

# EMERGE ROADMAP

A roadmap for the delivery of  
community-led Just Transition projects

PREPARED FOR:

Eastern and Midlands Climate Action Regional Office



**CARO**

Funded through the Just Transition Fund and the Carbon Tax Fund



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



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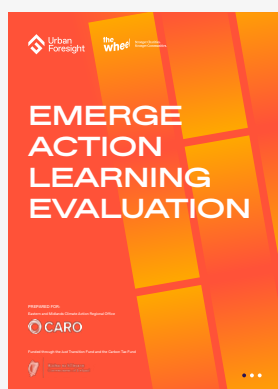
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# UNDERSTANDING THE SUCCESS OF EMERGE

Our delivery of EMERGE concludes with three reports, which reflect upon what has been achieved and next steps for community development.

An assessment of the successes and learnings developed through the delivery of EMERGE is used to inform recommendations for further community capacity-building support within the Eastern and Midlands region of Ireland.

## Evaluation ↘



To answer the question of ‘how’ did EMERGE make an impact, our evaluation encompasses an assessment of the process undertaken, outputs from the training workshops and key findings. Our honest and open assessment identifies areas for further action and insights into how future programmes could benefit from our experience of delivering a community-focused training and mentoring scheme.

## Activation Plans ↘



Our activation plans detail the individual project plans for communities which engaged in the EMERGE community activation planning and mentoring process. The report includes action plans co-developed with each of the 11 community groups in an iterative process which outlined the problems, inputs, outputs, outcomes and next steps for their community-led projects in greater detail.



# INTRODUCTION

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This report outlines a roadmap that will provide community led actions for further implementation beyond the life of EMERGE.

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## This report reflects on the process and outcomes of EMERGE to understand what has worked well and what has worked not so well.

The EU Just Transition Fund is only now open and starting to receive expressions of interest. Whilst EMERGE has worked with communities to develop a number of strong project proposals, there is still a lot of work to be done to make sure they are delivered on time and on budget.

Many of the communities expressed a desire for ongoing support. This related to a number of aspects of the EU JTF programme:

- Support to understand the State Aid rules relating to the different pillars of the programme. This was the subject that came up in many mentoring sessions and caused a great deal of uncertainty for communities. The provisions of the General Block Exemption Regulations were particularly difficult for communities to understand;
- Advice to make sure their projects fit the funding criteria for each of the pillar of the EU JTF. There has been some confusion as to what type of project is eligible under the different strands of funding;
- During the mentoring sessions, communities have come forward with a number of very good project ideas that are out of scope for the EU JTF. Ideally the next phase of support would be able to signpost these communities to any relevant funding if such is available. For example, this may be SEAI grants or LEADER funding;
- Support to find relevant partners for projects. Many communities had similar ideas to each other, for example around sustainable tourism or community energy. Rather than duplicating effort there is scope for the communities working on similar projects to share resources or experiences between them. This likely requires a third party to facilitate these collaborations;
- Whilst the majority of community groups had pre-existing governance structures a significant minority did not. There were also situations where the existing governance structure was inappropriate for the proposed project and a new governance structure was needed. In most cases the community will need support and advice on the best governance and legal structures for a particular project.

Much of the support and guidance needed by the communities already exists but is distributed across a number of organisations. Better signposting is needed.



# WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THIS SPACE IN THE MIDLANDS

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The landscape across the Eastern and Midlands region of Ireland is seeing significant progress towards a just transition. There are opportunities for communities to make an impact using a bottom-up approach, but they require more support to access the funding and schemes available to them.

# WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THIS SPACE IN THE MIDLANDS

The current state of the community-based climate action landscape in the Eastern and Midlands region of Ireland is explored in this section. A more detailed summary of the policies influencing communities' development of climate action capacity and access funding can be found in Appendix 2.

Since the closure of peat-burning power stations, which were key contributors to the region's economy, there is a clear push towards building the capacity of communities to foster a just transition. The communities possess differing levels of capacity for climate action as can be seen when analysing the data using the Just Transition Index (JTI) in the next section. Nonetheless, they are progressing towards the goal of a just transition and can access opportunities to continue this progress.

The Irish government is implementing policies and designating funding from the EU Just Transition Fund to help the region continue in its drive to achieve its climate action ambitions. There is also support in this endeavour from county-level and regional actors such as the county councils, the Eastern and Midlands Climate Action Regional Office (EM CARO), and key private sector partners. However, communities require more signposting and help to access these forms of support to better realise their ambitions in achieving a just transition.

# THE CURRENT STATE OF COMMUNITY-BASED CLIMATE ACTION

Communities in the Eastern and Midlands region of Ireland are at varying levels of development, economically, socially, and environmentally.

The Just Transition Index (JTI) developed by Urban Foresight shows this variation using 2016 Census data. We have updated the JTI with the latest data available (the 2022 Census data), which is analysed in the next section.

Communities require better and more consistent signposting towards support across the region, but there are examples of action already being taken. Most action is centred around capacity building, and moving towards community ownership of energy. There are clear overlaps in these types of community-led projects across the region, and more collaboration could lead to better outcomes.

## Overview of community-led climate action in the Midlands

There are efforts across the region to enable a just transition for communities, but communities are at varying levels of development in realising their goals. Certain communities require more support than others, and have different levels of support available to them. These communities also face challenges in accessing existing support. Much of the support is for specific types of project, for example community energy or rural economic development. Communities often find it difficult to find the right support for a particular project, meaning that tailored signposting to relevant supports would remove this barrier.

Nonetheless, the region as a whole is receiving national recognition in its community-level efforts to take climate action, such as in the SuperValu TidyTowns awards 2023.

- Abbeyleix in County Laois was named Ireland's Tidiest Town and the overall winner of Ireland's Tidiest Small Town
- Geashill in County Offaly was named as Ireland's Tidiest Village
- Portlaoise, Athlone, Tullamore, Abbeyshrule, and Ballinahown have won gold medals in the competition
- Milltownpass won the Water and Communities Award

There are also unique community-led approaches to achieving a just transition in each county, which can be seen below. Most of these projects are centred around capacity building and in developing community-owned energy, across the value chain from research through to practical implementation. These approaches must be supported, developed further, and replicated for each part of the region.



## Laois

Laois has support for communities to research, co-design, and implement community energy projects to move the county towards carbon neutrality. Examples include:

- The Portlaoise Decarbonisation Zone provides an opportunity for local stakeholders to launch and co-design community energy projects, which supports the growth of green skills in low carbon heating and energy.
- The CUBE, based in Portlaoise, combines research, enterprises, and community-level efforts to move towards carbon neutrality.

## Offaly

Offaly has a variety of community-level climate action projects ongoing, including community-owned energy and capacity building programmes. Examples include:

- The Dalton Centre, which was handed over from ESB for conversion to an enterprise hub, is enabling community owned energy at the Dalton Centre as an off-grid site.
- The Ballycommon Training Centre is a community hub with a retrofit workshop space, which focuses on retrofitting, sustainability, and the re-population of bogs, helps both the community adapt to a new landscape and the move towards a just transition.

## Roscommon

Roscommon is offering incentives for communities to be more active in promoting sustainable ways of living, and developing their own initiatives to take climate action. For example:

- Roscommon County Council's 2023 Greener Spaces Competition shows the number of community groups and schools taking climate action across the county to protect the environment, use resources with more care, and develop sustainable communities.

## Longford

Longford has projects that are aiming to build capacity in its communities to develop circular economy-focused and climate action projects. For example:

- The Empowering Communities in Circular Opportunities (ECCO) project is a community skill building initiative on repair, reuse, and circular living, including education & training, and learning by doing. It provides sustainability training to the communities to develop climate action projects.

## Westmeath

Westmeath is focused on helping communities redevelop and building capacity in skills to create circular economy-focused projects. For example:

- The Repair Acts project in Westmeath is focused on education and building capacity to help communities promote the regeneration of the repair and reuse culture in the county.

## West Kildare

West Kildare is promoting research and co-creation to help communities develop climate action projects that move towards sustainable ways of living. For example:

- The Climate Design Lab is using design-thinking and behavioural economics to co-create solutions for the community in Maynooth.

## North Tipperary

North Tipperary is focused on building capacity in their communities to develop sustainable projects that move the county closer to a just transition. Examples include:

- The Community Led Just Transition North Tipperary project aims to mobilise community-led energy efficiency in communities around Littleton that are most affected by peat plant closures.
- Community Climate Coaches in the county are building communities' capacities to undertake sustainable community-led projects to improve biodiversity, take climate action, and move towards a just transition.

## East Galway

In East Galway, communities are developing sustainable tourism projects to satisfy the growing demand for outdoor activities. For example:

- Mid-Ireland Adventure is supplying the growing demand for outdoor activities in the Midlands region, providing activities and environmental education programmes.

# CURRENT SUPPORT FOR THE REGION'S JUST TRANSITION GOALS

There are multiple organisations in the region that are working towards a just transition, from both the public and the private sector, and at a community level.

Communities can access support from these sources to help enable their efforts towards achieving a just transition. The main issue is therefore not the lack of support and funding, but instead communities face challenges in accessing these supports in a timely and efficient manner.

## National support for communities from the Irish Government

The major form of support that the Irish Government has offered communities across Ireland so far in achieving a just transition has come from the National Just Transition Fund. However, with the new EU Just Transition funding being implemented, the Irish Government has also supplemented the Just Transition funding with smaller grants focused towards individual community-led projects across the country.

The main aim of the existing national funding and support for communities in Ireland is centred around building capacity and supporting local initiatives to overcome capital constraints.

### National Just Transition Fund

The Irish Government has provided grants for the maintenance of community organisations and the areas that they are from. The Just Transition Fund for Ireland has provided much of this support until now, although there are more schemes that have been implemented in recent years.

The Just Transition Fund for Ireland has been a key source of support for the region's climate action projects. For example, it has helped:

- The community group North Offaly Development Fund (NODF) and Offaly County Council to fund a feasibility study to explore the potential for integrating a Data Centre with renewable energy and green hydrogen in the wider Midlands Region.
- Ballinasloe Area Community Development to establish The Pulse Hub to drive the creation of start-ups, opportunities for retaining and new remote working activity.

- The Energy Communities Tipperary Cooperative (ECTC) to conduct the ‘Community Led Just Transition North Tipperary’ project to mobilise community-led energy efficiency in communities around Littleton, affected by peat plant closures.

## Other forms of national support

The national government have also offered other sources of financial aid to communities and climate action groups. This support is substantial, and the main issue for communities is accessing it in a timely and efficient manner.

There is significant variation in the levels of support accessed by communities in different counties in the region. This can be seen by the variation in grants given from the 2022 Community Support Scheme across each of the counties that are also involved in the EMERGE programme. More information and support must be provided to communities to access these various forms of national support.

Examples of support given by the Irish government include:

- **Community and Voluntary Energy Support Scheme (CVESS)**  
This provided a once-off payment to eligible charities and community and voluntary sector organisations towards their energy costs in 2022.
- **2022 Community Support Scheme**  
This scheme provides €10 million to support community groups with energy bills, and with their facilities. This includes:
  - €282,239 for 229 local projects in Westmeath
  - €283,843 for 188 local projects in Offaly
  - €322,747 for 173 local projects in Tipperary
  - €276,912 for 132 local projects in Laois
  - €318,757 for 141 local projects in Kildare
  - €300,432 for 193 local projects in Galway
  - €276,585 for 184 local projects in Longford
  - €279,884 for 152 local projects in Roscommon
- **CLÁR-Funding for Small-Scale Rural Projects**  
Rural communities can access funding for small scale projects, and in 2023 is targeted towards developing community facilities & amenities.
- **Community Services Programme (CSP)**  
This supports community-based organisations to provide local social, economic and environmental services through a social enterprise model. It was redesigned in January 2023 with a new funding rate allocation model, to replace the previous flat rate model, which will see investment under the Community Services Programme (CSP) rise by over €5 million.



### → Empowering Communities Programme

This specifically targets area-based deprivation, identified by the Pobal HP Deprivation Index, through a community development approach. It empowers local communities to develop their own plans to combat area based poverty and social exclusion, with the support of their Local Community Development Committee (LCDC).

### → Community Trail Management Organisations funding

Grant funding of up to €1 million was also made available on a one-off basis for Community Trail Management Organisations for the maintenance and management of trails.

