



Coiste um Fhorbairt Pobail Áitiúil  
na hIarmhí  
Westmeath Local Community  
Development Committee



Westmeath  
**Local  
Economic  
& Community  
Plan**

2016-2021

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## FOREWORD

This Westmeath Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021 has been prepared at a time when there are strong indications of a tangible recovery of the national economy after a number of years of recession. It is essential to ensure that this improvement will bring about sustainable benefit to all the people of Westmeath. The recent reform of Local Government has created an environment where the Council has now been placed centre stage in the lives of the people of the county. The enhanced role of the Council in economic development has the potential to positively impact on the prosperity of the county. The new Local Community Development Committee structure and the delivery of the community development and rural development programmes will have a significant impact on our communities and addressing disadvantage.

The preparation of this Local Economic and Community Plan represents the first strategic framework for bringing together the proposed actions by a range of agencies involved in delivering economic and community development in Westmeath. This plan will provide enhanced strategic planning, better targeting, and co-ordination of resources with the objective of improving the quality of life of all of our citizens.

The preparation of this plan has presented an opportunity to undertake a detailed socio-economic analysis of the county which helped in identifying a range of strengths, challenges, opportunities and threats. Extensive consultation, and the input of individuals, communities, business interests, and a range of agencies provided insight and understanding of the needs and priorities for the coming years. The enthusiastic participation in this process is testament to the desire of the people to work together to improve our county.

This plan sets out economic and community goals and objectives which represent a shared vision for the future of the county in the context of broader regional and national strategic objectives. At the core of the plan are key principals of working for the public interest, efficiency, sustainability, consultation, equality and human rights. The action plan sets out a range of integrated collective actions to secure sustainable economic and community development in the county.

The adoption of this Westmeath Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021 represents an important mandate bestowed on this Council by the recent reform process. Monitoring the implementation of the plan will be a core function of the Economic Enterprise and Tourism Strategic Policy Committee and the Westmeath Local Community Development Committee. We will ensure that these structures working with other local agencies in the implementation of the plan will lead to a greater quality of life for everyone in Westmeath.



**Pat Gallagher**  
*Chief Executive*  
*Westmeath County Council*  
*(Chairman of Westmeath LCDC)*

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**BACKGROUND**

## BACKGROUND

### 1.1 Introduction

The Local Government Act 2001, as amended by the Local Government Reform Act 2014, provides a stronger and clearer role for local government in economic development and community development which is a key element in achieving the vision set out in the: Action Programme for Effective Local Government- Putting People First:

***“that local government will be the main vehicle of governance and public service at local level, leading economic, social and community development”.***

The policies articulated in this Action Programme were enabled by the enactment of the Local Government Reform Act 2014. One of the key sections of the Act provides that each local authority shall make a 6 year, Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) for its area. The purpose of the plan is to identify and implement actions to strengthen and develop the economic and community dimensions of the county.

The LECP is to be formulated as action focused rather than a high level strategy and encompass delivery programmes by a range of stakeholders. The objectives and actions identified in the plan are to be delivered by the Local Authority directly and in partnership with other economic and community stakeholders. In this way, the plan provides a framework for economic and community development of the area. The Plan must also be consistent with current County, Regional, and National strategies and plans.

This plan consists of two parts:

- An economic element - to be developed by the Economic Enterprise and Tourism Strategic Policy Committee (SPC).
- A community element – to be developed by the Westmeath Local Community Development Committee (LCDC).

The two elements are to be prepared in parallel and adopted by the local authority as a unified plan. This single, integrated economic and community plan will provide the basis for a more coherent, streamlined and co-ordinated approach to service planning and delivery locally.

The LECP will provide a mechanism for all local agencies involved in economic and community development to link their strategies and plans and to combine investment and resources to achieve a common agreed objective. All agencies preparing and implementing economic or community objectives must be cognate of the agreed priorities for Westmeath as set out in this plan. The priority for Economic Development is to create good quality jobs and sustainable employment and prosperity. The objective of Community Development is to improve the life chances of those who are marginalised. The achievement of these priorities will lead to an improved quality of life for all of the people of the county.

The LECP is to build on the existing economic and community development currently being undertaken by a number of agencies, through a local consultation process, identify the priorities for the future, and set out a range of actions to deliver on these objectives. In this regard the LECP is to be action focused. The plan identifies the lead and partner agencies involved in each action and the timeframe for implementation. A mechanism for the monitoring, and review of the plan is also outlined.

The LECP will provide a framework for all agencies in the county to bring forward for implementation the objectives of these plans and strategies. The plan will provide an overarching framework which will assist in co-ordinating the actions of agencies providing local services and thereby achieve greater efficiency and value for money.

### 1.2 Legislative Context

The legislative basis for the preparation and adoption of the LECP by Westmeath County Council is set out in Section 66 of the Local Government Act 2001 - as amended by the Local Government Reform Act 2014.

Ministerial direction to prepare an integrated Local Economic and Community Plan was conveyed to each Local Authority under Section 66H and 128E of the LG Act 2001 by way of Circular LG 1/2015 and AL 1/2015. Guidelines were issued to each Local Authority under Section 66B of LG Act 2001. The adoption of the LECP is a reserved function of the Elected Council.



### 1.3 Economic Development and Westmeath County Council

Westmeath County Council has played a significant role in economic development over a long number of years. The economic role of the council included a range of measures such as:

- Planning framework to facilitate economic development;
- Provision of infrastructure;
- Provision of a range of enterprise support measures;
- Provision of enterprise incubation units.

The **“Action Programme for Effective Local Government – Putting People First”** recognised this existing role of the Local Authority in Enterprise and Economic Development. The Action Programme recommended a significantly enhanced role and the Local Government Reform Act 2014 provided legislative powers for the Local Authority to affect this enhanced role. This enabled the establishment of the Local Enterprise Offices.

For the purposes of the LECP and in accordance with the Local Government Reform Act 2014, the promotion of economic development includes but is not limited to the following activities:

- Creating and sustaining jobs;
- Promoting the interests of the community including enterprise and economic development, foreign direct investment, indigenous industry, micro and small to medium enterprises, tourism, agriculture, forestry, marine sectors and other natural resources sectors;
- Identifying and acknowledging local attributes that are essential to enhancing local economic performance, such as the quality of the environment and the quality of towns and rural areas, and to promote local economic activities;
- Supporting enhancement of local innovation capacity including investment in research and development capacity, technology transfer, up-skilling and re-skilling;

- Identifying opportunities for existing businesses to engage with local government on relevant matters in setting up and managing their businesses and to ensure speedy and coordinated access and response;
- Identifying local strengths, challenges, opportunities and threats relevant to economic performance;
- Identifying economic potential and the requirements to realise it.

In relation to Economic Development the role of the Local Authority was seen as an evolving one, involving creativity, innovation and initiative.

The Council’s Economic Enterprise and Tourism Strategic Policy Committee will have a key role in Economic Development in the county. This will include the preparation and implementation of the economic element of LECP

### 1.4 Community Development and Westmeath County Council

Local Authorities also have a long history of involvement in Community Development initiatives ranging from:

- Provision of Community infrastructure such as libraries, swimming pools, art centres, etc.;
- Community Development under the RAPID programme;
- Estate Management;
- Support of the Community and Voluntary Fora;
- Support of local community initiatives such as Tidy Towns, Pride of Place, etc.;
- Social employment schemes;
- Consultation in relation to the planning process and other local authority initiatives.

For the purposes of the LECP, and in accordance with the Council’s enhanced role as envisaged in the Local Government Reform Act 2014, the promotion of local and community development includes but is not limited to the following activities:

## BACKGROUND

- Promoting and supporting the interests of local communities including measures to enhancing quality of life and well-being of communities aimed at:
  - Tackling poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion;
  - Supporting training and up-skilling, creating employment and self employment opportunities and investing in local development;
  - Provision of infrastructure and community facilities and investment in physical regeneration and environmental improvements;
- Supporting the capacity building of communities to improve their quality of life;
- Supporting social enterprise, social capital, volunteering and active citizenship;
- Developing integrated and evidence based approaches to service planning and delivery;
- Identifying community needs and priorities and making best use of local assets, strengths and opportunities to address these needs;
- Making best use of public and private funding to stimulate development;
- Supporting community involvement in decision making processes in relation to planning and delivery of services.

The Action Programme and facilitating legislation has enabled an expanded role for the Local Authority with the establishment of Westmeath Local Community Development Committees (LCDC). The LCDC is a committee of the Council and its membership comprises a range of statutory and non-statutory socio-economic partners drawn from the Councils administrative area. The LCDC membership is constituted so as to ensure an appropriate representational balance between public and private interests, including community representatives.

The primary role of the LCDC is to develop, co-ordinate and implement a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development. This includes:

- Prepare the community element of the 6 year local economic and community plan.
- Coordinate, manage and oversee implementation of local and community development programmes.
- Ensure effectiveness, consistency, co-ordination and avoid duplication of public funded programmes.
- Pursue co-ordination of all community development programmes

The preparation of the Local Economic and Community Development Plan is a critical element in strengthening the link between spatial planning and the enhanced role of the Local Authority in Economic and Community Development.

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## **PLAN PREPARATION**

## PLAN PREPARATION

### 2.1 Advisory Steering Group

While the adoption of the LECP is a reserved function of Westmeath County Council, the economic element of the plan was overseen by the Economic Enterprise and Tourism SPC and the community element was overseen by Westmeath LCDC. In order to facilitate this, an Advisory Steering Group was established to oversee the preparation of the plan. This Advisory Steering Group consisted of nominees of Westmeath County Council, Westmeath LCDC, and the Economic Enterprise and Tourism SPC. The membership of the Group is:

- Barry Kehoe, Director of Services with responsibility for Economic Development;
- David Hogan, Director of Services with responsibility for Community Development;
- Christine Charlton, Local Enterprise Office, WCC;
- Joe Potter, Local Development Company and LCDC representative;
- Terry McCague, Senior Planner, Westmeath County Council;
- Hugh O'Reilly, Chief Officer LCDC;
- Dave Raftis, Public Participation Network and LCDC representative;
- Bob Morrison, Public Participation Network and LCDC representative;
- Maria Fox, Longford Westmeath Education and Training Board and LCDC representative.

Secretariat support to the Group was provided by Anne Galvin, Community Development, Westmeath County Council. The role of the Advisory Steering Group was to oversee all elements of the preparation of the plan including the integration of the Economic and Community elements.

### 2.2 Stages in Preparation of Plan

In regard to the preparation of the LECP, guidelines entitled, **“Guidelines on Local Economic and Community Plan”**, were issued by the Department of Environment Community and Local Government.

Based on these Guidelines and legislation, the following process in preparation of the Westmeath LECP was initiated.

- **Stage 1 – Identification of High Level Goals**
- **Stage 2 – Prepare Framework Statement**
- **Stage 3 – Develop Objectives and Actions of Draft LECP**
- **Stage 4 – Consultation on Draft LECP**
- **Stage 5 – Finalise Plan**
- **Stage 6 – Implementation, Monitoring and Review**

### 2.3 Policy Context of the LECP

The LECP is part of a hierarchy of plans and strategies ranging from EU strategies, to National strategies, to Regional strategies, to county strategies, in particular the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020.

The Europe 2020 Strategy was adopted in 2010 and aims to enable Europe to emerge stronger from the current economic crisis and to turn the European Union into a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy. Five headline targets for 2020 have been set at the level of the EU as a whole, covering employment, research and development, climate change, education and poverty. All EU Member states have committed to achieving Europe 2020 targets and have translated them into national targets and growth-enhancing policies.

Arising from Europe 2020, Ireland adopted the following targets:

**Employment** – to raise to 69-71% the employment rate for women and men aged 20-64, including through the greater participation of young people, older workers and low-skilled workers and the better integration of legal migrants, and to review the target level of ambition in 2014, in the context of a proposed mid-term review of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

**Research and Development** – to raise combined public and private investment levels in this sector to 2.5% of GNP (approximately equivalent to 2.0% of GDP).

## PLAN PREPARATION

**Climate Change** – to reduce emissions in the non-traded sector by 20% compared to 2005 levels; to increase the share of renewables in final energy consumption to 16%; and to move towards a 20% increase in energy efficiency.

**Education** – to reduce the percentage of 18-24 year olds with at most lower secondary education and not in further education and training to 8%; and to increase the share of 30-34 years olds having completed tertiary or equivalent education to at least 60%.

**Poverty** – to reduce the number experiencing consistent poverty to 4% by 2016 (interim target) and to 2% or less by 2020, from the 2010 baseline rate of 6.3%, which will lift at least 200,000 people out of the risk of poverty and exclusion between 2012 and 2020.

National Economic strategies to have regard to include the Action Plan for Jobs and the Medium Term Economic Strategy 2014-2020. In addition, a range of community and social inclusion strategies were examined. All of these strategies represent evolving policies and this must be recognised and provided for in the plan review process. A full listing of the various policies and strategies consulted in the plan preparation process is outlined in **Appendix 1**.

The Plan must also be consistent with River Basin Management Plan(s) and comply with the requirements of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) (2000/60/EC) and in particular the requirements as set out in Annex V thereof.

### 2.4 Spatial Planning Context

The LECP must be consistent with existing spatial planning strategies. In this regard the plan as drafted is consistent with the current National Spatial Strategy, the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022, and the County Development Plan 2014-2020. When new spatial planning strategies are adopted such as the proposed new National Planning Framework and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, the plan will need to be reviewed to ensure consistency. The Goals, Objectives, and

Actions of this plan have been developed with cognisance of the relevant spatial planning strategies.

The Midland Regional Planning Guidelines promote the accelerated development of the Linked Gateway of Athlone and Mullingar along with Tullamore as a key driver of growth in the region. This concentration is essential in order to generate the critical mass necessary for economic growth and to sustain the services and infrastructure required to enable the “Linked Gateway” to perform and compete in a national context and is reflected in the CORE strategy of the CDP. The RPG also prescribes a settlement hierarchy for the region which has been incorporated at county level into the County Westmeath Development Plan 2014-2020. The LECP in terms of its high level goals and objectives is complimentary to and consistent with the RPG Strategic Goals.

At local level, the LECP must also be consistent with local spatial planning policy ie. The Westmeath County Development Plan and the Core Strategy. The high level goals, objectives, and actions of the LECP are informed by, consistent with and complement the objectives articulated in Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020. In this way, the enhanced local government role in economic and community development should ultimately ensure that planning and development are focused on supporting and promoting economic activity rather than being an overly regulated process. Individual actions identified in the LECP plan must comply in the first instance with relevant policy as set out in the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020 which remains the primary policy document in their implementation.

As part of this process each LECP is required to be consistent in the first instance with the existing Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022 and local authority development plans and subsequently with the regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (rSESSs) prepared by the Regional Assemblies and the proposed new National Spatial Strategy. In November 2015, Mullingar and Athlone Municipal Districts considered the Westmeath Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021 and adopted

## PLAN PREPARATION

the Statement which is attached at Appendix 6. In November 2015 also, the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly considered the Westmeath Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021 and adopted the statement which is attached at Appendix 6.

### 2.5 Strategic Environment Assessment

Under the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 -2011, the local authority is obliged to carry out a screening assessment for environmental effects arising from the implementation of the objectives and actions contained in the LECP. Due consideration has been given to the SEA in the preparation of the plan and the SEA Screening Statement should be read in conjunction with this plan. (See Appendix 5)

### 2.6 Socio-Economic Analysis

In terms of the physical profile of the county, County Westmeath, *the Lake County*, is situated in the heart of Ireland. Westmeath is predominantly a rural county with two main towns of Athlone and Mullingar. Athlone and Mullingar, with Tullamore, form the Midland Linked Gateway per National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020. The area of the county is 1,756 square kilometres and population, per the 2011 Census, is 86,164 persons. The M4/N4 which traverses the county in a north-westerly direction gives the county close proximity to the greater Dublin area, with Dublin Airport just one hour's drive from Mullingar. The M6 runs from Kinnegad, through Athlone and on to Galway and the west. An important national secondary Route, the N52, connects the north east with the Munster region and also traverses the county. The Dublin-Sligo railway line serves Mullingar and the Dublin-Westport/Dublin-Westmeath line serves Athlone.

Westmeath is rich in arts, culture, heritage and natural amenities. The many natural amenities include the *River Shannon* and *Lough Ree*, adjacent to Athlone, the *River Brosna*, *Lough Owel* and *Lough Ennell*, adjacent to Mullingar, with *Lough Derravaragh*, *Lough Lene* and *Lough Sheelin* in the

north of the county. The county has three electoral areas, Mullingar-Coole, Mullingar-Kilbeggan and Athlone which in turn form the Mullingar and Athlone Municipal Districts through which many of the local services are delivered by the Council.

An initial step in the preparation of the LECP was to establish the baseline data for the county. A summary of the socio-economic profile of the county could be outlined as follows:

- Total Population of the County per 2011 Census is 86,164 persons;
- Population has increased by 38% in the past 20 years;
- Population target for year 2022 as per Midland Regional Planning Guidelines is 109,623;
- Population of Mullingar Town and environs is 20,103;
- Population of Athlone Town and environs (excl 4,595 in Roscommon) is 15,558;
- Non-Irish Nationals as a percentage of the population is 12%;
- Persons classed as having a disability represented 13% of the population;
- Population over the age of 65 is 11%;
- Number of dwellings in the county is 36,836 with 87% of these occupied;
- Percent of dwellings built in 10 years prior to 2011 census is 30%;
- Percentage of households with broadband connectivity is 64%;
- Percentage of population with third level qualification is 26%;
- The 3rd level education provider in the county is Athlone Institute of Technology;
- Labour Force, age 15 and over, is 40,956 with 32,319 (78.9%) of these at work of which 7,320 worked outside the county;
- Number of persons working in Westmeath is 28,040;
- Numbers on the Live Register in mid 2015 was 8,868.

## PLAN PREPARATION

- The primary industry sectors for employment in the county are the Professional Services at 24% and commerce and trade sector at 23%.
- The number of overseas visitors to the county in 2013 was 95,000;
- The number of visitors to the top tourist attraction at Belvedere House Park and Gardens in 2012 was 160,000;
- There were 245 Gardai stationed in the County;
- Fertile agricultural land consists of a total of 3,459 farms with an average farm size of 37 hectares;
- The percentage of county area covered by forestry is 6%.

Appendix 2 provides a detailed Socio-Economic profile of County Westmeath.

### 2.7 Consultation Process

Consultation in relation to the preparation of this LECP was undertaken in 3 phases.

<b>Phase 1</b>	Initial stakeholder consultation with public and agencies to identify needs and high level goals.
<b>Phase 2</b>	Consultation with relevant agencies in developments of the Economic and Community Action Plans.
<b>Phase 3</b>	Consultation on draft LECP with the general public, Municipal Districts, and Regional Assemblies.

These consultation process stages provided an opportunity for all interested parties to identify objectives and actions to promote and support economic and community development of Westmeath.

#### Phase 1 Consultation

The primary purpose of the initial stakeholder consultation was to assist in identifying the future needs and priorities for economic and community development of the county. The initial consultation consisted of seeking submissions and observations by way of public advertisement in the local press, further information on the council's website, and facilitated workshops. In addition, all stakeholder organisations were asked to complete a questionnaire outlining the key needs for the county

under the economic and community headings. The output from this consultation process assisted in providing the building blocks for the high level goals of the plan.

In this consultation process, there was general agreement among the stakeholders that an increase in economic activity and the creation of jobs is of high priority for the county. In order to achieve this there is a need for co-operation by all agencies to promote enterprise and generate employment. There is potential for investment in rural villages to create enterprise hubs and this needs to be recognised. The utilisation of our natural resources also provides potential for development.

Throughout the submissions, education featured as a critical issue going forward. There are strong indications that there is a need for co-ordination among the education providers, the enterprise promoters, the community, and businesses in the county. This would facilitate the filling of gaps and decrease the numbers of young people withdrawing from education at post primary level. If the county wants to attract jobs it needs to have the skills base to fulfil requirements otherwise, the jobs will go elsewhere. There is a need for collaboration with adjacent counties to form links and develop networks which would ensure that training courses developed would match the employment needs of businesses both present and future. This could promote an environment for further job creation. There should be measures introduced at community level to enable up-skilling of unemployed people who need to change their career path. This is particularly necessary in the case of young people and also in disadvantaged areas.

At community level there was a need to foster participation and volunteerism. The needs of all sections of the community should be addressed particularly disadvantaged groups and areas. Isolation and security in rural areas was an issue of concern. A good quality of life was identified as the ultimate goal of the LECP.

A more detailed account of the outcome of the consultation process is outlined in **Appendix 3**.

## PLAN PREPARATION

### Phase 2 Consultation

In the development of the Economic and Community Action Plans, a numbers of meetings and consultations were held with a range of relevant agencies. The primary purpose of this consultation stage was to ensure the actions identified were consistent with the objectives and resources available to the relevant agencies. These actions were developed on the basis that the preparation of the LECP would not lead to the availability of additional resources. It was necessary to capture a range of actions and critical to secure buy-in of other public funded bodies to the plan process.

### Phase 3 Consultation

A completed draft of the LECP was advertised for public consultation in November 2015. This consultation phase consisted of the draft LECP being available online and in hard copy at all local authority

premises for viewing by the public. In accordance with legislative requirements, the draft LECP was also considered by the Athlone and Mullingar Municipal Districts regarding its consistency with Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020. The East and Midland Regional Assembly has considered the draft LECP regarding its consistency with regional strategies and other LECPs in the region. All observations and submissions received have been considered in the finalisation of the LECP. See **Appendix 4** for more detailed account of this Final Consultation Phase.

The draft LECP was approved by the Economic Enterprise and Tourism SPC and Westmeath LCDC. The LECP was considered and adopted by the elected members of Westmeath County Council on the 14th December 2015.

## 2.8 SCOT Analysis

The following Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, and Threats were derived following consideration of the policy context and an analysis of the Socio Economic profile for the county together with the submissions and views received as part of the initial public consultation process.



### Strengths

- Central location in the country with good inter-regional connectivity.
- Proximity of Westmeath to Dublin City and airport.
- High quality road infrastructure with M4 and M6.
- Availability of Rail connectivity with Dublin/Galway via Athlone and Dublin/Sligo via Mullingar.
- High quality natural environment.
- Growing population of county.
- Location of Athlone Institute of Technology in the county.
- Athlone FDI cluster particularly in medical device sector.
- Available workforce and skills including people who are on the live register.
- High quality natural water.
- Research and Development hub in Athlone incl. AIT facility.
- Tradition of successful Community Development initiatives.
- A strong Public Participation Network to facilitate active participation in local decision making.
- Good recreation and amenity infrastructure.
- Rich natural heritage and landscape.
- Good quality agricultural farmland.
- Availability of Metropolitan Area Network in Athlone and Mullingar.
- Availability of natural Gas services in Mullingar and Athlone.





## Challenges

Realise the potential of Gateway status as envisaged in the National Spatial Strategy.

Increase in employment levels in the county.

Population decline in some areas.

Low level of household income relative to national average.

Low level of 3rd level attainment relative to national average.

Provision of services to new communities.

Employment numbers in Mullingar relative to working population.

Level of Educational attainment in peripheral areas of county.

Provision of adequate Broadband services.

Increase in Rural Transport services.

Language barriers for immigrants.

Marginalised groups' dependence on social supports.

Ageing farming population and rural community.

Services to cater for large population increases in east of county.

Accessing hard to reach communities particularly in socially deprived areas.

Provision of adequate sport and recreation facilities.

Reduce flood risk in Athlone.

Increase in rail service frequencies.

Maintaining a comprehensive community healthcare service.

Maintaining and improving rural towns and villages.

Development management to minimise environmental impact.

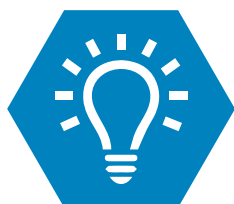
Need for move from traditional employment sectors to higher value activities.

Attracting further foreign direct investment to County Westmeath.

Creating strong brand identity for County Westmeath.

Cost of maintaining community facilities.

Availability and cost of childcare facilities.



## Opportunities

Development of linked Gateway of Mullingar and Athlone with Tullamore.

Tourism development assets including unspoilt landscape and cultural heritage.

Available Business and Technology Park in Mullingar.

High proportion of 20 to 29 year old population in Athlone.

Potential to expand Athlone FDI hub.

Realisation of Midland Region Action Plan for Jobs.

Tourism and recreational potential of waterways, lakes and rivers.

Cooperation with Roscommon in respect of Athlone town.

Development of integrated network of walking and cycling routes building on the national cycleway.

Development of Irish mythology tourist theme.

Availability of 3rd level educational opportunities in AIT.

Potential utilisation of large peat bogs for tourism and sustainable energy.

Increased usage of renewable energy.

Provision of eWorking facilities to reduce travelling.

Availability of empty buildings for new uses.

Increasing energy efficiency.

Availability of funding and support for rural development under new LEADER programme.

Improved co-ordination of service provision among public agencies.

Potential of forest for recreation and amenity.

Complement Fáilte Ireland marketing of Ireland Ancient East and Lakelands.

Improved linkages between AIT and local enterprises.



## Threats

New national planning framework to replace National Spatial Strategy.

Future negative national economic trends.

Vulnerability of employment due to high proportion of employment in manufacturing.

Rationalisation of local services by public agencies outside of Mullingar and Athlone.

Increasing rural isolation.

Decline of rural towns.

Decrease in town centre living as evidenced by Athlone population data.

Increasing elderly population with increased dependency ratio.

Insufficient housing supply in appropriate locations.

Migration of young people from the county due to unemployment and underemployment.

Closure of major employer.

Possible future Infrastructural capacity constraints such as Athlone Waste Water services.

Reduction in environmental quality.

Perception of increased threat to safety and security.

Negation impact of population migration on local culture.

3



**ECONOMIC  
AND  
COMMUNITY  
PLAN**

### 3.1 Mission Statement

This plan provides an opportunity to identify and chart a course of action that will support economic and community development and renders Westmeath a better place where a higher quality of life is available to all the people of the county. The Mission Statement of the Plan is outlined as follows:

**To enhance  
the well-being  
and quality of life  
of the people  
of Westmeath through  
sustainable economic  
and community  
development**

### 3.2 Core Values

In the preparation and implementation of the LECP the following **Guiding Principles** will apply:

#### A. Public Interest

All actions shall be guided by the needs of the people of the county.

#### B. Consultation and Engagement

All actions will be identified through consultation and engagement with the stakeholders involved.

#### C. Co-ordination and Collaboration

Effective co-ordination and collaboration to synergise the actions of all stakeholders including public, private and voluntary.

#### D. Maximising Outcomes and Value for Money

The LECP will be based on the management and deployment of resources in a manner that maximises outcomes by securing operational efficiency and value for money.

#### E. Equality and Human Rights

Ensure that the rights and dignity of all the people of Westmeath are considered throughout the preparation, consultation, and implementation of all of the actions identified in the Plan.

#### F. Sustainability

Ensure that sustainability is at the heart of all decisions. This includes sustainability in financial, environmental, land use, and socio-economic terms, and is fundamental to decision making in areas such as quality of life, climate change, the allocation of resources, energy efficiency, etc.

### 3.3 Community Impact Proofing

In the preparation of this plan it was necessary to assess the impact of the community actions of LECP against a number of horizontal priorities as follows;

- Sustainability
- Equality
- Poverty
- Rural
- Age
- Disability

This involved an exercise in screening, scoping, assessment, review and mitigation, as outlined in **Appendix 7**.

### 3.4 Implementation

The actions set out in this plan are challenging but realistic and have a genuine possibility of being achieved with the leadership and support of all of the stakeholders. The successful implementation of the Plan will require commitment, engagement and partnership of all of the stakeholders involved. This includes state agencies, the Local Authority, the private and community sectors, all working in partnership with a clear objective to deliver on the objectives of the plan.

The implementation of the economic elements of the plan will be overseen by the Economic Enterprise and Tourism SPC on behalf of the Council. The implementation of the community elements of the plan will be overseen by Westmeath LCDC.

### 3.5 Monitoring and Review

Monitoring and review of the actions set out in the LECP will be critical to measuring progress and ultimately achieving the mission of the plan. In this regard, the lead agency in monitoring and review of the plan will be Westmeath County Council with the Economic Enterprise and Tourism SPC overseeing the Economic element of the plan while the Local Community Development Committee will be charged with overseeing the Community element of the plan.

