PURSER

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04

Legal and Policy Framework

4.0 Legal and Policy Framework

4.1 Introduction

This chapter of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) examines the relevant waste management, energy, climate change and planning policy, and the legislative context at European, national, regional, and local levels with relevance to the proposed development at Lisheen Mine Site, Killoran, Moyne, Thurles, Co. Tipperary 'referred to as the 'the application site'/'the site'.

4.2 European Policy and Legislation

4.2.1 Energy and Climate

In recent years, the need to recognise the impact of climate change caused by human activity and to alter our way of life in order to address the effects of climate change has been included within European policy and legislation.

The EU has pledged to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, delivering on commitments under the Paris Agreement (COP21). Reaching this objective will require a transformation of Europe's energy supply, society, and economy. With the 2030 Climate Target Plan[1], the EC proposes to raise the EU's ambition on reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to at least 55% below 1990 levels by 2030. The plan recognises the significant contribution of the agricultural sector to GHG emissions and while these emissions can never be fully eliminated under existing technology and management options, they can be significantly reduced, whilst ensuring food security is maintained in the EU. Efficient use of fertilisers, adopting precision farming, a healthier herd, and the deployment of anaerobic digestion (AD) technologies treating organic waste to produce renewable biogas are highlighted within the plan as examples of existing technologies.

The European Green Deal package of policy initiatives was launched by the EC in 2019, which aims to set the EU on the path to a green transition, with the ultimate goal of reaching climate neutrality by 2050. The associated Fit for 55 legislative package aims to translate the ambitions of the Green Deal into law. The policy package itself underlines the need for a cross-sectoral approach in which all relevant policy areas contribute to the ultimate climate-related goal. The package includes initiatives covering the climate, the environment, energy, transport, industry, agriculture, and sustainable finance.

The Green Deal recognises that "*renewable and low-carbon gases, such as biomethane, will play a central role in achieving climate neutrality*"[2]. Biogas and biomethane, renewable and low carbon hydrogen have the potential to

[1] Communication from The Commission to The European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and The Committee of the Regions - Stepping up Europe's 2030 climate ambition Investing in a climate-neutral future for the benefit of our people. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0562

[2] European Commission, Directorate-General for Communication, (2021) Delivering the Green Deal: the role of clean gases including hydrogen. https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2775/718801

gradually replace fossil gases, including natural gas, and can be used as a fuel to reduce emissions in hard-to-abate sectors, particularly in industry and transport.

As part of the Deal, the EU Farm to Fork Strategy[3] was published which includes proposals to transform agriculture and position it as a key sector for climate mitigation and adaptation. The development of an agri-led biomethane industry in Ireland is strongly aligned with a number of the Farm to Fork goals, including:

- Ensure food production has a neutral or positive environmental impact.
- Carbon Farming Initiative - implement green business models that sequester carbon.
- Promote a circular bio-based economy.
- Reduce pesticide use and excess nutrients in the environment by 2030.
- Achieve a 50% reduction in nutrient losses without reducing soil fertility leading to a 20% reduction in fertiliser use.
- Increase the proportion of organic farming to 25% by 2030.

4.2.2 EU Common Rules on Renewable Gases

The common rules for the internal markets for renewable gas, natural gas, and hydrogen (recast) European Parliament legislative resolution was published on the 11th of April 2024.

The common rules outlined that the Commission communication of 8 March 2022 which was entitled 'REPowerEU: Joint European Action for more affordable, secure and sustainable energy' (REPowerEU), that was adopted after the beginning of Russia's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine, highlighted the importance of diversification of gas supplies to phase out the Union's dependency on Russian energy.

REPowerEU recognised that "*scaling up sustainable biomethane and the roll-out of renewable hydrogen could play a decisive role*" in ensuring secure and more sustainable power supply for the EU.

The common rules recognise that "*Although electrification is a key element of the green transition, household natural gas consumption, including increasing volumes of renewable gas, in particular biomethane, will continue to exist in the future*."

The common rules go on to state the following:

> *"Member States should take concrete measures to assist the wider use of sustainable biomethane, or other types of gas, that can technically and safely be injected into, and transported through, the natural gas system, the producers of which should be granted non-discriminatory access to that*

[3] Communication from The Commission to The European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and The Committee of the Regions - A Farm to Fork Strategy for a fair, healthy, and environmentally friendly food system. https://food.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-05/f2f_action-plan_2020_strategy-info_en.pdf

system, provided that such access is compatible with the relevant technical rules and safety standards on an ongoing basis and unless otherwise provided for in this Directive"

The rules also state that Member States should seek to expedite and support the connection of biomethane producers to the natural gas network, and that Member States must ensure that transmission and distribution system operators adhere to reasonable time limits to assess requests for the injection of biomethane.

4.2.3 Renewable Energy Directive

The current Renewable Energy Directive 2018/2001/EU4[4] entered into force in December 2018 and has since been amended by Directive EU 2023/24135 (RED III)[5]. On 12 September 2023, RED III was adopted by the Parliament. The Directive establishes a basis in policy for the production and promotion of renewable energy, setting a new binding renewable energy target for the EU for 2030 of at least 42.5%, with this target having been revised upward in 2023 from 32%.

This target is a continuation of the 20% target for 2020. In order to help EU member countries achieve this target, the directive introduces new measures for various sectors of the economy, particularly on heating, cooling, and transport. It also includes new provisions to enable citizens to play an active role in the development of renewables by enabling renewable energy communities and self-consumption of renewable energy. It also establishes strengthened criteria to ensure bioenergy's sustainability.

The 2023 amending Directive altered the 2018 Directive to align with increased climate ambitions and recognise renewable energy as an "*overriding public interest*" in the Appropriate Assessment process.

Under this revision the planning, construction and operation of renewable energy plants, their connection to the grid and the related grid itself, and energy storage assets are presumed to be in the overriding public interest and serving public health and safety when balancing legal interests for the purposes of the Birds, Habitats, and Water Framework Directives. The revisions to the Directive present further evolution of the target to accelerate the development of renewable energy developments in EU member states.

Building on the 2009 and 2018 directives, the revised directive introduces stronger measures to ensure that all possibilities for the further development and uptake of renewables are fully utilised. This will be key to achieving the EU's objective of climate neutrality by 2050 and to strengthen Europe's security of energy supply.

In addition to the new headline target to double the existing share of renewable energy sources, a strong policy framework will facilitate electrification in different sectors, with new increased sector-specific targets for

[4] Directive (EU) 2018/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2018 on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2018.328.01.0082.01.ENG

[5] Directive (EU) 2023/2413 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 October 2023 amending Directive (EU) 2018/2001, Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 and Directive 98/70/EC as regards the promotion of energy from renewable sources, and repealing Council Directive (EU) 2015/652 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32023L2413&qid=1699364355105

renewables in heating and cooling, transport, industry, buildings, and district heating/cooling, but also with a framework promoting electric vehicles and smart recharging.

To support renewables uptake in transport and heating and cooling, the revised directive converts into EU law some of the concepts outlined in the energy system integration and hydrogen strategies, published in 2020. These concepts aim at creating an energy-efficient, circular, and renewable energy system that facilitates renewables-based electrification and promotes the use of renewable fuels, including hydrogen, in sectors like transport or industry where electrification is not yet a feasible option. For these hard-to-electrify sectors, the directive sets new binding targets for renewable fuels of non-biological origin.

As an important bottleneck to the deployment of renewables on the ground, permitting procedures will also be easier and faster both for renewable energy projects (including through shorter approval periods and the creation of 'Renewables acceleration areas') and for the necessary infrastructure projects. Under the amended Directive, member states must identify areas for the acceleration of renewables where projects will undergo a simplified and fast-track procedure.

Member States (including Ireland) must transpose RED III into national law by 21 May 2025. However, certain provisions – including those aimed at accelerating permit-granting procedures – must be transposed into national law by 1 July 2024.

4.2.4 REPowerEU Energy Plan

The European Commission presented the REPowerEU Energy Plan on 18th May 2022, which aims to tackle the climate crisis by accelerating Europe's clean energy transition and adopts a call to end European dependency on Russian fossil fuels. The Plan recognises that the uptake of biomethane involves a continued support to innovative technologies for the production of sustainable biomethane, upgrade of biogas to biomethane and its integration within the gas network.

The proposal contains a Biomethane Action Plan[6] to stimulate the renewable gas value chain within EU member states and achieve production of 35 billion cubic metres (bcm) of biomethane by 2030. This plan also includes a targeted revision of the Fitfor55 energy efficiency and renewable targets, together with the necessary measures to accelerate Renewable Energy Sources (RES) permitting and recommendations to facilitate renewable gas injection.

4.2.5 EU Strategy to reduce Methane Emissions

After CO2, methane is recognised as the second largest greenhouse gas (GHG) contributor to climate change. Methane emissions from livestock originate from ruminant species, manure management and feed cultivation.

[6] Biomethane Action Plan Biomethane - European Commission (europa.eu)

The EU Strategy to reduce Methane Emissions[7], published in 2020, acknowledges the agriculture sector as having the highest potential in overall benefits for reducing methane emissions. The Strategy points to the benefits of biogas derived from organic agricultural wastes to reduce methane emissions, generate new revenue streams for farmers and contribute to wider rural development.

