

CHAPTER 1

Introduction



1.1 Introduction

The Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028 sets out the overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Wexford for the plan period and beyond. The Plan relates to the whole functional area of Wexford County Council including the areas previously under the jurisdiction of Wexford Borough Council, New Ross Town and Enniscorthy Town¹.

1.2 What is the County Development Plan?

The County Development Plan, hereafter referred to as the Plan, sets out the strategic spatial planning framework to guide the development of the county for the six year period of the plan and beyond. The Plan provides for the physical, economic and social development of the county and sets out the guiding strategies, objectives and standards for this development.

The Plan builds on the strategies and objectives of the previous County Development Plan 2013-2019 and reflects the current challenges and the opportunities facing the county. The Plan seeks to reconcile the need to protect the environment with the development required to meet the needs and aspirations of the people of County Wexford.

The review process and preparation of the Plan has had regard to key recent development trends and national, regional and local policy developments, in particular, the National Planning Framework, Rebuilding Ireland, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region and the Local Government Reform Act, 2014, in particular, the Council's enhanced role in the promotion of economic and community development.

1.3 Legislative Context

The Plan has been prepared in accordance with the relevant EU Directives, national legislation and guidelines.

¹ The Local Government Reform Act, 2014 provided for the abolition of Wexford Borough Council, Enniscorthy Town Council and New Ross Town Council, all of which would have previously had their own development plans.

1.3.1 Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended)

The Plan has been prepared in accordance with the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) which sets out the statutory requirements and content of a development plan. In accordance with the Act, the Plan is strategic in nature for the purposes of developing objectives to deliver an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the county and has taken account of the statutory obligations of the Council and the relevant policies or objectives of the Government or Ministers of the Government.

The Plan includes a written statement and plans indicating the development objectives for the plan area. It includes a Core Strategy which shows that the objectives in the Plan are consistent, as far as practicable, with national and regional development objectives set out in the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region (RSES).

The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and the associated SEA Statement in Volume 12 demonstrates that the objectives of the development plan are consistent, as far as practicable, with the conservation of the environment as required by Section 10(1D) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

The Act also requires the Planning Authority to append a statement to the Plan which demonstrates how the policies and objectives of Section 28 Guidelines have been implemented, or not as the case may be, in preparing the Plan. This statement is contained in Volume 4.

Section 10(2) of the Act lists the mandatory objectives which have, where relevant, been incorporated in the Plan. These include:

- Zoning of land for particular purposes;
- Provision, or facilitation of the provision, of infrastructure including transport, energy and communication facilities, water supplies, wastewater services, waste recovery and disposal facilities and any ancillary facilities or services;
- Conservation and protection of the environment including in particular the archaeological and natural heritage and the conservation and protection of European sites;

- Management of features of the landscape such as traditional field boundaries, important for the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network;
- Promotion of compliance with environmental standards and objectives established for bodies of surface waters and groundwater;
- Integration of the planning and sustainable development of the area with the social, community and cultural requirements of the area and its population;
- Preservation of the character of the landscape, including the preservation of views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest
- Protection of structures, or parts of structures, which are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest,
- Preservation of the character of architectural conservation areas;
- Development and renewal of areas, identified having regard to the core strategy, that are in need of regeneration in order to prevent adverse effects on existing amenities in such areas in particular as a result of the ruinous or neglected condition of any land, urban blight or decay, anti-social behaviour or a shortage of habitable houses or of land suitable for residential use or a mixture of residential use or other uses;
- Provision of accommodation for travellers and the use of particular areas for that purpose;
- Preservation, improvement and extension of amenities and recreational amenities;
- Control of establishments under the provisions of the Major Accidents Directive;
- Provision, or facilitation of the provision, of services for the community, including, in particular, schools, crèches and other education and childcare facilities;
- Protection of the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Gaeltacht where there is a Gaeltacht in the area of the Plan;
- Promotion of sustainable settlement and transportation strategies in urban and rural areas including the promotion of measures to reduce energy demand, reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions and address the necessity of adaptation to climate change in particular having regard to the location, layout and design of new development;

- Preservation of public rights of way which give access to seashore, mountain, lakeshore, riverbank or other places of natural beauty or recreational utility; and
- Provide a framework for the identification, assessment, protection, management and planning of landscapes.

The First Schedule of the Act also sets out a list of discretionary objectives which have, where appropriate, been incorporated into the Plan.

Section 19 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) requires either the preparation of a local area plan or the indication of objectives in a development plan for towns with a population greater than 1,500 persons. Based on Census 2016, there are nine such settlements in the county. Table 1 -1 sets out the Planning Authority's spatial planning framework for each settlement:

Table 1-1 Spatial Planning Framework for Settlements >1,500 persons

Settlement	Population Census 2016	Local Area Plan (LAP) or Specific Objectives in the Plan
Wexford Town	20,188	LAP to be prepared
Enniscorthy Town	11,381	LAP to be prepared
Gorey Town	9,822	LAP 2017-2023
New Ross Town	8,040	LAP to be prepared
Bunclody Town ²	1,984	Specific objectives and land use zoning are contained in Volume 3 of the Plan.
Courtown and Riverchapel	3,591	LAP 2015-2021 (as extended)
Rosslare Harbour and Kilrane ³	1,847	Specific objectives and land use zoning are contained in Volume 3 of the Plan.
Castlebridge	1,840	Specific objectives contained in Volume 3 of the Plan.
Rosslare Strand	1,620	Specific objectives contained in Volume 3 of the Plan.