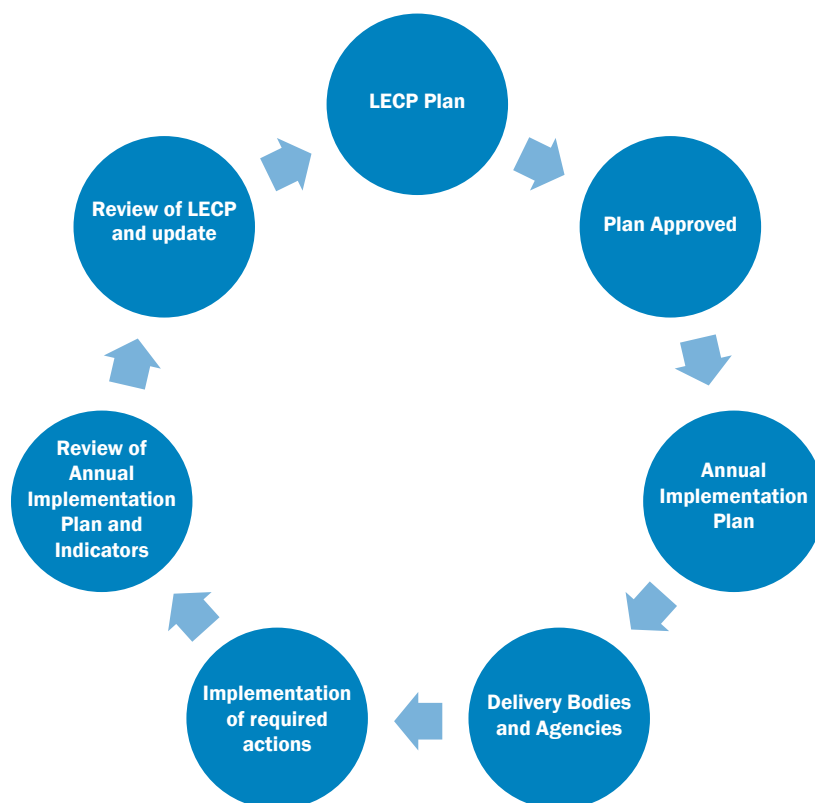
It is proposed that a systematic monitoring and review system will be developed in the early stages of the plan period. It is anticipated that further guidelines will be issued by the DECLG in respect of monitoring, implementation and review of the LECP and these requirements will be incorporated into this process.

The action plan includes a range of benchmarks and performance indicators for the purpose of monitoring the achievement of the objectives of the plan. The plan will be subject to an annual review process and adjustment made as required. It is anticipated that a further major review of the plan will be undertaken following the publication of the proposed Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy covering Westmeath. A review of the plan may also be required on publication of the proposed National Planning Framework.

The performance of Westmeath County Council in discharging their economic development and community development function will be subject to examination and report by the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC). The Council will also report on the implementation of the Local Economic and Community Plan as part of its annual reporting process.



### The Suggested Monitoring and Review Process:



### 3.6 High Level Goals

In order to achieve the mission of the plan, 3 primary goals were identified, Goal 1 referring to economic development, Goal 2 referring to integrated economic and community development, and Goal 3 referring to community development. These goals are expressed as follows:

#### Goal 1: Economic Development

To create employment opportunities through sustainable economic development in Westmeath.

#### Goal 2: Integrated Economic and Community Development

To secure sustainable economic and community development through the maximisation of educational opportunities and the provision of essential social and physical infrastructure.

#### Goal3: Community Development

To secure the creation of vibrant communities in County Westmeath through community development and quality of life initiatives.

### 3.7 Objectives

In order to achieve each of the 3 Goals, a number of objectives were identified as follows:

<b>Goal 1: Economic Development</b> <b>To create employment opportunities through sustainable economic development in Westmeath.</b>	
<b>Objectives Goal 1:</b>	
<b>1.1</b>	A strong culture of entrepreneurship in the county with an increase in the number of business start-ups and measures in place for the development and support of micro enterprise opportunities throughout the county.
<b>1.2</b>	Effective Research and Development facilities in place, to meet the needs of the business sector in Westmeath.
<b>1.3</b>	Increase employment through Foreign Direct Investment in the county of Westmeath.
<b>1.4</b>	Increase employment in indigenous businesses in the county of Westmeath.
<b>1.5</b>	To improve the competitiveness of Westmeath as a location for enterprise and economic development.
<b>1.6</b>	A thriving tourism sector that contributes significantly to the economic, social and cultural development of the county.

<b>Goal 2: Integrated Economic and Community Development</b> <b>To secure sustainable economic and community development through the maximisation of educational opportunities and the provision of essential social and physical infrastructure.</b>	
<b>Objectives Goal 2:</b>	
<b>2.1</b>	Provision of affordable early childhood and educational services and programmes to address educational disadvantage.
<b>2.2</b>	Universal access to comprehensive third level opportunities and the availability of a range of training and development opportunities consistent with the needs of participants and employers.
<b>2.3</b>	Critical physical infrastructure in place including energy, water, broadband, transportation and other necessary services to facilitate economic and community development.
<b>2.4</b>	A vibrant economy in the county through the implementation of rural development initiatives including development of the agriculture, creative and food sectors.

<b>Goal3: Community Development</b> <b>To secure the creation of vibrant communities in County Westmeath through community development and quality of life initiatives.</b>	
<b>Objectives Goal 3:</b>	
<b>3.1</b>	Co-ordination of community development initiatives including the socially excluded and enabling their active public participation.
<b>3.2</b>	Availability and utilisation of good quality community, recreational and amenity facilities.
<b>3.3</b>	Preservation of the natural environment, heritage and culture of Westmeath.
<b>3.4</b>	Provision of accommodation and infrastructure to meet the needs of the community.
<b>3.5</b>	A safe and secure environment for all, in both urban and rural areas.
<b>3.6</b>	Availability of an adequate range of community health services and well-being supports.

4



**ECONOMIC  
AND  
COMMUNITY  
ACTION PLAN**

#### 4.1 Goal 1: Economic Development

### To create employment opportunities through sustainable economic development in Westmeath

#### Background

The purpose of this LECP action plan is to set out the goals, objectives and actions needed to promote and support economic development in the county over a six year period. This will ensure the co-ordination of public funds in order to maximise resources and eliminate duplication of funding to capitalise on economic, business and development opportunities in the county. The LECP will be the primary mechanism at local level to bring forward relevant action arising from measures under the Action Plan for Jobs 2015-2017, delivery of which will be through the programmes of a range of stakeholders as well as Westmeath County Council. The Action Plan for Jobs 2015-2017 has been the Government's key policy instrument to support job creation and enterprise growth. A number of other high level strategies and plans were considered including EU 2020, Food Harvest 2020, Medium Term Economic Strategy 2014-2020, The Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022, CEDRA and IDA Strategy 2020 amongst others.

The priority for economic development is to create good quality jobs and prosperity and the public consultation process has identified that this can be achieved by pursuing the following strategic objectives. A number of key actions have been identified to ensure deliverability on these strategic objectives.

Objectives Goal 1:	
<b>1.1</b>	A strong culture of entrepreneurship in the county with an increase in the number of business start-ups and measures in place for the development and support of micro enterprise opportunities throughout the county.
<b>1.2</b>	Effective Research and Development facilities in place, to meet the needs of the business sector in Westmeath.
<b>1.3</b>	Increase employment through Foreign Direct Investment in the county of Westmeath.
<b>1.4</b>	Increase employment in indigenous businesses in the county of Westmeath.
<b>1.5</b>	To improve the competitiveness of Westmeath as a location for enterprise and economic development
<b>1.6</b>	A thriving tourism sector that contributes significantly to the economic, social and cultural development of the county.

#### Objective 1.1:

**A strong culture of entrepreneurship in the county with an increase in the number of business start-ups and measures in place for the development and support of micro enterprise opportunities throughout the county.**

#### Background

In terms of high level policy, the **Europe 2020** strategy is the European Union's ten-year growth and jobs strategy. Five headline targets have been set for the EU to achieve by the end of 2020.

These include:

**Employment:** - 75% of the 20-64 year-olds to be employed.

The CSO Business Demography survey 2012 found that there were 3,290 businesses operating in County Westmeath employing 13,082 people. According to the NACE codes in Geodirectory Q2 2015, the largest sector in the local economy is the service industry (31.5%), followed by 17.2% arts, entertainment and recreation businesses. Both these industries comprise of almost half of the industrial base of the county.

The Action Plan for Jobs and at regional level, the Action Plan for Jobs Midland Region 2015-2017 has been the Government's key policy instrument to support job creation and enterprise growth.

The Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022, amongst others have influenced the actions of this objective. The Vision of the guidelines is that the midland region will be a successful, sustainable and equitable region full of opportunities for its expanded population.

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

The Local Enterprise Office aims to develop a broad range of economic services including providing information and training in the areas of business planning, marketing and business development. It is proposed that these services will reduce duplication and overlap and this is reflected in the actions under this objective.

### Action Plan: Objective 1.1

**A strong culture of entrepreneurship in the county with an increase in the number of business start-ups and measures in place for the development and support of micro enterprise opportunities throughout the county.**

#### High Level Strategies Ref:

**S1, S3, S4, S5, S7, S10, S11, S13, S14, S17.**

Action Ref	ACTIONS	Lead Agency	Partner(s)	Desired Outcome	Performance Indicator	Timeframe
1.1.1	Develop a broad range of economic services, to be put in place with reduced duplication and overlap.	WCC	LEO, WLCDC, Chambers, AIT, Enterprise Ireland, IDA DSP	A coordinated map of economic services resulting in elimination of duplication of state services.	Map of economic services produced in 2016.	2016
1.1.2	Provide Business information and Advisory Services in relation to Business Planning, Public Procurement and Government Services.	LEO	WCC WCD	LEO as the premier one stop shop for small businesses in the county.	LEO as the recognised one stop shop for small businesses in the county.	Ongoing
1.1.3	Provide Enterprise Support Services to many entrepreneurs at various stages of business development through financial supports, training and access to enterprise space, mentoring, marketing supports, business networks and pathways to progression.	LEO	WCC WCD	A range of support services available to entrepreneurs at various stages of business development.	The number of businesses supported under each of these headings and availability of a commercial property register in the county.	Ongoing
1.1.4	Develop Entrepreneurship Support services to secondary school students, Female and Senior Entrepreneurs, Social enterprises, Enterprise Awards and promotion activities and the development of clusters.	LEO	WCC WCD PPN DSP	The creation of new start-up businesses and the provision of support to existing businesses in the county.	The number of schools, students, businesses, entrepreneurs and events supported under each of these headings.	Ongoing
1.1.5	Increase Local Enterprise Development Services through a local enterprise plan that will help leverage resources and develop partnerships with relevant agencies.	LEO	WCC WCD	The preparation of an annual local enterprise plan.	The increase in local enterprise.	Annually
1.1.6	To engage and support the SICAP target groups to move closer to employment and self employment.	WLCDC	WCD, WCC, DSP	450 Individuals (over 15 yrs), 80 young people (15 to 24 yrs) and 2 social enterprises to benefit from this action.	450 Individuals (over 15 yrs), 80 young people (15 to 24 yrs) and 2 social enterprises identified and engaged with SICAP.	2017

**Objective 1.2:****Effective Research and Development facilities in place, to meet the needs of the business sector in Westmeath****Background**

The **Europe 2020** strategy is the European Union's ten-year growth and jobs strategy. Five headline targets have been set for the EU to achieve by the end of 2020, this includes R&D at 3% of the EU's GDP to be invested in Research and Development.

At local level, AIT Research Innovation & Enterprise Strategy 2015 -2018, expressed the following:

**Vision**

*AIT will be a technological university distinguished by outstanding learner experience, international focus, distinctive regional contribution and high quality impact of its staff, teaching, applied research and innovation.*

Research Innovation and Enterprise (RI&E) is a central and integrating pillar within the overall AIT Strategic Plan to 2018, clearly illustrating the strategic importance of the RI&E ecosystem across AIT and for our external regional, national and international stakeholders and partners. This is also reflected in the fact that research, innovation and enterprise engagement is heavily referenced across all sections / pillars of the new integrated AIT Strategic Plan.

**Key Strategic Goal**

As outlined in the AIT Strategic Plan to 2018, AIT's Research, Innovation and Enterprise specific mission and overarching key strategic goal is:

*To support sustainable socio-economic development regionally and nationally through relevant and internationally excellent collaborative research, innovation and knowledge-based enterprise development.*

**AIT Research Innovation and Enterprise Strategy – Summary**

In the context of the AIT Strategic Plan to 2018 and evolving national and international Research Development and Innovation (RDI) policy, AIT's strategy is to be an RDI partner of choice for enterprise – focusing our research, innovation and enterprise engagement, development and support activities on addressing the needs of regional and national industry by proactively collaborating with start-ups and established companies via market-informed research across our areas of core research expertise, and by providing a comprehensive range of knowledge intensive support services, with a focus on SMEs.

Given our close connections with regional and national industry and communities, AIT is well positioned to help bridge the open innovation gap between new knowledge creation in HEIs and its real-world application for maximum socio-economic value and impact in people's lives, both now and into the future.

**Mullingar Chamber of Commerce:** The Mullingar Chamber is the representative body for the promotion of local business interests and for the benefit of the local economy of Mullingar and its wider rural environs. Current proposals include:

- To set up an international Start up Incubator & Growth Hub to support national and private sector initiatives to attract international start ups to Ireland, particularly in areas of Life Sciences and Med Tech.
- Maintain Purple Flag status through the development of a Strategic Plan.
- Leading and delivering the Midlands Industrial Expo.

**Action Plan: Objective 1.2:**

**Effective Research and Development facilities in place, to meet the needs of the business sector in Westmeath.**

**High Level Strategies Ref:**

**S1, S3, S4, S5, S7, S10, S13, S14, S17, S22, S29.**

Action Ref	ACTIONS	Lead Agency	Partner(s)	Desired Outcome	Performance Indicator	Timeframe
1.2.1	Development of Midlands Manufacturing Technologies Campus as a concerted response towards building regional competitiveness and innovation capacity in the Midlands.	Athlone Institute of Technology	Industry E.I. IDA LEO WCC EMRA	<b>Development</b> of the MMTC – with a focus on Advanced/Discrete/Additive Manufacturing technologies, Industrial/Product Design and ‘Smart Factories’. <b>Providing</b> a dynamic industry –focused R&D environment and regional outreach. <b>Incubation</b> facilities will support early – stage FDI companies and second stage indigenous companies. <b>A conference</b> facility will actively engage research and industry partners as well as local stakeholders.	The Midlands as centre of excellence for the development and adoption of advanced manufacturing processes and technologies.	2015-2020
1.2.2	Investigate the possibility of Mullingar as a location for the National Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre.	Mullingar Chamber of Commerce	ICMR, Industry E.I. IDA LEO WCC EMRA	The National Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre to be located in Mullingar. Create new opportunities for MNCs, SMEs and HPSUs and stimulate inward investment to the region. Positioning the Midlands as a centre of excellence for advanced manufacturing processes and technology. Promote a forum to link the needs of industry with IOT’s and University Programmes.	The Midlands as centres of excellence for the development and adoption of advanced manufacturing processes and technologies.	2015-2020

**Objective 1.3:****Increase employment through Foreign Direct Investment in the county of Westmeath**

The **Europe 2020** strategy is the European Union's ten-year growth and jobs strategy. Five headline targets have been set for the EU to achieve by the end of 2020. These include

**Employment:** 75% of the 20-64 year-olds to be employed.

**The Action Plan for Jobs (APJ)** ) has five overarching strategic objectives. One of these is to get Ireland back to a top-five ranking in international competitiveness and another is to build world-class clusters in key sectors of opportunity.

Westmeath is well placed in terms of economic assets to achieve these objectives as follows;

- Strategic location with excellent inter-urban links to the capital and international airport
- Gateway Towns of Mullingar and Athlone
- Highly skilled Workforce
- Advanced Infrastructure in terms of both road and rail connections
- The presence of Athlone Institute of Technology and its capacity for future expansion
- Existing industrial base
- Water and wastewater infrastructure

**IDA Ireland** won 19 projects for the Midlands (Offaly, Laois, Westmeath and Longford) from 2010-2014. Client companies in the region employ 4,032 people in a range of sectors including: ICT, Life Sciences and Engineering. 30% to 40% uplift in projects would result in 25 to 27 projects for the region. The Government, through DJEI has unveiled a five-year strategy aimed at accelerating the jobs recovery in every part of the country. The plan includes €150 million for an IDA property investment programme to attract foreign direct investment into different parts of Ireland over a five year period. This investment will focus on the building of Advance Building Solutions (ATBs), infrastructure investment in a number of Utility Intensive Strategic site solutions and the upgrade of Business and Technology Parks within IDA's national portfolio. The programme will build on recent investments by IDA in a number of Advance Technology Buildings in regional locations, and further investments are planned from 2016 onwards for Galway, Dundalk, Limerick, **Athlone**, Carlow and Waterford. The provision of Advance Building Solutions will account for approximately one third of the overall investment. These investments will be critical to the achievement of investment targets in all regions.

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

**Action Plan: Objective 1.3:****Increase employment through Foreign Direct Investment in the County of Westmeath****High Level Strategies Ref:****S1, S3, S4, S5, S7, S9, S10, S13, S14, S17.**

Action Ref	ACTIONS	Lead Agency	Partner(s)	Desired Outcome	Performance Indicator	Timeframe
1.3.1	The achievement of 30% to 40% uplift in projects, resulting in 25 projects for the Midlands region.	IDA	WCC LEO EI AIT LWETB	Win 25 projects for the midlands region between 2015-2019.	An increase in the number of new businesses based in County Westmeath. Win 25 projects for the midlands region between 2015-2019.	2015-2019
1.3.2	Work with public bodies and the private sector on regional action plans.	IDA	WCC EI LEO AIT LWETB	Involvement in drawing up the Regional Action Plan. Increased stakeholder engagement.	An action plan and the number of new stakeholders.	2015-2019
1.3.3	Work closely with existing clients to retain and strengthen their presence through continued company transformation.	IDA	WCC EI AIT LWETB	The appointment of a dedicated Regional Business Development Manager.	The appointment of a dedicated Regional Business Development Manager.	2015-2019
1.3.4	Increase Global Business Services and High Tech Manufacturing investments.	IDA	WCC EI AIT LWETB	On-going discussions with IDA global Teams.	The number of meetings.	Ongoing
1.3.5	Align IDA business sectors with the region and its corresponding strengths to develop sectoral ecosystems.	IDA	WCC EI LEO AIT LWETB	Marketing Material being upgraded.	Availability of marketing material.	Ongoing
1.3.6	Work with Enterprise Ireland and its indigenous base of companies to identify synergies, enhance clusters, participate in site visits and maximise benefits for the region.	IDA	WCC EI LEO AIT LWETB	Formal working partnerships between agencies to identify opportunities for businesses.	The list of benefits achieved.	Ongoing
1.3.7	Pursue new areas of opportunity for client companies.	IDA	WCC EI LEO AIT LWETB	Increased collaboration between agencies to pursue new areas of opportunity for client companies.	The new areas identified.	2019
1.3.8	Develop appropriate property solutions through the provision of buildings and sites in designated regional locations.	IDA	WCC EI AIT LWETB	New Advanced Technology Building or an Advanced Office Building planned for Athlone.	A new Advanced Technology Building or an Advanced Office Building planned for Athlone.	Ongoing
1.3.9	Increase IDA Ireland's regional footprint to adequately support the regional strategy.	IDA	WCC EI AIT LWETB	Increase in regional footprint.	Increase in regional footprint.	Ongoing



**Objective 1.4:****Increase employment through indigenous businesses in the county of Westmeath.**

The **Europe 2020** strategy is the European Union's ten-year growth and jobs strategy.

Five headline targets have been set for the EU to achieve by the end of 2020. These include

**Employment:** 75% of the 20-64 year-olds to be employed.

**R&D:** 3% of the EU's GDP to be invested in Research and Development

**Enterprise Ireland-Strategy to 2016:**

The Vision is that Irish enterprise will be a powerhouse of economic growth and job creation in Ireland.

Enterprise Ireland's strategy sets out their vision, strategic goals and key deliverables. It details initiatives and actions that will create 40,000+ new jobs in Irish companies and increase Irish exports by €5bn by 2016.

This strategy will drive the greatest export gain in job creation ever achieved in any three year period by Irish companies. The associated annual spend in Ireland will increase national prosperity in towns and cities across Ireland.

Enterprise Ireland's 4 Pillars are:

1. Start – Our ambition is to establish Ireland as the best small country in the world in which to start a new business.
2. Innovate – We will help our clients to lever off the excellent innovation platform that exists in Ireland, to develop a competitive edge in international markets through Building collaboration, Driving Commercialisation, Building International Linkages, Supporting in-Company R&D.
3. Scale – To increase the number of companies that achieve business scale we are backing business leaders with big ambitions, through a new tailored approach to scaling companies.
4. Anticipate – Our goal is to invest in the sectors, markets and technologies of the future and to help our clients to anticipate and respond to growth opportunities efficiently.

The public consultation process undertaken for this LECP highlighted as a priority the need to address the level of unemployment in the county. Measures are required to develop industrial development and rural enterprise. There is a need to network the education and enterprise developers and funders. Through the collaboration of these entities, the economic actions of this plan should materialise.

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

**Action Plan: Objective 1.4:**  
**Increase employment in indigenous businesses in the county of Westmeath.**
**High Level Strategies Ref:**  
**S1, S3, S4, S5, S7, S10, S11, S13, S14, S17, S29.**

Action Ref	ACTIONS	Lead Agency	Partner(s)	Desired Outcome	Performance Indicator	Timeframe
1.4.1	Enterprise Ireland will work with client companies from the region, including high potential "Start Ups", to increase participation on programmes and accelerate their capacity to scale up and succeed in international markets.	Enterprise Ireland	LEO WCC Chambers of Commerce AIT IDA LWETB	Job Creation and facilitation of participants on entrepreneurship programmes. Support 13 Start-Ups from the Midlands and outside will go through the New Frontiers Programme in AIT/ NUIM EI and its partners will work with existing and new indigenous companies in Westmeath to drive exports of those companies which will ultimately lead to an increase in both direct and indirect jobs.	Net change in jobs in Enterprise Ireland funded businesses in Westmeath.	Ongoing
1.4.2	Enterprise Ireland will advise and help individuals and organisations prepare proposals for accessing the available funding including enterprise Initiatives which will drive regional development.	Enterprise Ireland	LEO WCC Chambers of Commerce AIT IDA LWETB	An increase in businesses availing of funding from Enterprise Ireland.	The Number of funded proposals.	Ongoing
1.4.3	Fostering an innovation culture through the development of a Regional Innovation Forum.	Enterprise Ireland	LEO WCC Chambers of Commerce AIT IDA LWETB	Enterprise Ireland will facilitate a Regional Innovation Forum to encourage peer to peer interactions and SME-HEI linkages to promote and showcase innovation.	The existence of an innovation forum.	Ongoing
1.4.4	Enterprise Ireland and its partners will work with existing and new indigenous companies in Westmeath to drive exports of those companies which will ultimately lead to an increase in both direct and indirect jobs.	Enterprise Ireland	LEO WCC Chambers of Commerce AIT IDA LWETB	An increase in the number of companies exporting.	The no. of companies exporting.	Ongoing
1.4.5	Building sectoral opportunities in Manufacturing, Food, Internationally Traded services and Software.	Enterprise Ireland	LEO, WCC, Chambers of Commerce, AIT, IDA, LWETB.	Companies targeted to scale, innovate and develop international markets.	The no. of companies targeted.	Ongoing



**Objective 1.5:****To improve the competitiveness of Westmeath as a location for enterprise and economic development.****Ireland's Competitiveness Scorecard 2015**

The National Competitiveness Council reports to the Taoiseach and the Government through the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation on key competitiveness issues facing the Irish economy and offers recommendations on policy actions required to enhance Ireland's competitive position. To achieve the productivity growth necessary to continue Ireland's recovery, the Council's analysis has identified a number of policy challenges:

- There is a need to maintain fiscal stability.
- The availability of competitively-priced, world-class infrastructure (energy, telecoms, transport, waste and water) and related services is critical to support economic growth and enterprise development.
- Investment in people is not a new concept – the skills and talent of the work force are essential determinants of labour productivity.
- While Irish export performance remains robust, there is a need to broaden out into new products, markets and sectors, whilst maintaining the competitive advantages enjoyed in existing ones.
- While Ireland's overall innovation performance has improved in recent years, performance lags innovation leaders such as Denmark, Finland, Germany and Sweden with whom we aspire to compete.

To help achieve this the Government will continue to take the necessary action to improve Ireland's competitiveness, through initiatives such as the multi-annual Action Plan for Jobs and a range of other strategies to encourage investment, entrepreneurship and job creation, across all regions of the country.

The public consultation process undertaken for this plan highlighted as a priority the need to address the level of competitiveness of Westmeath. The selection of Westmeath as a place to develop economic enterprise will depend on all the stakeholders involved in this Local Economic and Community Plan to each play their part in improving the competitiveness of Westmeath.

The actions of other stakeholders on how to address competitiveness will have been captured earlier under their respective objectives therefore, highlighted here is the contribution of the lead agency i.e. Westmeath County Council as per their County Development Plan on how to improve competitiveness locally. The Westmeath County Development Plan will provide:

- A spatial framework to facilitate economic recovery and growth founded on an Economic Regeneration Strategy for the county.
- A sustainable spatial development strategy to guide the location of development.
- A framework for future investment in physical, social and community infrastructure
- A process for the preservation, protection and enhancement of the county's natural and built heritage and social assets.

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

**Action Plan: Objective 1.5:**

**To improve the competitiveness of Westmeath as a location for enterprise and economic development.**

**High Level Strategies Ref:**

**S1, S3, S4, S5, S7, S10, S13, S14, S17, S29.**

Action Ref	ACTIONS	Lead Agency	Partner(s)	Desired Outcome	Performance Indicator	Timeframe
1.5.1	Develop marketing material for Westmeath as a location for enterprise and economic development.	WCC	LEO	Availability of Marketing material for the County.	Available 2016.	2016
1.5.2	Assist in the provision of adequate enterprise facilities in the county.	WCC	E.I. LEO IDA Enterprise Centres	Adequate zoned enterprise facilities in the County. The Local Authorities will assist businesses in the identification of suitable premises/sites through the development of a property database of industrial and commercial properties available for sale or let.	Ongoing review.	Ongoing
1.5.3	Support the development of Economic Promotion initiatives.	WCC	LEO WCD IDA EI AIT	Develop an economic promotion campaign.	No. of economic promotion initiatives undertaken in the county each year.	Ongoing
1.5.4	To support the expansion of existing retail and commercial outlets within town and village centres, consistent with the Retail Strategy and the CORE Strategy.	WCC	Chambers of Commerce	An increase in the level of appropriate development. The vibrancy of the towns and villages is captured and enhanced.	Reduction in the no. of vacant properties in these towns and villages.	Ongoing
1.5.5	To permit the provision of new appropriately scaled retail development and commercial outlets located in accordance with Retail Policy.	WCC	Chambers of Commerce	An increase in the level of appropriate development. The vibrancy of the towns and villages is captured and enhanced.	Reduction in the no. of vacant properties in these towns and villages.	Ongoing
1.5.6	To protect and support the viability of core retail areas of town centres.	WCC	Chambers of Commerce	An increase in the level of appropriate development. The vibrancy of the towns and villages is captured and enhanced.	Reduction in the no. of vacant properties in these towns and villages.	Ongoing
1.5.7	To support the orderly expansion and development of towns and villages as centres for employment, enterprise and local services provision, consistent with the Core Strategy for County Westmeath.	WCC	Chambers of Commerce	An increase in the level of appropriate development. The vibrancy of the towns and villages is captured and enhanced.	Reduction in the no. of vacant properties in these towns and villages.	Ongoing
1.5.8	Avail of opportunities to secure investment in the towns, villages and rural areas in the county that might arise through central government schemes and through the Local Development Strategy consistent with the CORE Strategy.	WCC	DECLG DTTAS DAFM WCD WI FI	Strong investment in towns, villages and rural areas.	Funding Secured.	Ongoing



**Action Plan: Objective 1.5:****To improve the competitiveness of Westmeath as a location for enterprise and economic development.****High Level Strategies Ref:****S1, S3, S4, S5, S7, S10, S13, S14, S17, S29.**

Action Ref	ACTIONS	Lead Agency	Partner(s)	Desired Outcome	Performance Indicator	Timeframe
1.5.9	Support Local Chambers of Commerce and Business Networks through provision of serviced land for appropriate Enterprise & Employment developments in conjunction with the relevant agencies and consistent with the county development plan.	WCC	Chambers of Commerce	An increase in the level of appropriate development. The vibrancy of the towns and villages is captured and enhanced.	Reduction in the no. of vacant properties in these towns and villages.	Ongoing
1.5.10	To designate appropriate lands to accommodate community, educational and institutional uses consistent with county development plan policy.	WCC		Sufficient availability of serviced land to meet demand.	The amount of suitable zoned land.	Ongoing
1.5.11	To prioritise the reuse of vacant and derelict buildings and lands in town and village centres for uses including residential, retail and mixed-use development.	WCC	Chambers of Commerce	Maximise the use of vacant and derelict buildings and lands.	Ongoing	Ongoing
1.5.12	To promote and facilitate the development of local markets devoted to the sale of local agricultural and craft produce and support their role as visitor attractions.	WCC	LEO WCD WFN	Increase in number and range of markets & producers.	No. of markets available.	Ongoing
1.5.13	Enhance the public realm and prioritise pedestrian movement in the town centres of Mullingar and Athlone, to support tourism and cultural and economic development.	WCC	DECLG DTTAS	Improvement in the quality of the public realm in the town centres of Mullingar and Athlone.	Completion of improvement projects 2018.	2018
1.5.14	Development and support of Business and Tidy Towns Groups to improve towns and villages.	WCC	LEO WLCDC WCD PPN	Co-ordinated development of business and Tidy Towns Groups.	Ongoing	Ongoing



**Objective 1.6:****A thriving tourism sector that contributes significantly to the economic, social and cultural development of the county**

The **Europe 2020** strategy is the European Union's ten-year growth and jobs strategy.

