council under five key areas: Energy and Buildings, Transport, Nature Based Solutions, Resource Management and Flood Resilience.

The County Development Plan aims to protect, conserve, and enhance the County's biodiversity and ecological connectivity with regard to national and EU legislation and strategies as outlined in Policy NCBH2.

Policy NCBH19 aims to establish an inter-county greenway to enhance public access and connectivity between Fingal, South Dublin Counties, and Dublin City. Meanwhile, Policy SM1 focuses on improving movement and access within South Dublin County by integrating sustainable land-use planning with a high-quality sustainable transport network. This policy supports greenway initiatives, including the extension of the Grand Canal Greenway and the ongoing development of the Dodder Greenway.

The County Development Plan references the Council's Tree Management Policy, "Living with Trees" (2021-2026), which aims to proactively expand the tree canopy in the County. Section 3.6.3 of the plan emphasises the importance of utilising existing buildings for sustainable development, a point reinforced by Policy NCBH24, which encourages the reuse and adaptation of historic, traditional, and older vacant or derelict structures. Additionally, the Grand Canal is identified as a vital part of the County's Green Infrastructure, with Policy NCBH9 focused on its protection and promotion. This policy seeks to enhance the visual, recreational, environmental, ecological, and industrial heritage of the Grand Canal, acknowledging its significance as a proposed Natural Heritage Area with nearby wetlands and habitats.

2.16.2 Newcastle Local Area Plan

Section 2.2.3 of the Newcastle Local Area Plan identifies the key environmental issues, where it outlines the need to establish a robust biodiversity network by enhancing ecological connectivity and preventing habitat fragmentation, particularly through the preservation of hedgerows and protection of the local bat population. It also highlights the opportunity to improve walking and cycling routes within Newcastle and connecting to surrounding areas.

The Plan highlights the significance of the Green Infrastructure Strategy, which aims to protect and enhance both natural and built heritage, conserve biodiversity, provide accessible parks and recreational facilities, manage water sustainably with Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS), and maintain sensitive landscapes.

The plan highlights that Article 10 of the Habitats Directive emphasises the role of ecological networks, such as hedgerows, as important corridors for wildlife movement. The Local Area Plan acknowledges the importance of townland hedgerows along Peamount Road and other areas for supporting various plant and animal species.

Additionally, Section 7.2.1 outlines the objective to create dedicated cycleways along the Main Street, arterial streets, link streets, and through open green spaces and green links.

2.17 Education

2.17.1 South Dublin Development Plan

The County Development Plan details the collaboration between the Council and the Department of Education to identify and acquire sites for new primary and post-primary schools and outlines the Council's recognition of the importance of higher and further education for the economic and social wellbeing of the County's population. The Plan highlights the Tallaght Campus of Technological University Dublin is the largest provider of part-time and apprentice education in Ireland, supporting lifelong learning.

The Plan also outlines the Council's objective to work with existing and new schools to enhance the number of students walking and cycling to school, promoting initiatives such as the 'Green Schools' and 'School Streets' projects.

2.17.2 Newcastle Local Area Plan

Objective LUD11 of the Newcastle Local Area Plan outlines the need for the creation of safe walking and cycling routes for children travelling to secondary education in Rathcoole. Meanwhile, Objective AM16 outlines that the objectives of the Plan are to support the provision of pedestrian and cyclist routes at a wider level outside of the Plan Lands, that will integrate with Newcastle's planned cycle and pedestrian network and link Newcastle with Hazelhatch, Rathcoole and Saggart to include for access to Greenogue (with street lighting) and routes towards the Luas terminus in Saggart and the railway station in Hazelhatch.

2.18 Economy

2.18.1 South Dublin Development Plan

The overarching policy regarding the economy in the County Development Plan is Policy ED1, which aims to support sustainable enterprise and employment growth in South Dublin County. This policy acknowledges the County's role as a key driver of economic growth within the Dublin region.

The Plan emphasises the significance of the Green Economy, with Policy EDE2 outlining the Council's support for it as a strategy for future proofing South Dublin County's economy while facilitating orderly growth. Additionally, Policy EDE4 advocates for urban growth and regeneration by promoting effective placemaking, aiming to attract both employees and employers, thereby providing a competitive advantage and diverse investment opportunities for the County.

Newcastle is defined as a Level 4 settlement in the County Development Plan, serving as a centre that addresses the local day-to-day needs of surrounding residents through its shops and services. Policy EDE20 states that the Council will support and facilitate the development of an integrated network of Greenways and Trails (walking routes) along suitable corridors. This initiative aims to provide local connections to villages and attractions while considering the environmental sensitivities of these areas and promoting public awareness of the location and availability of these resources.

