



SECTION 25A REPORT

REPORT DATE	LOCAL AUTHORITY	PREPARED BY
24 th January 2024	Carlow County Council	Anita Sweeney

The purpose of the table below is to assist the local authority in completing the Section 25A (1) report to the Regional Assembly. This report will be used by the Regional Assembly to complete the Section 25A (2) Monitoring Report to be submitted to NOAC and which will focus on progress made in securing the overall objectives of the RSES.

It is intended that the Monitoring Report will be succinct, covering the 2-year period 2022-2024, and therefore we would ask that the response to the questions are as short as possible and for example we do not need the full detail of each policy or programme outlined.

The Regional Assembly is keen to capture examples of good practice initiatives and actions undertaken by the Local Authority which relate to the objectives of RSES and would welcome the inclusion of such examples where appropriate.

For further information, please contact Brigh Ryan at bryan@southernassembly.ie or Claire Breen at cbreen@southernassembly.ie

Please return the report to this office by **Friday, 26th January 2024**.

This can be submitted by email to: cbreen@southernassembly.ie

RSES THEME & RPO REFERENCE	RSES IMPLEMENTATION IN DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY & SUPPORTING PROJECTS/INITIATIVES
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SUSTAINABLE PLACE FRAMEWORK & A TAILORED APPROACH RPOS 2 TO 30	Please complete the following table relating to the status of your County/City Development Plan
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Name and Date Made	Date Came into Effect	Direction	Judicial Review	Variations
Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028 Date Made: 23 rd May 2022	4 th July 2022	None	None	None

	Please outline briefly how the Core Strategy supports the guiding principles and Settlement Typology contained in the RSES
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	<p>Sections 2.3 to 2.8 in Chapter 2 of the Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (hereafter the Plan) refer.</p> <p><u>Section 2.3</u> Acknowledges that the Council must have regard to the RSES guiding principles and settlement typology in the allocation of future growth in the preparation of the Core Strategy.</p> <p><u>Section 2.4</u> Sets out the strategic elements of the growth strategy of the RSES that will influence growth and development in County Carlow.</p> <p><u>Section 2.5</u> Lists 6 strategic aims of the Core Strategy including “i. To guide the future development of County Carlow in line with national and regional objectives set out in the NPF and RSES and other national guidelines and policies”.</p> <p><u>Section 2.7</u> Notes the requirement for the Plan to contain a settlement hierarchy, and that this settlement hierarchy must be consistent with the RSES and be within the framework of the RSES settlement typology.</p> <p><u>Table 2.1</u> In accordance with the requirements of the RSES, the settlement typology and hierarchy for County Carlow is outlined in Table 2.1 (see below), which acknowledges the strategic role of Carlow as a regional and inter-regional growth driver, followed by the towns of Tullow and Muinebheag, and then a range of other settlements that have been identified on the basis of their nature and function and which comprise smaller towns, larger serviced villages, smaller serviced villages, and rural nodes.</p>
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Settlement Tier	Settlement Typology	Description	Settlements
1	Key Town	Large population scale urban centre functioning as self – sustaining regional drivers. Strategically located urban center with accessibility and significant influence in a sub-regional context.	Carlow Town
2	District Towns	Well-developed serviced settlements with a moderate level of jobs supporting services and community facilities with good transport links and capacity for continued commensurate growth to become more self-sustaining.	Tullow Muine Bheag
3	Small Towns	Smaller towns with an urban structure providing local services and employment functions catering for a wider rural hinterland area.	Rathvilly Leighlinbridge Ballon Borris Hacketstown Carrickduff Tinnahinch
4	Larger Serviced Rural Villages	Serviced villages with established populations circa. 200 and settlement structure which provide important local level services.	Palatine Ballinabrannagh Rathoe Fennagh Myshall Clonegal Kildavin Tinryland
5	Smaller Serviced Rural Villages	Villages with more limited services established populations <200 and settlement structure which provide important local level services and community facilities.	Bennekerry Old Leighlin Nurney Ardattin Glynn Tiknock Ballinkillen Bilboa St Mullins Clonmore
6	Rural Nodes	Villages with established populations <200 and a weaker settlement structure but contain important local services and community facilities e.g. local schools, churches and community facilities	Grange Drumphea Ballymurphy Garryhill Rathanna Newtown Newtown Fennagh

Section 2.8
Specifically highlights how the settlement hierarchy for the County corresponds with the settlement typology requirements of the RSES. This section of the Plan also includes a suite of policies with support for the role of Key Town - Carlow Town (CSP. 1 to CSP. 4), District Towns (CSP. 5 to CSP. 7), Small Towns (CSP. 8 to CSP. 9), Larger and Smaller Serviced Villages (CSP. 10), and Rural Areas (CSP. 11).

Please provide details on progress with the preparation of any Local Area Plans or other area-based plans (e.g., Masterplans) in your Local Authority

- (i) **Draft Carlow-Graiguecullen Joint Urban Local Area Plan 2024-2030** (currently on public display until the 5th February 2024. Due for adoption Q3 of 2024).
- (ii) **Muine Bheag- Royal Oak Local Area Plan 2024-2030** (background research underway – Issues Paper due for publication Q1 of 2024).
- (iii) **Tullow Local Area Plan 2024-2030** (background research underway – Issues Paper due for publication Q1 of 2024).

SUPPORTING GROWTH / DEVELOPMENT OF KEY TOWNS
RPO 11 Key Towns

Please outline progress made in developing Carlow’s role as a Key Town as envisaged in RPO 11 Key Towns and RPO 14 Carlow. Please identify progress on delivering some of the key development sites/projects identified in the RSES

To fulfil the designation of Carlow as a Key Town pursuant to RPO 11 and RPO 14, policies and objectives and related provisions have been incorporated into the Plan to support:

- i. Regeneration, addressing vacancy, dereliction and redevelopment of underutilised/brownfield sites.
- ii. Economic Development including recognition of the regional and interregional role of the town.
- iii. Residential Development and the importance of accommodation 30% of new homes being built within the existing built-up footprint.
- iv. Tourism Development, enhancing and maximising the tourism and recreational potential of the town.
- v. Enabling Infrastructure to facilitate future growth.
- vi. Preparation of a Joint Urban Area Plan (UAP)/Local Area Plan (LAP) for Greater Carlow Urban Area with Laois County Council.

Progress on Delivering Key Development Sites / Projects

URDF: Call 1
Carlow County Council secured funding in 2019 under Call 1 of the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund to retain Consultants Avison Young to prepare a regeneration strategy for Carlow. The final report titled ‘Project Carlow 2040 – A Vision for Regeneration’ was presented to Council in November 2020. The report is a regeneration strategy for Carlow Town and the long-term strategy is to transform Carlow into a regional powerhouse with sustainable growth and a better quality of life for all. The report includes several interventions throughout the town, all of which were considered in the context of national, regional, and local policies and were formed after an extensive public consultation process with key stakeholders.