Five headline targets have been set for the EU to achieve by the end of 2020. These include

Employment:

- 75% of the 20-64 year-olds to be employed.

**Tourism Ireland 2016 - "People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025".**

The key goals of the Tourism Policy are:

- By 2025, revenue from overseas visitors will increase to €5 billion. The comparable figure for 2014 is €3.5 billion.
- Employment in the tourism sector will be 250,000 by 2025, compared with around 200,000 at present.
- There will be 10 million visits to Ireland annually by 2025.

Following the success of the Wild Atlantic Way, the newest tourism experience, **Ireland's Ancient East**, will be unveiled around the world in 2016.

It is envisaged that there will be a clear understanding of the responsibilities and expectations of Government, State agencies, Local Authorities, the tourism industry and other stakeholders in the development of our tourism industry; with an enhanced role for Local Authorities and recognition of the contribution of communities to tourism.

**Tourism Data:**

Fáilte Ireland publishes an annual statistical document on regional tourism performance which provides useful county level data on overseas visitors, visitor revenue and a detailed profile on the tourists who visit each county in Ireland. The latest publication in October 2014 provides a snapshot of the relative strength of the tourism sector in Westmeath in 2013. In 2013, Westmeath/Roscommon/Longford welcomed 226,000 domestic visitors and this accounted for total revenue of €39m. In 2013, Westmeath welcomed 95,000 international visitors and accounted for total revenue of €43m. Westmeath is the most popular and profitable tourist destination in the Midlands.

**Waterways Ireland's Marketing Strategy 2012-2017**

The Tourism and Recreation Sectors are one of the largest and important indigenous industries in Ireland. These sectors provide and generate significant levels of employment and earnings and have brought economic activity to areas on the island where little or no other economic activity exists. The tourism and recreational development and investment along the waterways bring activity to the very heart of the island and the communities along the waterway corridors.

The **Marketing Mission**: - Increase awareness and promote greater use of Ireland's Inland Waterways.

The **Strategic Marketing Objectives** are as follows:

- promoting increased use of the Waterways including promoting the range of uses;
- creating awareness of the waterways including the commercial potential of the waterways; and
- creating working relationships with other state and semi state, tourism, trade, recreational organisations and users.

To **achieve** the **objectives in the period 2012 – 2017**,

Waterways Ireland will continue to develop and implement 6 key marketing programmes as follows:

- Waterway branding programme;
- Communication programme;
- Product development programme;
- Visitor services programme;
- Promotional programme; and
- Research programme.

**Westmeath Local Economic and Community Plan** is committed to promoting Tourism through the well-developed actions within this plan and the commitment of the various stakeholders. There is huge potential to develop the tourist sector, which is largely undeveloped in the county and thus boost the local economy and job creation. The preparation of an Integrated Tourism Strategy for the County should be a priority. Westmeath County Council is in a unique position as it owns and operates many of the premier tourist attractions in the county such as Belvedere House & Gardens, Mullingar and Athlone Castle.

**Action Plan: Objective 1.6:**

**A thriving tourism sector that contributes significantly to the economic, social and cultural development of the county.**

**High Level Strategies Ref:**

**S1, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S10, S13, S14, S15, S16, S17, S29.**

Action Ref	ACTIONS	Lead Agency	Partner(s)	Desired Outcome	Performance Indicator	Timeframe
1.6.1	Develop a Tourism Strategy for the county encompassing all potential tourism opportunities.	WCC	WCD Fáilte Ireland, Business Interests, PPN	A tourism strategy for the county. A growing and sustainable tourism sector.	No. of visitors to the county.	2017
1.6.2	Implement the Tourism Strategy for the county.	WCC	WCD, Fáilte Ireland, The Tourism Business Sector, PPN	A renewed focus for tourism in the county.	No. of visitors to the county.	2017-2021
1.6.3	Implement destination & activity marketing initiatives.	WCC	Fáilte Ireland	A heightened awareness of Westmeath as a tourist destination.	No. of visitors to the county.	Ongoing
1.6.4	Develop the county's Waterways for leisure activities.	Waterways Ireland	Fáilte Ireland, WCD PPN	Progress the development and promotion of Greenways and Blueways to capitalise on the centrality of the Midlands, linking the River Shannon, Royal Canal, Grand Canal and River Barrow.	No. of visitors to the county.	Ongoing

**Action Plan: Objective 1.6:**

**A thriving tourism sector that contributes significantly to the economic, social and cultural development of the county.**

**High Level Strategies Ref:**

**S1, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S10, S13, S14, S15, S16, S17, S29.**

Action Ref	ACTIONS	Lead Agency	Partner(s)	Desired Outcome	Performance Indicator	Timeframe
1.6.5	Support Fáilte Ireland's Ancient East Tourism initiative.	Fáilte Ireland	WCC WCD	Develop and market Ireland's Ancient East which will help in scaling up the asset base and achieve international 'stand out' for the region based on its competitive advantage in built and cultural heritage.	Ongoing	Ongoing
1.6.6	Support Fáilte Ireland's Lakelands Tourism initiative.	Fáilte Ireland	WCC WCD	Develop and market Ireland's Lakelands which will help in scaling up the asset base and achieve international 'stand out' for the region based on its competitive advantage in the built and cultural heritage.	Ongoing	Ongoing
1.6.7	Festival and Event support schemes including Diaspora Events.	WCC	Fáilte Ireland WCD	Support a suite of festivals that deliver the strategic tourism experience in Westmeath.	Ongoing	Ongoing
1.6.8	Support the development of the REDZ initiatives in the county including North Westmeath.	WCC	MCOC LEO WCD PPN	A vibrant Tourism/Economic brand for Westmeath.	The increase in tourist numbers.	2016
1.6.9	Implement the <i>Destination Athlone</i> Plan.	WCC	Fáilte Ireland, Local Businesses	Develop Athlone to make it one of the top centres for short stay breaks in Ireland and bring a higher number of visitors to the region.	No. of visitors to Athlone.	Ongoing
1.6.10	Development of activity holidays including walking, cycling, angling and similar activities.	WCC	Fáilte Ireland, WI Local Businesses, LEO WCD	Increase the use of amenities in Westmeath.	No. of visitors using these amenities.	Ongoing

## 4.2. Goal 2 - Integrated Economic and Community Development

**To secure sustainable economic and community development through the maximisation of educational opportunities and the provision of essential social and physical infrastructure.**

### Goal 2 Introduction

Economic development and local and community development, while distinct and involve some different challenges, approaches and skills, are mutually supportive in building sustainable communities with strong local economies. As a consequence, the economic and community elements of the plan will have areas of common interest and action. For example, Westmeath County Council's investment in place-making activities will be supported by the community based work such as local tidy town's efforts and other local improvement initiatives under the local and community development programmes. Similarly, strong economic performance helps to build stronger communities and is fundamental to their welfare through greater prosperity, job creation and financial stability. Equally, local and community development interventions can support economic activity from the ground up, while also helping to combat social exclusion and poverty, for example, through targeted interventions to improve education, training and employment opportunities within disadvantaged or marginalised communities. Therefore here is a dedicated action plan to capture these "integrated elements" to ensure coordinated delivery of both economic and community actions in Westmeath.

### Objectives Goal 2:

<b>2.1</b>	Provision of affordable early childhood and educational services and programmes to address educational disadvantage.
<b>2.2</b>	Universal access to comprehensive third level opportunities and the availability of a range of training and development opportunities consistent with the needs of participants and employers.
<b>2.3</b>	Critical physical infrastructure in place including energy, water, broadband, transportation and other necessary services to facilitate economic and community development.
<b>2.4</b>	A vibrant economy in the county through the implementation of rural development initiatives including development of the agriculture, creative and food sectors.

### Objective 2.1:

#### **Provision of affordable Early Childhood Care and Educational Services and programmes to address educational disadvantage**

##### **Background**

The EU Commission proposes the following headline target with regard to Education:

*"To reduce the share of early school leavers to 10% from the current 15%."*

Ireland's National Reform Programme 2013 update states that the share of early school leavers should be below 8% (currently 10.6%)

In April 2011 Westmeath had a population of 86,164, consisting of 42,783 males and 43,381 females. The population of pre-school age (0-4) was 6,882, of primary school going age (5-12) was 10,111 and of secondary school going age (13-18) was 7,141. Of the county total, Mullingar had a population pre - school age (0 - 4) was 1,860, of primary school going age (5 - 12) was 2,351 and of secondary school going age (13 - 18) was 1,495. Athlone had a population of pre - school age (0 - 4) was 1,698, of primary school going age (5 - 12) was 1,990 and of secondary school going age (13 - 18) was 1,341.

Westmeath County Childcare Committee has identified that there are 85 early childhood services which include 5 afterschool services in the county and that there is a need for expansion of childcare services in specific urban areas in the county. The closest community based service to any of these towns is either Mullingar or Athlone which is a minimum driving distance of 10km. WCCC also recognises that the sustainability of services is essential and with that the need to support the capital investment of suitable community based premises to meet the current pre-school regulations. WCCC supports the development of the new build project in Rathowen to meet new regulation requirements.

The Consultation process highlighted the need to address the level of school retention in the county. Although Westmeath is at a level of 3% from the 2013 report on early school leavers from post-primary schools enrolled in 2009/2011 and not in 2010/2011 which is lower than the national average of 3.5%, there is a need to make education more accessible to hard to reach communities particularly the travelling community. In the 51 most disadvantaged areas in Westmeath the proportion of people with just a primary education, ranges from 14.7% in Sarsfield Square, Athlone, to 55.7%, in Springfield Mullingar. Eight of the 51 disadvantaged areas have in excess of 40% of the population with just a primary education

In the Retention Rates of Pupils in Second Level Schools report, February 2015, over 89% of persons aged 20-24, in 2013, had attained at least a Leaving Certificate equivalent. This represented an increase from 82.6% in 2000. The Early School leaver's numbers have decreased from 12.5% in 2005 to 8.4% in 2013. The "*National Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019*" aims to ensure that education contributes to sustainable development by equipping learners with knowledge, skills and values that will motivate them to become informed active citizens. The objective of the LECP is to provide affordable education for all from pre-school to second level.

**Action Plan: Objective 2.1:****Provision of affordable Early Childhood Care and Educational services and programmes to address educational disadvantage.****High Level Strategies Ref:****S1, S3, S4, S5, S7, S13, S14, S15, S17, S21, S22, S26, S28.**

Action Ref	ACTIONS	Lead Agency	Partner(s)	Desired Outcome	Performance Indicator	Timeframe
2.1.1	Support the development of an infrastructure of high quality early childhood care and education.	WCCC	HSE Tusla WCD	Good quality childhood care available to meet the needs of the community.	Number of childcare spaces available.	2020
2.1.2	To actively work to reduce early school leaving and promote awareness among parents from the highest deprivation index areas of the importance of education.	Tusla	DES LWETB School Boards, PPN WCD DEIS schools	Reduce educational disadvantage.	% of early school leavers.	2020
2.1.3	Support the provision of homework and aftercare clubs.	WCCC	WCD Tusla Private providers	Homework and aftercare clubs available to those of greatest need.	Numbers of spaces available.	2020
2.1.4	Provide lifelong learning opportunities appropriate to the needs of the community through SICAP.	WLCDC	WCD	Lifelong learning opportunities available.	450 individuals over 15 and 814 children under 15 engaged in SICAP.	2017
2.1.5	Provide education opportunities to supplement mainstream education services through the Youthreach programme.	LWETB	DES	Provide alternative option for securing second level educational qualification.	Numbers of students.	2020
2.1.6	To proactively support the integration of children with additional needs into the Early Childhood Care and Education year (free pre-school year).	WCCC	Tusla HSE WCD	To allow access and integration to quality early childhood care to all children in County Westmeath.	Number of children with special needs accessing the ECCE year.	2020

**Objective 2.2:**

**Universal access to comprehensive third level opportunities and the availability of a range of training and development opportunities consistent with the needs of participants and employers.**

**Background**

The EU Commission proposes the following headline target with regard to Education:

*“To reduce the share of early school leavers to 10% from the current 15%.”*

*Ireland’s National Reform Programme 2013 Update* states that the share of early school leavers should be below 8% (currently 10.6%)

**Educational Attainment**

According to the 2011 census, of those aged 15 years and over whose full-time education had ceased, 16.6 per cent were educated to at most primary level only; a further 56.4 per cent attained second level while 27.0 per cent were educated to third level. In the socio-economic profile in Appendix 2, the map (Appendix 7) indicates the spatial distribution of people who did not progress beyond Primary level education in the county. A very clear spatial pattern is evident as areas with the lowest levels of education generally occur in the more rural and peripheral parts of Westmeath, in particular in the north and northwest of the county. Lowest rates are also found in areas within the main urban centres of Mullingar and Athlone and within smaller settlements. The map in Appendix 8 of the socio-economic profile shows the distribution of graduates in the county. The highest concentration (40%) resided in the rural hinterlands of Mullingar and Athlone.

Although Westmeath has a higher rate of graduates than the Midlands, with 26% of its population receiving a third level qualification, compared to the 23% in the region, the county still lags behind the state with a lower percentage of graduates than the national rate of 29%.

**Action Plan: Objective 2.2:**

**Universal access to comprehensive third level opportunities and the availability of a range of training and development opportunities consistent with the needs of participants and employers.**

**High Level Strategies Ref:**

**S1, S3, S4, S5, S7, S10, S11, S13, S14, S15, S17, S21, S22, S29.**

Action Ref	ACTIONS	Lead Agency	Partner(s)	Desired Outcome	Performance Indicator	Timeframe
2.1.1	Develop and promote a targeted campaign to highlight the value of third level education.	WLCDC	LWETB DES AIT	An increase in the number of people in the county with a third level qualification.	The number of people with a third level education as per the census figures 2018.	2018
2.2.2	Address the barriers to participation in third level education.	WLCDC	LWETB AIT DES	Report on the barriers to participation in third level education.	Barriers Identified.	2018
2.2.3	Examine the feasibility of establishing an outreach third level facility in Mullingar.	AIT	LWETB AIT DES WCC MCOC Others	Report on the feasibility of establishing a third level facility in Mullingar.	Completion of feasibility study.	2017
2.2.4	Conduct an audit of training undertaken by various agencies in the county and to explore opportunities for further training.	WLCDC	LWETB AIT E.I. IDA LEO	Production of a comprehensive guide to training and development opportunities available in the County.	Audit complete.	2018
2.2.5	Support the provision of post leaving cert courses in cooperation with the education providers.	LWETB	AIT NUIM WCC DES WLCDC	Availability of courses.	Numbers attending third level.	Ongoing
2.2.6	Support the establishment and operation of a Regional Skills Forum in the Midlands which will connect education providers with employers and industry stakeholders to collaborate in building the skills in the region.	WLCDC	DES ETBs Institutes of Technology, Universities Skillnets IDA EI LEOs Business Associations, INTREO	A regional skills forum in the midlands.	Established Forum.	2016
2.2.7	Support the development of training to allow learners to transition from further education and training to third level education.	LWETB	DES AIT NUIM WCC WLCDC	The availability of training.	The numbers being provided with training to enable them to attend third level.	Ongoing

**Objective 2.3:****Critical physical infrastructure in place including energy, water, broadband, transportation and other necessary services to facilitate economic and community development.****Background**

The availability of physical infrastructural services is a critical component in facilitating economic and community development.

**Road**

One of the critical features of Westmeath is its central location and connectivity to the rest of the country with the M4 traversing the county and providing a road link to the M50, Dublin, and Dublin Airport. Similarly the M4 and M6 and the National Secondary routes such as the N52 are important transportation links to other parts of the country. Regional and local roads within the county are critical in linking communities. The maintenance and improvement of the road network is an essential element in facilitating economic and community development.

**Rail**

The main population centres of Athlone and Mullingar are served by mainline rail routes. This rail connectivity is very important in facilitating economic growth. This mainline rail network is also important in providing commuter links from Mullingar to Dublin, and Athlone to Galway, in recognition of the commuting patterns to work in the county as outlined in the Socio-economic profile in Appendix 2.

**Water Services**

Westmeath is currently well served in terms of an abundant supply of high quality drinking water. According to the 2011 Census, 73% of households in Westmeath are connected to a public mains water system. The envisaged population growth will require augmentation of this supply to the main growth centres. Extension of the public water supply would benefit the development of rural areas not currently served.

The availability of wastewater treatment capacity is essential to facilitate the growth centres of the county and protect the existing high quality natural environment. According to the 2011 census, 57% of households in Westmeath are connected to a public sewage scheme, 36% with individual septic tanks, 4% with individual treatment systems, and 3% not stated. In the short to medium term, upgrading of Athlone Town wastewater treatment system has been identified as a priority.

**Electricity and Gas**

Westmeath is currently well served in terms of capacity of the electricity network available. However it is essential to ensure that the capacity of the network does not become a constraint on future development. Similarly the expansion of the existing natural gas network serving Athlone and Mullingar to other growth centers in the county would be beneficial.

**Action Plan: Objective 2.3:**

**Critical physical infrastructure in place including energy, water, broadband, transportation and other necessary services to facilitate economic and community development.**

**High Level Strategies Ref:**

**S1, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S10, S11, S13, S15, S17, S21, S22, S29.**

Action Ref	ACTIONS	Lead Agency	Partner(s)	Desired Outcome	Performance Indicator	Timeframe
2.3.1	Ensure the maintenance and development of a good road infrastructure in the county.	WCC	NRA TII	A good road infrastructure in place.	Good road infrastructure in place.	Ongoing
2.3.2	Support the maintenance and improvement of rail services.	WLCDC	Iarnród Éireann	Increase in the level of Rail Service available in Mullingar and Athlone.	Frequency of trains.	Ongoing
2.3.3	Support the upgrade of Water Services infrastructure to meet demand, with a particular initial focus on wastewater treatment capacity in Athlone.	Irish Water	WCC	Good quality water infrastructure.	Demand met.	Ongoing
2.3.4	Support the improvement in electricity services.	Eirgrid		Capacity of infrastructure to meet demand.	Demand met.	Ongoing
2.3.5	Seek to expand the availability of Gas infrastructure in the county.	WLCDC	BGE	Expansion of gas infrastructure.	The increase in infrastructure.	Ongoing
2.3.6	Broadband – Support the implementation of the National Broadband Scheme.	WLCDC	DCENR Broadband providers	Rollout of the National Broadband Scheme.	A minimum speed of 30Mbps to every house in the county.	2020

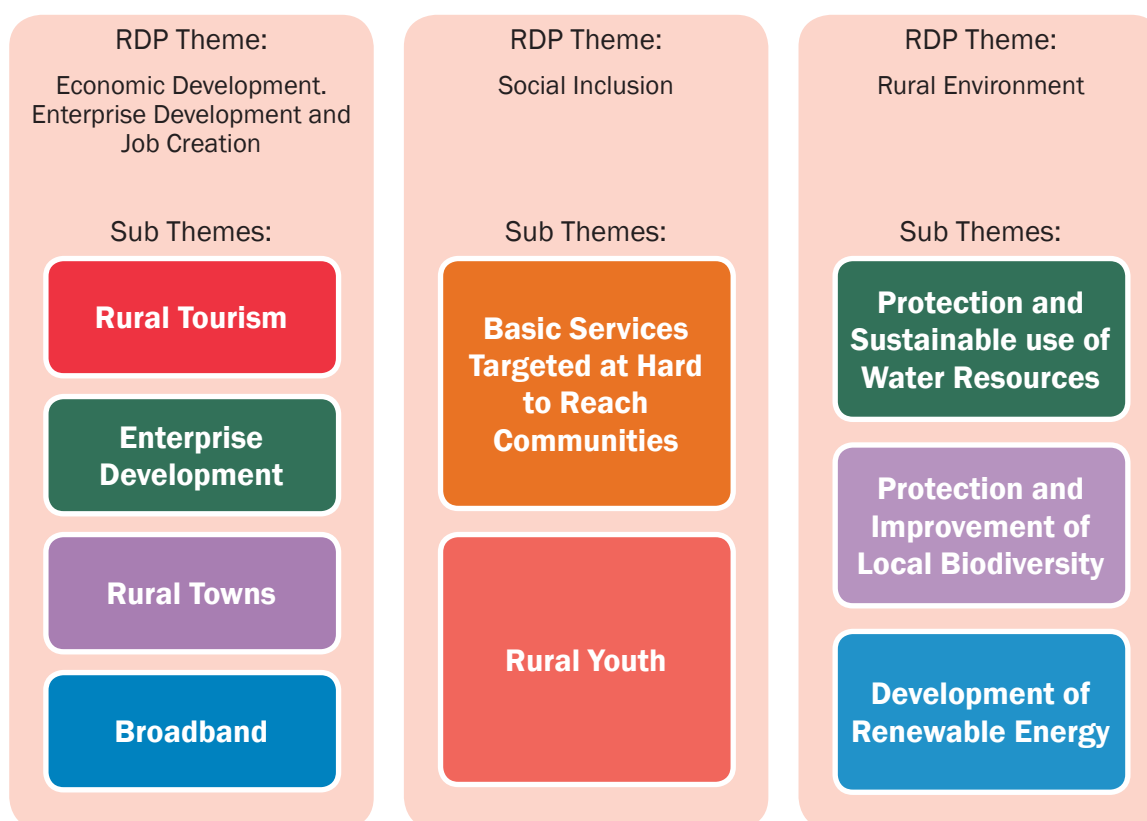
**Objective 2.4:**

**A vibrant economy in the county through the implementation of rural development initiatives including development of the agriculture, creative and food sectors.**

**Background**

Since its launch in 1991, LEADER has supported the delivery of local development actions in rural communities and has formed an integral part of the EU funding framework, through the national Rural Development Programme (RDP) of each Member State.

The commitment to promoting social inclusion and poverty reduction is a defining feature of LEADER for 2014-2020. Whilst LEADER has primarily operated from a rural and economic development context, historically it has generated social inclusion outcomes for individuals and communities. The policy context for the new programming period calls for a focus on addressing poverty and social exclusion, particularly given the significant economic and social changes that have taken place within the last decade.

**Rural Development Programme: Themes and Sub-Themes**

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

**Action Plan: Objective 2.4:**

**A vibrant economy in the county through the implementation of rural development initiatives including development of the agriculture, creative and food sectors.**

**High Level Strategies Ref:**

**S1, S3, S4, S5, S7, S11, S13, S14, S15, S17, S18, S21, S22, S29**

Action Ref	ACTIONS	Lead Agency	Partner(s)	Desired Outcome	Performance Indicator	Timeframe
2.4.1	Preparation and approval of a Local Development Strategy.	WLCDC	LWETB LEO WCD	Approval of the strategy.	Approval of plan by DECLG.	2016
2.4.2	Implementation of the LEADER Programme.	WLCDC	WCD	Delivery of the LDS objectives.	LDS target achieved.	2014-2020
2.4.3	Promotion of options designed for farm families in looking at alternatives for growing farm income and other possibilities for the future.	Teagasc	WLCDC	Farm diversification Two Options Programmes delivered in Westmeath.	The number of farmers exploring options for increased income and diversification.	Ongoing
2.4.4	To undertake a LARES for County Westmeath for the development of renewable energy and support proposals which advance sustainable renewable energy in compliance with the County Development Plan.	WCC	Coillte Bord na Móna, WCD Private sector SEAI Eirgrid	An increase in renewable energy projects in the county and a decrease in the carbon footprint in Westmeath.	A completed Study.	Ongoing
2.4.5	A feasibility Study on the potential for food processing in the county and support appropriate initiatives conceived.	WLCDC	EI LEO WCD Westmeath Food Network	A number of new initiatives to increase the number of food based businesses in the county.	Completion of the feasibility study.	2017
2.4.6	Develop the CEDRA concept through the development of Rural Economic Development Zones.	WCC	WCD LEO Fáilte Ireland PPN	Enhancement of rural economic development zones.	Projects undertaken.	2016-2020
2.4.7	Support and expand Forestry development and associated industries consistent with the county development plan policy.	WLCDC	Coillte DAFM	The development of Forestry in a manner and to a scale that maximises its contribution to socio-economic well-being on a sustainable basis.	The no's employed in the sector.	Ongoing
2.4.8	Explore the potential of boglands to assist in the economic development of the county and the preparation of a holistic plan for the future use of peat land areas.	WCC	Bord na Móna WLCDC	Facilitate the establishment of a framework for sustainable planning and development of bogs for economic development, biodiversity and other appropriate potential after-uses.	Completion of the framework.	2018
2.4.9	Support the potential development of Arts, Crafts and Creative industries.	WLCDC	LEO, WCD, WCC, Made in Westmeath Network PPN	Increase in the number of Arts, Crafts and Creative industries initiatives.	Number of new and expanding businesses in these sectors.	Ongoing

### 4.3 Goal 3 - Community Development

**To secure the creation of vibrant communities in County Westmeath through community development and quality of life initiatives.**

#### Goal 3 Introduction

The purpose of the community elements of the LECP is to promote local and community development within the functional area of Westmeath and to ensure the co-ordination of relevant public-funded local and community development actions in a way that reduces duplication, targets available resources where they are most needed and maximises benefits for communities. The focus of the community elements of the LECP is primarily on social and economic issues that have relevance and can be addressed at a community level, which involve community engagement or participation, which address the specific needs of communities and which identify areas of priority and indicate the most appropriate programmes or other resources to be linked with each particular priority.

#### Definition of Community Development:

There are many definitions of community development but the basic concept was stated by the United Nations in 1948

***“Community Development is a process designed to create conditions of economic and social progress for the whole community with its active participation and fullest possible reliance upon the community’s initiative.”***

(quoted in Head, 1979:101)

or as articulated recently by the DECLG

***“Seeks to harness all the potential resources at the disposal of communities by bringing together people, groups, and agencies, voluntary and statutory bodies to make a positive difference in the development of sustainable communities”.***

Community development is sometimes confused with community-based programs, community research and other forms of community interventions. The most significant feature that distinguishes community development from other community work is its values and principles. Below are a list and a brief definition of the values and principles that are typically embodied in community development programs.

- **Democratic:** The will of the majority must be carried out, but only after all voices are heard and considered and minority rights are protected.
- **Inclusive:** There are many barriers to participation in society; poverty, disability, age, race and ethnicity are some characteristics that often marginalise people. A healthy community embraces diversity and recognises that all community members have a right to be heard and participate in processes that affect their lives.
- **Non-authoritarian:** Organisational structures are as flat as possible, with all participants being seen as equally important and having equal input.
- **Community self determination:** Community members come together to discuss their concerns, assess options and arrive at their own conclusions. They may seek advice from “experts”, but consider it along with other sources of information and their own experience and make their own decisions that are right for them.

- **Community Ownership:** Communities thrive when they develop their own assets, but also when they “own” their problems and issues. When communities accept that it is “their” problem, then they are more likely to work together to develop a solution, and the solution will be better than one provided solely by an external “expert”.
- **Enhance natural capacities and networks:** There are sources of strength in every community; for example, informal networks and social support systems, or certain individuals that have particular talents or are able to help others in need. A community developer identifies these existing community assets and works with them. It is important not to duplicate existing structures and functions as that may weaken rather than strengthen the community.
- **Social justice and equity:** This is fundamental to community development and is at least implicit in all Community Development work, if not an explicit goal of a Community Development program.
- **Universality:** Services are available to everyone, without requiring means or needs testing.
- **Service Integration:** Often services provided to persons in need are fragmented, so that one service provider doesn’t know what other services are available or being used, resulting in gaps, duplications and sometimes conflicting advice or treatments. A community development approach would ensure that services are coordinated, that they enhance and strengthen natural community and family supports, that there is effective communication among all involved, and that services are directed by the individual receiving them, to the extent possible.
- **Upstream:** The distinction between upstream vs. downstream approaches uses a river as a metaphor for the increasing impact of conditions and events which affect health over time and space, and relates to the point of intervention. For example, if there is a toxic spill upstream, it will affect the quality of the water in the river for everyone living downstream. You can focus either on dealing with the illnesses that are experienced by the downstream people (downstream approach) or you can stop the spill and prevent others from happening in the future (upstream approach).