² This includes Carrickduff which is in the jurisdiction of Carlow County Council.

³ The population of Ballygeary (Rosslare Harbour) was 1,200 and the population of Kilrane was 647 giving a combined total of 1,847.

1.3.2 Strategic Environmental Assessment

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is the formal, systematic evaluation of the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing a plan or programme before the decision is made to adopt the plan or programme. The purpose of the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable developments.

The SEA of the Plan has been carried out in accordance with the SEA Directive and transposing national regulations. An SEA Environmental Report was prepared in conjunction with the Plan and is contained in Volume 12. The report describes the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the Plan and outlines the measures to maximise positive effects and reduce or offset potential adverse effects. The report also identifies the methods for monitoring environmental effects over the lifetime of the Plan.

1.3.3 Appropriate Assessment

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) place an obligation on competent authorities to consider the effects of every plan and project on European sites (Natura 2000 network of sites) through a process known as Appropriate Assessment (AA). A Natura Impact Report was prepared and it was determined that the Plan, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, would not adversely affect the integrity of European sites.

The Council will ensure, during the period of the Plan, that all plans and projects in the plan area which are likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site, either individually or in combination with other plans and projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of their implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives.

Environmental Strategic Objectives

Objective EM01

To ensure that proposed projects/developments comply with the requirements of EIA Directive 2014/52/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014, amending Directive 2011/92/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment, and as transposed into Irish law under national legislation, including in Schedule 5 Part 1 and Part 2 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended). In accordance with Article 3 of Directive 2014/52/EU, where EIA is required the environmental impact assessments presented in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) shall identify, describe and assess in an appropriate manner, the direct, indirect and cumulative significant effects of a project on the following factors: population and human health; biodiversity (with particular attention to species and habitats protected under Directive 92/43/EEC and Directive 2009/147/EC); land, soil, water, air and climate, material assets, cultural heritage, and the landscape, and the interaction between the foregoing factors.

Objective EM02

To ensure that planning permission will only be granted for a development proposal that, either individually or in combination with existing and/or proposed plans or projects, will not have a significant effect on a European site, or where such a development proposal is likely or might have such a significant effect (either alone or in combination), the planning authority will, as required by law, carry out an appropriate assessment as per requirements of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC of the 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, as transposed into Irish legislation. Only after having ascertained that the development proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of any European site, will the planning authority agree to the development and impose appropriate mitigation measures in the form of planning conditions. A development proposal which could adversely affect the integrity of a European site may only be permitted in exceptional circumstances, as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive as transposed into Irish legislation.

Objective EM03

To ensure that proposed plans and programmes comply with the requirements of the SEA Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment, as transposed into Irish law under national legislation.

Objective EM04

To ensure that plans, including land use plans, will only be adopted, if they either individually or in combination with existing and/or proposed plans or projects, will not have a significant effect on a European site, or where such a plan is likely or might have such a significant effect (either alone or in combination). Wexford County Council will, as required by law, carry out an appropriate assessment as per requirements of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC of the 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, as transposed into Irish legislation. Only after having ascertained that the plan will not adversely affect the integrity of any European site, will Wexford County Council adopt the plan, incorporating any necessary mitigation measures. A plan which could adversely affect the integrity of a European site may only be adopted in exceptional circumstances, as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive as transposed into Irish legislation.

1.3.4 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

The Section 28 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management-Guidelines for Planning Authorities' - Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG) and Office of Public Works (OPW), 2009 requires land use plans to be subject to a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) to identify potential flood risk in the plan area. An SFRA was carried out as part of the process of preparing the Plan and it is contained in Volume 11.

1.4 Format of the Plan

The Plan contains a Written Statement and accompanying volumes as follows:

Volume 1 Written Statement

This constitutes the main body of the document outlining the vision, Core Strategy and objectives of the Plan. The Written Statement is accompanied by a set of maps which give visual representation to the strategies and objectives in the Plan.

Volume 2 Development Management Manual

The Development Management Manual sets out the standards for different types of development and land uses that will be applied in the assessment of planning applications.

Volume 3 Settlement Plans and Specific Objectives

This volume includes land use zoning maps and specific objectives for Rosslare Harbour and Kilrane and Bunclody Town. It also includes specific objectives for Rosslare Strand and Castlebridge.

Volume 4 Section 28 Statement of Compliance

This volume has been prepared in accordance with Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) and outlines how the relevant guidelines have been implemented in the Plan.

Volume 5 Record of Protected Structures

The Record contains the list of Protected Structures. These structures are considered worthy of protection due to their special interest from an architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social and or technical perspective. The Record also now includes the structures previously protected under the Wexford, Enniscorthy and New Ross town development plans.

Volume 6 Architectural Conservation Areas

This volume provides a list and maps of all Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs)

in the county. It also provides guidance and common objectives on conservation and enhancement of ACAs and for the management of change in these areas.

Volume 7 Landscape Character Assessment

The Landscape Character Assessment identifies the landscape character units in the county. It also assigns a sensitivity rating to the landscape character units and contains objectives to manage change in our landscapes.

Volume 8 Retail Strategy

The Retail Strategy has been prepared in accordance with the Guidelines for Planning Authorities: Retail Planning (Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, 2012).