## Regional support for communities from public authorities and organisations

At a regional level, there are multiple key actors combining their efforts to support communities develop capacity and develop sustainable climate action projects. This includes the regional Climate Action Regional Office (CARO), Eastern & Midlands CARO, the county councils, and other key regional actors for the economy.

### Climate Action Regional Offices

The Eastern & Midlands CARO is continuing to make an impact, even outside of the EMERGE training programme, through their research. With €3.09 million in additional funding allocated to EM CARO over the next 5 years, these activities will only expand to help support communities in the region.

In addition to EMERGE, the Eastern & Midlands CARO is helping to organise other events and projects in the Midlands. Examples include:

- Abbeyleix Climate Action Walk
- Decarbonising Zone in Maynooth
- Climate Change Summer Camps in Kildare
- Installation of solar panels on public buildings in Roscommon and Tipperary
- Improving public lighting and testing out a low carbon town in Laois
- Testing the construction of roads over peatlands in Offaly
- Developing Flood Defence Schemes in Offaly and Westmeath

## County councils

The county councils are key actors that help deliver national funding in effective ways to their communities. They have plans and policies that explicitly focus on involving communities in the co-creation and development of climate focused projects.

There is expected to be a €75.4 million increase in funding to Local Authorities in 2024, which will help facilitate more plans and policies that support community capacity building for climate action. Examples of key initiatives at a regional level include:

### Local Economic and Community Plans (LECP) and Regional Enterprise Plans (REP)

The county councils are key supporters of the just transition, which can be seen in their development, Local Economic and Community Plans (LECP), and Regional Enterprise Plan (REP), which seek to complement the national ambition of Project Ireland 2040.

Funding is provided in these plans to start initiatives aimed at developing the region and its communities, and progress to net zero goals. They aim to create smart towns, villages, and communities, utilising the green skills expertise and assets from academic institutions and enterprises in the region.

### Climate Action Plans

The county councils are also supporting community-based climate action projects, through their Climate Action Plans. The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 required local authorities to develop five-year Climate Action Plans, which are now in action, covering both mitigation and adaptation measures, particularly emphasising place-based climate action.

## Key partners in the region

Bord na Móna and the Electricity Supply Board (ESB) are major actors in the region and play a key role in the economy. They help drive the narrative of the region and how it integrates with the national economy. Bord na Móna is committed to diversification away from peat, and ESB is retaining its national functions in the region. Both are providing support to communities in the Midlands to achieve a just transition.

### Bord na Móna

In recent years Bord na Móna has placed a focus on climate solutions, following its 2018 Brown to Green strategy. Part of this involves launching one of the largest peatland restoration and management programmes in Europe.

As a key employer in the region, their transition seeks to empower and fund communities, as well as provide training in green skills to make progress towards a just transition. They are currently planning to raise €1.6 billion to fund a series of major climate action projects across its 200,000-acre landholding.

Their support involves the:

→ **Accelerate Green programme**

The Accelerate Green programme is an executive accelerator that helps local green enterprises scale.

→ **Near Neighbour Scheme**

The Near Neighbour Scheme offers electricity bill payers living near to a wind turbine a discount on their electricity bills. This scheme also funds residents to carry out energy efficiency measures, education support, or contributes to the purchase of an electric vehicle.

→ **Community Gain Funds**

Community Gain Funds provide funding for community-based projects located near sources of renewable energy generation. They have funded projects in Dehid, Mountlucas & Bruckana, Sliabh Bawn, and Oweninny so far. They encourage communities to develop Community Action Plans to effectively use the funding, and provide resources for education support and local development.

## Electricity Supply Board (ESB)

ESB is a state-owned electricity company that operated two peat-powered power stations in the Midlands at Lanesborough and Shannonbridge, before they were closed in 2020. Much like Bord na Móna, ESB provided significant levels of employment in the region with many of the rural communities and villages being established in close proximity to their sites. ESB are therefore restricting their activities, whilst seeking to empower the communities most affected by the closure of their sites.

ESB's Wind Farm Community Funds aim to engage with communities neighbouring their wind farms by helping those communities to become more sustainable through the support of local initiatives. The Wind Farm Community Funds are available to support projects that are aligned with local needs and opportunities such as the purchase of equipment, building, or refurbishment work. Approximately €1 million is awarded annually using nominated grant making organisations.

ESB has also made a number of commitments to the just transition in the Midlands and commitments include:

- Making a €5m contribution to the Just Transition fund and its Networks operations and to the National Training Centre for Network Technicians in Portlaoise
- Giving a community dividend of €500,000 to the Lanesborough area
- Handing over ownership of one of their former industrial buildings to Longford County Council for redevelopment as a multi-purpose sporting facility for the community in Lanesborough
- Handing over ownership of the Dalton Centre to Offaly County Council for conversion to an enterprise hub and enable community owned energy at the Dalton Centre as an off-grid site
- In a partnership with Vodafone, they provided high-quality broadband accessibility to 15,000 homes



# SUPPORTS BEYOND THE LIFE OF EMERGE

Much of the existing funding and capacity-building support will continue beyond the life of EMERGE. There are, however, more sources of support that are set to be implemented from the national and EU level, as well as expansions to regional support.

## Future funding streams

Communities will have significant levels of funding available to them from both European and national sources. With this funding communities can be better organised and form structures that suit the activities they wish to undertake in moving towards a just transition.

There must be signposting to communities, as well as support given in preparing applications to access this funding in a timely manner. This funding can then be utilised to create more sustainable community-led projects that continue to aid the region's push towards a just transition.

## European funding support

Ireland benefits from the support of the EU, and their just transition mandate is to support less economically developed regions. This includes the Eastern and Midlands region of Ireland due to its transition from peat production, which has a significant impact on its economy.

Communities must be given support to develop projects that can take advantage of the significant availability of funding from the EU. Examples of EU support for the region's communities to achieve a just transition include:

### EU Just Transition Fund

The EU Just Transition Fund is a major source of funding for the Eastern and Midlands region. It is providing €169 million to support communities in the region.

The funding will support training and upskilling for former peat workers. It will help create new green jobs, develop affordable green energy, decarbonise local transport, and roll-out new tourism enterprises. There will also be further investment into sustainable agriculture and forestry, to SMEs and start-ups, and into vital research and innovation.

The Just Transition Plan includes funding for community and local projects focused on sustainable tourism, community facility development, and community-led innovation:

- €38 million for Regenerative Tourism business support
- €30 million for a Tourism Trails Network
- €15 million for the Community Facilities EV Charging Scheme
- €10 million for the Midlands Bioeconomy Demonstration Initiative Scheme

### LEADER programme

The EU uses its LEADER programme to provide support in the region using Local Action Groups (LAGs) in each county, that are often represented by the LCDs.

The LEADER programme provides rural communities with the resources to enable local partners to actively engage and direct the local development of their area, through community-led local development. This includes projects such as the €217,000 refurbishment of the Mount Temple Community Hall in County Westmeath.

The programme has been renewed for 2023 to 2027 and offers continued support for the region. It will provide €180 million to support rural communities and enterprises between 2023 and 2027 and the first two local development strategies (LDS) have recently been approved, one of which is in Tipperary.

### National funding support

The government is continuing in its firm commitment to fund climate action in communities. Communities must be informed of these schemes and sources of funding, especially given the narrow focus of each support.

Examples of planned national funding for community-led projects include the following initiatives:

#### Grants for Tidy Towns groups

€1.4 million in funding will be used to provide grants of between €1,000 and €4,000 to almost 900 Tidy Towns community groups, who entered the competition in 2021 or 2022, across the country.

#### Circular Economy Innovation Grant Scheme (CEIGS)

This scheme provides support to community groups and small enterprises that are attempting to innovate to progress towards the circular economy.

### Climate Action Fund (CAF)

This will provide at least €500 million in government funding up to 2027 to assist and support projects that will help Ireland achieve its climate and energy targets, with a wide remit that includes capacity building, innovation, and community participation.

### Community Enabling Framework

This includes the Renewable Energy Support Scheme (RESS) and the Support Scheme for Small-scale Non-domestic Renewable Electricity Generators (SSGS). The Community Enabling Framework has been developed to support community participation in both the RESS and SSGS.

The aim of the RESS is to help communities increase ownership, participate in, and benefit from, renewable electricity projects, and was renewed in 2023 after success in 2020 and 2022. The SSGS will enable larger businesses, farms, public buildings, and community projects to maximise their participation in the energy transition from 2023.

## Future capacity building support

There will be significant supra-national and national support in place for future community capacity building for climate action. Communities in the region need to be signposted and given support to develop projects that are eligible for this support.

The main sources of support for communities include the following initiatives that are funded by the EU and the Irish government:

### Community Climate Action Programme (CCAP)

The CCAP has two strands which build capacity in communities fostering a just transition, which are administered by Pobal.

- **Strand 1** created dedicated Community Climate Action Officers (CCAO) and provided resources for Community Climate Action Funds in LAs to guide and support communities from the very start of project development
- **Strand 2** was released in 2023 and includes climate education, capacity building, and learning by doing programmes

Strand 1 aimed to help the funding and development or direct implementation of Climate Action pilots and projects.

Strand 2 will provide finance for projects seeking to build capacity and know-how within communities to develop low carbon communities and further engage in climate action. The funding is to develop toolkits, apps, guidance, tools, and to design training programmes, which can be used by community groups to take sustainable action on climate change.

### **Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) Community Grant**

The SEAI supports energy efficiency community projects through capital funding, partnerships, and technical support. There is a SEAI Community Mentor located in each county of Ireland that guides local sustainable energy communities through the stages of development.

They aim to increase the capacity of communities and provide resources such as online tools, guides, and other supports. Each mentor also provides online and in-person supports depending on the community's requirements and to foster cohesion across different communities.

### **The EU Just Transition Fund**

The EU Just Transition Fund is also providing funding for community capacity building in the Eastern and Midlands region, mainly through Fáilte Ireland, Pobal, and the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

#### **Fáilte Ireland**

Fáilte Ireland are acting on their seven pillars of transformation. They are supporting the economic diversification of local economies through the development of the regenerative tourism sector, using capacity building workshops among other projects. This scheme is called the 'Regenerative Tourism and Placemaking Scheme'.

They will also provide funding to appoint Tourism Activators in each County Council in the Midlands. They will build capacity within private and community-based micro enterprises and SMEs by providing investment grants, and establish a network of support across the region.



## Pobal

The Local and Regional Economic Strategies Support Scheme uses EU Just Transition funding to provide targeted support to projects that will boost communities and the economic fabric of the region. It will provide funding of up to €15 million, through Pobal, to projects aligned with the eight LECs in the Territory, with a further €9 million available for projects aligned with the REPs. The projects include:

- Investment in infrastructure that improves the business and consumer environment
- The expansion of existing, or the implementation of new education, training, or skills programmes by relevant educational institutions within the region
- Investment in heritage infrastructure in the region to improve existing built or natural heritage sites, or re-purpose sites from industrial use
- The delivery of education, skills, and training and the associated social care infrastructure, for the purposes of supporting participation in skills training and employment

## National Parks and Wildlife Service

The National Parks and Wildlife Service will use the EU Just Transition funding to provide education, awareness-raising, and community engagement activities by presenting the benefits of the restoration measures.

The Community Engagement Scheme encourages communities to engage in peatland conservation. It also promotes public engagement and raises awareness of natural heritage and the environment. NPWS, landowners and farmers, SMEs, local community development groups, and leisure users can apply to take part in the project.

# JUST TRANSITION INDEX (JTI)

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The comparison of the JTI before the project and after shows that communities have progressed economically, but are still lagging behind the rest of Ireland socially and environmentally.

# JUST TRANSITION INDEX (JTI)

Urban Foresight developed the Just Transition Index (JTI) for Ireland, which was designed to provide a broad overview of each individual community's progress towards achieving a Just Transition in response to the climate emergency.

In this section, we present the updated JTI (created using electoral division level data), with maps displaying data across the region before and after the start of EMERGE.

We used this tool to understand what the data tells us about key strengths and weaknesses of each community that we worked with at the start of the project, and after the project's completion. We also recognise that there are some constraints to this approach, and that there is no replacement for qualitative local context and stakeholder input. This index nonetheless offers an illustration of how each area and community has progressed since 2016.

As such, we can use this index to report back to communities what the data is saying about where they live, and how they have evolved since the start of the project. It is important to note that the changes in the JTI scores cannot be solely attributed to the impact of EMERGE, however, they do offer an indication into the evolution of activity in the region.