## Agencies and Bodies involved in Community Development

### Westmeath County Council (WCC)

Westmeath County Council (WCC) is the statutory Local Authority for Co Westmeath. In addition to its core functions providing services in Planning, Housing, Roads and Transport, Environment, Water Services and Library Arts & Recreation, Westmeath County Council also has significant involvement in Community Development including:

- The Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)
- The Public Participation Network (PPN),
- Community Grants and Cathaoirleach Awards & Grants and Pride Of Place
- Comhairle na n-Óg,
- The RAPID Programme
- The Age Friendly Strategy
- Support Fund for Festivals and Events.
- The Joint Policing Committee (JPC) in partnership with the Gardai

The Westmeath Heritage Forum is a key component in the Heritage Planning process. The Forum is a non-statutory group established by the Council which provides advice on the preparation and implementation of the County’s Heritage Plan.

**Westmeath Sports Partnership**

Westmeath Sports Partnership is dedicated to the promotion and development of sport in County Westmeath.

**Health Service Executive (HSE)**

Westmeath forms part of Area 8 (which covers Laois, Offaly, Longford, Westmeath, Meath and Louth) region playing a significant role in the implementation of the *Healthy Ireland, A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing*.

In addition to its core services, HSE provides support for a range of community initiatives in the county including:

- Funding for Traveller Health and Primary Care Strategy
- The Community Health Needs Assessment for Athlone 2015
- Funding for Food and Health programme,
- Funding Midland Regional Drugs and Alcohol Taskforce.
- Homelessness Services
- Section 39 Funding to Community Groups targeting the elderly
- Lottery Funding through the HSE

**Tusla**

The Child and Family Agency is now the dedicated State agency responsible for improving wellbeing and outcomes for children. The Child and Family Agency's services include a range of universal and targeted services including Child protection and Welfare services, Educational Welfare Services, Psychological Services, Family and locally based Community Supports, Early Years Services and Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence Services. Tusla provides funding for the Community Mothers Programme and the Triple P parenting programme in Longford and Westmeath.

**Children and Young Persons Services Committee – (CYPSC)**

CYPSC are the key structure identified by Government to plan and co-ordinate services for children and young people in every county in Ireland. The overall purpose is to improve outcomes for children and young people, aged between 0 to 24 years, through local and national interagency working. They provide a forum for joint planning to ensure that children, young people and their families receive improved and accessible services.

**Department of Social Protection – (DSP)**

There are a number of DSP initiatives in relation to employment and job seeking. These include the new Intreo service, Job Initiative Projects, Tus, RSS, Community Employment Schemes, Business Development Programmes, Back to Work and Short Term Enterprise Allowance Schemes (BTEA/STEA) and the Jobs Clubs. Other DSP Job Seeking and Training Supports include Job Bridge, Jobs Plus and the new Job Path and Youth Guarantee programmes.

**Longford Westmeath Education and Training Board (LWETB)**

The principal objective of LWETB is to promote the development of education, training and youth work in the region. It has a remit for second level and adult education and training services and runs a number of programmes including the VTOS Programme in Mullingar and Athlone, Youthreach Programmes and is responsible for the School Completion Programme. In addition to this, LWETB is also responsible for Local training initiatives in the region.

### **National Learning Network**

The National Learning Network, with centers in Athlone and Mullingar, provides a range of flexible training courses for people who need specialist support including job seekers and people with an illness or disability.

### **Citizens information Board**

Westmeath Citizens Information Services has two main centres in the County, Athlone and Mullingar, and also provides outreach services in Castlepollard and Kilbeggan.

### **Westmeath Community Development**

Westmeath Community Development is the Local development company for Co Westmeath. The company delivers a range of EU and Exchequer funded programmes addressing rural development and social inclusion issues e.g.

- LEADER
- SICAP
- Rural Social Scheme
- Labour Market Programmes include TUS, CE and JI
- Business Development Programme
- Back to Work & Short Term Enterprise Allowance (BTEA/STEA)
- Job Club
- Local Training Initiatives.

### **Westmeath Volunteer Centre**

The Westmeath Volunteer Centre is a county-wide project managed by WCD in partnership with a number of other organisations including WCC, the PPN, Westmeath Sports Partnership and the Citizens Information Service.

### **Congress Information and Development Centres**

There are two congress centres in Westmeath, Dr Stephens Centre Athlone and Mullingar Congress Information & Development Centre. They both provide a variety of services including education, career advice, personal development and information on a variety of services.

### **South Westmeath Education Employment and Training Services (SWEETS)**

South Westmeath Education Employment and Training Services (SWEETS) is a community based initiative providing support to unemployed people in the Kilbeggan and surrounding area.

### **Mullingar Employment Action Group (MEAG)**

The Mullingar Employment Action Group is a support group for unemployed people in the Mullingar and surrounding areas.

### **Athlone Community Taskforce (ACT)**

Athlone Community Taskforce is a support group for unemployed people in Athlone and surrounding areas.

### **Other Community Services Projects (CSPs)**

There are twelve Community Services projects in total in the county, operating under the Community Services Programme, delivering a range of services and providing employment. There are opportunities for CSPs to progress to social enterprise.

**Youth Services**

The Midland Youth Service (MRYS) and Foroige are the two most active youth organisations in the area and operate clubs in Mullingar and in some rural areas.

**Women's Community Projects (WCP)**

The Women's Community Projects, Mullingar is the most established women's group in the area. This project delivers employment focused training to women and has also established a community enterprise.

**Age Friendly Alliance**

The Westmeath Age Friendly Strategy has been launched, having been developed under the National Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme.

**Westmeath County Childcare Committee**

WCCC provides supports to Childcare Service providers who wish to avail of the government funding under the National Childhood Investment Programme, Community Childcare Subvention Scheme, Childcare Education & Training Support Scheme and the Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme.

**Family Resource Centres**

There are two Family Resource centres in the county, Monsignor McCarthy Centre in Battery Heights Athlone and Cara Phort Family Resource Centre in Ballynacargy. Both Family Resource Centres provide a focal point for social activities as well as hosting training and support initiatives in those disadvantaged areas.

**Longford Westmeath Community Transport (Local Link)**

Longford Westmeath Community Transport Ltd is developing an effective sustainable and accessible rural transport service for rural dwellers in County Longford and Westmeath. LWCT provides transport for youth services, disability, pre-School, after school, and day care centres.

**Midland Regional Drug and Alcohol Taskforce**

The Midland Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Force (MRDATF) is one of ten Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Forces in Ireland that was set up in 2003 on foot of recommendations from the National Drugs Strategy (NDS) 2001 – 2008. Funded by the Department of Health, the MRDATF works to co-ordinate an effective response to drug and alcohol problems in areas experiencing the highest levels of substance misuse, and involve those directly affected by the problem in the development of an area based drug strategy. The MRDATF and its sub-structures bring together members, representing the community, voluntary and statutory sectors, public representatives and key interest groups to develop and co-ordinate a collective and integrated response to drug and alcohol problems in the midland region which covers the catchment area of Longford, Westmeath, Laois and Offaly.

### Goal 3: Community Development

To secure the creation of vibrant communities in County Westmeath through community development and quality of life initiatives

#### Objectives Goal 3:

3.1	Co-ordination of community development initiatives including the socially excluded and enabling their active public participation.
3.2	Availability and utilisation of good quality community, recreational and amenity facilities.
3.3	Preservation of the natural environment, heritage and culture of Westmeath.
3.4	Provision of accommodation and infrastructure to meet the needs of the community.
3.5	A safe and secure environment for all, in both urban and rural areas.
3.6	Availability of an adequate range of community health services and well-being supports.

#### Objective 3.1:

**Co-ordination of community development initiatives including the socially excluded and enabling their active public participation.**

#### Background

Under the **Europe 2020 Strategy**, the EU adopted, for the first time, a European poverty target. This target is to lift at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty and exclusion by 2020. Ireland's target is to reduce by a minimum of 200,000, the population in consistent poverty, at-risk-of-poverty or basic deprivation.

The Government's **National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016** states;

*"People are living in poverty if their income and resources (material, cultural and social) are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living which is regarded as acceptable by Irish society generally. As a result of inadequate income and resources people may be excluded and marginalised from participating in activities which are considered the norm for other people in society".*

The 2013 Social Inclusion Forum report on the **National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016** expressed concern that the state is departing from the bottom-up approaches that are required to reverse the effects of the economic downturn. Community organisations have a proven ability to act as a first-step response to unemployment and poverty and to enhance and augment the work of departments and agencies in meeting the needs of the most marginalised.

The Westmeath LECP through this objective intends to strengthen the participation of the whole community in the development of the county. This will be facilitated by the new mechanism for public engagement and participation called **The Public Participation Network (PPN)**. Its primary objective is to enable communities to take an active formal role in the policy making and oversight activities of the Local Authority and other local decision making agencies.

The public consultation process undertaken for this plan highlighted as a priority the need to address the level of social exclusion in the community. Measures are required to ensure that all community services are accessible to everyone. There are 51 designated areas of deprivation in Westmeath, 33 of these 51 areas are in the towns of Athlone and Mullingar. The population of both Mullingar and Athlone is much more diverse than either the county or state. Non-Irish nationals accounted for 11.9% of the population of the county compared with a national average figure of 12.0%.

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

There are many communities that will be targeted in this plan including but not exclusively, travellers, older people, the LGBT community, children and youth at risk, refugees, people living in disadvantaged areas, Roma, asylum seekers, people with disabilities, new communities, and the unemployed. The Westmeath Local Economic and Community Plan is committed to promoting Social Inclusion through the well-developed actions within this plan and the commitment of the various stakeholders to address the issues caused by social exclusion. Social Inclusion ensures that marginalised people and those living in poverty have greater participation in decision making which affects their lives. The Westmeath LECP is committed to achieving equality, accessibility and to celebrate diversity in the county.

### Action Plan: Objective 3.1

#### Co-ordination of community development initiatives including the socially excluded and enabling their active public participation.

#### High Level Strategies Ref:

**S1, S3, S4, S5, S7, S13, S14, S15, S17, S19, S20, S21, S22, S23, S24, S25, S26, S27, S28, S29, S30.**

Action Ref	ACTIONS	Lead Agency	Partner(s)	Desired Outcome	Performance Indicator	Timeframe
3.1.1	Establish and support community and voluntary groups through the Public Participation Network.	WCC	PPN	Community participation in local decision making.	The no. of community and voluntary groups affiliated to the PPN.	Ongoing
3.1.2	Address social exclusion and equality issues by empowering disadvantaged communities through implementation of SICAP.	WLCDC	WCD WCC PPN DECLG Pobal HSE	Participation of disadvantaged persons and groups in the community.	45 groups and 800 individuals identified and engaged with SICAP.	2017
3.1.3	Build community capacity by providing training and animation through the LEADER Local Development Programme.	WLCDC	WCD WCC PPN DECLG Pobal	Improvement in the capacity of community groups.	The number of community groups in receipt of capacity building training.	2020
3.1.4	Support existing RAPID structures in Athlone and Mullingar and seek to extend these structures to incorporate all disadvantaged areas.	WCC	WCD	Effective community development structures in place in all disadvantaged areas.	Number of disadvantaged areas participating in community development structures.	Ongoing
3.1.5	Undertake a mapping exercise of community services and programmes in the county.	WLCDC	WCD	Comprehensive information available on the range of community services available.	Completed map of community services in the county.	2017
3.1.6	Establish a mechanism that will maximise coordination and address the duplication and gaps identified by the mapping exercise of community services.	WLCDC	WCC WCD HSE DSP LWETB PPN	Improved and efficient community services.	Duplication and gaps in community services addressed.	2018 - 2020
3.1.7	Provide grant support to community groups.	WCC	PPN WCD HSE	Enable local community objectives to be realised.	Amount of grant funding provided.	Ongoing
3.1.8	Develop communication mechanisms including website and newsletter to support and inform community groups.	PPN	WCD WCC	Relevant information available to all community groups.	Community information portal developed and in operation.	Ongoing

**Action Plan: Objective 3.1**

**Co-ordination of community development initiatives including the socially excluded and enabling their active public participation.**

**High Level Strategies Ref:**

**S1, S3, S4, S5, S7, S13, S14, S15, S17, S19, S20, S21, S22, S23, S24, S25, S26, S27, S28, S29, S30.**

Action Ref	ACTIONS	Lead Agency	Partner(s)	Desired Outcome	Performance Indicator	Timeframe
3.1.9	Support youth group structures through Comhairle na nÓg.	WCC	DCYA MRYS LWETB	Structure in place which gives children and young people the opportunity to be involved in the development of local services and policies.	Completion of Comhairle na nÓg Annual Workplan initiatives.	Ongoing
3.1.10	Support of a range of voluntary youth groups and clubs.	LWETB	Foroige MRYS Scouting Ireland, other National Youth Organisations	All young people aged 12-18 years will have the opportunity to join a youth club in their area.	Number of young people involved in groups/clubs allocated funding under the DCYA grant scheme.	Ongoing
3.1.11	Celebrate community participation through the annual Cathaoirleach Awards event.	WCC	PPN	Mechanism in place to recognise community participation.	Annual event held.	Annually
3.1.12	Support community groups to participate in National Pride of Place competition.	WCC	PPN	Community Groups have the opportunity to showcase their achievements at national level.	Number of community groups supported to participate in national pride of place competition.	Annually
3.1.13	Support of Community Service Projects.	DECLG	Pobal	Delivery of community service projects.	Number of projects supported.	Ongoing
3.1.14	Support Traveller Inter-agency group including early school leavers.	WCC	HSE DES Tusla WCCC WCD DJE MRYS	More holistic response to the needs of Travellers.	Number of meetings of support group held.	Ongoing
3.1.15	Support community engagement in areas most affected by the drug & alcohol problem through the establishment and support of appropriate networks.	MRDATF	Statutory, Community & voluntary sectors	Establishment of appropriate drug and alcohol support networks comprised of representation from all community, voluntary and statutory agencies.	Network(s) established and working to agreed outcome based workplan.	Ongoing

**Objective 3.2:****Availability and utilisation of good quality community, recreational and amenity facilities.****Background**

The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Governments **Statement of Strategy 2015-2017** promotes the concept to support a range of community and voluntary initiatives and programmes aimed at tackling social exclusion and facilitating community participation at all levels. The **vision** is to facilitate integrated development at local level and foster vibrant, sustainable and inclusive communities.

The consultation process undertaken in respect of the LECP highlighted the need to address the level of facilities available to every community throughout the county, also the improvement of existing facilities to address accessibility. This will require investment in the community, recreational and amenity facilities throughout Westmeath. Measures will be included in the LEADER programme to enhance the capacity of people volunteering in the community which will enable them to prepare funding applications for community projects and also to operate and manage such facilities.

According to the 2011 census, outside the towns of Athlone and Mullingar, there were 24 electoral districts that had a population increase of over 50% in the period from 1991 to 2011. The most dramatic increase was in Kinnegad ED where the population increased by 421%. The census also indicates that Westmeath has higher than the state average of 0-20 year olds. This growth in population has not been accompanied by the requisite supporting social and community infrastructure to meet the increase in population. The Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midlands 2010-2022, predict a population increase in the county from 86,164 in 2011 to 109,623 in 2022. This population increase needs to be catered for by the provision of adequate community, recreational and amenity infrastructure.

It is important to seek efficient use of new and existing facilities so that the use of such resources may be maximised. Many existing community facilities such as schools or religious buildings provide a focal point for the community. When such premises are multi-functional, it makes them more economical to run and sustain. The Westmeath County Development Plan (2014 – 2020) includes objectives to provide accessible community facilities to serve the needs and expectations of a growing and diverse population in the county.

A survey of community facilities in Westmeath undertaken in 2008, indicated that there were approximately 110 facilities located around the county including community halls, playgrounds, parks, libraries etc. This action plan provides for this database of facilities to be updated to set a baseline against which the needs of the community can be properly assessed.

The aim of this plan, through the capacity building of communities and the integration of new communities and the investment of funds by the LEADER programme, the Local authority, and the community combined will ensure that all villages and towns will have access to community, recreation and amenity facilities appropriate to their needs.

**Action Plan: Objective 3.2****Availability and utilisation of good quality community, recreational and amenity facilities.****High Level Strategies Ref:****S1, S3, S4, S5, S7, S13, S14, S15, S17, S19, S20, S21, S22, S23, S24, S25, S26, S27, S28, S29, S30.**

Action Ref	ACTIONS	Lead Agency	Partner(s)	Desired Outcome	Performance Indicator	Timeframe
3.2.1	Carry out an audit and needs analysis of community, recreational and amenity facilities.	WLCDC	WCD PPN	Requirements for community, recreational and amenity facilities identified.	Completion of needs analysis.	2017
3.2.2	Zoning sufficient and appropriate land to provide for community infrastructure requirements.	WCC		Land zoned for community infrastructure.	Area of land zoned.	Ongoing
3.2.3	Provision of a modern sports campus in Mullingar.	WCC	DTTAS	Multi functional sport and recreation facility available in Mullingar.	Completion of campus project.	2020
3.2.4	Maximise sharing /multi use of existing community facilities.	WLCDC	WCD DES PPN Church bodies	Reduced demand for new build capital expenditure.	The number of facilities being utilised in alternative ways to their primary use.	Ongoing
3.2.5	Support the refurbishment and upgrading of facilities including energy efficiency and universal access.	WLCDC	WCD MEA SEAI	Increased quality and improved energy efficiency of community facilities.	Number of facilities upgraded.	2020
3.2.6	Provide and upgrade public amenity areas consistent with the County Development Plan.	WCC,	WLCDC WCD PPN Coillte Bord na Móna	Increase in range and quality of amenity areas available.	The number of new and upgraded public amenity areas.	2020
3.2.7	Capacity building of community groups to develop and manage community facilities.	WLCDC	WCD	Increased capacity of communities to deliver projects and manage facilities.	Number of community groups provided with capacity building.	Ongoing
3.2.8	Increased utilisation of forest areas for recreation and amenity use.	WLCDC	WCD Coillte	Increase in recreation and amenity areas available.	Number of forest areas available for public access.	2020
3.2.9	Implementation of the Westmeath Library Development Plan.	WCC	DECLG	Enhancement of Library service available.	Number of people utilising Library service.	Ongoing
3.2.10	Develop a network of additional walking and cycle routes.	WCC	DTTAS WCD Bord na Móna Coillte Waterways Ireland, Fáilte IRL.	Enhancement of walking and cycling routes available.	Length of additional routes provided.	Ongoing

**Objective 3.3:****Preservation of the natural environment, heritage and culture of Westmeath.****Background**

In recognition of the EU2020 targets for Climate change/Energy, Ireland's National Reform Programme 2013 update has targeted the following

- Greenhouse gas emissions 20% lower than 1990 (-7.6% in 2010)
- 16% of energy renewables (6.4% in 2011)
- 20% increase in energy efficiency

Ireland's emissions profile has changed considerably since 1990, with the contribution from transport more than doubling, and the share from agriculture reducing since 1998. Agriculture is the largest source of emissions, representing 32% of total national emissions in 2012. The energy industries are the second largest source of emissions, representing 21.9% of total national greenhouse gas emissions in 2012. The transport sector has been the fastest growing source of greenhouse gas emissions, showing a 113% increase between 1990 and 2012, although emissions from this sector have shown decreases on an annual basis from peak levels in 2007.

County Westmeath has a high quality natural environment and has a rich variety of archaeological, built, cultural and natural heritage. There are 1,580 protected structures in the county as documented in Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020. This plan and the actions in the Westmeath Heritage Plan aim to conserve our heritage by identifying it, conserving it and promoting it in a sustainable manner so that it continues to be a part of life for everyone in Westmeath. The County Westmeath Biodiversity Action Plan 2014-2020 examines concepts and issues in biodiversity and aims to conserve and enhance the biodiversity of County Westmeath by prioritising, coordinating and initiating actions to ensure effective conservation and enhancement in our county and raising awareness of biodiversity in partnership with local communities. The Consultation process highlighted as a priority the need to address climate change.

The actions under this objective will help Westmeath contribute towards the realisation of these EU 2020 targets. The County Development Plan 2014-2020 endeavours to achieve a sustainable, efficient and integrated transport system, high quality connectivity and ease of movement within and to Westmeath, by enhancing the existing strategic transportation infrastructure, in terms of the road, rail and public transport network, together with cycleway and pedestrian facilities.

**Natural Water Quality**

The county of Westmeath lies in two river basin districts; the majority being in the Shannon River Basin District. There are five major lakes and five groundwater bodies in the County. The majority of Westmeath's river water bodies are at moderate water quality status. The main pressures affecting rivers are generally agriculture, wastewater discharges and septic systems. The five lakes in Westmeath County are at good or moderate status. The main pressures affecting lakes are generally forestry and agriculture.

**Natural Heritage**

There are 46 esker systems in Westmeath covering 1,681 hectares or 0.91% of the area of the County along with many other natural heritage features.

**Waterways Ireland: Waterways Ireland Heritage Plan 2016-2020 (draft)**

The aim of the Waterways Ireland Heritage Plan is to identify, conserve and promote the sustainable use of the unique waterways heritage for the enjoyment of this and future generations.

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

- Objective I: Fostering partnerships to continue building waterway heritage knowledge through storing information, undertaking research and developing best practice.
- Objective II: Promoting awareness, appreciation and enjoyment of our waterway heritage with a focus on community engagement.
- Objective III: Promoting the integrated management, conservation, protection and sustainable use of the waterway heritage resource.
- Objective IV: To develop Waterways Ireland as a heritage organisation

### Conclusion

This Local Economic and Community Plan aims to generate greater awareness of environmental issues and greater ownership of the natural landscape and culture of the county. The proposed actions include initiatives to promote the conservation of water; the development of renewable energy initiatives; support the implementation of sustainable transport, and the conservation of our natural built heritage.

#### Action Plan: Objective 3.3

#### Preservation of the natural environment, heritage and culture of Westmeath.

#### High Level Strategies Ref:

**S1, S3, S4, S5, S7, S13, S14, S15, S17, S19, S20, S21, S22, S23, S24, S25, S26, S27, S28, S29, S30.**

Action Ref	ACTIONS	Lead Agency	Partner(s)	Desired Outcome	Performance Indicator	Timeframe
3.3.1	Protect the natural environment by ensuring balance between conservation and development through the implementation of the County Development Plan.	WCC	DECLG ABP	Protection of the high quality natural environment.	Environmental indices.	Ongoing
3.3.2	Promote the natural, built and cultural heritage of the county through the implementation of the County Westmeath Heritage Plan.	WCC	Westmeath Heritage Forum	Conservation of the natural, built and cultural heritage.	Achievement of Westmeath Heritage Plan objectives.	Ongoing
3.3.3	Provide access, appreciation, awareness and enjoyment of the arts through the implementation of the Westmeath Arts Plan.	WCC	Arts Council DAHG DECLG	Enhanced appreciation of the arts in the county.	Annual support provided to Art in the county.	Ongoing
3.3.4	Protect and improve water quality in our lakes and rivers by the implementation of the River Basin Management Plans.	WCC	DECLG EPA IW Other LA's	High quality of natural water quality.	EPA published natural water quality.	Ongoing
3.3.5	Promote and implement sustainable waste management through the implementation of the Regional Waste Management Plan.	WCC	DECLG EPA	Sustainable management of waste.	Level of waste recycling.	2021
3.3.6	Promote and support development of renewable energy initiatives through the LEADER rural development programme.	WLCDC	WCD SEAI	Increased utilisation of renewable energy to reduce the impact of climate change.	Renewable energy initiatives implemented.	2020

**Action Plan: Objective 3.3****Preservation of the natural environment, heritage and culture of Westmeath.****High Level Strategies Ref:****S1, S3, S4, S5, S7, S13, S14, S15, S17, S19, S20, S21, S22, S23, S24, S25, S26, S27, S28, S29, S30.**

<b>Action Ref</b>	<b>ACTIONS</b>	<b>Lead Agency</b>	<b>Partner(s)</b>	<b>Desired Outcome</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
<b>3.3.7</b>	Implementation of sustainable transport Initiatives to reduce dependence on car usage by prioritising walking, cycling and public transport.	WCC	DTTAS	Reduction in dependence on car usage.	Sustainable transport initiatives implemented.	2020
<b>3.3.8</b>	Promote and support water conservation initiatives through the LEADER rural development programme.	WLCDC	WCD IW	Conservation of valuable water resources.	Water conservation initiatives implemented.	2020
<b>3.3.9</b>	Reduce annual energy usage through collaboration with the Midland Energy Agency.	WCC	Midland LA's	Reduce energy use.	Annual amount of energy used.	Annually
<b>3.3.10</b>	Advance proposals to secure world heritage site designation for the Hill of Uisneach.	WCC	Heritage Forum	Designation of Hill of Uisneach as world heritage site.	Designation achieved.	2020
<b>3.3.11</b>	Protection and improvement of local biodiversity initiatives through the LEADER rural development programme.	WLCDC	WCD Westmeath Heritage Forum	Protection and improvement of local biodiversity.	Biodiversity protection and improvement initiatives implemented.	2020
<b>3.3.12</b>	To preserve and enhance the historic core of villages and town centres and protect the distinctive heritage and character of these settlements.	WCC	WCD PPN	Increase in preserved historic village and town centres.	Adoption of supporting policies re: preservation of historic character.	2020

**Objective 3.4:****Provision of accommodation and infrastructure to meet the needs of the community.****Background**

The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government's **Statement of Strategy 2015-2017** supports the realisation of a new vision: that to the greatest extent possible, every household in Ireland will have access to secure, good quality housing suited to their needs at an affordable price in a sustainable community. This is supported by the **National Housing strategy 2014**, the **Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020** and the **Westmeath Social Housing Strategy 2015-2017**. Construction 2020 aims to triple housing output to 25,000 units by 2020.

The consultation process highlighted, as a priority, the level of housing need in the county, including the elderly, the need to address homelessness, and provide accommodation for travellers. Improvement in the general quality and accessibility of housing was also identified as an issue.

The consultation process also identified the need for a range of communication and transportation services including Broadband and improvement in ICT capacity of the community.

According to the census 2011, the proportion of the general population of the county living in Athlone and Mullingar was 42%. The proportion of the population of the county living in urban areas (with greater than 1,500) was 49% with 51% living in rural areas. The projected increase in the population of the county will require additional housing accommodation.

Not all persons have the means to provide housing from their own resources and a social housing programme is required. Westmeath's Housing Strategy prepared as part of the County Development Plan set out the anticipated social housing requirement. As of April 2015 there were 2,948 approved households seeking social housing in Westmeath. 60% of this demand related to the towns of Athlone and Mullingar.

The Local Economic and Community Plan will support the zoning of sufficient lands to meet the projected housing need. A number of social housing programmes will provide housing for the most vulnerable in our society. The quality of housing will be monitored and improved through the implementation of a range of regulatory controls available. The need for transportation and communications will be addressed through the LEADER programme which will also support training to increase use of ICT by the community.