Volume 9 Housing Strategy

The Housing Strategy has been prepared in accordance with Part V of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended). It also incorporates elements of the Housing Need Demand Assessment (HNDA).

Volume 10 Energy Strategy

This Strategy relates to all types of energy developments and includes the objectives and development management standards relating to future energy developments in the county. The Strategy sets out renewable energy resource targets for County Wexford by 2027 which will contribute to both national renewable energy targets and the transition to a low carbon economy. The Strategy recognises the importance of not only generating and supplying energy by renewable means but balancing this with more energy efficient practices.

Volume 11 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

The SFRA identifies the nature of flood risk in the county and the settlements listed in Levels 1 to 5 of the Settlement Hierarchy, includes detailed flood risk assessments for Rosslare Harbour and Kilrane and Bunclody Town and development management advice and flood risk management objectives.

Volume 12 Strategic Environmental Assessment

The SEA Environmental Report identifies, evaluates and describes the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the Plan and identifies appropriate mitigation and monitoring measures.

Volume 13 Natura Impact Report

The Natura Impact Report forms part of the Appropriate Assessment of the Plan and includes the associated determination.

1.5 Monitoring and Implementation

It is important for a Plan to be monitored to assess its effectiveness and to ensure the implementation of its objectives. A development plan must also be able to respond to changing circumstances during its lifetime.

Monitoring will identify issues with objectives and allow suitable corrective action to be taken. It will also identify whether the Plan remains consistent with national and regional policy, and where changes occur at national and/or regional level, advise whether the Plan should be varied as necessary to ensure consistency with these higher-level plans.

In accordance with Section 15 of the Act, within two years of making the Plan, the Chief Executive must give a report to Members of the Planning Authority on the progress achieved in securing the objectives in the Plan. The Planning Authority can take such steps within its powers as may be necessary for securing the objectives of the Plan.

The Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DEHLG, 2007) recommend that an annual monitoring and evaluation report is prepared. This report will facilitate the identification of any issues concerning the implementation of the Plan. It will inform the two-year review required by Section 15 of the Act. It will also inform the mandatory review of the existing Plan and preparation of a new Plan required by Section 11 of the Act, which must be commenced not later than four years after the making of the Plan.

1.6 Underlying Themes

The Plan addresses a wide range of interrelated economic, social and environmental issues set within an overall framework of achieving sustainable development, social inclusion, adapting to climate change and a healthy county where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential.

1.6.1 Sustainable Development

The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) requires a development plan to deliver an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the county. The Council, for the purposes of the Plan, defines proper planning and sustainable development as ensuring that a balance is achieved between economic, social, cultural and environmental considerations in the interests of the common good of present and future generations of the county.

The United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions-economic, social and environmental (see Figure 1-1). Many of these SDGs are relevant to this Plan including climate action, sustainable cities and communities, industry, innovation and infrastructure, economic growth, clean energy, clean water, quality education and good health and well-being. These SDGs inform and underpin the Plan which is focused on the integration of employment, transport, schools, community facilities, amenities and sustainable urban and rural settlements as key mechanisms for achieving sustainability.

There is significant alignment between the UN SDGs and this Plan, particularly, good health and well-being, education, environmental quality, clean energy, economic growth, sustainable communities and climate action.

Figure 1-1 UN Sustainable Development Goals



1.6.2 Climate Action

Climate change brings both challenges and opportunities for County Wexford. The Council is committed to addressing climate change in a proactive manner through the careful consideration of growth and development. The Plan seeks to protect, mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Climate action is integrated into every chapter and strategy in the plan. Each chapter includes a sub-section outlining how the spatial strategy and objectives of that chapter have been climate proofed and/or will contribute to mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

1.6.3 Biodiversity and Ecosystems

In light of the climate change and biodiversity emergency there is a pressing need to mainstream biodiversity into decision making across all sectors and to raise awareness and appreciation of its value and the benefits it delivers. The protection,

conservation, restoration and management of biodiversity and ecosystems forms an underlying theme of the Plan and is reflected in relevant chapters, strategies and objectives.

1.6.4 Healthy Wexford

The chapters and strategies in the plan are aligned with UN SDG No. 3 Good Health and Wellbeing and achieving a healthy county. As set out in Healthy Wexford County Plan 2020-2022, the vision for Wexford is a county where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential, where wellbeing is valued and supported at every level of society and is everyone's responsibility.

Healthy Wexford is an underlying theme of the Plan, emphasising the important role that spatial planning has to play in creating built environments that promote good health and wellbeing including mental health and in reducing deprivation and inequalities. The Plan will, amongst other things, facilitate increased physical activity through active travel, well-located and designed green and open spaces, require high quality housing and living environments, promote community participation and social inclusion by requiring well-planned community developments and facilities such as health facilities and improve energy efficiencies in developments and reduce pollutions and emissions.

1.6.5 Social Inclusion, Accessibility and Age Friendly

Social inclusion is a process which assists people to participate fully in life from an economic, social and cultural perspective. People can be excluded from society if they do not have equal access to services, facilities, resources and opportunities. The Council is committed to developing a socially inclusive society in County Wexford and the Plan focuses on promoting and facilitating social inclusion for everyone in the county. The Plan has identified target groups which include children and young people, carers, older people, people with disabilities, ethnic minority groups, including the Traveller community and immigrant communities.

