



SECTION 25A REPORT

REPORT DATE	LOCAL AUTHORITY	PREPARED BY
26 th January 2024	Clare County Council	Candace Ingram

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				
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				
	Name and Date Made	Date Came into Effect	Direction	Judicial Review	Variations

Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029	20 th April 2023	Yes	No	None
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Please outline briefly how the Core Strategy supports the guiding principles and Settlement Typology contained in the RSES

- The core strategy reflects a holistic approach to allocating population/Housing Supply Targets to the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area, the Key town of Ennis, and the strong network of towns and villages across the county. The availability of necessary services, infrastructure and the jobs to resident workers ratio was factored in. Density is based on historical performance, demand relative to each settlement and, given the rural nature of the county, the need to provide an attractive, alternative option within smaller towns and villages to address the pressure for single rural housing,
- The Core Strategy supports the guiding principles of the RSES in terms of settlement typology, and their position on the settlement hierarchy, by prioritising population and economic growth to the Key Town of Ennis, the MASP including the Metropolitan Town of Shannon, Service Towns and Small Towns and promotes their continued growth;
- It provides for growth at a scale appropriate to the settlement size and function in the Service Towns, Small Towns and Large Villages;
- Facilitates residential development in serviced and unserviced settlements as an alternative to rural one-off housing;
- It provides for the management of urban generated growth in rural areas under strong urban influence, by ensuring single houses in the open countryside are based on the core consideration of demonstrable economic or social need to live in the rural area in addition to compliance with statutory guidelines, plans and having regard to ensuring the viability of villages and towns;
- All lands identified for development are in accordance with the “Tiered Approach to Land Use Zoning” as set out in the NPF and identified in Appendix 1 of the Volume 3’s of the plan;
- Principles of climate change and sustainability are central to the core strategy; and
- Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Guidance Note on Core Strategies (2010)
- Tiering of Settlements in the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029
KEY Town- Ennis
Metropolitan Area
Service Towns
Small Towns
Large Villages-Tier 1
Large Villages- Tier 2 (No public wastewater)
Small Villages (No public wastewater)
Clusters
Countryside
- The County’s zoning strategy is based on three important principles:
 1. Sufficient lands should be provided at appropriate locations throughout the County, in accordance with the population and housing supply targets as set out in the Core Strategy, to facilitate the envisaged land-use requirements during the lifetime of this plan;
 2. Sustainable development and the use/redevelopment of brown field sites within established settlements which should accommodate 30% of their allocated growth;
 3. Land-use zoning objectives should assist individuals in accessing the most appropriate location for new development. Not all needs can be anticipated and therefore some flexibility is required, having regard to all other principles, policies and objectives.

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

Shannon Town and Environs Local Area Plan 2024-2030 – currently at pre-draft stage

Ennis Town and Environs Local Area Plan – currently at information gathering stage in advance of preparing an Issues Paper

METROPOLITAN AREAS - GROWTH AMBITION

RPO 6: Collaboration between Metropolitan Areas
RPO 10 Compact Growth in Metropolitan Areas
ALL MASP Policy Objectives

How has the designation of a Metropolitan Area & the MASP impacted on the following?

- **Any joint initiatives between Metropolitan Areas: Cork, Limerick – Shannon, Waterford, and Galway, to advance the combined proposition for effective regional growth e.g. exchange of good practice/ examples of joint research papers on urban policy.**
 - **Cross-boundary collaboration/key strategic initiatives in areas such as sustainable mobility, infrastructure delivery, urban regeneration.**
 - **Progress on delivering some of the key development sites/projects identified in the Limerick-Shannon MASP**
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- **Shannon Town Centre Masterplan** – The Shannon Town Centre Masterplan was finalised in January 2022. The purpose of the Masterplan is to guide the development of Shannon Town Centre into the future and to influence and deliver real change for Shannon Town to make Shannon a more attractive destination in which to live, work and do business. The masterplan informs the overall vision, strategy and most significantly, commitment for the proper planning and sustainable development of Shannon Town Centre for a 15- year period.
 - **One Shannon Hub** – This is a key output of the Shannon Town Centre Masterplan and is to be developed by Clare County Council. It will be a multi-functional building in the town centre of Shannon which will combine a town hall, an adaptable performance and community space, a library, and flexible co-working spaces. Concept Design has proceeded during 2023, culminating in a public consultation in December 2023. In 2024, URDF funding will be sought for the project and subject to funding it will proceed to Detailed Design stage.
 - **Sixmilebridge** is the Co. Clare pathfinder for the Department of Housing Local Government and Heritage’s Town Centre First initiative. During 2023 a Town Centre First Plan was consulted upon with the Sixmilebridge community and ultimately finalised in August 2023. The process enabled the establishment of a Town Team for Sixmilebridge, who were centrally involved in the formulation of the Plan and will lead an action plan and projects in the short, medium and long term. The Town Centre First Plan sets a vision for the future development of Sixmilebridge, addressing key emerging issues including tackling dereliction and vacant properties, improving community facilities and public space and building on the town’s assets and positive attributes including the river and heritage.
 - A **Local Area Plan for Shannon Town and Environs** is in progress (2023), including a Local Area Transport Accessibility Assessment.
 - The **Shannon Town and Environs Flood Relief Scheme** is underway. It is a major infrastructural scheme which will replace the existing flood defences along the Shannon Estuary and address flood risk within the town, as well as at the Airport and the employment areas. Public Consultation on the Emerging Preferred Option took place in 2023. The project will proceed to EIAR/application preparation stage in 2024, and ultimately to construction stage by 2027. The completion of the flood relief scheme will allow for the future sustainable and compact growth of the town and environs, including Shannon Airport.
 - A key strategic initiative has been the **Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (LSMATS)**. One of the immediate outcomes has been the completion of the Bus Network Redesign for Limerick, under the NTA’s Limerick Bus Connects programme. Clare County Council has collaborated with the NTA and Limerick City and County Council to bring forward the new Limerick Bus Network for implementation. This will result in a c. 70% increase in the amount of bus services in Limerick city and its suburbs. The coverage of the city bus network will expand into areas of Co. Clare such as Ardnacrusha and the UL North Campus, and the frequency of the services will increase to Parteen and Athlunkard, in Co. Clare.
 - The designation of the Metropolitan Area and the MASP have not impacted on progress on delivery of the Limerick Northern Distributor Road (since same was not made an objective of

LSMATS), the Shannon Rail Link or the economic Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) at University of Limerick Clare Campus. Some progress has been achieved in relation to the **Infrastructural Requirements for Shannon** (RSES p275), such as Road Access to Shannon International Airport with the N19 upgrade which will proceed to its submission for statutory consent in 2024, and **Public Transport Improvements**, with Shannon being currently considered as part of the NTA's Connecting Ireland bus network planning phase.