The baseline JTI is composed from Census 2016 data, and the updated JTI uses Census 2022 data. The indices draw from data across each of the three Just Transition themes – Economy, Society and Environment. Each constituent variable is assigned a score of +1 if it outperforms the national average and a score of -1 if it underperforms in relation to the national average.

These are then aggregated and divided by the total number of indicators for each Just Transition dimension (8 indicators for Economy, 7 for Society, and 6 for Environment) to calculate an average Economy, Society, and Environment score (ranging from -1 to +1) for each area (shown in Table 1). An overall Just Transition Index score (ranging from -1 to +1) is then calculated by taking an average across each area's Economy, Society, and Environment scores.

Table 1: Indicators used to produce the Just Transition Index

Just transition theme ↴	Variable	Census table
<b>Economic</b>	At work	T8.1
	Unemployed	T8.1
	No formal education	T10.4
	Ordinary bachelor degree or national diploma	T10.4
	Commute under 15 mins	T11.3
	Commute over 1 hour	T11.3
	Skilled jobs	T13.1
	Unskilled jobs	T13.1
<b>Society</b>	Owner occupied accommodation	T6.3
	Private rented accommodation	T6.3
	Social rented accommodation	T6.3
	Good general health	T12.3
	Bad general health	T12.3
	Unable to work due to permanent sickness	T8.1
	Broadband access	T15.3
<b>Environment</b>	Houses built 2011 or later	T6.2
	Fossil fuel powered central heating	T6.5
	Active Travel to work or education	T11.1
	Public Transport to work or education	T11.1
	Private vehicle to work or education	T11.1
	Car ownership (1 or more motor cars)	T15.1



# 2022 JTI ANALYSIS

## Just Transition Index

Figure 1 shows the JTI score for each Electoral Division (ED) across the counties (and parts of counties) which are in scope for EMERGE.

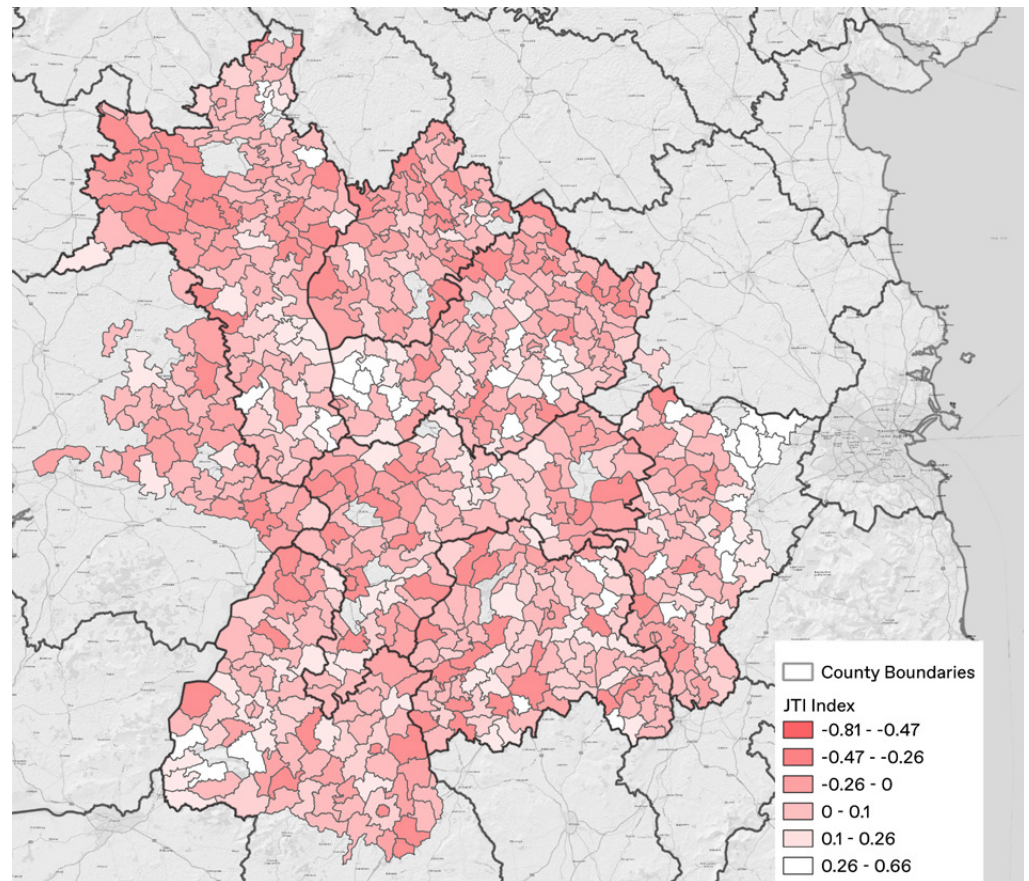


Figure 1: JTI scores for each electoral division included within EMERGE

As in the previous JTI analysis, the JTI scores vary greatly across the Eastern and Midlands region as a whole, and within the eight counties. The highest JTI scores are most highly concentrated in County Roscommon, County Westmeath, and North Tipperary, however the overall pattern is uneven. The lowest JTI scores are also dispersed unevenly across the Eastern and Midlands region. However, the northwest of County Roscommon, parts of County Longford and County Offaly, and the outskirts of all the counties tend to have lower JTI scores.

## Economy

Figure 2 shows the economy index score for each ED across the counties (and parts of counties) which are in scope for EMERGE.

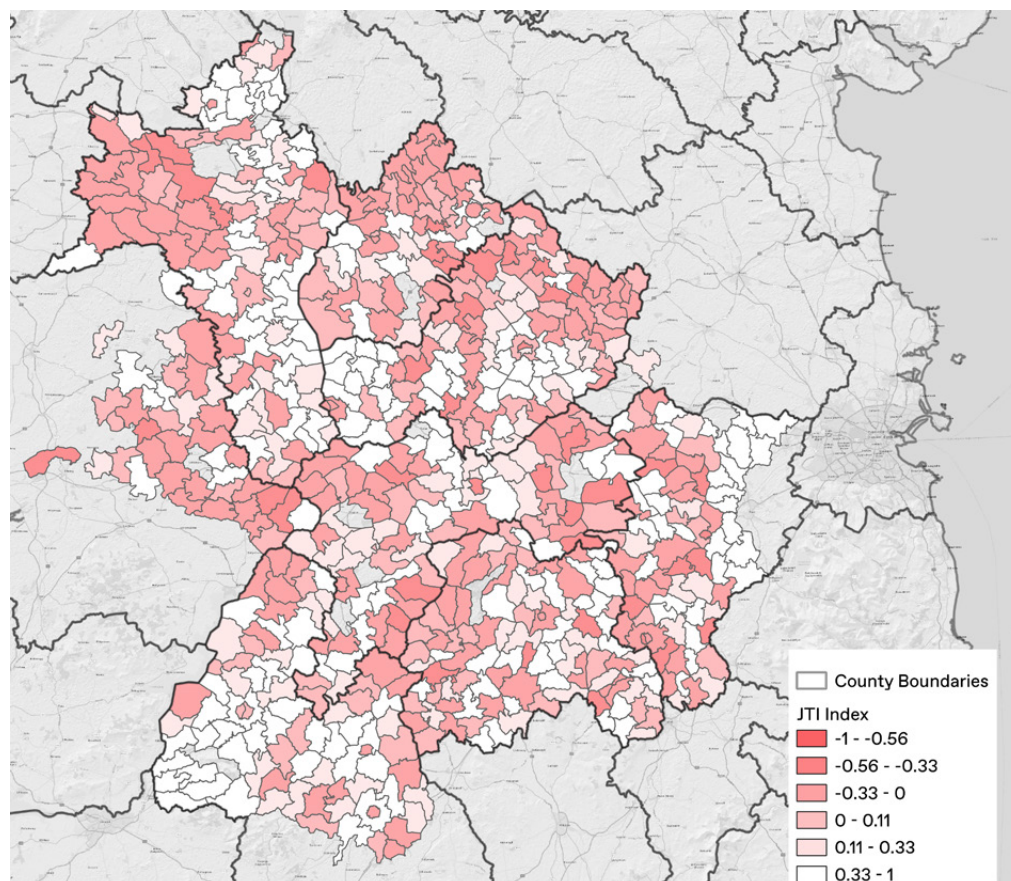


Figure 2: Economy index scores for electoral divisions included within EMERGE

The economy index score also remains uneven across the Eastern and Midlands region, but is notably higher than before across the region. There are significant areas with higher economic index scores, including the southeast and north of County Roscommon, western and central areas of North Tipperary, western County Longford, and northern areas of County Offaly. Lower economy index scores are concentrated in northwestern County Roscommon, northern County Longford, and eastern County Offaly. Nevertheless, there are pockets of low (between -1 and 0.56) and high (between 0.33 and 1) economy index scores across all of the counties.



## Society

Figure 3 shows the society index score for each ED across the counties (and parts of counties) which are in scope for EMERGE.

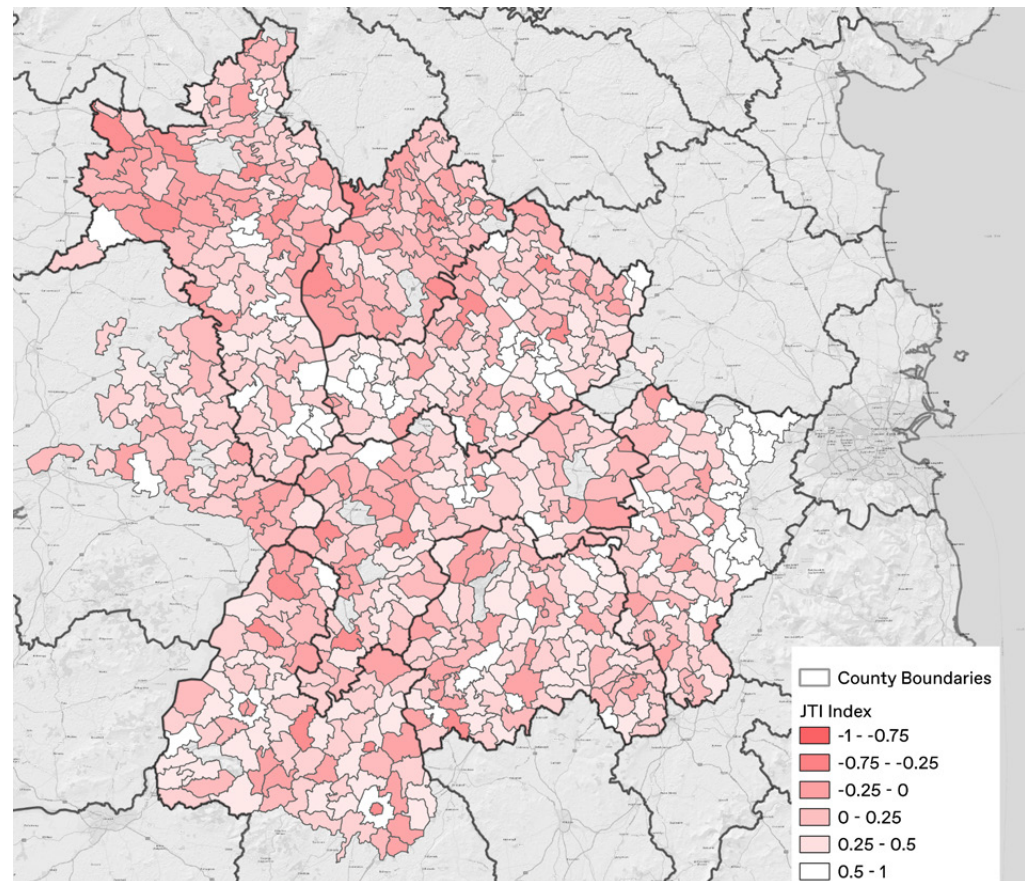


Figure 3: Society index scores for electoral divisions included within EMERGE

The society index score also remains uneven across the Eastern and Midlands region, and has not shown demonstrable signs of improvement since the 2016 JTI scores. In similarity to the economy index score, there is a higher concentration of lower society index scores in northwest County Roscommon and East Galway. There are also a high concentration of lower society index scores in western County Offaly and County Longford.

## Environment

The map in Figure 4 shows the environment index score for each ED across the counties (and parts of counties) which are in scope for EMERGE.