The use of digestate is also identified as an organic soil improver and mechanism to displace chemical fertilisers. It is noted that sequential cropping can be used with manure as feedstock for sustainable biogas production, while contributing to sustainable farming practices. The Strategy aims to provide targeted support to accelerate the development of the EU market for biogas from sustainable sources such as livestock manure, organic waste, and residues via policy initiatives.

4.2.6 Waste

The benefits of anaerobic digestion (AD) are recognised and promoted in European Union (EU) waste management legislation and policy. The EU Directives and policies discussed below, which set the context for the management of waste in Ireland (and which are transposed and implemented by domestic legislation), encourage the use of AD as an essential element of sustainable waste management and an efficient recycling method for organic wastes. The Waste Framework Directive (2008/98/EC, as amended by Directive (EU) 2018/851) enshrines a key principle which aims to move waste away from landfill and towards treatment options. The separate collection of organic waste with a view to its biological treatment, through processes such as AD, is encouraged by this Directive. The objective of landfill diversion is also a requirement of the Landfill Directive (1999/31/EC).

The foundation of EU waste management is the five-step "*waste hierarchy*," established in the Waste Framework Directive. It establishes an order of preference for managing and disposing of waste. On the 5th of July 2023, a targeted revision of the Waste Framework Directive[8] was published by the Environment Directorate General of the European Commission. The proposal aims to bring about increased circular and sustainable management of waste and aims to reduce the environmental and climate impacts of food systems associated with food waste generation.

Towards a circular economy: a zero-waste programme for Europe[9] was proposed in 2014 by the EC to establish a common and coherent EU framework to promote the circular economy. In December 2017, a provisional agreement was reached with representatives of the European Parliament on all four legislative proposals of the package with new targets. An obligation on EU member states to separately collect organic waste and associated ban of organic waste landfilling will come into effect as of 2024. The circular economy principles, and particularly the development of a bioeconomy can provide opportunities for agricultural residues such as those from crops,

[7] European Commission (2020) Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, The European Council, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - on an EU strategy to reduce methane emissions.

[8] Proposal for a targeted revision of the Waste Framework Directive. https://environment.ec.europa.eu/publications/proposal-targeted-revision-waste-framework-directive_en

[9] Communication from The Commission to The European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and The Committee of the Regions - Towards a circular economy: a zero-waste programme for Europe. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52014DC0398

animal manures and dairy by-products, to be used to produce biobased fertiliser and renewable energy through the AD process.

4.3 National Planning, Climate and Waste Policy and Legislation

4.3.1 National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework (NPF)[10] was adopted in 2018 and is the overarching policy and planning strategy for the social, economic, and cultural development of Ireland. In June 2023, a first revision of the NPF was undertaken, this was due to be completed in April 2024, however this deadline has since been deferred to September 2024. A first draft of the revised NPF has been published in July 2024, which is discussed in the next section.

At the heart of the NPF is the provision of a framework to guide public and private investment, in order to create and promote opportunities for the Irish people, and to protect and enhance the environment. Within this framework the NPF takes a very positive stance towards sustainable development particularly in rural locations which seeks to boost the rural economy. In Chapter 5 (Planning for Diverse Rural Places) and Chapter 9 (Realising our Sustainable Future) the NPF sets out how this will be achieved through the promotion of more balanced growth throughout the country with strengthened rural economies and communities.

The NPF recognises the economic, administrative, and social functions of rural towns, and seeks to support such towns to become centres for local housing and employment growth, based on development that will include new low carbon and energy efficiency initiatives. In particular, National Policy Objective (NPO) 21 seeks to:

> *"Enhance the competitiveness of rural areas by supporting innovation in rural economic development and enterprise through the diversification of the rural economy into new sectors and services, including ICT-based industries and those addressing climate change and sustainability."*

The role of rural areas in providing a sustainable renewable energy supply is recognised in the NPF, which states:

> *"In planning Ireland's future energy landscape and in transitioning to a low carbon economy, the ability to diversify and adapt to new energy technologies is essential. Innovative and novel renewable solutions have been delivered in rural areas over the last number of years, particularly from solar, wind and biomass energy sources. In meeting the challenge of transitioning to a low-carbon economy, the location of future national renewable energy generation will, for the most part, need to be accommodated on large tracts of land that are located in a rural setting, while also continuing to protect the integrity of the environment and respecting the needs of people who live in rural areas."*

[10] Government of Ireland (2020) National Planning Framework: www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/246231/39baaa8c-48dc-4f24-83bd-84bbcf8ff328.pdf#page=null

Additionally, the competitive advantage of rural activities associated with the bioeconomy is recognised within the NPF, which states:

> *"The transition to a more circular economy and bioeconomy, where the value of bio-based products, materials and resources is maintained in the economy for as long as possible, and the generation of waste management is minimised, will provide an essential contribution to our national goal of developing a sustainable, low-carbon, resource efficient and competitive economy"*.

National Policy Objectives 23 and 53 as set out below for completeness, reinforce these objectives.

NPO 23: Facilitate the development of the rural economy through supporting a sustainable and economically efficient agricultural and food sector, together with forestry, fishing and aquaculture, energy and extractive industries, the bio-economy and diversification into alternative on-farm and off farm activities, while at the same time noting the importance of maintaining and protecting the natural landscape and built heritage which are vital to rural tourism.

NPO 53: Support the circular and bio economy including in particular through greater efficiency in land management, greater use of renewable resources and by reducing the rate of land use change from urban sprawl and new development.

The NPF goes on to identify the need to reduce emissions while ensuring that Ireland has a reliable and resilient energy supply, as set out in Section 9.2:

> "*Ireland's national energy policy is focused on three pillars: (1) sustainability, (2) security of supply and (3) competitiveness. The Government recognise that Ireland must reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the energy sector by at least 80% by 2050, compared to 1990 levels, while at the same time ensuring security of supply of competitive energy sources to our citizens and businesses*."

The transition of the energy sector within Ireland towards low-carbon and renewable sources of the energy is a critical element of achieving the sustainable targets which the Government have set within their timescales. This is set out in NPO 54 and NPO 55 below:

NPO 54: Reduce our carbon footprint by integrating climate action into the planning system in support of national targets for climate policy mitigation and adaptation objectives, as well as targets for greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

NPO 55: Promote renewable energy use and generation at appropriate locations within the built and natural environment to meet national objectives towards achieving a low carbon economy by 2050.

Finally, the NPF supports circular economy principles that aim to minimise the amount of waste that goes into landfill and maximise the utilisation of waste as a resource, as expressed by the following National Policy Objective:

NPO 56: Sustainably manage waste generation, invest in different types of waste treatment and support circular economy principles, prioritising prevention, reuse, recycling and recovery, to support a healthy environment, economy and society.

The overarching focus of the National Planning Framework (NPF) is to create opportunities for the people living and working in Ireland whilst simultaneously protecting and enhancing our environment. A key element of the NPF is to use planning as a tool to tackle Ireland's higher carbon-intensity per capita and enable a national transition to a competitive low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050. This will be done by harnessing the country's renewable energy potential.

4.3.1.1 National Planning Framework Draft First Revision[11] – July 2024

Planning legislation requires that the National Planning Framework be revised or replaced every six years. Following a decision of Government in June 2023, the preparation of a revised National Planning Framework commenced. The Framework has been revised and updated to take account of changes that have occurred since it was originally published in 2018 and to build on the existing framework that is in place.

The first draft of the National Planning Framework (July 2024) maintains the key objectives within the original document of creating and promoting opportunities for Irish people whilst continuing to protect and enhance the unique environment. Sustainable development and the creation of a circular economy still forms a core objective of the NPF particularly in rural locations where it can be used to boost the rural economy.

The draft document expands upon the circular economy and the bio-economy in Chapter 9 (Climate Transition and our Environment). It is acknowledged within the document that climate change is an issue that is beginning to impact Ireland and will continue to impact the country beyond the lifetime of the NPF. The NPF advises that the planning system is best placed to respond to these issues as it covers a wide range of sectors and provides an established means through which to implement and integrate climate change objectives, including mitigation and adaptation, at local level. This is highlighted in NPO 67 and NPO 70 respectively which state:

> "*The planning system will be responsive to our national environmental challenges and ensure that development occurs within environmental limits, having regard to the medium and longer-term requirements of all relevant environmental and climate legislation and the sustainable management of our natural capital*." [NPO 67]

> "*Reduce our carbon footprint by integrating climate action into the planning system in support of national targets for climate policy mitigation and adaptation objectives, as well as targets for greenhouse gas emissions reductions as expressed in the most recently adopted carbon budgets*." [NPO 70]

[11] Note: this policy is draft only at present. The information is included so as t provide a comprehensive review of extant and emerging policy.

The draft revision to the NPF includes the following statement in relation to biomethane within Chapter 9, which deals with Climate Transition and Environment:

> "*Biomethane is a carbon-neutral renewable gas made from farm and food waste through a process known as anaerobic digestion. A National Biomethane Strategy has been published which requires the development of policies with the primary objective of delivering the ambitious target of producing 5.7 TWh of indigenous biomethane by 2030.*
> *It is estimated that over 80% of biomethane will be produced from grass silage and cattle slurry. This will require grass from 120,000ha (3% of total agricultural area) to produce the required feedstock.*
>
> *To meet Ireland's target of 5.7 TWh of biomethane by 2030, a large number of anaerobic digestion facilities will need to be developed, alongside the related infrastructure necessary to support these facilities*."