**SUPPORTING GROWTH /
DEVELOPMENT OF KEY TOWNS**
RPO 11 Key Towns

Please outline progress made in developing Ennis's role as a Key Town as envisaged in RPO 11 Key Towns and RPO 13 Ennis. Please identify progress on delivering some of the key development sites/projects identified in the RSES

- Works commenced in October 2023 on the €11.6m (URDF and CCC funded) major **Ennis Public Realm Regeneration (Project B)** to enhance the streetscape of High Street, Bank Place, O'Connell Square, O'Connell Street, Old Barrack Street and Barrack Square in Ennis town centre. Works due for completion late 2024.
- **Ennis 2040** project sites being progressed:
 - Abbey Street, - project progressing on the proposed development of the Abbey Street car-park, with public consultation on concept design in January 2024.
 - Harvey's Quay – concept design being finalised with public consultation to follow.
 - Post Office Field – Draft Masterplan has been completed.
 - Francis Street – Proposed scheme for 39 affordable homes under the Affordable Housing Fund, located on part vacant/part regeneration site within the town centre.
- **Ennis Transport Plan** commenced in 2023 with the undertaking of the Ennis Area Based Transport Assessment (ABTA) and Local Transport Plan (LTP) Baseline Assessment report for initial evaluation by CCC. This will inform the preparation of an Ennis and Environs Local Area Plan.
- Considerable progress on the delivery of an **Ennis Public Bus Service** with TII with the service anticipated to commence in Q1 2025.
- **New County Library** nearing completion of construction and due for opening 2024. The state-of-the-art new build will provide a key resource for research, study, recreation, and art in a centralised location of Ennis town adjacent to the well-established Glór theatre.
- **New Primary Care Centre** built in Ennis Town Centre and opened by **Minister Donnelly**.
- **Roche Masterplan** prepared. Decommissioning and site remediation is underway and set to be completed by 2027.
- Clare County Council is working with the NTA to deliver the **Ennis Town Bus Service** which is projected to commence in Q1 2025. At present, the Council is designing the bus-stops for the proposed bus routes.
- **Tulla Road (Ennis) Active Travel Scheme** has achieved Part 8 Approval; This project has been awarded €1.8m in funding by the NTA and is currently at detailed design stage. The purpose of the scheme is to improve safety and continuity for cyclists via the provision of a suite of traffic calming measures including vertically segregated cycle lanes, shared surfaces, tightened junctions together with raised cyclist / pedestrian crossings and associated works. The scheme covers the Tulla Road (R352) from the edge of Ennis town centre to the outer extent of the built-up area of the town, a distance of 2.2km.
- **Limerick Road (Ennis) Active Travel Scheme**. This scheme received its initial funding allocation from the NTA in 2023 and is currently at Concept Design and Route Option Development stage. The scheme includes St. Flannan's Drive and will cover c. 3km of public road between the town

centre and the southern boundary of Ennis. The road network in this area serves primary and secondary schools and links Ennis Town Centre with Clarecastle village.

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 tables 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.

- Work is under way to establish a comprehensive database for on-going monitoring of the implementation of the County Development Plan, and once in place we should be in a position to provide the detailed level of information being sought.

Details of planning permissions, housing commencements and completions

Housing requirement identified in Core Strategy	Units completed since beginning of Development Plan period	Units from extant planning permission – commenced	Units from extant planning permission – not yet commenced

Details of planning permissions, housing commencements and completions (Metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas)

	Housing requirement identified in Core Strategy	Units completed since beginning of Development Plan period	Units from extant planning permission – commenced	Units from extant planning permission – not yet commenced
Metropolitan Area	<i>Insert answer here</i>	<i>Insert answer here</i>	<i>Insert answer here</i>	<i>Insert answer here</i>
Remainder of County	<i>Insert answer here</i>	<i>Insert answer here</i>	<i>Insert answer here</i>	<i>Insert answer here</i>

- See response to regeneration projects and associated funding under other policy areas below e.g. in relation to Ennis 2040, Shannon Town Centre Masterplan (One Shannon Hub)
- Wastewater infrastructure is a major constraint for over 50 villages where there is no wastewater infrastructure. Constraints in relation to capacity and/or inadequate treatment exist in certain settlements, including Ennis, Kilrush, Ennistymon, Lahinch, Killaloe, Miltown Malbay, Kilkee, Inagh, Kilfenora, Newmarket-on-Fergus, Doonbeg, Kilmihil, Kildysart, Liscannor, Cooraclare, Broadford, Ballycannon North (Meelick), Ballyvaughan, Spanish Point as well as other settlements, some of which should be addressed in 2024.

- LNDR is a key strategic piece of road infrastructure that is now hindered in its delivery by its removal from LSMATS.
- Progress in driving regeneration through the activation of Derelict Sites has been significant as the tables below show.

Derelict Sites	November 2023	Year to date 2023	Full Year 2022
No. of new files opened	3	58	69
No. of Section 8(2) Notices issued - Intention to enter site on Derelict Sites Register	5	41	33
No. of Section 8(7) Notices issued - Entry of site onto Derelict Sites Register	1	24	22
No. of Section 11 Notices issued - Measures required to render the site non-derelict	0	0	0
Notice of Valuation of Property for Derelict Sites Levy	3	7	0
No. of files closed / property removed from Derelict Sites Register	5	15	21
No. of Notices served to Compulsorily Purchase derelict sites (CPO) (see note below)	0	10	6
No of Vesting Orders signed	0	9	4

Compulsory Acquisition of Derelict Sites (CPO)

The Department of Housing, Heritage and Local Government has launched a CPO activation programme for local authorities and has set targets for CPOs for each local authority. We commenced this programme in 2022 and the Table below sets out the status of those CPO's commenced in 2022 and 2023 to date.

Year	No of CPOs commenced	Current Status
2022	6	3 - completed and transferred to Housing for refurbishment / re-development
		1 - completed recently and is being put up for sale early in 2024
		1 - works have commenced and CPO parked for now
2023	12	8 - At Vesting Stage and lodged in PRA
		2 - Early Stage of CPO process
		1 - Objection received and will be referred to An Bord Pleanála
		1 - Works have commenced and CPO parked for now

- An enormous amount of work in 2022 and 2023 has been undertaken to set up the system prepare the GIS mapping requirements to identify residential and mixed-use lands land that will fall within the scope of the **Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT)**, responding to submissions, making determinations and preparing all the subsequent maps as required by legislation. This is an on-going obligation in an effort to activate development of land within settlements, its effectiveness remains to be seen following its application being deferral to 2025 when property owners become liable for the tax.

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'

- Sixmilebridge is the Co. Clare pathfinder for the Department of Housing Local Government and Heritage's **Town Centre First** initiative. During 2023 a Town Centre First Plan was consulted upon with the Sixmilebridge community and ultimately finalised in August 2023. The process enabled the establishment of a Town Team for Sixmilebridge, who were centrally involved in the formulation of the Plan and will lead an action plan and projects in the short, medium and long term. The Town Centre First Plan sets a vision for the future development of Sixmilebridge, addressing key emerging issues including tackling dereliction and vacant properties, improving community facilities and public space and building on the town's assets and positive attributes including the river and heritage.
- In December 2023, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage announced a €50m funding scheme targeting the **wastewater collection and treatment** needs of villages and settlements without access to public wastewater services. 7 villages across Ireland were selected, including Broadford and Cooraclare in Co. Clare, to proceed to the stage of planning for these facilities.
- **Uisce Éireann** has proceeded with major capital wastewater projects in the following settlements in Co. Clare:
 - Clarecastle – connection of the village sewerage network to the Ennis Wastewater Treatment Plant (project complete);
 - Liscannor – new wastewater treatment plant for the village (€7m project complete);
 - Kilrush – new wastewater treatment plant for the town (project nearing completion);