URDF: Call 2
During 2020, the Department of Housing Planning and Local Government invited applications under Call 2 for the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund. Carlow County Council made an application under the Call 2, submitting several of the interventions proposed under Project Carlow 2040 for consideration.

The schemes submitted for consideration were:

- Railway Link and Public Realm Improvement through Carlow College to Town Centre
- Public Realm Improvement to Tullow St and Dublin St
- Public Realm Improvement to Potato Market
- Public realm improvement and new linkage from Potato Market to Barrack St via Carlow SC
- Barrack St including Shamrock Square and Thompsons Corner
- Public Realm Improvement to Kennedy Avenue

Carlow County Council received preliminary Gate 0 and Gate 1 approval in for an approved budget of €23.6m and approval to proceed to Gate 2 of the PSC .

Progress To Date on Carlow 2040 Projects:

Rail Station Link

Preliminary designs completed. Statutory Consent process will commence in Q1 2024 with a view to securing Gate 2 approval mid-2024. Construction work programme subject to consents late 2024 with completion in 2025.

Carlow Town Centre Scheme

Public Realm Improvement Works proposed for Potato Market, Shamrock Square including Tullow St, Kennedy Avenue, Barrack St including the bus park junction and then the development of a linkage through Carlow shopping Centre onto Barrack St. The design team procured and appointed in 2023 and detailed design work is ongoing with the intention to start the statutory consent phase mid-2024. Elements of the construction work to commence late 2024 subject to consents in place. Enabling works by Uisce Eireann are completed and land acquisition is nearing completion. Construction contract – 24 months.

URDF: Call 3

Carlow County Council has secured funding of €1.5m under URDF Call 3 to compulsorily acquire 10 properties in Carlow town, those properties will then be made available on the open market in order to be brought back into use. To date 1 of the 10 has been compulsorily acquired, the process to compulsorily acquire 1 has commenced and action is being taken on the remaining 8 properties.

Draft Carlow Graiguecullen Joint Urban Local Area Plan 2024-2030 and Local Transport Plan

It is a specific objective of the RSES *To support the preparation of a cross-boundary Joint Urban Area Plan for Carlow Town by both Local Authorities of Carlow and Laois*. The Draft Carlow-Graiguecullen Joint Urban Local Area Plan (Draft JULAP) has been finalised and is currently subject to public consultation. The Local Transport Plan (LTP), which was formulated using the Area Based Transport Assessment (ABTA) concept, is a key element of the Draft JULAP. It assesses the current and future transport needs of the Carlow-Graiguecullen area and identifies a range of measures to improve transport infrastructure and services. The LTP is an important tool for planning sustainable and accessible transport in the area.

Other Council Projects:

Carlow Southern Relief Road (SRR) it is a specific objective of the RSES *To support delivery of the Southern Relief Road N80-R448 and the completion of the Carlow Southern Relief Road (SRR) to link the N80 within County Laois*. A Strategic Assessment Report was commissioned in August 2021 for the Carlow SRR which set out the project rationale for the scheme and the following 4 key objectives for the project:

- Reduce the volume of vehicular traffic in the Town centre,
- Reduce the mode share of car transport,
- Increase cycling as mode share,
- Increase bus transport as a mode share.

This Strategic assessment report looked at 9 potential transport options with project expenditure for each option. Carlow County Council was given approval by the Department of Transport in late 2022 to undertake

a competition to engage specialist technical services to progress the scheme in order to complete the Preliminary business case (Phase 1: Concept and Feasibility, Phase 2: Options Selection, Phase 3: Design and evaluation and Phase 4: Statutory Process. This is in line with the Public Spending Code. Carlow County Council intends to go out to Tender for Consultants to deliver on Phases 1-4 in April 2024 with the plan to have a consultant appointed in Q3 of 2024.

Council Housing Projects: A number of key regeneration housing projects are underway / proposed in Carlow Town including the heritage led regeneration of Barrack Street (8 no. units), Dublin Street / Cox's Lane (12 units including refurbishment of protected structures/ structures within the ACA), and refurbishment of historic building fabric at Haymarket (2 no. units), Dublin Street (2 no. units), Chapel Street (1 unit) and 21a/22a Burrin Street.

The Exchange: The Carlow Exchange at Potato Market was developed by Carlow County Council and officially opened in September 2022. It is a centrally located 332sq.m. semi-covered multi-functional community space for cultural, economic, and social activities. The development was funded under the Town and Village Accelerate Scheme and the Open Public Spaces Scheme, its purpose being to enhance the vitality and vibrancy of the urban area and contribute to improved public facilities and amenities.

Enterprise Campus: It is the intention of the Council to develop an innovative Enterprise Campus in Carlow Town which will accommodate office and technology space, remote working, and light manufacturing. The campus aims to stimulate economic development by providing a location for scale up companies with a vision to secure alternative accommodation as they expand their businesses. The campus will also include a white box studio, which will enable companies to create visual content in a studio space. The proposed Enterprise Campus has been the subject of the Part 8 process in 2023.

REGENERATION & SUPPORT FOR COMPACT GROWTH

RPO 34 Regeneration, Brownfield and Infill Development

RPO 35 Support for Compact Growth

RPO 36 LDA

RPO 37 Active Land Management

RPO 38 Retrofitting Initiative Priorities

RPO 176 "10-minute" city and town concepts

Please provide details on the implementation of your Core Strategy to date, including the achievement of compact growth targets (include details of planning permissions, housing commencement and completion figures in the table below, where available)

Please outline briefly, examples of significant regeneration projects/Initiatives planned or recently delivered, or innovative examples of delivering quality high density residential development, or any projects to develop lands planned in conjunction with the LDA.

Please identify details (including amounts) of any funding sources identified to deliver such projects

Please provide details on progress in the delivery of enabling infrastructure and identification of any capacity issues or challenges faced in progressing such projects, including details of programmed delivery of Uisce Éireann's Investment Plan and prioritisation programme

Please identify any challenges faced in delivering objectives for development of compact growth, in particular the unlocking of key regeneration sites and/or development of brownfield land.

Details of planning permissions, housing commencements and completions

Settlement	Housing requirement identified in Core Strategy	Units completed since beginning of Development Plan period	Units from extant planning permission – commenced
Carlow Town	1330	N/A	275
Tullow	404	N/A	78
Muine Bheag	295	N/A	9
Small Towns	400	N/A	90
Larger Serviced Villages	153	N/A	3
Smaller Serviced Villages	119	N/A	5

Key Town Development Sites / Projects: See Supporting Growth / Development of Key Town - Carlow above.