2.18.2 Newcastle Local Area Plan

The Newcastle Local Area Plan emphasises the importance of Green Infrastructure and its economic benefits, stating that its development contributes to a high-quality environment that it states underpins economic prosperity in the County. The Plan also outlines the vital role of retail and service businesses in Newcastle Village. The Plan outlines its priority to support and augment local businesses by encouraging further retail growth.

2.19 Clare

2.19.1 Overview

The following policy documents were considered for this review:

1. Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029.
2. Clare County Development Plan Volume 3c Killaloe Municipal District Settlement Plans 2023-2029.



The review focussed on three primary policy areas: (i) Environment, (ii) Economy, and (iii) Education within these plans.

The Clare County Council Vision statement is:

To be a professional, responsive, and inclusive local government that will lead the social, economic, physical, rural and tourism development of our county, having sustainable communities at its heart.

The county's development goals focus on fostering resilience to climate change, promoting sustainable economic growth, and enhancing the quality of life for residents. Key objectives include leading in renewable energy and supporting a low carbon future, leveraging unique resources and location for local and regional development, and encouraging sustainable job creation while supporting indigenous businesses. The plan aims to sustainably manage natural resources to enhance rural quality of life and position the county as a sustainable tourism destination with year-round benefits. It also seeks to develop healthy and sustainable communities with access to educational and cultural facilities, ensuring inclusivity, while providing robust infrastructure that respects environmental responsibilities and relevant legislation. The County strives to support a good economy with a high quality of life for its residents.

Additionally, the goals include maximising the potential of the Shannon Estuary for various developments while protecting the environment, conserving biodiversity, and promoting sustainable green infrastructure and eco-tourism. The plan emphasises the importance of protecting sites of natural heritage and biodiversity as valuable cultural and economic assets, ensuring adherence to national and regional planning frameworks, prioritising sustainability and inclusivity, and ensuring sites of cultural or archaeological significance are protected and promoting policies that support a shift from a linear to a circular economy, enhancing wellbeing, economic growth and environmental quality.

Overall, these goals aim to create a sustainable, inclusive, and prosperous County for current and future generations.

2.19.2 Small Town - Killaloe

Section 2 of the Killaloe Municipal District Settlement Plans discusses Killaloe and outlines general objectives relevant to this review. These objectives include ensuring that Killaloe remains an important local service centre that fosters a sustainable community, maintains a good quality environment, provides public transport to key centres, and offers a high quality of life for residents and those in the surrounding areas.

The Plan aims to provide zoning that facilitates the sustainable expansion of the existing town centre and promotes the development of residential lands, ensuring a suitable mix of housing types and densities alongside complementary land uses, such as community and public transport facilities, to serve both current and future residents. Additionally, it seeks to promote the growth of the commercial, tourism, and retail sectors in the town, encourage enterprise and employment-generating developments to increase local job opportunities, and ensure that future growth is balanced, sustainable, and appropriate to the scale, size, and character of the existing town.

Killaloe is well positioned for development due to its proximity to Limerick and its location at one of the few crossings over the River Shannon. It serves as a service and retail centre for the surrounding hinterland in East Clare and is connected to Ballina in County Tipperary by a bridge.

2.19.3 Small Village – O’Briensbridge

O’Briensbridge is categorised as a Small Village by the County Development Plan. It is located at a bridging point on the River Shannon, which provides the only crossing of the River Shannon between Limerick City and Killaloe and acts as an important link between Counties Clare, Limerick, and Tipperary.

The general objectives for O’Briensbridge, as outlined in Section 4 of the Killaloe Municipal District Settlement Plans, include focusing on ensuring that future growth is incremental and small-scale, appropriate to the scale, size, and character of the village. Additionally, the objectives include developing walking and cycling trails to enhance accessibility to the countryside through sustainable modes of travel, while promoting the sustainable designation and delivery of Greenway and Blueway Corridors.

O’Briensbridge adjoins the Lower River Shannon Special Area of Conservation, and there is a strong focus on the waterfront. There are existing recreational looped waterside walks, and a number of green amenity walks and parks in the area.