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

**Action Plan: Objective 3.4****Provision of accommodation and infrastructure to meet the needs of the community****High Level Strategies Ref:****S1, S3, S4, S5, S7, S13, S14, S15, S17, S19, S20, S21, S22, S23, S24, S25, S26, S27, S28, S29, S30.**

Action Ref	ACTIONS	Lead Agency	Partner(s)	Desired Outcome	Performance Indicator	Timeframe
3.4.1	Zone sufficient lands in the County Development Plan to meet projected housing needs.	WCC	DECLG ABP	Sufficient land zoned for housing to meet projected demand.	Area of land zoned for housing.	Ongoing
3.4.2	Provide social and affordable housing units and other support measures for those unable to cater for their own housing needs.	WCC	DECLG AHBs	Houses made available to those unable to meet their own housing needs.	850 houses provided through social housing provision schemes by 2020.	2020
3.4.3	Provide for the accommodation of Travellers, Homeless and special needs groups.	WCC	DECLG AHBs	Appropriate accommodation available to all members of the community.	Number of accommodation units provided.	Ongoing
3.4.4	Implement rented accommodation control measures.	WCC	DECLG PRTB	Rental accommodation available of good quality.	Number of registrations and inspections.	Ongoing
3.4.5	Implement Building Control and Planning Enforcement measures to ensure housing construction completed to required standards.	WCC	DECLG	All housing built in accordance with appropriate standards.	Number of houses constructed to certified standard.	Ongoing
3.4.6	Maintain social housing stock.	WCC	DECLG AHBs	Good Quality social housing.	Number of houses maintained.	Ongoing
3.4.7	Support the provision of sufficient and strategic public and school bus services.	WLCDC	Bus Éireann LWCT DES LWETB Schools Private bus operators	Efficient public bus service available.	Number and frequency of services.	Ongoing
3.4.8	Provide and promote rural transport services.	LWCT	DTTS	Maximise transport services available to rural areas of the county.	Range of services available.	2017
3.4.9	Coordinate local public transport services available to the public through review and maintenance of the Integrated Rural Transport Initiative.	WLCDC	LWCT HSE IWA St Hilda's NLN LWETB WCC	Coordination of local public transport services operating in the county.	Efficiencies in local transport services achieved.	Ongoing
3.4.10	Review the feasibility study of a bus service for Mullingar Town.	WLCDC	WCD LWCT PPN	Determination if Mullingar town bus service feasible.	Feasibility study completed.	2020
3.4.11	Support increased use of ICT by the community through the LEADER rural development programme.	WLCDC	WCD PPN	Enhanced IT capacity of local community.	Number of ICT initiatives implemented.	2020
3.4.12	Undertake a revision of the bus service for the whole town of Athlone including Monksland.	NTA	LWCT	A bus service for the full town of Athlone.	The presence of a service.	2016

**Objective 3.5:****A safe secure environment for all, in both urban and rural areas.****Background**

The **Statement of Strategy 2015-2017** by the Department of Environment Community and Local Government includes an objective that the local government will be tasked with promoting the well-being and quality of life of citizens and communities, representing and serving them effectively and efficiently. The revised structures provided for in the Local Government Reform Act 2014 facilitate this objective.

The Westmeath Local Economic and Community Plan includes a primary objective for a safe and secure environment for all in Westmeath. This reflects the plans of the Annual Westmeath Policing Plan, the Westmeath Joint Policing Committee Plan and submissions received. The LECP consultation process highlighted the need to address the level of security, safety for all and especially the most vulnerable in society including isolated rural areas of the county.

From the data, the population of the county has been increasing steadily and was recorded at 86,164 in the 2011 census. In 2012/2013, Westmeath was ranked 8th in the Irish Independent's (Nov 2014) "*country's worst crime black spots*". This data also indicated that crime levels had decreased by 4% in the years 2012/2013. In County Westmeath, for the years, 2013, 2014 and 2015 to date; Theft and related offences has been consistently the highest offence reported by the Gardai.

Initiatives such as Neighbourhood Watch, Text Alert and community support schemes like the care and repair and the befriending service, have a positive impact through the cooperation of Communities, the Gardai, Westmeath County Council and supported by the Joint Policing Committee.

Additionally the proposed actions in the Local Economic and Community Plan will improve the safety and security of everyone in Westmeath.

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

**Action Plan: Objective 3.5****A safe and secure environment for all, in both urban and rural areas.****High Level Strategies Ref:****S1, S3, S4, S5, S7, S13, S14, S15, S17, S19, S20, S21, S22, S23, S24, S25, S26, S27, S28, S29, S30.**

Action Ref	ACTIONS	Lead Agency	Partner(s)	Desired Outcome	Performance Indicator	Timeframe
3.5.1	Promote active community engagement to develop appropriate policing strategies that meet the needs and priorities of citizens and communities.	Garda Síochána	WCC PPN	Appropriate local policing strategies in place.	Community support for local policing strategies.	Ongoing
3.5.2	Increase the number of Community Alert and Text Alert areas in the county.	Garda Síochána	WCD WCC PPN	All areas of the county covered by community alert scheme.	Area covered by Community Alert scheme.	Ongoing
3.5.3	Put in place a structured programme which fosters positive relationships between Garda Síochána and young people and assists them in dealing with issues such as crimes against children incl. bullying, alcohol and substance misuse.	Garda Síochána	Schools MRDATF WCC MRYS Foróige HSE	Supports available to young people through positive relationships with Garda Síochána.	Programmes in place.	Ongoing
3.5.4	Implementation of measures to promote and improve road safety through implementation of the Westmeath Road Safety Strategy.	WCC	Garda Síochána, RSA PPN LWETB HSE	Reduction in road accidents.	Number of accidents, injuries, and fatalities.	Ongoing
3.5.5	Targeted local crime reduction and prevention initiatives, working with communities and business groups.	Garda Síochána	JPC PPN WCC	Reduction in the level of crime.	Levels of crime recorded.	Ongoing
3.5.6	Develop guidelines to create safe and secure design and layout of urban areas.	WCC	PPN Garda Síochána, JPC	Design guidelines available for safe and secure urban areas.	Guidelines available.	2017
3.5.7	Manage flood risk through land use, planning, and flood alleviation measures.	WCC	OPW	Reduction in the impact of flooding incidents.	Flood management measures in place.	Ongoing
3.5.8	Implement initiatives to raise public awareness of Water Safety.	IWS	WCC Garda Síochána, HSE Water safety Area committee	Greater public awareness of water safety.	Reduction in water related drownings.	Ongoing
3.5.9	Ensure effective response to Fire and Emergency incidents.	WCC	Garda Síochána, HSE	Effective systems in place to respond to fire and emergency incidents.	Response times to fire incidents.	Ongoing
3.5.10	Review and implement measures to address anti-social behaviour.	Garda Síochána	JPC WCC PPN	Reduction in anti-social behaviour.	Anti-social crime data.	Ongoing



## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

### Objective 3.6:

**Availability of an adequate range of Community Health Services and wellbeing supports.**

#### Background

WHO definition of Health

***“Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”***

The **Healthy Ireland Framework 2013-2025** outlines the following vision:

*“A Healthy Ireland, 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.”*

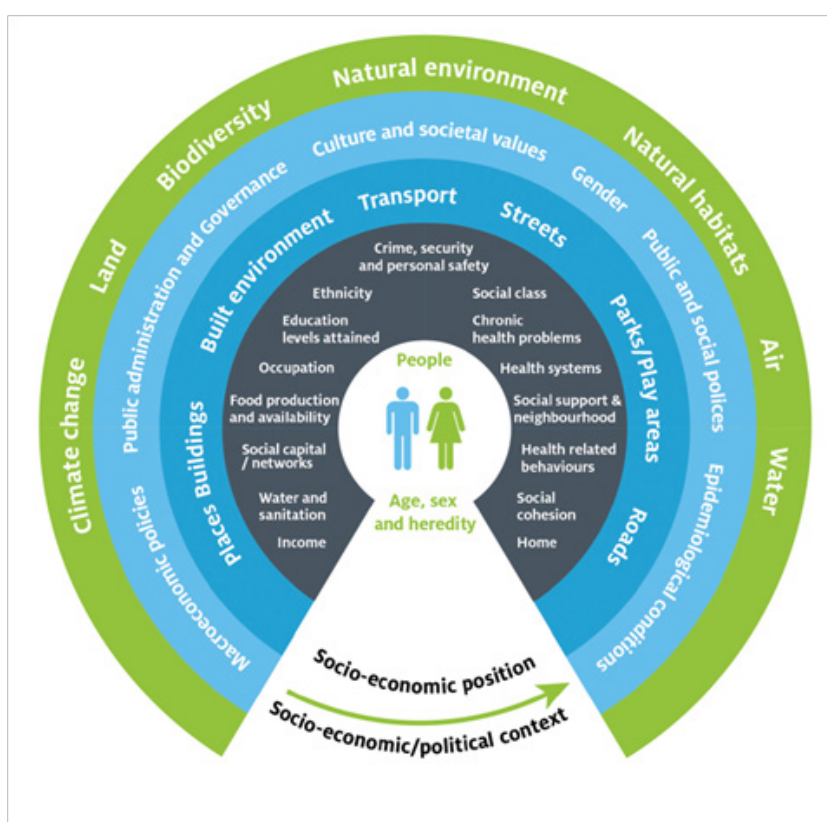
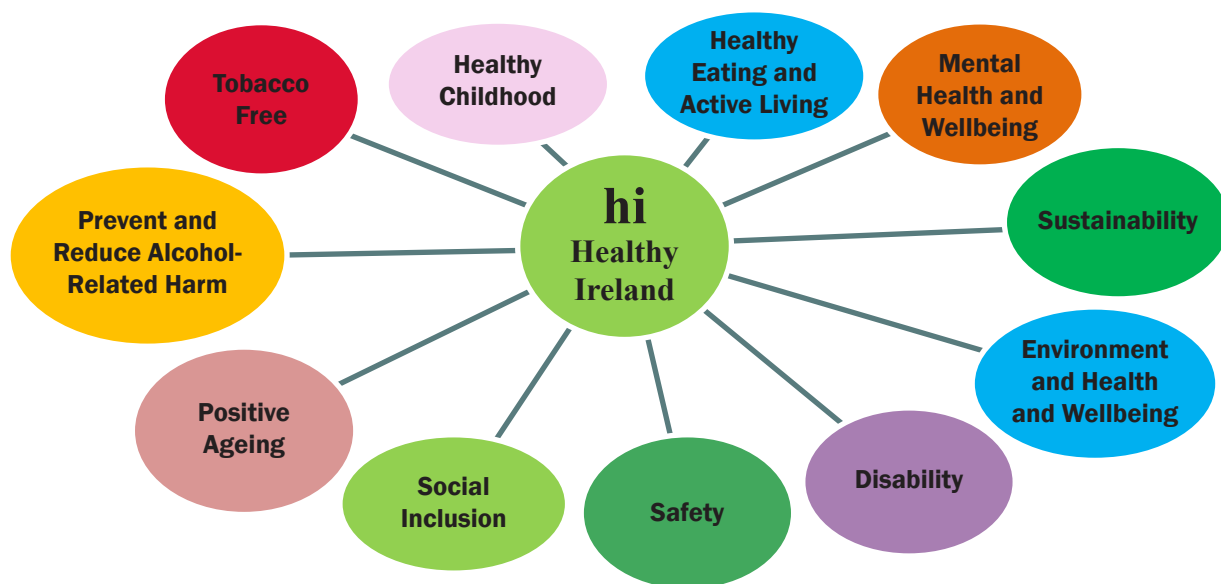


Chart: Determinants of Health (Adapted from Dalghren and Whitehead, 1991 and Grant and Barton, 2006)

## Key areas in the Healthy Ireland National Implementation Plan 2015 – 2017



**The National Positive Ageing Strategy** was launched in April 2013 and aims to create conditions which support individuals and families to plan and prepare for older age. The aim of the strategy is to make Ireland a great place in which to grow old. The **Vision of Age Friendly Ireland is for: “every county in Ireland to be a great place in which to grow old”**. Westmeath has the 5th highest ageing population nationally.

The ethos underpinning recent local government reform provides for more active citizenship and community participation. The LECP recognises that voluntary activity and active citizenship are both vital elements of flourishing communities.

The consultation process highlighted as a priority the level of poverty and poor mental health in the community. There is a need to make community health services more accessible. Other priorities included improving the health and wellbeing of children and young people and address the issue of mental health. The health needs of Travellers were also highlighted.

The actions included under this objective address many aspects of the health and wellbeing issues affecting Westmeath’s society today. The achievement of this objective is also dependent on the success of the other objectives in this plan. For example, the success of employment generation, community development and education objectives, will contribute to the health and wellbeing of the people of the county.

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

**Action Plan: Objective 3.6****Availability of an adequate range of community health services and well-being supports.****High Level Strategies Ref:****S1, S3, S4, S5, S7, S13, S14, S15, S17, S19, S20, S21, S22, S23, S24, S25, S26, S27, S28, S29, S30.**

Action Ref	ACTIONS	Lead Agency	Partner(s)	Desired Outcome	Performance Indicator	Timeframe
3.6.1	Provide a comprehensive range of community health services.	HSE	WCD PPN	Availability of comprehensive range of community health services.	Number of people availing of community health services.	Ongoing
3.6.2	Provide a comprehensive range of positive mental health and suicide prevention services and supporting the "Connecting for Life-Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce suicide (2015-2020) at a county level.	HSE	WCD PPN	Availability of mental health and suicide prevention services.	Number of people availing of mental health and suicide prevention services .	Ongoing
3.6.3	Provide Drug & Alcohol Assessment, Treatment, Rehabilitation and support services for Adults and U18 year olds concerned with their own or another person's drug or alcohol use.	HSE CADS	MRDATF Community & Voluntary Sector	To minimise drug and alcohol harm in order to have a positive impact on individuals, families and communities.	Numbers availing of services provided by CADS and their funded services.	Ongoing
3.6.4	Implement Stop Smoking initiatives in accordance with Healthy Ireland.	HSE	WCC PPN	Improved health due to reduction in smoking.	Number of people smoking in county.	Ongoing
3.6.5	Implement and develop initiatives for positive ageing including the County Westmeath Age Friendly Strategy.	WCC	HSE WCC Westmeath Age Friendly Alliance, WCD PPN	Westmeath to be an Age-friendly county.	Realisation of objectives of Age Friendly Strategy.	Ongoing
3.6.6	Promote increased physical activity levels among communities across the county through the implementation of the Westmeath Sports Partnership Strategy.	WSP	WCC HSE WCD PPN	A healthy and active community.	Number of sports events promoted.	Ongoing
3.6.7	Promote increased participation in physical recreation such as walking, cycling, and other activities.	HSE	WCC WSP	A healthy and active community.	Number participating in physical recreation.	Ongoing
3.6.8	Promote child protection and welfare.	Tusla	Garda Síochána	Safe environment for children.	Child protection and welfare initiatives implemented.	Ongoing
3.6.9	Implement Healthy Eating and active living awareness campaign.	HSE	WCD MAPP	Increase in public awareness of the benefits of healthy eating.	Awareness initiatives implemented.	Ongoing
3.6.10	Raise awareness of volunteerism opportunities and supports available.	WCD	PPN	Improved well-being due to participation in volunteerism.	Number registered with Westmeath Volunteer Centre.	Ongoing

**Action Plan: Objective 3.6****Availability of an adequate range of community health services and well-being supports.****High Level Strategies Ref:****S1, S3, S4, S5, S7, S13, S14, S15, S17, S19, S20, S21, S22, S23, S24, S25, S26, S27, S28, S29, S30.**

Action Ref	ACTIONS	Lead Agency	Partner(s)	Desired Outcome	Performance Indicator	Timeframe
3.6.11	Implement programme aimed at addressing the health needs of Travellers.	HSE	WTIG WCD	Improved health of Traveller community.	Initiatives implemented	Ongoing
3.6.12	Inclusion of policy and objective in the County Development Plan to ensure that development management standards encourage and facilitate a healthy lifestyle.	WCC	PPN	Healthy living environment.	Inclusion of policy and objective in County Development Plan.	Ongoing
3.6.13	Implement supports and strategies to give children a "Healthy Childhood".	HSE	MAPP Triple "P"	A service in place.	The number of children in receipt of the service.	Ongoing
3.6.14	Expand the "Community First Responder Scheme".	HSE	PPN	A first responder scheme in every community.	The no. of first responder schemes in Westmeath.	Ongoing



# Appendices



## Appendix 1: High Level Strategies

Ref	STRATEGY (EU / National Economic)	Short Description
S1	EU 2020 Strategy	<p><b>EU 2020</b></p> <p>Europe 2020 is the European Union's ten-year growth and jobs strategy. Five headline targets have been set for the EU to achieve by the end of 2020. These include</p> <p><b>Employment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 75% of the 20-64 year-olds to be employed</li> </ul> <p><b>R&amp;D</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3% of the EU's GDP to be invested in R&amp;D</li> </ul> <p><b>Climate change and energy sustainability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• greenhouse gas emissions 20% (or even 30%, if the conditions are right) lower than 1990</li> <li>• 20% of energy from renewables</li> <li>• 20% increase in energy efficiency</li> </ul> <p><b>Education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing the rates of early school leaving below 10%</li> <li>• at least 40% of 30-34-year-olds completing third level education</li> </ul> <p><b>Fighting poverty and social exclusion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• at least 20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion</li> </ul>

S2	Food Harvest 2020	<p><a href="#">Food Harvest 2020 (FH2020)</a> is a strategy to chart the direction of agri-food, forestry and fisheries for the next decade, was published in July 2010. This strategy, which is primarily industry-led, was underpinned by a comprehensive range of analytical papers prepared by the <a href="#">Department</a> and relevant State Bodies, views received from the public consultation process, and input from the <a href="#">Harvard Business School</a> and senior farming and food industry figures. The detailed report contains over 200 recommendations and suggestions towards which Government and private enterprise will work. It also sets clear and ambitious targets to be achieved by 2020. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increasing the value of primary output of the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sector by €1.5 billion; a 33% increase compared to the 2007-2009 average.</li> <li>- Improving the value added in the sector by €3 billion.</li> <li>- Achieving an export target of €12 billion for the sector which is a 42% increase compared to the 2007-2009 average,</li> <li>- Increasing milk production by 50%;</li> <li>- Adding 20% to the value of the beef sector.</li> </ul>
S3	Medium Term Economic Strategy 2014 - 2020 (MTES)	<p><b>Vision Statement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By helping to create jobs so that we return to full employment.</li> <li>• By tackling the problems of excessive household debt and mortgage arrears.</li> <li>• By giving opportunities to our children to live and work at home, including for those who have had to emigrate.</li> <li>• By ensuring that we have well-managed public finances and a stable and effective banking system.</li> <li>• By generating the resources to protect the vulnerable in our society, to eliminate poverty and to provide the public services that our citizens deserve.</li> <li>• By ensuring that the fruits of recovery are enjoyed by all of our people in all parts of our country.</li> </ul> <p><b>Goal 1:</b> Create more Jobs</p>

		<p><b>Goal 2:</b> Enhance Living Standards</p> <p><b>Goal 3:</b> Ultimately achieve full employment</p>
S4	Action Plan for Jobs 2015	<p>The Action Plan for Jobs (APJ) has five overarching strategic objectives (see below), which it seeks to achieve by implementing each instalment in its multi-annual series. The next few pages illustrate the progress that has been made on each of these objectives over the course of the first three annual plans implemented to date. This 2015 Plan has been devised such that all five strategic objectives are delivered upon.</p> <p><b>Action Plan for Jobs Five Strategic Ambitions</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To support 100,000 additional jobs by 2016</li> <li>2. To get Ireland back to a top-five ranking in international competitiveness</li> <li>3. To stimulate the domestic economy and generate employment in locally traded sector</li> <li>4. To build an indigenous engine of growth that drives up the export market share of Irish companies</li> <li>5. To build world-class clusters in key sectors of opportunity</li> </ol>
S5	Action Programme for Effective Local Government – Putting People First	<p><b>“Putting People First – the New Age Action Plan for Local Government” covers four main themes.</b> The policy statement sets out an overall <u>vision</u> for local government. It seeks to deliver a system where local government will be the <b>“main vehicle of governance and public service at local level-leading economic, social and community development, delivering efficient and good value services, and representing citizens and local communities effectively and accountably”</b>.</p> <p>The emphasis on this Action Programme is to enable Local Government to deliver more to the community it serves, be more accountable and build a stronger relationship between local government, local representatives and the communities they serve. It is about Local Government putting people first.</p> <p><b>The Action Plan covers four main themes:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Structures</li> <li>2. Funding, Accountability and Governance</li> <li>3. Economic Development and Job Creation</li> <li>4. Delivering Services Efficiently</li> </ol>

S6	<b>Energising Irelands Rural Economy - Commission for Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA)</b>	<p><b>Vision Statement</b></p> <p>Rural Ireland will become a dynamic, adaptable and outward looking multi-sectoral economy supporting vibrant, resilient and diverse communities experiencing a high quality of life with an energised relationship between rural and urban Ireland which will contribute to its sustainability for the benefit of society as a whole.</p> <p><b>Introduction and Context</b></p> <p>Rural communities have experienced the negative impacts of the current economic crisis due largely to their heavy reliance on declining employment sectors, particularly the construction industry, with the result that unemployment in rural areas increased by 192% between 2006 and 2011, compared to 114% in urban centres. The effects of this have been felt in particular in small and medium sized towns and the evidence of small town decline throughout the country is clear. It was in this overall context that the Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Ireland (CEDRA) was established in October 2012 by Minister Phil Hogan and Minister Simon Coveney .</p> <p>The primary task given to CEDRA was to identify strategic initiatives that will ensure rural areas contribute to sustained and sustainable national economic growth and development in the future.</p> <p>If past errors are to be avoided the Commission believes that the implementation of the first three actions outlined below is critical to the future economic development of rural Ireland.</p> <p>The need for a more integrated approach to the management of Rural Development in Ireland requires the development of systems that will support a more coordinated approach to the design, development and implementation of all policies that have an impact on the economic development of rural areas.</p> <p>The Commission believes that actions 1-6 are the necessary foundation for the development of dynamic rural communities to 2025. The remaining actions are offered to facilitate full participation of both enterprise and community in a fully participative integrated approach to rural economic development.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Recommendations for Government:</b></p> <p><b>Objective 1: Governance and Coordination</b></p> <p><b>Objective 2: Prioritise Rural Development Regionally and Locally</b></p> <p><b>Objective 3: Facilitating Economic and Community Participation</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;">4</p>
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S7	<b>National Spatial Strategy.</b>	<p>This National Spatial Strategy for Ireland (NSS) is a twenty year planning framework designed to achieve a better balance of social, economic, physical development and population growth between regions. Its focus is on people, on places and on building communities. Through closer matching of where people live with where they work, different parts of Ireland will for the future be able to sustain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a better quality of life for people</li> <li>• a strong, competitive economic position and</li> <li>• an environment of the highest quality.</li> </ul> <p>This Strategy is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• national – it provides a national framework to guide policies, programmes and investment</li> <li>• spatial – it is concerned with the location of people, their work and other activities and with how different places relate to each other</li> <li>• strategic – it offers a broad, long-term, comprehensive twenty-year view for achieving more balanced patterns of development.</li> </ul> <p>The remarkable economic, social and physical progress of recent years has established a platform upon which policies can be put in place to ensure that more balanced development is achieved, within a well-planned spatial structure of attractive, competitive and innovative places.</p>
S8	<b>National Reform Programme for Ireland 2015.</b>	<p>Ireland's National Reform Programme 2015 (NRP) sets out work underway across a range of policies towards that goal. It identifies what has been done to implement the country-specific recommendations (CSRs) made to Ireland in 2014, and it also charts progress towards our Europe 2020 targets.</p> <p>Among the priorities the Government has set for itself for the period ahead are strengthening the domestic economy and prioritising new jobs for the unemployed; delivering better working and living standards; and responsible and sustainable management of the public finances. These priorities guide and underpin the work set out in this Programme.</p> <p><b>CSR 1:</b> Public Finances</p> <p><b>CSR 2:</b> Reform of the Healthcare Sector</p> <p>Advance the reform of the healthcare sector initiated under the Future Health strategic framework to increase cost-effectiveness. Pursue additional measures to reduce pharmaceutical spending, including through more frequent price realignment exercise for patented medicines, increased generic penetration and improved prescribing practices. Reform</p>

	<p>the financial management systems of the national health authority to streamline systems across all providers and to support better claims management. Roll out individual health identifiers starting in January 2015.</p> <p><b>CSR 3:</b> Labour Market Activation, including Long-term Unemployment, Youth Guarantee and Reform of Further Education and Training Pursue further improvements in active labour market policies, with a particular focus on the long-term unemployed, the low-skilled and, in line with the objectives of a youth guarantee, young people. Advance the on-going reform of the further education and training (FET) system, employment support schemes and apprenticeship programmes. Offer more workplace training; improve and ensure the relevance of FET courses and apprenticeships with respect to labour market needs. Increase the level and quality of support services provided by the <i>Intreo</i> labour offices. Put in place a seamless FET referrals system between <i>Intreo</i> offices and Education and Training Boards.</p> <p><b>CSR 4:</b> Low Work Intensity Households, Child Poverty and Childcare Tackle low work intensity of households and address the poverty risk of children through tapered withdrawal of benefits and supplementary payments upon return to employment. Facilitate female labour market participation by improving access to more affordable and full-time childcare, particularly for low income families.</p> <p><b>CSR 5</b> Supports for SMEs, including Access to Finance</p> <p><b>CSR 6:</b> Mortgage Arrears Targets and SME Debt</p> <p><b>CSR 7:</b> Legal Services Regulation Bill and Courts Data Collection</p> <p>Progress Towards the Europe 2020 Targets</p> <p>Additional Reform Measures and the use of European Structural and Investment Funds</p> <p><b>Funding Priorities</b></p> <p>The funding priorities identified for Ireland’s ESIF programmes take account of the Europe 2020 Strategy, the National Reform Programme and our national consultation processes. In line with these, Ireland has decided that the funding priorities for the 2014-2020 period, are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☐ Promoting jobs and growth;</li> <li>☐ Combating unemployment and social exclusion;</li> <li>☐ Promoting R&amp;D and ICT investment and the competitiveness of the business sector; and</li> </ul>
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		<p>☐ Promoting an environmentally-friendly and resource efficient economy.</p> <p>Ireland's ERDF and ESF programmes also respect the requirement for thematic concentration, a feature of the new regulations that requires that minimum allocations must be fixed for a number of priority areas in line with the <i>Europe 2020</i> Strategy.</p>
S9	IDA Ireland Strategy 2020	<p>This strategy document articulates IDAs view of the next decade's significant future changes. It outlines the results of a detailed analysis of global mega-trends, economic geopolitical changes and technology roadmaps from which the goals Ireland needs to set to capitalise on the opportunities that they represent are outlined. Significantly, it also outlines a series of impactful short term goals, including an ambitious target for job creation.</p> <p><b>Investment Targets 2010-2014:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 105,000 new jobs</li> <li>• 640 investments</li> <li>• 50% of investments will be located outside Dublin and Cork</li> <li>• 20% of Greenfield investments originating from high-growth emerging markets by 2014</li> <li>• Annual spend in excess of €1.7bn in research , development and innovation by 2014</li> </ul> <p><b>New Initiatives – “Ten Steps of Transformation”</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Drive company transformation</li> <li>2. Win employment-intensive Services investments</li> <li>3. Win new forms of foreign investments</li> <li>4. Support regional economic development</li> <li>5. Increase investment from new emerging high growth markets</li> <li>6. Target new emerging and small technology companies</li> <li>7. Enhance Ireland's brand and reputation overseas</li> <li>8. Embrace 'Open Innovation' philosophy</li> </ol>

		9. Strengthen Ireland's value proposition 10. Increase collaboration within Team Ireland
<b>S10</b>	<b>Pathways to Work 2015</b>	<p><b>PATHWAYS TO WORK 2015: ACTIONS</b></p> <p>While there has been good progress in implementing the actions set out in <i>Pathways to Work 2013</i>, more needs to be done to address the key challenge of the persistence of long-term unemployment, in particular among those who became unemployed in the period 2008 - 2011.</p> <p>Ambitious targets have been established for 2015 which reflect both the scale of the unemployment problem and the resolve of the Government to alleviate it. Each of the 17 actions contained in <i>Pathways to Work 2015</i> is accompanied by a series of milestones/measures detailing how these actions will be realised.</p> <p>As in previous years this programme of activity is organised under five strands.</p> <p><b>Strand 1: Incentivising employers to provide more jobs for those who are unemployed</b></p> <p><b>Strand 2: Better engagement with unemployed people</b></p> <p><b>Strand 3: Greater targeting of activation places and opportunities for those who are long-term unemployed</b></p> <p><b>Strand 4: Incentivising the take-up of employment opportunities by unemployed jobseekers</b></p> <p><b>Strand 5: Completing the Reform Agenda.</b></p>
<b>S11</b>	<b>Enterprise IRL. Strategy 2016</b>	<p>Enterprise Ireland's 4 Pillars</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Start</li> <li>2. Innovate</li> <li>3. Scale</li> <li>4. Anticipate</li> </ol>
<b>S12</b>	<b>Infrastructure and Capital Investment Programme and associated strategies 2012-2016</b>	<p>The country's infrastructural and capital investment needs are a function of broad societal and economic developments. This review assesses the existing capacity of Ireland's infrastructure and identifies remaining gaps which must be addressed to aid economic recovery, social cohesion and environmental sustainability.</p> <p>The approach identifies four main components of the investment strategy, namely:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Economic infrastructure – encompassing transport networks, energy provision and telecommunications capacity.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Investment in the productive sector and human capital – such as direct supports for enterprise development; science, technology and innovation advancement; supports for tourism, agriculture, fisheries and forestry; and capital investment in education infrastructure.</p>