Uisce Eireann Projects:

Bagenalstown: Existing wastewater treatment plant is currently being upgraded. It is anticipated that these works will be completed early in 2025, increasing the treatment capacity from a population equivalent of 4,500 to 9,800.

Tullow: Existing wastewater treatment plant upgrade is nearing completion, increasing the treatment capacity from a population equivalent of 5,442 to 9,200.

Mortarstown, Carlow: Existing wastewater treatment plant is proposed to be upgraded, increasing the treatment capacity from a population equivalent of 36,000 to 58,000. The forecasted completion date for this upgrade is 2029.

Small Town and Village Growth Programme: confirmed upgrade projects Raheendoran-Ballinabrannagh and Kildavin WWTPs.

Regarding **public water supply:** Uisce Eireann are continually progressing leakage reduction activities, mains rehabilitation and capital maintenance activities in Carlow Town.

Key challenges in Delivering Key Regeneration Sites/ Brownfield Site: Land acquisition, availability of staff / financial resources, consultants and contractors to deliver on projects.

SMALLER TOWNS AND VILLAGES

RPO 26 Towns & Villages
RPO 31 Sustainable Place Framework

Please outline progress made in strengthening the role and viability of towns and villages identified in the Development Plan, including details of housing units planned/developed through programmes such as the RRDF funding and 'Town Centre First'

- Under the Town Centre First Initiative Town Teams have been established in Carlow Town and Tullow. These teams act as crucial pillars in the implementation of local development strategies, ensuring that the unique needs and opportunities of each locality are effectively addressed.
- Under the Building Acquisition Measure of the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, Carlow County Council has planned two projects:
 - (i) A community and business centre located in Bagenalstown, which is strategically positioned to act as a catalyst for future growth and collaboration within the community.

- (ii) A volunteer hub located in Graiguecullen, further reinforcing the council's commitment to community engagement and civic participation.
- Carlow County Council has initiated pre-development processes for RRDF applications in Rathvilly and Bagenalstown to drive sustainable development in these areas.
- Applications have also been submitted under the Town and Village Renewal (value over €1.1m) for St Mullins (community park, paint scheme, signage, public realm improvements), Clonegal (paint scheme, village signage, interpretative project), Carrigduff (formal play area), Tullow (riverfront amenity area, Graveyard and bio-diversity garden, virtual trail, improved wayfinding and paint scheme), and the Volunteer Hub in Graiguecullen, categorised as part of the Carlow Urban area. This comprehensive approach aims to address the diverse needs of both rural and urban areas, ensuring a balanced and inclusive development strategy.
- In 2023 Carlow County Council was chosen to pilot a Data Vacancy Survey in towns and villages. To date 446 have been identified. On foot of this survey Carlow County Council was tasked with activating the properties (i.e engaging with the owner to assist in bringing the structure back into use) a target of 40 properties was set for 2023 and to date 348 property owners have been engaged with. In 2024 the survey will be extended to housing estates and rural areas in the County.
- Housing in vacant / derelict units: C.47 no. units are being advanced by the Housing Department throughout towns and villages under a number of housing schemes (i.e. Buy and Renew, Social Housing Investment Programme and Capital Advance Leasing Facility).
- Housing under the Repair and Lease Scheme: C. 48 no. units are being advanced under the repair and lease scheme in Carlow Town and Tullow.

RURAL AREAS / RURAL DEVELOPMENT / NETWORKS & CROSS BOUNDARY INITIATIVES

RPO 27 Rural
RPO 28
Collaboration/Partnership
RPO 29 Rural Settlement Networks
RPO 43 Rural Economy & EU Good Practice
RPO 44 Common Agricultural Policy
RPO 45 Action Plan for Rural Development
RPO 46 Digital and Physical Infrastructure in Rural Areas
RPO 47 Rural Partnership Models
RPO 48 Innovation Hubs and Centres of Excellence
RPO 49 Innovation in Rural areas
RPO 50 Diversification

Please outline progress made in supporting vibrant rural communities and sustainable economic development, such as initiatives to develop networks/shared resources between settlements.

Carlow County Council has made the following progress in supporting vibrant rural communities and sustainable economic development via the following projects:

- Redevelopment of Ballon Community Enterprise Centre: Transformed via Connected Hub Funding and Community Development Funding which has included the development of a new Community Hub.
- Predevelopment of Catalyst HQ under the framework for SMART Regions.
- Connected Hubs funding secured for the development of a new Remote Working Hub in Hacketstown and the continued development of a Hub in Enterprise House, Carlow Town.
- Provide targeted support to rural businesses through advisory clinics for people considering starting a business.
- Development of Wayfinding Signage to enhance navigability and visibility in rural areas for improved accessibility in Carlow Town and Fenagh.
- Partnership with South East Technological University: Collaborate to facilitate innovation adoption among Carlow businesses.
- Broadband Connection Points: Roll out seven broadband connection points to bridge the digital divide.

- Craft Hub Project: Lead the Craft Hub project funded under Creative Europe to support creative industries.
- Knowledge Sharing under Ru-Rban, ATHENA, Innocom: Participate in international collaborations for shared learning and good practices.
- Empowering Women in Business: by facilitation of Women in Business Network - lunchtime events and Expert Speakers: Provide a platform for knowledge exchange and skill enhancement.

PLACEMAKING

RPO 31 Sustainable Place Framework
RPO 61 Health Place Audit (HPA) for Place-making
RPO 70 Bidding capacity

Please provide a brief summary of progress on major projects and initiatives identified through the Development Plan to support Placemaking such as improvements to the public realm, developing new streets/spaces/pocket parks. Details of funding sources (including amounts) to deliver such projects should also be included.

Carlow: Project Carlow 2040

- Railway Link and Public Realm Improvement through Carlow College to Town Centre
- Public Realm Improvement to Tullow St and Dublin St
- Public Realm Improvement to Potato Market
- Public realm improvement and new linkage from Potato Market to Barrack St via Carlow SC
- Barrack St including Shamrock Square and Thompsons Corner
- Public Realm Improvement to Kennedy Avenue

Progress to-date outlined under Development of Key Towns above.

Tullow: Tullow Town Centre First Plan was carried out in 2022-2023 and approved in July 2023. It contains 11 projects and objectives to be carried out in Tullow covering a range of developments, including the re-imagining of the Market Square as a social space with enhancement to the visual quality of the urban environment. Development of a Riverfront Amenity area is also proposed which will facilitate an upgrade to the quality of the public realm and promotion of the use of public open space in the Town Centre. The funding required to implement the projects mentioned above is circa. €1.5m and the funding sources identified include RRDF and Town and Village Renewal. An application has been made for Town and Village Renewal funding to carry out the Riverfront Amenity Area project and works will be taking place in 2024. It is also intended to seek RRDF Pre-Development Funding for the Market Square in 2024.