2.20 Environment

2.20.1 Clare County Development Plan

The County Development Plan addresses Climate Action in Chapter 2, outlining several strategic aims in section 2.1. These aims include coordinating with relevant stakeholders to facilitate the development of low carbon residential and business properties within the plan area. The Plan emphasises the importance of considering and managing future development in relation to flood risk, aiming to minimise flood risk to people, businesses, infrastructure, and the environment. It also highlights the need to consider the potential effects of climate change in the location and design of new developments. Furthermore, the Plan stresses the importance of fully assessing the risks of flooding and coastal erosion when identifying future development lands. Lastly, it aims to capitalise on the economic opportunities presented by climate adaptation, such as those related to Moneypoint and downstream supply chain benefits.

The climate change policies and objectives outlined in the Plan are guided by and aligned with relevant international and EU level policies. It references the Water Framework Directive, which aims to maintain good ecological status in rivers and lakes.

Chapter 15 of the Plan focuses on Biodiversity, Natural Heritage, and Green Infrastructure. Objective CDP15.15 outlines the Council's commitment to conserving, protecting, and enhancing biodiversity on lands owned or managed by Clare County Council, as well as supporting national policies aimed at creating new woodlands on public land.

Section 15.3 presents the objectives related to Green Infrastructure, emphasising the “economic, educational, and social benefits” it provides. Objective CDP15.30 specifies the Council's aims to promote and facilitate the development and improvement of green infrastructure, while also working with community groups to secure funding for green infrastructure projects.

2.20.2 Killaloe Municipal District Settlement Plans

The Killaloe Municipal District Settlement Plans set a general objective for Killaloe to ensure it remains a sustainable community, with a good quality environment, provides public transport to key centres, and offers a high quality of life for those who live in the town and surrounding areas.

In relation to O'Briensbridge, the Plan specifies the EPA requirements and standards that must be adhered to for future development, ensuring sustainability in the long term. It also encourages the re-use and redevelopment of vacant or derelict sites and buildings within the village.

2.21 Education

2.21.1 Clare County Development Plan

The County Development Plan outlines several objectives related to education. CDP6.11 states that the Council aims to support and facilitate beneficial interactions between industries in County Clare and relevant higher education institutions. Section 10.17.3 of the Plan highlights the higher education institutes situated in or near County Clare, including the University of Limerick, the Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest (TUS), NUI Galway, the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, the Shannon College of Hotel Management, the Burren College of Art, and the College of Further Education and Training Ennis Campus.

The Council outlines its support for the development of higher education institutes in County Clare through various course delivery methods, including outreach, distance, and blended learning.

Policy CDP10.18 specifically aims to promote a collaborative approach to regional skills development that aligns with the needs and opportunities of the regional economy. This policy encourages the consolidation and expansion of all levels of educational services and associated training programmes, and it emphasises collaboration with other agencies, such as the Limerick Clare Education and Training Board (LCETB), to facilitate lifelong learning, skills training, and post-secondary education.

2.22 Economy

2.22.1 Clare County Development Plan

The County Development Plan highlights the role of the Clare Economic Taskforce, which collaborates with the Local Enterprise Office and relevant stakeholders to build on the economic strengths of the County and Region. The Plan outlines that the Taskforce aims to actively pursue economic development opportunities, create conditions that promote enterprise, enhance resilience to economic vulnerabilities, and attract and retain high-quality jobs.

The Development Plan outlines an economic strategy aimed at achieving greater prosperity across all areas of the County. This strategy aligns with the overall vision for the County and includes strategic aims such as ensuring that the benefits of economic growth are distributed throughout the County, maximising returns from its economic assets, and proactively implementing the economic aspects of the adopted Clare Local

Economic and Community Plan (LECP). It also focuses on encouraging and supporting enterprise development, research, technology advancement and innovation, diversifying the rural economy, and establishing digital hubs across the County.

Specific policy objectives include CDP6.12, which aims to continue developing a network of digital hubs to facilitate remote working, attract new businesses, and support the growth and development of the digital and media industries in County Clare. Additionally, Section 9.2.14 of the Plan discusses the Ireland's Hidden Heartlands initiative, which aims to realise the potential of the lakes and waterways in East Clare.

Killaloe's economic base is strongly associated with tourism due to its location on Lough Derg. The Killaloe Municipal District Settlement Plans identify several sites aimed at supporting the development of tourism and enterprise development.

The Killaloe Municipal District Settlement Plans also provide an economic overview of O'Briensbridge, which offers convenient access to the Mid-West region. The proposed Shannon Greenway will pass through O'Briensbridge, which may create further tourism opportunities in the area. Additionally, improving access to the river for water-based activities is seen as a way to boost tourism in the area according to the Plan. The Plan also sets out the objective of developing and enhancing the village's tourism offerings, with a particular focus on sustainable and eco-tourism.

