

CLIMATE ACTION TRAINING PROGRAMME

FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENT

PREPARED FOR:

Eastern and Midlands Climate Action Regional Office



Funded through the Just Transition Fund and the Carbon Tax Fund



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Introduction

INTRODUCTION

The EM CARO climate action training programme will work with 20 communities across 8 counties in the Midlands region of Ireland to empower them to take climate action and to develop new, sustainable economies.

Five counties are included in their entirety – they are Laois, Longford, Offaly, Roscommon and Westmeath. North Tipperary, West Kildare and East Galway are also included.

These 8 counties, whose intrinsic economic and societal connection to and reliance on the major employers of Bord na Móna and the ESB, is now under significant pressure in the wake of the acceleration of Bord na Móna's decarbonisation programme and the closure of the two ESB operated power plants in the region.

These developments have resulted in the loss of direct and indirect employment and negatively impacted on income generation and associated supply chains, training and education opportunities, and physical, social, and community development – all of which is serving to compound pre-existing socio-economic challenges being faced by communities. At the same time, communities are being mobilised to reduce Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions by 51% (from 2018 levels) by 2030 and to achieving climate neutrality by 2050.

Therefore, this project is an opportunity for communities across the region to take ownership of the challenges and opportunities posed by climate action, and to own the economic, social, and environmental future of the Eastern and Midlands region.

In order to deliver an effective training programme tailored to the needs of communities across the 8 counties which are in scope, it is pivotal that we understand the history of climate action and community responses to the Irish government's Just Transition agenda.

This document presents the insights generated from the stakeholder engagement, desk research and data analysis undertaken to date by Urban Foresight and The Wheel. This will form the basis of the training materials which are to be developed. It is intended to be an internal document for use by the project partners only. It aims to achieve a set of common facts and conclusions which will enable the delivery of training to be highly sensitive to the local context in each county and community.

INTRODUCTION

THIS DOCUMENT IS STRUCTURED IN FIVE PARTS:

- 1/ Quantitative analysis based on census data – The Just Transition Index
- 2/ County-level policy review
- 3/ Analysis of EU, National and Regional policies and opportunities
- 4/ Emerging findings for each community
- 5/ Moving forward to the development of training materials

Following submission of this document, Urban Foresight and The Wheel will arrange a meeting with EM CARO to review the contents and discuss the next steps in the development of training materials.

INTRODUCTION

THE EASTERN AND MIDLANDS REGION

The Eastern and Midlands region of Ireland has been historically dependent upon the peat cutting and agricultural industries for economic sustainability and growth.

Due to the nature of the region's economy, communities have long-standing and deep-rooted ties to these industries. The social and economic dependence upon peat cutting and agriculture has been primarily exposed following the economic shock resulting from Bord na Móna and ESB winding down operations in the region. Former employees of these two leading firms and across the wider supply chain have felt the sharp impact of the cessation of peat cutting and the resulting downturn in economic activity.

The current data has uncovered that the majority of people across the Eastern and Midlands have found alternative employment. This trend is supported by our Economy Index within the Just Transition Index (JTI) for the Eastern and Midlands region which highlights that the majority of communities are experiencing a strong economic recovery from the initial shock experienced. To support this, some efforts have been made by Bord na Móna to convert existing facilities and launch new schemes to manage the decrease in peat harvesting activity. For example, Bord na Móna launched the €126m Peatland Climate Action Scheme (PCAS), alongside a range of other schemes, to secure employment for employees previously engaged in peat harvesting activities.

However, the key issue is that although people have returned to various forms of employment, these jobs struggle to provide the long-term certainty for former employees and wider supply chain which were deeply embedded in the peat extraction and agricultural economy. This aligns to data from Midlands Regional Transition Team, highlighting that disposable income per person (€17,717 in 2016) is 14% below the national average (€20,638 in 2016)¹. This reflects three central impacts of the economic shock experienced by cessation of peat cutting and the decline in agricultural activity. The first is a loss in the sense of community across the Eastern and Midlands counties following the closure of power plants. The second is identifying alternative sources of economic activity to grow the Eastern and Midlands economy in growing in an environmentally sustainable manner. The third is a loss of identity of the communities as the power generators of Ireland's economy.

To mitigate the socio-economic impacts of this current decline in activity, the EU, the Irish government and County Councils are responding by directing financial support to the Eastern and Midlands region, providing a range of potential opportunities for communities to respond and enable new clean economic growth and just transition.

The EU have allocated €55 billion from 2021 – 2027 to fund the Just Transition Mechanism across all member states. Of this there is a current announced commitment to the Eastern and Midlands Region of Ireland in the amount of €84.5 million. This will be supplemented by further funding from the Irish government to create a total of circa €145m in funding. The EU Just Transition Mechanism is aiming to support communities who are most in need

INTRODUCTION

of support to enable a just transition, strengthen communities and unlock clean economic growth opportunities. The EU Just Transition Mechanism has been designed to provide support to citizens and communities, companies and sectors, and member states and regions.

In order to unlock this funding, the Irish government has written a draft Just Transition Plan, setting out four key priority areas for Eastern and Midlands Region.

1. Modernise the Business Environment and Create Employment Opportunities

1. Enhance the Skills Profile

1. Focus on Environmental Sustainability and Industrial Heritage

1. Enhancing potential of region as a place to live and work

These four key areas will be supported by the Irish government by:

- Investing in remote working and digital infrastructure to support rural communities.
- Investing in towns and villages to enable them to become hubs of strong communities and new economic activity.
- Adopting a place-based approach to rural development to meet the needs of different areas in a holistic way and maximise the impact of investment.
- Empowering rural communities and young people to design and deliver responses that meet their local needs.

These are key actions with strong implications to support how communities to design community projects, provide leadership and governance in local areas and create new environmentally sustainable employment opportunities.

There are tangible examples of how the Irish government are attempting to drive community climate action and the just transition. A key example is the Renewable Energy Support Scheme (RESS), providing financial support for community – led projects and providing community benefit funds. With a similar purpose, the SEAI Community Grant programme enables communities across Ireland to launch and fund community energy projects with multiple community beneficiaries. In addition, the Connected Hubs Scheme which is actively providing community capacity and remote working infrastructure has allocated €9m to over 100 projects across the regions, with a further €5m awarded in 2022 to 81 projects.

On a county and local level, there are a range of exemplar projects providing important lessons for County Councils and communities to create new projects, employment opportunities and take climate action. For instance, the Dalton Centre, a major ESB office

INTRODUCTION

complex, has been handed over to Offaly County Council for conversion to an enterprise hub and potentially enable community owned energy at the Dalton Centre as an off-grid site. Another key example Ballinasloe Area Community Development Ltd in East Galway who were awarded funding from the Just Transition Fund for Ireland to establish a new physical space named the Pulse Hub. This will drive the creation of start-ups, opportunities for retaining and new remote working activity. The Pulse Hub is part of a wider vision to create additional remote working facilities in Ballinasloe, meeting the increasing demand for remote working and improved digital connectivity. These key cases demonstrate the ability of County Councils and community organisations to drive new economic opportunities, support community cohesion and reduce carbon emissions.

Quantitative analysis

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

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

For the purposes of this project, we intend to use this tool to understand what the data tells us about key strengths and weaknesses of each community in which we will be working. We recognize that there are some constraints to this approach, and that there is no replacement for qualitative local context and stakeholder input. In this section, we present the JTI with electoral division level data, with maps below displaying data across the region and across the counties. In the final section of this document, we present narrative portraits of each community informed in part by JTI analysis.

As such, we have presented this analysis to frame later conclusions in the document and to be able to report back to communities what the data is saying about where they live.

The Just Transition Index is composed from Census 2016 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 the national average.

These are then aggregated and divided by the total number of indicators for each Just Transition dimension (9 indicators for Economy and Society and 7 indicators for Environment) to calculate an average Economy, Society, and Environment score (ranging from -1 to +1) for each area.

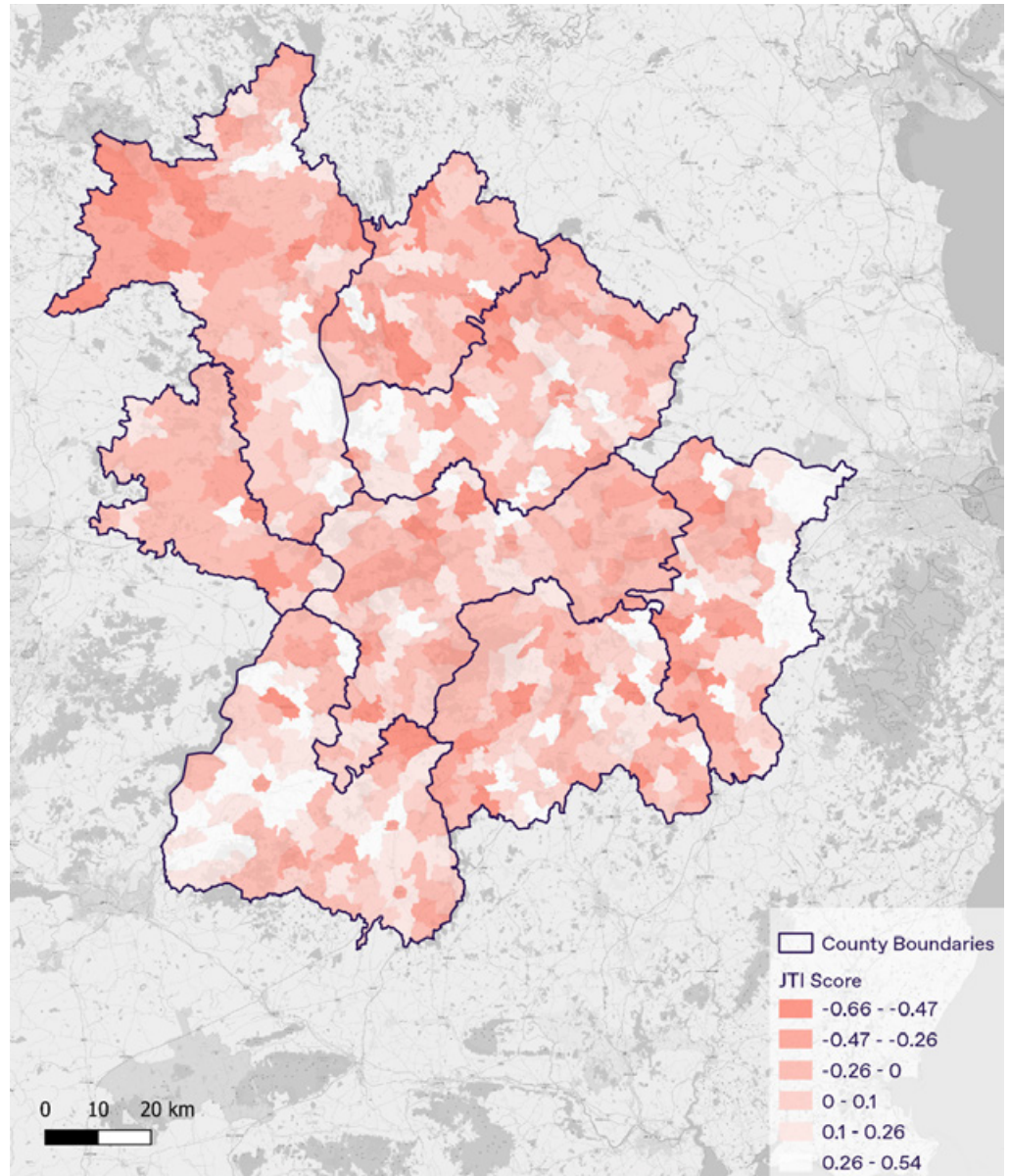
An overall Just Transition Index score (ranging from -1 to +1) is then calculated by taking an average across each area's Economy, Society, and Environment scores.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Just transition theme	Variable	Census table
Economic	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
Society	Owner occupied accommodation	T6.3
	Private rented accommodation	T6.3
	Social rented accommodation	T6.3
	Good general health	12.3
	Bad general health	12.3
	Unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability	T8.1
	Broadband access	T15.3
Environment	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

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

The map shows the JTI score for each ED across the counties (and parts of counties) which are in scope for the training programme.

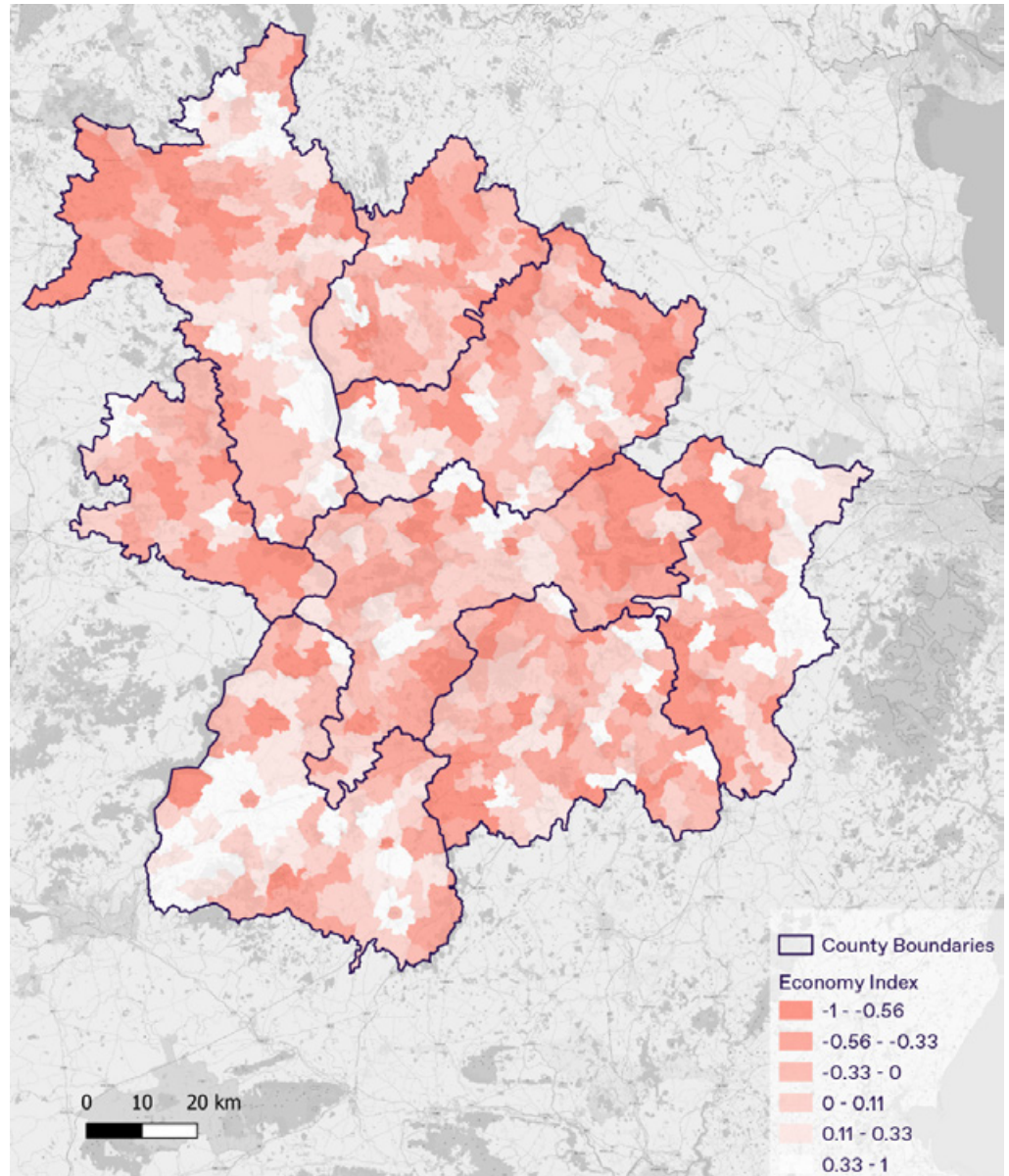


OVERALL JTI SCORE

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, alongside areas of County Longford and County Offaly tend to have lower JTI scores.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

The map shows the economy index score for each ED across the counties (and parts of counties) which are in scope for the training programme.