NPO 68: support the circular and bio economy including in particular through greater efficiency in land and materials management, promoting the sustainable re-use of existing buildings and structures, while conserving cultural and natural heritage, the greater use of renewable resources and by reducing the rate of land use change from urban sprawl and new development.

Rural areas playing a strong role in ensuring a secure energy future while contributing to a zero-carbon economy continues to form a key element of the government's move to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and create a circular economy. The location of renewable technology such as anaerobic digestion facilities near farming communities who will both contribute to and benefit from this new industry supports the government's ambitions in line with NPO 71.

NPO 71: Promote renewable energy use and generation at appropriate locations within the built and natural environment to meet national objectives towards achieving a zero-carbon economy by 2050.

4.3.2 National Development Plan 2021 – 2030

As part of Project Ireland 2040, the National Development Plan (NDP)[12] sets out the national capital investment priorities to realise the objectives of the National Planning Framework. The NDP seeks to balance the demand for investment across all sectors and regions of Ireland whilst also focusing on improving the delivery of infrastructure projects. It sets out the sectoral strategies and strategic investment priorities relevant to the NSOs contained in the NPF. The relevant strategies and investment priorities to the NSOs are set out below.

NS03 – Strengthen Rural Economies and Communities

- Recognises the importance of rural communities and community engagement in achieving the goals of the NPF and NDP

[12] Government of Ireland (2021) National Development Plan 2021-2030: www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/200358/a36dd274-736c-4d04-8879-b158e8b95029.pdf#page=null

- Highlights the role that rural economies and communities can plan in responding to climate change across sectors.
- Supports the sustainable development of Ireland's agri-food sector.
- On-Farm Capital Investment Scheme supports farmers looking to increase their environmental efficiency through, inter alia, the investment in and adoption of new technologies.

NSO5 - A Strong Economy, supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills

- The Economic Recovery Plan 2021 sets out the Government's ambition to build a sustainable and resilient economic recovery, underpinned by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan. New programmes, designed to enhance the resilience and productivity of our enterprise base as it addresses the challenges and opportunities of our transition to a low carbon economy will be delivered.
- The Enterprise Green Transition Fund is targeted at both foreign and indigenous enterprises with the aim of assisting them in achieving carbon abatement and thereby building their resilience, competitiveness and environmental sustainability This Fund will build on the leaning and implementation of the Climate Enterprise Action Fund launched by Enterprise Ireland in April 2021, and carbon abatement opportunities in the manufacturing combustion sectors through process transformation, specific technological interventions, fuel-switching and manufacturing innovations. The fund will drive industrial sectors to play their part in the national decarbonisation objective, The Fund will be designed to facilitate early adoption of technologies to deliver on CO2 abatement in the manufacturing combustion sector – identifying and focusing on those businesses using fossil fuels that could install new technologies that will lead to significant reductions in CO2 and funding which will reduce the payback period to justify the installation of these technologies.

NSO8 – Transition to a Climate-Neutral and Climate-Resilient Society

- The investment priorities set out must be delivered to meet the targets set out in the current and future Climate Action Plans, and to achieve national climate objectives. The investment priorities represent a decisive shift towards the achievement of a decarbonised society, demonstrating the Government's unequivocal commitment to securing a carbon neutral future.
- The NDP Review in 2021 commits to increasing the share of renewable electricity up to 80% by 2030. The NDP indicates that public capital investment choices over the next 10 years must contribute to the objective of a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and lay the pathway to achieve the national climate objective of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Action in the energy sector will be critical to the achievement of Ireland's climate targets and the transformation to a high-renewable, net-zero emissions future.

NSO 9 – Sustainable Management of Water and Other Environmental Resources

- Highlights the need for investment in environmental resources and infrastructure with a particular focus on the sustainable management of waste and water.
- Investment in waste management is critical to achieving an environmentally and economically sustainable future.

The National Development Plan (NDP) sits alongside the National Planning Framework setting out the roadmap for sustainable economic growth and resilience for the country over the next decade. Its key remit is to set out the overall vision for the country's infrastructure and public services. A sustainable economy and the reduction of Ireland's carbon footprint underpins the strategies set out within the document which links it back to the National Planning Framework.

4.3.3 Climate Action Plan 2024

The Climate Action Plan 2024 (CAP24)[13] is the third annual update to Ireland's Climate Action Plan, adopted by Government on the 21st of May 2024 following public consultation in early 2024. Under section 15 of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, as amended, the Planning Authority must perform its functions in a manner which is consistent with the current Climate Action Plan, as far as is practicable.

CAP 24 builds upon last year's Plan (CAP23) by refining and updating the measures and actions required to deliver the carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings. The Plan provides a roadmap for taking decisive action to halve Ireland's emissions by 2030 and reach net zero by no later than 2050, as committed to in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021.

Section 16 'Agriculture' of the CAP 2024 identifies a required reduction in annual agricultural emissions (on 2018) of 25% (17.25 MtCO2eq. per annum by 2030). CAP 2024 states that the agricultural sector is the largest contributor to Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions.

CAP 2024 reiterates the need of the "*production of up to 1 TWh of Biomethane by 2025" and the "production of up to 5.7 TWh of Biomethane by 2030*".

Section 14 'Built Environment' consists of a key target of "*up to 0.6 TWh of heating provided by biomethane by 2025, and up to 1.1 TWh by 2030*".

Section 14.4.1 'Measures to Delivery Required Abatement' states that to meet the required level of emissions reduction, in regard to residential, by 2025 we will:

- "*Develop the appropriate policies and safeguards, as set out in chapter 16, to supply up to 0.4 TWh of biomethane to decarbonise residential heating; and*
- *Supply 0.7 TWh of biomethane to decarbonise residential heating.*"

In regard to the Commercial/Public sector, by 2025 we will "*Develop the appropriate policies and safeguards to supply biomethane for use in commercial and public buildings of up to 0.4 TWh*".

Section 15.2.1.3 'Road Haulage Strategy – Decarbonisation Programme' states that "*there is a full relief from the carbon component of Mineral Oil Tax for liquid or gaseous fuels that have been produced from biomass. This*

[13] Government of Ireland (2024) Climate Action Plan 2024: https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/79659-climate action-plan-2024/

means that no carbon tax applies to biofuels, such as Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil or biomethane, used in any road vehicle, private or commercial."

Section 16.6.1 'Actions for 2024' states that "*there is also increasing potential for the use of bio-fertilisers and digestate coming from a developing biomethane industry to replace chemical nitrogen combined with more efficient use of existing animal slurries through achieving our targets for low-emission slurry spreading*."

Other key measures to deliver climate adaptation in agriculture, indicated in the CAP include the following:

- RE/24/6: Increase investment in research to support agricultural and land use diversification. AG/24/22: Establish a Biomethane Coordination Group to oversee delivery of 5.7 TWh target and National Biomethane Strategy implementation activities.
- AG/24/21: Identify and address the research and knowledge gaps around supply of feedstocks, the role of biobased products including digestate and the sequestration potential regarding biomethane production.
- Introduce obligation in the heat sector, incentivising the production of indigenously produced biomethane.

CAP24 states that "*guided by the Food Vision 2030 Strategy, Irish farmers and food producers will be supported to continue to produce world-class food whilst reducing greenhouse gas emissions and achieving high levels of sustainability*". The Government will also take measures to promote diversification into less greenhouse-gas practices, such as biomethane feedstock production.

4.3.4 National Biomethane Strategy

The National Biomethane Strategy (NBS)[14] was published by the Department of Environment, Climate, and Communications and the Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine in May 2024. The NBS sets out the necessary policy and regulatory measures, and provides a roadmap, to developing a biomethane industry of increased scale in Ireland. The vision of the NBS states,

> "*By 2030, Ireland will have developed a sustainable biomethane industry of scale, meeting ambitious targets set by the Government*".

The primary objective of the NBS is to deliver on the ambitious target set by the Government as part of the agreement on the sector emission ceilings. This ambition is to increase indigenously produced biomethane to 5.7 TWh per annum by 2030, which has been increased substantially from a previous Climate Action Plan 2019 target of 1.6 TWh by 2030. The NBS states that "*biomethane has the potential to progressively replace fossil gas supplies at a national level as we substantially reduce our use of gas over the next 15 to 20 years*."

[14] National Biomethane Strategy (2024): https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/d115e-national-biomethane-strategy/

The strategy states that Ireland is recognised by the European Commission as having one of the largest potentials for biomethane production in Europe on a per capita basis due to its substantial agriculture sector. The development of a new agri-centric biomethane industry can stimulate cross sectoral benefits for Ireland which is a core objective within the NPF trickling down to regional and local level. However, Ireland currently only has two operational biomethane facilities injecting biomethane into the gas grid; the volume of biomethane injected into the grid at present is small, equating to c. 75 GWh per annum (0.001% of Ireland's current gas demand).

The benefits that Ireland can realise from the development of this new industry are summarised as follows:

- Increased likelihood of meeting climate targets.
- Biomethane helping to reduce agriculture sector emissions.
- Diversification option for farmers.
- Opportunity to replace chemical fertiliser with a supply of biobased fertiliser.
- Helping reduce Ireland's energy emissions.
- Improving gas security and diversification of supply.
- Stimulation and diversification of the rural economy

Another key element of the strategy is increasing the number of biomethane sites within the country, is the importance of ensuring security of the energy supply in Ireland. It is noted that circa 75% of Ireland's gas supply is currently imported from the UK, with biomethane playing a pivotal role in ensuring a domestic supply of renewable gas. The proposal at Lisheen complies with the objective and need for Ireland to become increasingly more self-sufficient in the production of energy.