CHAPTER 2

Climate Action



2.1 Introduction

As the impacts of climate change are experienced first-hand at the local level, the Council is best placed to plan and respond to local climate change and to use its services and resources to help local communities and businesses build resilience to the impacts. Many of the Council's services, including the management of roads, coastal areas and water services, are already feeling the effects of climate change, responding on the ground to extreme weather events which are having impacts on people, property and infrastructure across the county. The Climate Action Charter, which was signed by all local authorities on the 31st October 2019, requires every local authority to embed decarbonisation, sustainable development and climate resilience into every aspect of the work they do.

The Council is at the forefront of climate action and the transition to a low carbon economy. In November 2017, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the United Nations, the Irish Government, Wexford County Council and NZEBRA, committing to the establishment of a UN Centre of Excellence on Nearly Zero Energy Buildings (NZEB) in Enniscorthy Town, alongside similar centres in Vancouver and New York. This centre will, in collaboration with Waterford Wexford Education Training Board (WWETB), provide education in High Performance Buildings to students from all over the world and help develop standards that will improve energy efficiency in buildings and reduce emissions. The centre is also recognised in the RSES as a 'Key Change Location' for driving innovation and the transition to a low carbon economy. The Council also joined the European Climate Alliance in September 2020. This is the world's largest network of cities dedicated to climate action and which pairs local action with global responsibilities. Amongst other things, it commits the Council to reduce CO₂ emissions by 10% every five years, equivalent to the halving of per capita emissions by 2030 (from a 1990 baseline).

Wexford has also been at the forefront of renewable energy development having a Wind Energy Strategy in place since 2007 and has made a significant contribution to the State's installed renewable energy (182 MW). Climate change has been an underlying theme in the County Development Plan and local area plans since the Draft CDP in 2011. The Council is also a leading authority in building NZEB social housing and retrofitting social houses, resulting in important reductions in fuel poverty for occupants.

As a Planning Authority the Council can ensure that spatial planning, through strategies and objectives in development plans and local area plans, address mitigation and adaptation to climate change which are the two terms usually used to explain climate change.

Climate mitigation refers to efforts to reduce or prevent emission of greenhouse gases. Mitigation can mean using new technologies and renewable energies, making older equipment more energy efficient, or changing practices and behaviours e.g. encouraging more walking and cycling by providing footpaths and cycle paths.

Climate adaptation is focused on anticipating the adverse effects of climate change and taking appropriate action to prevent or minimise the damage or taking advantage of opportunities that may arise. Examples include water conservation, ensuring buildings are designed for future climate conditions and weather events, building flood defences, planting crops and trees suitable to new climate, and avoiding unnecessary development in coastal areas at risk of coastal erosion and flooding.

The Plan addresses climate change in so far as it relates to and can be influenced by spatial planning. It is an underlying theme and it expressly influenced the formulation of a number of strategies in the plan including settlement, movement, economic development, renewable energy, flood risk management and coastal zone management. The SEA Environmental Report and Natura Impact Report also considered climate change. Such is the importance ascribed to climate change, each chapter has been prefaced with a section detailing how the topic interacts with climate change.

To avoid duplication with other strategies and policy documents, including the Council's Climate Adaptation Strategy, the Plan addresses climate change only in so far as it relates to spatial planning.

2.2 Policy Context

Climate policy in Ireland has evolved rapidly in recent years with the Government fully committed to a long term climate policy based on the adoption of a series of national plans over the period to 2050, informed by both UN and EU policy. Given

the extensive array of climate change policy documents, a brief summary of the main policy documents and key issues as they relate to climate change and spatial planning is provided.

2.2.1 National Policy Position 2014

This establishes the national objective of achieving transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050. It sets out the context for the objective; clarifies the level of greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation ambition envisaged; and establishes the process to pursue and achieve the overall objective. Specifically, it envisages that policy development will be guided by a long-term vision based on: an aggregate reduction in carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions of at least 80% (compared to 1990 levels) by 2050 across the electricity generation, built environment and transport sectors, in parallel with an approach to carbon neutrality in the agriculture and land-use sectors, including forestry, which does not compromise capacity for sustainable food production.

2.2.2 The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act, 2015

This Act placed climate change at the heart of Government policy and decision making. Amongst other things the Act made provision for two national plans; the National Mitigation Plan and the National Adaptation Framework. The Act requires local authorities to have regard to both in the performance of their functions and also requires local authorities to prepare Climate Change Adaptation Strategies setting out local level adaptation measures.

2.2.3 Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021

This Act commits Ireland in law to move to a climate resilient and climate neutral economy by 2050. The current programme for Government (2020) commits to a 7% average yearly reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions from 2021-2030, and to achieving net zero emissions by 2050. The Act includes the following key elements:

- Establishes a 2050 emissions target;
- Introduces a system of successive five-year, economy wide carbon budgets starting in 2021;
- Strengthens the role of the Climate Change Advisory Council in proposing carbon budgets;
- Introduces a requirement to annually revise the National Climate Action Plan and prepare a National Long-Term Climate Action Strategy at least every decade;
- Introduces a requirement for all Local Authorities to prepare individual Climate Action Plans which will include both mitigation and adaptation measures; and
- Gives a stronger oversight role for the Oireachtas through an Oireachtas Committee.