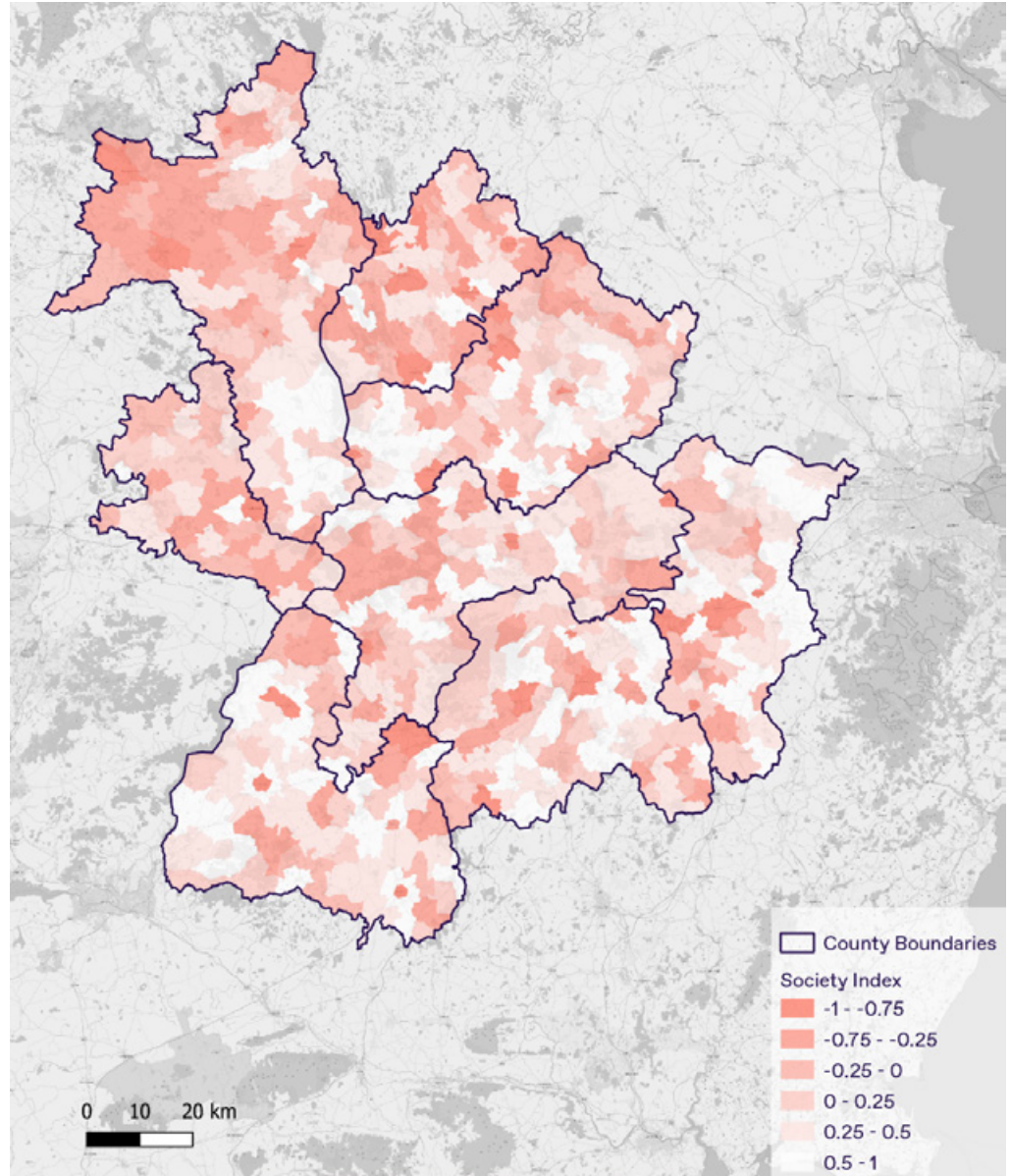


ECONOMIC INDEX SCORE

The economy index score is uneven across the Eastern and Midlands region. However, there are notable areas with higher economic index scores, including the southeast 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, East Galway and eastern County Offaly. Nevertheless, there are pockets of low economy index scores (between -1 and 0.56) across all of the counties.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

The map shows the society index score for each ED across the counties (and parts of counties) which are in scope for the training programme.

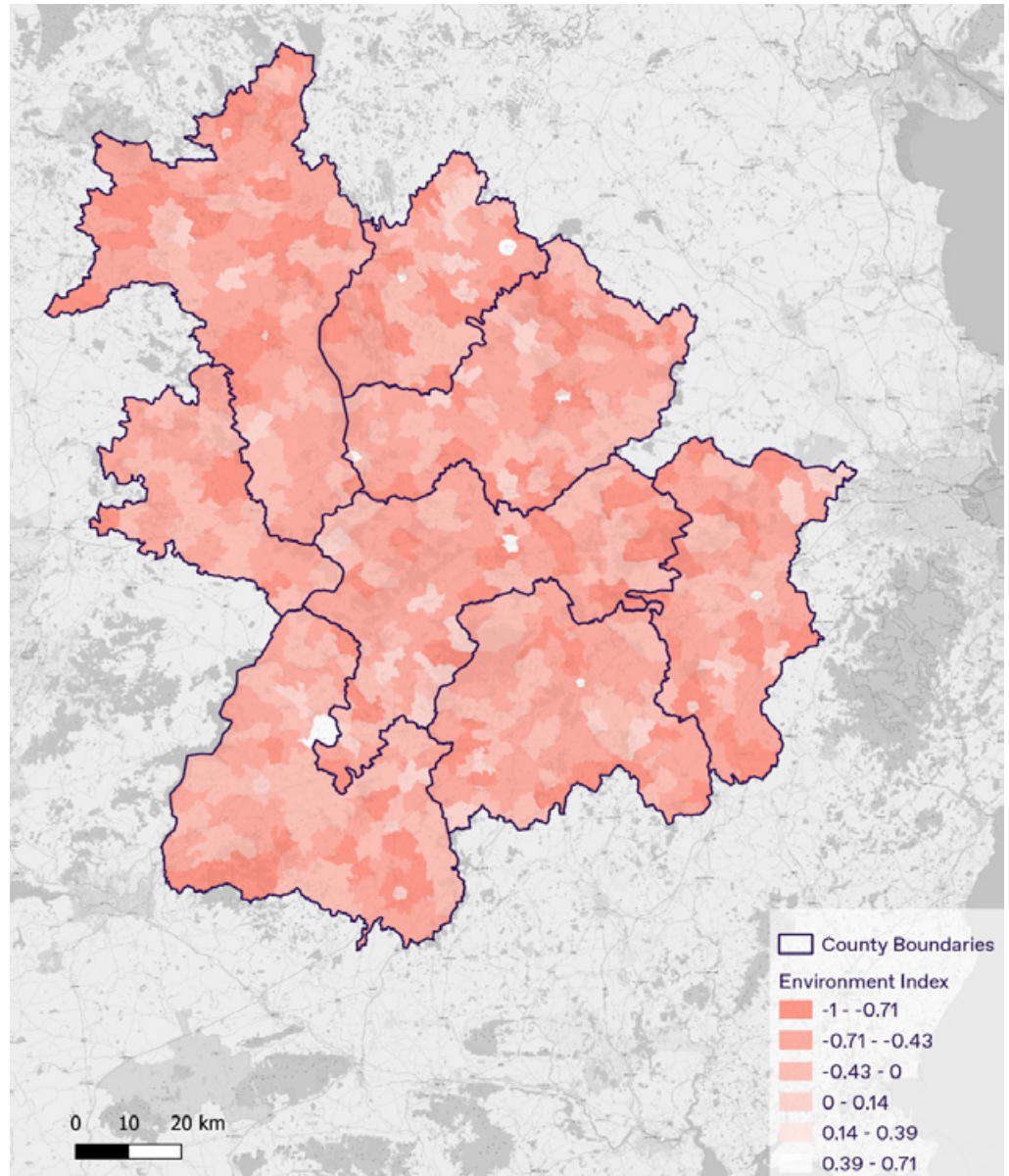


SOCIETY INDEX SCORE

The society index score is uneven across the Eastern and Midlands region. 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.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

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



ENVIRONMENT INDEX

In similarity to the economic and social index maps, there is a high degree of variation in the environment index scores across the Eastern and Midlands region and within counties. 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. Higher concentrations of lower environment index scores (between -1 and -0.71) in southern areas of North Tipperary, northwest County Roscommon and eastern County Offaly.

County-level Policy Review

COUNTY-LEVEL POLICY REVIEW

KEY FINDINGS

Our local policy review and stakeholder engagement to date has identified the following key themes shaping how Local Authorities and communities can respond to enable a just transition and take climate action:

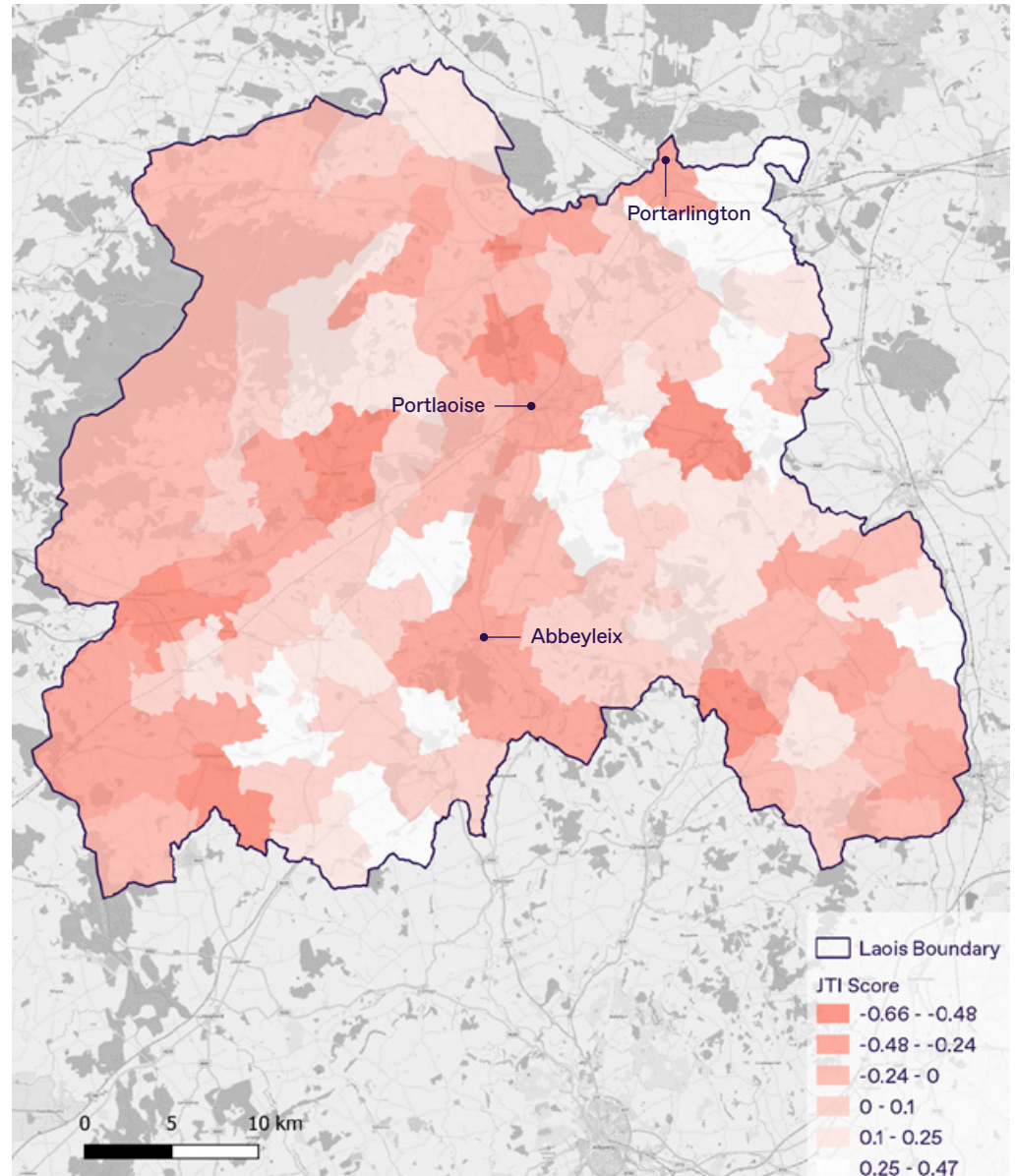
- Community Owned Energy
- New modes of tourism – active, environmental and heritage
- Sectoral innovation and SME incubation – agriculture, food, manufacturing
- Green skills – retrofit, energy, modern methods of construction
- Low carbon travel

COUNTY-LEVEL POLICY REVIEW

COUNTY LAOIS

IDENTIFIED COMMUNITIES:

Abbeyleix,
Portlaoise and
Portarlinton (one
joint Community
Activation Plan with
County Laois and
Offaly)



COUNTY LAOIS JTI COMMENTARY

On the whole there is no clear pattern of JTI scores in County Laois. However, there are areas with higher concentration of lower JTI scores in western and southeastern areas of County Laois, with some areas of central areas with lowest JTI scores. There is a higher concentration of lower JTI scores in southern and northeastern areas of County Laois.

COUNTY-LEVEL POLICY REVIEW / COUNTY LAOIS

PORTLAOISE DECARBONISATION ZONE

The County Laois County Development Plan (2021 – 2027) set a key action of supporting the facilitation of a **‘Decarbonisation Zone’ in the town of Portlaoise**, which is a National Demonstration Project for Decarbonisation Zones across Ireland. To support the implementation of the Decarbonization Zone, a **Low Carbon Implementation Group** has been 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.

A report by Siemens² suggested that there is a clear need to develop projects to decarbonise Portlaoise through:

- Community owned wind energy, through the delivery of around 5 turbines at a cost of €23.5M.
- Rooftop PV installation of around 50MW, combined with a storage element.
- Retrofitting homes built before 2000 through housing and insulation programs.

What does this mean for community climate action and the just transition?

The Portlaoise Decarbonisation Zone can enable 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.

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.

COUNTY-LEVEL POLICY REVIEW / COUNTY LAOIS

SOCIAL HOUSING RETROFITTING

The County Laois Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019 – 2024 identified a key action to become leaders in and champions of energy efficiency, ensuring that all council owned buildings are assessed for possible retrofitting.

In reality, this action has been enabled by a **€3.3m allocation of funding to Laois County Council for the retrofitting of 160 local authority-owned houses in the county**. This has been 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.

What does this mean for community climate action and the just transition?

A sizeable financial commitment by Laois County Council to retrofitting social housing 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.

This investment is part of a long term commitment to retrofit 500,000 homes across Ireland and provides a viable opportunity for County Laois and other EM CARO counties.