In relation to planning permission for anaerobic digestion developments, the strategy states the following:

> *"AD developments can bring significant benefits to the communities and the local environments in which they are located. Anaerobic Digestion and biorefinery facilities can be significant constructions, with impacts on the environment, biospheres, and the local communities in the area which they are located. Anaerobic digestion and other integrated assets are therefore correctly required to undergo a planning process to ensure proper consideration of a range of factors, including location, visual impact, land-zoning plans, and ecology."*

4.3.5 Sectoral Emissions Ceilings

Following the approval of the Carbon Budgets, Ireland's Sectoral Emissions Ceilings were agreed by Government on 28 July 2022. Section 6C of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 (as amended) (the Act) provides for the preparation of Sectoral Emissions Ceilings which set out the maximum amount of greenhouse gas emissions that are permitted in different sectors of the Irish economy.

This carbon budget programme comprises three successive 5-year Carbon Budgets as follows:

- 2021-2025: 295 Mt CO 2 eq. This represents an average reduction in emissions of 4.8% per annum for the first budget period.
- 2026-2030: 200 Mt CO 2 eq. This represents an average reduction in emissions of 8.3% per annum for the second budget period.
- 2031-2035: 151 Mt CO 2 eq. This represents an average reduction in emissions of 3.5% per annum for the third provisional1 budget.

Following the process set out in the Act, the carbon budget programme proposed by the Climate Change Advisory Council was approved by the Government on 21 February 2022, and subsequently adopted by the Oireachtas on the 6th of April 2022.

For the agriculture sector, the sectoral emissions ceilings mandate a reduction in emissions of 10% over the period from 2021-2025, and a reduction of 25% from 2026-2030. The rollout of AD and Biomethane production helps to contribute to a reduction in agricultural emissions, while also benefiting efforts to reduce carbon emissions in other hard to abate sectors which are currently reliant on natural gas.

4.3.6 Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Acts 2015 and 2021

The first Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015[15] provided the statutory basis for the national goal of progressively pursuing a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050. In 2021 the Government passed the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021[16] enshrining the target to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 and a 51% reduction in emissions by 2030 into law. The roll-out of an agri-led biomethane industry can help to decarbonise both industry and agriculture, contributing to the goals set out in the new Act.

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 established the National Mitigation Plan (NMP) and National Adaptation Framework (NAF), both of which are designed to address the causes and consequences of climate change in Ireland.

Published in July 2017, the NMP represented an initial step in transitioning Ireland to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050. This whole-of government Plan drew on the perspectives and responsibilities of a range of government departments and reflected the central roles of key ministers responsible for electricity generation, the built environment, transport, and agriculture.

The Plan acknowledges the role of the circular economy and particularly the bioeconomy, and opportunities for residues and agriculture residues such as from crops, animal, and dairy by products to be used to produce biomaterials and biochemicals through biorefining or to produce heat and/or power through combustion or AD.

[15] Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Acts 2015: Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 (irishstatutebook.ie)

[16] Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021: Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 (irishstatutebook.ie)

The NMP identifies the role that anaerobic digestion can play in contributing to the bioeconomy in particular, and the circular economy in general:

> *"The circular economy, or bioeconomy, provides opportunities for FBB and agriculture residues, such as animal by-products (ABP), to be used to produce heat and/or power through combustion or anaerobic digestion. In addition, there is potential to reduce carbon emissions along the full life cycle of the food/processing chain through food waste reduction."*

The NAF provides a framework to ensure local authorities, regions, and key sectors can assess the key risks and vulnerabilities of climate change, implement actions to build resilience to climate change, and ensure climate adaptation considerations are mainstreamed into all local, regional, and national policy.
The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2021 commits the Government to moving to a climate-resilient and climate-neutral economy by the end of 2050. It sets the commitment to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 and a 51% reduction in emissions by 2030. It introduces carbon budgets for the State, and sectoral emissions ceilings.

In particular Section 4 of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2021 (as amended), which states that:

> *"4. (8) For the purposes of performing their respective functions under this section, the Minister and the Government shall have regard to the following matters.*
>
> (h) the fact that the means of achieving a climate neutral economy and other measures to enable the State to pursue the national climate objective may not yet be fully identified and may evolve over time through innovation, evolving scientific consensus and emerging technologies.
>
> (n) the special economic and social role of agriculture, including with regard to the distinct characteristics of biogenic methane."

Section 15 of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, as amended, states the following:

> *"(1) A relevant body shall, in so far as practicable, perform its functions in a manner consistent with—*
> *a) the most recent approved climate action plan,*
> *b) the most recent approved national long term climate action strategy,*
> *c) the most recent approved national adaptation framework and approved sectoral adaptation plans,*
> *d) the furtherance of the national climate objective, and*
> *e) the objective of mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change in the State."*

This places a responsibility on Planning Authorities to consider the compliance of each proposed development with these criteria and to make decisions which are consistent with the listed policies in so far as practicable.

The criteria are addressed in turn below to assist the Planning Authority in considering the current application and in undertaking an Environmental Impact Assessment of the proposed development with cognisance of the above requirement of the Act.

4.3.7 Support Scheme for Renewable Heat (SSRH)

This support scheme[17] was developed to contribute towards Ireland's 2020 renewable energy and emission reduction targets. It focuses on support mechanism to increase the energy generated from renewable sources in the heat sector, including an on-going operation support for biomass boiler and AD heating systems. This scheme aims to incentivise the development and Biomethane Utilisation and Renewable Gas Certification.

The SSRH comprises an installation grant for heat pumps and an operational support (an ongoing payment for up to 15 years) for biomass and anaerobic digestion (biogas) heating systems. The SSRH was developed to incentivise the delivery of an additional 3% of heat use in Ireland to come from renewable sources. The current National Development Plan includes an allocation of €300 million for the rollout of the SSRH for the period up to 2027.

Gas Networks has recognised that there is significant growth in demand from households and businesses looking to source sustainable fuel alternatives that have been produced in Ireland. They state that:

> *"Gas Networks Ireland registers and issues certificates to Irish producers that inject renewable gas into the gas network. This includes biomethane, which is a renewable gas produced by anaerobic digestion of biodegradable matter that is then upgraded to network entry specifications prior to injection. Each certificate represents our guarantee that the equivalent amount of renewable gas has been injected into the gas network."*[18]

AD facilities must be compliant with the requirements of Gas Networks Ireland's Renewable Gas Certification for the export and utilisation of biogas. This certification system is in place to ensure that natural gas produced in Ireland is compliant with relevant legislation, and to assure customers that their gas has been generated in a sustainable manner. This is also relevant to ensure that gas produced aligns with EU policies and guidance, such as the EU Methane Strategy (2020) which estimates that by 2050, the EU's annual consumption of biogas and biomethane will increase to between 54 and 72 Mtoe (up from c.17 Mtoe in 2017).

[17] Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (2019) Support Scheme for Renewable Heat (SSRH): gov - Support Scheme for Renewable Heat (SSRH) (www.gov.ie)

[18] Gas Networks Ireland, Renewable Gas Certification: Renewable gas certification (gasnetworks.ie)

4.3.8 White Paper: Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-2030

The White Paper[19] sets out a framework to guide policy and the actions that the Government intends to take in the energy sector from 2015 up to 2030.

Section 133 (Bioenergy) states:

> "*Bioenergy is a versatile source of energy that can be used for heating, transport, and power generation. The most advantageous economic benefits arise when it is used for heating. Bioenergy encompasses a range of fuels in solid, liquid, and gaseous forms, including forest-based biomass, dry agricultural residues, energy crops, organic materials including wastes, and landfill gas and other biogases. Bioenergy can contribute to broader policy objectives such as waste recovery and rural development, as is the case with anaerobic digestion, which not only generates energy, but also gives effect to national waste policy in terms of utilising waste as a resource. It has been highlighted in waste management plans as a technology suitable for development at a local and regional level and at varying scales. Anaerobic digestion also has the potential to improve air quality, for example through mitigation of ammonia emissions and odour by diverting slurry from land spreading. However, expanding the uptake of bioenergy involves several challenges, including the availability of sufficient sustainably-sourced biomass, competition with other land uses such as food production, and the cost of support. Consideration must be given to the most prudent uses for bioenergy*."

Section 136 (Waste policy) advises:

> "*Waste Management Policy in Ireland recognises the need to develop efficient ways to extract as much value as possible from waste in accordance with the requirements of the waste hierarchy and the opportunity for waste to be used as an indigenous energy resource [34]. In this regard, three new regional waste management plans for the period 2015-2021 support the development of additional thermal recovery and biological treatment capacity within the State. The REFIT schemes, which support the generation of electricity and CHP technologies including waste-to-energy, anaerobic digestion, and landfill gas, continue to support the use of waste as a renewable energy feedstock*."