Muine Bheag: Public realm improvements are proposed in Bagenalstown with funding to the value of €500,000 obtained under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme.

Subject to the availability of funding for Phase 2 of Town Centre First Plans in Q1 of 2024, it is the intention of Carlow County Council to progress preparation of the Town Centre First Plan for Muine Bheag.

Rathvilly: Following funding awarded under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, a public realm plan for Rathvilly entitled 'Vision Rathvilly 2040' was initiated. The Public Realm Plan has been prepared to act as a tool kit to assist and guide Carlow County Council in enhancing Rathvilly Village as a people-oriented, safe and legible place via identified public realm improvements.

Fennagh: Under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme the town has been awarded €96,369 to facilitate improvements to the village to include upgrade of signage, planting, Carlow fence installation, shopfront improvement enhancement, sculpture and outdoor benches etc.

RSES ECONOMIC STRATEGY

RPO 40 Regional Economic Resilience

RPO 64 Facilitate new business

formation, growth and industrial re-organisation

RPO 72 Brexit

RPO 74 Economic Risk Management

System

RPO 62 Locations for Employment

Development

Please provide details of progress in supporting the RSES Economic Strategy and the role of the Region's Economic Drivers. Details on progress with the delivery of Strategic Locations for Employment Development should also be included.

Carlow County Council continues to support the Ireland South East Office to drive Economic Growth. In terms of Regional Actions, Carlow County Council is the planned delivery agent for the Virtual Innovation Hub for SMEs by delivery of the Catalyst HQ Campus and the collective delivery of the cluster agenda in particular with a focus on Digital.

The inCarlow Economic Development and Business Support Strategy 2022- 2027 has been created to demonstrate County Carlow's economy can be developed collectively through an extensive programme of activities intended to stimulate and support local growth. The core focus of this strategy is recovering and growing sustainably to achieve a vibrant county with revitalised towns and villages that creates economic opportunities to enable people and business to thrive.

Key projects in the development of an Enterprise Culture have included:

Encourage entrepreneurship and enhancing the regions startup ecosystem by:

- Provision of Start Your Own Business Courses.
- Develop programmes to support manufacturing and International traded services with Carlow business Community.
- Identify service-based companies with potential to grow internationally but require Export Path Development.
- Mentoring Advice.
- Management Development Programme.
- Grad Start – Ensuring the Right Personnel are available to companies.
- Technical Assistance Micro Exporters Grant – Giving companies the opportunity to access new markets.
- Digital Start – Ensuring companies embrace technology to encourage automation of processes.
- Grants – Build on the strengths to sustain a strong economy and support the creation of quality jobs that ensure a good living standard for all.
- Delivery of Student Enterprise Programme to promote entrepreneurial development.
- Export Ready Initiatives.
- Export Development Programmes.

Climate Action / Green Growth

- Carlow County Council provide high-quality, targeted environmental information to promote Climate Action and to encourage early adoption by companies.
- Enhance the environment and address climate change by providing Green for Micro Vouchers and Green Efficiency Grants the benefit to allow companies to understand their carbon footprint, to be leaner and more resourceful and to take action on their climate action goals.
- Promote a low carbon economy and encourage companies to develop greener policies.
- Carlow LEO are developing and leading a green festival and events guide to facilitate carbon reduction in festival and events.

- Measurement / Monitoring and assessment of clients and their issues related to climate change.
- Deliver programmes to assist businesses in Carlow improve the environmental profile of their business in the marketplace.
- Aid in company investment in equipment and technologies to reduce their impact on the environment.
- Develop and provide a series of green and climate based workshops for owner managers of indigenous Carlow Companies.
- Lean for Micro - Develop a series of mentoring to ensure efficiency in terms of the use of resources from a climate action point of view.

Innovation - Building on our existing RD&I capacity to place innovation at the heart of the South-East economy.

- Agile Innovation Grants.
- LEAN - Creating needed value with fewer resources and less waste.
- Liaise with SETU - call for innovation accelerator programmes to encourage Innovation.
- Identify emerging technologies and areas of innovation and provide courses and research opportunities for companies in these areas.
- Feasibility Grants.
- Innovation Vouchers –to encourage the use of Vouchers for gateways in the region for outside region companies.
- Grad Start – Skilled Personnel to drive Innovation.
- Develop a series of partnership with Industry and increase the level of engagement of third-level institutions in respect of sector specific skills.
- Digital Start - Encouraging businesses to evolve technology using Digital Start and Trading online Vouchers.

Please provide details of progress that has been made with respect to the preparation of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) for your Local Authority

Carlow County Council at the November Council meeting adopted the new Local Economic and Community Plan, 2023-2029 (LECP). The LECP is a statutory plan which sets out the objectives and actions needed to promote and support both the economic and community development of the County for the next 6 years; this plan forms the local element of the national development framework among other national and regional policies. The two-year implementation plan and the actions arising will be undertaken both by Carlow County Council directly and in partnership with economic and community stakeholders.

TOURISM

RPO 53 Tourism
RPO 54 Tourism & the Environment

Please outline any recently completed or planned projects of significance to support tourism development, culture, heritage or the arts in your Local Authority

Tourism

Carlow County Council seeks to support the implementation of the Carlow Tourism Strategy for 2020-2025 which focuses on leveraging the historical and cultural richness encapsulated within Ireland's Ancient East brand, with key objectives focusing on:

- Maximise Ireland's Ancient East Brand (e.g. marketing campaigns, collaboration with local businesses and communities and fostering partnerships with key stakeholders).
- Strengthening Carlow as a Tourist Destination (e.g., capitalising on natural resources, investing in infrastructure and amenities and collaborating with local businesses and communities).
- Promoting Carlow (e.g., implementing targeted marketing strategies, utilising digital platforms and engaging with strategic partnerships)
- Tourism Experiences (e.g., developing and expanding greenways and water hubs, investing in the creation of thematic trails and fostering a sustainable tourism approach).

- Food and Drink Sector (e.g., showcase Carlow's culinary offerings encourage collaborations between local producers, farmers, and restaurants to create a distinctive and locally rooted gastronomic experience. And developing guided tours or trails that showcase the region's food and drink culture).
- Collaborative Initiatives: (e.g., RuRban URBACT Project).