MULTI-MODAL COMMUNITY AND ENTERPRISE HUBS

The County Laois Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2021 – 2027 raised the importance of further supporting the Laois Hub Collective of enterprise centres to be made available to workers travelling outside of the county. This action has been followed by a €200,000 investment into further supporting the renovation and expansion of five enterprise sites across County Laois³. The investment has been made possible by the Connected Hubs Scheme.

What does this mean for community climate action and the just transition?

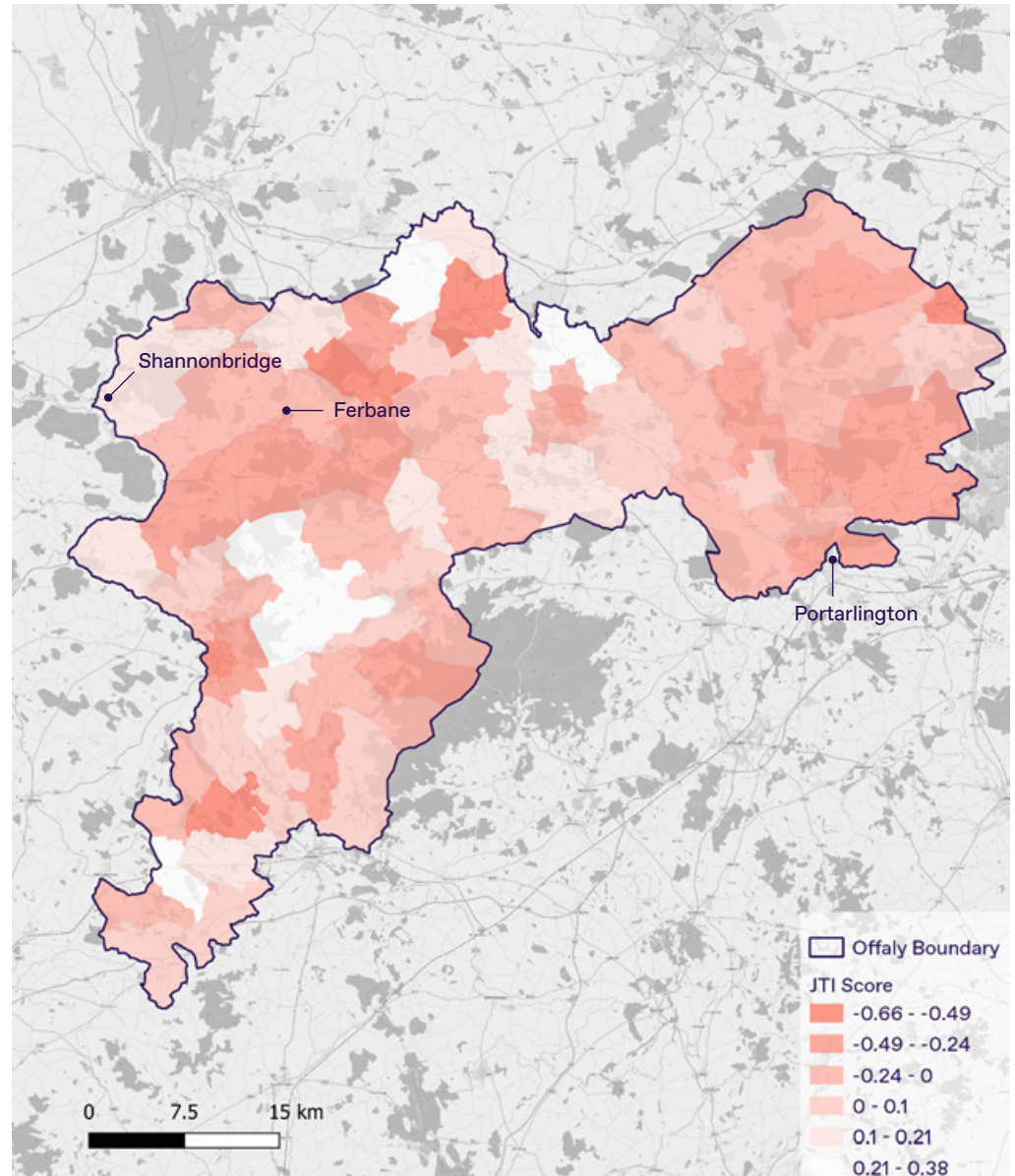
Enhanced and diversified enterprise and community hubs across County Laois can help provide the capacity for communities to co-design community energy projects, provide a space for sectoral innovation, and provide an opportunity for the food and drink supply chain to utilise.

COUNTY-LEVEL POLICY REVIEW

COUNTY OFFALY

IDENTIFIED COMMUNITIES:

Shannonbridge, Ferbane and Portarlinton (one joint Community Activation Plan with County Laois and Offaly)



COUNTY OFFALY JTI COMMENTARY

Overall, there is a higher concentration of lower JTI scores in the eastern area of County Offaly, although there are areas in western County Offaly with the lowest JTI scores. Typically, there are higher JTI scores located in central Offaly around Tullamore and Lough Boora Discovery Park.

COUNTY-LEVEL POLICY REVIEW / COUNTY OFFALY

ENABLING SECTORAL INNOVATION AND JOB CREATION: FERBANE FOOD CAMPUS AND INNOVATION CENTRE

The County Offaly Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2016-2021 outlined a key objective of supporting strategic locations to attract new investment and enterprise. One of these locations is the Ferbane Food Campus and Innovation Centre at the Ferbane Business and Technology Park (FBTP), wherein the LECP committed to promoting the expansion of site as with the AIT (Athlone Institute of Technology) Catering & Hospitality faculty.

Currently, there are currently 30 start-up food businesses which use the Ferbane Campus Kitchens at the FBTP, alongside 300 people attending food courses prior to COVID-19. The Ferbane Food Campus is currently a sectoral innovation hub and is a innovation success story in County Offaly.

The LECP objective aligns with current activity of the Ferbane Business & Technology Park CLG who are now applying for funding from the Just Transition Fund to support existing businesses and create new jobs in the food and drink by extending and modifying an existing building on the site⁴. Furthermore, the proposed modification of the site building involves installing renewable energy technologies (PV and Waste Heat Capture).

What does this mean for community climate action and the just transition?

The Ferbane Business and Technology Park, and Ferbane Food Campus, is currently job creation and innovation in the food and drink sector, alongside supporting training and skills in the sector. The Ferbane Food Campus is operate like a Multi Modal Community and Enterprise Hub, as highlighted in the County Laois section, and provides a strong vision and model which could be replicated in other counties where appropriate.

However, the potential expansion of the Ferbane Food Campus will enable further job creation and sectoral innovation, thereby providing the platform to support the just transition through food and drink supply chain development and innovation.

Committing to 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.

COUNTY-LEVEL POLICY REVIEW / COUNTY OFFALY

HARNESSING FORMER POWER ASSETS FOR HERITAGE TOURISM AND COMMUNITY ENERGY

The Dalton Centre at the former ESB West Offaly Power Station could be repurposed to draw tourists and for community usage⁵. This current development aligns to the promotion and development of industrial heritage assets outlined in the Offaly LECP 2016-2021.

What does this mean for community climate action and the just transition?

Repurposing the Dalton Centre may act as a strong pathway for creating new jobs and attracting economic benefits to the area through heritage tourism. 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.

LARGESCALE INFRASTRUCTURE AND INNOVATION: RHODE GREEN ENERGY PARK

The County Offaly Development Plan (2021-2027) identifies a key action of supporting 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 the renewable energy innovation and new job creation.

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 Region⁶. There is a potential for the co-location of renewable energy generation and storage systems at the National Grid infrastructure ready site.

COUNTY-LEVEL POLICY REVIEW / COUNTY OFFALY

What does this mean for community climate action and the just transition?

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.

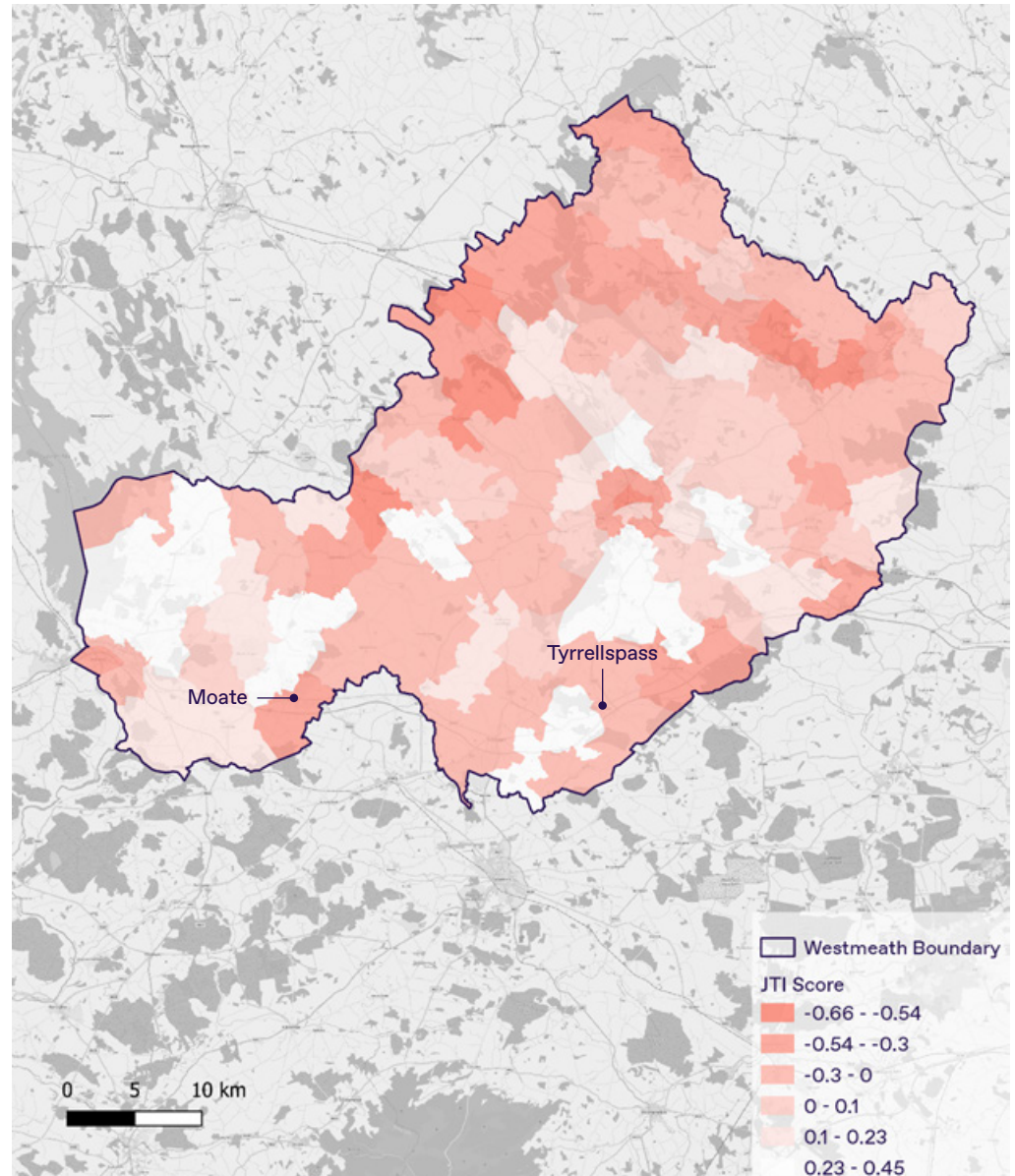
The NODF is prioritising business and community engagement to collaborate and co-design future demonstration projects at the site. Therefore the site may act as a future mechanism for supporting community energy project development and supporting the green skills agenda ⁷.

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.

COUNTY-LEVEL POLICY REVIEW

COUNTY WESTMEATH

IDENTIFIED
COMMUNITIES:
Tyrrellspass and
Moate



COUNTY WESTMEATH JTI COMMENTARY

On the whole, there is a higher concentration of higher JTI scores in western areas of County Westmeath, in particular area north of Athlone. However, there are other areas with the highest JTI scores on the peripheries of Mullingar and Tyrrellspass. There is a clear correlation with higher concentration of lower JTI scores in northern and northeastern areas of County Westmeath.

COUNTY-LEVEL POLICY REVIEW / COUNTY WESTMEATH

GREEN SKILLS AND SMART COMMUNITIES

The Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027⁸ states an ambition 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'.

What does this mean for community climate action and the just transition?

Westmeath County Council, with potential support from the EU Action for Smart Villages, is aiming to support the development of smart communities by building upon local assets to drive innovations around energy, transport, agri-food, tourism, e-services and remote working. 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).

GREEN AND HERITAGE TOURISM

As highlighted in the Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027, the county has a 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. There are currently 14 social enterprises and a wealth of community level knowledge to be accessed, from organisations such as PPNs. However, County Westmeath has a number of opportunities to enhance the tourist offer and enable job creation in communities, including the development of biodiversity, greenway and blueway trails between peatland areas.

What does this mean for community climate action and the just transition?

The policy priorities of enhancing nature based and heritage tourism in the Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027 also align to the ambitious Tourism Masterplan for the Shannon 2020 – 2030⁹. This Masterplan strongly supported 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.

COUNTY-LEVEL POLICY REVIEW / COUNTY WESTMEATH

UPSKILLING AND CAPTURING THE GREEN ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Stakeholder engagement to date has highlighted that County Westmeath has a strong base of currently unemployed tradespeople with a wealth of knowledge and experience. There is an opportunity to upskill this section of the labour market in advance, or in parallel with the wider regional energy programmes such as the Midlands Bioenergy Development Project (MBDP)¹⁰, launched in July 2022. 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.

What does this mean for community climate action and the just transition?

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 drive a new green economic development path.