4.3.9 Biomethane Energy Report – Gas Networks Ireland

While not a policy or guidance document, the Biomethane Energy Report was published by GNI, who are the public body responsible for connecting customers to the gas network and for connecting developments such as the proposed development to the grid. The Energy Report provides a detailed insight into the potential for biomethane production in Ireland. The Gas Networks Ireland (GNI) Biomethane Report21 provides a rationale for accelerating biomethane production in Ireland and states the following:

[19] Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (2020) The White Paper: Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources - Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future - 2015-2030 (www.gov.ie)

- Domestically produced biomethane, dispersed throughout the country, boosts security of supply and can displace fossil gas from Corrib as it declines;
- Similar to the early years of the wind industry, the biomethane gate price is currently more expensive than natural gas.
- Biomethane could rapidly reduce climate emissions across hard to abate energy demand sectors and can create negative emissions;
- Biomethane production boosts employment in rural areas, promotes circular economy in agriculture, and can improve soil health. Digestate, a byproduct of biomethane production can displace fossil produced fertilizer;
- Biomethane can deliver highly valuable energy, which is dispatchable, suitable for intensive heat industries, transport and other hard to abate sectors; and
- Biomethane is produced with existing technology and can therefore be rapidly scaled up. It can also be transported, stored, and distributed through existing gas grids.

The GNI report refers to the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill. In 2021 the Bill was "*signed into law and Ireland is now on a legally binding path to net-Zero emissions no later than 2050, and to a 51% reduction in emissions by the end of this decade*".

Section 6 of the report states that after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, "*Ireland must ensure that security of energy supply is maintained as Ireland transitions to a net-zero emissions future*".

The report concludes by stating that "*Ireland has a real opportunity to develop a biomethane industry at scale, which will offer multiple benefits for our agricultural economy, assist in the decarbonisation of Ireland's economy more generally, enhance our security of energy supply and lead to the development of a key renewable indigenous energy resource in the build-up to 2030*".

4.3.10 Energy Security in Ireland to 2030

The Government Strategy for Energy Security in Ireland to 2030 was published in November 2023.

Energy Security in Ireland to 2030 outlines a new strategy to ensure energy security in Ireland for this decade, while ensuring a sustainable transition to a carbon neutral energy system by 2050. This report is being published as part of an Energy Security Package, containing a range of supplementary analyses, consultations, and reviews, which have informed the recommendations and actions related to energy security.

Informed by the Government's energy security policy objectives - to ensure energy is affordable, sustainable, and secure - the review considered the risks to oil, natural gas, and electricity.

The strategy states that "*the National Biomethane Strategy in development sets us on a trajectory to develop a new source of renewable indigenous gas in Ireland*".

The strategy is clear that Biomethane has an important role to play in supporting Ireland's energy transition, while maintaining and safeguarding security of supply through indigenous renewable gas generation.

4.3.11 National Policy Framework on Alternative Fuels Infrastructure for Transport in Ireland

The National Policy Framework on Alternative Fuels Infrastructure for Transport in Ireland: 2017-2030[20] sets an ambitious target that from 2030 all new cars and vans sold in Ireland will be zero emission (or zero emission-capable) and that other technologies, perhaps still unknown, will be fuelling larger vehicles, so that by 2050, the nation's car fleet, along with much of our public transport buses and rail lines, will be low/near zero emissions.

The framework highlights the importance of greater diversification of fuels in the freight sector to include a mix of natural gas, biogas/biomethane, electricity and renewable diesel or other biofuels.

4.3.12 Ag Climatise – National Climate & Air Roadmap for the Agriculture Sector

The National Climate & Air Roadmap for the Agriculture Sector[21] sets an ambitious vision for a 'climate neutral agriculture sector by 2050' and includes 29 actions with specific and targets aimed at reducing the environmental footprint and further building on the strong credentials of Irish Agriculture. Of particular relevance to the proposed development are the following action and targets:

Reference	Targets
Action 20	Engage with stakeholders to maximise the potential opportunities from Anaerobic Digestion for the agriculture sector. Work closely with DCCAE and other key stakeholders to set a target for the level of energy to be supplied by indigenous biomethane injection and consider the necessary supports including funding mechanisms. Work with DCCAE and other stakeholders to develop the necessary research, policies, and measures to provide policy certainty around the development of an Anaerobic Digestion industry in Ireland.

Table 4.1: Extract from A Roadmap towards Climate Neutrality. (Source: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine)

[20] Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (2017) National Policy Framework on Alternative Fuels Infrastructure for Transport in Ireland: 6186_NPF_Alternative Fuels_V5.indd (www.gov.ie)

[21] Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (2020) A Roadmap towards Climate Neutrality www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/100931/7c8b812c-d857-4f39-96b9-1e7f134ba896.pdf#page=null

The roadmap recognises that the agriculture sector has a key role to play in the provision for bio-energy feedstocks for the production of biogas/biomethane as a key renewable energy resource for the decarbonisation of the transport and heat sectors in particular.

4.3.13 National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) 2021-2030

Ireland's National Energy & Climate Plan (NECP) 2021-2030[22] was submitted to the European Commission in December 2018. The Plan outlines a long-term vision for the agriculture, forest and land use sectors based on an approach to carbon neutrality in these sectors, which does not compromise the capacity for sustainable food production. This effectively means that agricultural emissions are balanced by reducing emissions of methane, nitrous oxide, and carbon dioxide in so far as the best available science allows, increasing carbon-sequestration through forests and land use and displacing fossil fuel and energy intensive materials with renewable sources.
The Plan set an indicative target of 1.6 TWh/yr (Terawatt hour per year) for the level of energy to be supplied by indigenous biomethane injection in 2030, taking account of the domestic supplies of feedstock that meet strict sustainability criteria and agreed a commitment to consider how the supports necessary to reach this target would be funded.

The Plan stated the following:

> "*In the absence of certainty in relation to the mechanism by which biomethane will be supported, it is proposed to set an indicative target which will be reviewed in 2023 as part of the review process for the National Energy and Climate Plan. This review will take into account the development of supports and market development for biomethane and progress towards the indicative target. The indicative target for indigenous biomethane is therefore set at 1.6 TWh and will be reviewed in 2023.*"

As noted previously in this EIAR chapter, the 2023 CAP and the draft CAP24 include the following key actions relevant to the development of a biomethane industry in Ireland, including:

- *"By 2025 – Production of up to 1 TWh of Biomethane by 2025; Construction of up to 20 AD plants of scale; and*
- *By 2030 – Production of up to 5.7 TWh of Biomethane by 2030; Construction of up to 200 AD plants of scale."*

This represents a significant uplift in the targeted level of biomethane production by 2030 vis a vis the National Energy and Climate Plan.

[22] Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (2020) National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030: NECP_DRAFT_BRANDED (www.gov.ie)

4.3.14 Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)

The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)[23] also sets out provisions for climate change within Section 10 (2) (n). This includes requirements to:

- reduce energy demand in response to the likelihood of increases in energy and other costs due to long-term decline in non-renewable resources,
- reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, and
- address the necessity of adaptation to climate change; in particular, having regard to location, layout, and design of new development.

The Planning and Development Act, as amended also transposes the requirements of the EIA Directive and provides the framework within which the Planning Authority will undertake EIA of the current development proposal.

4.3.15 Whole of Government Circular Economy Strategy 2022-2023

The Whole of Government Circular Economy Strategy 2022-2023[24] is Ireland's first national circular economy strategy. It serves as a driver for the Irish government to achieve a 51% reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and to reach net-zero emissions by no later than 2050, as per commitments in the Programme for Government and the Climate Act 2021. The strategy was a specific commitment in the Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy (see below).

Key elements of the circular economy are outlined in the DISRUPT model of the Circular Economy as presented in the Strategy. We note in particular section 'U' – 'Use waste as a Resource', which seeks to "*utilise waste streams as a source of secondary resources and recover waste for reuse and recycling*".

Case Study 5 of this report (Circuléire Member Ashleigh Environmental's 'Biowave') provides an interesting example of the role that renewable gas production can play in achieving the goals of the Circular Economy Strategy. The case study states:

> "*Increasing our renewable gas potential in Ireland is part of Gas Network Ireland's 2050 decarbonisation plan, targeting growth of 20% of current demand in the network by 2030.*
>
> *Ashleigh Environmental of Dungarvan, Co. Waterford has developed the Biowave system as a proprietary process that supercharges the conversion of feedback materials such as dairy sludges, food waste and municipal biosolids to renewable energy in the form of biogas. It diverts these waste streams from land spreading and disposal resulting in a reduction in transport CO2 emissions and a significant saving on associated costs.*

[23] Planning and Development Act 2000: Planning and Development Act, 2000 (irishstatutebook.ie)
[24] Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (2021) Whole of Government Circular Economy Strategy 2022-2023: www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/207622/bd90130d-494e-4d32-8757-46d36c77b912.pdf#page=null

> *In Europe today, just 16% of bio-waste is recycled into something useful. The EU has set a target by 2035 of 65% of bio-waste to be reused or recycled. In Ireland, the agri-food and municipal wastewater treatment sectors together produce over 100,000 tonnes of bio-waste per year. This waste is largely applied to agricultural land or disposed of as waste, thereby missing the opportunity for recycling into energy.*"

This strategy also discusses the role of the bioeconomy in transitioning to a carbon-neutral and circular economy. It describes the bioeconomy as:

> *"... the part of our economy which uses renewable resources such as crops, forestry, and fisheries to produce food, products, as well as energy, while also reducing waste. Increasing the scope of the bioeconomy will mean diminishing our reliance on fossil-based fuels and carbon intensive resources and will boost our use of renewable biological resources.*"

4.3.16 A Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy Strategy 2020-2025

This plan[25] provides a roadmap for cross-sectoral waste planning and management in Ireland. It broadly discusses the role of the Circular Economy in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG7 'Affordable and Clean Energy'.