2.23 Limerick

2.23.1 Overview

The following policy documents were considered for this review:

1. Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028.
2. Castleconnell Local Area Plan 2023-2029.



The review focussed on three primary policy areas: (i) Environment, (ii) Economy, and (iii) Education within these plans.

The Limerick Development Plan Strategic Vision is:

Limerick – A Green City Region on the Waterfront: By 2030, Limerick will become a green City region on the Shannon Estuary connected through people and places. This will be achieved through engagement, innovation, resilient urban development and self-sustaining rural communities.

The Limerick Development Plan outlines four key ambitions. Firstly, A Green Region, where Limerick aims to develop as an environmentally sustainable and carbon-neutral economy, pioneering sustainable growth through the promotion of active mobility, creating an attractive place to live, work, and visit. Secondly, Embracing the River Shannon, which focuses on enhancing public access to the River Shannon/Estuary, animating the waterfront to create new recreational opportunities for both residents and visitors. Thirdly, Resilient, Connected, and Inclusive Communities, which aims to facilitate sustainable living and prepare for the future by improving movement and connectivity between communities. Lastly, A Sustainable, Innovative, and Competitive Economy, where the Limerick region aspires to build an inclusive, self-sustaining economy based on growth and innovation, maximising its competitive edge to enhance local enterprises and attract international investment while ensuring a high quality of life.

Due to its proximity in relation to the WSP project, the Town of Castleconnell has been chosen for the policy review for Co. Limerick. In the County Development Plan, Castleconnell is designated as a Level 3 Town. The Council aims to consolidate the growth of such towns and focuses its policy on ensuring they become more self-sufficient regarding job creation and the provision of services.

2.23.2 Key Town: Castleconnell

Section 3.4.7 of the County Development Plan discusses Castleconnell. Castleconnell is within the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area which is the subject of the Spatial Strategy in Section 2 of the Development

Plan. Castleconnell is defined as a Level 3 Town in the Development Plan, objectives for Level 3: Towns are set out under Section 2b 3.6. These objectives include monitoring and reviewing Local Area Plans to ensure that towns are becoming more self-sufficient in terms of job creation and provision of services.

The Castleconnell Local Area Plan provides an in-depth assessment of the area. Chapter 10 of the County Development Plan discusses Sustainable Communities and Social Infrastructure. The Council's key policies outlined in this plan including SCSI P1 which states that the Council will aim to improve the provision of community infrastructure and recreational opportunities in a sustainable manner and SCSI P3 which states that it shall be an aim of the Plan to promote and support targeted policies and measures to assist in renewal, regeneration and retrospective interventions and ensure local needs for social infrastructure are properly considered.

Chapter 5 of the Castleconnell Local Area Plan focuses on Sustainable Communities and includes Policy C1, which states that the Council is committed to supporting the provision of a wide range of high-quality social, community, educational, healthcare, and recreational facilities and infrastructure in Castleconnell. Under Policy C1, the Council aims to facilitate the development of parks, open spaces, and recreational amenities. This includes the development of a community park, the creation of a new Greenway linking Castleconnell with the University of Limerick and Montpelier, and an examination of the feasibility of Blueway opportunities along the River Shannon.

2.24 Environment

2.24.1 Limerick County Development Plan

Section 6.3 of the County Development Plan highlights the need for policies that preserve Limerick's landscape while allowing for appropriate development. It details that the state of natural habitats influences their ability to deliver ecosystem services, which are essential for climate change resilience. Section 7.1 outlines the Council's objectives to enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors, create more attractive environments, and support Limerick's transition to a low-carbon, resilient society by improving the connection between land use and transport planning and encouraging sustainable transport options.

Chapter 6 outlines policies set out in alignment with national and regional planning policy in the context of the National Planning Framework and the RSES for the Southern Region.

Section 6.3.7 of the Plan outlines the important functions of Blue and Green Infrastructure. These include providing habitats, increased biodiversity, creating ecological corridors, climate change adaptation and mitigation, managing water treatment and retention, offering local amenities, improving air quality, preserving cultural and heritage sites, creating mentally restorative environments, and mitigating flood risks.

2.24.2 Castleconnell Local Area Plan

The Castleconnell Local Area Plan outlines its key objectives, with Objective CH1 focusing on Climate Change. The Council's aims under CH1 include supporting and promoting climate-proofing measures in the design and construction of all developments, advancing renewable energy sources, and ensuring the responsible development and management of land, drainage systems, and natural habitats.