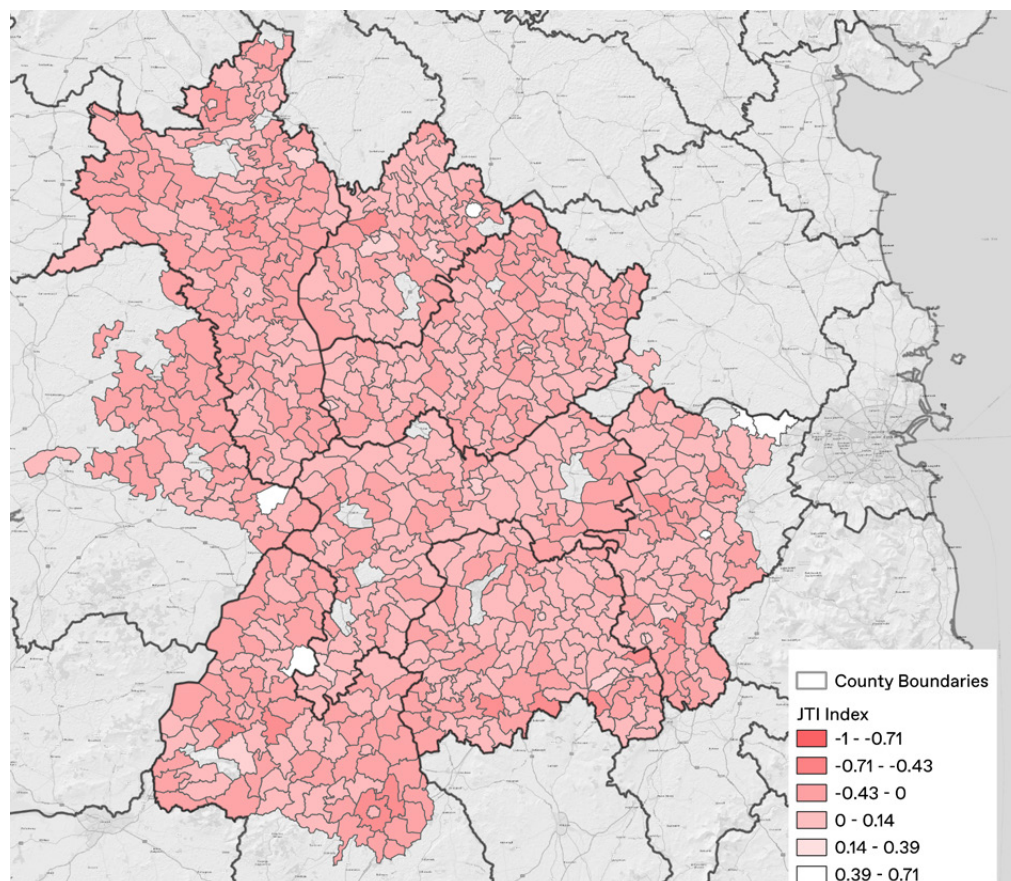


Figure 4: Environment index scores for electoral divisions included within EMERGE

In similarity to the economic and social index maps, there continues to be a high degree of variation in the environment index scores across the Eastern and Midlands region and within counties, with little sign of improvement since the last iteration. However, there are certain small geographic locations with higher environment index scores (0.39 – 0.71) in North Tipperary, County Longford, West Kildare, County Laois, and County Westmeath. Lower environment index scores (between -1 and -0.71) are all distributed across the region, although they are most focused in southern areas of North Tipperary, northwest County Roscommon, and eastern County Offaly.

# COMPARISON OF JTI BEFORE AND AFTER EMERGE

By taking the difference between the 2016 JTI scores, and the updated 2022 JTI scores, it is possible to evaluate the changes across the region under each metric.

It is important to consider that the progression of each area is only slight for the society and environment scores due to the slow-changing nature of the variables. Therefore, the index should be used in conjunction with the other findings from our qualitative analysis to paint a more accurate picture of the region.

In general, using the JTI scores, there are clear signs of growth across the region. However, this growth is not equal across the region, and in some areas, the growth in terms of JTI scores is slower than national average. This may be due to the gap between Dublin and the rest of Ireland increasing since 2016.

The comparison shows that the areas in the region that had lower scores in the previous JTI improved, but the ones that had higher scores did not. This may indicate that as an area progresses, they may require more support to continue to progress. This trend also indicates that the region is becoming more equal. However, it is important to note that this trend is not consistent, and cannot be widely applied.



## Just Transition Index

There is no clear trend when comparing the JTI scores from 2016 and 2022 (shown in Figure 5). Areas in every county have seen improvement by the index, but they have also seen reductions.

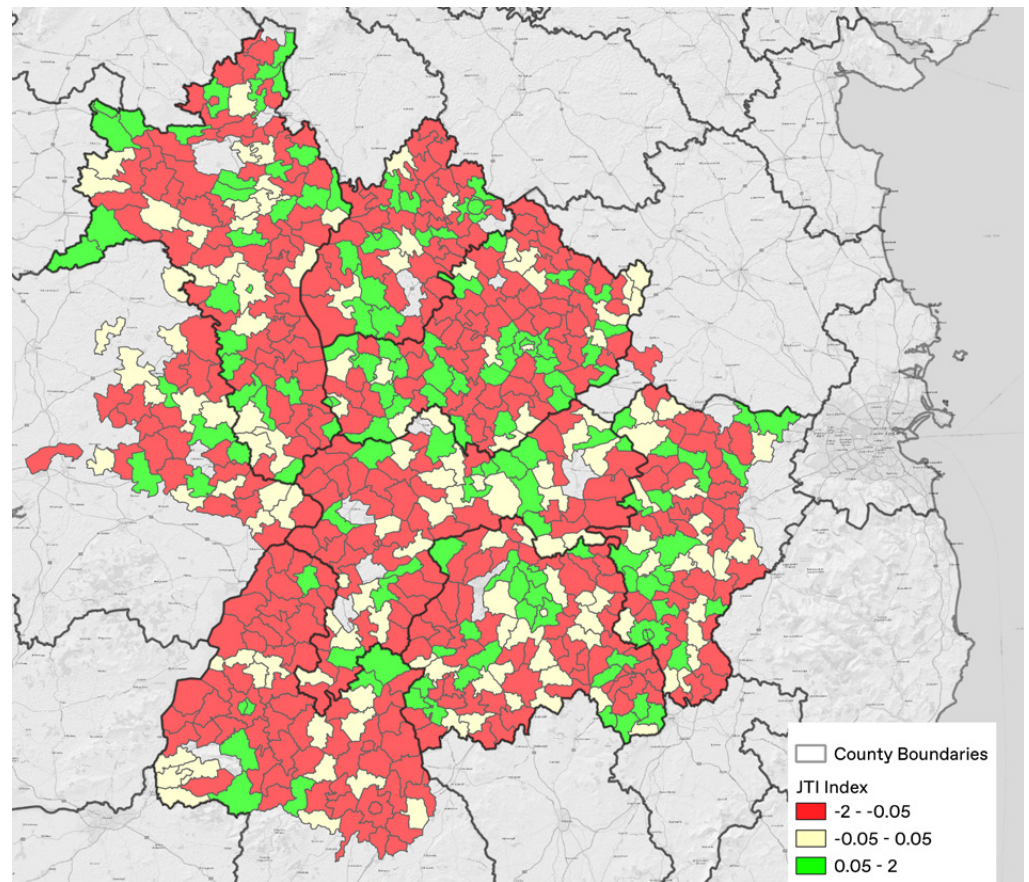


Figure 5: A map comparing the 2016 and 2022 JTI scores

In some counties, it appears that the worse-performing areas by the 2016 JTI scores are improving, such as the northwest of County Roscommon, parts of County Longford and County Offaly, and the outskirts of all the counties. By contrast, the better scoring regions by the previous JTI are not progressing, such as the south of County Roscommon, County Westmeath, and most of North Tipperary. However, these trends are not consistent across the region.



## Economy

Across the region, the economy has fared better in comparison to the national average than in 2016 when examining the economy part of the JTI index. The economy in the region is 3% closer to the national average than before.

When comparing the JTI scores from 2016 and 2022, the economy scores have seen the most progression (shown in Figure 6). The majority of the region has improved compared to their previous economy JTI scores.

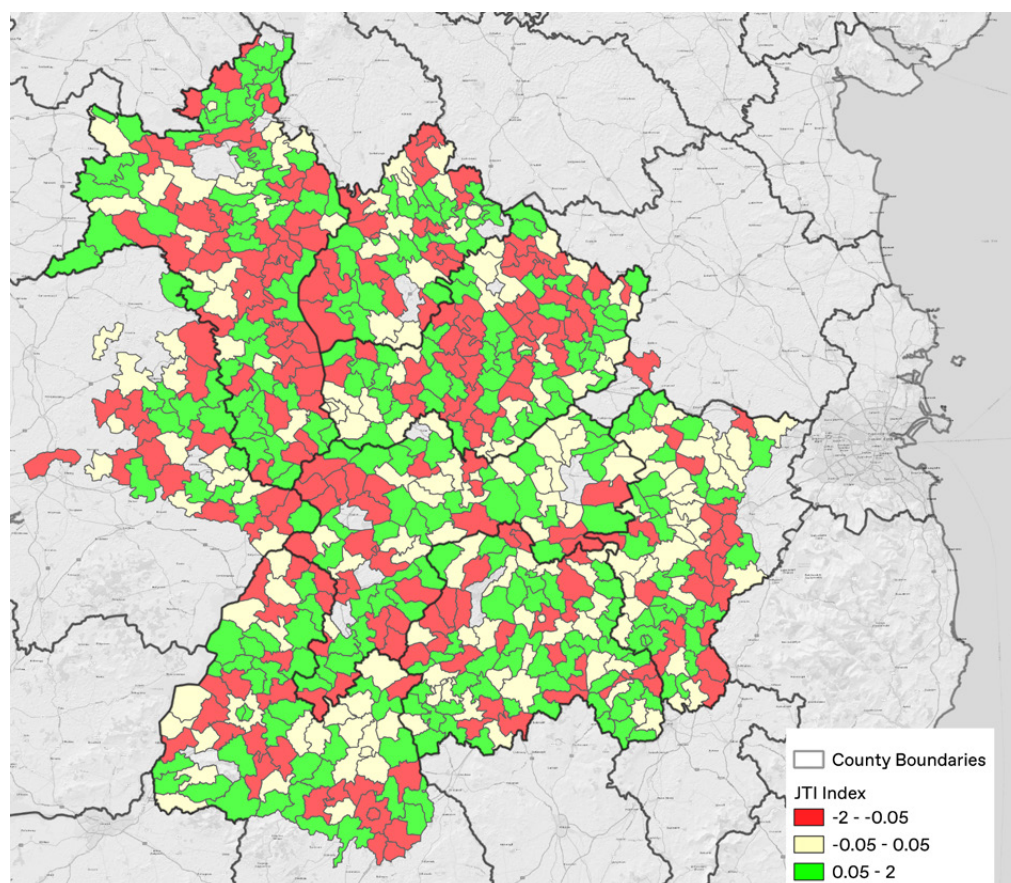


Figure 6: Comparison of economy index scores from 2016 and 2022 for electoral divisions included within EMERGE

Overall, it appears that the region's economy is continuing to improve. In some counties, it appears that the worse-performing areas by the 2016 JTI scores are improving, such as the northwest of County Roscommon, County Longford and County Offaly, and the outskirts of all the counties. By contrast, the better scoring regions by the previous JTI are not progressing, such as the south of County Roscommon, parts of County Westmeath, and the west of North Tipperary, although this trend is not consistent.

## Society

By contrast, the society scores across the region have not improved as considerably, if at all, when comparing the society JTI scores from 2016 and 2022 (shown in Figure 7). The majority of the region has not seen improvement compared to their previous society JTI scores.