Among the measures outlined to achieve the optimum results of the Waste Action Plan is the following, which commits to the development of a government circular economy strategy (see above):

> "*One of its first tasks will be the development of a high-level all of government circular economy strategy. This will set a course for Ireland to transition across all sectors and at all levels of government toward circularity. Policy coherence across government will be key to ensuring all policy levers are set towards the same objective.*"

We note in particular the following:

> "*We want to realise the Anaerobic Digestion (AD) and composting potential of the food waste resource. AD and composting provide opportunities for regional development with benefits for communities through sales of locally generated energy and compost.*"

[25] Government of Ireland (2020) A Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy: Ireland's National Waste Policy 2020-2025: www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/86647/dcf554a4-0fb7-4d9c-9714-0b1fbe7dbc1a.pdf#page=null

4.3.17 National Policy Statement on the Bioeconomy (2018)

This national policy statement[26] elaborates on how the strategic development of the bioeconomy might be advanced through greater policy coherence across all relevant sectors and dealing with fundamental challenges to its commercial success and social development. It outlines Ireland's comparative advantages in developing bioeconomy and provides commitments in the form of a Policy Framework for Developing the Bioeconomy.

4.3.18 Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Strategic Plan 2023-2027

First established in 1962, the CAP23[27] (as revised) consists of a Two Pillar Structure: Pillar 1 Income Support (including Basic Payment Scheme and Greening) and Pillar 2 Infrastructure, Environment and Development Support (including GLAS, EIP-AGRI and TAMS).

4.3.19 European Union (Waste Directive) Regulations 2020

This Statutory instrument sets out regulations for the mode by which waste compost and digestate is recycled into fertiliser products. We note in particular the following replacement of Regulation 38 in the Regulations of 2011 (Bio-waste):

> *"38 (2): The Minster shall take measures in accordance with sections 21A and 32(1) of the Act of 1996 to:*
> *(a) encourage the recycling, including composting and digestion, of bio-waste in a way that fulfils a high level of environment protection and results in output which meets relevant high-quality standards."*

4.3.20 Environmental Protection Agency (Industrial Emissions) (Licencing) Regulations, 2013 and Waste Facility Permitting

All operators of an AD Facility require consent to operate under the provision of the Waste Management Act, 1996[28] (as amended), the Environmental Protection Agency Act, 199231, the Environmental Protection Agency (Industrial Emissions) (Licensing) Regulations, 201332, and S.I. No. 821 of 2007, Waste Management (Facility Permit and Registration) Regulation (as amended 2008), and the Industrial Emissions Directive (2010/75/EU) which introduced a class of license that can be granted by the EPA, known as an Industrial Emissions License.
As established by the aforementioned legislation, consent for the operation of the proposed AD facility is granted in the form of an Environmental Protection Agency Industrial Emissions License.

[26] Government of Ireland (2018) National Policy Statement on the Bioeconomy gov - National Policy Statement on the Bioeconomy (www.gov.ie)
[27] Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (2020) The CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027 gov - The CAP Strategic Plan 2023 -2027 (www.gov.ie)
[28] Waste Management Act, 1996 Waste Management Act, 1996 (irishstatutebook.ie)

S.I. No. 821 of 2007 Waste Management (Facility Permit and Registration) Regulation (as amended) sets out the procedures for the making of applications for waste facility permits for the purposes of section 39(4) of the Waste Management Act, 1996, and the manner by which a waste authorisation can be granted by the EPA. The Regulations also provide rules pertaining to public consultation, consideration by the local authorities of submissions in relation to permit applications, and the grant, refusal, and review of permits by local authorities. They also prescribe rules for the spreading of organic waste on land from waste facilities and other matters relative to organic waste.

4.3.21 Animal Bi-Product Regulations

In order to build a biogas plant, an operator must comply with the European Communities (Animal By-Products) Regulations 2014 (S.I. No. 187 of 2014)[29] and in accordance with Regulation (EC) No. 1069/2009 and Regulation (EU) No. 142/2011. If animal by-products are processed within the AD facility, certification may be required and obtained from the Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine.

Document 'CN11 – Approval and operation of biogas plants transforming Animal By-products in Ireland' provides details on the requirements of a biogas plant such as that proposed here. These include general requirements including animal by-product feedstocks, structural and equipment requirements, plant operational requirements, requirements for microbiological testing, Plant HACCP Plans and Plant Pre-requisite Programmes (PRPs), and record keeping requirements.

4.3.22 S.I. No. 323/2020 – European Union (Waste Directive) Regulations 2020

This Statutory instrument[30] sets out regulations for the mode by which waste compost and digestate is recycled into fertiliser products. We note in particular the following replacement of Regulation 38 in the Regulations of 2011 (Bio-waste):

> "*38 (2): The Minster shall take measures in accordance with sections 21A and 32(1) of the Act of 1996 to: (a) encourage the recycling, including composting and digestion, of bio-waste in a way that fulfils a high level of environment protection and results in output which meets relevant high-quality standards*."

[29] European Union (Animal By-Products) Regulations 2014 S.I. No. 187/2014 - European Union (Animal By-Products) Regulations 2014. (irishstatutebook.ie)

[30] European Union (Waste Directive) Regulations 2020 S.I. No. 323/2020 - European Union (Waste Directive) Regulations 2020 (irishstatutebook.ie)

4.4 Regional Planning Policy

4.4.1 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES)[31] provides the framework through which the NPF's strategies and the related Government policies and objectives will be delivered for the southern region as part of the wider Project Ireland 2040. The southern region is a diverse area with significant assets for building sustainable economic growth, improving quality of life and place for the population, creating and maintain regional equality, and creating a sustainable environment.

The Southern Regional Assembly supports the implementation of the Government's Climate Action Plan and the RSES has identified three priority areas for action to address climate: decarbonisation, resource efficiency, and climate resilience.

A key objective of the RSES is to support Tipperary Council in expanding the bioeconomy sector in Ireland. Tipperary has been recognised as being a location which can lead in this sector which will be centred on the National Bioeconomy campus in Lisheen. It is acknowledged by the RSES that infrastructure will need to be developed within the surrounding area to ensure that the economic potential of the bioeconomy campus is met. This hub is also supported by the EU bio-economy strategy and Horizon 2020 which promotes the sustainable use of Ireland's natural resources from traditional and non-traditional sectors.

The campus will have a range of facilities which will enable industry, entrepreneurs and researchers to scale technologies that convert Ireland's natural resources (including residues) to products of high value for use in a wide variety of sectors including food ingredients, feed ingredients, pharmaceuticals, natural chemicals, biodegradable plastics and more. Developments in this area could enable the Region to become the 'European Model Demonstrator Region of the Bio-Economy.'

The following Regional Policy Objectives reinforce these overarching objectives:

RPO 50: It is an objective to further develop a diverse base of smart economic specialisms across our rural Region, including innovation and diversification in agriculture (agri-Tech, food and beverage), the marine (ports, fisheries and the wider blue economy potential), forestry, peatlands, renewable energy, tourism (leverage the opportunities from the Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Ancient East and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands brands), social enterprise, circular economy, knowledge economy, global business services, fin-tech, specialised engineering, heritage, arts and culture, design and craft industries as dynamic divers for our rural economy.

RPO 59: It is an objective to support the sustainable development of the Lisheen Bio-economy Hub site into a significant economic and employment driver with the potential to significantly contribute towards meeting Ireland's climate change targets as a strategic site of European significance. Such initiatives as the Lisheen site

[31] Southern Regional Assembly RSES 2020 High Res.pdf

shall be subject to robust environmental assessment including Flood Risk Assessment (if required) and satisfy AA requirements so as to avoid adverse effects on the integrity of European Sites.

RPO 56:
a) The RSES recognises the urgency to transition to a low carbon future and it is therefore an objective to accelerate the transition towards low carbon economy and circular economy.
b) It is an objective to develop enterprises that create and employ green technologies.
c) Local authorities should ensure that the development of green industry and technologies incorporates careful consideration of potential environmental impacts at project level including the capacity of receiving environment and existing infrastructure to serve new industries.

RPO 87: The RSES is committed to the implementation of the Government's policy under Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-30 and Climate Action Plan 2019. It is an objective to promote change across business, public and residential sectors to achieve reduced GHG emissions in accordance with current and future national targets, improve energy efficiency and increase the use of renewable energy sources across the key sectors of electricity supply, heating, transport, and agriculture.

The Regional Policy Objectives set out below demonstrate how the RSES aims to create a region that is resilient to climate change; implement decarbonisation; promote the region as a leader and innovator in sustainable renewable energy generation.

RPO 88: The RSES is committed to the implementation of the National Mitigation Plan and National Adaptation Framework: Planning for a Climate Resilient Ireland to enable the Region transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy. It is an objective to ensure effective co-ordination of climate action with the Climate Action Regional Offices and local authorities to implement the National Mitigation Plan and the National Adaptation Framework in the development and implementation of long-term solutions and extensive adaptation measures.

RPO 89: It is an objective to support measures to build resilience to climate change throughout the Region to address impact reduction, adaptive capacity, awareness raising, providing for nature-based solutions and emergency planning.