The Local Authority Climate Action Plan, which must be reviewed every five years, will specify the mitigation and adaptation measures that the Local Authority intends to adopt and to link the plan to other relevant statutory functions that they perform. Adjoining local authorities will be required to consult and co-operate with each other and to co-ordinate measures, where appropriate. The Local Authority will also be required to have regard to the Climate Action Plan when preparing its development plan and local area plans.

2.2.4 The National Adaptation Framework

Published in 2018, the National Adaptation Framework (NAF) specifies the national strategy for the application of adaptation measures in different sectors and by local authorities in their administrative areas. It emphasises that climate change considerations need to be taken into account as a matter of course in planning-related decision making processes and that progression of adaptation considerations in the planning and building standards processes is considered the most appropriate way of increasing the resilience of the built environment.

It also emphasises that effective planning reduces vulnerability to the negative effects of climate change by integrating climate considerations into decision making in order to avoid inappropriate forms of development in vulnerable areas and promoting compact development in less vulnerable areas.

2.2.5 Climate Action Plan 2019

The Climate Action Plan 2019 to Tackle Climate Breakdown contains 183 actions which will be implemented by 13 Government Departments and 40 agencies under the remit of those Departments. Actions relating to local authorities include signing up to the Climate Action Charter, the development of the Electric Vehicle (EV) charging network, the preparation of local adaptation strategies and the implementation of objectives for compact growth, in particular NPF National Policy Objective (NPO) 3a, 3b and 3c with regard to targets for development within the existing built-up footprint of settlements.

Action 165 of the Plan outlines that each local authority will identify and develop plans for one Decarbonising Zone (DZ) in their functional area. Circular Letter LGSM01-2021 from the Department Housing, Local Government and Heritage defines a DZ as “a spatial area identified by the local authority, in which a range of climate mitigation, adaptation and biodiversity measures and action owners are identified to address local low carbon energy, greenhouse gas emissions and climate needs to contribute to national climate action targets”. The DZ should either cover (i) urban areas and agglomerations with a population not less than 5000 persons, or (ii) rural areas with an area of not less than 4km².

The range of projects proposed for the Decarbonising Zone should be specific to the energy and climate characteristics of the spatial area covered by the DZ and identify appropriate project sponsors and embrace a range of technologies. Plans for the identified DZ should also consider the economic and social benefits of decarbonizing including just transition and health. A DZ should also address the wider co-benefits of air quality, improved health, biodiversity, embodied carbon, agricultural practices and sustainable land.

2.2.6 National Planning Framework 2040

The implementation of the NPF will ensure that the planning system responds successfully to the challenges of climate change and specifically those associated with how Ireland transitions successfully to a climate resilient economy by 2050. Amongst a number of strategic goals, the NPF aims to ensure better integration of land use and transport planning policy in order to reduce commuter travel demand

and support more efficient patterns of development and travel. Investment in social, educational, health and employment spheres will all impact on the development of an integrated, efficient and sustainable transport system.

National Strategic Outcome (NSO) 1 Compact Growth, NSO 5 Sustainable Mobility, NSO 8 Transition to a local carbon and climate resilient society and NSO 9 Sustainable management of water, waste and other environmental resources all embed climate change at the heart of the NPF and planning at national, regional and local level.

2.2.7 National Development Plan

The National Development Plan (NDP) includes objectives in relation to the aim of transitioning to a low carbon and a climate resilient society, including €940 million for flood risk management projects.

The NDP also established a Climate Action Fund with an allocation of at least €500 million to 2027. The fund will support initiatives that contribute to the achievement of Ireland's climate and energy targets in a cost effective manner. It offers the potential for innovative interventions which, in the absence of support from the Fund, would not otherwise be developed.

The Fund will also seek to facilitate projects that contribute to other Government policy priorities including:

- Supporting innovation and capacity building towards the development of climate change solutions capable of being scaled and delivering benefits beyond a once-off impact
- Generating wider socio-economic benefits such as job creation, air quality improvements, reduction in fuel poverty, biodiversity and community resilience and development.

2.2.8 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region

The RSES aims to build a strong, resilient, sustainable region by implementing 11 strategy statements, of which climate action is embedded in seven of those statements. It supports the implementation of the Climate Action Plan 2019, and

has identified three priority areas for action to address climate change and to bring about a transition to a low carbon economy and society – decarbonisation, climate resilience and resource efficiency. The RSES prioritises action on climate change across all strategic areas and in all economic sectors, and outlines that combined effort is required to implement objectives for compact growth, sustainable travel and place-making to reduce travel demand between residential areas and centres of employment and education. The key Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) listed below are incorporated into the relevant chapters/strategies in the Plan:

Table 2-1 Key Climate Action Regional Planning Objectives

RPO No.	Focus
RPO 87	Low carbon energy future
RPO 88	National Mitigation Plan and National Adaptation Framework
RPO 89	Building resilience to climate change
RPO 90	Regional decarbonisation
RPO 91-93	Decarbonisation in the transport Sector, EV and Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) Infrastructure
RPO 94	Decarbonisation in the agricultural sector
RPOs 95-103	Sustainable renewable energy generation and supporting infrastructure

2.2.9 County Wexford Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024

The county's first climate adaptation strategy was adopted in September 2019. Its purpose is to ensure a proper comprehension of the key risks and vulnerabilities of climate change, to bring forward the implementation of climate resilient actions in a planned and proactive manner and to ensure that climate adaptation considerations are mainstreamed into all plans and policies and integrated into all operations and functions of the Council.