		<p>Environmental infrastructure – including our waste and water systems and investment for environmental sustainability.</p> <p>Critical social investment – such as the health service and social housing programmes.</p> <p>These pillars are the main components of a viable infrastructure base for a modern, competitive economy.</p>
	<b><u>ECONOMIC - Local</u></b>	
<b>S13</b>	<b>Midland Regional Planning Guidance 2010 – 2022.</b>	<p>The Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022 for the Midland Region have been prepared at a time of unprecedented change, both in global and national economic terms, coupled with changes in both environmental and planning legislation. This time of transition, presents challenges in the way we plan for our future, and offers opportunities to examine innovative ways, and means of achieving a bright future for the citizens of the Midland Region.</p> <p>Vision: By 2022, the Midland Region will be a successful, sustainable and equitable region full of opportunities for its expanded population achieved through:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.Enhancing the critical mass of the region by combining the strengths of the linked gateway of Athlone, Tullamore and Mullingar, as envisaged in the NSS with those of the principal towns of Longford and Portlaoise.</li> <li>2. Developing the full potential of rural areas in the region in a manner that is compatible with the strengthening of the urban structure of the region.</li> <li>3. Offering a distinctive lifestyle rooted in a high quality living environment, rich in heritage and landscape value.</li> <li>4.Harnessing the central geographical location of the region at the “heart” of Ireland with more interregional</li> </ol>

		<p>links than any other region in Ireland, to build a strategically focused network of transport and communications links.</p> <p>5.Ensuring that the natural environment of the region such as water quality, landscape, and biodiversity is protected, maintained, and enhanced, where appropriate, as a basis for future sustainable development in the region.</p> <p>GOAL 1 To drive the implementation of the linked gateway, envisaged in the NSS for the Midland Region, within a broader context of a polycentric model centred on the linked gateway and principal towns in the region.</p> <p>GOAL 2 To provide a comprehensive sustainable spatial policy framework, supported by the necessary implementation structures to harness the strengths of the Midland Region.</p> <p>GOAL 3 To achieve a regional population of the order of 317,100 by 2022 building on individual strengths of the linked gateway and the principal towns, while maintaining and supporting the viability of smaller town's villages and rural areas.</p> <p>GOAL 4 To ensure that the strategic development of the region works to conserve and enhance the natural and environmental qualities of the region, its biodiversity and habitats.</p> <p>GOAL 5 To upgrade and augment strategic physical and social infrastructure in the region to attract the target population and sustain critical mass and regional competitiveness.</p> <p>GOAL 6 To promote the economic development of the region through the sustainable development of the social, economic and physical infrastructure demanded by foreign and indigenous industry. Regional education provision and research and development capability should be aligned with industry needs.</p> <p>GOAL 7 To expand the tourism sector by creating an integrated approach to facilitate the development of the Midland Region as a unique visitor destination, promoting and developing all areas in a balanced and sustainable manner.</p> <p>GOAL 8 To promote the delivery of renewable energy particularly in the context of the existing energy infrastructure in the Midland Region.</p> <p>GOAL 9 To structure the region in a manner that integrates high quality built and physical environment with essential physical and social infrastructure such as transport and water services as well as schools, retail, community, healthcare</p>
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		<p>and recreation/sporting facilities.</p> <p>GOAL 10 To co-ordinate and target key transport and communications investments within the region in order to create sustainable effective communication links and improve intra and interregional connectivity.</p> <p>GOAL 11 To develop and market a distinctly unique image and identity for the region that will attract investment and economic activity to the region.</p> <p>GOAL 12 To strengthen and sustain rural communities in order to complement urban centres, and contribute to the distinct identity of the region.</p> <p>GOAL 13 To identify and expand on the opportunities and linkages that exist between the Midland Region and adjoining regions.</p>
<b>S14</b>	<b>Westmeath County Development Plan 2014 – 2020</b>	<p>The Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020 provides the strategic framework for land use planning in the county. This Plan builds on the strategies, policies and objectives of the previous County Development Plan 2008-2014. The review process and preparation of the Plan has had regard to recent development trends and national, regional and local policy developments, in particular the need to support economic recovery and development. The increased emphasis on flooding and climate change and greater awareness of the crucial importance of safeguarding the County's environmental resources including lakes, water and landscape is reflected in policy throughout the Plan.</p> <p>In summary, the Plan will provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>! A Spatial framework to facilitate economic recovery and growth founded on an Economic Regeneration Strategy for the County.</li> <li>! A sustainable spatial development strategy to guide the location of development</li> <li>! A framework for future investment in physical, social and community infrastructure</li> <li>! A process for the preservation, protection and enhancement of the County's natural and built heritage and social assets.</li> <li>! Safe and socially inclusive sustainable communities with a renewed emphasis on improving the quality of life for all.</li> </ul>
<b>S15</b>	<b>Rural Development Programme 2014-2020</b>	<p><b>Priority Six</b></p> <p><i>Promoting social inclusion poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas, with a focus on the following areas:</i></p> <p><i>a. facilitating diversification, creation and development of small enterprises as well as job creation;</i></p>

		<p><i>b. fostering local development in rural areas;</i></p> <p><i>c. enhancing the accessibility use and quality of information and communication technologies (ICT) in rural areas</i></p> <p><i>6a) facilitating diversification, creation and development of small enterprises as well as job creation;</i></p> <p>Key issues that arose in this focus area are the high unemployment rate in and emigration from rural areas and the need to respond via targeted training and support for enterprise development and job creation. Access to credit and finance in general is also an important aspect of initiatives that support enterprise development. There are a number of sectors within the rural economy that have been identified as having potential from the perspective of enterprise development and job creation. These sectors include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Artisan Foods</li> <li>ii) Renewable Energies</li> <li>iii) Marine</li> <li>iv) Social Enterprise</li> <li>v) Creative Industries</li> </ul> <p>In line with available evidence individual Local Development Strategies (LDS) will be required to examine the potential of these sectors within the LDS process and in the context of an integrated regional and local planning approach. It is envisaged that this integrated approach to planning at a local level will not only maximise the impact of available support but also ensure that responsible bodies are working in a complementary way to ensure this, for example in areas such as the marine. Support allocated through the LEADER element of the RDP will focus on the need to facilitate specific training and capacity building. This will support enterprise development with identified potential tailored to the LDS area, and working in cooperation with the overall integrated approach to regional and local planning proposed in <i>Putting People First – Action Programme for Effective Local Government</i>. 63</p>
<b>S16</b>	<b>Lakelands and Inland Waterways Strategic Plan 2010-2015 –</b>	<p><b>Vision for tourism in the Lakelands Region</b></p> <p>The vision for tourism and recreation in the Lakelands and Waterways area by 2015 is:</p> <p>Of a visitor journey both on and off the water that delivers a complete, authentic and unique Irish experience. Here will be found a freedom to relax and renew, balanced by a host of sustainable activities that will refresh the body and soul and encourage the visitor to return.</p>

<b>S17</b>	<b>Local Enterprise Development Plan 2015</b>	<p>Develop a broad range of economic services, to be put in place with reduced duplication and overlap.</p> <p>Provide Business information &amp; Advisory Services in relation to Business Planning, Public Procurement and Government Services.</p> <p>Provide Enterprise Support Services to many entrepreneurs at various stages of business development through financial supports, training and access to enterprise space, mentoring, marketing supports, business networks and pathways to progression.</p> <p>Develop Entrepreneurship Support services to second school students, Female and Senior Entrepreneurs, Social enterprises, Enterprise Awards and promotion activities and the development of clusters.</p> <p>Increase Local Enterprise Development Services through a local enterprise plan that will help leverage resources and develop partnerships with relevant agencies.</p> <p>To engage and support the SICAP target groups to move closer to employment and self employment</p>
<b>S18</b>	<b>Teagasc Advisory Region Strategic Plan 2015-2020</b>	<p><b>Teagasc Mission Statement:</b></p> <p>To support science-based innovation in the agri-food sector and wider bioeconomy so as to underpin profitability, competitiveness and sustainability.</p> <p><b>Teagasc Goals:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improve the competitiveness of agriculture, food and the wider-bioeconomy.</li> <li>2. Support sustainable farming and the environment.</li> <li>3. Encourage diversification of the rural economy and enhance the quality of life in rural areas.</li> <li>4. Enhance organisational capability and deliver value for money.</li> </ol>
	<b><u>COMMUNITY - National</u></b>	
<b>S19</b>	<b>National Anti-Poverty Strategy 2007</b>	<p>This NAPS sets a ten-year target to reduce consistent poverty in Ireland to 2% by 2007, or ideally to eliminate it.</p> <p>It identified five themes needing particular attention, and set targets for each:</p> <p>Income adequacy</p> <p>Unemployment</p> <p>Educational disadvantage</p>

		<p>Rural poverty and Poverty in disadvantaged urban areas. The Government reviewed the strategy in 2002, updated the targets in these areas and added six new themes: Child poverty Women s poverty Health and poverty Older people s poverty Housing and accommodation and New and emerging forms of poverty , such as racism The strategy was designed to achieve the targets under these themes through a combination of new administrative mechanisms and mainstreaming instruments, including <i>poverty proofing</i> .</p>
S20	National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016	<p><b>Overall Poverty Goal</b> <b>To reduce the number of those experiencing consistent poverty to between 2% and 4% by 2012, with the aim of eliminating consistent poverty by 2016, under the revised definition.</b> <b>High Level Goals:</b></p> <p><b>Goal 1: Education</b> Ensure that targeted pre-school education is provided to children from urban primary school communities covered by the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) action plan;</p> <p><b>Goal 2: Education</b> Reduce the proportion of pupils with serious literacy difficulties in primary schools serving disadvantaged communities. The target is to halve the proportion from the current 27%-30% to less than 5% by 2016;</p> <p><b>Goal 3: Education</b> Work to ensure that the proportion of the population aged 20-24 completing upper second level education or equivalent will exceed 90% by 2013;</p> <p><b>Goal 4: Income Support</b> Maintain the combined value of child income support measures at 33%-35% of the minimum adult social welfare</p>

		<p>payment rate over the course of this Plan and review child income supports aimed at assisting children in families on low income.</p> <p><b>Goal 5: Employment and Participation</b>  Introduce an active case management approach that will support those on long-term social welfare into education, training and employment. The target is to support 50,000 such people, including lone parents and the long-term unemployed, with an overall aim of reducing by 20% the number of those whose total income is derived from long-term social welfare payments by 2016. This target will be reviewed in the light of experience</p> <p><b>Goal 6: Income Support</b>  Maintain the relative value of the lowest social welfare rate at least at €185.80, in 2007 terms, over the course of this Plan, subject to available resources.</p> <p><b>Goal 7: Community Care</b>  Continue to increase investment in community care services for older people, including home care packages and enhanced day care services, to support them to live independently in the community for as long as possible;</p> <p><b>Goal 8: Income Support</b>  Maintain a minimum payment rate of €200 per week, in 2007 terms, for all social welfare pensions over the course of this Plan and, if possible, having regard to available resources and the Government's commitment in <i>Towards 2016</i>, to enhance this provision. The overall pension structures and system to provide income supports for pensioners will be reviewed in the light of the forthcoming Green Paper on Pensions, to be finalised at end March 2007. This will review all the pillars of pension provision.</p> <p><b>Goal 9: Employment and Participation</b>  Increase the employment of people with disabilities who do not have a difficulty in retaining a job. The immediate objective is to have an additional 7,000 of that cohort in employment by 2010. The longer term target is to raise the employment rate of people with disabilities from 37% to 45% by 2016 as measured by the Quarterly National Household Survey. The overall participation rate in education, training and employment will be reviewed in the light of experience and the availability of better data.</p> <p><b>Goal 10: Housing</b>  Deliver high quality housing for those who cannot afford to meet their own housing needs and to underpin the building of</p>
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		<p>sustainable communities. An important element will be the enhanced housing output reflected in <i>Towards 2016</i>, which will result in the accommodation needs of some 60,000 new households being addressed over the period 2007 to 2009. This will embrace meeting special housing needs (the homeless, Travellers, older people and people with disabilities);</p> <p><b>Goal 11: Health</b></p> <p>Develop 500 primary care teams by 2011 which will improve access to services in the community, with particular emphasis on meeting the needs of holders of medical cards;</p> <p><b>Goal 12: Integration of Migrants</b></p> <p>Develop a strategy aimed at achieving the integration of newcomers in our society. As an initial action, resources for the provision of 550 teachers for language supports in the education sector will be provided by 2009 and access to other public services through translation of information</p>
<b>S21</b>	<b>Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures - The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020</b>	<p>Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020 was approved by Government and launched by the Taoiseach, Tánaiste and then Minister for Children and Youth Affairs Ms. Frances Fitzgerald, on 16 April 2014 and will run from 2014 - 2020.</p> <p><b>Major Innovations of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a shared set of outcomes for children and young people towards which all government departments and agencies, statutory services and the voluntary and community sectors will work, to ensure a coherent response for children and young people.</li> <li>• Identify the range of commitments in place across government and progress these based on a structured, systematic and outcomes focused approach.</li> <li>• Prioritise the key cross-cutting transformational goals under each outcome area, which requires concerted and coordinated action to ensure the realisation of the respective outcomes.</li> <li>• Emphasise an integrated and evidence informed approach to working across government, on horizontal and</li> </ul>

		vertical levels, which transfers to all sectors and settings working with children and young people.
<b>S22</b>	<b>Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019</b>	<p>The Strategic Goals are:</p> <p><b>Strategic Goal 1</b> Skills for the Economy</p> <p><b>Strategic Goal 2</b> Active Inclusion</p> <p><b>Strategic Goal 3</b> Quality Provision</p> <p><b>Strategic Goal 4</b> Integrated Planning and Funding</p> <p><b>Strategic Goal 5</b> Standing of Further Education Training</p>
<b>S23</b>	<b>Healthy Ireland – A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2013–2025</b>	<p><b>Vision Statement:</b> A healthy Ireland, 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.</p> <p><b>Goal 1:</b> Increase the proportion of people who are healthy at all stages of life</p> <p><b>Goal 2:</b> Reduce health inequalities</p> <p><b>Goal 3:</b> Protect the public from threats to health and wellbeing</p> <p><b>Goal 4:</b> Create an environment where every individual and sector of society can play their part in achieving a healthy Ireland.</p>
<b>S24</b>	<b>National Strategy for Traveller/Roma Integration</b>	<p><b>Introduction and Context</b></p> <p>It is important to note that the term “Roma” as defined by the Council of Europe refers to Roma, Sinti, Kale and related groups in Europe, including Travellers and Eastern groups (Dom and Lom), and covers the wide diversity of the groups concerned, including persons</p>

		<p>who identify themselves as “ Gypsies” .</p> <p>From the Irish perspective, with regard to the definition above, the vast majority of Travellers/Roma in the Irish State are indigenous Irish Travellers. There are no official statistics on the number of Roma in Ireland.</p> <p>The Roma Community in the Irish State is made up principally of persons of Romanian, Hungarian, Polish and Czech Republic origin, all of whom are EU citizens and, as such, in terms of immigration controls, are covered by the provision of the European Communities (Free movement of Persons) (No. 2) Regulations 2006. Such persons are not required to register their presence in the State. They have the same rights as any other citizen from their country of origin legally resident in this State.</p> <p>The Travellers are Irish citizens that have the rights and responsibilities of any Irish citizen and are fully entitled to seek to avail of the various Health, Education, Housing and Employment services in the same way that any other Irish citizen does.</p>
S25	Rural Transport Strategy 2011-2016.	<p>The Rural Transport Programme (RTP) is designed to provide a quality nationwide community based public transport system in rural Ireland which responds to local needs. It is funded by the Department of Transport under the National Development Plan 2007-2013, and managed by Pobal on behalf of the Department</p> <p>The Rural Transport Programme (RTP) was officially launched in 2006 following a pilot action research initiative known as the Rural Transport Initiative. The RTP was initiated as a response to the growing acknowledgement of the economic and social impacts of inadequate transport in rural areas and the increasing level of interest amongst community and local development groups in developing and implementing locally based solutions.</p> <p>The Programme, which has expanded to provide national coverage, is delivered locally through 36 community based groups all of whom operate on a not-for-profit basis.</p> <p><b><i>The aim of the Programme is to provide a quality nationwide community based public transport system in rural Ireland which responds to local needs.</i></b></p> <p>Its key objectives are to:</p> <p>_ Provide, enhance and sustain a nationwide community based public transport system in rural</p>

		<p>areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_ Maximise existing transport assets and to utilise new technology where necessary in the coordination and development of transport.</li> <li>_ Act as a catalyst in providing models of partnership at all levels where key sectors actively engage in transport provision.</li> <li>_ Ensure equality of access for all, including older people as well as people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments.</li> <li>_ Maintain, promote and develop models of good practice.</li> <li>_ Continue to influence rural public transport policy.</li> </ul>
S26	<b>Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme Framework 2014. SICAP</b>	<p><b>Aim</b></p> <p>The draft aim of the programme is: <i>The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme aims to reduce poverty, promote social inclusion and equality through local, regional and national engagements and collaboration.</i></p> <p><b>Vision</b></p> <p>The draft vision is: <i>To improve the life chances and opportunities of those who are marginalised in society, living in poverty or in unemployment through community development approaches, targeted supports and interagency collaboration where the values of equality and inclusion are promoted and human rights are respected.</i></p> <p><b>Horizontal Themes</b></p> <p>The promotion of an equality framework</p> <p>The application of Community development approaches and principles to achieve full participation of disadvantaged and marginalised communities</p> <p>The development of collaborative and partnership approaches with local and national stakeholders through the LCDC.</p> <p><b>Target Groups</b></p> <p>This programme will have a strong focus on the specific target groups designated under each of the three SICAP goals.</p>

S27	Social Housing Strategy 2020	<p><b>Introduction and Context</b></p> <p>This Social Housing Strategy will support the realisation of a new vision: that to the greatest extent possible, every household in Ireland will have access to secure, good quality housing suited to their needs at an affordable price and in a sustainable community.</p> <p>It will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide 35,000 new social housing units, over a 6 year period, to meet the additional social housing supply requirements as determined by the Housing Agency,</li> <li>• Support up to 75,000 households through an enhanced private rental sector; and</li> <li>• Reform social housing supports to create a more flexible and responsive system.</li> </ul> <p>A multi-annual approach underpins the delivery requirements during two phases. Phase 1, building on Budget 2015, sets a target of 18,000 additional housing units and 32,000 HAP/RAS units by end 2017. Phase 2 sets a target of 17,000 additional housing units and 43,000 HAP/RAS units by end 2020.</p> <p><b>Context</b></p> <p>The development of this Strategy has taken place against a background of successive years of retrenchment in the social housing budget, which has seen Exchequer funding fall from over €1.7bn in 2008 to some €597m in 2014.</p> <p><b><u>Three Pillars/Goals:</u></b></p> <p><b>Pillar 1: Provision of New Social Housing Supply</b></p> <p><b>Pillar 2: Providing Housing Supports Through the Private Rental Sector</b></p> <p><b>Pillar 3: Reform Creating More Flexible and Responsive Social Housing Supports</b></p>
S28	National Disability Strategy	<p><b>The four High Level Goals:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Equal citizens</li> </ol>

	<b>2013-2015</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Independence and choice</li> <li>3. Participation</li> <li>4. Maximise potential</li> </ul>
	<b><u>COMMUNITY – Local</u></b>	
<b>S29</b>	<b>Westmeath Rural Development Programme 2014-2020</b>	<p><b>Vision</b> The vision is of a county with an active and inclusive society, supported by strong communities and a vibrant economy, with equal access to basic services and an environment which is cherished and protected by everyone.</p> <p><b>Theme/Sub Theme Budgets</b> The indicative budget for Co Westmeath is €7,384,205. The table below shows the Draft Budgets allocated to Actions after allowing for Animation and Administration Costs.</p> <p><b>Theme 1: Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation</b> Rural Tourism Enterprise Development Rural Towns Broadband</p> <p><b>Theme 2: Social inclusion</b> Basic Services for Hard to Reach Communities Rural Youth</p> <p><b>Theme 3: Rural Environment</b> Protection and Sustainable Use of Water Resources Protection and Improvement of Local Biodiversity. Development of Renewable Energy.</p>
<b>S30</b>	<b>Westmeath Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014-2018</b>	<p>There are 344 <b>traveller</b> families living in County Westmeath (May 2013). On the 7 May 2013 116 Traveller families were identified as needing accommodation. The assessment of need March 2013 including future needs showed a requirement for <b>127</b> units of accommodation.</p> <p><b>The Annual targets for number of units of accommodation to be provided under</b></p>

		<b>Standard Social Housing and RAS/Leasing Westmeath County Council and Athlone Town Council</b>
		<hr/>
		<b>2014</b> <b>7</b>
		<hr/>
		<b>2015</b> <b>7</b>
		<hr/>
		<b>2016</b> <b>7</b>
		<hr/>
		<b>2017</b> <b>7</b>
		<hr/>
		<b>2018</b> <b>7</b>
		<hr/>
		<b>Total</b> <b>35</b>

# Appendices



# Appendix 2

## Socio-Economic Profile

### *Westmeath*



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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this report is to provide a detailed profile of Co. Westmeath based on an extensive set of social, economic and community indicators to inform the Local Community & Economic Plan for the county. The report is based on the following nine themes: (1) demographic profile, (2) education, (3) labour force, (4) commuting, (5) housing, (6) community, recreational & amenity facilities, (7) environment, (8) safe communities, (9) health. Where appropriate, the results for Westmeath are compared to regional or national results to provide a degree of relative context in assessing the county's performance in relation to indicators such as socio-economic development and general well-being.

References are made in the report and data analysis to three distinct areas namely Athlone, Mullingar and Rural Westmeath. Appendix 1 contains a map indicating the extent of these areas. For the purposes of this report, the area outside Athlone and Mullingar is termed "Rural Westmeath".

### **1.1 Data Sources and Datasets**

The development of this evidence based report has been based on open access to a wide variety of statistical datasets from a number of key agencies across Ireland. This report was primarily informed by statistical datasets from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) and will continue to be the main source for future revisions and any monitoring process that is put in place for the Westmeath LECP.

The main datasets that were sourced from the CSO were as follows:

- Census 2011
- Place of Work Census of Anonymised Records (POWCAR)
- Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS)
- Live Register
- Crime Data
- CSO Business Demography Survey 2012

Data was also extracted from the following sources and agencies:

- Fáilte Ireland
- Department of Social Protection
- Higher Education Authority
- Department of Education & Skills
- Pobal HP Deprivation Index
- Westmeath County Council
- Road Safety Authority

## 2. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

This section explores the population profile of Westmeath, highlighting its dynamic nature and outlines some of its key characteristics. The following census based indicators are used to provide an in depth population profile of the county: Total Population, Population Change 2006 to 2011, Population Density, Age Cohorts and Dependency Rates, Households and Family Size, Nationality and the Pobal HP Deprivation Index.

County	Area (sq km)	Population 2011	Population Density (People/sq km)
Westmeath	1756.01	86164	49
Laois	1719.14	80559	47
Longford	1039.55	39000	38
Offaly	1995	76687	38
Midlands	6509.7	282410	43
State	68466.06	4588252	67

**Table1: Population Density within the Midlands and State**

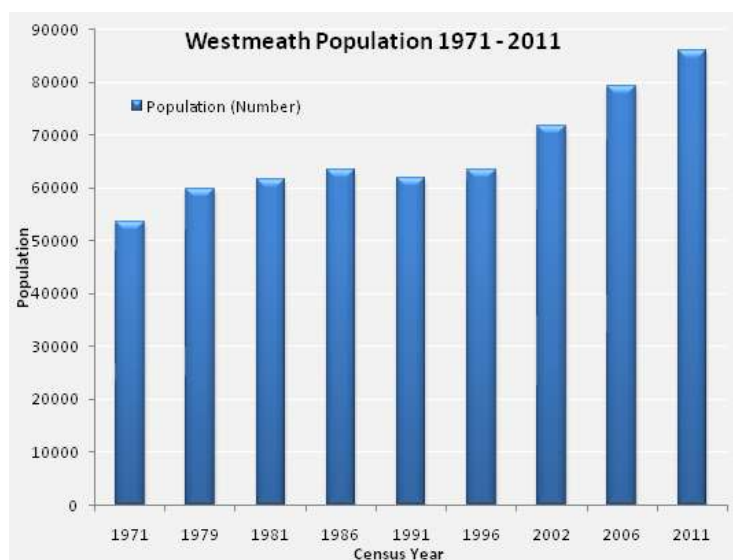
Co. Westmeath is geographically central to the island of Ireland and occupies an area of 1,756 square kilometres. It is both the largest county and most populated (86,164) in the Midlands region, comprising 30% of the overall population of the Midlands in 2011, down from 31% in the 2006 census). Its population density (49 inhabitant/km<sup>2</sup>), the highest of the Midland counties but significantly below the average for the State at 67 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>.

The county is characterised by a rich and diverse landscape of lakes, peatlands, eskers and an array of attractive towns and villages ranging from the thriving Gateway centres of Mullingar and Athlone to strong Market Towns such as Moate and Kilbeggan to quaint historical villages such as Multyfarnham and Glasson.

The county boasts many economic assets:

- Strategic location with excellent inter-urban links to the capital and international airport
- Gateway Towns of Mullingar and Athlone
- Highly skilled Workforce
- Advanced Infrastructure in terms of both road and rail connections
- The presence of Athlone Institute of Technology and its capacity for future expansion
- Existing industrial base
- Water and wastewater infrastructure

## 2.1 Population Change



**Fig. 1 Population Trends in Westmeath 1971-2011 (Source: CSO)**

The population of the county has been increasing since 1991 as indicated in Figure 1. In the 2011 census Westmeath had a population of 86,164, consisting of 42,783 males, which equates to 49.6% of the overall population and 43,381 females (50.3%), which is consistent with national trends. Since 1991 the population of the county has increased by 38%.

Between 2006 and 2011 the population of the county rose from 79,346 to 86,164 persons. This increase in the population in the 2006-2011 intercensal period of 8.6% is above the state increase of 8.1% and below the Leinster increase of 9%.

In 2011 there were 20,103 people living in Mullingar Town and environs. Mullingar comprises of 23% of the county's population. The town and its environs have increased in population by 9.2% since the previous census in 2006, which equates to half the percentage growth recorded in the town between 2002 and 2006. Most notable is the disparity between the growth of the rural DED's relative to the urban DED's. The census records show that the growth in Mullingar Rural DED's between 2002 and 2011 was 3364, far exceeding the growth of the two Mullingar Urban DED's, which grew by 594 over the same period.

According to the 2011 census, there were 20,153 people living in Athlone, with 15,558 living within the legally defined town boundary and the remaining 4,595 comprised of people living in the town environs including parts of the town within the jurisdiction of Roscommon County Council. Athlone comprises of 18.1% of the county's population. Most notably, the largest increase in population in the town occurred in the ED of Moydrum (Part Urban), which grew by 38% between 2006 and 2011.

**Table 2: Top 24 ED's in terms of Population Increase between 1991-2011**

DED Name	2011	1991	Increase 1991-2011 (No)	% change in population from 1991 – 2011
Kinnegad	2827	542	2285	421.59%
Mullingar Rural	10376	4157	6219	149.60%
Killucan	1691	793	898	113.24%
Delvin	1028	500	528	105.60%
Lackan	98	50	48	96.00%
Castlelost	1716	892	824	92.38%
Gaybrook	444	232	212	91.38%
Killua	1014	534	480	89.89%
Huntingdon	485	261	224	85.82%
Riverdale	427	243	184	75.72%
Glore	193	113	80	70.80%
Bellanalack	565	335	230	68.66%
Ballyhealy	281	170	111	65.29%
Castle	895	550	345	62.73%
Kilbeggan	1527	949	578	60.91%
Killulagh	439	275	164	59.64%
Kilpatrick	222	143	79	55.24%
Auburn	715	468	247	52.78%
Collinstown	475	313	162	51.76%
Noughaval	411	271	140	51.66%
Moydrum	2792	1845	947	51.33%
Griffinstown	559	370	189	51.08%
Carn	753	499	254	50.90%
Boherquill	149	99	50	50.51%
Moate	2909	1938	971	50.10%

Outside the Gateway Towns, the top 24 ED's with population increases of over 50% in the 20 year period from 1991 to 2011 are as listed in Table 2 and mapped in Appendix 2. The most dramatic increase in that period occurred in Kinnegad ED which experienced an increase in population of 421%. However, growth in population has not been accompanied by the requisite supporting social and community infrastructure to meet the residents in the town.