RPO 90: It is an objective to develop a Regional Decarbonisation Plan to provide a framework for action on decarbonisation across all sectors. The Regional Decarbonisation Plan shall include existing and future targets for each sector and shall be prepared with key stakeholders, including the Climate Action Regional Offices, and shall identify the scope and role of the Plan, the requirements for SEA, AA, and the timescale for its preparation. Implementation mechanisms and monitoring structures for the Plan should also be established.

RPO 94: Decarbonisation in the Agricultural Sector: "It is an objective to support initiatives that advance an approach to achieve carbon neutrality for agriculture and land-use that does not compromise sustainable food production.

RPO 95: It is an objective to support implementation of the National Renewable Energy Action Plan (NREAP), and the Offshore Renewable Energy Plan and the implementation of mitigation measures outlined in their respective SEA and AA and leverage the Region as a leader and innovator in sustainable renewable energy generation.

RPO 96: It is an objective to support the sustainable development, maintenance and upgrading of electricity and gas network grid infrastructure to integrate renewable energy sources and ensure our national and regional energy system remains safe, secure, and ready to meet increased demand as the regional economy grows.

RPO 98: It is an objective to support the development of a Regional Renewable Energy Strategy with relevant stakeholders.

RPO 102: It is an objective to support initiatives for energy research funding within our Region to accelerate diversification away from fossil fuels to green energy, including the potential of wind, wave, solar, biomass, biofuels, biogas, and hydrogen in the Region.

RPO 109: It is an objective to support the preparation of a Bio-energy Implementation Plan for the Southern Region in conjunction with the Local Authorities and the Regional Waste Management office.

b. Proposals for Bio-energy development and infrastructure will need to be subject to robust site and/or route selection that includes consideration of likely significant effects on European Sites and subject to the outcome of the required appraisal, planning and environmental assessment processes.

RPO 225: Subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process where required, it is an objective to:

•Promote renewable gas leading to carbon emission reduction in agriculture, industry, heating and transport as well as sustainable local employment opportunities; and

•Support investment in the sustainable development of agricultural biogas sector and regional gas supply projects which strengthen gas networks in the Region and assist integration of renewable gas to the grid network.

The RSES sets out a vision for the Southern Region which promotes all areas covered under the plan to realise their full potential; protect and enhance the environment; and to successfully combat climate change alongside achieving economic growth and improving life for the region.

4.5 Local Planning Framework

This section outlines the relevant local planning and considers how the development is in accordance with the adopted policies.

The below documents are the framework under which the proposals have been considered and are the focus of this chapter:

- Tipperary County Development Plan 2022-2028
- Tipperary Climate Action Plan
- Tipperary Renewable Energy Strategy 2016

4.5.1 Tipperary County Development Plan 2022-2028

Under the Planning Act 2000 (as amended) any planning application must be determined in accordance with the development plan for the area unless any material considerations indicate otherwise. The 'Development Plan' comprises Tipperary County Development Plan 2022-2028.

The aim of the approved Tipperary County Development Plan is to provide sustainable development which is carefully balanced between the urban and rural areas of the borough. The development plan embraces inclusivity, quality-of-life and healthy placemaking and will guide the sustainable development of Tipperary for the next 6 years. One of the core tenets of the plan is to strengthen the local economy whilst simultaneously protecting the environment and guiding and supporting the move to a low-carbon society.

The Tipperary County Development Plan has been drawn up with regard to the overarching planning frameworks that seek to shape and coordinate planning, economic and spatial level at national, regional and local levels, and is in compliance with the NPF (2018) and Regional Spatial Strategy for the South (2020).

The development plan has five core strategy ambitions which have been grounded in the overriding ambition for Tipperary to transition to a climate resilient, sustainable, and low-carbon county over the lifetime of the plan. This is done in conjunction with Tipperary Climate Action Plan (2024) which seeks to support and direct a collaborative move towards carbon emissions reductions, biodiversity enhancement and climate action.

Thurles has been designated as a driver of the bioeconomy within Tipperary and Ireland, this will include bioenergy and biotechnology. A 445-hectare site at Thurles and Lisheen has been designated as a strategic national economic and employment centre. This will be one of six designated sites within the EU for piloting the next generation of the bioeconomy. The development of the bioeconomy campus at Lisheen will be plan-led and will benefit from a masterplan to ensure development is carried out in line with the aims and objectives associated with the bioeconomy.

Chapter 3 (Low-Carbon Society and Climate Action) sets out how the plan has embedded climate action through policies and objectives that will support emissions reductions throughout Tipperary and a transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity-rich, environmentally sustainable, and climate-neutral economy by 2050 with a focus on renewable energy production.

Policy	
Policy 3-1	Promote and facilitate renewable energy development, in accordance with the policies and objectives of the Tipperary Renewable Energy Strategy 2016 (and any review thereof), and the Tipperary Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019.
Policy 3-5	Support innovation in both sustainable energy storage technologies, and natural carbon capture systems, as key elements of a move to a low-carbon society, where it is demonstrated that they will not result in a significant adverse impact on the environment.
Objectives	
Objective 3-E	Support, in collaboration with stakeholders, research and innovation in smart renewable energy technologies and initiatives to accelerate diversification away from fossil fuels.
Objective 3-F	In accordance with the objective of the Renewable Energy Strategy (and any review thereof), to encourage and support community energy schemes, and ways to incorporate energy efficiency and renewable energy development at the community level, though micro-generation, auto-production, and investment in commercial energy production.
Objective 3-K	Support a culture of sustainability as part of a move towards a low-carbon society and economy through training programmes, demonstration sites and other activities, and in collaboration with stakeholders, local community groups and other sectoral groups.

The Tipperary County Development Plan supports innovation in the energy sector particularly where it contributes to reducing carbon emissions and the move towards a low-carbon society. At a regional and local level Tipperary is highlighted as an early leader in climate action and the green economy. This is through the designation of the bioeconomy site at Lisheen.

Chapter 10 (Renewable Energy and Bioeconomy) demonstrates how renewable energy, and the bioeconomy are important aspects of the diverse and vibrant rural economy that supports collaboration between other areas such as climate action, job creation and amenity development.

The overall strategic aim is to facilitate a low-carbon future in Tipperary by supporting the sustainable development of the renewable energy sector within the county. All proposed development will be subject to the required environmental assessment processes where necessary and balance with the importance of maintaining and protecting the natural landscape.

The NPF highlights the potential of the bioeconomy in promoting more efficient use of renewable resources and in supporting rural economic development and employment. This will be done within Tipperary at its National Bioeconomy Campus in Lisheen. The campus will support the southern region in becoming a 'European Model Demonstrator Region' for the bioeconomy.

Tipperary is recognised as an area that has significant potential to support the bioeconomy and produce bioenergy through its agriculture. The Council supports the sustainable development of the bioenergy sector in the county and will promote the efficient use of bio-based waste resources as part of a broader strategy to develop a Bioenergy Implementation Plan for the Southern Region.

The Climate Action Plan (DECC, 2019) states that '*Each local authority will identify and develop plans for a spatial area(s), in which a range of climate mitigation, adaptation and biodiversity measures and actions are identified to address local low carbon energy, greenhouse gas emissions and climate needs to contribute to national climate action targets'*. Tipperary Council has identified the Lisheen campus as the first candidate decarbonisation zone in the county. It is hoped that the area will create benefits in other sectors such as tourism and amenity for local residents. In the future it is hoped that further decarbonisation zones and energy activation zones can be developed over the lifetime of the plan.

Policy	
Policy 10-1	Support and facilitate new development that will produce energy from local renewable sources such as hydro, bioenergy, wind, solar, geothermal and landfill gas, including renewable and non-renewable enabling plant, subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria, in co-operation with statutory and other energy providers. The provisions of the Tipperary Renewable Energy Strategy (and any review thereof) will apply to new development.
Policy 10-2	Support and facilitate disruptive technologies and innovations, including natural carbon capture systems that will support the generation of energy from local renewable energy sources and support energy storage and carbon capture, subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria, in co-operation with statutory and other energy providers.

Policy 10-3	Support and facilitate the development of a sustainable and economically efficient agricultural and food sector and bioeconomy, balanced with the importance of maintaining and protecting the natural services of the environment, including landscape, water quality and biodiversity.
Policy 10-4	Ensure the sustainable management of waste and the application of the 'Circular Economy' concept in line with the provisions of the National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy and the Waste Management Infrastructure – Guidance for Siting Waste Management Facilities, (Government of Ireland, 2022) in the development and management of new development.
Policy 10-5	Support and facilitate the co-location of renewable energy development and technologies to ensure the most efficient use of land identified as suitable for renewable energy generation.
Objectives	
Objective 10-A	Support the Climate Action Plan (DECC, 2019) as it relates to renewable energy production, having consideration to the strategic importance and potential benefits of renewable energy investment to rural communities.
Objective 10-B	Support the National Policy Statement on the Bioeconomy (Government of Ireland, 2018) and any review thereof, having consideration to the strategic importance of the bioeconomy to rural Tipperary and support the preparation of a Bioenergy Implementation Plan for the Southern Region in conjunction with the Local Authorities and the Southern Regional Waste Management office.
Objective 10-C	To continue to support renewable energy development and to maintain a positive framework for development through the review of the Renewable Energy Strategy over the lifetime of the Plan.
Objective 10-D	Support the emerging bioeconomy sector, including continued support for the National Bioeconomy Campus at Lisheen, Co. Tipperary.
Objective 10-E	Support the diversification of the agriculture sector as part of decarbonisation, and its role in energy production, including anaerobic digestion and green gas production.