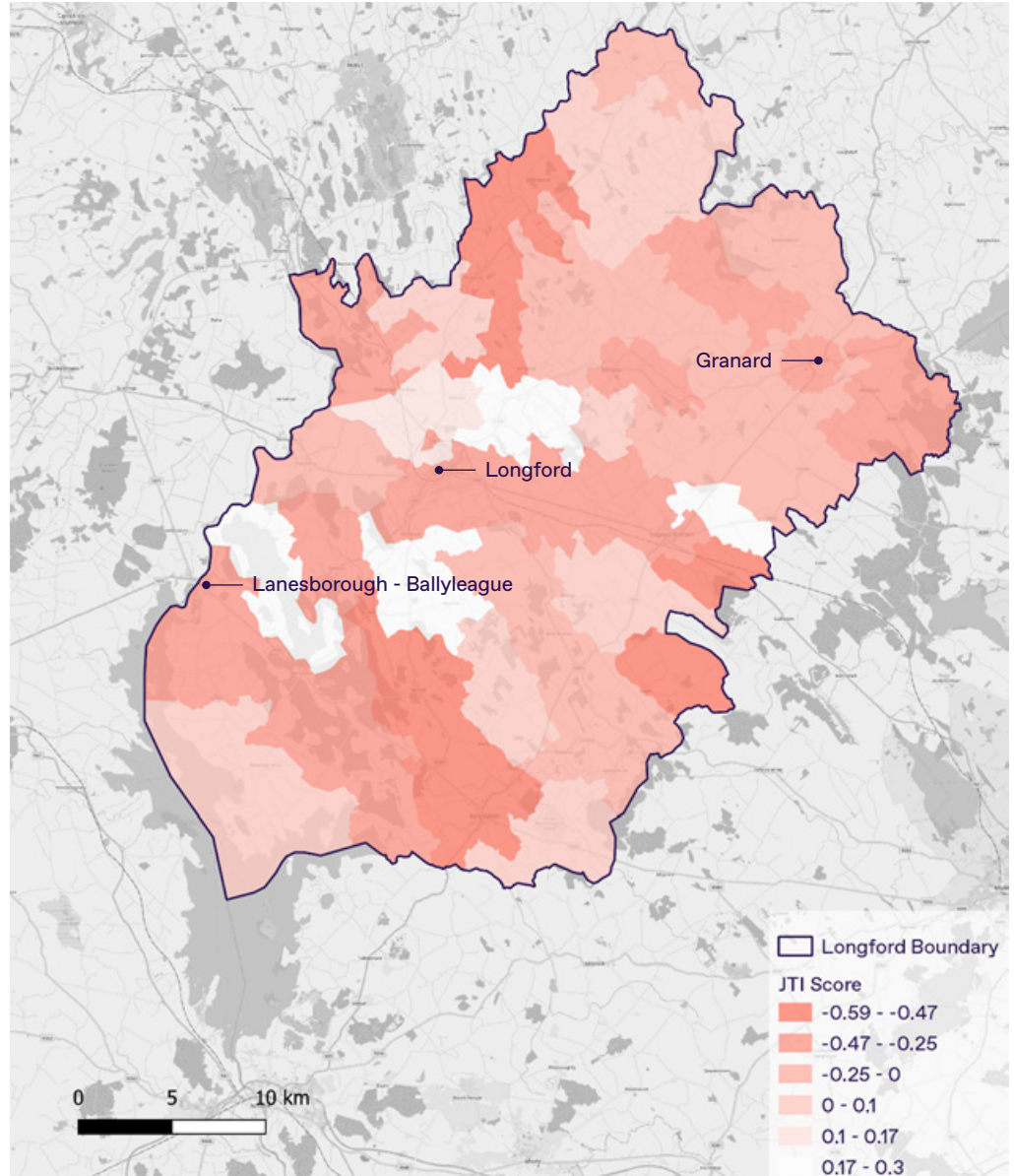
The MBDP will however need to consider the current economic and financial context relating to the green energy economy and the just transition. For example, existing social housing stock is still heavily reliant upon traditional turf heating and individuals are constrained by a lack of access to grants to outlay the initial financial investment into alternative fuels.

COUNTY-LEVEL POLICY REVIEW

COUNTY LONGFORD

IDENTIFIED COMMUNITIES:

Lanesborough – Ballyleague (extending to Cloondara to the north, Keenagh, Derryhaun and Killshee to the east and Newtowncashel to the south), Longford and Granard.



COUNTY LONGFORD JTI COMMENTARY

On the whole, the JTI map for County Longford highlights four distinctive areas with the highest JTI scores in western areas of the county, with exception of one area in the east of County Longford. There is no clear pattern of lower JTI scores across the county, however there are notable areas in southern areas of the county on the border with County Westmeath, with the exception of one area located in the north of the county.

COUNTY-LEVEL POLICY REVIEW / COUNTY LONGFORD

HARNESSING THE RIVER SHANNON FOR NEW BLUEWAY AND GREENWAY TOURISM

The Tourism Masterplan for the Shannon 2020 – 2030¹¹ highlights a clear opportunity for Lanesborough, as a key crossing-village on the River Shannon, to develop as a leading water tourism and angling destination. One key way of achieving this is through developing blueways, including the Shannon-Lough Ree Canoe Blueway from River Inny to Lanesborough. This opportunity is not limited to Lanesborough, with other locations and communities on the River Shannon and in neighbouring counties with aligned policy priorities.

Furthermore, there is an opportunity to connect the Corlea Trackway Visitor Centre with existing links to the Royal Canal Greenway, to other locations on the River Shannon such as Clondra, Lanesborough and into County Westmeath. Since opening the Royal Canal Greenway in 2021, research has highlighted that 17 new businesses have opened, 13 have pivoted to serve the increased tourism draw and has brought an economic dividend of €17.2m to businesses in the first year of opening.¹²

What does this mean for community climate action and the just transition?

The cessation of peat cutting, in particular the closure of the Lough Ree Power Station, has brought many challenges for the just transition in County Longford and more broadly across the Eastern and Midlands Region. However, 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.

The Ireland Just Transition Fund has supported this ambition through funding a feasibility into creating a Tourism Hub in Lanesborough¹³. The attraction of new tourists can bring new employment opportunities in the tourism, retail and food and drink sector across the County.

COUNTY-LEVEL POLICY REVIEW / COUNTY LONGFORD

ADAPTING LOUGH REE FOR GREEN ENERGY AND THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

The Just Transition Fund for Ireland has funded projects to explore how the assets of the former Lough Ree Power Station can be harnessed and adapted to support the just transition and climate action. The Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the County Longford Climate Change Adaptation Strategy align with this investment commitment, stating a key policy priority of exploring how the former Lough Ree Power Station can be utilised for green energy, the circular economy and tourism.

What does this mean for community climate action and the just transition?

The project with most potential impact for communities is the Lough Ree Technology Cluster Study¹⁴, which has explored four potential opportunity areas, with the ambition of creating community demonstration projects:

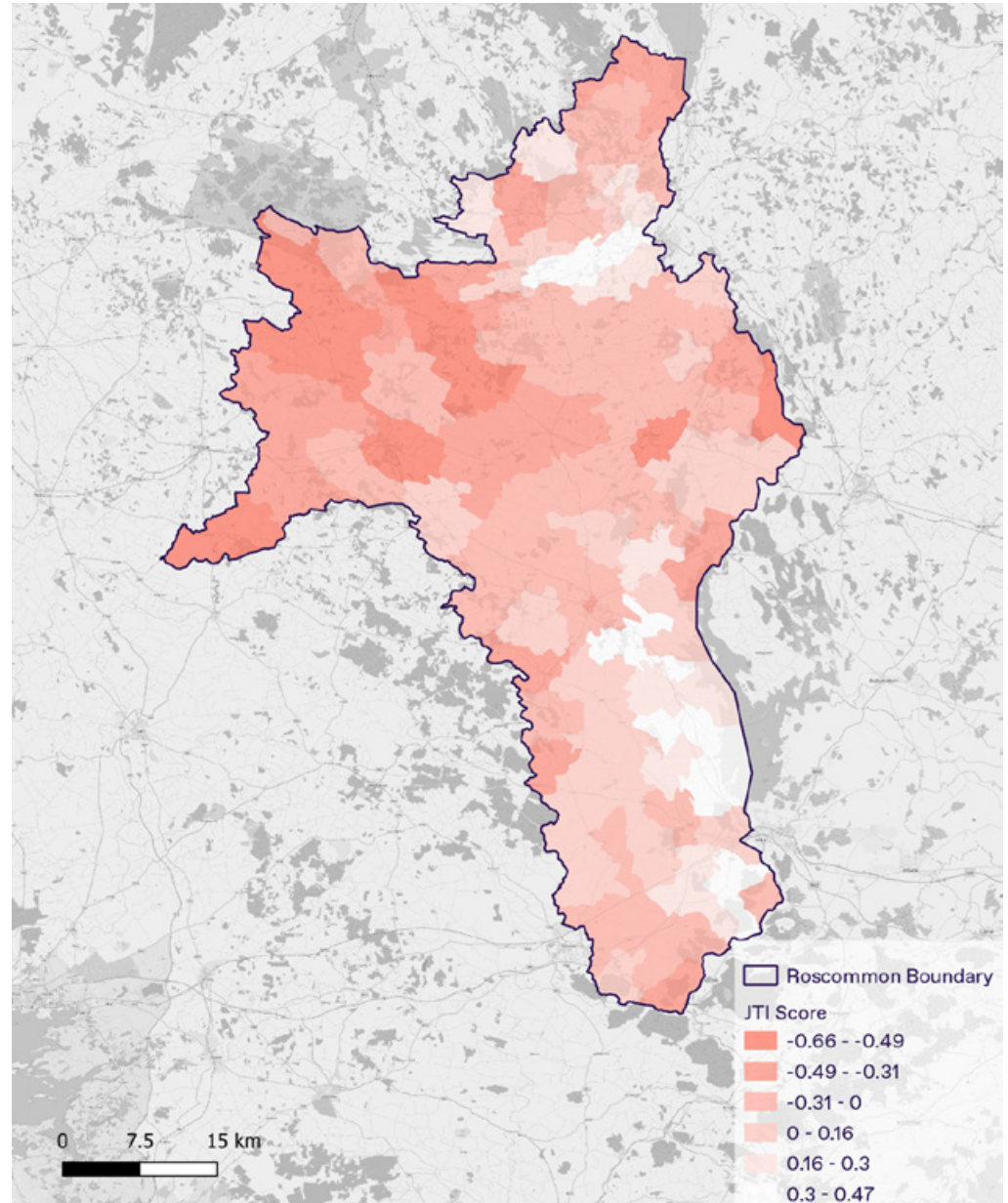
- Hydrogen production and distribution
- Insect Production for Protein, potentially from agricultural waste, food waste and distillery co-products.
- Hemp Growing and Processing
- Willow torrefication, as a viable green source and peat alternative, with between €211 - €383 profit per hectare per year.

Communities will have the opportunity to potentially undertake demonstrator projects as part of the study in 2023, harnessing the existing assets of the Lough Ree Power Station.

Community ownership of energy generated in the future will be critical for enabling a just transition in County Longford. For example, the Lanesboro Tourism Co-Operative has the ambition to enable a sustainable low carbon community as a Sustainable Energy Community (SEC) in the SEAI Network. Therefore SECs must work closely with projects such as the Lough Ree Technology Cluster Study to clearly understand the potential benefits for their respective community and potential opportunities to launch demonstrator projects in collaboration with industry.

COUNTY-LEVEL POLICY REVIEW

COUNTY ROSCOMMON



COUNTY ROSCOMMON JTI COMMENTARY

The JTI map for County Roscommon is distinctive in its concentration of JTI scores. The northwest of the county has a higher concentration of lower JTI scores around locations such as Castlebar. Higher JTI scores are concentrated in the southeastern area of County Roscommon around Lough Ree and Athlone, alongside areas in the northeast adjacent to Carrick-On-Shannon.

COUNTY-LEVEL POLICY REVIEW / COUNTY ROSCOMMON

MEETING DEMAND FOR REMOTE-WORKING AND COMMUNITY COHESION

One central outcome of the COVID-19 pandemic has been the growth of remote working in locations across Ireland and a growth in the numbers of high-skilled workers relocating to counties outside main employment locations such as Dublin. In parallel, the Just Transition Fund for Ireland has made key investments to provide new training and remote working facilities for communities impacted by the cessation of the peat cutting industry and close of associated power stations.

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. The local community was strongly impacted by the closure of the Shannonbridge Power Station. Establishing community hubs such as these is a priority in the County Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028.

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 goods¹⁵. This is a key mechanism for producers to access and enable business growth, making it an important route for driving the just transition in the local food and drink sector.

What does this mean for community climate action and the just transition?

Establishing community enterprise, remote working and training hubs is critical for providing communities with the necessary capacity to take climate action and embodies a just transition. Hubs of these nature also provide the physical mechanism for people currently located in Dublin or in similar cities to relocate to County Roscommon and other similar counties, thereby enabling the attraction of new remote workers, resulting in community growth. The Just Transition Fund for Ireland has demonstrated its commitment to funding such projects and may be committed to investing similar projects in the future.

COUNTY-LEVEL POLICY REVIEW / COUNTY ROSCOMMON

INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE TOURISM: CLOONTUSKERT

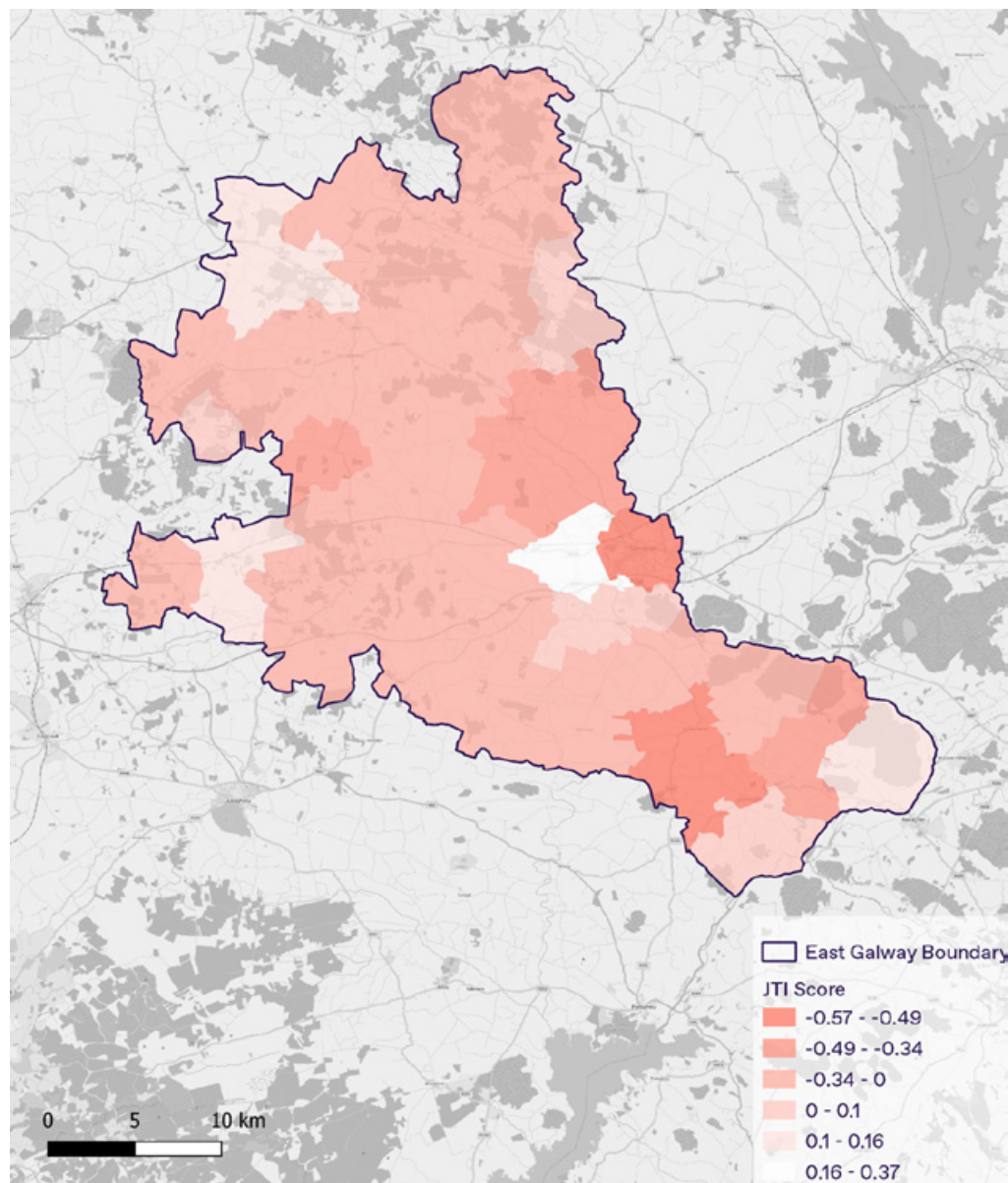
Roscommon County Council have actively demonstrated their commitment to using industrial assets for new uses and are currently undertaking a feasibility study to better understand how to create education, virtual and interactive facilities at the Cloontuskert Visitor Centre and Organic Farm to attract tourists¹⁶. The Cloontuskert Visitor Centre and Organic Farm will be part of the former Clontuskert Bord Na Mona Machinery works, providing an opportunity to create a new industrial tourist experience.