- Ballycannon North (Meelick) upgrade of village wastewater treatment plant (project at construction stage);
 - Kilfenora – upgrade of village wastewater treatment plant (project at planning stage);
 - Ballyvaughan - new wastewater treatment plant for the village (project at planning stage);
 - Miltown Malbay - upgrade of town’s wastewater treatment plant (project at design stage);
 - Ennistymon & Lahinch upgrade of the wastewater treatment plant serving both towns (project at option selection stage);
 - Kilmihil - upgrade of village’s wastewater treatment plant (project at design stage);
 - Inagh - upgrade of village’s wastewater treatment plant (project at design stage);
 - Kilkee – new wastewater treatment plant for the town (project at planning stage);
 - Newmarket -on-Fergus- upgrade to village wastewater treatment plant and new outfall (project at planning stage).
- **Corofin Enhancement Plan** This transformational plan provides a framework for the future development of the village, including public realm projects. Clare County Council, the National Parks & Wildlife Services (NPWS) and Fáilte Ireland formed a strategic partnership to prepare an Enhancement strategy for the village of Corofin, working closely with Corofin Future Planning Group. This enhancement plan is built upon innovative urban planning principles and looks to realise the potential of a strategically located village. The Corofin Enhancement Plan is composed of a building feasibility study, streetscape enhancement plan and a signage plan. Having received Part 8 approval for the following elements, the Council will proceed with construction of: a new-build Visitor Centre; renovation and conversion of the workhouse as an Artist’s Studio; repurposing of St. Catherine’s Church as a new public library, and a full upgrade of the public realm throughout the village. Funding for all elements will be sought through the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund in 2024 (RRDF).
 - **Ennistymon Enhancement Plan** This plan was finalised in late 2022 and provides a framework for the future development of the town, including public realm projects. Clare County Council partnered with Ennistymon Town Team in the delivery of this Plan. Under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, Clare County Council has secured funding to implement a public realm upgrade at Parliament Street, and has designed further public realm upgrades at Main Square, for which a further application for Town and Village Renewal Scheme funding has been made.
 - **Cappa Village Amenity Enhancement Plan** This plan was completed in 2021 and proposes enhancements to an existing seaside amenity at Cappa, Kilrush. Town and Village Renewal Scheme funding was awarded in 2022 and certain elements of the scheme – access works to the existing playground and construction of an amphitheatre, will proceed to Part 8 stage in 2024 and construction thereafter.
 - **Lisdoonvarna Streetscape Enhancement** Streetscape improvement works have been completed in Lisdoonvarna under the Town & Village Renewal Scheme – Streetscape Enhancement Measure. The 2022 measure provided €100,000 and targeted the improvement of properties located in the town centre and along the northern end of the main street, which serves as the central spine of the town.

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

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

- Clare County Council has appointed 5 **Rural Community Development Officers**, covering all of Co. Clare.
- Clare CoCo has published the draft **Local Economic and Community Plan** in 2023.
- The renewed **Clare Rural Development Strategy 2030** is the second rural development strategy adopted by Clare County Council. The Renewed Strategy focuses its aims on ten Renewed Strategic Objectives, which include social enterprises, multi-service centres and digital broadband, co-operating communities under the umbrella of the Municipal Districts, managing the environment and transitioning to a low-carbon economy, and a range of infrastructure.
- Clare County Council operates Measure 1 of the Department of Rural and Community Development's **CLÁR** funding programme, which is for 'Developing Community Facilities & Amenities. In 2023, four schemes were allocated c. €50,000 each, in Inagh, Doonbeg, Miltown Malbay and Cloonanaha. For 2024€292,000 funding has been secured for projects in 7 communities: Kilmurry Ibrickane, Kilshanny, Lisdoonvarna, Cross, Killaloe, Kilnamona and Inagh.
- The **Clare Local Area Grant Scheme** is direct funding from Clare County Council to encourage and assist community and voluntary groups to take an active part in the development of their communities and to improve the quality of life experience in their areas. Categories within the scheme include: Public Realm Initiatives and Amenity Projects, Maintenance of Open Spaces in Private Housing Developments, Community Playgrounds, Burial Ground Maintenance and Provision, the Arts, Christmas Lighting, Best Kept Local Authority Estate, Tourism Marketing & Promotion, Sustainable Tourism and Community Project Development.

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.

- **Ennis Public Realm Regeneration (Project A) - New Paving** and Public Realm upgrade at Parnell Street and High Street. Construction complete.
- Works commenced in October 2023 on the €11.6m (URDF and CCC funded) major **Ennis Public Realm Regeneration (Project B)** to enhance the streetscape of High Street, Bank Place, O'Connell Square, O'Connell Street, Old Barrack Street and Barrack Square in Ennis town centre. Works due for completion late 2024.
- **Ennistymon Inner Relief Road and Bridge Crossing (Blake's Corner)** - Includes for a significant public realm upgrade in the town centre of Ennistymon. Planning approved and currently at CPO stage.
- **Ennistymon Enhancement Plan** - This plan was finalised in late 2022 and provides a framework for the future development of the town, including public realm projects. Clare County Council partnered with Ennistymon Town Team in the delivery of this Plan. Under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, Clare County Council has secured funding to implement a public realm upgrade at Parliament Street, and has designed further public realm upgrades at Main Square, for which a further application for Town and Village Renewal Scheme funding has been made.
- **Corofin Enhancement Plan** - This transformational plan provides a framework for the future development of the village, including public realm projects. Clare County Council, the National Parks & Wildlife Services (NPWS) and Fáilte Ireland formed a strategic partnership to prepare an Enhancement strategy for the village of Corofin, working closely with Corofin Future Planning Group. This enhancement plan is built upon innovative urban planning principles and looks to realise the potential of a strategically located village. The Corofin Enhancement Plan is composed of a building feasibility study, streetscape enhancement plan and a signage plan. Having received Part 8 approval for the following elements, the Council will proceed with construction of: a new-build Visitor Centre; renovation and conversion of the workhouse as an Artist's Studio; repurposing of St. Catherine's Church as a new public library, and a full upgrade of the public

realm throughout the village. Funding for all elements will be sought through the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund in 2024 (RRDF).

- **Cappa Village Amenity Enhancement Plan** - This plan was completed in 2021 and proposes enhancements to an existing seaside amenity at Cappa, Kilrush. Town and Village Renewal Scheme funding was awarded in 2022 and certain elements of the scheme – access works to the existing playground and construction of an amphitheatre, will proceed to Part 8 stage in 2024 and construction thereafter.
- **Lisdoonvarna Streetscape Enhancement** - Streetscape improvement works have been completed in Lisdoonvarna under the Town & Village Renewal Scheme – Streetscape Enhancement Measure. The 2022 measure provided €100,000 and targeted the improvement of properties located in the town centre and along the northern end of the main street, which serves as the central spine of the town.

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

- The former Roche pharmaceutical site located in Clarecastle just outside of the town of Ennis is recognised as a key strategic site in the Ennis 2040 Economic and Spatial Strategy, the redevelopment of the Roche site is expected to play a key role in the economic development of County Clare in the years ahead. Representatives from Roche Basel, Roche Products Dublin, Clare County Council, the community, IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, the Environmental Protection Agency, together with elected representatives have all been involved in the future planning of this site for Economic Development.
- A masterplan for the overall site will now be undertaken, the purpose of which will set a clear vision for its future as a location for investment and employment in the Mid-West region. It will be important that the development of the site is integrated with the overall development of Clarecastle and be complementary to the village and community. Clare County Council is working closely with the village team to support an integrated approach.
- The Shannon Airport Group (including **Shannon International Airport**) made a contribution of almost €4 billion to the Irish economy in 2022, according to an independent report published in November 2023 by advisory firm Oxford Economics. The Group’s activities support over 20,300 jobs and contributes €643m in tax revenues.
- Overall, in 2023, Shannon Airport welcomed **1.958 million passengers** to the airport, a 29 per cent increase on 2022 activity. This strong performance saw the airport achieve its highest passenger numbers since 2009.
- In 2023, The Shannon Airport Group invested over €17 million across the **Shannon Campus** to provide property solutions for business and enhance airport facilities. Key projects undertaken during the year included the completion of a new €7.6 million 60,000 sq. ft. multi-purpose industrial unit, and a €6.2 million 40,000 sq. ft. R&D technology unit. The Group also completed a number of infrastructural projects at the airport including rehabilitation work on an airport taxiway.
- Over the last 6 years approx., development of c. 450,000 sq ft. of industrial floorspace by the Shannon Airport Group has been implemented or is planned at **Shannon Free Zone West**.