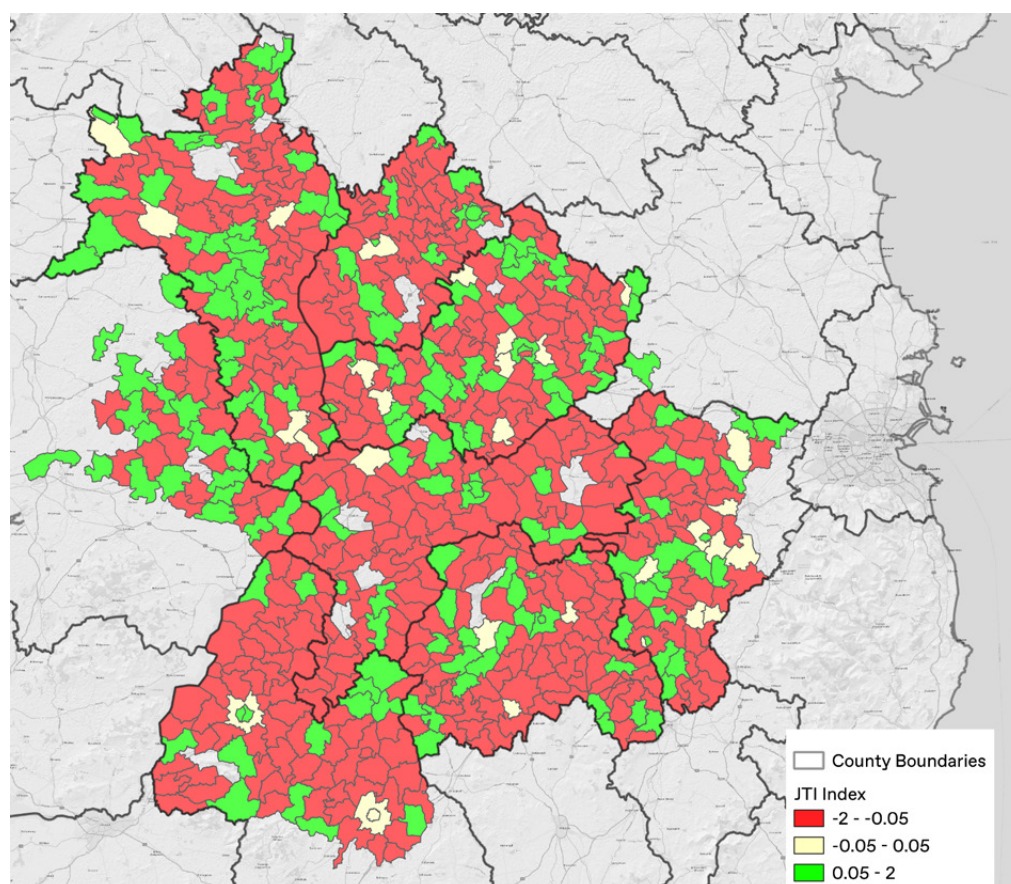


Figure 7: Comparison of society index scores from 2016 and 2022 for electoral divisions included within EMERGE

Overall, the region appears to be moving backwards when it comes to the society JTI scores. In some counties, it appears that the worse-performing areas by the 2016 JTI society scores are more likely to improve, such as the northwest of County Roscommon, and parts of County Longford and County Offaly. The rest of the region has largely seen little improvement. It is important to note that these scores are weighted in relation to the national average, which is affected by the significant progression of Dublin's economy in this period.



## Environment

Similarly to society JTI scores, the region has not improved when comparing the environment JTI scores from 2016 and 2022 (displayed in Figure 8). The majority of the region has not seen improvement compared to their previous environment JTI scores.

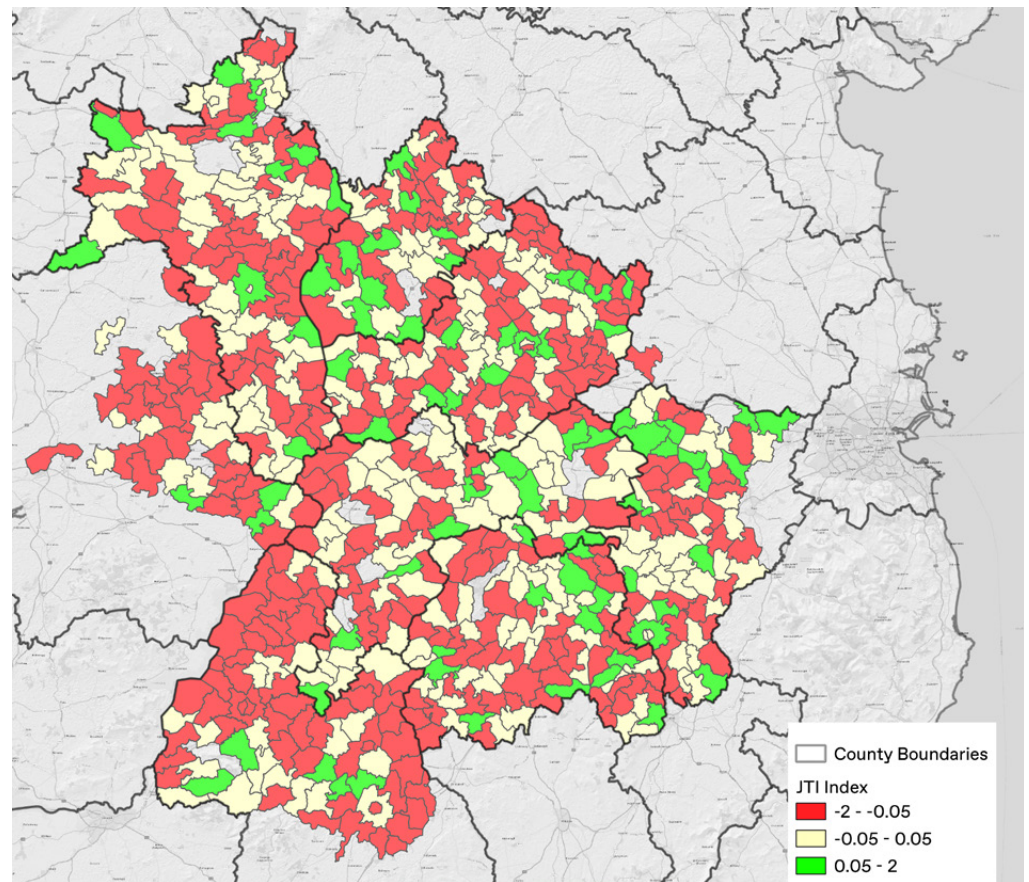


Figure 8: Comparison of environment index scores from 2016 and 2022 for electoral divisions included within EMERGE

The region is largely stagnant when it comes to the environment JTI scores, with most of the region seeing no significant improvement or regression. There is no clear trend in the progression of the environment scores. This is likely due to the nature of the environment scores because the variables included typically take a large period of time to change. This can be seen when considering that the region is largely keeping up with the national average.

# CHALLENGES

Engaging with the communities in this project has highlighted a number of challenges to the effectiveness of the Just Transition funding programme.

# CHALLENGES

## After a slow start the EMERGE mentoring programme built considerable momentum towards the end of 2023.

This was in part due to delays in publication of the detail criteria for the funding streams. It was also partly about finding the right people in each community to engage with. It was often the case that it took one or two mentoring meetings to find the right group or key gatekeeper for a community.

Analysis in previous sections shows that there is no shortage of financial support for communities developing a just transition project. The difficulty is often navigating the complexity of funding requirements, state aid and governance to develop a viable project.

The next section outlines some specific challenges encountered by the EMERGE team when engaging communities. There is also a broader process issue around the Just Transition and project development. In a number of cases communities had strong and well developed plans for the future of their community. The task for the mentoring sessions was to draw out which elements of the plan could be developed into a just transition project. In our view this is an optimal way to approach this task.

Other communities started with the funding opportunity and then tried to develop a project that would fit the criteria. This was less than optimal as in some cases projects were being proposed that did not really fit the wider development needs of the community.

To address this challenge, EMERGE mentoring adopted a two stage process which started with a holistic development plan or strategy for a community. The second stage, which is largely ongoing in many of the supported communities, is to extract the elements of the plan or strategy which could be supported by just transition funding. Using this process ensures that just transition funding supports the projects project relevant to and supported by the community.

Some more specific challenges are outlined on the following pages:

01

**Short lead in times for funding streams exclude lower capacity communities.**

There has been a noticeable difference in the capacity to engage in the project planning and development process across the communities in the area of benefit. Even with the support provided through EMERGE a number of communities have not been able to develop projects within the timescales allowed.

02

**Just Transition is not very high on the list of community priorities.**

From an economic perspective, the Midlands region is largely improving and performing well in contrast to other deindustrialising regions across Europe, which have struggled to adjust to a post-industrial future. In the case of the Midlands region the transition away from peat cutting is being managed, reducing the pressure to diversify the economy.

03

**Language can exclude certain groups.**

The earlier information and guidance for the JTF focused on enterprise and economic development. It was not clear that community groups were eligible to apply for funding. Through discussion with the funding bodies it was possible to revise the wording to make it clear that community groups were able to apply for funding. Care is needed in the language used to scope and promote the JTF so that all relevant groups are aware they are included.

04

**There is a risk of community burn-out.**

Communities are tired from the constant pressure to develop projects. Most of the activity relies on volunteers and voluntary effort. There is a need to have longer-term revenue funding to build capacity in communities. It is positive that there is funding to support capacity within local authorities but this needs to be extended to include community groups.

05

**The Just Transition is about identity, heritage and culture.**

These often intangible issues arising from the transition to net zero are harder to address than straight forward economic transitions. Elements of the funding will cover this aspect of the just transition, but not enough. If possible, in future funding rounds there should be funding streams for support projects which focus on the impact of the identity, culture and heritage of the communities affected by the transition to net zero.

06

**Communities are concerned with a sense of place.**

For most of the communities we engaged with, an understanding of a 'just transition' was linked to an understanding of place. During the course of the mentoring sessions it was often difficult to steer the debate towards issues that were relevant to the just transition funding. It felt as if the priorities identified in the funding pillars were not always well aligned with community priorities.



07

**Significant technical barriers to engagement.**

Understandingly the communities had many practical questions about the funding and the constraints. These related to State Aid, the relationship between Local Economic and Community Plans and EU JTF and the timing of the projects. For a number of communities there is a chance a lack of understanding of how to tackle these challenges will prevent them submitting an Expression of Interest (EOI) or concept note.

08

**The complexity causes delays.**

This was the case on both the delivery side and the community side. The delay in publishing the call documents for the various funding pillars meant the EMERGE programme was finishing just at the point most support was needed. There was also a gap between the EMERGE support ending and the new Just Transition Activators being appointed. This also meant there was little support available for communities at the time a number of funding deadlines were reached.

09

**A lot of overlap with funding streams.**

There is a lot of overlap with other funding streams, such as LEADER and SEAI grants. This often caused confusion within communities as to which funding organisation they were dealing with. There needs to be better coordination between the funding programmes to create a joint up offering for communities.

10

**Tourism may be the wrong focus.**

There was a missed opportunity to tackle some structural issues within the communities. Communities in the JTF region are suffering from a number of societal issues that are indirectly related to the just transition. For example, there are still issues around depopulation, particularly in relation to the movement of younger people. A number of communities had project ideas relating to skills, training and housing but these do not fit easily into the pillars of support within the JTF.

11

**Regularly update the Just Transition Index (JTI) to evaluate progress.**

The impact of the Just Transition Funding will take time to emerge. In many instances it will also be difficult to track its wider impact and secondary effect. The JTI offers an opportunity to robustly track the impact of the JTF. The baseline established by the EMERGE project can be referenced over the coming years as the just transition processes. It can also be a tool to change course or adapt the funding to make sure it reaches all communities.

# ENSURING LONGER-TERM SUCCESS

To continue the momentum of community capacity-building efforts, the challenges facing community engagement need to be addressed in future supports.

# ENSURING LONGER-TERM SUCCESS

Based on the challenges observed and faced by EMERGE, it is recognised that the longer-term success of just transition funded project relies on a number of factors:

- An initial approach to community planning which takes a holistic approach and covers more than just projects which fall within the just transition remit.
- Better coordination of effort between the various strands of funding. This could include joint workshops or information events.
- Better signposting to specialist support for projects which focus on a particular technology i.e. renewable energy, or a particular sector, i.e. tourism.
- Clearer guidance on the technical aspects of proposals, for example, cash flow, state aid and governance.
- Simplify the application process with one gateway for EOIs or concept notes. These could then be assigned to the correct funding stream by assessors. In a number of cases projects span more than one funding stream.
- As the community Just Transition Activators take up their posts, it would be beneficial for them to be networked together and with other community development staff in other organisations.

# CONCLUSION

The EMERGE project has made a start at building community capacity in the areas seeking to create a just transition. A concerted effort is needed to maintain this momentum.



# CONCLUSION

The EMERGE project has steadily built momentum over the course of the programme. This is to be expected with community development initiatives. It takes time for the community to organise and find a coherent plan. It also takes time to connect with the right people in the community and build a level of trust.

Only once the momentum has been built, the right people brought on board, and a suitable idea for a project developed, can the community make a start developing a project for just transition funding.