Blue and Green Infrastructure is a key objective of policy CH02 in the Castleconnell Local Area Plan, with key focuses on developing and enhancing blue and green infrastructure opportunities throughout Castleconnell and promoting connecting corridors for the movement of species and encouraging biodiversity. Objective ECON 048(d) details the council's objective to develop a greenway from the University of Limerick to Montpelier.

Policy CH2 outlines the Council's responsibilities under the Water Framework Directive in relation to the management of water bodies and the achievement/maintaining of good status in all waters. Objective CH06 focuses on protecting the integrity of the Lower River Shannon Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Zoning

measures are implemented to safeguard the SAC, which includes an Open Space and Recreation designation as well as a Special Control Area.

2.25 Education

2.25.1 Limerick County Development Plan

In section 10.5 of the County Development Plan, Limerick City and County Council highlights the significance of accessible education facilities for all age groups. It underscores the responsibility of Planning Authorities to protect existing schools and college facilities while ensuring adequate provisions for new schools and the expansion of current educational institutions.

The County Development Plan outlines the educational landscape in Limerick, which includes 172 primary and post-primary schools. Additionally, Limerick is home to three third-level institutions: the University of Limerick, Mary Immaculate College, and the Technological University of Shannon.

The Council's key objectives regarding education includes Objective SCS1 011 – Location of Schools: this objective aims to assist educational authorities in expanding schools in conjunction with residential development and to locate educational facilities near other community services and accessible locations whenever possible. Objective SCS1 013 – Further and Higher Education Facilities: this objective focuses on supporting the ongoing expansion of the City's third-level institutions, promoting the development of the University of Limerick's City Centre Campus, and encouraging third-level outreach, vocational training, and lifelong learning initiatives.

2.25.2 Castleconnell Local Area Plan

The Castleconnell Local Area Plan details its policies regarding Education in Section 5.1. The Plan states that "the provision of good quality educational and childcare facilities is important to support the development of sustainable communities and facilitate economic development in Castleconnell". The Council's Education objectives are detailed under Objective C1. These objectives under C1 align directly with those detailed by the County Development Plan.

The Council further outlines that future development of new community facilities should adhere to the criteria of the 10 Minute Town Concept. This includes being situated within an 800m walking distance from the village centre, centrally located relative to the community it serves while considering topographical and transportation limitations. It states that facilities should be accessible by public transport and clustered with complementary community amenities and local retail services, integrated with housing. Additionally, it states that they should be placed in areas where a significant portion of the population lives, particularly catering to older and less mobile members of the community.

2.26 Economy

2.26.1 Limerick County Development Plan

Chapter 5 of the County Development Plan outlines key policies of Limerick City and County Council relating to the economy. The plan aims to support the growth of employment, enterprise, retail, tourism, and the marine economy in Limerick while ensuring that economic development does not negatively impact the environment. It presents a variety of policies for economic growth that align with national, regional, and local strategies, including the National Planning Framework and the Southern Region RSES. The National Planning Framework sets ambitious growth targets, aiming for Limerick City to expand by at least 50% by 2040.

The Council's economic objectives focus on promoting sustainable enterprise and economic development in collaboration with relevant agencies, in line with national, regional, and local strategies. They aim to position the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area as a key hub for economic growth, enhancing employment through

the expansion of the existing enterprise ecosystem and smart specialisation. Additionally, the Council seeks to facilitate economic development and job creation in Limerick City Centre and other strategically zoned areas sustainably. They support the long-term growth of the retail sector according to established retail strategies and aim to boost the tourism industry by developing urban and rural attractions, amenities, and events in line with regional tourism plans. Finally, the Council promotes the sustainable growth of the Marine Economy while ensuring environmental protection.

2.26.2 Castleconnell Local Area Plan

Chapter 6 of the Castleconnell Local Area Plan focuses on Economic Development and Tourism, providing a framework for development through the allocation of adequately zoned lands and policies that support economic and tourism initiatives. The Local Area Plan references the Limerick Development Plan, which outlines the strategic context for economic development in the region, as well as the Limerick Local Economic and Community Plan, which details objectives and actions to promote economic and community development across Limerick. Specifically, Objective ED 1 aims to promote, facilitate, and enable economic development and employment-generating activities in Castleconnell on appropriately zoned lands, ensuring that such development occurs in a sustainable manner and aligns with the Limerick Development Plan.

The Council promotes Castleconnell as a location for supporting remote working hubs, as well as culture, creative, and smart technology enterprises. An eHub has been established as a community service in the village. The Local Area Plan encourages opportunities for employment creation and business and technology development in Castleconnell to stimulate economic activity, aligning with the RSES and the Limerick Development Plan. The Local Area Plan highlights the potential of small settlements like Castleconnell to host community-based enterprise centres on serviced lands, benefiting from good access to regional and national roads and a local skilled workforce.