- Clare County Council has applied for the designation of an **Economic Strategic Development Zone (SDZ)** on 100ha of land at the University of Limerick Clare Campus, including adjacent agricultural lands. The designation of the lands as an SDZ is identified as a 'National Enabler' in the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP), which is part of the RSES. The RSES also includes an objective "to support an application for the designation and subsequent development as an Economic Strategic Development Zone (SDZ), subject to the provisions of the Planning Act and all environmental considerations".

The Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 contains an Objective CDP6.7 'University of Limerick - Clare Campus Proposed Strategic Development Zone' which states that it is an objective of Clare County Council to secure the designation and subsequent development of the South Clare/University of Limerick Economic Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) on lands including those identified as the University Zone. It is also an objective under CDP6.7 'to support, promote and encourage the further expansion of the University of Limerick campus on the north side of the River Shannon, including hinterland development within the University Zone'.

Clare County Council in partnership with the University of Limerick have worked together to establish the UL and Clare Economic Development Agency Designated Activity Company (DAC). In 2022 an Economic report was prepared by the University and Clare County Council as part of the documentation to accompany the application to Government for the designation of the SDZ. In January 2022, on foot of a unanimous resolution by the Elected Members of Clare County Council, the DAC applied to the Minister for Housing to designate a significant portion of lands on the Clare side of the University of Limerick campus as an economic SDZ in order to develop an Academies of Learning model. The application for designation of the SDZ includes a Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report and Screening Determination, plus an Appropriate Assessment Screening Report and Screening Determination. This application remains with the Minister for consideration.

Subject to designation the South Clare / UL Economic Strategic SDZ will be an environment with high quality placemaking providing for a full range of living, working, amenity, social, cultural and recreational spaces integrated with a range of university facilities, including teaching, learning and research. It will be a model of sustainable urban living, transport, education and enterprise, building on the standards of the existing campus. It will offer opportunities for collaboration towards world class living, learning, research and employment founded on high quality placemaking.

The Clare County Development Plan sets out a Core Strategy which distributes an overall population target to the settlements of Co. Clare, including the proposed SDZ lands. The target for those lands is stated to be 197 persons, with an additional 3,303 as longer-term population growth. Ultimately it is envisaged that a resident population of 3,500 will be present at this location.

Timely designation of the site as an SDZ by the Minister would allow it to be optimally master-planned and developed in a plan-led manner. Notwithstanding such a designation, the site is zoned for University uses in the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 and therefore in principle it can accommodate the quantum and format of development envisaged for it in the Development Plan.

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

The LECP is in preparation with the public consultation on the Draft LECP concluding on 20th December 2023.

ECONOMIC CORRIDORS

RPO 41 Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC)

Please provide details of progress that has been made to advance development of the Atlantic Economic Corridor

The Western Development Commission is working closely with the Department of Rural and Community Development to advance a strategy for the Atlantic Economic Corridor. When in place, this will be advanced in collaboration with the AEC officers in each of the ten participating local authorities.

<p>TOURISM RPO 53 Tourism RPO 54 Tourism & the Environment</p>	<p>Please outline any recently completed or planned projects of significance to support tourism development, culture, heritage or the arts in your Local Authority</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 4 Clare Heritage Sites of Bunratty Castle and Folk Park, Craggaunowen Bronze Age Park Knappogue Castle and Gardens, and the retail unit at the Cliffs of Moher Experience were handed over to Clare County Council from the Shannon Airport Group in May 2023. These properties will now be managed, developed and promoted by Clare County Council. This adds to its existing portfolio of signature visitor attractions and sites, namely the Cliffs of Moher Experience, Loop Head Lighthouse, Vandeleur Walled Gardens, and the Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience. This new role in managing these sites and other heritage tourism projects marks a strategic approach and a commitment to sustainable tourism and heritage conservation by Clare County Council. • Clare County Heritage Plan 2024-2030 has been prepared. Many of the Actions included in the Plan relate to developing and promoting sustainable heritage tourism. • Heritage Week - • Clare tourism Strategy • Visitor Experience Development Plan and Destination Experience Development Plan with Failte Ireland • Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040 will provide a long-term vision for the sustainable development of the world-class visitor attraction over the next 20 years, while also extending economic benefits across the wider region. The preliminary Draft Strategy was published in September 2023 and focuses on setting a long-term vision for the sustainable development of the world-class visitor attraction. The proposals have been informed by detailed analysis of the natural, heritage, architectural, tourism and economic context of the Cliffs of Moher site and wider region. • From 2022 to 2024, the County Heritage Office in Clare undertook key projects, aided by Heritage Council funding of €112,000, to enhance tourism, culture, and heritage. These included: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lisdoonvarna Heritage Audit and Plan: This involved auditing Lisdoonvarna's heritage assets and creating a plan to use this heritage for sustainable tourism, thus boosting the local economy. 2. Clare County Heritage Plan 2024-2030: This strategic plan outlined heritage management objectives, addressing challenges like climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic, and focusing on sustainable practices, technology, and community involvement. 3. County Clare Holy Wells Audit: A detailed survey of holy wells in Clare was conducted, aiding in their preservation, and offering insights into Ireland's religious history and folklore. 4. iCAN Project Development: This project enabled communities to document and share local heritage online, fostering cultural and historical awareness.
<p>MARINE ECONOMY RPO 76 Marine Economy RPO 77 Maritime Spatial planning - Consistency and Alignment RPO 78 First Mover under the National Marine Planning Framework RPO 79 Shannon Estuary and Other Harbour Plans RPO 81 Fishery Harbour Centres and Local Authority Harbours</p>	<p>Please provide a brief summary of relevant recent initiatives, planned or completed projects that support development of our marine and coastal assets</p>

- **Shannon Estuary Economic Taskforce Report** was launched by Taoiseach Leo Varadkar at Ardnacrusha in July 2023. The report sets out recommendations for the delivery of up to 30GW of Atlantic Offshore Wind through the Estuary by 2050, and measures to maximise the industrial development opportunities arising from this. It also sets a vision for the Shannon Estuary to become Ireland's Green Digital Corridor, and the lead location for Atlantic offshore wind. Among the targets are:
 - The creation of 10,000 new green jobs by 2035 and 50,000 by 2050
 - 2GW of green energy capacity in development by 2030
 - Up to 30GW installed by 2050The potential of the Shannon Estuary to deliver unprecedented economic and environmental transformation for the region, the entire country and to play a part in the greening of Europe was endorsed by cabinet members at the launch.
- **Clare Maritime Economic Zone (Clare MEZ):** Clare County Council has for some time been exploring the potential to establish a Maritime Training Centre of Excellence at the Marina in Kilrush Co. Clare to service the forthcoming Offshore Renewable Energy sector.
- The Clare MEZ project in Kilrush is an initiative by Clare County Council to provide a world-class educational and training centre specialising in Marine, Renewable, Science and Climate Change. The proposal is to build a specialist maritime training facility at the marina in Kilrush Town, for mandatory training for non-seafaring personnel taking up positions at sea (with an opportunity to service the offshore renewable energy sector) and a field research lab providing a focal point for research on the Shannon Estuary.
- The project is both a maritime and rural initiative reflecting the importance and opportunities that coastal and maritime areas play to the socio-economic development of Ireland. Clare, Limerick and Kerry have a rich maritime tradition which heretofore have largely gone unexploited and for which Clare County Council see a unique opportunity for our coastal counties to benefit from and to provide much needed upskilling, jobs and economic development.
- Clare County Council in conjunction with the National Maritime College of Ireland, Munster Technological University and Shannon Foynes Port Company are committed to the establishment of this facility. Shannon Foynes Port Company and the ESB have already shown immense leadership in this space through their recent signing of an MoU to transform the Shannon Estuary into an international green energy hub.
- See the Clare MEZ project as complementing this leadership from Shannon Foynes Port Company. To date €3.5million euro has been allocated under the Rural Regeneration Development Fund together with €1.78 million in Enterprise Ireland Funding which demonstrates significant commitment from Government for this project.
- The project is a key action in the Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024 and will deliver new job creation opportunities for the region.
- Shannon Estuary Economic Taskforce Report included a specific Action under Skills Development for the establishment of a Maritime Training Centre of Excellence in Kilrush by 2024, with funding supported by government through existing funding routes.