By the end of the mentoring process the EMERGE programme had engaged all but two of the communities identified for support by the EMERGE programme. Fourteen communities engaged in the mentoring phase of the programme which resulted in eleven detailed action plans being drawn up.

The complexity of the funding programme has caused some difficulties for communities developing projects. This is particularly the case where a community had a pre-existing strategic community plan which they were seeking to implement through just transition funding.

There were also some technical barriers to communities developing strong project proposals. These included governance, state aid and ability to conform to funding criteria.

Its clear more ongoing support is needed. It is also clear that this support needs to be better coordinated and networked with wider community development activity.

The EU Just Transition Fund is a great opportunity for the Midlands region of Ireland. However, for it to be truly 'just' it needs to be available to all communities whatever their situation. There is a risk that those communities with lower capacity will miss out due to the barriers identified in this roadmap.

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# APPENDICES



# APPENDIX 1: COMMUNITY STATUS

Here we summarise the status of each community based upon the in-person workshops.  
Some communities chose to engage with the EMERGE mentoring offer beyond this.

Community ▾	Level of capacity	Issues discussed	Themes emerging	Next steps
Abbeyleix	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biodiversity</li> <li>• Sustainable growing</li> <li>• Appropriate employment</li> <li>• Loss of skills</li> <li>• Use of heritage centre as a hub</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Development of a multi-use centre with horticulture and agroforestry inspired by “Field of Dreams” in Cork</li> <li>→ Native woodland restoration</li> <li>→ Therapy and wellness centre</li> <li>→ Advancing biodiversity aims</li> </ul>	Engaged in EMERGE mentoring (see activation plan for further details).
Ballinasloe	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No clear idea of what idea to pursue next</li> <li>• Should map tourist offers and conduct community engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Discussed tourism ideas e.g. an improved community hub/tourism facility</li> <li>→ Some cohesion and community capacity but ideas are underdeveloped</li> <li>→ Increasing the visibility of tourist attraction</li> <li>→ Potential collaboration with TD Anne Rabbitte’s Constituency office</li> </ul>	<p>Establish coherence around tourism.</p> <p>Develop community engagement initiatives.</p>

Community ▾	Level of capacity	Issues discussed	Themes emerging	Next steps
Ballyforan	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community development</li> <li>• Tourism enhancement</li> <li>• Inclusive education</li> <li>• Giving land to BnM for a factory which was not built</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Cohesive and looking to avail of EU JTF monies</li> <li>→ The group is undertaking a JTF funded feasibility study on the village</li> <li>→ Secured new land to expand facilities in the village – the community is planning what can be done with the land</li> <li>→ Hub development</li> <li>→ Eco-food business</li> <li>→ Tourism interpretive centre</li> <li>→ Community garden</li> <li>→ The JTF funded greenway is currently at a pre-planning stage</li> </ul>	Continued support for ongoing initiatives and presenting of ideas.
Cloontuskert	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is a highly impacted community that are angry/ confused</li> <li>• There is a lot going on in the community but this is largely down to individuals rather than group cohesion</li> <li>• Cloontuskert have a vision from village visioning project, but do not know what to do to progress it further</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Anglers guide cooperative: coming out of training for employment scheme</li> <li>→ Expansion of established anglers hub</li> <li>→ Employment opportunities</li> <li>→ Community information network exchange</li> </ul>	Additional support required to progress early-stage project idea.

Community ▾	Level of capacity	Issues discussed	Themes emerging	Next steps
Coill Dubh	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Village composition and community cohesion</li> <li>• Home ownership</li> <li>• Migration and employment opportunities</li> <li>• Heating costs</li> <li>• Grant writing skills</li> <li>• Wider impacts</li> <li>• Strong committee, board, and group skills</li> <li>• The bog closure in the 1970s</li> <li>• The large number of people commute to Dublin</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Potentially interested in adding a hall: hall retrofit</li> <li>→ Solar focus: village, solar for soccer club, and wider community development solar initiatives</li> <li>→ No singular clear idea</li> <li>→ Community has already worked to build new classrooms in schools</li> </ul>	The community needs support to cohere around a specific project idea.
Ferbane	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walking, cycling, and active travel</li> <li>• Collaboration</li> <li>• Green Offaly</li> <li>• Frustrations with Bord na Móna regarding promises, employment, and climate actions, as well as closure of factory</li> <li>• Grants</li> <li>• Isolation</li> <li>• An impacted community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ The community has a dynamic leader backed by the Development Association</li> <li>→ Others in the community also had small ideas.</li> <li>→ Just Transition Fund bid could unite community and create cohesion</li> <li>→ Potential opportunities for consortium bidding – one strong project idea did not emerge, but a number of smaller ideas could be added together</li> <li>→ Community hub, community information and network exchange, and community activities</li> <li>→ Climate initiatives, walkways, and energy masterplan</li> <li>→ Grants</li> <li>→ Coffee shop</li> <li>→ Community gardening</li> <li>→ Musical and drama society</li> </ul>	This cohesive community requires support to build connections and pull together a consortium bid eligible for EU JTF funding, as the ideas already exist. Community members from Kilcormac, who attended the Ferbane workshop, engaged in further mentoring and activation plan development.

Community ↘	Level of capacity	Issues discussed	Themes emerging	Next steps
Glenamaddy	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community unlikely to produce a cohesive project</li> <li>The community consists of lots of groups which do not communicate</li> <li>Community information and network exchange, community projects, community gardening, sensory garden, musical and drama society, climate actions, active retirement, grants, coffee shop, community engagement, SEC, energy masterplan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Community information and network exchange, community engagement, and other community projects</li> <li>→ Community gardening and sensory garden</li> <li>→ Musical and drama society</li> <li>→ Climate actions and grants, SEC, and energy masterplan</li> <li>→ Active retirement</li> <li>→ Coffee shop or community hub</li> </ul>	Glenamaddy engaged in one EMERGE mentoring session. The community have a number of early-stage but feasible project ideas, outlined in their community activation plan.
Granard	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Well-being therapy, youth hub, heritage centre, traditional skills development project, circular economy- social enterprise centre of excellence, community activation, multi-use building, heritage tourism, community cohesion</li> <li>A deprived area but is changing</li> <li>Opportunity for further help from Just Transition Fund</li> <li>Many different individual groups within the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Community activation hub</li> <li>→ Heritage tourism centre expansion</li> <li>→ Traditional skills development project</li> <li>→ Circular economy centre expansion</li> <li>→ Community space phase 2 funding need</li> <li>→ Integrated outdoor amenity</li> <li>→ Green tourism</li> <li>→ Nearby villages have community employment skills, which could form the basis of a project</li> </ul>	Granard community engaged in two EMERGE mentoring sessions. Urban Foresight introduced the community representatives to the local SEAI mentor to support the greening of a local building.
Lanesborough/ Ballyleague	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited Expressions of Interest so merged with Cloontuskert workshop</li> </ul>		Support required to increase community cohesion and enthusiasm for project development.

Community ↘	Level of capacity	Issues discussed	Themes emerging	Next steps
Lisheen	Medium	<p>Due to a lack of expressions of interest, the Lisheen workshop was merged with Littleton. The following themes emerged:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heritage tourism from history as a coal area</li> <li>• Heritage trail, interpretive centre, local amenities, community cohesion, tourism development, local shop, coffee shops</li> <li>• Community pride</li> <li>• Two popular community hubs and a family resource centre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Potential for heritage tourism expansion</li> <li>→ Community pride</li> <li>→ Heritage trail</li> <li>→ Interpretive centre</li> <li>→ Local amenities</li> <li>→ Community hub</li> <li>→ Tourism development</li> </ul>	Continue to develop Lisheen's community capacity.
Longford	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frustration, burnout, and loss of experience from a lack of support, concerns about retirement, feeling left behind</li> <li>• Problems accessing finance, grant opportunities from a lack of information about grants</li> <li>• Tidying up Longford town</li> <li>• Active community but it is disconnected</li> <li>• Work requires people to come forward</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Support for tidy towns groups</li> <li>→ Retention of experienced volunteers</li> <li>→ Improved access to grants and funding</li> <li>→ Rejuvenation of Longford town</li> </ul>	The community is active and engaged but requires individualised support to pursue grant opportunities.

Community ↘	Level of capacity	Issues discussed	Themes emerging	Next steps
Moate	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community activation, community space hub, and office space</li> <li>Cohesion among local groups</li> <li>Green tourism, location advantages, green skills development, traffic management, improved access to amenities</li> <li>Could be a flagship community if the community pulls together</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ The community is active and understands the offering</li> <li>→ Community activation hub</li> <li>→ Cohesion among groups will enable a project idea to emerge</li> <li>→ Green tourism</li> <li>→ Green skills development</li> <li>→ Improved access to amenities</li> <li>→ Traffic management</li> </ul>	Moate engaged in two mentoring sessions (see activation plan for further details). Moate Action Group needs to gain control of the land. The group could be supported to develop an application for funding from the EU JTF.
Portlaoise	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of cohesion in the town</li> <li>Opportunities for tourism</li> <li>Better traffic management for improved access</li> <li>Disability rights and access</li> <li>Migrant integration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ New community space</li> <li>→ Integrated outdoor amenity</li> <li>→ Green tourism opportunities</li> <li>→ Leveraging location and connecting public transport to amenities</li> <li>→ Developing green skills to keep skills locally</li> </ul>	Support is required to increase community cohesion and enable community project development.
Portarlington	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Town centre management</li> <li>Status as a commuter town by rail to Dublin</li> <li>Capacity and skills are increasing, and have identified the gaps and needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ There has been excellent centre management and there has been a lot of work done to maintain the town centre</li> <li>→ Lack of cohesion</li> <li>→ Possible opportunities around tourism</li> <li>→ No cohesive project yet</li> </ul>	Portarlington engaged in 5 EMERGE mentoring sessions to support the development of the Derrycastle bog. Next steps can be viewed within the activation plan.
Portumna	Low	Limited Expressions of Interest so merged with Ballinasloe workshop		Support required to increase community cohesion and enthusiasm for project development.



Community ↘	Level of capacity	Issues discussed	Themes emerging	Next steps
Rathangan	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peatland tourism, heritage and biodiversity interpretation, traffic management, and tourism opportunities</li> <li>• Art studio hub and music promotion</li> <li>• Frustration with Bord na Móna</li> <li>• Carbon travel initiatives</li> <li>• Lack of cohesion among groups,</li> <li>• NC500</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Peatland tourism connect hubs – recently completed a €100k feasibility study</li> <li>→ Have a strategic plan, in negotiations with BnM over a long term lease</li> <li>→ LEADER will commit €200k</li> <li>→ Multiple hubs of tourism assets</li> <li>→ Possible consortium bid with high impact</li> <li>→ Art studio hub</li> <li>→ Heritage interpretation</li> <li>→ Green tourism</li> <li>→ Traffic management</li> <li>→ Community cohesion</li> </ul>	Umeras Community Development CLG engaged in a number of mentoring sessions and are now pursuing a pre-feasibility study for an element of their bog tourism project (see activation plan).
Shannonbridge	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vision for town development, building transfer from ESB, becoming an SEC, tourism opportunities as greenway passing by, collaboration with neighbouring communities, heritage assets, engagement with Bord na Móna</li> <li>• Cohesive community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Impacted from ESB closure</li> <li>→ Potential for town development – have assets and good community cohesion</li> <li>→ ESB recently gave the community a building to use as a new community asset</li> <li>→ Community activation plan needed to decide what to do with the buildings</li> <li>→ Heritage tourism opportunities</li> <li>→ Collaboration with neighbouring communities</li> <li>→ Vision and plans in place, building transfer, tourism opportunities identified</li> <li>→ Exploration of sustainable energy communities</li> </ul>	Shannonbridge received two EMERGE mentoring sessions and require further support to confirm costings, appoint a project manager, raise project awareness and secure planning permission (see activation plan).
Tyrrellspass	Low	No expressions of interest from the area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Local organisations may be connected to some people in area</li> <li>→ Lack of tidy towns group and community infrastructure</li> </ul>	Support required to increase community cohesion and enthusiasm for project development.