SECTION THREE:
THE EMERGING SCHEME



3.1 Introduction

This section presents the proposed elements of the Community Benefit Scheme (CBS) and highlights the stakeholder engagement process that has been integral to its development. During ongoing interactions with key stakeholders, the research team gathered real-time feedback to ensure that the study methodology was fit for purpose and to share the research findings at key stages of the study.

As detailed in the following sections, we have conducted several meetings with hosting local authorities and with other potentially interested stakeholders. Stakeholder input has been invaluable, allowing us to incorporate their insights as the study evolved.

Additionally, during a public consultation for the Water Supply Project, Eastern and Midland Regions, members of the public were invited to share their perspectives on the CBS. This engagement provided an opportunity for community members to propose ideas and initiatives that could be supported within the scheme, and we have summarised some of their contributions in this section.

This section also emphasises emerging key themes related to the economy, education, and the environment. Emerging themes and topics are outlined, and the final portions will present the evolving scheme structured around these three pillars.

For a comprehensive understanding, this of the study should be read in conjunction with the accompanying Emerging Community Benefit Scheme document.

3.2 Stakeholder Engagement – Key Findings

3.2.1 Engagement with Local Authorities

Uisce Éireann held WSP briefings all relevant local authorities in 2024 to provide an overview of the proposed approach to formulating a community benefit scheme.

During phase of the research study, a series of six meetings were held with the executive management teams of the Local Authorities in which infrastructure is proposed (e.g. Tipperary, Offaly, Kildare). The purpose of this engagement process was to provide updates on the development of the WSP-EMR community benefit scheme and to seek feedback on the research findings within the study area. As Local Authorities are engaged in planning and delivering services which underpin the development of sustainable communities, inputs, expertise and insights gained from Local Authority officials was invaluable in furthering the research team's understanding of the host communities and priorities for sustainable social progress in these areas.

This process of engagement supported the development of the proposed community benefit scheme by affirming the research findings and providing the opportunity for the organisations most closely associated with service provision in the host communities to inform the development of the community benefit scheme. Local Authority feedback provided was very beneficial and useful to influence the direction of the formulation of the proposed scheme. Stakeholder feedback confirmed that the approach adopted by Uisce Éireann aligns with the community development priorities for communities in proximity to the proposed infrastructure.

Meetings were also held with the Heath Service Executive (National Environmental Health Service) and the Local Authorities Water Programme.

Table 3-1 Summary of Engagement with Local Authorities

Stakeholder	Meeting 1 Study Overview	Meeting 2 Socio- economic Baseline and Community Development Policy Analysis	Meeting 3 Opportunities for Community Benefit Supports	Meeting 4 Emerging Proposals & Governance Model	Meeting 5 Emerging Proposals & Governance Model	Meeting 6 Update on Emerging Scheme & Governance Model
Tipperary County Council	21/10/24	18/11/24	19/12/24	20/01/25	17/02/25	11/06/25
Offaly County Council	07/11/24	04/12/24	14/01/25	28/01/25	24/02/25	20/05/25
Kildare County Council	14/11/24	11/12/24	14/01/25	20/01/25	24/02/25	21/05/25

Throughout this engagement process, Uisce Éireann also shared information with the Local Authorities on the proposed community gain investment fund and associated topics such as the fund objectives, community investment benchmarking, funding categories, and governance and administration model options. Feedback was welcomed on all aspects on the development of the community gain investment fund.

3.2.2 Emerging Themes and Topics

The following themes and topics emerged from the socio-economic and community development policy research findings. These were presented to the Local Authorities and discussed during the engagement phase of the study.