- The Project is currently in the process of applying for the remaining funding gap under the newly launched Smart Regions Enterprise Innovation Scheme which is co-funded by the Government and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

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

- Preparation of the **Clare Climate Action Plan** which is due for adoption in February 2024
- In 2022, Clare County Council supported the Burrenbeo Trusts '**Hare's Corner**' Initiative. The project involves working with landowners to make more space for nature through creation of a mini woodland, a mini orchard, a pond or a 'plan for nature'. The project provides a range of ecosystem services including biodiversity enhancement, carbon sequestration and serves as an educational resource for local landowners and schools. Over 270 Hares Corners have been created since launching the initiative in June 2021.
- **Return to Nature Initiative:** 2023 saw the development of the 'Return to Nature' biodiversity initiative by the Irish Catholic Bishops Conference. Clare County Council's Biodiversity Officer along with the Bishop of Killaloe and Laudato Si' Officer signed up 10 Clare parishes to carry out biodiversity actions on church grounds. This will include pollinator friendly management regimes and native tree planting to combat the biodiversity and climate crisis at a local scale.
- **Clare County Wetland Survey:** This project aims to field survey, map and evaluate wetland sites across Clare. The project aims to inform appropriate planning and safeguard their protection from pressures associated with development. The project also aims to raise awareness of the biodiversity of wetland sites and to map sites with potential to store carbon and link in with local communities and schools to promote learning opportunities of wetland habitats and the ecosystem services they provide.
- **12 Active Travel Projects** promoting & supporting a modal shift were closed out in 2023 – these ranged from pedestrian crossings , provision of new footpaths, a Safe Route to School project.
- There are **5 major cycle schemes** in the NTAs Active Travel Programme for Clare. One scheme is at design stage and another is at preliminary design stage.
- Construction is continuing on the **Ennis Enhancement -Co Creating project** (Junction tightening , pedestrian facilities enhancement project) .
- In partnership with the NTA as lead, **Bus facilities** have been improved with the provision of 14 new bus shelters in 2023.
- The *Heritage Stewardship of Loop Head Decarbonisation Zone Project* by Clare County Council is a proposed initiative for 2024 to audit the impact of climate change on Loop Head's heritage monuments, aligning with the actions in the Clare County Heritage Plan 2024-2030. It focuses

on surveying and conserving archaeological monuments and Holy Wells to understand and preserve them for the future which will serve as a model for heritage conservation in adapting to climate change.

RESOURCE EFFICIENCY INCL. RENEWABLE ENERGY

RPO 98 Regional Renewable Energy Strategy
RPO 109 Bio-Energy Implementation Plan

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

- Clare County Council has identified its strategic aims for renewable energy in the Clare County Development Plan 2023 – 2029 and the **Clare Renewable Energy Strategy** which is included as Volume 5 of the Plan. The stated aim in these documents is for County Clare to become a ‘Low Carbon’ County where greenhouse gas emissions are minimised as a result of increased energy use from renewable means and improved energy efficiency. This is the precursor to the more advanced zero-carbon situation, whereby carbon emissions are eliminated completely, and this necessitates the disuse of all fossil fuels.

Within the RES, Renewable Energy Targets are set across a number of renewable energy sectors, based on the available resources and any constraints such as availability of grid connections and impacts on the environment. The targets, taking the available resources into consideration, demonstrate that County Clare has the capacity to meet almost 100% of its energy needs from renewable energy resources in the County by 2030. This allows for a significant period in which to facilitate and support renewable energy projects.

- A further 3 solar farms were granted planning permission in 2023 which brings the total number of solar farm applications granted to 16 since 2016. To date none have commenced due to grid connection issues.

BLUE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

RPO 110 Ecosystem Services
RPO 122 Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)
RPO 124 Green Infrastructure
RPO 125 Green Infrastructure Corridors
RPO 126 Biodiversity
RPO 127 Invasive Species
RPO 128 All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015 – 2020

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

- **Clare Biodiversity Officer** appointed in May 2023.
- **Funding** secured for 2023 was €78,267 LBAF with 15% CCC match funding for 2023. Funding for 2024 is anticipated to be at least the same level as that of 2023.
- **Clare Heritage and Biodiversity Forum:** Clare County Council established a new Clare Heritage and Biodiversity Forum in 2023. In order to best inform the County Heritage Plan for the period 2023-2029 and Clare County Biodiversity Plan 2024-2030, it was the intention of Clare County Council to establish a Heritage and Biodiversity Forum consisting of a wide range of stakeholders drawn from a variety of sectors and organisations with a county wide remit, all of whom have a recognised role in the protection and promotion of heritage and biodiversity in County Clare. The forum will inform and provide observations during the preparation stage of the Heritage and Biodiversity Plans and provide feedback and assistance in the implementation and monitoring of the plans. The forum will also promote exchange of information, good practice, awareness, and a discussion of biodiversity and heritage related topics. One of the key areas is water quality and members of Inland Fisheries Ireland, Teagasc and the Irish Farmers Association sit on the forum. The forum facilitates cross collaboration and partnerships between forum members.

- Clare County Council has supported a range of county wide biodiversity initiatives in the provision of **ecosystem services**.
- In 2022, Clare County Council supported the Burrenbeo Trusts '**Hare's Corner**' Initiative. The project involves working with landowners to make more space for nature through creation of a mini woodland, a mini orchard, a pond or a 'plan for nature'. The project provides a range of ecosystem services including biodiversity enhancement, carbon sequestration and serves as an educational resource for local landowners and schools. Over 270 Hares Corners have been created since launching the initiative in June 2021.
- **Invasive Species:** Clare County Council has supported treatment and eradication programmes for all Municipal Districts in the county. Notable projects funded under the Local Biodiversity Action Plan include West Clare Invasive Species Survey, Quagga Mussel Survey of the Shannon Catchment and Killaloe Invasive species survey. for invasive species. In 2023 and 2024, Clare County Council have commissioned consultants to carry out dedicated surveys of local and regional roads in West Clare Municipal District with a view to eradicating invasive species listed on the 'Third Schedule' subject to Regulation 49 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended), and species listed as 'high impact' under the National Biodiversity Data Centre's (NBDC) 'Invasive Species in Ireland Prioritization Risk Assessment'. Clare County Council have commissioned consultants to treat and eradicate invasive species in Killaloe in 2022, 2023 and again in 2024. The local authority have also developed an online campaign and dedicated webpage to offer guidance to the general public in identifying, recording, reporting and implementing biosecurity around invasive species (<https://yoursay.clarecoco.ie/invasive-species-clare>). In addition to offering internal training to staff, CCC have partnered with organisations and invasive species specialists to deliver invasive species workshops and training events to the general public.
- **Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity Best Practice:** In 2022, Clare County Council produced the guidance document '*Clare County Council Biodiversity manual: Biodiversity Best Practice Guidelines*'. CCC is the first local authority in the country to produce biodiversity manual for internal staff. It offers best practice guidance to CCC staff in relation to hedgerow cutting and management, wildflower meadow creation and management (All Ireland Pollinator Plan), invasive species, green infrastructure and green infrastructure planning, promoting biodiversity community engagement, drainage maintenance and nature based solutions, biodiversity enhancement actions, herbicide use, tree and grassland management, impacts on biodiversity linked to management processes, works in proximity to watercourses, calendar of works.
- **All Ireland Pollinator Plan:** Clare County Council has been an official partner of the 'All Ireland Pollinator Plan' since February 2020. In 2023, the Gardening Team implemented 'No Mow May' at Áras Contae an Chláir (main Council Office Headquarters). The aim of this measure was to encourage insect pollinators and plant diversity in line with the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, and to publicly demonstrate how simple measures can be implemented at a local level to support insects, plants, and nature. Information signage was erected at various locations around the building to raise awareness as to the action and its benefits. This grassland management produced a flush of Daisies, Dandelions, Red and White Clover, cuckoo flower, Hawksbeard, Selfheal and Bird's-foot trefoil without any wildflower seed application. The flowers provided food and shelter for pollinators over the hungry gap in springtime. It is intended to monitor the plant species diversity changes over time given this mowing regime. The Gardening Team has been involved for the past four years in an ongoing review of practices to align with the various actions for Councils, as set out in the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. Some of the key measures are as follows:
 - Ban on use of herbicides by Gardening Team.
 - Implementing pollinator-friendly perennial planting in place of annual bedding species at appropriate locations. This action will continue to be developed and expanded in future years.
 - Provide pollinator nesting habitat in the recently-completed woodland garden at HQ.
 - Identifying and protecting existing areas for pollinators at HQ and Waterpark House.
 - Alternating mowing of grassy areas – as set out above and to be further developed in 2024.