What does this mean for community climate action and the just transition?

Combined with potential wider developments in the Tourism Masterplan for the Shannon 2020 – 2030 in Lanesborough for example, provides an opportunity for communities such as Cloontuskert with existing industrial assets to explore new tourism opportunities.

COUNTY-LEVEL POLICY REVIEW

EAST GALWAY



EAST GALWAY JTI COMMENTARY

Overall the majority of East Galway scored a slightly below average JTI score (-0.34 – 0). However there are two areas with the lowest JTI score around Ballinasloe in the east alongside an area in the south of the East Galway geography, although the adjacent area west of Ballinasloe scored the highest JTI score.

COUNTY-LEVEL POLICY REVIEW / EAST GALWAY

HIDDEN HEARTLANDS TOURISM

Portumna in East Galway has been a success story in terms of drawing tourists to the town and providing a strong platform for enabling a just transition. This success has been supported by a €1.5m investment by Waterways Ireland to provide new greenway and blueway infrastructure to further attract tourists to the area, which may lead to increasing spending in the community and provide a mechanism for enabling a just transition¹⁷. Galway County Council are currently drafting a Tourism Strategy to provide strategic direction for tourism across the county and in East Galway. However, one of the strategic aims of the Draft County Galway Development Plan 2022-2028 is to capitalise upon Ireland's 'Hidden Heartlands' brand and strategy.

What does this mean for community climate action and the just transition?

The success of Portumna may be replicated in other towns with proximity to key natural attractions such as Lough Derg, and existing green and blueways. Fáilte Ireland have previously provided funding to support the growth of tourism and investment into physical infrastructure¹⁸, aligning to its 'Hidden Heartlands' brand for rural attractions and the natural environment in rural Ireland. Therefore, communities in towns may have the opportunity, as demonstrated by the recent investment in Portumna, to access funding and provide infrastructure to support the attraction of tourists.

CREATING NEW MULTI-FUNCTIONAL HUBS: THE PULSE HUB, BALLINASLOE

In relation to the theme of creating community and remote-working hubs in County Roscommon, Ballinasloe Area Community Development Ltd were also 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. 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. This investment and project is aligned to the policy priorities of the Draft County Galway Development Plan 2022-2028, which recognises the importance of establishing multi-functional hubs as a clear opportunity to enable economic diversification and support the just transition in East Galway.

What does this mean for community climate action and the just transition?

In parallel with community hub developments in County Roscommon, The Pulse Hub provides lessons for community climate action by aiming to reduce commuting of over 40

COUNTY-LEVEL POLICY REVIEW / EAST GALWAY

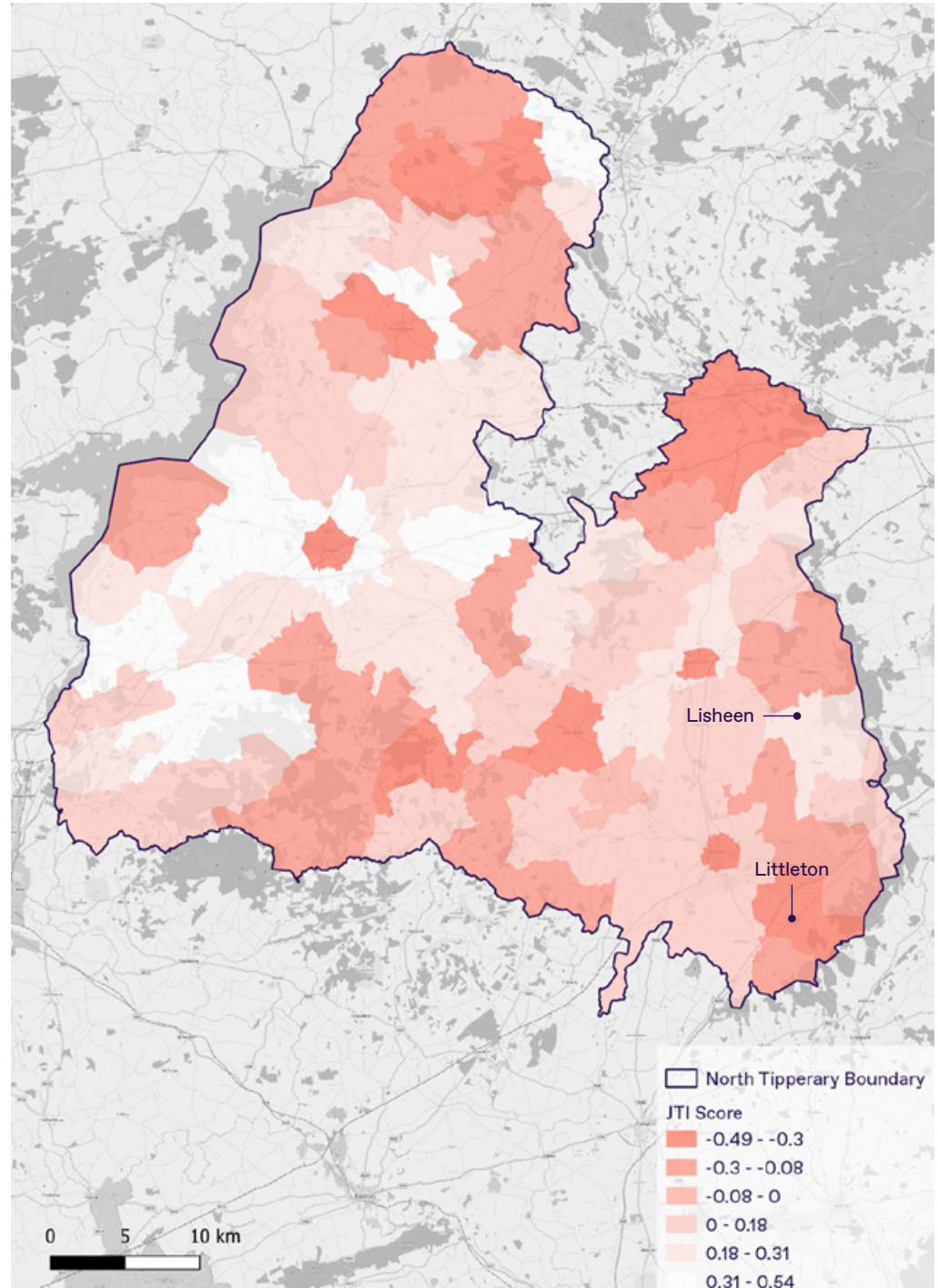
people and providing EV charging points in partnership with the local SEC. In addition, it will directly contribute to the just transition by creating opportunities for retaining and remote working for former ESB and Bord na Mona employees for example. **This model of multi-functional hub provides clear lessons for replication in areas impacted by the cessation of the peat cutting industry.**

COUNTY-LEVEL POLICY REVIEW

NORTH TIPPERARY

IDENTIFIED COMMUNITIES:

Lisheen and Littleton



NORTH TIPPERARY JTI COMMENTARY

The JTI scores vary across the geography of North Tipperary, although higher JTI scores are concentrated in western and central areas of North Tipperary. Lower JTI scores are dispersed across the geography, however notable areas include Roscrea in the north and across southern areas of North Tipperary.

COUNTY-LEVEL POLICY REVIEW / NORTH TIPPERARY

DRIVING COMMUNITY ENERGY PROJECT DELIVERY

The Energy Communities Tipperary Co-operative (ECTC) has been enabling 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.

More recently, 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.

The Draft County Tipperary Development Plan 2022-2028 highlights the importance of enabling community energy projects and commits to supporting the wide renewable energy innovation ecosystem in the County. 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.

What does this mean for community climate action and the just transition?

According to our stakeholder engagement, there are around 36,000 community voluntary groups in Ireland, of which 11,000 have a legal form such as a charitable status, with even fewer having a company limited by guarantee (CLG) legal form. Establishing a community and voluntary group with a CLG provides a greater ability and capacity to provide stronger support to communities aiming to undertake retrofitting or other energy projects. For example, the ECTC supports 15 communities across County Tipperary and provides a strong model for other EM CARO counties to adopt.

COUNTY-LEVEL POLICY REVIEW / NORTH TIPPERARY

LOW CARBON AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY INNOVATION

In addition to North Tipperary being an area of increasing community energy projects and low carbon investment, there is also a strong low carbon and circular innovation ecosystem in North Tipperary. The Draft County Tipperary Development Plan 2022-2028 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 plan¹⁹.

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 cooperatives²⁰. The Cloughjordon Ecovillage presents a strong model of what communities in North Tipperary, and across the Eastern and Midlands Region, can aspire to achieve and learn from.

What does this mean for community climate action and the just transition?

An exciting example of innovation which can provide a foundation for climate action and the just transition is the €13m Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Energy, Nenagh. The centre will be a demonstrator facility and is committed to supporting learning and education for sustainable energy technologies, and will be housed in a demonstrator building. Therefore, communities may have the opportunity to work closely with the centre to learn about the application of renewable technologies and potentially partner to drive community energy projects.

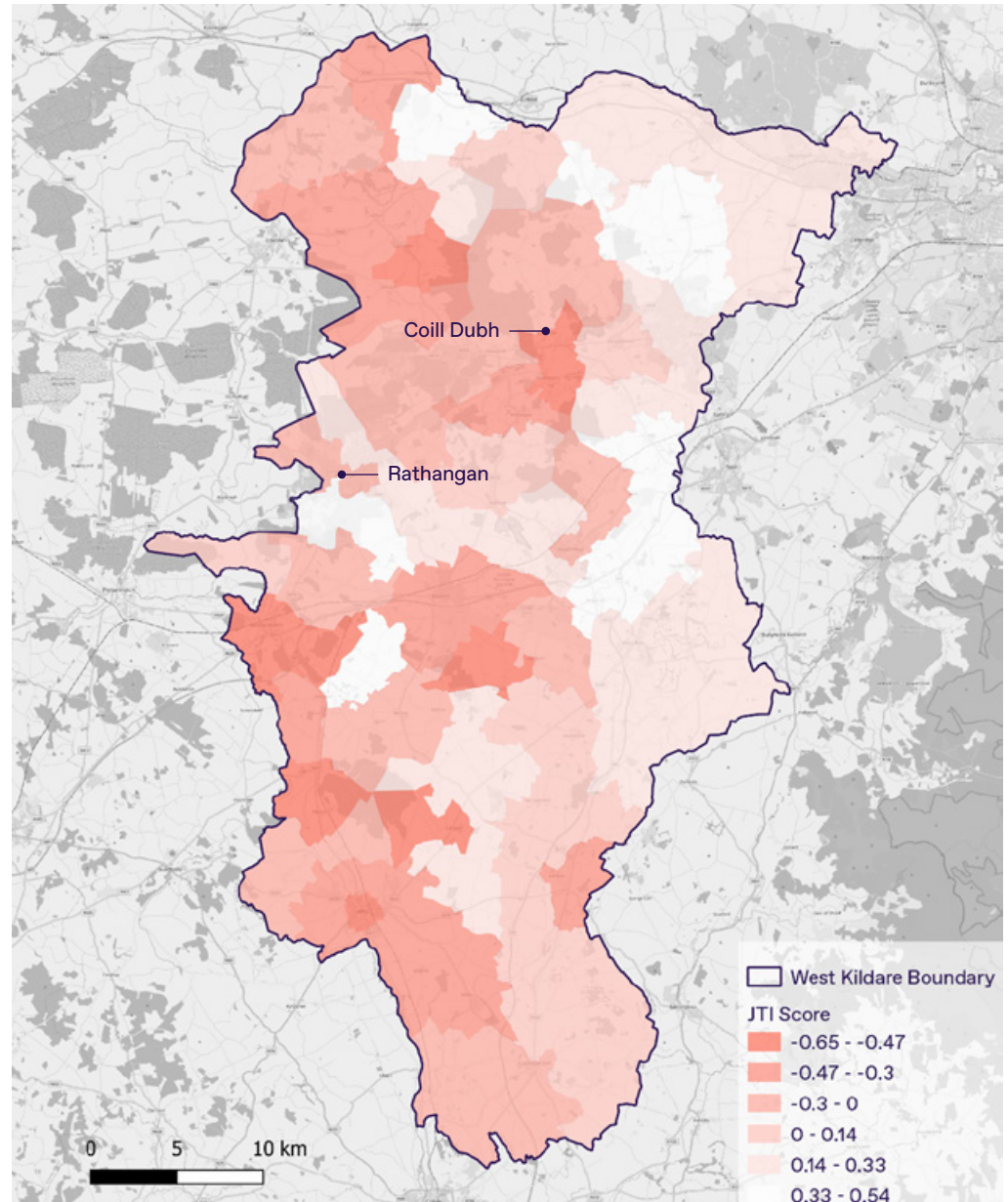
The low carbon and circular economy is further supported by the National Bioeconomy Campus at Lisheen, and Gorteen College with a strong specialism in generating graduates with agricultural and green skills. Therefore, North Tipperary has a strong supply of skilled labour to support climate action and just transition projects focused upon low carbon and the circular economy.

COUNTY-LEVEL POLICY REVIEW

WEST KILDARE

IDENTIFIED COMMUNITIES:

Coill Dubh and Rathangan.



WEST KILDARE JTI COMMENTARY

On the whole there is a higher concentration of lower JTI scores in the western areas of West Kildare, especially in the central location around Monasterevin, Athy and the border with County Laois. Higher JTI scores are primarily concentrated in the north of the West Kildare geography and eastern areas of the county with greater proximity to Dublin, reflecting the need to focus activity upon the western areas of County Kildare

Urban Foresight's West Kildare Just Transition Plan²¹ identified three key themes and associated actions to enable communities to drive the just transition and to take climate action, aligning with the County Kildare this section will explore these in further detail as they provide key lessons for Coill Dubh and Rathangan.

COUNTY-LEVEL POLICY REVIEW / WEST KILDARE

NATURE AND HERITAGE BASED TOURISM

West Kildare has the opportunity to drive nature and heritage based tourism, drawing upon peatlands and bogs of the area which already provide an attractive offer. A range of actions were identified in the West Kildare JTP shaping climate action and the just transition in West Kildare, including:

1. Creating a new National Park for Ireland (Priority Action).
2. Establishing community owned marinas and facilities.
3. Establishing a nature and activity centres network.
4. Creation of an oral and visual history project, drawing upon West Kildare's industrial heritage.
5. Providing a new Ballydermo Camp experience, utilising derelict buildings at the site.
6. Scoping a 'Kildare 300' km tourist route.
7. Pop-up or touring exhibitions at Bord na Mona built infrastructure sites.

What does this mean for community climate action and the just transition?

Creating stronger community infrastructure can provide the mechanism for communities to capitalise upon large economic benefits from the associated nature and heritage tourism appeal. Constructing, reinstating, mapping and publicising access routes can significantly stimulate and enable tourist and visitor interest even in natural areas considerably more remote than the turbary landscape of West Kildare.