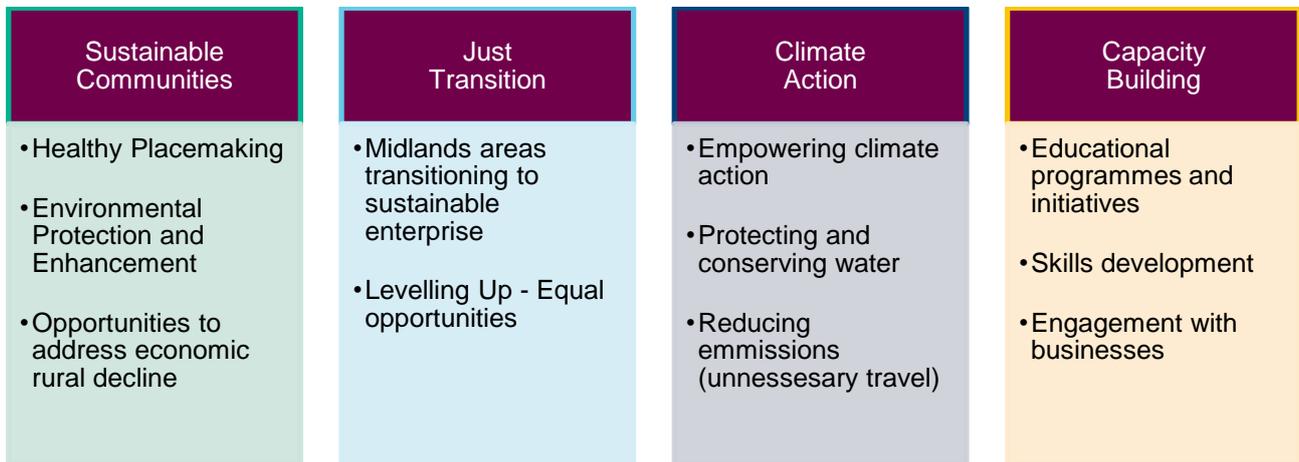


Figure 3-1 Emerging Themes and Topics

The Emerging Community Benefit Scheme proposes supports for projects and initiatives which seek to advance sustainable community development in alignment with the identified themes and topics.

3.2.3 Feedback on Community Benefit

A variety of opinions regarding the proposed Community Benefit Scheme (CBS) were submitted to the Project Team by the public at various stages of project development and during the non-statutory public consultations. Uisce Éireann wishes to thank the individuals and organisations which took time to provide feedback on community benefit throughout the pre-planning phase.

Most submissions welcomed a proposal for a community benefit scheme. Some expressed support for its potential to enable communities and the region to prosper. Additionally, there were calls for proactive community engagement and communication with local residents about all aspects of the CBS.

During the non-statutory public consultation (NSC) undertaken by UÉ from January to March 2025, a theme emerged regarding a concern of losing water-based amenities both up-stream and down-stream of the (Parteen Basin) abstraction.

Suggestions were made for a public amenity at the extraction point in the Parteen Basin area, as well as for the creation of further offtakes from the project to enable wider community benefit.

While the Community Gain Investment Fund, which focuses on economic, education, and environment was welcomed, some submissions indicated that the proposed project would primarily benefit urban centres on the east coast rather than rural areas.

One stakeholder called for the fund to be available for the operational lifetime of the project, not just during construction, and some submissions called for no limitations or caveats to be placed on the funding, allowing for opportunities to support economic activities based on sustainable tourism projects, environmentally friendly farm diversification, or other community-based initiatives. Support for water source protection, water quality enhancement, and water conservation measures were suggested as aligned areas for which support should be provided through the community benefit scheme.

Funding for habitat restoration and biodiversity initiatives in the source area were also suggested. While the positive impact of the fund was acknowledged, concerns were raised that the community fund themes appear more focused on construction impacts rather than addressing the needs of the community or the local environment at the point of abstraction. Furthermore, it was submitted that communities downstream from the extraction point should be included in the funding. Additional suggestions included creating educational resources to educate and upskill individuals to work on the project and developing significant national sporting infrastructure at the extraction point (in Parteen Basin which is operated by ESB).

There was a spectrum of feedback with a particular concern expressed by key stakeholders on the western end of the pipeline route that the emerging CBS was “construction focussed and land-based” and that it did not give enough consideration to management of potential water quality impacts to water-based communities in Lough Derg and the broader Shannon river basin over the long term.

UÉ sought to reassure stakeholders including community group representatives that the ESB operated water level regime remains intact and expect that proximate water-based community groups in Limerick, Clare and Tipperary will be eligible for funding which their respective LA's will evaluate as administrators of the proposed Community Gain Investment Fund.

UÉ also highlighted the many positive programmes underway by other entities to improve and manage river basin water quality under more established and appropriate funding mechanisms, and UÉ anticipates working in partnership with communities to support these and other initiatives e.g., water conservation and education which address the longer-term water quality issues highlighted in the feedback.

Therefore, the emerging Community Benefit Scheme (CBS), and the proposed Community Gain Investment Fund (CIF) - detailed in the accompanying Emerging Community Benefit Scheme document is considered by UÉ to be a fair and proportionate response to the community impacts discussed during development of the scheme.