# APPENDIX 2: POLICIES AND INITIATIVES IN THE REGION

Level	Policy	Summary ↘
County Laois	Portlaoise Decarbonisation Zone	<p>The ‘Decarbonisation Zone’ in the town of Portlaoise is a National Demonstration Project for Decarbonisation Zones across Ireland. Laois County Council are investing an estimated €2.7 million into it.</p> <p>To support the implementation of the Decarbonization Zone, a Low Carbon Implementation Group was formed by Laois County Council, consisting of local stakeholders. This group provides an opportunity for local stakeholders to potentially launch and co-design community energy projects and therefore support the growth of green skills in low carbon heating and energy.</p> <p>This enables the potential of more community owned energy projects and provides the platform for the growth of green skills. Community energy projects, especially ones with higher costs such as onshore wind turbines, can be supported by the SEAI’s Better Energy Communities Program or the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS).</p> <p>Furthermore, the “The CUBE”, as the Portlaoise Low Carbon Centre of Excellence, will act as a leading centre for providing the necessary green skills and innovation to deliver retrofit schemes and community energy projects in County Laois and beyond.</p>
County Laois	County Laois Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019 – 2024	<p>The strategy identified the retrofitting of 160 local authority-owned houses in the county as a key initiative which would enable Laois to become leaders in and champions of energy efficiency, and was enabled by a €3.3m allocation of funding to Laois County Council. This was supported by the Midlands Retrofit Programme and funded by the Carbon Tax, as part of a wider national objective to retrofit 500,000 homes across Ireland by 2030.</p> <p>This provides the demand for the increase in green skills, supporting green jobs across County Laois, centred upon the areas of Mountrath, Portlaoise, Rathdowney, Arles, Portarlinton and Mountmellick.</p>
County Laois	County Laois Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2021 – 2027	<p>The County Laois LECP includes plans to support the Laois Hub Collective enterprise centres to be made available to workers travelling outside of the county. This action was followed by a €200,000 investment into further supporting the renovation and expansion of five enterprise sites across County Laois. The investment has been made possible by the Connected Hubs Scheme.</p> <p>The investment provides the capacity for communities to co-design community energy projects, a space for sectoral innovation, and an opportunity for the food and drink supply chain to become established in the area and to take advantage of the investment.</p>

Level	Policy	Summary ↴
County Laois	Laois Climate Action Plan	Community consultation ongoing through surveys and workshops.
County Offaly	County Offaly Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2016-2021	<p>The County Offaly LECP supported strategic locations to attract new investment and enterprise, including the sectoral innovation hub of the Ferbane Food Campus and Innovation Centre at the Ferbane Business and Technology Park (FBTP).</p> <p>The expansion of the Ferbane Food Campus enables further job creation and sectoral innovation, thereby providing the platform to support the just transition through food and drink supply chain development and innovation.</p> <p>Installing renewable energy technologies aligns with the County Laois LECP and Climate Adaptation Plan objectives of decarbonising new community and private buildings. It also provides an opportunity for community ownership of energy in the County and further supports the green skills agenda for energy.</p> <p>The LECP also repurposed the Dalton Centre to increase heritage tourism, which may act as a strong pathway for creating new jobs and attracting economic benefits to the area. Furthermore, Offaly County Council have the opportunity to enable community owned energy at the Dalton Centre as an off-grid site. There may also be potential to create a seed fund for reinvestment in other community energy projects in the future.</p>
County Offaly	Local plans	<p>County Offaly has multiple localised plans for key towns and areas in the county, emphasising climate action and community capacity building in them all:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clara Town Centre First Plan</li> <li>• Portarlinton Local Area Plan</li> <li>• Edenberry Local Plan</li> <li>• Birr Local Plan</li> </ul>

Level	Policy	Summary ↴
County Offaly	County Offaly Development Plan (2021-2027)	<p>The County Offaly Development Plan supports the development of Rhode Green Energy Park (RGEP) on the former Rhode Power Station site. The RGEP is an important clean energy project, which may act as an enabling piece of infrastructure to support renewable energy innovation and new job creation.</p> <p>The community group North Offaly Development Fund (NODF) and Offaly County Council have co-funded a feasibility study, with support from the Just Transition Fund to Offaly County Council, to explore the potential for integrating a Data Centre with renewable energy and green hydrogen in the wider Midlands Region. There is a potential for the co-location of renewable energy generation and storage systems at the National Grid infrastructure ready site.</p> <p>The Rhode Green Energy Park, although at feasibility study stage, may provide businesses and communities with the opportunity to participate and learn about the potential of renewable energy systems at a nationally and internationally relevant site. The NODF is prioritising business and community engagement to collaborate and co-design future demonstration projects at the site.</p> <p>Therefore the site may act as a future mechanism for supporting community energy project development and supporting the green skills agenda. This example also highlights the opportunity for communities and County Councils to harness existing industrial assets, especially former peat-powered power station sites, and explore new opportunities.</p>
County Offaly	Active Travel Measures & Climate Change Adaptation Projects	<p>In 2023, the National Transport Authority (NTA) has allocated €3,009,382 to Offaly County Council for Active Travel measures. This will be allocated across 23 projects which are designed to improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists by providing the infrastructure required to encourage active and sustainable travel.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offaly also received an allocation of €388,650 for Climate Change Adaptation works. This is to complete 8 projects in 2023 for measures related to addressing the impact of climate change on the road network.</li> </ul>
County Offaly	Offaly Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024	<p>This strategy aims to build capacity in communities through programmes which inform communities on local climate change issues and climate action measures, run awareness campaigns and manage funding for climate action projects.</p> <p>It also include the promotion of integrated planning, the design and delivery of green infrastructure (including urban greening through appropriate provisions in planning policies), development standards, infrastructural, public realm, and community projects.</p>

Level	Policy	Summary ↘
County Westmeath	Work, Live Westmeath	<p>Work, Live Westmeath is a Remote Working initiative by Westmeath County Council, which includes marketing campaigns and community centres.</p> <p>The Remote Working Marketing Scheme is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development, in partnership with local authorities and Connected Hubs, under the Town &amp; Village Renewal Scheme 2022.</p>
County Westmeath	County Westmeath Development Plan 2021-2027	<p>The County Westmeath Development Plan aims to create smart towns, villages and communities across the County, utilising the green skills expertise and assets of the Technical University of the Shannon, AIT (Athlone Institute of Technology), the IMR (Irish Manufacturing Research) facility and a potential 'Midlands Technology Campus'.</p> <p>As a result, communities in Tyrrellspass and Moate have an opportunity to work closely with Westmeath County Council and the Westmeath LEO to collaborate and identify projects with support from EU Action for Smart Villages initiative, delivered by the ENRD (European Network for Rural Development).</p> <p>The plan aims to develop the county's range of emerging tourism activities and opportunities to support the just transition and enable community scale climate action. Communities have already been at the forefront of driving tourism projects such as the Dún na Sí Amenity and Heritage Park in Moate.</p>
County Westmeath	Westmeath Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024	<p>The strategy aims to mirror those of the national Climate Action Plan 2023. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building capacity through upskilling, knowledge dissemination, and a community outreach programme;</li> <li>• Supporting and delivering climate action projects through funding resources from Project Ireland 2040;</li> <li>• Developing robust community engagement on climate action by linking to existing and new networks and clustering initiatives using the National Dialogue on Climate Action and local authority structures;</li> <li>• Working to expand sustainable energy communities.</li> </ul>
County Westmeath	Westmeath Climate Action Plan	<p>Westmeath County Council is developing a new Local Authority Climate Action Plan (LACAP), to be completed by February 2024, including a public consultation with its communities.</p>

Level	Policy	Summary ↘
County Longford	Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027	<p>The Longford County Development Plan places a priority of exploring how the former Lough Ree Power Station can be utilised for green energy, the circular economy and tourism. One project that aims to do so is the Lough Ree Technology Cluster Study, which explored four potential opportunity areas, with the ambition of creating community demonstration projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hydrogen production and distribution</li> <li>• Insect Production for Protein, potentially from agricultural waste, food waste and distillery co-products</li> <li>• Hemp Growing and Processing</li> <li>• Willow torrefication, as a viable green source and peat alternative, with between €211 – €383 profit per hectare per year</li> </ul> <p>Communities had the opportunity to potentially undertake demonstrator projects as part of the study in 2023, harnessing the existing assets of the Lough Ree Power Station.</p>
County Longford	County Longford Climate Change Adaptation Strategy	<p>Along with the priority of exploring how the former Lough Ree Power Station can be utilised for green energy, the circular economy and tourism, the strategy considers community ownership of energy generated in the future, which is critical for enabling a just transition in County Longford.</p>
County Roscommon	County Roscommon Development Plan 2022-2028	<p>As part of this plan, funding is being provided to develop initiatives which support the region. For example, Moore Community Council in South Roscommon have received €55,250 to provide a remote working hub and training facility, shaped by strong community engaging to define training needs.</p> <p>In addition, the Roscommon Produce Network, as part of the Open Food Network Ireland operating as a cooperative owned virtual marketplace, acts as an open-source platform for local producers in Roscommon to sell their goods.</p> <p>Roscommon County Council are also trying to use industrial assets for new uses and are currently undertaking a feasibility study to better understand how to create education, virtual, and interactive facilities at the Cloontuskert Visitor Centre and Organic Farm to attract tourists.</p>
County Roscommon	Greener Spaces 2023	<p>Roscommon County Council's Greener Spaces Competition is now open for applications. The Environment Department launched the new Greener Spaces Competition for 2023. The aim is to reward and highlight their efforts of community groups in enhancing and maintaining their outdoor spaces.</p> <p>The awards are an opportunity to recognise the work done across the county to protect our environment, use resources with more care, and develop sustainable communities.</p>



Level	Policy	Summary ↘
County Roscommon	Roscommon Climate Action Plan	Roscommon County Council is currently preparing its Climate Action Plan for 2024-2028, including a public consultation with its communities.
East Galway	County Galway Development Plan 2022-2028	The plan recognises the importance of establishing multifunctional hubs as a clear opportunity to enable economic diversification and support the just transition in East Galway.
East Galway	Galway Climate Action Plan	<p>Galway County Council are currently working with communities, businesses, public representatives, and other stakeholders in a consultation process to develop a Climate Action Plan and a Heritage and Biodiversity Plan for the county.</p> <p>Their strategic goals include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fostering governance, leadership and partnership for climate action strategic goal;</li> <li>• Mobilising climate action in local communities and in enterprise to support transition to an inclusive, net zero, and circular economy;</li> <li>• Achieving a 'just transition' particularly for communities that may be economically disadvantaged by decarbonising projects.</li> </ul>
North Tipperary	Energy Communities Tipperary Cooperative (ECTC)	The ECTC enables community energy project delivery, beginning on a very small scale in 2012 with a pilot scheme in the Drombane and Upperchurch community. The ECTC has since transformed itself into a strong and dynamic organisation for supporting local community energy, now operating as a One Stop Shop for retrofitting.
North Tipperary	County Tipperary Development Plan 2022-2028	<p>The County Tipperary Development Plan highlights the importance of enabling community energy projects and commits to supporting the wide renewable energy innovation ecosystem in the County.</p> <p>Therefore, communities have the support of Tipperary County Council, alongside its Renewable Energy Strategy, to enable the design and delivery of community energy projects and micro level renewable energy generation.</p> <p>It also commits to a range of actions to drive low carbon and circular innovation, under the umbrella of potentially achieving a 7% reduction in GHG emissions each year over the lifetime of the plan.</p> <p>A key case of how a community in North Tipperary is driving climate action and just transition is the Cloughjordon Ecovillage, based at the North Tipperary Green Enterprise Park. This is a community of 55 homes on 67 acres with substantial woodlands, a community farm, amphitheatre, allotments, DHS, research Gardens, alongside number of co-located enterprises and cooperatives.</p>

Level	Policy	Summary ↘
North Tipperary	Draft Local Authority Climate Action Plan for the period 2024 – 2029 (LACAP)	<p>Tipperary are in the public consultation process involving the community to further develop this plan. A strategic goal of this plan is to build capacity for climate action in its communities.</p> <p>They will build capacity and readiness with communities and other strategic partners for transformative climate action and a ‘Just Transition’, using capacity building programmes, policy/financial instruments and local development and wellbeing programmes.</p> <p>They will also promote climate action and green skills in training and education in partnership with Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs).</p> <p>This also includes influence, co-ordinating, facilitating, and advocating for other agencies, sectors, and communities wherever feasible through the delivery of services and in the implementation of other sectoral plans at local level.</p>
North Tipperary	Community Learning Spaces	<p>Tipperary County Council in partnership with South Tipperary Development Company and North Tipperary Development Company are looking to support the provision, rollout, and promotion of Community Learning Spaces across County Tipperary.</p> <p>This will allow community facilities to have broadband and WIFI capability, dedicated spaces for creating a learning/study space, capability of opening and closing the facility to meet the demands of students, heating, and a comfortable operating environment.</p>