Drawing in greater tourist and visitor numbers provides the economic base for local and community-owned assets to be successful and act as a catalyst to drive the just transition. For example, the Connecting Communities with Peatlands project, operated by the Community Wetlands Forum, is aiming to provide communities with support and guidance on how to harness peatland areas for new social and economic benefits.²²

COUNTY-LEVEL POLICY REVIEW / WEST KILDARE

BUSINESS AND SKILLS

Communities in West Kildare must be able to benefit from new business and income opportunities, whether in the tourist industry, existing industries like logistics and food and drink, or in emerging and growing industries such as green energy and digital.

Firstly, there is a need to help communities and individuals turn ideas into planned and funded projects or businesses. Secondly, therefore is a need for further support to help individuals access new jobs and benefit from economic change and the transition to net zero. The Local Just Transition Plan for West Kildare proposed a range of actions to enable this:

- Encourage new community development groups to emerge (Priority Action).
- Improving community skills through ensuring ‘One-stop shops’ be centres for skills matching, skills training, and remote working.
- 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.
- Establish a community project co-ordinator to represent projects in technical discussions and to help share information and resources between projects.
- Secure funding for business space to accommodate new business growth.

What does this mean for community climate action and the just transition?

These actions will enable communities to establish stronger local economies and thereby enable a just transition in West Kildare. However, there is a need for communities to collaborate beyond West Kildare, working in collaboration with similar communities and businesses in County Offaly for example, as new economic opportunities do not necessarily align to county council boundaries.

COUNTY-LEVEL POLICY REVIEW / WEST KILDARE

ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND GENERATION

The Local Just Transition Plan for West Kildare proposed a series of actions to drive energy efficiency and the generation of clean energy in the area, including:

- Provide community retrofit support by accessing funding from the JTF to establish a funded retrofit initiative in communities most affected by industrial decline.
- 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
- Learning from Accelerate Green in County Offaly, establishing an Energy Skills Programme through a network of activity.
- Utilise one-stop-shops to create a Community Energy Company, thereby consolidating multiple SECs into one.

What does this mean for community climate action and the just transition?

Communities have an important role to play in meeting energy efficiency and generation targets in West Kildare, as highlighted by the vital work being undertaken by the 25 Sustainable Energy Communities (SECs) across County Kildare. All of these actions recommended into the Local JTP for West Kildare enable communities to take stronger climate action and enable the just transition.

EU, National, and Regional Background

EU, NATIONAL, AND REGIONAL BACKGROUND

EUROPEAN UNION

EU: EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL

Strategic Themes

To achieve climate neutrality by 2050, the European Green Deal is taking action across several key themes:

- Climate
- Environment and Oceans
- Energy
- Transport
- Agriculture
- Finance and regional development
- Industry
- Research and Innovation

Objectives

Climate change and environmental degradation are an existential threat to Europe and the world. To overcome these challenges, the European Green Deal has an objective to enable the EU to transform into a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy, ensuring:

- No net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050
- Economic growth decoupled from resource use
- No person and no place left behind

Key Priorities

As highlighted in the strategic themes above, a key priority of the European Green Deal is providing the necessary finance to enable regions and communities to transition to climate neutrality. One key way the EU is ensuring this for member states and regions is through the EU Just Transition Fund Mechanism.

EU, NATIONAL, AND REGIONAL BACKGROUND / EUROPEAN UNION

EU: JUST TRANSITION MECHANISM

Strategic Themes

There are three pillars of the Just Transition Mechanism to enable a just transition of regions and communities between 2021 - 2027:

1/ A new Just Transition Fund

The fund will alleviate the socio-economic costs triggered by climate transition, supporting the economic diversification and reconversion of the territories concerned. This means backing productive investments in small and medium-sized enterprises, the creation of new firms, research and innovation, environmental rehabilitation, clean energy, up- and reskilling of workers, job-search assistance and active inclusion of jobseekers programmes, as well as the transformation of existing carbon-intensive installations when these investments lead to substantial emission cuts and job protection.

2/ InvestEU Just Transition Scheme

It will be implemented under the InvestEU programme across the four policy windows. This means that InvestEU can support investments in the framework of the Territorial Just Transition Plan (TJTP) in a wider range of projects, such as projects for energy and transport infrastructure, including gas infrastructure and district heating, but also decarbonisation projects, economic diversification and social infrastructure

In parallel with the Invest EU Just Transition Scheme, an InvestEU Advisory Hub:

1. Supports the identification, preparation, development, structuring, procurement and implementation of investment projects
2. Enhances the capacity of promoters and financial intermediaries to implement financing and investment operations
3. Supports awareness raising and preparatory activities for investment areas that show a clear market gap

3/ A new Public Sector Loan Facility

(leveraged by the European Investment Bank)

This instrument targets public entities, providing support to projects that do not generate a sufficient stream of own resources to be financed commercially. Projects are expected to include investments in all types of public infrastructures, such as in the area of energy and transport, district heating networks, energy efficiency measures including renovation of buildings, as well as social infrastructure.

A **Just Transition Platform** helps EU Member States and regions unlock support available through the Just Transition Mechanism (JTM). It ensures that all stakeholders have the guidance, information and knowledge they need to support Europe's just transition to a sustainable, climate-neutral economy.

Established in 2020, the **JTP** is a single access point to information about the support for

EU, NATIONAL, AND REGIONAL BACKGROUND / EUROPEAN UNION

the EU territories most affected by the transition. It provides technical assistance and advice, including a dedicated helpdesk. The Platform also promotes sharing of knowledge and exchanges of best practices to a wide range of stakeholders, particularly in regions dependent on fossil fuels or carbon-intensive industries.

In order to unlock and implement JTM resources, EU Member States must prepare strategic Territorial Just Transition Plans (TJTPs).

Objective

The Just Transition Fund Mechanism is a key tool to ensure that the transition towards a climate-neutral economy happens in a fair way. It provides targeted support, as listed above, to help mobilise around €55 billion over the period 2021-2027 in the most affected regions across the EU, to alleviate the socio-economic impact of the transition.

Key Priorities

The priorities of the Just Transition Mechanism are focused upon supporting people and citizens, companies and sectors, member states and regions to enable a just transition across all EU territories. More specifically:

People and Citizens

- facilitating employment opportunities in new sectors and those in transition
- offering re-skilling opportunities
- improving energy-efficient housing
- investing to fight energy poverty
- facilitating access to clean, affordable and secure energy

Companies and sectors

- supporting the transition to low-carbon technologies and economic diversification based on climate-resilient investments and jobs
- creating attractive conditions for public and private investors
- providing easier access to loans and financial support
- investing in the creation of new firms, SMEs and start-ups
- investing in research and innovation activities

Member States and regions

- supporting the transition to low-carbon and climate-resilient activities
- creating new jobs in the green economy
- investing in public and sustainable transport
- providing technical assistance
- investing in renewable energy sources
- improving digital connectivity
- providing affordable loans to local public authorities
- improving energy infrastructure, district heating and transportation network

EU, NATIONAL, AND REGIONAL BACKGROUND

NATIONAL

IRELAND CLIMATE ACTION PLAN (ICAP) 2021, GOVERNMENT OF IRELAND

Strategic Themes and Key Priorities

The ICAP covers a range of strategic themes as an action-led roadmap:

Citizen Engagement and the Just Transition

The ICAP clearly prioritises establishing a National Dialogue Climate Action (NDCA) on a rolling basis to obtain input key challenges facing individuals and communities to enable a just transition. The NDCA engagement will be complemented by a set of indicators for measuring a just transition, to be developed by the National Economic and Social Council (NESC), the EPA and wider stakeholders.

Pathways and Investment

The ICAP summarises the decarbonisation pathways which creates the least burden and creates the greatest opportunity for Ireland, building upon the ICAP 2019. These pathways have core and further actions outlined with associated costs across electricity, transport, buildings, industry and agriculture. The ICAP also notes that the total public investment will be €165 billion over the period 2021 to 2030, as outlined in the National Development Plan for Ireland.

Electricity

The ICAP highlights that there needs to be 62%-81% reduction in emissions by 2030 when generating electricity and to increase the proportion of electricity generated by renewable energy to up to 80%. The ICAP sets out a commitment to support microgeneration schemes for householders, business, communities to generate electricity and supply the grid. The ICAP also notes a priority to improve storage and deploy biomethane and green hydrogen to generate electricity.

Enterprise

The ICAP notes that enterprise needs to reduce remissions by 24-37% by 2030. The ICAP prioritises decarbonising businesses as a key way of meeting their decarbonisation objectives, noting that the biggest share of enterprise emissions comes from a small number of large companies in the manufacturing sector, mostly in alumina, food processing, beverages and cement. The IDA (Industrial Development Agency), Enterprise Ireland and the SEAI will work with industry to enable its decarbonisation.

Retrofitting, renewable energy, clean mobility and sustainable agriculture are key priority areas for the green economy. Carbon-neutral heating and using more sustainable building materials are also priority areas of decarbonisation of businesses.

The Irish Government will also produce a Climate Toolkit for business.

EU, NATIONAL, AND REGIONAL BACKGROUND / NATIONAL

Areas of decarbonisation

The ICAP includes the following areas of decarbonisation which are key priorities for Irish Government are buildings (44-56% by 2030), transport (42-50% by 2030), agriculture (22-30% by 2030) and land use (37-58% by 2030).

Circular economy

The ICAP makes reference to how the circular economy is key for decarbonisation and tackling climate change, in alignment with wider policies and strategies to be set by the Irish Government including the Whole-of-Government Circular Economy Strategy, the Circular Economy Bill 2021 and a forthcoming Bioeconomy Action Plan. The ICAP sets the targets of reducing food waste by 50%, all plastic packaging is reusable or recyclable by 2030, increase capacity to recycle packaging waste by 70% by 2030, and plastic package waste by 55% by 2030.

Governance

The ICAP outlines a clear governance structure for delivering the ICAP actions:

- A Climate Action Delivery Board will hold each Department and public body accountable for the delivery of actions set out in the Climate Action Plan and will present a delivery report to Government each quarter.
- The Government will annually update the new Climate Action Plan and the roadmap of actions to reflect developments in the previous year, developments in technology and research in relation to climate action and to ensure the required emissions reductions are achieved.
- The 2022 Plan will reflect the legally binding carbon budgets and sectoral ceilings which will be adopted by Government following consideration by the Oireachtas.

Sustainable Development and International Climate Action

The actions outlined in the ICAP are aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals and achieving the 3030 agenda for Sustainable Development, which remains a key priority for the Irish Government.

Adaptation

The ICAP makes the case for increased policy attention for ensuring the delivery of and review of plans and actions outlined in the statutory five-year National Adaptation Framework (NAF), published in 2018. In particular, the NAF recognised the importance of the critical role to be played by government-funded local authority Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs).

EU, NATIONAL, AND REGIONAL BACKGROUND / NATIONAL

Figure 1: Proposed Emissions Reductions by Sector, ICAP 2021

Objectives

The ICAP, published in 2021, outlines an action-led roadmap to halve emissions in Ireland by 2030 and reach net zero no later than 2050. The table below sets out the sectoral ambitions for emissions reduction:

Sector	2018 emissions (MtCO ₂ eq.)	2030 target emissions (MtCO ₂ eq.)	% reduction relative to 2018
Electricity	10.5	2-4	62-81%
Transport	12	6-7	42-50%
Buildings	9	4-5	44-56%
Industry	7.9	5-6	24-37%
Agriculture	235	16-18	22-30%
LULUCF (Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry)	4.8	2-3	37-58%

As noted earlier, The NDCA plays a central role to inform the actions set out in the ICAP and is of strong relevance to informing this project. The vision and purpose of the NDCA will be realised through three key objectives:

1. Improving climate literacy by creating awareness about, and promoting understanding of climate change.
2. Funding, supporting, and enabling active engagement in climate action at a local and national level, conducting public consultations, and promoting self-efficacy by empowering the public to adopt more sustainable behaviours.
3. Capturing insights from engagement activities and conducting social and behavioural research to measure behavioural change and provide an evidence base to inform the Climate Action Plan and sectoral climate policies.

EU, NATIONAL, AND REGIONAL BACKGROUND / NATIONAL

DRAFT TERRITORIAL JUST TRANSITION PLAN (2021), GOVERNMENT OF IRELAND

Strategic Themes

The Draft Territorial Just Transition Plan is a statutory document to be provided to the EU to unlock €84 million from the EU Just Transition Fund. The draft plan:

- Outlines how Ireland will transition to meet the EU's 2030 targets for energy and climate, and meet the EU's 2050 climate neutrality target via the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021; National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030; Just Transition Commissioner; Climate Action Plan 2021.
- Identifies the territories most negatively affected by the transition, highlighting peat resources and Bord na Móna and alongside Power Stations in the Midlands Region as key locations and assets at risk, concluding that the Midlands NUTS 3 counties (East Galway, North Tipperary, Longford, Laois, Offaly, Westmeath, West Kildare) alongside County Roscommon, as the most negatively impacted territories.
- Assesses challenges and recommends actions for enabling the Midlands Region Just Transition.
- Sets out the governance mechanisms for the Midlands Region Just Transition process.

Objectives

The Draft Territorial Just Transition Plan highlights four Development Needs for the Midlands Region to address in order to meet the EU's 2030 and 2050 targets:

- Modernise the Business Environment and Create Employment Opportunities
- Enhance the Skills Profile
- Focus on Environmental Sustainability and Industrial Heritage
- Enhancing potential of region as a place to live and work

EU, NATIONAL, AND REGIONAL BACKGROUND / NATIONAL

Key Priorities

In association with these Development Needs, are key actions to be taken forward:

Development Need 1 Modernise the Business Environment and Create Employment Opportunities	Action 1: Midlands Green Energy Cluster: Dedicated Staff and Development Plan
	Action 2: Midlands Green Energy Cluster: Business Supports and Advice
	Action 4: Entrepreneurship and Social Enterprise Training & Support for Low- Carbon Services
	Action 12: Expand Midlands Retrofit Programme to Private Housing and Retrofitting Public Buildings
	Action 13: Supporting Smart Specialisation Strategies
Development Need 2 Enhance the Skills Profile	Action 3: Midlands Green Energy Cluster: Training Centres of Excellence
	Action 5: Green Ambassador Enhanced Employment Scheme
	Action 6: Career Guidance Personnel for Secondary Level Students
Development Need 3 Promoting Environmental Sustainability and Industrial Heritage	Action 11: Developing the Midland's Tourism Potential
	Action 10: Extension of Peatlands Restoration
	Action 15: Support for the EU LIFE Project/Agricultural Training
Development Need 4 Enhancing potential of region as a place to live and work	Action 7: Scoping for Development Sites - FDI, Business and Community Facilities
	Action 8: Repurposing of Existing Sites - FDI, Business and Community Facilities
	Action 9: Community Support Fund for Microenterprise, Active Mobility & Circular Economy
	Action 14: Improved Local Mobility

EU, NATIONAL, AND REGIONAL BACKGROUND / NATIONAL

OUR RURAL FUTURE: RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY 2021-2025, GOVERNMENT OF IRELAND

Strategic Themes

Our Rural Future addresses the following strategic themes:

- Optimising the opportunities for rural communities from high speed broadband.
- Supporting improved quality employment and career opportunities in rural areas.
- Assisting the regeneration, repopulation and development of rural towns and villages.
- Enhancing the participation, leadership and resilience of rural communities.
- Enhancing public services in rural areas.
- Supporting the sustainability of Agriculture, the Marine environment and Forestry.
- Supporting the sustainability of island and coastal communities.
- Nurturing culture and heritage.
- Supporting a Just Transition to a climate neutral economy.