3.3 WSP Community Benefit Scheme – Emerging Proposal

The WSP will safeguard public health and will protect and improve the environment through providing a new sustainable water source for the eastern and midlands region. This project has capacity to address supply water needs for up to 50% of the State’s population. In recognition of the impacts experienced by host communities during the construction phase of a major infrastructure project, Uisce Éireann is committing to deliver a bespoke community benefit scheme as part of the delivery of the Water Supply Scheme, Eastern and Midlands Region.

Table 3-2 Categories for WSP Community Benefits Scheme

Category	Objective	Description
Economy	To support sustainable economic development within the project area through the provision of employment opportunities and the application of social inclusion initiatives.	Providing local employment opportunities for jobseekers (including support for long-term unemployed persons returning to work, youth unemployed, or persons entering the workforce for the first time) through the use of social procurement / social inclusion initiatives.
		Providing opportunities for SMEs and social enterprises to benefit from the delivery of the WSP-EMR.
Education	To act as a thought leader and inspire students to pursue educational pathways in science, technology, engineering or maths (STEM).	Initiatives that support progression in education at all levels or which seek to encourage pathways in STEM.
		Support for initiatives which seek to reduce early school leaving in disadvantaged areas.
Environment	To encourage and empower thriving communities through environmental protection and enhancement.	Supports for local projects that seek to protect or enhance the natural environment including those aligned with the objectives of protecting and enhancing water bodies, water conservation and climate actions initiatives as per the objectives of the Water Action Plan, the Climate Action Plan, and the National Biodiversity Action Plan.

3.4 Summary and Next Steps

Uisce Éireann and its research team wish to thank the contributors who gave time, expertise and insights during the undertaking of this research project and during the development of the WSP Community Benefit Scheme proposals.

The emerging community benefit scheme provides a fair and proportionate benefit to support communities that will host this vitally important piece of water supply infrastructure. Through the development of the proposed scheme and the proactive engagement undertaken to date with the Local Authorities and other interested organisations, Uisce Éireann has demonstrated its commitment to maximizing the societal and environmental benefits that can accrue from the delivery of the Water Supply Project.

Appendix A – List of Electoral Divisions within the Study Area

Tipperary

1. Ardcroney
2. Ballina
3. Ballingarry
4. Ballygibbon
5. Ballylusky
6. Birdhill
7. Borrisokane
8. Burgesbeg
9. Carrigatogher
10. CloghJordan
11. Cloghprior
12. Clohasquin
13. Derrycastle
14. Kilbarron
15. Kilcomenty
16. Killoscully
17. Kilmore
18. Kilpatrick
19. Knigh
20. Lackagh/Greenhall
21. Mertonhall
22. Monsea
23. Nenagh East Urban
24. Nenagh Rural
25. Nenagh West Urban
26. Newcastle
27. Terryglass
28. Uskane
29. Youghalarra

Offaly

1. Aghancon
2. Ballincor
3. Barna
4. Birr Rural
5. Birr Urban
6. Cangort
7. Cappancur
8. Clonbulloge
9. Clonygowan
10. Daingean
11. Derrinboy
12. Dromoyle
13. Drumcullen
14. Edenderry Rural
15. Edenderry Urban
16. Esker/Ballaghassaan
17. Ettagh
18. Geashill
19. Kilcolman
20. Kilcormac
21. Killeigh
22. Killooly
23. Killoughy
24. Killyon
25. Kinnitty
26. Knockbarron
27. Letter
28. Monasteroris
29. Mountbriscoe
30. Mountheaton
31. O'dempsey
32. Rathfeston
33. Rathrobin
34. Seirkieran
35. Shinrone
36. Templeharry
37. Cappalough, Laois
38. Castlecuffe, Laois
39. Castletown, Laois
40. Clonaslee, Laois
41. Garrymore, Laois
42. Rearymore, Laois

Kildare

1. Balraheen
2. Bodinstown
3. Carbury
4. Celbridge
5. Cloncurry
6. Donadea
7. Donaghcumper
8. Drehid
9. Dunferth
10. Kilcock
11. Killinthomas
12. Kilmeage North
13. Lullymore
14. Maynooth
15. Oughterard
16. Straffan
17. Timahoe North
18. Timahoe South
19. Windmill Cross

South Dublin

1. Clondalkin Village
2. Clondalkin-Cappaghmore
3. Clondalkin-Dunawley
4. Lucan Heights
5. Lucan-Esker
6. Lucan-St. Helens
7. Newcastle
8. Rathcoole
9. Tallaght-Fettercairn

Clare

1. Killaloe
2. Lackareagh
3. O'briensbridge

Limerick

1. Castleconnell