According to the baseline information, agriculture (43%), transport (22%) and residential (18%) accounted for 83% of the county’s CO2 emissions in 2006¹. The remaining 17% was attributed to commercial (8%), industry (7%), and the public sector (2%).

The strategy is developed around six key themes, most of which have relevance for the Council’s planning functions. Each of these themes is underpinned by a set of objectives and actions which have been incorporated, where relevant, into the Plan’s strategies and objectives.

Table 2-2 Thematic Areas in the Wexford County Council Climate Adaptation Strategy

No.	Theme
1	Local Adaptation Governance and Business Operations
2	Infrastructure and the Built Environment
3	Land Use and Development
4	Drainage and Flood Management
5	Natural Resources and Cultural Infrastructure
6	Community Health and Wellbeing

2.2.10 3 Counties Energy Agency – Energy Transition Strategy 2020-2030

The 3 Counties Energy Agency (3cea) was established to provide independent sustainable energy information, support, and services to the people of Carlow, Kilkenny and Wexford, to local businesses and community groups and to their local authorities. In January 2020, 3cea launched the 3 Counties Energy Transition Strategy to 2030. The vision is to be a leader in efficient use of locally produced energy, delivering low carbon homes, jobs and enterprise.

¹ The most accurate information for total emissions in Wexford County is based on Census 2006 data. Using this data, Wexford County Council (WCC) was able to calculate that the total emissions for County Wexford amounted to 1,882,699 tonnes of CO2 equivalent in 2006.

By 2030 the region will:

- Be energy efficient,
- Use clean energy and produce surplus local clean energy supply,
- Empower citizens to act and participate in the energy transition with rewards for their investment, and
- Be sustainable – an attractive place to live, work, play and invest.

The Strategy also sets energy consumption targets and CO2 emissions by sector for 2030.

2.2.11 Climate Action Regional Office

In January 2018, the Government established four Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs) in recognition of the commitment by local government to develop and implement its own climate action measures, as well as the need to build capacity within the sector to respond and adapt to climate change. Each CARO focuses on the predominant risks in each geographical area. Through these offices local authorities can play a crucial role in driving practical policy and behavioural changes within their communities to encourage both businesses and citizens to embrace the need for climate action. The offices also played a key role in coordinating the development of the local authority adaptation strategies and ensuring their alignment with sectoral adaptation plans.

County Wexford, along with 16 other local authorities, form the Eastern and Midlands CARO. The office is operated by Kildare County Council and Kilkenny County Council. The predominate risks for this CARO include fluvial flooding, rural pluvial flooding and groundwater flooding.

2.3 Climate Change in County Wexford

Research at national level has shown that changes in Ireland's climate are in line with global trends. For Ireland, climate change impacts are expected to increase over the coming decades and could include the following:

- sea level rise
- more intense storms and rainfall events
- increased likelihood and magnitude of river and coastal flooding
- water shortages in summer in the east
- adverse impacts on water quality
- changes in distribution of plant and animal species
- effects on fisheries sensitive to changes in temperature

There are particular areas and land uses that will be vulnerable to these predicted changes in our climate.

2.3.1 Critical Infrastructure

This infrastructure is essential for the functioning of the county and includes transport, energy, communications, water services and health services and depending on its location it may be vulnerable to the impacts of climate change in extreme weather events, flooding and coastal erosion. New infrastructure must be climate resilient so as to minimise the impacts on people, property and businesses.

2.3.2 Rivers and Water

Many of the county's main settlements developed around rivers and some of these settlements are already vulnerable to flooding e.g. Enniscorthy Town and New Ross Town. Increased rainfall will result in flooding events and pressures on flood defences.

Flooding can also have adverse impacts on water quality. The availability of water sources and the capacity of water bodies to assimilate wastewater discharges when water levels are low in rivers during longer and drier periods will also need to be considered in water resource planning.

2.3.3 Coastal Areas and the Marine Sector

Many of the county's settlements have developed along the coastline and the marine and fisheries sector is also very important for the county's economy. The increased

coastal flood risk from sea level rise and increased intensity of storms poses a threat to coastal communities and sectors operating in the coastal zone. Increased storm intensity will exacerbate coastal erosion particularly the soft shorelines, and this will pose a threat to property and infrastructure. It will therefore be necessary to strictly control the nature and type of future development in these areas, carefully manage the location and siting of development and ensure that new infrastructure is climate resilient so as to minimise the impacts on people, property and infrastructure.

2.3.4 Built Heritage

Managing and adapting to the effects of climate change on the historic built environment, in particular the county's archaeological and architectural heritage, will be very important. Historic buildings have already experienced and survived the effects of climate change, in many cases over several centuries, leaving a building stock of proven resilience. However, the increasing occurrence of extreme weather events mean that all structures, including historic ones, need to be kept in a good state of repair to resist damage from a variety of threats².

2.3.5 Tourism

Climate change will impact on tourism in the county in a number of ways. The potential warmer climate offers opportunities to extend the tourist season and as a result significantly enhance its economic potential. The county's coastal areas including beaches are also valuable for tourism as are the many historical and cultural heritage sites in these areas. As coastal areas are at risk of coastal erosion and flooding, there is a need to consider the vulnerability of our beaches and the cultural heritage sites and consider their future protection.