**Table 3: ED's with decrease in Population between 1991-2011**

ED Name	2011	1991	Change 1991-2011	% change in population from 1991-2011
Templepatrick	194	245	-51	-20.82%
Athlone East Urban	4118	4765	-647	-13.58%
Woodland	295	322	-27	-8.39%
Athlone West Urban	3170	3405	-235	-6.90%
Newtown	210	225	-15	-6.67%
Glenlough	184	195	-11	-5.64%
Rahugh	286	303	-17	-5.61%
Ballinlough	133	140	-7	-5.00%

At the other end of the scale, there are 8 ED's in which the population fell in the period 1991-2011 as outlined in Table 3 and mapped in Appendix 3.

In the case of the Athlone EDs, this decrease may be attributable to administrative boundary changes. However, there has only been a modest reduction of 128 people over this 20 year period within this combined area.

## 2.2 Future Population Trends

**Table 4: Population Targets for the Midlands Region (Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022)**

Midland Region 2022 317,100					
County	Offaly 86,771	Westmeath 109,623		Laois 79,314	Longford 41,392
Principle Towns	Tullamore 24,575	Athlone 26,203	Mullingar 32,722	Portlaoise 19,356	Longford 12,622

Key to the socio-economic future of Westmeath is its future population. Population growth will help drive and underpin economic growth. Official forecasts see the population of the State, the Midlands and Westmeath growing strongly. The Regional Planning Guidelines (RPG's) for the Midlands Region 2010-2022 contain regional population targets for Westmeath and the Gateway Towns of Mullingar and Athlone, as indicated in Table 4. The RPG's population targets up to 2022 for the county is 109,623, Mullingar is 30,934 and Athlone is 26,203. It is envisaged that both towns will be the focus of the bulk of the Midlands Regions target population up to 2022.

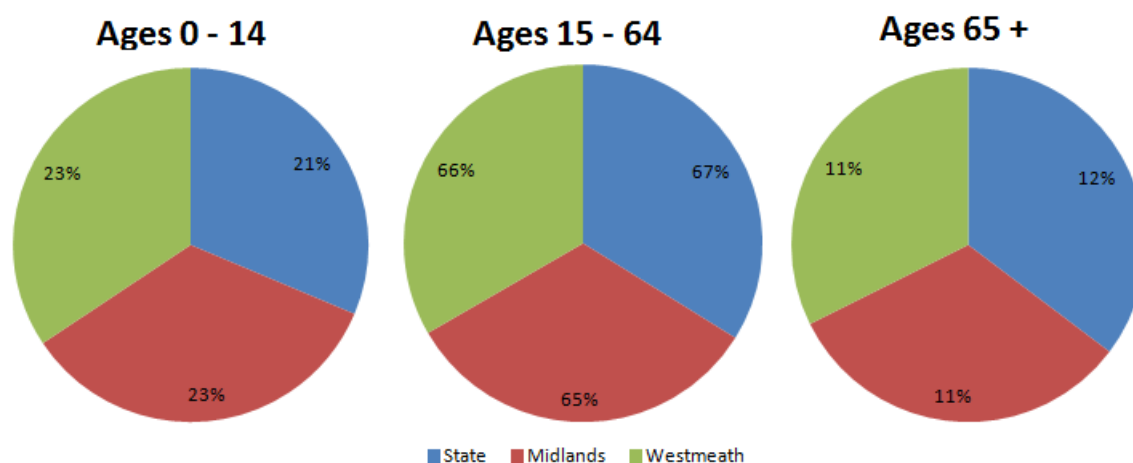
## 2.3 Population Distribution

The population distribution between the Town and Rural areas of Westmeath in aggregate is reported by CSO in the Census 2011 results. These results show a distribution between Town and Rural population as 48.54% and 51.46% respectively. The greater proportion of urban population resides in the two Gateway towns of Athlone and Mullingar, which in 2011 represented 41.6% of the county's total population. The population growth in Westmeath for Rural and Town areas from 2006 to 2011 was 6.2% and 11.2% respectively.

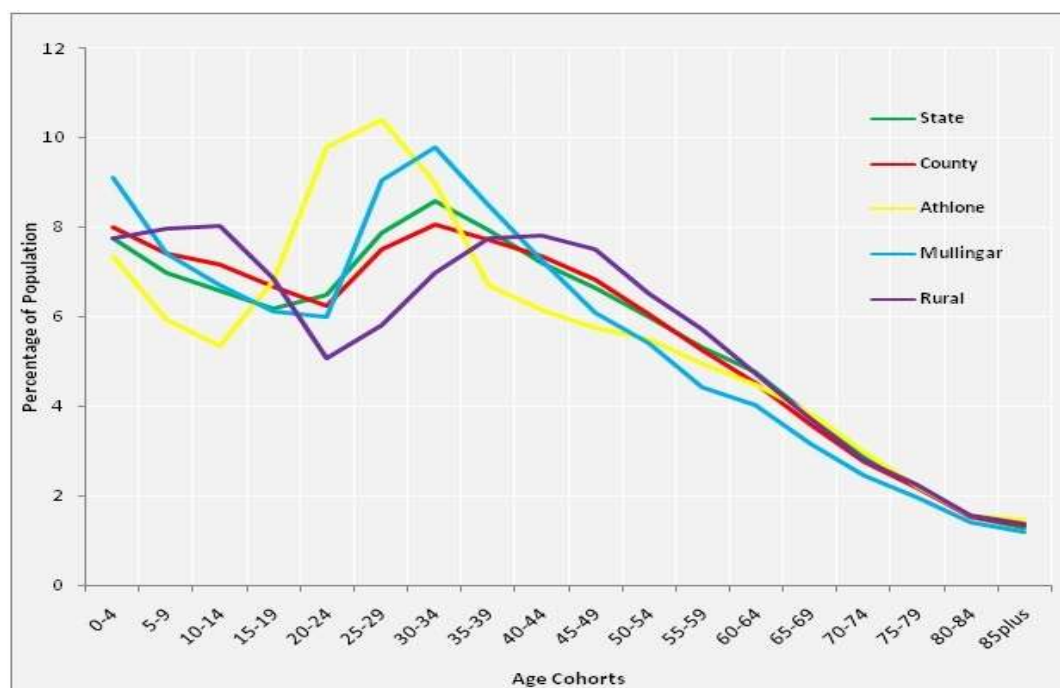
## 2.4 Age Profile

In terms of the demographic profile of Westmeath, the county has similar proportions of 0-4 year olds (23%) to the Midlands, which is higher than the State average of 21%. At the other end of the spectrum, the county has a lower elderly cohort, with 11% of residents aged 65 and over compared to the State average of 12%, as illustrated by Fig 2 below.

**Fig. 2 Breakdown of the Population in Westmeath, Midlands & the State**



**Fig. 3 Analysis of Population Cohorts within Westmeath compared to the State**



In 2011 the population of pre-school age in the county (0-4) was 6,882, of primary school going age (5- 12) was 10,111 and of secondary school going age (13-18) was 7,141. There were 9,796 persons aged 65 years and over. The number of persons aged 18 years or over was 63,112.

Fig. 3 above illustrates that Westmeath has a higher percentage of 0-20 year olds and lower percentage in the 25-44 year old cohort compared to that of the state. The county has recorded an increase in each cohort since the previous census with the exception of the 20-24 year cohort which has declined. The next cohort to this, the 25-29 year old age group, only showed an increase of 120 people from the previous census. The fall in the 20-24 cohort may be a result of emigration with this age group seeking employment elsewhere. The high percentage of young people would suggest the county has experienced a high birth rate and has a high percentage of young family households. In 2011 Birth rate and Death rate for Westmeath were respectively recorded at 17.9 and 6.4 per 1,000 of average population. In comparison, the birth rate and death rate for the state were 16.6 and 6.4 respectively.

Further analysis of the 2011 census indicates that the largest component of the population in Athlone comprises people in the 20-24 and 25-29 age cohorts, equating to 10.3% and 11.1% of the towns' population. This compares to 6.5% and 7.9% for the corresponding age group for the state. This is most likely indicative of the student population and number of young professionals working in the town. Athlone has a smaller proportion of children in the 10-14 age cohort compared to the state average.

In the case of Mullingar, the largest component of the population of Mullingar Town and Environs comprises people in the 30-34 age cohorts, which equates to 10% of the overall population. This compares to 8.6% for the corresponding age group for the state. In general, there are less middle aged and older people living in town compared to the state average. It is interesting to note that 9.3% of the population of Mullingar comprises of children aged 0-4, compared to the 7.8% average for the state. This upward trend in the quantum of 0-4 year olds will generate a demand for both Primary and Secondary Education provision to be met. According to the census data, 38% of families in Mullingar have a child aged between 0-4 years old.

Outside the towns of Mullingar and Athlone, the most notable trend in the population of rural Westmeath is the higher concentration of middle aged people residing in rural areas. Fig. 3 also indicates that there are fewer 25-29 year olds living in rural Westmeath (6%) compared to both Athlone (11%) and Mullingar (9%). This may be attributable to the lack of employment opportunities in the settlements and rural areas beyond the principal towns.

## 2.5 Age Dependency

The effect of these contrasts in age profiles is more sharply revealed by examining the so-called dependency ratios. Table 5 illustrates that Dependency groups within the county are growing over the last number of censuses, in particular the number of 85 years olds has risen sharply by 31% since 2006. Between 2006-2011 there was a reduction in the number of 20-24 year olds of 11%, which would suggest that many people in this cohort left the county in search of employment opportunities.

**Table 5. Population Change between the age cohorts in Co. Westmeath 2002- 2011**

Age Cohort	2002 Population (Number)	% Change 2002 - 2006	2006 Population (Number)	% Change 2006 - 2011	2011 Population (Number)
0-4	5578	8%	6000	15%	6882
5-9	5317	11%	5919	8%	6389
10-14	5549	3%	5732	8%	6169
15-19	6040	-8%	5559	3%	5732
20-24	5479	11%	6070	-11%	5373
25-29	5263	20%	6341	2%	6461
30-34	5537	14%	6317	10%	6932
35-39	5419	15%	6244	6%	6640
40-44	4976	16%	5754	10%	6315
45-49	4683	10%	5167	13%	5863
50-54	4090	14%	4680	11%	5205
55-59	3393	17%	3961	14%	4517
60-64	2636	21%	3182	22%	3890
65-69	2382	6%	2532	22%	3098
70-74	2018	5%	2120	12%	2364
75-79	1725	-2%	1685	11%	1865
80-84	1067	19%	1271	3%	1310
85plus	706	25%	884	31%	1159
<b>Total</b>	<b>71858</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>79346</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>86164</b>

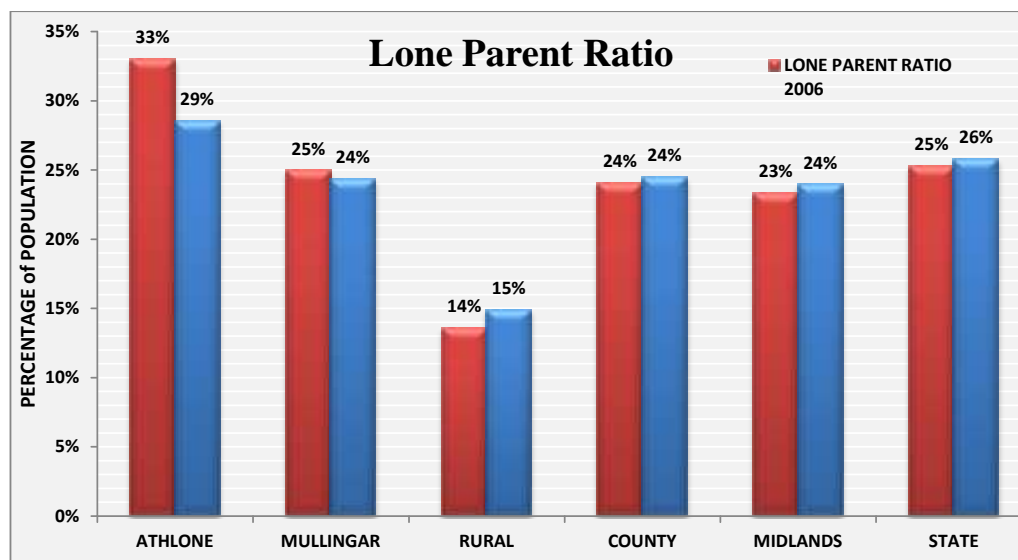
The age range for the young population is 0–14 while older people are classed as those aged 65 and over. Dependency ratios are used to give a useful indication of the age structure of a population with young and old shown as a percentage of the population of working age (i.e. aged 15-64). The total dependency ratio is the sum of the young and old ratios. The total dependency rate for Westmeath is 51%. The total dependency ratio for the state increased to 49.3 in 2011 from 45.8 in 2006. The rural areas outside Mullingar and Athlone have a total dependency rate of 56% which far exceeds the national average. Leitrim had the highest dependency of any county at 57.3 per cent, closely followed by counties Donegal (56.9%), Mayo (55.9%), Roscommon (55.9%) and by Westmeath at 55%. Appendix 4 contains a map illustrating the total dependency rate in Westmeath by Small Area. It is interesting to note that some of the areas with the highest dependency (>65%) correlate with

the location of Nursing Homes in the county eg. Moate, Multyfarnham, Killucan, Tyrrellspass, Cloghanboy, Baylough, Castlepollard and Ballinderry, and accordingly would have an elderly dependent population.

## 2.6 Lone Parents

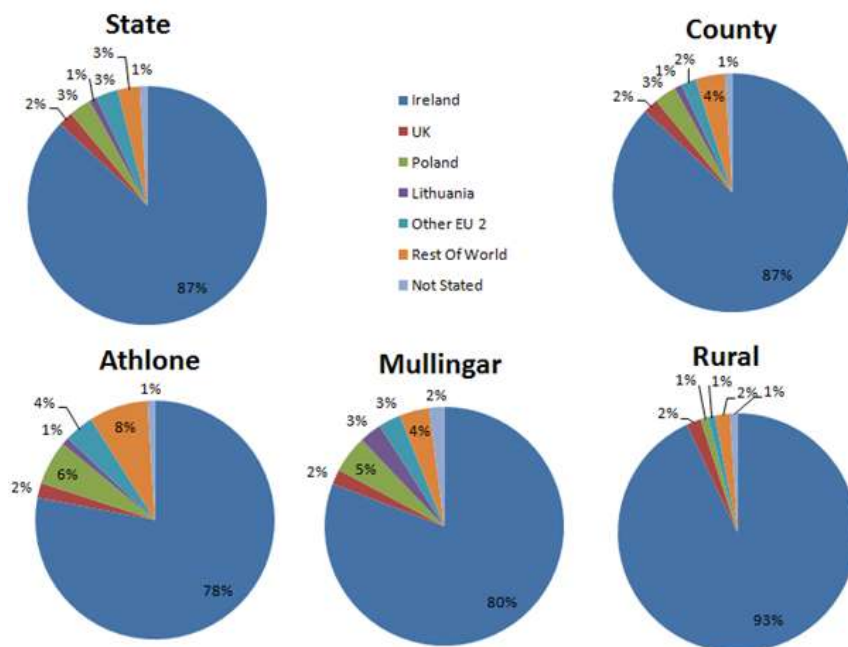
The 2011 census recorded that there were 3,893 lone parent families in Westmeath, which equates to 24.5%, which is slightly lower than the national average of 25.8%. The highest proportion of lone parents in the county (29%) were resident in Athlone.

Fig. 4 Lone Parent Ratio county, region and State



## 2.7 Ethnicity & Nationality

**Fig. 5 Nationality of Usual Residents in Mullingar, Athlone, Rural Westmeath, the county and the State**



92.8 per cent of the usually resident population in Westmeath aged over 1 lived at the same address one year before the census. A further 3.9 per cent lived elsewhere in the same county, 2.1 per cent lived elsewhere in the State while 1.1 per cent lived outside the State twelve months before the census on April 10, 2011.

Non-Irish nationals accounted for 11.9 per cent of the population of Westmeath compared with a national average figure of 12.0 per cent. Polish (2,345 persons) were the largest group, followed by UK nationals (1,929 persons). Fig. 5 above also indicates that the population of both Mullingar and Athlone is much more diverse than either the county or state.

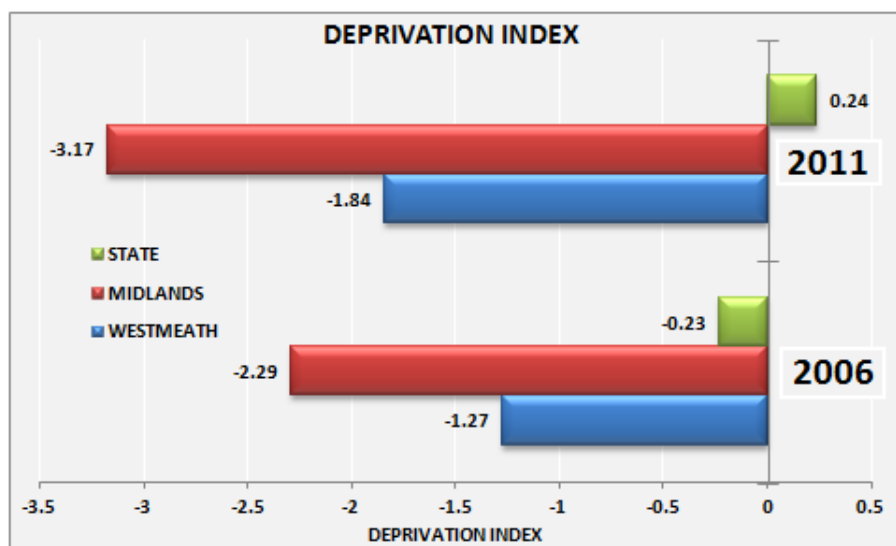
The census also revealed that 1,923 could not speak English well or at all. Polish was the most common foreign language spoken at home with 2,290 speakers.

The needs of the proportion of the population who have migrated into Westmeath are required to be met in the plan in terms of education and training, language, places of worship and childcare.

## 2.8 Social Deprivation

The Pobal HP Deprivation Index is the primary dataset on social deprivation in Ireland and is a key indicator for all local authorities. According to this index, the absolute deprivation score in Westmeath in 2011 was -1.84, comparable to Cork City and Kerry. Changes in the deprivation score in Westmeath relative to the Midlands and State are indicated in Fig. 6. Westmeath has been affected by the economic downturn after 2007. This has been reflected in the drop in the absolute deprivation score from -1.3 in 2006 to -1.84 in 2011. Appendix 5 shows the level of deprivation across the county by Small Area. It is evident that the most deprived areas are located on the periphery of the county.

**Fig.6 Social Deprivation Index for Westmeath relative to the Midlands and the State 2006-2011**



### **3. EDUCATION**

This section explores the education profile of Westmeath, and focuses on aspects of educational achievement at primary, secondary and third level education. Some additional references are made to further education. A spatial profile of educational attainment across the county is also presented. Results from Census 2011 provide a baseline for the overall level of education attainment within the county. Using indicators from the Department of Education and Skills (DES), and the Higher Education Authority (HEA), it is also possible to get an insight into primary, secondary and third level trends in Westmeath such as class sizes, progression rates to third level, and the college destinations chosen by Westmeath second level graduates.

#### **3.1 Provision of Primary & Secondary Education**

In 2012, there were 74 Primary Schools in the county with 10,581 pupils and an average class size of 24.5 pupils. Westmeath has the highest number of Primary Schools in the Midlands.

There were 15 Secondary Schools in the county with 8,629 pupils. In the Midlands 63.6% of persons aged 15-24 are in full-time education. Appendix 6 illustrates the distribution of Primary and Secondary Schools across the county.

DEIS designated schools provide additional learning supports for children at risk of educational disadvantage. As of 2013, of the 15 Secondary Schools in the county, only 4 were classified as DEIS schools which equates to a rate of 26% of all schools. This is comparable to Offaly (27.3%).

The population projections for the county indicate the greatest rise in the school going age population has been in the Gateway Towns of Athlone and Mullingar, which creates a demand for additional Primary school places within these towns. This demand is currently being met by a number of Schools within the hinterland of these two major towns which, which in many instances rely on temporary accommodation to accommodate additional demand. This trend is unsustainable.

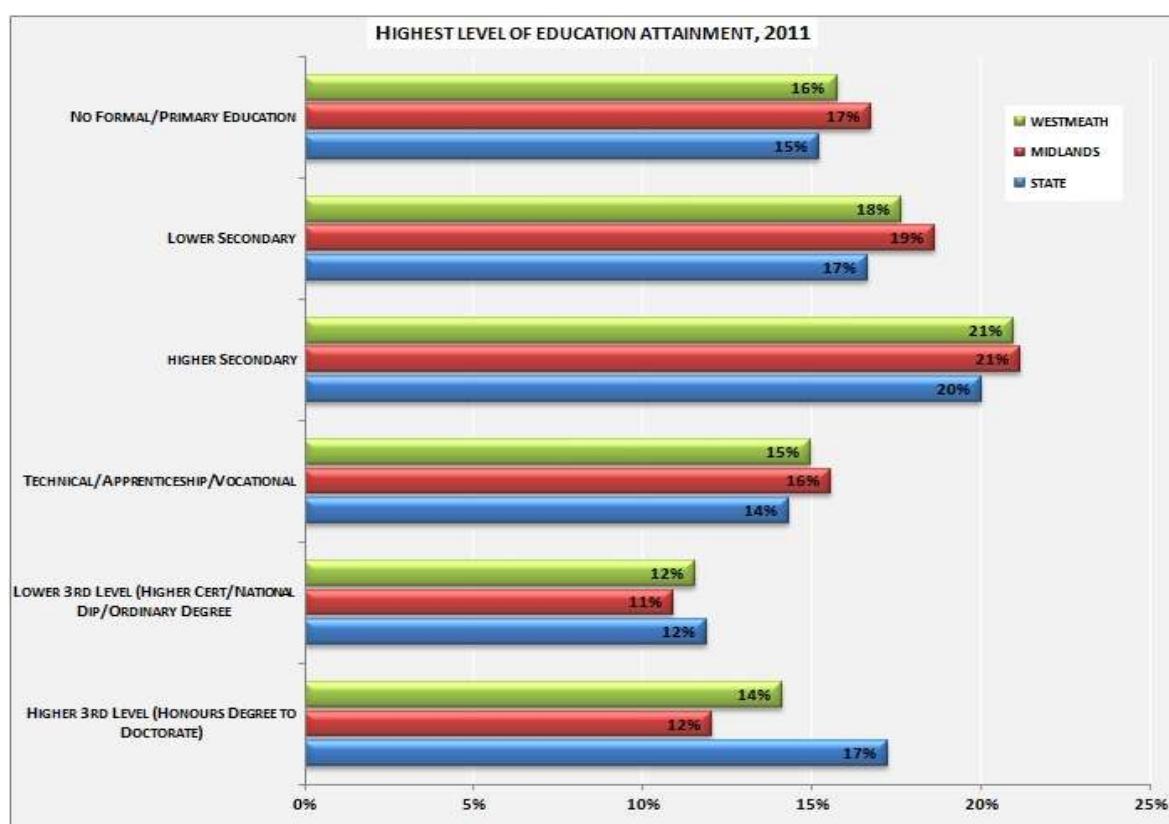
#### **3.2 Educational Attainment**

According to the 2011 census, of those aged 15 years and over whose full-time education had ceased, 16.6 per cent were educated to at most primary level only; a further 56.4 per cent attained second level while 27.0 per cent were educated to third level. Appendix 7 indicates the spatial distribution of people who did not progress beyond Primary level education in the county. A very clear spatial pattern is evident as areas with the lowest levels of education generally occur in the more rural and peripheral parts of Westmeath, in particular in the north and northwest of the

county. Lowest rates are also found in areas within the main urban centres of Mullingar and Athlone and within some smaller settlements.

Although Westmeath has a higher rate of graduates than the Midlands, with 26% of its population receiving a third level qualification, compared to the 23% in the region, the county still lags behind the State with a lower percentage of graduates than the national rate of 29%. Fig 7 highlights the disparity in educational attainment between the County, Midlands and the State.

**Fig. 7 Educational Attainment Westmeath 2011**



Appendix 8 shows the distribution of graduates in the county. The highest concentration (40%) resided in the rural hinterlands of Mullingar and Athlone.

### 3.3 Field of Study

Table 6 below provides detail on the Field of Study of those with third level qualifications in the county. The 'Social Sciences, Business and Law' category was the most popular field of study among all those with post-secondary school qualifications in 2011 and accounts for 11% of the total in Westmeath. The county also performs very well in the 'Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction' field and at 10% has a higher rate than the State and regional averages.

**Table 6 Field of Study of those with 3rd Level Education, Census 2011**

Field of Study						
	County		Midlands		State	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
<b>Education And Teacher Training</b>	2249	4%	6797	4%	112438	4%
<b>Arts</b>	691	1%	2080	1%	56175	2%
<b>Humanities</b>	751	1%	2404	1%	55425	2%
<b>Social Science Business Law</b>	5978	11%	18600	10%	413959	14%
<b>Science Mathematics Computing</b>	2136	4%	5837	3%	130563	4%
<b>Engineering Manufacturing Construction</b>	5487	10%	17278	9%	284925	9%
<b>Agriculture Veterinary</b>	1883	3%	7362	4%	82942	3%
<b>Health And Welfare</b>	4057	7%	12493	7%	202959	7%
<b>Services</b>	2572	5%	7805	4%	133400	4%
<b>Other Subjects</b>	63	0%	165	0%	3148	0%
<b>Not Stated</b>	29555	53%	101296	56%	1527556	51%
<b>Total</b>	55422	100%	182117	100%	3003490	100%

## 4. LABOUR FORCE/INDUSTRY

This section explores the economy and employment profile of Westmeath. Data is also presented on the distribution of employment across a range of occupational categories. Data sources range from Census 2011 and QNHS (Quarterly National Household Survey) data. The ratio of the labour force to the population of all persons aged 15 years or over, is referred to as the labour force participation rate, and is a measure of that cohort of the population that is economically active. It should be noted that a significant cohort of this population aged 15 and over will be in full time education, and therefore unavailable for work.

### 4.1 Industrial Profile Westmeath

The CSO Business Demography Survey 2012 found that there were 3,290 businesses operating in Co. Westmeath employing 13,082 people.

Westmeath's economy traditionally depended on strong agricultural and manufacturing sectors, with food processing and consumer products being of secondary importance in economic terms. In recent times, the county's industrial base has broadened and diversified to host a diverse range of employment opportunities in sectors such as the knowledge economy, life sciences, logistics and distribution, international traded Services, tourism and hospitality, professional services and retail. Table 7 below highlights the main employment sectors in the principal towns and villages in the county. It is noted that Westmeath has a broad industrial base with the Gateway Town of Athlone maximising its locational advantage to also specialise in Tourism and hospitality, whereas the Mullingar economy is characterised by a strong public administration base centred on the Midland Regional Hospital and Westmeath County Council.

**Table 7: Employment Sectors in the Principal Towns and Villages in Westmeath**

Settlement	Employment Sectors
<b>Mullingar, Athlone</b>	<b>Athlone</b> ICT related activities, Pharmaceuticals, life sciences and medical devices, International Trading, Shared Services (Multi-lingual), Logistics, R&D in partnership with AIT, Retailing – Higher order comparison and wholesale retail trade, Knowledge based economy, Tourism & Hospitality, Conferences. <b>Mullingar</b> Engineering & ICT, Consumer Products, Office based Industry, Financial Services, Shared Services (multi-lingual), R&D, Agri-Food Production, Public Administration, Healthcare, Retailing – Higher order comparison and Wholesale Retail Trade, Tourism and Hospitality, Conferences.
<b>Castlepollard</b>	Engineering, Medical Devices, Tourism, Convenience, retailing
<b>Moate, Kilbeggan, Kinnegad</b>	Engineering, Hospitality, Convenience Retailing, Agriculture/Agri-Foods, Tourism, Wood Production, Manufacturing, Equine, Retailing, Distilling, Logistics and Micro Enterprise.
<b>Rochfortbridge, Killucan/Rathwire, Clonmellon, Tyrrellspass</b>	Convenience Retailing, Small-scale commercial enterprises, Indigenous industry and Micro Enterprise.