Chapter 11 (Environmental and Natural Assets) sets out how Tipperary Council seeks to integrate sustainable economic and social development with the protection and enhancement of our natural environment, and the natural services on which we depend. This is in line with objectives in the NPF and RSES at national and regional levels.

Policy	
Policy 11-1	In assessing proposals for new development to balance the need for new development with the protection and enhancement of the natural environment and human health. In line with the provisions of Article 6(3) and Article 6 (4) of the Habitats Directive, no plans, programmes, etc. or projects giving rise to significant cumulative, direct, indirect or secondary impacts on European sites arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall be permitted on

	the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans, programmes, etc. or projects).
Policy 11-16	Facilitate new development which integrates and respects the character, sensitivity, and value of the landscape in accordance with the designations of the Landscape Character Assessment, and the schedule of Views and Scenic Routes (or any review thereof). Developments which would have a significant adverse material impact on visual amenities will not be supported.
Policy 11-17	Ensure the protection of the visual amenity, landscape quality and character of designated 'Primary' and 'Secondary' amenity areas.
Policy 11-18	Ensure that new development does not result in significant noise disturbance and to ensure that all new developments are designed and constructed to minimise noise disturbance in accordance with the provisions of the Noise Action Plan 2018 and relevant standards and guidance that refer to noise management.
Policy 11-19	Ensure that new development does not result in significant disturbance as a result of light pollution and to ensure that all new developments are designed and constructed to minimise the impact of light pollution on the visual, environmental and residential amenities of surrounding areas.

4.5.2 Tipperary Climate Action Plan (2024)

The National Climate Action Plan 2023 required each local authority to prepare and adopt their Local Area Climate Action Plan (LACAP) by February 2024 as part of a sustained and planned response at local and community levels to support the delivery of the National Climate Objective. This document will remain in place for 5 years. The National Climate Objective seeks to achieve a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and carbon neutral economy no later than 2050. Local authorities like Tipperary are key to this plan and will focus on the reduction of their own greenhouse gas emissions by 51% along with improving energy efficiency by 2030.

The document sets out 100 climate actions which have been grouped under 5 key themes:

- Governance and Leadership
- Natural Environment and Green Infrastructure
- Sustainability and Resource Management
- Communities: Resilience and Just Transition
- Built Environment and Transport

The actions will guide and support community and sectoral emissions, biodiversity enhancement and climate actions.

In accordance with the Local Authority Climate Action Plan Guidelines a Decarbonising Zone has been identified in Tipperary centred around the National Bioeconomy Campus at Lisheen, Thurles. Decarbonisation zones are areas of land in which a range of potential climate change mitigation, adaptation and biodiversity measures have

been identified. These sites will act as a demonstration area for possible decarbonising and positive climate action at local and community living.

The vision for the Mid-Tipperary Decarbonising Zone is:

> *"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."*

A range of potential climate change mitigation, adaptation and biodiversity measures are identified for the area and a list of opportunities and actions are set out to help deliver on the vision for the area.

The Mid-Tipperary Decarbonisation Zone is the only inland and rural decarbonising zone in the country, and opportunities and actions are therefore focused on the bioeconomy, rural and agricultural diversification, land use change and biodiversity, as well as co-benefits such as building retrofitting, renewable energy, rural transport, forestry, and tourism.

The proposed development at the former Lisheen mine sits within Tipperary's decarbonisation zone. This is a predominantly rural location characterised by villages and agricultural land. The agricultural sector is the dominant land use and employer in the area. For this reason, the locality has a higher than the nation average emissions with agriculture accounting for 58% of the emissions for the area. The designation of the decarbonisation zone will allow the wider area to diversify, in particular the development of the bioeconomy campus at Lisheen. This will be done through the development of a masterplan to guide development.

> *"There is an opportunity for the National Bioeconomy Campus to become an innovator in the circular economy, piloting and commercialising circular economy initiatives that if implemented will lower GHG emissions and reduce waste both in the area and beyond."*

The proposed development of the biomethane facility complies with the climate actions identified by Tipperary County Council as part of the Climate Action Plan. The proposed use of the site supports the diversification of land use in the area while contributing to a circular economy through links with the agricultural industry and the potential for providing heating etc. to local residents and businesses along with outputs that can be used on the land.

4.5.3 Tipperary Renewable Energy Strategy

The Renewable Energy Strategy recognises that Ireland (and Tipperary) is a long way off meeting its own energy demands from renewable resources, and it is recognised that significant and immediate commitment to energy (and better energy efficiency) is now required. This Renewable Energy Strategy is set in a hierarchy of international

and national legislation which provides the statutory basis for planning policy for the development and use of renewable energy resources and for the protection of the environment. The Strategy aligns with the White Paper for Energy 2015, aiming to create a low-carbon future by fostering renewable energy technologies, energy efficiency, and local job creation. These goals ensure Tipperary contributes to national climate objectives.

Since the Renewable Energy Strategy was produced by Tipperary Council targets have become more ambitious in order to meet the carbon neutral status by 2050 as agreed by the Irish government. However, the underlying principles of increasing the amount of energy sourced from renewable sources still stands today.

Tipperary has significant capacity for the production of biomass from the resources available within the county such as agricultural waste and forestry. It is envisaged that there is capacity for significantly increased bioenergy production in Tipperary across the sectors of forestry, agricultural by-products, energy crops and municipal waste energy recovery. Investment in technologies dedicated to the extraction of energy from biomass have been varied in nature in Tipperary, however, limited in scale, and focused on the production of heat. The Strategy acknowledges that there has been very little investment in AD facilities at farm level within Tipperary and in facilities for the recovery of energy from suitable AD feed stocks such as slurries. Whilst this has increased since the publication of the strategy it is still considered to be an underdeveloped sector. It is considered that there is potential for the development of farm-based facilities and facilities that source waste from the agriculture sector, in order to recover energy from agricultural waste in Tipperary. The Council recognises the need to support the development of biomass processing facilities within the county.

Policy	
Policy RE1	It is the policy of the Council that renewable energy developments and associated supporting infrastructure shall be assessed for compliance with the environmental standards and policies as set out in the County Development Plan
Policy RE2	It is the policy of the Council to facilitate new development which integrates with and respects the character, sensitivity and value of the landscape in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Tipperary Landscape Character Assessment 2016 and the policies as set out in the County Development Plan
Policy RE3	It is the policy of the Council to support and facilitate renewable energy proposals that bring about a direct socio-economic benefit to the local community. The Council will engage with local communities and stakeholders in energy and encourage developers to work with local communities to identify how they can invest in/gain from significant renewable energy development.
Policy RE5	It is the policy of the Council to support mixed biomass processing (using a range of technologies) and using mixed feedstock (including biological waste) imported from surrounding areas on suitable sites. (a) Mixed bioenergy plants should be located close to the energy source and the point of demand, where they can be served by a transport network with sufficient capacity to safely absorb increased traffic movements and where waste heat can be used. Such facilities will

	be assessed against the ability of the receiving environment to accommodate them without causing an adverse impact on residential or environmental amenity. (b) Proposals for bioenergy in Tipperary that will cater for regional energy demand or feedstocks imported from the region will be assessed for compliance with appropriate regional plans, strategies and policies.
Policy RE8	It is the policy of the Council to support the recovery of energy from waste in accordance with the provisions of the Southern Regional Waste Management Plan 2015. In particular the Council will facilitate waste to energy processes on the site of production or in local biomass processing installations, as follows: (a) Small scale thermal recovery technologies will be permitted for industrial process wastes, including sludges, at the location of generation by producers or manufacturers. (b) In line with Policy RE7: Mixed Biomass Processing, organic waste products may be incorporated as feedstock for biomass facilities in accordance with the requirements of the Waste Management Act 1996 as amended.
Objectives	
Objective SO1	It is an objective of the Council to support the implementation of the targets and objectives of the White Paper for Energy 2015.
Objective SO4	It is an objective of the Council, in conjunction with relevant stakeholders, to be proactive supporting the renewable energy sector in the county through training, information awareness, and networking events with respect to renewable energy technologies and opportunities.
Objective SO6	It is an objective of the Council to maintain a high level of awareness and training of its staff in the area of renewable energy planning and development and in the area of existing and emerging technologies in order to better deliver pre-planning support and guidance as part of the planning process.

The proposed development of the biomethane facility complies with the policies and objectives identified by Tipperary County Council as part of the Renewable Energy Strategy (2016). The proposed use of the site supports the need to increase the supply the renewable energy sources within the county. This is particularly crucial as the targets adopted by the Irish Government have increased since the Energy Strategy was compiled. Whilst the underlying principles remain the same, an increased focus is required on increasing the amount of energy sourced by renewables.

4.6 Conclusion

The above policies and plans emphasise the essential contribution biomethane production and anaerobic digestion will make to meeting national and European climate and renewable energy targets. The proposed

development supports and is key to the delivery of multiple national and international policies and plans in relation to the production of renewable energy.

As a significant indigenous energy source, the proposed development will help meet Ireland's security of supply requirements and the EU's objective to move away from imported fossil fuels. The proposed development will support the specific objectives of key policy, including the National Biomethane Strategy and the National planning Framework in that it will contribute to the decarbonisation of the environment and will enhance the security of energy supply in Ireland.

4.6 References

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