- **Roundabout management:** Roundabouts in and around Ennis, including the Rocky Road Roundabout, the Claureen Roundabout and the Tulla road roundabout, have been managed for pollinators with a delayed mowing regime in place (once a year in September). This has seen the establishment of wildflowers such as Ox-eye daisy, Hawksbeard, Bird's-foot trefoil, and Cuckoo flower. Clare County Council is also implementing and managing pollinator friendly grassland management regimes at Lees Road Sports Complex (since 2019) and more recently Kilrush Sports Complex (2023). The grassland at the edges of the sports pitches has been let grow and are cut once every six weeks.
- **Community biodiversity actions plans:** In September and October 2023, Clare County Council's Biodiversity Officer met over 40 community groups to advocate for pollinator friendly management regimes to be included in their village/town local biodiversity action plans. Many of these communities are applying for funding under the Community Foundation Ireland's Biodiversity Fund. Some of the towns and villages that are actively managing their local area for pollinators include Lisdoonvarna, Cratloe, Inagh, Shannon, Kilmurry, Scarriff, Toonagh, Clarecastle, Ennis, Kilrush, Kilnaboy, Clonlara, and Corofin.
- **Clarecastle GAA Club:** In September 2023, Clare County Council's Biodiversity Officer and Clarecastle Tidy Towns met with Clarecastle GAA Club to help them naturally restore wildflower meadows by managing the lands around the newly constructed astro turf pitch for pollinators with a pollinator-friendly mowing regime.
- **Return to Nature Initiative:** 2023 saw the development of the 'Return to Nature' biodiversity initiative by the Irish Catholic Bishops Conference. Clare County Council's Biodiversity Officer along with the Bishop of Killaloe and Laudato Si' Officer signed up 10 Clare parishes to carry out biodiversity actions on church grounds. This will include pollinator friendly management regimes and native tree planting to combat the biodiversity and climate crisis at a local scale. On 12/10/23, the Biodiversity Officer gave an online presentation as part of the Laudato Si' Animators.
- **Clare County Council Biodiversity Projects:** In 2022 and 2023, Clare County Council has commissioned and supported a wide range of county biodiversity projects funded through the Local Biodiversity Action Fund (LBAF) and CCC including:
 - **Clare County Wetland Survey:** This project aims to field survey, map and evaluate wetland sites across Clare. The project aims to inform appropriate planning and safeguard their protection from pressures associated with development. The project also aims to raise awareness of the biodiversity of wetland sites and to map sites with potential to store carbon and link in with local communities and schools to promote learning opportunities of wetland habitats and the ecosystem services they provide.
 - **Ennis Circuitscape Study:** Clare County Council commissioned a consultant to prepare a circuitscape bat study of Ennis town environs. The study incorporated software modelling to map potential landscape connectivity for bat populations (emphasis on Lesser Horseshoe Bat) within Ennis Town environs. The project looked at the town of Ennis from the perspective of stepping stones and ecological corridors that are available across the settlement for all bat species with a particular focus on Lesser horseshoe bats which are the primary Qualifying Interest Feature of a number of SACs surrounding the settlement. The project aims to inform appropriate planning including green infrastructure projects and development to safeguard wildlife corridors for the species including important linear features (i.e. hedgerows and treelines) and woodland features in the landscape for bats.
 - **Burren Protected species Survey:** This project aims to continue to survey and to determine the current status of the rare, threatened and characteristic plants of the Burren.
 - **Clare Barn Owl Project:** This project assesses uptake and breeding status of all nest boxes installed through this project to date, to determine the number that are occupied

and to assess breeding success in these nest boxes. This will provide valuable information on the success of this conservation measure, the contribution of this project and of local communities to Barn Owl conservation in the County and also importantly to help to inform the implementation of future conservation action.

- **Ardnaculla Summer School:** In July 2023, Clare County Council supported the Ardnaculla Summer School event organised by Hometree Charity. The Ardnaculla Summer School 2023 hosted twenty four biodiversity workshops that took place over the weekend of the 7th – 9th July with over 200 participants in attendance. Guest speakers came from across Ireland and the UK to participate in the Summer School. The event was attended by the Minister of State for Heritage and Electoral Reform, Malcom Noonan.
- **West Clare Invasive Alien Species (IAS) Survey:** Survey to detail the distribution and extent of invasive alien plant species (IAPS) along selected regional and local primary roads in West Clare.
- **Shannon Dolphin Project:** Clare County Council supported a communications work package project led by the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group (Shannon Dolphin Project) to promote biodiversity awareness of dolphins in the Shannon Estuary. This included a Shannon Dolphin Book Publication, Outreach to Schools (Shannon Estuary), a Short Film, Exhibition of Images, Shannon Dolphin Story Boards, Dolphin Bio Blitz, Shannon Dolphin Podcasts and Shannon Dolphin Seminar and Seminar report.
- **Killaloe Invasive Species Treatment and Eradication Project:** Annual Invasive Species Treatment Killaloe. Control and reduction of existing Invasive Alien Species on public roads. This project is a continuation of the recording and treatment of IAS in the Killaloe Municipal District and annual treatment plan.
- **Hare's Corner Communications Work Package (Biodiversity Awareness):** The Hare's Corner project offers landowners practical and accessible support in enhancing biodiversity on their land through creation of habitats such as ponds, native orchards, and mini woodlands. A series of videos have been produced which feature participating landowners showcasing the transformation of sites managed for biodiversity enhancement actions.
- **Locally Led EIP (European Innovation Partnership Projects):** In 2022, Clare County Council's Heritage Officer supported a range of locally led Clare EIP projects through the provision of guidance, presenting at key events and incorporating the biodiversity projects as deliverables under the Clare Biodiversity Action Plan. These projects included Shanakyle Bog Restoration and Habitat Enhancement EIP (involved targeted drain blocking to deliver the first raised bog restoration project in Co. Clare) with ecosystem services for water retention, water quality, biodiversity, carbon sequestration and education), Inagh EIP which involved working with farmers in the upper Inagh catchment to protect water quality through native tree planting and adopting farming practices that aim to safeguard water quality; and Hometree's Illaun-Farm Forest Alliance EIP. The project involved planting 30,000 native trees across participating farms in the local community in County Clare. Trees and shrubs were planted in shelterbelts, copses, and hedgerows. This will improve connectivity between woodland parcels and their resilience into the future and provide ecosystem services including enhancing biodiversity to provide a refuge for wildlife and to establish a carbon sink.
- **Clare County Council Biodiversity Awareness events:** Clare County Council has supported and hosted a range of events during National Heritage Week and National Biodiversity Week. In 2023, Clare County Council's Biodiversity Officer hosted a series of wildlife talks in November and December 'Winter Wildlife Talks' in collaboration with Clare Libraries and 'World Wetland Day' events.