Key Projects:

Gardening Tourism

A significant programme of investment by Carlow County Council in 2023 considerably improved the visitor experience at Duckett's Grove Historic House and Walled Gardens. Duckett's Grove forms part of the Carlow Garden Trail, a collective of nineteen gardening attractions including Altamont Gardens, Huntington Castle and Delta Sensory Gardens. Improvements included:

- Provision of a fully re-furbished tearoom.
- Provision of guided tours each Friday – Sunday and at other times by appointment
- Completion of a 30-minute audio tour in six main languages (Irish, English, French, German, Italian and Spanish) and three-minute film, which can be accessed from the refurbished visitor information point on-site. Completion of a suite of on-site heritage interpretation panels.
- Construction of a wheelchair-friendly access path from the car park to the main entrance.
- Refurbishment of the two kitchen gardens to improve the overall gardening offer.

Other works completed to date in 2023-2024 include:

- An additional car park, doubling the size of the existing facility to accommodate the significant increase in visitor numbers arising from the works completed over the previous twelve months.
- Removal of a large barn due to safety concerns, used to host events heretofore with a view to constructing an alternative structure with capacity to host outdoor events in the future.

Outdoor Recreation

Funding secured by Carlow County Council under the Shared Island funding scheme has facilitated the completion of an All-Ireland feasibility study for the Columban Way, a 569km walk stretching from County Carlow (starting at the Nine Stones on Mount Leinster) to Bangor in County Down. Carlow was the lead Local Authority on this project, partnering with Ards and North Down Borough Council. The Carlow stretch of the route has been appropriately way marked and interpreted.

Funding secured from the ORIS programme has enabled the development of four new walking experiences in 2023 which include:

- (i) Re-development of John's Hill looped walk to meet best practice guidelines from the National Trails Office (11km via Kilbrannish Forest North Recreation Area).
- (ii) Refurbishment of Kilbrannish Forest North Recreation Area to include removal of overgrown vegetation, improvements to the access path from the car park and provision of enhanced outdoor picnic area.
- (iii) Completion of 1,100 metres of pathway addressing a key infrastructural weakness and major safety concern in respect of the Barrow Way long distance walking route between the town of Borris and Ballytiglea Bridge.
- (iv) Development of a new looped walk at Scratoes Bridge.

Significant enhancements to Oak Park Forest Park which included an upgrade of 1.2km of pathways along the Lake Path Trail and sections of the Butler Wood Loop, ensuring universal access. Enhancement of all existing seating and picnic areas along with the provision of additional picnic areas with accessible seating and replacement of fencing on the Lake Path and Butler's Wood Loop.

The re-development of the Nine Stones vantage point to meet the needs and expectations of walkers is a priority and has been submitted as a Measure 3 application to the ORIS programme with a decision due in 2024.

Carlow County Council support to Carlow Tourism

Carlow County Council provide a range of supports to Carlow Tourism, the county tourism marketing and development company via a MOU which focus on marketing and improving the visitor experience in Carlow. Funding serves to support existing marketing and in 2024 additional initiatives including shoulder season marketing of Snowdrop Month (February) and creation of a Carlow Food Series which focuses on ten premises and their food offering.

Culture / Arts

- In July 2023 Carlow County Museum, operated by Carlow County Council, achieved Full Accreditation under the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI) coordinated by the Heritage Council.
- Carlow's Decade of Centenaries 2016 – 2023: Remembering, Reflecting, Re-imagining – *Book published in December 2023.*
- The Rambling House Schools Project: Keeping the Oral Tradition Alive (*2024 project*).
- Carlow Sugar Factory: A History – *Book to be published in 2024.*
- County Archive – conservationist to do report on archival material with a view to conserving and making more material available digitally – *2024.*
- Genealogy - online payments system for genealogy and new signage to brand centre – (*2024 project*).

Heritage- Built and Natural

- County Carlow Heritage Forum established (May 2022) and operational. County Carlow Heritage Plan (2024-2029) in draft and will be finalised in 2024.
- Carlow Placenames Project recording all minor placenames in County Carlow is ongoing after a positive pilot study funded by the Heritage Council.
- Carlow County Surveys of Swifts and Barn Owls completed in 2023.
- Historic Towns Initiative Plan - Heritage-led Regeneration for Carlow Town is being finalised for adoption in 2024 by Carlow County Council.
- Presentation Building Carlow Central Library Regeneration Project approved Part 8. (funding dependent).

CLIMATE ACTION AND DECARBONISATION: TRANSITION TO A LOW CARBON ECONOMY & SOCIETY

RPO 56 Low Carbon Economy
RPO 57 National Policy Statement on Bio-economy
RPO 85 Renewable offshore energy
RPO 88 National Mitigation Plan and National Adaptation Framework
RPO 89 Building Resilience to Climate Change
RPO 90 Regional Decarbonisation.
RPO 91 Decarbonisation in the Transport Sector
RPO 94 Decarbonisation in the Agricultural Sector

Please provide a brief summary of relevant recent initiatives, planned or completed projects to address Climate Action, including progress with the preparation of your Local Authority's Climate Action Plan and Decarbonisation Zone

Carlow Local Authority Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 was adopted on 15th January 2024. The plan contains a total of 73 actions to be carried out under 5 thematic areas.

1. Governance and Leadership
2. Built Environment & Transport
3. Natural Environment & Green Infrastructure
4. Communities: Resilience & Transition
5. Sustainability & Resource Management

In response to Action 165 of the Government's Climate Action Plan 2019, Local Authorities were required to 'identify and develop plans for a Decarbonising Zone' within their respective administrative area, for submission to the Department of Housing Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH), as action lead, in Q2 2021, Circular Letter LGSM01-2021. The spatial area of The Carlow Local Authority Decarbonising Zone comprises of the District Electoral Division's (DED's) of Carlow Rural, Carlow urban and Graiguecullen Urban. Census 2022 shows the population of Carlow Town has reached 27,351 which represents circa just over 44% of the County Population.

Please provide details of renewable energy targets, projects, or initiatives to support renewal energy.