2.3.6 Agriculture and Forestry

Agriculture and forestry are important sectors in our local economy. The changing climate, in particular temperature, rainfall, soil quality and extreme weather events will affect crop, food and tree production. Sustainable forestry will play an important role in mitigation as trees act as carbon sinks helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

² National Adaptation Framework (Department of the Environment, Climate Action and the Environment, 2018), page 68.

2.3.7 Biodiversity

Climate change is likely to be a significant driver of biodiversity loss. Increases in temperature will change the timing of life cycle events and the distribution of species. The physical impact of more intense storms and increased winter/spring rainfall will accelerate the degradation of habitats that are already compromised by unsustainable practices. There is therefore a need to protect biodiversity from the impacts of climate change and to conserve, restore and manage ecosystems to deliver services that increase the adaptive capacity of people and biodiversity. This, together with the expansion of the county's green infrastructure and recognition by all sectors of the importance of biodiversity, are key components of any climate action strategy.

2.4 Climate Action Spatial Planning Strategy

2.4.1 Goal

To protect the people, buildings, infrastructure, businesses and ecosystems in County Wexford against the negative impacts of climate change, build resilience to climate change, change our behaviours and patterns of development to lessen the extent of climate change and take advantage of any opportunities that climate change may bring. This will require the Council, key stakeholders, businesses and communities to work together.

2.4.2 Mitigation and Spatial Planning

This is focused on reducing ghg emissions, using sustainable renewable energy sources and moving to a low carbon economy. In this regard, the Plan includes objectives to:

- Facilitate a modal shift towards sustainable transport options as set out in Chapter 8 Transportation Strategy, encourage and facilitate a significant increase in the active travel modes of walking and cycling and associated infrastructure, work with transport providers to develop public transport options across the county, including rail and bus, both in urban and rural areas, and encourage the use of electric vehicles by ensuring EV infrastructure is in place.

- Delivering compact growth, through increasing densities, developing brownfield sites and infilling the redundant areas of our towns and villages and facilitating the development of mixed residential and commercial areas which will reduce the distance people need to travel to their homes, workplaces and other amenities and services.
- Increase employment opportunities within the county and promote the development of remote working hubs in towns and villages in order to reduce the amount of unsustainable commuting out of the county for work, much of which is car-based commuting.
- Facilitate sustainable and regenerative agriculture such as sustainable agroforestry which not only acts as a carbon sink but is a source of renewable fuel and biomass.
- Facilitate the transition to a low carbon economy which is focused on clean, low carbon technologies and promote the development of sustainable renewable energy sources such as wind, tidal and solar energy as a means of reducing dependencies on fossil fuels, in particular, community owned and locally produced energy generation projects.
- In line with the European Energy Performance of Buildings Directive Recast ensure that all new buildings be NZEB by 31st December 2020.
- Maximise the opportunities offered by the presence of the UN European Centre of Excellence in High Performance Buildings in Enniscorthy Town and help develop standards that will improve energy efficiency in buildings and significantly reduce emissions.
- To use the Decarbonising Zone identified for the county to implement a range of climate mitigation, adaptation and biodiversity measures to address local low carbon energy, greenhouse gas emissions and climate needs to contribute to national climate action targets, and to use this learning experience to inform the roll out of further zones in the county.

2.4.3 Adaptation and Spatial Planning

The aim of adaptation is to reduce the vulnerability of our county, people, economy and environment to climate change, to ensure a 'Just Transition' so that nobody is left behind and increase resilience to ensure good health and wellbeing. Adaptation

brings many opportunities through green growth, innovation, jobs and ecosystem enhancement as well as improvements in areas such as water and air quality. In this regard, the Plan includes objectives to:

- Ensure new critical infrastructure such as transport, communications, waste and water facilities and energy supply is managed and controlled to avoid areas at risk of coastal or river flooding and/or coastal erosion.
- Ensure that vulnerable developments are directed away from areas at risk in particular coastal areas at risk of erosion and flooding and areas at risk of flooding from rivers.
- Protect, conserve and take actions to restore biodiversity, expand the county's green infrastructure network and encourage nature-based approaches and green infrastructure solutions. These measures will provide many benefits including the regulation of temperature, reduction in storm flows and provides clean water and air.
- Consider the conversion or maintenance of land at risk of flooding to less vulnerable uses e.g. parks, gardens and open spaces for natural habitats where such land does not form part of the riparian zone or riparian buffer and where it would not interfere with the flood regulation functions of the floodplain.
- Continue to work with the OPW in the development of flood relief schemes and the maintenance of existing flood defences.
- Require new developments to demonstrate that energy planning and energy efficiency has been considered in the design of the building and the site layout and ensure that the location, layout and design of new development accommodates predicted future climate change impacts. This approach will require innovative building design, new materials and standards (to accommodate hotter summers while withstanding changes in precipitation patterns and more intense storms for example). When assessing applications, the planning authority will be cognisant of the requirements of adaptation.