Objectives

Objectives set out in Our Rural Future cover a wide range of thematic objectives across the key thematic areas listed above. However, the policy document highlights how the Irish Government is focused upon enabling a Just Transition to a climate neutral economy in rural communities. The aim of the Irish Government is to work closely with rural communities and businesses to tackle climate challenges and unlock economic opportunities in key areas such as retrofitting, renewable energy generation, carbon mitigation and smart farming practices.

Key Priorities

To deliver the objectives associated with the strategic themes, the Irish Government states it will:

- Invest significantly in remote working infrastructure to provide an opportunity for people to continue to live in rural communities while following their career ambitions.
- Invest in rural towns and villages as hubs of economic and social activity.
- Transform the opportunity for the diversification of rural economies, including through the delivery of high speed broadband to every part of the country.
- Adopt a place-based approach to rural development to meet the needs of different areas in a holistic way and maximise the impact of investment in those areas.

EU, NATIONAL, AND REGIONAL BACKGROUND / NATIONAL

- Invest in and empower rural communities to design and deliver responses that meet their local needs.
- Actively involve young people in rural areas in decisions that affect them and their future.

All of these actions are key priorities for the Irish Government and is closely aligned to enabling the Just Transition of communities across the EM CARO geography.

IRISH GOVERNMENT: SOCIAL INCLUSION AND COMMUNITY ACTIVATION PROGRAMME (SICAP)

Overview

The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2018-2022 is funded by the Irish Government through the Department of Rural and Community Development and co-funded by the European Social Fund. SICAP funding has been extended until December 2023 and more importantly, the Irish Government have stated that they envisage that a new programme will be implemented in January 2024. Therefore, SICAP can play an important part in supporting community climate action and the just transition across the EM CARO region.

Objectives

SICAP has two clear objectives. Firstly, to support communities and target groups to engage with relevant stakeholders in addressing social exclusion and equality issues, developing the capacity of local community groups and creating sustainable communities. Secondly, to support disadvantaged individuals to improve quality of life through the provision of lifelong learning and labour market support.

EU, NATIONAL, AND REGIONAL BACKGROUND / NATIONAL

SEAI COMMUNITY GRANT

Overview

The SEAI Community Grant programme supports new approaches to achieving energy efficiency in Irish communities. Each year SEAI supports multiple community projects across Ireland, managed by registered SEAI Project Coordinators.

Objectives

The SEAI Community grant aims to deliver energy savings to homeowners, community groups, private sector organisations and public sector bodies, thereby supporting local climate action and the just transition. In terms of measures, the grant supports:

- Building Fabric Upgrades
- Technology and System upgrades
- Integration of Control Systems
- Integration of renewable energy sources
- Domestic Combined Fabric Upgrade
- Single Building Demonstration projects

Taking a new collaborative approach

The grant supports projects which is highly collaborative in nature, and SEI Project Coordinators must be able to demonstrate this when supporting the application. Projects can be delivered more efficiently and have greater economic and carbon reduction impact if multiple organisations are involved in a community energy scheme.

Example organisations include GAA clubs and other sports facilities, County Councils, retail outlets, factories, community centres, not-for-profit organisations and charities, hotels, public sector facilities and schools.

EU, NATIONAL, AND REGIONAL BACKGROUND / NATIONAL

RENEWABLE ELECTRICITY SUPPORT SCHEME (RESS)

Overview

The Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) has been designed to promote investment in renewable energy generation in Ireland. Ireland has set a target of 80% renewable electricity, and an EU-wide renewable energy target of 32%, by 2030. The RESS is based upon competitive auctions which are held throughout the RESS.

Objectives

Alongside enabling increased renewable energy generation in Ireland, it aims to help deliver

1. Community ownership and partnership and
2. Increased renewable technology diversity

Key Priorities

Community involvement in the RESS is critical for its success and is a funding arrangements which is important for communities across the EM CARO region to consider. Therefore there are two main strands in which communities can be involved:

Community – Led projects, meeting the following criteria:

- Application must be made in conjunction with a Sustainable Energy Community (SEC)
- Project size must be between 0.5 and 5MW
- Fully (100%) owned by a Renewable Energy Community (REC) - primary purpose is community benefit (environmental, economic or social) rather than financial profit
- Community group must be based on open and voluntary participation
- Participation based on local domicile (within close proximity to the RESS project)

Community Benefit Funds

A mandatory Community Benefit Fund must be provided by all projects successful in a RESS auction. The contribution is to be set at €2/MWh. The Fund will be aligned to incentivise investment in local renewable energy, energy efficiency measures and climate action initiatives.

EU, NATIONAL, AND REGIONAL BACKGROUND / NATIONAL

The community benefit funds under RESS-1 will deliver approximately €4.5million a year to sustainable community initiatives targeted at those communities living in close proximity to the RESS-1 Projects. The RESS-1 community benefits funds highlight the importance of the RESS scheme for communities aiming to take greater control over renewable energy generation and the potential for supporting climate action and the just transition.

CONNECTED HUBS

Overview

The Connected Hubs scheme, operated by the National Hub Network, aiming to provide support the communities to build capacity and enhance remote working infrastructure across Ireland. In 2021, €9m was allocated to over 100 projects across the regions, with a further €5m awarded in 2022 to 81 projects.

Objective

The key objective of the Connected Hubs scheme is to facilitate greater access to remote working facilities and contribute to achieving greater economic benefits in rural locations across Ireland. As a result of greater remote working and supporting an increasing volume of people relocating to rural locations, can be a catalyst for a just transition across rural communities.

Aligning to the National Remote Work Strategy (2021)

The Connect Hubs scheme strong aligns to the key priorities outlined in the National Remote Work Strategy, which is taking actions to enable increased home working and provides the mechanism for enabling the just transition across rural communities. The key commitments in relation to facilitating the local and community level just transition action include:

- Mandating that home and remote work should be the norm for 20 percent of public sector employment.
- Reviewing the treatment of remote working for the purposes of tax and expenditure in the next Budget of Ireland
- Mapping and investing in a network of remote working hubs across Ireland (including the Connected Hubs scheme)
- Legislating for the right to request remote working

EU, NATIONAL, AND REGIONAL BACKGROUND / NATIONAL

- Developing a code of practice for the right to disconnect
- Accelerating the provision of high-speed broadband to all parts of Ireland.

LOCAL ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY PLANS GUIDELINES 2021

Strategic Themes

The Guidelines for Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs) cover the following strategic themes:

- General guidelines outlining the process for developing LECPs
- Economic elements of the LECPs
- Community elements of the LECPs
- General guidelines outlining the implementation plan process and actions

Aim and Objectives

The aim of the LECP Guidelines is to provide support to Local Authorities and relevant local partners to develop and implement comprehensive and flexible 6-year plans to drive sustainable development. The LECPs will form the basis for interventions at a local level that are complementary to and consistent with the RSES (Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies), and the City and County Development Plans.

More importantly, the LECP is a key framework through which climate action interventions can be delivered at a local level. The LECP guidelines state that the Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs) are currently conducting research and training/capacity building to support the full consideration of climate change in LECPs. Concluding that the outputs of these processes, including in the EM CARO geography, will support the inclusion of Climate Actions in forthcoming LECPs.

EU, NATIONAL, AND REGIONAL BACKGROUND / NATIONAL

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORKS (PPN) ANNUAL REPORT 2020, THE DEPARTMENT OF RURAL AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND THE NATIONAL PPN ADVISORY GROUP.

Strategic Themes

The PPN Annual Report 2020 captures data and feedback from a range of PPNs across Ireland and highlights the key annual outputs. One key section focuses upon training and capacity building provided by PPNs. PPNs provide free and low-cost training to their members, representatives and secretariats to enable full and close community engagement. There is technical training provided, examples include bid writing support, governance, data protection, growing an online presence. There is also soft-skilled bases training, including self-advocacy workshops community development and showcases.

Objectives

The Department of Rural and Community Development and the National PPN Advisory Group continuously review the PPNs and make recommendations for review across key areas of governance, participation, promotion, resources and structure. Importantly, the Annual Report emphasises the importance of how training and community capacity building is key for increasing the participation of community groups in local decision-making, aligning with the core remit of the PPNs.

Key Priorities

The Department of The Department of Rural and Community Development and the National PPN Advisory Group asked Local Authorities and PPNs to make recommendations on the following training and capacity building tools, underlining these as key priorities. Aligning with these key priorities is critical to inform how communities take action:

Local Authorities

- Refresher training on the role and function of the PPN, and how it is of benefit to the Local Authority.
- Community Development training and briefing sessions.
- Induction on training for Local Authority staff and elected members, procured at a national level for consistency.
- Training on the development and uses of the Vision for Community Wellbeing.
- Information session on the Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities Strategy.
- Training on guidelines for consultations by Local Authorities.

EU, NATIONAL, AND REGIONAL BACKGROUND / NATIONAL

- Public engagement and the role of the PPN.
- IT Skills.
- Effective engagement of marginalised groups.
- Human Rights and the Public Sector Duty
- The Sustainable Development Goals.
- Communications training.

PPNs

1. Advocacy and Influencing Policy.
2. Local Authority structures.
3. Public Speaking and Communications.
4. Governance.
5. Data Protection.
6. Induction for Secretariat Members and Representatives on their respective roles.

To facilitate Climate Change engagement with communities, The Wheel undertook a pilot project with 16 PPNs in 2021 and again in June 2022 with all PPNs. These projects were in close collaboration with the Department Environment, Climate & Communications (DECC). The input from these conversations informs the Climate Action Plan for Ireland. The engagement was themed around 4 questions:

- What comes into your mind when you think about Climate Change?
- Do you know what you can do, or what are you doing and what are you willing to do to address Climate Change?
- What would you like the Government/Local Authority to do to address Climate Change?
- How do you think we could get more people involved in the debate about Climate Change and perhaps encourage them to act?

EU, NATIONAL, AND REGIONAL BACKGROUND

REGIONAL

MIDLANDS PATHWAY TO JUST TRANSITION

Strategic Themes

The Midlands Pathway to Just Transition covers the following key strategic themes:

- Key Assets and Growth Sectors for the Just Transition
- The Transition Pathway, via a three Phase approach.
- The MRTT-START Midlands Engagement Process for project and programme proposals to enable a Just Transition, which operated in 2020.
- Community engagement and development to enable a Just Transition, including a range of support and training requirements highlighted by local authorities and communities. Examples included governance, organisational and project management, access to external expertise, public sector interface, knowledge of technology.
- Opportunities in rural communities, including examples of community-led projects.

Objectives

The Midlands Regional Transition Team (MRTT) and START (Secretariat Technical Assistance for Regions in Transition) developed the Midlands Pathway to Just Transition in order to enable the following objectives:

1. Consensus in the MRTT and with government actors on key transition priorities and actions
2. Optimisation of resource allocation and coordination to enhance a just transition.
3. Co-ordination and transparency across the MRTT and public actors, and alignment with national, regional and local plans;
4. Monitoring of progress and the management of risks over time.

Key Priorities

The first key priority for the MRTT and START is for the Midlands region has a pathway which is widely acknowledged transition programme, a point of reference for multiple local, regional and national actors, and aligns with multiple plans, strategies and policies.

The second key priority is that the Midlands Pathway to Just transition needs to be inclusive and responsive to political, economic, social and technological change, whilst ensuring the projects within its inventory evolve over time.

EU, NATIONAL, AND REGIONAL BACKGROUND / REGIONAL

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORK (PPN) CASE STUDY, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC EXPENDITURE AND REFORM

Strategic Themes

The PPN Case Study²³ touches upon a range of strategic themes which reflect the key challenges for PPNs, and inform how communities can take climate action and enable a just transition:

Challenge	Description	Learnings
Managing the local context	Forming a PPN must align to and complement existing local activities	Partnership approach required in designing PPN structure
Creating the national infrastructure	Wide ranging challenges occurring when implementing PPNs, including organising feeling they're losing local autonomy.	Ensuring correct national and local balance in terms of PPN guidelines is critical, informed by local feedback.
Building new role understandings	Challenge of creating a shared understanding among key parties at local level, ensuring mutual respect.	New engagement structure requires substantial communication across all stakeholders.
Constructing the relationship with elected councillors	Ensuring that the correct level of joint working between local councillors and PPNs is occurring.	New training opportunities for councillors to improve interface with PPNs is in planning phase.
Investing in relationship building to develop trust and shared vision	Strong importance for building and developing strong relationships at a local level.	Developing trust and shared visions in PPNs requires local partnership building.
Ensuring meaningful participation	There is a key challenge around getting PPN volunteers to participate due to external personal or work commitments.	Time required to undertake community capacity building must be built into planning engagement and community training initiatives.

EU, NATIONAL, AND REGIONAL BACKGROUND / REGIONAL

The PPN Case Study covers key strategic themes which reflect the key successes for PPNs.

Success	Description
Expanding and inclusive membership	4,000 attendees at 386 training events in 2018, ranging across an extensive programme of training events and topics.
PPNs: An established communication channel	PPNs are a key channel of communication between the Local Authority and local communities.
PPNs as a source of high-quality citizen engagement	<p>Examples include:</p> <p>Wicklow PPN Developing a Vision for Community Wellbeing, which included considering the environment and sustainability as a key factor for enabling Community Wellbeing.</p> <p>A Collaborative Conference to strengthen community wellbeing and resilience involving Kilkenny, Tipperary, Carlow, Wexford and Waterford PPNs. The purpose of this conference was to build capacity in the community to engage with the Environmental College in each PPN and with the Irish Environmental Network and to create ideas for a programme of ideas and actions around Climate Action.</p>

EU, NATIONAL, AND REGIONAL BACKGROUND / REGIONAL

Objectives

The Reform Delivery Office (RDO) in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform developed a case study on the role and operation of PPNs in relation to citizen engagement. The key objectives of this case study were to:

- Provide organisational learning to embed future citizen engagement initiatives.
- Provide greater understanding around the implementation and delivery of citizen engagement initiatives.
- Increase public awareness and acknowledge progress made to date.
- Share best practice in citizen engagement by public servants.
- Create valuable educational resources for use in third level and other educational institutions
- Add to the body of knowledge on the Irish Public Service by publishing a number of case studies on citizen engagement.

Key Priorities

The PPN Case Study sets out the key priorities for PPNs moving forward, including:

- Drawing upon change management insights
- Learning and reflection to guide development
- Enriching the PPN vision with local experiences
- Investing in relationships
- Aligning resources with emerging needs
- Celebrating success of the PPN

Emerging findings for each community

EMERGING FINDINGS FOR EACH COMMUNITY

In this section we have provided a brief overview of our initial analysis and consideration of how our training could support each of the communities put forward to participate in the training programme.

We are highly conscious that our approach will need to be flexible, and that feedback from communities may change some of the conclusions that have been reached.

Nevertheless, this approach ensures that our initial conversations with communities will be informed by data and research – rather than beginning from scratch.

EMERGING FINDINGS FOR EACH COMMUNITY

COUNTY LAOIS

ABBEYLEIX

-0.33	0.00	-0.43	-0.25
Economy	Society	Environment	Overall JTI

In many respects, the Just Transition Index figures taken from 2016 do not reflect the huge progress that has been made in Abbeyleix in recent years.

The Abbeyleix bog project is an early example of community action in the context of peatlands. Established in 2010, this rewetting project gained control of the bog from Bord na Mona and prioritised the establishment of a new community amenity and the development of biodiversity over industrial peat cutting.