Carlow County Council Tier 2 Baseline Emissions Inventory 2023 identified the following:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Lighting was the highest energy consumer, accounting for 3.27 GWh of the total energy consumption (40%) • Building and Facilities accounted for 3.04 GWh (37%) • Transport accounted for 1.85 GWh(23%) <p>When energy use was converted into emissions, Carlow County Council’s total emissions amounted to 2.56 ktCO₂eq</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Lighting was the highest contributor, accounting for 1.21ktCO₂eq (40%) of these total emissions. • Building and Facilities contributing 0.88ktCO₂eq (37%) • Transport 0.47ktCO₂eq (23%) to the council’s CO₂eq emissions, respectively. <p>Carlow County Council are progressing the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Conversion of public lighting to LED luminaires through the National Public Lighting Energy Efficiency Project (PLEEP). It is anticipated that this project will be completed before the end of 2024. (b) Engaging in the SEAI pathfinder programme in partnership with Kilkenny, Wexford, Waterford, and Tipperary County Councils to carry out energy saving and CO₂ reducing retrofit works to Council facilities. (c) Developing and adopting an Electric Vehicle Strategy to support the transition to electric vehicle use in the wider community for County Carlow and for the South East Region. (d) Investigating options for a renewable fuel alternative to diesel. (e) Developing Transport Plans for Carlow Town, Tullow and Muinebheag.
<p>RESOURCE EFFICIENCY INCL. RENEWABLE ENERGY RPO 98 Regional Renewable Energy Strategy RPO 109 Bio-Energy Implementation Plan</p>	<p>Please provide details of renewable energy targets, projects or initiatives to support renewal energy</p>
	<p>As part of the preparation of the Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028, a new Carlow County Renewable Energy Strategy (RES) was prepared in accordance with the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland’s (SEAI) Methodology for Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategies (2013).</p> <p>The RES includes a comprehensive assessment and spatial evaluation of the County to identify the most suitable locations for renewable energy technologies, taking account of available natural resources, environmental considerations, impacts on local communities and quality of life. The RES is included as Appendix VI to the Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028.</p> <p>The role of the RES is promoted and supported by Policy CA. P1 in Chapter 7, and the provisions of the RES are integrated into the content of Chapter 7, grounded in data on the County’s energy profile, and wind and solar energy opportunity and constraints mapping. It is a specific objective of the Council to seek to achieve a minimum of 130MW of renewable energy by 2030 by enabling renewable developments and through micro generation including rooftop solar, wind, hydro – electric and bioenergy combined heat and power. Permissible MW renewable energy targets since the adoption of the Plan in the County have exceeded the target identified in the CDP for the plan period 2022-2028.</p>
<p>BLUE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE RPO 110 Ecosystem Services RPO 122 Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)</p>	<p>Please provide details of any recently completed or planned projects or other actions to support the development of Blue Green Infrastructure, ecosystem services and biodiversity</p>

RPO 124 Green Infrastructure
RPO 125 Green Infrastructure Corridors
RPO 126 Biodiversity
RPO 127 Invasive Species
RPO 128 All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015 – 2020

The County Carlow Green Infrastructure Strategy

Carlow County Council adopted the *County Carlow Green Infrastructure Strategy in 2023*, which contains a novel approach to managing urban pollinator foraging networks. The approach is based on the policy that: “No pollinator in County Carlow’s towns and villages will have to travel more than 200 metres in order to find a food source (green space of a minimum size, that is managed for biodiversity).”

Carlow Town Edible Pollinator Patch at Carlow College

Arising from the Green Infrastructure Strategy, a gap was identified for pollinators at St Patrick’s College. Funding was secured for same under the Local Biodiversity Action Fund 2023, to install two gardens, one on either side of the College’s main entrance gate, with fruit trees underplanted with fruit bushes, and all underplanted with a variety of herbs, providing food for pollinators.

Launch of County Carlow Biodiversity Action Plan 2023 – 2025

In March 2023, Carlow County Council adopted its first Biodiversity Action Plan and will be implementing actions over the Plan period.

Hare’s Corner Wildlife Pond

An initiative of the Burrenbeo Trust Landscape Charity, the Hare’s Corner project aims to help landowners to make a little more space for nature on their land, by creating pocket-sized habitats which are good for wildlife. The project was successfully piloted in Co. Clare, before being scaled up by the Burrenbeo Trust in Co. Mayo. In liaison with the Burrenbeo Trust, and with funding secured under the Local Biodiversity Action Fund, Carlow County Council is acting as the test case for the initiative to be directly administered by local authorities nationwide. In 2023, five wildlife ponds were installed across the county, coordinating landowners, hydrological surveys, machine operators, and project requirements.

Bagenalstown Biodiversity Classroom

Funding was secured under the Local Biodiversity Action Fund to prepare a management plan for a Council-owned site in Bagenalstown, which supports several rare species that were under pressure from encroachment. As the site is also informally used as a desire line between the River Barrow walk and footpaths back into Bagenalstown, there was the opportunity to create a biodiversity classroom – a resource to be used for place-based education, learning about your place, for your place, in your place. Minimalist gravel tracks, interpretive signage, and seating were installed, with ecologists on-site informing routes and positioning to minimise impacts. Carlow County Council’s triquetra logo was used as the route layout design.

Other Projects:

- **Japanese Knotweed control** carried out at 30 locations county-wide.
- County **Carlow Wetlands Survey** is ongoing being conducted over a 3-year period.
- In 2024 **mapping of community-managed green spaces** (who manages them and how), will be carried out as the next stage of the Green Infrastructure Strategy.

RECREATION & SPORTING FACILITIES INCL. BLUEWAYS & GREENWAYS	Please provide details of any recently completed or planned projects or other actions to support recreation and sporting facilities including blueways and greenways
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first phase of improvement works to Hanover Park Carlow were completed in 2022 with a focus on biodiversity and the provision of new pathways, seating and lighting. A second phase of works are also planned, to include accessible and inclusive playground, a bike pump rack and a mini basketball court. • The Water Centre Activity Hub will involve the development of a regional water activity centre located on the River Barrow in Carlow Town Park. The project has received approval by An Bord Pleanála and on completion will align with key objectives of the Council to support tourism and water based activities associated with the River Barrow. • The Council is preparing a Local Sports Plan in 2024 to reduce the barriers to physical activity and promote well-being. • Through the ORIS programme the Council have provided a number of walking routes such as Borris Looped walk, Kilbrannish Forest, Oak Park Forest, Bagenalstown Northern Hub. • Projects are also planned to upgrade Clashganny and Nine Stones amenity/recreation areas and connection of the South Leinster way to the Wicklow Way. • Carlow Town Park upgrade is being progressed under the Town and Village Renewal Project with the refurbishment of town park play equipment and installation of outdoor seating and smart benches. • Pre-development funding under the Town and Village Renewal has been obtained for the upgrade of the existing town park in Tullow.
WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE RPO 110 Ecosystem Services RPO 111 Water Resources RPO 112 Water Quality RPO 121 Effective Collaboration to Implement River Basin Management Plans and Water Framework Directive RPO 122 Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) RPO 123 River Basin Management Plan and Spatial Planning RPO 124 Green Infrastructure RPO 126 Biodiversity RPO 127 Invasive Species	Please provide details of any recently completed or planned projects or other actions to support the implementation of the Water Framework Directive including ecosystem services, SuDS and biodiversity
	Completed Projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County Carlow Green Infrastructure Strategy (adopted April, 2023). • Powerstown Stream Restoration Project: 1km stretch of fish spawning habitat restored. Historic works had widened the stream to almost double its preferred natural state, eliminating riffle habitat and facilitating overgrowth of vegetation, making it unsuitable for fish spawning.