Climate Action Strategic Objectives³

It is the objective of the Council:

Objective CA01

To ensure that the spatial planning of County Wexford provides for a county that is resilient to climate change, encourages development along existing transport corridors, enables the decarbonisation of the county's economy and reduces the county's carbon footprint in support of national targets for climate mitigation and adaptation objectives as well as targets for greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

Objective CA02

To implement the National Adaptation Framework through the strategies and objectives of the County Development Plan and in future local area plans.

Objective CA03

To implement the County Wexford Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 and any Wexford County Council Local Climate Action Plan in future local area plans and the assessment of planning applications.

Objective CA04

To implement the Energy Strategy contained in Volume 10 of the Wexford County Development Plan to facilitate the transition to a low carbon county.

Objective CA05

To continue to work with the Eastern and Midland Climate Action Regional Office and the 3 Counties Energy Agency to achieve the implementation of national climate policies and targets at the local level.

³ Mitigation and adaptation to climate change is reflected/embedded in many objectives throughout the Plan.

Objective CA06

To continue to reduce energy related CO2 emissions of Wexford County Council, to improve energy efficiencies and to achieve the commitment under the European Climate Alliance to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 10% every five years.

Objective CA07

To review the County Development Plan following the publication of the new Section 28 Development Plan - Guidelines for Planning Authorities to ensure that the approach to climate action is consistent with the guidelines and to vary the Plan, if necessary.

Objective CA08

To support and maximise the opportunities offered by the presence of the United Nations Centre of Excellence on Nearly Zero Energy Buildings in Enniscorthy Town and to support the designation of this centre as the National Centre for Ireland.

Objective CA09

To utilise the Climate Action Fund established under the National Development Plan to facilitate public and private climate mitigation and adaptation projects in line with criteria set out by the Fund at that time.

Objective CA10

To implement, through the County Development Plan and future local areas plans, sustainable settlement and transportation strategies in urban and rural areas including measures to reduce energy demand in response to the likelihood of increases in energy and other costs due to long-term decline in non-renewable resources, reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, and address the necessity of adaptation to climate change in particular, having regard to the location, layout and design of new development.

Objective CA11

To support measures to build resilience to climate change including adaptive capacity, awareness and providing for nature-based solutions and emergency planning and to raise awareness of the role of spatial planning in climate change mitigation and adaptation through the forward planning and development management functions of the Planning Authority.

Objective CA12

To ensure future local area plans adopt sustainable spatial planning frameworks which successfully integrate land use and transportation and facilitate mixed use developments as a means of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and decarbonising the county.

Objective CA13

To require new developments to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change by ensuring they are appropriately located, sited and designed to accommodate predicted future climate change impacts.

Objective CA14

To carry out climate adaptation measures such as developing NZEB social housing and retrofitting local authority housing, ensuring new public buildings are NZEB and retrofitting existing public buildings, promoting jobs and innovation in the green economy through the Local Enterprise Office and Economic Development Section, transitioning the Council's own fleet to electric vehicles, facilitating electric vehicle infrastructure in public car parks, ensuring flood risk management in conjunction with the Office of Public Works, promoting water conservation in conjunction with Irish Water, incorporating biodiversity and green infrastructure planning into local authority own developments including residential schemes, public parks, open spaces, walking trails and greenways and seeking opportunities to implement nature friendly carbon sequestration options on Council owned or controlled public lands e.g. community orchards and rewilding schemes.

Objective CA15

To support the decarbonisation of the energy sector by supporting the implementation of the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan and investment in initiatives to improve energy efficiency and future proof the county's residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural and public building stock, including retrofitting in urban and rural areas and reduction in fuel poverty. The Council will encourage developments to achieve certification under systems such as the Home Performance Index and Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design.

Objective CA16

To support change across business, public and residential sectors to achieve reduced greenhouse gas emissions in accordance with current and future national targets, improve energy efficiency and increase the use of renewable energy sources across the key sectors of electricity supply, heating, transport and agriculture.

Objective CA17

To support decarbonisation in the transport sector by facilitating initiatives that promote the use of clean generated electricity biogas, hydrogen and other non-fossil fuels for private and public transportation and provide clean energy and lower carbon fuelling and electric vehicle charging stations and infrastructure at appropriate locations including consideration of electric, hydrogen, compressed natural gas (CNG)/biogas.

Objective CA18

To require the provision of Electric Vehicle charging point infrastructure and solar panels (the latter where possible and practicable) within residential, commercial and mixed use developments, and to support investment in the sustainable development of Electric Vehicle charging facilities aligned with the transportation networks in the county and the region and CNG refuelling stations aligned with the TEN-T corridors as a renewable technology for servicing public service vehicles and commercial fleets.

Objective CA19

To support the decarbonisation of the agricultural sector by facilitating initiatives that advance an approach to achieve carbon neutrality for agriculture and land use that does not compromise sustainable food production through programmes such as the Green Low-Carbon Agri-environment Scheme (GLAS) and other relevant mitigation and adaptation programmes and initiatives of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications.

Objective CA20

To prepare a Climate Proofing Matrix to be submitted with planning applications to allow the proposed development to demonstrate how it incorporates climate mitigation and adaptation, where relevant.

Objective CA21

To ensure that spatial planning is fully embedded in and contributes to achieving the targets set for the Decarbonising Zone in the county by facilitating sustainable transport, energy efficient buildings, appropriate renewable energy developments, waste management developments that promote the circular economy, measures to improve air quality, and restoration and enhancement of biodiversity and green infrastructure in the Decarbonising Zone.