Abbeyleix is the reigning small town champion of the Tidy Towns awards, with adjudicators praising the town's shopfronts, recycling rates and active travel options.

As a result, our training programme will first need to address the question of "what next?" – potentially considering opportunities to capitalise on emerging trends around remote work or to develop new areas such as community energy. This will of course need to be steered by the community.

PORTLAOISE

Portlaoise Urban Electoral District

-0.56	-1.00	+0.43	-0.38
Economy	Society	Environment	Overall JTI

Portlaoise Rural Electoral District

-0.11	-0.75	-0.43	-0.43
Economy	Society	Environment	Overall JTI

Portlaoise is the biggest town within scope of the training programme. The first consideration here will be to identify which of many overlapping communities are the key interlocutors for the programme – and how best to ensure that all stakeholders feel able to participate to the fullest extent. This will be addressed as part of the communications strategy being developed.

Portlaoise scores relatively poorly on both economic and social indicators. The proportion of people with poor general health or sickness which prevents employment is well above the national average, whilst the number of available skilled jobs relative to the population is low. We would expect that since the last census, digital connectivity has dramatically improved given investments made into broadband in the town – and therefore anticipate an increase in the JTI following an update with the latest census data.

Economically the town has had recent successes in drawing in foreign investment – particularly in the Agri-food sector with the arrival of Greenfield Global complementing the existing investment of Ireland-based Glanbia.

Portlaoise's status as a Low Carbon Town has demonstrated the capacity of the local authority and communities to lead on climate action projects – such as the introduction of an array of EV chargers and a "park and stride" policy seeking to reduce congestion in the town centre.

EMERGING FINDINGS FOR EACH COMMUNITY / COUNTY LAOIS

PORTARLINGTON

(SHARED WITH OFFALY)

Portarlington North (Offaly)

-0.56	0.00	-0.71	-0.42
Economy	Society	Environment	Overall JTI

Portarlington South (Laois)

-0.33	-0.25	-0.43	-0.34
Economy	Society	Environment	Overall JTI

Portarlington has been at the forefront of the economic transition occurring across the Midlands – having previously been home to Ireland’s first peat-fired power station which opened in 1950 and was demolished in 1997. Projects to address declining employment on the bog were first put in place in 1977.

As such, there is much scope to learn from Portarlington’s experience whilst also looking to future opportunities available. Our training programme will need to work cohesively across the community, embracing opportunities available in both Laois and Offaly.

EMERGING FINDINGS FOR EACH COMMUNITY

COUNTY OFFALY

SHANNONBRIDGE

+0.11	+0.25	+0.14	+0.17
Economy	Society	Environment	Overall JTI

Shannonbridge is home to the former West Offaly Power Station, which was built in 2004 and expected to have a service life considerably longer than has come to pass. The station was forced to close in December 2020 after permission to continue burning peat was revoked.

This abrupt cessation of economic activity has posed numerous challenges to the community, which otherwise has a history of relative prosperity as shown by its 2016 JTI scores and the relatively high skill nature and wages of jobs at ESB.

Key developments subsequently include the handover of the Dalton Centre – a major ESB office complex – to Offaly County Council for conversion to an enterprise hub. A key objective for the training may be to support the community to take full advantage of this.

Other areas of potential expansion are around tourism – with the town's connectivity to Blueways and Greenways a key boost as is its proximity to Clonmacnoise. The Offaly Development Strategy for 2021-2027 foresaw the development of a visitor centre, which could be furthered.

FERBANE

+0.11	+0.25	-0.71	-0.12
Economy	Society	Environment	Overall JTI

Ferbane's power station closed in 2001, and so the community has been responding to the reality of economic transition for some time. This was perceived at the time to be a difficult process, but today there are a number of growing businesses and opportunities in Ferbane.

For instance, the Ferbane Business and Technology Park – established after the closure of the power station – is now home to the Ferbane Food Campus. This has created a thriving ecosystem of food SMEs producing a diverse range of products from chocolate to Kombucha.

The sale of the Ferbane convent to Offaly County Council creates an opportunity to generate further economic activity and growth, and our training programme can look to provide support to the community to shape the development of this.

The JTI reveals a disparity between the economic and social wellbeing of Ferbane and the environmental performance. A key issue is the ongoing use of peat to heat homes, along with high usage of private vehicles. Another area which could be explored is decarbonisation of buildings, and/or active travel projects.

EMERGING FINDINGS FOR EACH COMMUNITY

COUNTY WESTMEATH

TYRELLSPASS

Clonfad

-0.11	+0.25	-0.43	-0.10
Economy	Society	Environment	Overall JTI

Tyrrellspass has a distinct character, as a planned village built in the late 18th century. The town’s history is reflected in its current economy, with the Tyrrellspass Castle converted into a restaurant.

The town abuts the Cloncrow bog, which has been the subject of recent restoration projects including through the use of regenerative agriculture as well as more traditional restoration. Some of the bog is forested.

When published, it was noted that the Tyrrellspass Local Action Plan 2018-2021 posed challenges community and voluntary organisations active in Tyrrellspass, including a changing funding environment and increased competition for resources. A key opportunity highlighted in plan was to draw greater visitor numbers following the opening of Center Parcs Longford Forest due to the relative ease of road accessibility and the significant natural and cultural amenity of Tyrrellspass.

MOATE

-0.11	-0.75	-0.43	-0.43
Economy	Society	Environment	Overall JTI

Moate is also an historic town, with a significant legacy of past community driven projects. For instance, the Dún na Sí amenity and heritage park was established just outside the town and acts as a centre for the celebration of Irish heritage and culture.

The town also has a golf course and youth club close to the centre. It scores relatively poorly in the JTI, driven mostly by high levels of sickness and disability as well as low levels of public transport and active travel usage.

In alignment with the Tyrrellspass Local Action Plan 2018-2021, the Moate Local Action Plan 2018-2021 highlighted a key opportunity to draw greater visitor numbers following the opening of Center Parcs Longford Forest due strong road accessibility and attractiveness of Moate as a destination. There may need to be strong collaboration and communication between these two communities to shape projects and investment to attract visitors.

EMERGING FINDINGS FOR EACH COMMUNITY

COUNTY LONGFORD

LANESBOROUGH-BALLYLEAGUE

Rathcline

+0.11	-0.25	-0.71	-0.28
Economy	Society	Environment	Overall JTI

Lanesborough-Ballyleague experienced the closure of the ESB Lough Ree Power Station in late 2020 (around the same time as the closure of the power station in Shannonbridge). A number of projects have subsequently been taken forward with the general objective of advancing the tourism and heritage sector.

On the Roscommon side of the Shannon, a boardwalk is being developed as is a heritage centre in Cloontuskert – which is next to the former Bord na Mona facility which supplied the power station.

Area for future community action could centre around ensuring this development is taking place on both sides of the Shannon in a cohesive and sustainable way. Climate action could also focus on improving the insulation and energy efficiency of homes.

LONGFORD

Longford No.1 Urban

-0.56	-1.00	+0.43	-0.38
Economy	Society	Environment	Overall JTI

Longford No.2 Urban

+0.33	+0.25	-0.14	+0.15
Economy	Society	Environment	Overall JTI

Longford is one of the larger towns in scope for the project, and so a key consideration will be the identification of community representatives (a similar challenge to Portlaoise).

Interviews with the county council identified a mixed picture in the development of the town, which is supported by the mixed results of the JTI across the town's 2 electoral districts. Parts of Longford score quite poorly on health and social deprivation indices.

There is a growing cluster of agrifood and engineering businesses based along the N4, creating new economic opportunities which could be explored further.

EMERGING FINDINGS FOR EACH COMMUNITY / COUNTY LONGFORD

GRANARD

Granard Urban

-0.33	-1.00	+0.43	-0.30
Economy	Society	Environment	Overall JTI

Granard Rural

+0.11	+0.25	-0.43	-0.02
Economy	Society	Environment	Overall JTI

Granard has a long history of community action – triggered in part by a report published by Longford County Council in 2011 which concluded that the town was in decline and that a shift to developing a tourism economy was necessary to generate and sustain prosperity.

Partly in response to this, in 2012 the community came together to purchase a plot of land next to town's Norman-era moat – leading to the creation of today's Knights and Conquests visitor centre which to this day is managed by the community enterprise. This attraction is well embedded in Failte Ireland's Hidden Heartlands initiative.

This creates a strong basis for further community action to address the opportunities and challenges facing Granard. For instance, the JTI identifies peat burning and a lack of sustainable transport options as key barriers facing the town.

EMERGING FINDINGS FOR EACH COMMUNITY

NORTH TIPPERARY

LISHEEN

Moyne

+0.33	+0.50	-0.14	+0.23
Economy	Society	Environment	Overall JTI

Lisheen is the site of a former mine, which was active from 1999 to 2015 producing lead, zinc and silver. It is now home to a range of high-tech businesses, including AgriChemWhey bio-refinery which is the first bio-reactor of its type seeking to convert dairy industry by-products into sustainable packing materials.

It is also home to one of Ireland’s most modern and efficient wind-farms, the latest generation of which is currently being developed by Orsted Energy.

The community has an extensive history with the wind power industry, having been cited as an early case study in the development of community gain funds when Bord Gais Energy built the first generation of the farm in 2009. Since then, a range of local clubs have received funding which is expected to total €600,000 over the life of the project.

It will be necessary to establish the boundaries of this engagement carefully – Lisheen village being some way away from the old mining site and a wider definition of the local community having been used to manage the community gain fund – including Moyne and Templetuohy.

Lisheen performs relatively well in the JTI analysis.

LITTLETON

-0.33	-0.50	-0.43	-0.42
Economy	Society	Environment	Overall JTI

Littleton is very closely associated with Bord na Mona and its adjacent bog which has been extensively cut over a long period of time. BnM are now proposing to develop a large wind energy project on the site, which is currently in consultation phase. At the same time, Coillte are working with BnM looking at reforestation of the bog with the intention of restoring its natural biodiversity and landscapes.

A key area of focus for our training may be looking at opportunities to drive up sustainable employment and climate action as part of these initiatives – including potential options to defray a community benefit fund were the wind farm to be constructed.

EMERGING FINDINGS FOR EACH COMMUNITY

WEST KILDARE

COILL DUBH

Robertsdown ED

-1.00	-0.25	-0.71	-0.65
Economy	Society	Environment	Overall JTI

Coill Dubh sits within one of Kildare’s most deprived electoral districts according to the Pobal Deprivation Index ²⁴, and similarly demonstrates relatively low scores in Urban Foresight’s JTI. The town is adjacent to Bord na Mona’s Kilbery Bog group and the nature reserve at Ballynafagh lake.

Whilst the Blueway along the Grand Canal is starting to bring new prosperity to this part of Kildare, Coill Dubh is discolated from this development. A key focus here will be on how the community can benefit from wider opportunities facing Kildare.

RATHANGAN

-0.33	+0.25	-0.71	-0.27
Economy	Society	Environment	Overall JTI

Rathangan borders onto to Bog of Allen, and sits on the border between Kildare and Offaly. Proposed tourism developments could benefit the town, including a wider network of attractions built around a remediated Bog of Allen and the Barrow Blueway which is currently being taken forward.

The Into Kildare community tourism pilot project is looking to expand from Newbridge into Rathangan, creating further opportunities in this sector. Creative Rathangan – Meitheal is also working with Maynooth University to develop tourism attractions based on local archives, and establish oral history installations in the town.

Our training programme here could look to accelerate the development of green tourism further, or to explore other sectors for sustainable development.

EMERGING FINDINGS FOR EACH COMMUNITY

COUNTY
ROSCOMMON

Communities still to be
identified

EAST GALWAY

Communities still to be
identified

Moving forward to the development of training materials

This document sets out how the Just Transition Training Programme is clearly not being launched into a vacuum – a range of strategies, policies and action plans have already been developed, and in many places communities are highly activated and owning the transition away from industrial peat extraction and carbon-intensive economies.

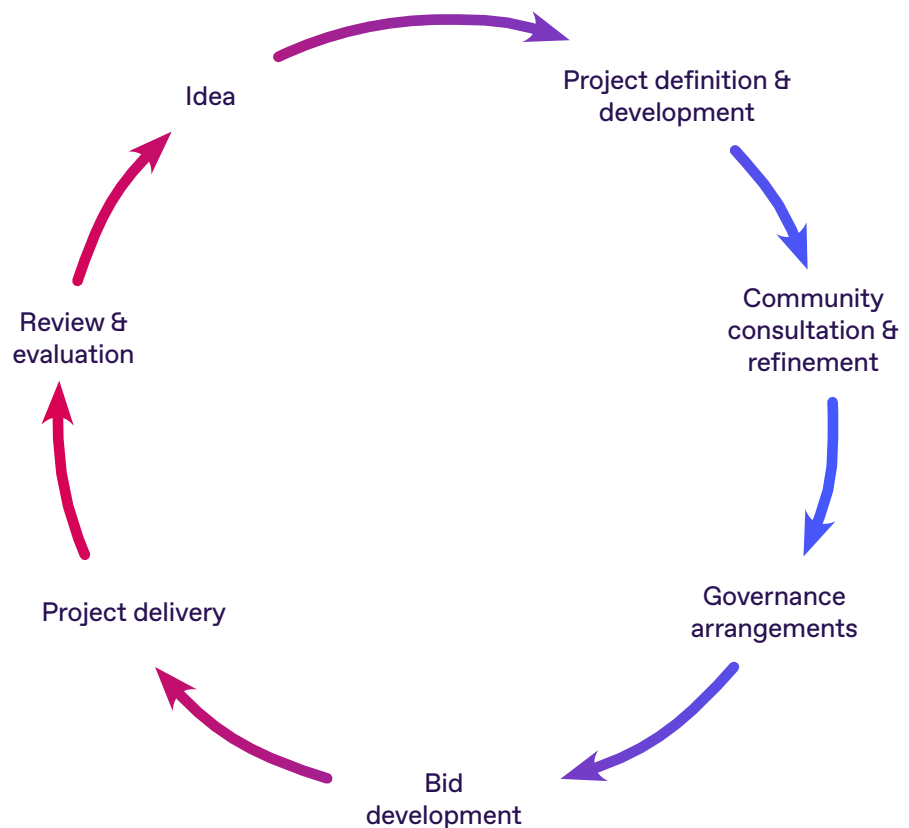
It is essential therefore that our programme adds value rather than seeking to duplicate existing initiatives, and that communities feel that we understand the hard work that has already gone in to this agenda.

Our proposed approach is therefore built on project lifecycles – working with communities to first of all identify their needs and aspirations to take forward the just transition in their areas across a range of potential project categories. We will then identify their “activation level” and work with them to increase this over the life of the project.

Potential project topics include, but at this stage are not limited to:

- Retrofit of housing and built environment
- Green skills hubs
- Community energy initiatives
- Remote working hubs
- Clean mobility initiatives/active travel
- Greenway/Blueway development
- Natural asset development. For example, driving tourism through community peatland projects.
- Heritage asset development
- Sectoral innovation
- Rural enterprise hubs

We propose to develop life-cycles for each project topic, covering the following stages:



This will be supported by training on cross-cutting topics, which will include:

- Consideration of role played by individuals, organisations and communities in response to opportunities. For example, business or social enterprise creation, new supply chain jobs, apprenticeship or skills programmes.
- Project journey assessment to identify project inclusivity and key beneficiaries. Establishing legal form for community projects
- Governance
- Grant applications
- Managing finances
- Community engagement methods buy-in
- Project succession and closure management

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