	<p>Planned for 2024:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County Carlow Otter Survey (R. Burrin, R. Mountain, and Urban otters) • Red Data List Mayfly Survey (part of national survey funded through Biodiversity Officers) • Catchments-based Hedgerow Survey: mapping within 1km either side of Carlow river catchments to identify priority hedgerows for flooding, water quality, climate and biodiversity.
<p>DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY/SMART REGION/SMART CITIES RPO 133 Smart Cities RPO 134: Smart Cities and Smart Region:</p>	<p>Please provide details of any recently completed or planned projects or other actions to support the development of a Smart Region/Smart City/Smart Towns. In rural areas, please outline progress made in the development of Remote Working & Digital Hubs and other relevant initiatives for the optimisation of digital connectivity.</p>
	<p>The recent Open Data Directive mandates the release of public sector data in free and open formats. Smart South East is a collaborative project between the four County Councils in the South East region – Waterford, Kilkenny, Carlow and Wexford. This project will enable the four Councils in the South East to harness the power of data analytics for improved decision making, operational efficiency, and collaboration. To advance the ‘Smart Southern Region’ the SRA collaborated with Smart City Consultants Bable GmbH and the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) to offer training to Local Authorities on how to practically apply smart principles into their work going forward.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broadband Connection Points have been rolled out at seven broadband connection points to bridge the digital divide. <p><i>Remote Working / Digital Hubs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redevelopment of Ballon Community Enterprise Centre: Transformed via Connected Hub Funding and Community Development Funding which has included the development of a new Community Hub. <p><i>Proposed Projects</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connected Hubs funding secured for the development of a new Remote Working Hub in Hacketstown and the continued development of a Hub in Enterprise House, Carlow Town.
<p>INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIVITY/ PORTS/AIRPORTS, FREIGHT & LOGISTICS RPO 139 Low Carbon International Connectivity RPO 145: Ports and Harbour Strategy for the Southern Region RPO:149: Airport Strategy for the Southern Region RPO 141: Regional Freight Strategy RPO 143 Ports and Airports</p>	<p>Please provide details of any recently completed or planned projects or other actions to support development of the Region’s International Connectivity, development of ports, airports, freight and logistics.</p>
	<p>N/A</p>
<p>ENHANCED REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY</p>	<p>Please provide details of any recently completed or planned projects or other actions to support enhanced regional connectivity – by road, rail and public transport.</p>

<p>RPO 169 Strategic Road Network Improvement Priorities RPO 170 Rail RPO 171 Bus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade of Carlow Town Bus Park: Carlow County Council undertook an upgrade of Carlow Town Bus Park and re-opened in 2023. This upgrade enhances regional connectivity and improves the overall experience for bus users. • Carlow County Council engaged with the National Transport Authority to provide a sustainable and accessible public transport service serving the needs of county Carlow under the Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan and Rural Transport programme. This has resulted in the provision of new regional services: connecting Enniscorthy, Co Wexford to Tullow, Co. Carlow and New-Ross, Co Wexford to Carlow Town, linking with other established services. • New Local Link Service Carlow-New Ross: The Carlow-New Ross (887) Local Link service runs seven days a week, three times a day, serving the towns of Carlow, SETU Campus, Bagenalstown, Borris, St Mullins, Leighlinbridge, Glynn, Ballinkillen, and Drummond. The new services provide residents of south Carlow with a convenient and eco-friendly alternative to driving. • New Local Link Service Mountrath to Carlow: The extension of TFI Local Link Route 822 from Mountrath to Carlow provides improved access to public transport and encourages a shift towards sustainable mobility between the two towns.
<p>SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY / LOCAL TRANSPORT PLANS (AND OBJECTIVES/INITIATIVE S RPO 151 Integration of Land Use and Transport RPO 152 Local Planning Objectives RPO 154 Land Use Plans RPO 157 Local Transport Plans (LTP) RPO 163 Sustainable Mobility Targets RPO 165 Higher Densities</p>	<p>Please provide details of any recently completed or planned projects or other actions to support sustainable mobility e.g. public transport, walking cycling, the 10 minute city/town concept, sustainable mobility targets. Please also provide details of any Local Transport Plans in respect of relevant settlements in your Local Authority.</p>
	<p>Sustainable Mobility Projects</p> <p>Carlow Town</p> <p>(i) Carlow Town Bus Service: The Carlow Town Bus Service commenced in 2023. It operates two routes, CW1 and CW2, which cover most of the town centre and surrounding areas. The CW1 route runs from MSD Carlow to Tyndall/CIFET, while the CW2 route runs from Wexford Road Business Park to Barrow Valley Retail Park.</p> <p>(ii) Pilot Electric Bike Scheme: Carlow County Council, in partnership with Bolt, launched in 2023 a pioneering electric bike scheme in Carlow Town, providing transportation options. The scheme offers a convenient and sustainable alternative to car journeys, encouraging residents and visitors to explore the town in an eco-friendlier way. With over 50 electric bikes available at 30 strategic locations across Carlow Town, the scheme makes it easy to pick up and drop off an e-bike throughout the town.</p> <p>(iii) Hanover to Tyndall Pedestrian & Cycle Scheme: In a significant milestone for sustainable mobility in Carlow town, the Hanover to Tyndall Pedestrian and Cycle scheme was awarded Pathfinder status by the National Transport Authority (NTA). This designation recognises the scheme's</p>

innovative approach to promoting cycling and pedestrian movement within the town, aligning with the NTA's vision for a more sustainable, integrated, and people-centered transport system. The scheme involved the construction of a new footpath and cycle lane, which will connect the two areas and provide a safe and convenient route for people to travel on foot or by bike.

- (iv) **Active Travel Permeability Link at Staplestown Road / Pollerton Road, Carlow:** A new active travel permeability link has been completed at Staplestown Road in Carlow. This link provides a more convenient and accessible route for pedestrians and cyclists to travel between the housing estate and the town centre.
- (v) **River Barrow Walk Permeability Link:** The River Barrow Walk Permeability Link aims to improve the connectivity between the River Barrow Walk and the surrounding areas, facilitating the movement of pedestrians and cyclists. The scheme involved the construction of a new footpath and cycle lane, which will connect the River Barrow Walk to the town centre and other key locations.
- **Tullow: Tullow Town Orbital Walking and Cycling Scheme:** A new 550m long and 3.5m wide combined footpath and cycle track was developed in Tullow. This route links existing residential areas including Oakleigh Heights, An Caislean and Court View with Castle Lane. Phase 3 of the scheme has commenced and consists of the construction of 250 meters of segregated two-way cycle track adjacent to the Phelimwood housing estate.
- **Bagenalstown: Permeability Link at St Brigid's Crescent:** The scheme at St Brigid's Crescent, Bagenalstown aims to improve the connectivity between the two areas and facilitate the movement of pedestrians and cyclists. The scheme involved the construction of a new footpath and cycle lane, connecting St Brigid's Crescent to the surrounding streets.
- **Hacketstown: Permeability Link at Mountain View:** A new permeability link has been completed at Mountain View in Hacketstown. This link provides a more direct and accessible route for pedestrians and cyclists to travel between the housing estate and the town centre.
- **Rathvilly: Permeability Link between De Lacey Abbey and Fr. Flood Avenue:** The project aims to improve the connectivity between the two areas and facilitate the movement of pedestrians and cyclists.
- **Carrickduff: Permeability link at Oliver Plunkett Park:** The permeability link at Oliver Plunkett Park, Carrickduff is a key initiative to enhance connectivity between the park and the surrounding areas, promoting sustainable mobility and making it easier for residents to choose walking and cycling options.