RECREATION & SPORTING FACILITIES INCL. BLUEWAYS & GREENWAYS

Please provide details of any recently completed or planned projects or other actions to support support recreation and sporting facilities including blueways and greenways

- **West Clare Railway Greenway (Section 1: Kilrush to Kilkee)** The 'Option Selection Report' is almost complete. A peer review is scheduled for January 2024 after which the third formal Public Consultation event (PC3) is planned for Q1, 2023.
- **West Clare Railway Greenway (Section 2: Ennis to Ennistymon)** The 'Option Selection Report' is due to be completed in Q1, 2024, following which there will be Public Consultation (PC3) which will take place following a peer review.
- **West Clare Railway Greenway (Section 3 & 4: Ennistymon to Miltown Malbay and Miltown Malbay to Moyasta)** Preparations are ongoing for initial Public Consultation on these sections, which will launch in January.
- Clare County Council is a key part of the Steering Group of the **UL to Scarriff Greenway/Blueway** proposal as much of it runs through Clare and a significant part of same will utilise the Cycling and Pedestrian elements of the Killaloe Bridge and Bypass Project. The project is being led by Waterways Ireland, but Clare County Council is involved in the drawing down of the funds from the Approving Authority, TII.
- In 2023, the Council received funding from TII to commence **the Limerick – Bunratty – Shannon Greenway** project: Consultants have been appointed by the Council to progress the project. The inclusion of a Shannon Airport – Ennis – Limerick 'National Cycle Network Corridor' as part of the new National Cycle Network developed by TII & AECOM on behalf of the Department of Transport gives high-level policy support to the delivery of this Greenway.

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

The following projects also fall under contribution to Climate Action objectives.

- **Quagga Mussel Project:** This project aimed to monitor the invasion of the quagga mussel (*Dreissena rostriformis bugensis*) and other aquatic invasive species in the Shannon River system. The project funded in 2023 was built on the work completed in 2022 and addressed numerous aims to further monitor the invasion of the Quagga mussel and other high-profile species. The project aimed to help inform future management of aquatic invasive species within the Shannon system and interconnected water bodies and limit their spread in Ireland.
- **Mayfly Survey:** In 2024, Clare County Council will support research scientists associated with University College Dublin to survey aquatic habitats across Ireland to address gaps in the recent distribution data on mayflies in Ireland, with data contributing to completing the red listing for Ireland in 2024. This project will involve the surveying of aquatic habitats in Ireland for mayfly species. The first red listing of this group, determining the conservation status of each species, was conducted in 2013 (Kelly-Quinn & Regan 2013) and the 10yr follow up listing is due in 2023. The assessment is based on the records and distribution and looks at the trends over time. It also looks at the restricted nature of the distribution and needs to account for any new changes

in the taxonomy and recent new records. The EPA carries out monitoring of water quality along natural water courses throughout Ireland using biological indicators such as mayflies and stoneflies to inform river health of aquatic ecosystems. This survey will inform their remit. The Council will also be collaborating with the local authority water programme LAWPRO. This takes cognisance of WDF requirements.

- **Locally Led EIP (European Innovation Partnership Projects):** In 2022, Clare County Council supported a range of locally led Clare EIP projects through the provision of guidance, presenting at key events and incorporating the biodiversity projects as deliverables under the Clare Biodiversity Action Plan. Projects included:
 - **Shanakyle Bog Restoration and Habitat Enhancement (European Innovation Partnership (EIP)** - involved targeted drain blocking to deliver the first raised bog restoration project in Co. Clare, with ecosystem services for water retention, water quality, biodiversity, carbon sequestration and education.
 - **Inagh EIP** which involved working with farmers in the upper Inagh catchment to protect water quality through native tree planting and adopting farming practices that aim to safeguard water quality; and
 - **Hometree's Illaun-Farm Forest Alliance EIP** involved planting 30,000 native trees across participating farms in the local community in County Clare. Trees and shrubs were planted in shelterbelts, copses, and hedgerows. This will improve connectivity between woodland parcels and their resilience into the future and provide ecosystem services including enhancing biodiversity to provide a refuge for wildlife and to establish a carbon sink.
- 448 river and lake samples taken by LA per annum, sent to EPA laboratories for analysis to comply with EPA annual river/lake Monitoring Plan. Results of physio-chemical analysis reported in EPA monitoring reports to determine water quality classification for the purposes of WFD reporting and the River Basin Management Plan.

DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY/SMART REGION/SMART CITIES

RPO 133 Smart Cities
RPO 134: Smart Cities and Smart Region:

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.

Clare has eight digital hubs located in Kilrush, Kilkee, Cross, Feakle, Ennis , Ennistymon, Corofin and Miltown Malbay which offer:

- Hot-desks - for individuals, local community members, entrepreneurs etc. who would like to book a desk for one or more days or for shorter term use. With this option we hope to address the needs of those who wish to work occasionally on a more ad-hoc or one-off basis. However, customers may still avail of reduced rates and packages for multiple days.
- Co-working spaces - for individuals, local community members, entrepreneurs and teams of co-workers seeking a space to work and collaborate. By providing this option we hope to address the needs of those who wish to avail of desks on a longer-term basis or for a number of days a week on a regular or ongoing basis. We will facilitate flexible arrangements; multi-day rates/packages are also available.
- Conference facilities for small-scale training and conferencing (Kilrush and Feakle).

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

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.

- The Shannon Airport Group (including **Shannon International Airport**) made a contribution of almost €4 billion to the Irish economy in 2022, according to an independent report published in November 2023 by advisory firm Oxford Economics. The Group's activities support over 20,300 jobs and contributes €643m in tax revenues.

- Overall, in 2023, Shannon Airport welcomed **1.958 million passengers** to the airport, a 29 per cent increase on 2022 activity. This strong performance saw the airport achieve its highest passenger numbers since 2009.
- In summer 2023, Shannon provided services to **33 destinations** on over 280 weekly flights with increased frequency on 11 services providing over 370,000 extra seats. Included in these services were six new routes to Liverpool, Porto, Beziers, Naples and Newcastle with Ryanair, and a daily seasonal service to Chicago with United Airlines. In September 2023, Aer Lingus commenced a new service from Shannon to Paris Charles De Gaulle and in May 2024 Delta Air Lines will re-commence a daily seasonal service from New York JFK to Shannon in 2024 after a five-year absence.
- Shannon Airport received €7.1m funding under the **Regional Airports Programme** in December 2023, which supported some of the vital safety and security operational costs of running Shannon Airport during 2023, and therefore enable the Airport to contribute towards balanced regional development. This is an increase from the €6.8m in funding obtained by Shannon in 2022, which was the first year that it was eligible for the Programme.
- In 2023, The Shannon Airport Group invested over €17 million across the **Shannon Campus** to provide property solutions for business and enhance airport facilities. Key projects undertaken during the year included the completion of a new €7.6 million 60,000 sq. ft. multi-purpose industrial unit, and a €6.2 million 40,000 sq. ft. R&D technology unit. The Group also completed a number of infrastructural projects at the airport including rehabilitation work on an airport taxiway.
- Over the last 6 years approx., development of c. 450,000 sq ft. of industrial floorspace by the Shannon Airport Group has been implemented or is planned at **Shannon Free Zone West**.
- The **N19 Airport Access Road** scheme is in its design phase, led by Clare County Council. The scheme will link the N19 dual carriageway and M18 Motorway to Shannon International Airport, with an enhanced roadway of 2km in length, including bus lanes and off-road cycle and pedestrian facilities.