Level	Policy	Summary ↘
West Kildare	West Kildare Just Transition Plan	<p>Key actions of this plan which relate to the activities of EMERGE include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage new community development groups to emerge (Priority Action).</li> <li>• Improving community skills through ensuring ‘One-stop shops’ be centres for skills matching, skills training, and remote working.</li> <li>• Ensure project sponsorship at Kildare County Council level to help community groups, stakeholders to develop ideas, craft bids and to advise on matters of governance, liability, legal and business plan development.</li> <li>• Establish a community project co-ordinator to represent projects in technical discussions and to help share information and resources between projects.</li> <li>• Scoping a ‘Kildare 300’ km tourist route.</li> <li>• Provide community retrofit support by accessing funding from the JTF to establish a funded retrofit initiative in communities most affected by industrial decline.</li> <li>• Establish a Just Transition focussed Community Gain Scheme so that Bord na Móna’s developments and nature and tourism projects are aligned and working together</li> <li>• Learning from Accelerate Green in County Offaly, establishing an Energy Skills Programme through a network of activity.</li> <li>• Utilise one-stop-shops to create a Community Energy Company, thereby consolidating multiple SECs into one.</li> </ul>
West Kildare	Kildare Climate Action Plan	<p>Kildare County Council launched a public consultation on the development of a new Climate Action Plan 2024–2029. The plan will aim to create a low carbon and climate resilient Kildare, by delivering and promoting best practice in climate action in Kildare.</p> <p>The consultation includes community groups, citizens, and businesses in Kildare to help secure a sustainable future for its citizens.</p>
West Kildare	Drehid Grant Scheme 2023	<p>Drehid Community Grant Scheme funds environmental, recreational, and community projects that mitigate the impact of the landfill facility on the local community. This is available to community groups within a 9km radius from the Drehid Waste Management Facility.</p>

Level	Policy	Summary ↘
West Kildare	Brigid 1500 Community and Creative Grant Scheme 2024	<p>To celebrate Brigid 1500, Kildare County Council is funding a Grant Scheme for local communities to conduct projects of up to €5,000 such as performances, talks, workshops, walks, tours etc., festivals, creative projects, biodiversity projects, history talks, heritage projects, and other activities that have a strong link to Brigid 1500.</p> <p>This scheme prioritises community groups, artists, clubs and other relevant organisations delivering projects in partnership with local communities. The activity must take place in Kildare.</p>
Eastern and Midlands region	Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024	<p>The three strategic objectives:</p> <p><b>1/ Climate Action – Transition to a zero-carbon economy</b></p> <p>This objective aims to support the activities of the Midlands Regional Transition Team to develop transformative projects to guide emerging low-carbon focused projects across the region.</p> <p><b>2/ Capitalising on strengths of the Midlands through Smart Specialisation and Digitalisation</b></p> <p>This objective includes actions to capitalise and realise business, industry, and skills opportunities presented by TU status; leverage The Midlands Advanced Manufacturing Action Plan to position the region as an advanced manufacturing centre of excellence and develop a Smart Connected Technologies Cluster.</p> <p><b>3/ Positioning the Midlands as the destination of choice to live, work, visit, invest, and learn</b></p> <p>This objective includes actions to promote and position the region as a community of choice; to support and develop additional flexible office solutions throughout the region, including the exploration of and the development of vacant properties; to progress and support tourism development, visitor experience development plans and the experience economy across the region and finally to establish a Regional Food and Drink Cluster in the Midlands.</p>
Eastern and Midlands region	Tourism Masterplan for the Shannon 2020 – 2030	<p>The Masterplan supports the priority of co-development community projects, with particular relevance for Athlone as a strategic tourism hub on the River Shannon. However, developing green and heritage tourism routes between Athlone, Moate and Tyrrellspass may be an important opportunity for driving increase tourism from Athlone.</p> <p>By providing the necessary infrastructure on the River Shannon, Longford County Council is aiming to drive new modes of active tourism in locations such as Lanesborough and the development of the Royal Canal Greenway at Clondara in County Roscommon can bring tourism opportunities through establishing stronger greenway and blueway links to Dublin.</p>

Level	Policy	Summary ↴
Eastern and Midlands region	Bord na Móna programmes	<p>Bord na Móna have funded projects in Dehid, Mountlucas &amp; Bruckana, Sliabh Bawn, and Oweninny so far. Relevant initiatives include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Accelerate Green programme, which is an executive accelerator that helps local green enterprises scale.</li> <li>• The Near Neighbour Scheme offers funds to residents to carry out energy efficiency measures, education support, or contributes to the purchase of an electric vehicle.</li> <li>• Funding for community-based projects through their Community Gain Funds, especially those located near sources of renewable energy generation.</li> <li>• Encouraging communities to develop Community Action Plans to effectively use the funding, and provide resources for education support and local development.</li> </ul>
Eastern and Midlands region	Green Kilometre Scheme	<p>The Green Kilometre Scheme invites individuals/groups to choose a kilometre or longer stretch of rural road/loop in their area. The individual/group then commit to maintain the chosen stretch of road over the course of a year. Each Green Kilometre/stretch of road will be looked at once a year, not to judge, but to offer advice in terms of litter, hedge maintenance, care of heritage features, etc.</p>
Eastern and Midlands region	Midlands Bioenergy Development Project (MBDP) (2022)	<p>The MBDP is aiming to catalyse the creation of businesses centred upon green bioenergy, which can drive the creation of new employment opportunities, local supply chains, support the rural just transition and the production of bioenergy.</p> <p>Meeting the potential demand generated by programmes such as the MBDP, which is covering County Westmeath in addition to County Offaly, Roscommon, Longford, Kildare, Laois, North Tipperary and East Galway, may support communities, businesses and individuals to drive a new green economic development path.</p>

Level	Policy	Summary ↴
Eastern and Midlands region	Just Transition Fund for Ireland	<p>The Ireland Just Transition Fund has funded a feasibility study relating to the creation of a Tourism Hub in Lanesborough.</p> <p>Ballinasloe Area Community Development Ltd were awarded funding from the Just Transition Fund for Ireland to establish a new physical space to drive the creation of start-ups, opportunities for retaining and new remote working activity.</p> <p>The Pulse Hub, is part of a wider vision to create additional remote working facilities in Ballinasloe to meet the increasing demand for remote working and improved digital connectivity.</p> <p>The ECTC received a provisional offer of €995,000 under the Just Transition Fund to mobilise community-led energy efficiency in communities around Littleton, affected by Peat Plant Closures. The project, known as the ‘Community Led Just Transition North Tipperary’ Project is a collaboration between ECTC and Littleton Development Association CLG and Ballingarry (Thurles) Community Development CLG.</p>



# APPENDIX 3: NATIONALLY-FUNDED SCHEMES AND EU JUST TRANSITION FUND SCHEMES

Funding source	Policy	Summary ↘
EU Just Transition Fund	Eastern and Midlands region funding	<p>Under the Just Transition Fund, 56 projects in the Midlands region are being supported, with up to €22 million in committed grant funding until 2024, bringing €15 million in additional funding to the region and supporting an estimated 178 direct and 999 indirect jobs.</p> <p>The EU Just Transition Fund Programme will deliver an additional €169 million in investment to the region in the period to 2030.</p>
EU Just Transition Fund	Local and Regional Economic Strategies Support Scheme	<p>The Local and Regional Economic Strategies Support Scheme uses EU Just Transition funding to provide targeted support to projects that will boost communities. It will provide funding of up to €15 million, through Pobal, to projects aligned with the eight LECs in the Territory, with a further €9 million available for projects aligned with the REPs. The projects include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investment in infrastructure that improve the business and consumer environment;</li> <li>• The expansion of existing, or the implementation of new education, training, or skills programmes by relevant educational institutions within the region;</li> <li>• Investment in heritage infrastructure in the region to improve existing built or natural heritage sites, or re-purpose sites from industrial use;</li> <li>• The delivery of education, skills, and training and the associated social care infrastructure, for the purposes of supporting participation in skills training and employment.</li> </ul>
EU Just Transition Fund	Regenerative Tourism & Placemaking Scheme	Fáilte Ireland support the economic diversification of the local economy through the development of the regenerative Tourism sector. The scheme is to support regenerative tourism projects launched by Fáilte Ireland. The tourism element of the Just Transition Plan includes allocations of €38 million under Regenerative Tourism business supports and €30 million for a Tourism Trails Network.
EU Just Transition Fund	Community dividend of €500,000 for the Lanesborough area	ESB is delivering on its commitment, outlined as part of Just Transition, of making a community dividend of €500,000 for the Lanesborough area.
EU Just Transition Fund	Midlands Bioeconomy Demonstration Initiative Scheme (2023)	The Midlands Bioeconomy Demonstration Initiative Scheme is using the €10 million of Just Transition funding for NGOs, local and regional authorities, community, and local action groups to pilot and demonstrate bioeconomy innovation.

Funding source	Policy	Summary ↘
EU Just Transition Fund	Community Facilities EV Charging Scheme	The Community Facilities EV Charging Scheme provides funding to install electric vehicle charge points at a variety of community facilities.
EU LEADER programme	LEADER programme	<p>The LEADER programme provides rural communities with the resources to enable local partners to actively engage and direct the local development of their area, through community-led local development.</p> <p>This includes projects such as the €217,000 refurbishment of the Mount Temple Community Hall in County Westmeath. This programme is renewed for 2023 to 2027 and offers continued support for the region.</p>
Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI)	Community Grant & Community Mentor	<p>The SEAI Community Grant supports energy efficiency community projects through capital funding, partnerships, and technical support. There is also a SEAI Community Mentor located in each county of Ireland that guides local sustainable energy communities through the stages of development.</p> <p>They aim to increase the capacity of communities and provide resources such as online tools, guides, and other supports. Each mentor also provides online and in-person supports depending on the community's requirements and to foster cohesion across different communities.</p>
Irish government	Just Transition Fund for Ireland	<p>The National Just Transition Fund (JTF) was a key pillar of the Midlands region. A fund was made available in 2020 to support communities transitioning to a low carbon economy. The focus is on retraining workers and generating sustainable employment in green enterprise across the region.</p> <p>It facilitated innovation and projects that contribute to the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of the Wider Midlands region (including East Galway, Kildare, Laois, Longford, North Tipperary, Offaly, Roscommon and Westmeath).</p>
Irish government	CLÁR-Funding for Small-Scale Rural Projects	Communities can access CLÁR-Funding for Small-Scale Rural Projects, which in 2023 is targeted towards developing community facilities and amenities.
Irish government	Empowering Communities Programme	<p>The Empowering Communities Programme specifically targets area-based deprivation, identified by the Pobal HP Deprivation Index, through a community development approach.</p> <p>It empowers local communities to develop their own plans to combat area based poverty and social exclusion, with the support of their Local Community Development Committee (LCDC).</p>

Funding source	Policy	Summary ↘
Irish government	Community Climate Action Programme	<p>The Community Climate Action Programme has two strands that build capacity in communities to foster a just transition. Strand 1 created dedicated Community Climate Action Officers (CCAO) and provided resources for Community Climate Action Funds in LAs to guide and support communities from the very start. It also helps to fund the development or direct implementation of Climate Action pilots and projects.</p> <p>Strand 2 includes climate education, capacity building, and learning by delivering programmes, which are administered by Pobal, and started in 2023. This will provide finance for projects seeking to build capacity and know-how within communities to develop low carbon communities and further engage in climate action. The funding is to develop toolkits, apps, guidance, tools, and to design training programmes, which can be used by community groups to take sustainable action on climate change.</p>
Irish government	The Community and Voluntary Energy Support Scheme (CVESS)	The Community and Voluntary Energy Support Scheme (CVESS) provided a once-off payment to eligible charities and community and voluntary sector organisations towards their energy costs in 2022.
Irish government	Community Trail Management Organisations grant funding	Grant funding of up to €1 million was made available on a once-off basis for Community Trail Management Organisations for the maintenance and management of trails.
Irish government	Community Services Programme (CSP)	<p>The Community Services Programme (CSP) supports community-based organisations to provide local social, economic and environmental services through a social enterprise model.</p> <p>It was redesigned January 2023 with a new funding rate allocation model, to replace the previous flat rate model, which will see investment under the Community Services Programme (CSP) rise by over €5 million.</p>



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