Local Transport Plans

- **ABTA (Area Based Transport Assessment):** Carlow County Council's ABTA for the **Carlow-Graiguecullen area**, is currently subject to public consultation as part of the Draft Carlow-Graiguecullen Joint Urban Area Local Area Plan. It focuses on supporting sustainable mobility by encouraging people to switch from cars to public transport, walking, and cycling. One of the key actions identified in the ABTA is to improve the quality and connectivity of public transport services. This includes increasing the frequency of services, extending routes, and developing new modes of transport such as bus rapid transit. Another key action is to invest in cycling infrastructure, such as new cycle lanes and improved pedestrian areas. This will make it safer and more convenient for people to cycle, which will help to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality. The ABTA also includes a number of other measures to support sustainable mobility, such as promoting car-sharing, park-and-ride schemes, and electric vehicles. The ABTA is a long-term plan that will require a significant investment from the Council and other stakeholders. However, it is an important step in making Carlow-Graiguecullen a more sustainable and livable place.
- As part of the **Muine Bheag-Royal Oak and Tullow** Local Area Plans 2024-2030, it is intended to prepare transport plan appropriate to the scale of the relevant settlement.

Sustainable Mobility Targets
 The Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028 contains a specific objective to achieve the following modal shift: *“To support modal shift at a County level from private vehicles to sustainable modes (walking, cycling, Bus or Train) to access work, school, college from 23% in 2016 to 28% in 2028”*.

INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES & PLACES -IMPROVING WELLBEING AND QUALITY OF LIFE
 RPO 181 Equal Access
 RPO 182 Ageing Population

Please provide details of any recently completed or planned projects or other actions to support and develop Inclusive Communities and Places and Improved Quality of Life

- Carlow County Council propose subject to funding to construct a multi-functional community hub at Tullow Road, Carlow. This project will facilitate new and existing supports and services, catering for physical, social and community needs. The main constituents of the facility are broken down into three main areas: (1) General Administration, (2) Social Areas and (3) Activity spaces.
- Consultants have been engaged to Prepare An Age Friendly Strategy for County Carlow for the period 2024-2028.
- The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2024-2028 provides funding to tackle poverty and social inclusion at a local level through local engagement and partnerships between disadvantaged individuals, community organisation and public sector agencies. The programme will engage with the most difficult to reach in the most disadvantaged areas, will also support these individuals to improve the quality of their life through the provision of lifelong learning and labour market supports. Local Community groups and target groups will be supported to engage with relevant stakeholders in identifying and addressing social exclusion and equality issues and creating more sustainable communities.
- Provision of Bespoke Communication boards which will be individualised for each park in county Carlow. These boards will allow children /adults with intellectual disabilities to communicate their needs.
- Continued implementation of Healthy Carlow 2023-2025, a key objective of which is to achieve an ‘Increase in individual’s level of positive mental health as per Energy and Vitality Index.
- Carlow County Council launched an innovative project to provide increased recycling opportunities for everyone in the community by introducing the universal access facility at Powerstown Civic Amenity Site in Dec 2022. The new addition to the recycling area ensures that everyone in the community, no matter what age or ability, can now play their part and recycle a wide range of household items.
- Carlow County Council launched The Talking Newspaper: A podcast featuring weekly stories and reports from the Carlow Nationalist which is a key initiative to aid the visually impaired.
- My Open Library Service – *Launched in Borris in Nov 2023. Tullow My Open Library Service planned for Q1 2024.*

LEARNING REGION
 RPO 186: Lifelong Learning & RPOs 39, 63,
 Also RPO 187 Education & Training, RPO 190 Lifelong Learning & Healthy Cities Initiative

Please provide details of any recently completed or planned projects or other actions to support lifelong learning and development of a Learning Region

Training Initiatives for Business Growth:

- Carlow County Council provides training opportunities tailored for both startup enterprises and those seeking to upskill and expand. These training courses become catalysts for multifaceted development, encompassing Skills Development, Improved Employee Performance, Increased Job Satisfaction: Adaptability to Changing Trends and Technologies: Retention of Talent: and Enhanced Innovation.

Empowering Entrepreneurs: Start Your Own Business Programmes:

- Carlow County Council conducts five Start Your Own Business courses annually, providing knowledge and skills and ongoing support through follow-ups, ensuring participants receive continuous guidance on their entrepreneurial journey.

Global Connectivity through Enterprise Europe Network (EEN):

- Recognising the importance of international collaboration, Carlow County Council is an integral part of The Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) representing Carlow, Kilkenny and Wexford Local Authorities. Carlow County Councils participation in EEN connects local businesses with global experts, fostering a dynamic exchange of ideas and opportunities.

Collaborative Learning with South East Technological University:

- The collaboration between Carlow County Council’s Local Enterprise Office and South East Technological University marks a commendable effort to provide lifelong learning opportunities to Carlow entrepreneurs. This strategic partnership aims to create a holistic learning environment, offering entrepreneurs access to a diverse range of resources and expertise, thereby contributing to the continuous development of their skills and knowledge.

Adult Literacy for Life

- In 2024 Carlow County Council intends to prepare an application for Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) Strategy funding to support and progress the Literacy-Friendly County Carlow initiative as per the County Carlow LECP 2023-2029. Based on research findings, this will involve the development of an overall plan focussed on awareness raising and training.

**GAELTACHTAÍ,
GAELTACHT SERVICE
TOWNS(GSTs) & IRISH
LANGUAGE NETWORKS**

Please provide details of any recently completed or planned projects or other actions to support Gaeltachtaí, Gaeltacht Service Towns (GSTs) & Irish Language Networks

N/A

Please provide any other comments that you would like to make with respect to your Local Authority and implementing the RSES. This may include any recommendations that you consider would facilitate this process, reduce barriers to implementation or ways to improve implementation.

PLEASE PROVIDE A CONTACT POINT IN THE EVENT THAT WE NEED TO CONTACT YOU ABOUT THIS FORM.

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