ENHANCED REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY

RPO 169 Strategic Road Network Improvement Priorities
RPO 170 Rail
RPO 171 Bus

Please provide details of any recently completed or planned projects or other actions to support enhanced regional connectivity – by road, rail and public transport.

- The **N19 Airport Access Road** scheme is in its design phase, led by Clare County Council. The scheme will link the N19 dual carriageway and M18 Motorway to Shannon International Airport, with an enhanced roadway of 2km in length, including bus lanes and off-road cycle and pedestrian facilities. Active Travel links from the town centre and residential areas of Shannon to the Shannon Free Zone employment area will also be facilitated by the scheme.
- Delivery of the **Limerick Northern Distributor Road** remains an objective of the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029. It is recognised as a key strategic driver in connecting Shannon International Airport with enhanced access to the University of Limerick, the proposed SDZ/University Zone at UL's Clare Campus (UL North Campus), Limerick City and key strategic routes and locations.
- The proposed **Killaloe Bypass**, Shannon Bridge Crossing and R494 Improvement Scheme will provide a western bypass of Killaloe, a new bridge crossing of the River Shannon and an upgrade of the existing R494 regional road from Ballina to the N7 at Birdhill. The entire scheme is approximately 6.2km and will cross the River Shannon approximately 1km to the south of the existing Killaloe Bridge. Construction of the scheme has progressed rapidly during 2023, including the Shannon Bridge Crossing which will proceed further in 2024.

- **Bus Éireann Expressway Route 51** operates 14 buses per day in each direction, Monday to Sunday year-round, linking Shannon Airport with Cork, Limerick, Ennis and Galway. In 2023, Bus Éireann added four additional services to the route for the summer season: Galway-Shannon Airport non-stop at 4am, Galway – Shannon Airport at 9am, plus Shannon Airport to Galway non-stop at 6.45am and 11.45am.
- **The Flightlink Bus service** commenced in December 2023 connecting Ennis to Dublin Airport, Monday to Sunday year-round, with 4 services per day in each direction, each with a journey time of 3 hours 15 minutes.
- **Ennistymon Inner Relief Road and Bridge Crossing (Blake's Corner)** includes for a significant public realm upgrade in the town centre of Ennistymon. Planning approved and currently at CPO stage.
- In early 2024, Iarnród Éireann appointed AtkinsRéalis to implement a project to propose infrastructure improvements to increase capacity on the **Limerick to Ennis Railway Line**. Atkins will provide transport planning, engineering, and estimating services. The line is constrained by a single-track railway, with potential enhancements intended to reduce journey times and increase capacity for both passenger and freight journeys. The Ennis Line enhancements are part of the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (LSMATS). The Ennis Line enhancements will also help to facilitate plans to increase train services between Galway and Limerick, as outlined in the All-Island Strategic Rail Review (AISRR).

**SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY /
LOCAL TRANSPORT PLANS
(AND OBJECTIVES/INITIATIVES)**

- 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

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.

- A key strategic initiative has been the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (LSMATS). One of the immediate outcomes has been the completion of the **Bus Network Redesign for Limerick**, under the NTA's Limerick Bus Connects programme. Clare County Council has collaborated with the NTA, Limerick City and County Council and transport consultants to bring forward the new Limerick Bus Network for implementation. This will result in a c. 70% increase in the amount of bus services in Limerick city and its suburbs. The coverage of the city bus network will expand into areas of Co. Clare such as Ardnacrusha and the UL North Campus, and the frequency of the services will increase to Parteen and Athlunkard, in Co. Clare.
- **West Clare Railway Greenway** is at various stages of design and public consultation, with the Kilrush – Kilkee section being the most advanced. (see earlier response above).
- **Tulla Road (Ennis) Active Travel Scheme** has achieved Part 8 Approval;
- Clare County Council is working with the National Transport Authority to deliver the **Ennis Town Bus Service** which is projected to commence in Q1 2025.
- Clare County Development Plan (Development Management Guidelines) has limited the extent of the **car-parking requirement** for certain developments, and increased the cycle parking requirements.
- The **Transport Accessibility Assessment for Shannon Town** is underway and is a key input to the draft Shannon Town and Environs Local Area Plan 2024-2030.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ennis Local Transport Plan has proceeded through initial public consultation phase and will ultimately form a key input to the forthcoming draft Ennis and Environs Local Area Plan. • The National Transport Authority allocated Clare County Council €4.5m in Active Travel Investment Grants for 2023, and €5.3m in 2022. • In 2022, the Shannon Bike Share Scheme was established across the Shannon Free Zone and Shannon Town. The scheme is operated by an Irish start-up CoMotion Mobility Solutions Ltd who have established a base at the Future Mobility Campus in Shannon. The free-floating scheme which is accessible via the CoMotion App sees 50 bikes deployed across the area. Bikes are located on-street 24-7 and can be rented by paying a €1 unlocking fee and then 1c per minute thereafter. The scheme is sponsored by local Businesses and the elected members of the Shannon Municipal District of Clare County Council.
<p>INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES & PLACES -IMPROVING WELLBEING AND QUALITY OF LIFE</p> <p>RPO 181 Equal Access RPO 182 Ageing Population</p>	<p>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 Clare MEZ</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clare County Council hosted the Age Friendly Recognition and Achievement Awards in November 2022 where the Ennis Age Friendly Town Strategy won the Age Friendly Environment Award. Shannon Airport won under the World's 1st Age Friendly Airport award category. • The Clare Age Friendly Programme is hosted by Clare County Council and is supported by an alliance of agencies and organisations who provide key services for older people. A survey was undertaken during 2023 to gather information that would provide key service providers with the evidence needed to tailor their services to meet the needs of our older population. • In October 2023 a workshop was held to build on momentum to develop actions for the new Clare Age Friendly Strategy. A Directory of Services for Older People that includes detail for public services, community and voluntary organization and community based social groups across the county, as well as guidance around entitlements, safety and security, security and health.
<p>LEARNING REGION</p> <p>RPO 186: Lifelong Learning & RPOs 39, 63, Also RPO 187 Education & Training, RPO 190 Lifelong Learning & Healthy Cities Initiative</p>	<p>Please provide details of any recently completed or planned projects or other actions to support lifelong learning and development of a Learning Region</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Clare MEZ project (see detailed earlier response) in Kilrush will provide a world-class educational and training centre specialising in Marine, Renewable, Science and Climate Change. The proposal is to build a specialist maritime training facility at the marina in Kilrush Town, for mandatory training for non-seafaring personnel taking up positions at sea (with an opportunity to service the offshore renewable energy sector) and a field research lab providing a focal point for research on the Shannon Estuary.
<p>GAELTACHTAÍ, GAELTACHT SERVICE TOWNS(GSTs) & IRISH LANGUAGE NETWORKS</p>	<p>Please provide details of any recently completed or planned projects or other actions to support Gaeltachtaí, Gaeltacht Service Towns (GSTs) & Irish Language Networks</p>
	<p>N/A</p>

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.

Insert answer here

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

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