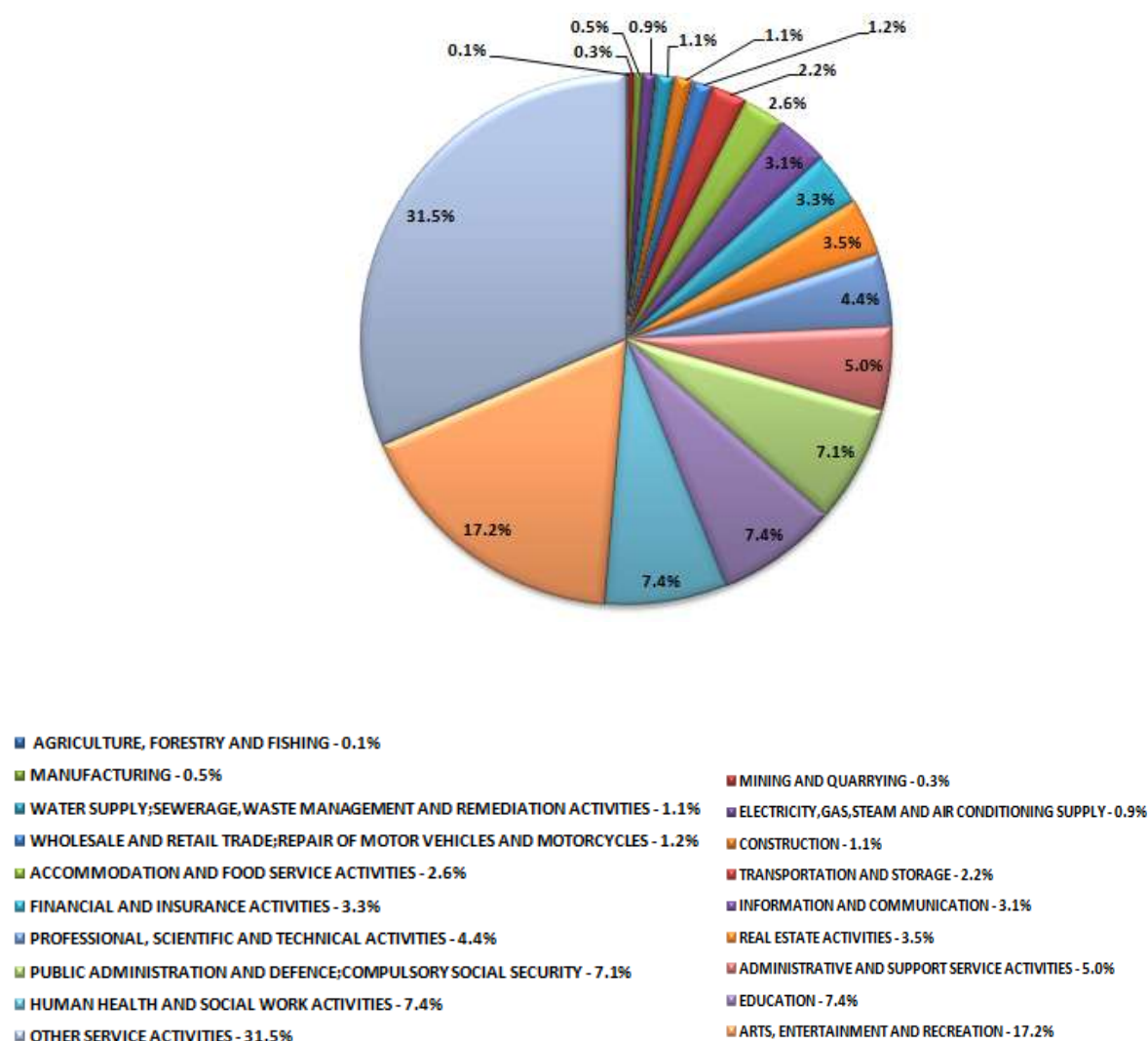
Fig 8 below outlines the principal employment sectors and leading companies in Westmeath. It is noted that many of these companies are at the forefront of their respective sectors and have an international profile.

**Fig. 8 Employment Sectors & Leading Companies in Westmeath**



According to the NACE codes in Geodirectory Q2 2015, the largest sector in the local economy is the service industry (31.5%), followed by 17.2% arts, entertainment and recreation businesses. Both these industries comprise of almost half of the industrial base of the county, as outlined in Fig. 9.

**Fig. 9 Type of Industrial Sectors in Westmeath**



According to the 2011 census, there were 40,956 persons aged 15 years and over in the labour force and of these, 78.9 per cent (32,319 persons) were at work. This represents a total labour force participation rate of 61.4%, broadly similar to that of the State. The labour force in the county has increased by 6% since the previous census from 38,649 to 40,956. The principal areas of employment for residents of the county are Commerce and Trade, Manufacturing Industries, Professional Services, Public Administration and Agriculture. Numbers employed in the Building and Construction Sector have decreased to 1,696 in 2011 from 4,641 in 2006.

Of the 32,319 workers enumerated in Westmeath, 7,320 worked outside the area. The daytime working population (resident and non-resident) of Westmeath was 28,040. Travel to work patterns are examined in more detail in Section 5 below.

**Fig. 10 Distribution of the Working Population by Industry in Westmeath and the State**

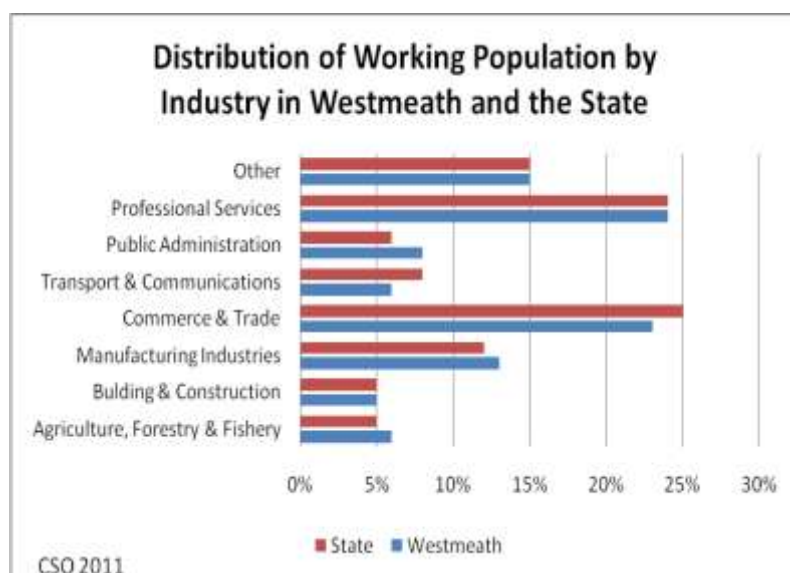


Fig. 10 illustrates the nature of employment for people at work in Westmeath and the State. The majority of workers in the county 7,573 (24%) work in professional services, followed closely by 7,408 23% of workers employed in the commerce and trade sector. A higher proportion of the labour force in Westmeath is engaged in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery (6%) and manufacturing (13%) than in the state. Of the 32,319 workers enumerated in Westmeath, 7,320 worked outside the county. The daytime working population (resident and non-resident) of Westmeath was 28,040.

**Table 8 Nature of Jobs in Westmeath and Counties in the Midland Region**

County	Professional workers	Managerial & technical	Non-manual	Skilled manual	Semi-skilled	Unskilled & other	Total persons
Midland	5.4	25.1	17.3	17.2	11.5	23.5	282.4
Laois	5.3	25.9	17.7	16.9	11.6	22.6	80.6
Longford	4.7	23.0	16.9	17.9	11.8	25.7	39.0
Offaly	4.9	23.8	17.0	18.4	11.9	24.0	76.7
Westmeath	6.2	26.5	17.4	16.1	10.8	23.0	86.2

Table 8 above outlines the nature of jobs in Westmeath. Given that professional services is the largest sector of employment in the county, it is unsurprising that Westmeath has the highest proportion of both Professional (6.2%) together with Managerial/Technical workers than any of the other Midlands counties. 32.7% of Westmeath resident workers are employed in the professional and managerial sectors, compared to 34.1% in the State as a whole. In relation to semi-skilled and unskilled workers, Westmeath has a higher percentage (33.8%) than the state average (32.5%).

Of the 7,670 workers enumerated in Athlone, 1,716 worked outside the area. The daytime working population (resident and non-resident) of Athlone was 11,667 with commerce and trade being the largest industry, closed followed by Professional Services with 2,527 workers. Athlone West Urban represents the highest percentage of low-skilled workers in the county (28.5%).

Of the 7,450 workers enumerated in Mullingar, 2,553 worked outside the area. The daytime working population (resident and non-resident) of Mullingar was 8,388 with professional services being the largest industry.

## **4.2 Agriculture**

County Westmeath is a largely rural county, with agriculture being the primary land use. The 2011 census shows that 1,431 persons or 6% of the working population in Westmeath are full-time employed in agriculture, forestry or fishing, which is slightly higher than the national average of 5.1%.

According to the Census of Agriculture 2010, there are 3,459 farms in the county covering a total land area of 128,371 hectares, which equates to 70% of the total land area of the county. The census records that there are 4,005 full-time farmers in Westmeath. The average size of a farm in the county is 37.1 hectares, which is slightly larger than the national average. Table 9 below illustrates the general trend for fewer small farms of less than 10ha and an increasing number of larger farms in the county, in particular the county has 5% of farms greater than 100ha, compared to 3% in the state.

**Table 9. Farms in Westmeath and the State classified by farm size as a percentage of the total number of farms**

Number of farms classified by farm size as percentage of total number of farms								
	County 1991	State 1991		County 2000	State 2000		County 2010	State 2010
Less than 10 ha	23%	25%		17%	20%		14%	18%
10 ha to less than 20 ha	25%	28%		22%	24%		22%	24%
20 ha to less than 30 ha	19%	18%		17%	18%		18%	18%
30 ha to less than 50 ha	18%	17%		22%	21%		23%	22%
50 ha to less than 100 ha	11%	9%		17%	14%		18%	15%
Greater than 100 ha	3%	2%		4%	3%		5%	3%

Agriculture in Westmeath supports thousands of jobs in the rural economy, both directly in food & drink processing and also in the wider agri-industry, including input suppliers, agricultural contractors, jobs in auctioneering, transport and engineering and in accountancy, legal, veterinary and other advisory services. In 2014, the IFA estimated that the value of agricultural output in the county was €178.2m, and the value of agricultural exports arising from agricultural output in the county was €245.4m. The number of food and drink processing jobs supported by agricultural output of county is 1,260, which represents 31% of the food and drink processing jobs in the Midlands region.

Notwithstanding this high volume of agricultural activity, the 2011 census show that only 6% of the working population in Westmeath are full-time employed in agriculture, forestry or fishing.

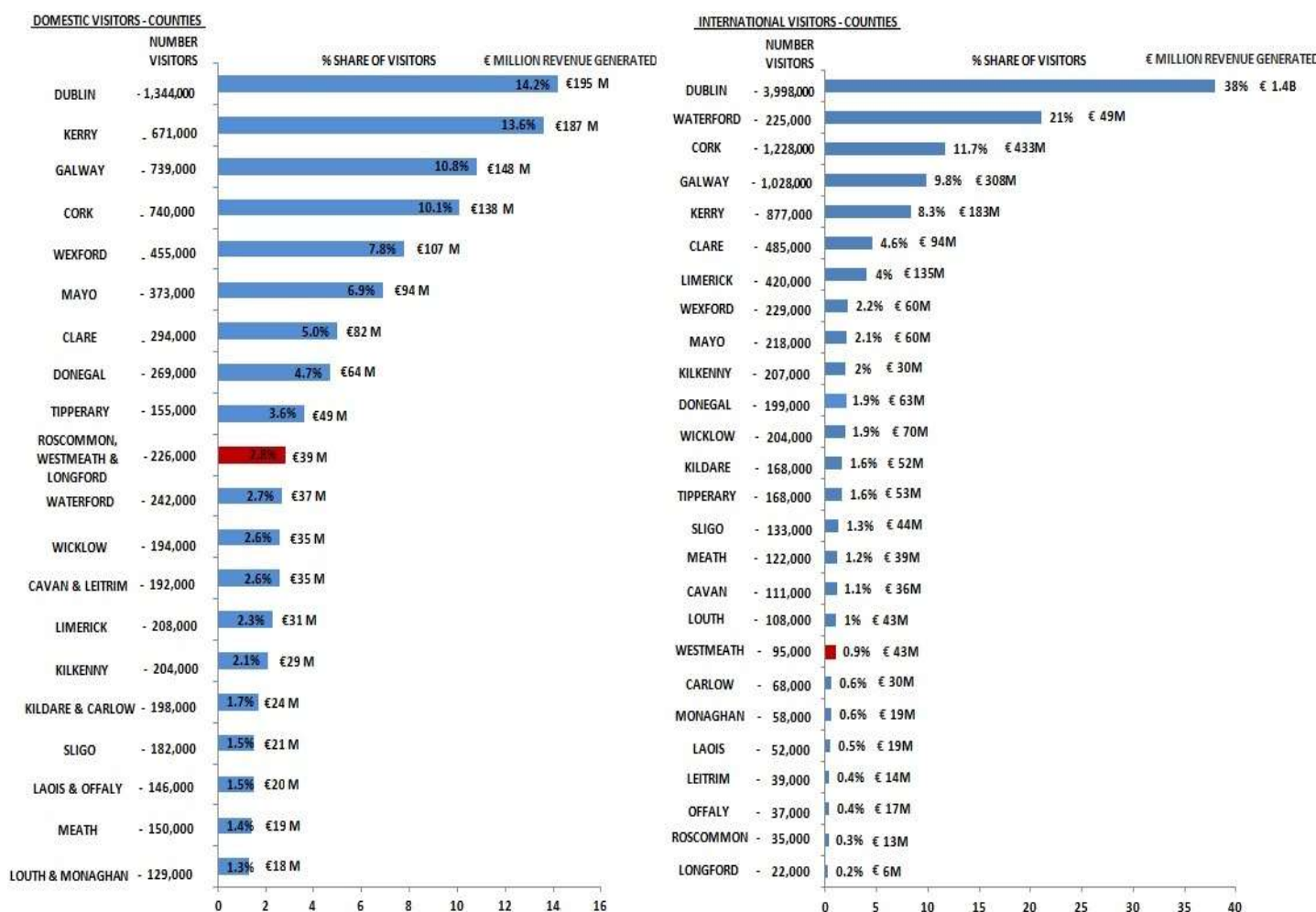
In 2011, Westmeath had forestry coverage of approximately 6%, which is one of the lowest percentages of forest cover in the country. 9,153ha of land area is under private forestry. The value of forestry output to the county in 2014 is €2.3m. The growth of this sector is envisaged in the coming years with increased emphasis on renewable energy and the move away from carbon based fuels.

Although the agriculture sector is providing increasingly less employment over the years, it still remains a significant source of income and employment in rural areas. It is considered that this sector will be a crucial driver in restoring Ireland's economic growth and creating employment over the next number of years, particularly the food processing industry. There are significant opportunities for growth of this sector in the county.

### 4.3 Tourism

Tourism has become an increasingly important sector to the Westmeath economy. County Westmeath's character, quality landscape and rich culture are vital assets which help the county compete as a tourism destination and a location of choice. Westmeath is known as the "Lake County" and is uniquely positioned having regard to the majestic lakes of Lough Owel, Lough Ennell, Lough Derravaragh, the River Shannon and the Royal Canal to capitalise upon the potential of these existing waterways. Recent investment in cycle infrastructure in the county, in particular the Athlone Mullingar Greenway, which forms part of the National Cycle Network will further add to the county's tourism potential.

**Fig. 11 Tourism Profile**



Fáilte Ireland publishes an annual statistical document on regional tourism performance which provides useful county level data on overseas visitors, visitor revenue and a detailed profile on the tourists who visit each county in Ireland. The latest publication in October 2014 provides a snapshot of the relative strength of tourism sector in Westmeath in 2013 in Fig 11 above. In 2013,

Westmeath/Roscommon/Longford welcomed 226,000 domestic visitors and this accounted for a total revenue of €39m. In 2013, Westmeath welcomed 95,000 international visitors and accounted for a total revenue of €43m. Westmeath is the most popular and profitable tourist destination in the Midlands. Notwithstanding, there is huge potential to develop the tourist sector, which is largely undeveloped in the county and thus boost the local economy and job creation. The preparation of an Integrated Tourism Strategy for the County should be a priority.

The top tourist attractions in the county are listed in Table 10. Westmeath County Council are in a unique position as they own and operate the premier tourist attractions in the county, namely Belvedere House & Gardens, Mullingar and Athlone Castle.

**Table 10 Visitors to Top Tourist Attractions in Westmeath (Failte Ireland)**

Attraction	2012
Belvedere House Gardens and Park	160,000
Kilbeggan Distillery Experience	53,000
Tullynally Castle & Gardens	2,740
Athlone Castle & Visitor Centre*	1107*
Moate Museum	400

\*Closed for refurbishment 2012

#### **4.4 Unemployment**

In 2011, the unemployment rate in the county was 21.1% which is much higher than the then national average of 19%. Unemployment is prevalent across urban and rural areas with larger concentrations in larger urban centres. Fig. 12 shows that unemployment peaked in the county in 2012 with 10,244 people out of work. The unemployment rate increased by a staggering 168% between 2004 and 2013. Contrary to national trends, the number on the live register in Westmeath in August 2015 was 8,868, which represents a slight increase from the 2014 figure. Increased buoyancy in the national economy in the current year may positively affect unemployment rates in the county.

Of the 25,768 persons aged 15 years and over who were outside the labour force, 29.1 per cent were students, 25.9 per cent were looking after the home/family and 32.3 per cent were retired.

Fig. 12 Live Register in Westmeath

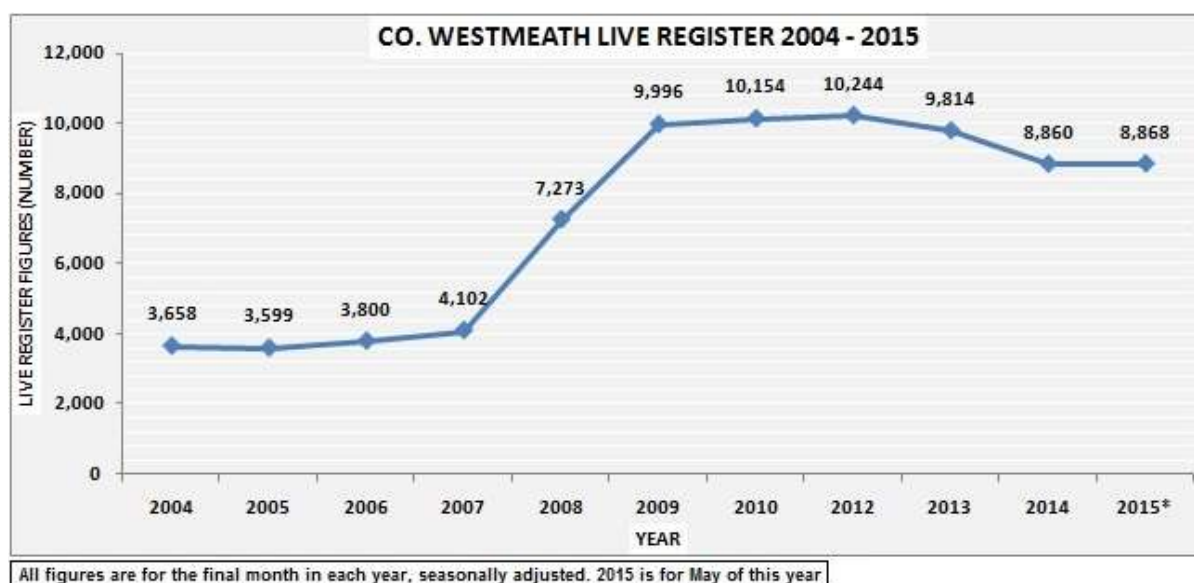
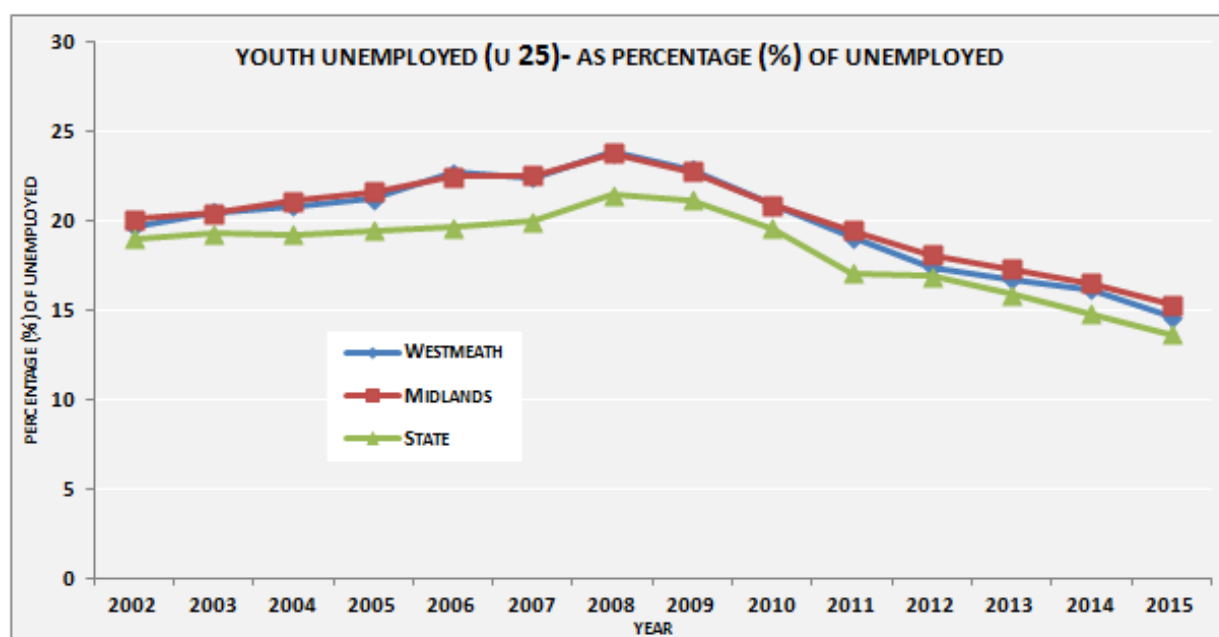
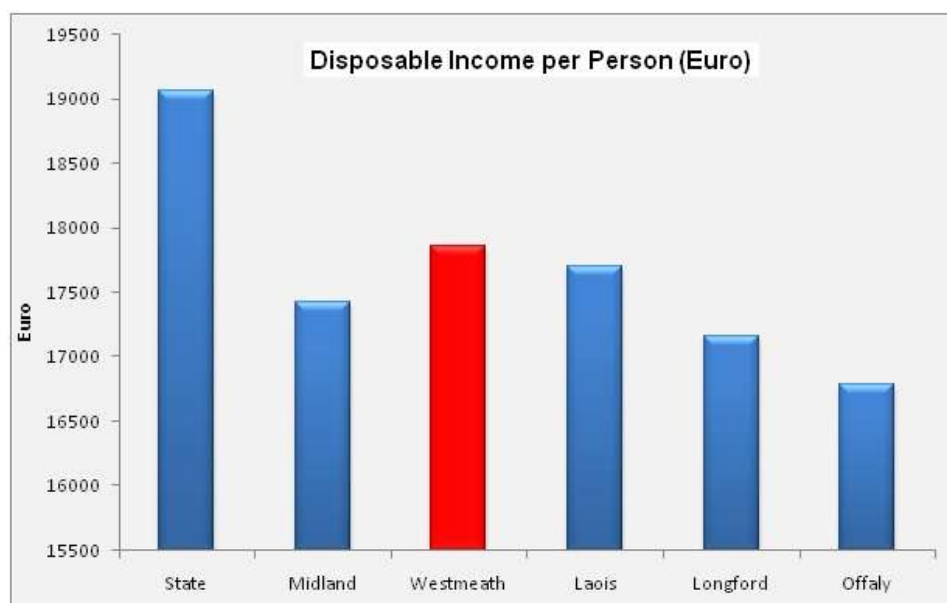


Fig. 13 below highlights the percentage of youth unemployed of the total unemployed for the county, region and State. The rate of youth unemployment in Westmeath is 15%, which is slightly above the State average of 14%.

Fig. 13 Youth Unemployed as a % of the Total Unemployed in Westmeath, the Midlands & the State



## 4.5 Disposable Income



On average residents in Westmeath have a disposable income of €17,856, which is the highest income in the Midlands, but less than the state average of €19,055.

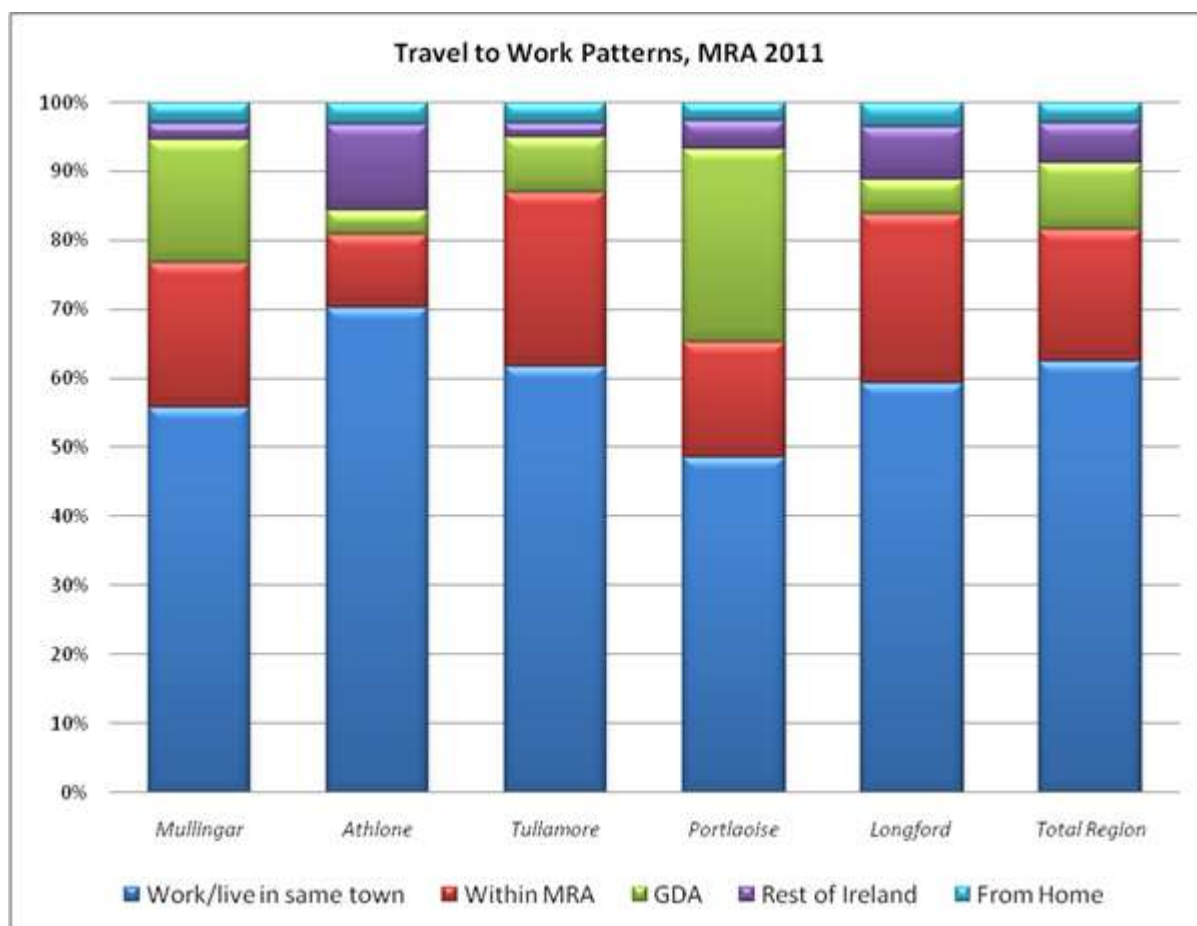
## 4.6 Gross value added

Gross Value Added is a measure of the value of goods and services produced in an area, industry or sector of an economy. In 2012, the latest year for which such data is available, the Midland Region accounted for 3.3% of the total Gross Value Added within the State - the lowest level of output of all regions. In 2012, the level of GVA produced per person in the Midland Region was 54.3% of the State average. Gross value added per person in 2012 was €18,638, compared to €34,308 nationally. The relatively low level of GVA in the Midlands can be attributed in part to the low population density of the region relative to all other regions and the lack of higher value-added activities in the region.

## 5. COMMUTING

This section sets out the profile of commuting in and out of Westmeath. By analysing the Place of Work Census of Anonymised Records (POWCAR) datasets from the CSO, it is possible to clearly identify commuting trends within and across the county and also to provide a detailed work profile of the type of jobs that are undertaken in the key Westmeath employment centres of Athlone and Mullingar.

### Place of Work Anonymised Records –Census 2011



**Figure 14 Travel to work patterns for gateway towns and other county towns in the Midlands Region, 2011**

Figure 14 which is based upon the Places of Work – Census of Anonymised Records (POWCAR) data illustrates, from a regional perspective, variations in travel to work pattern distances between each of the Gateway Towns and the other county towns in the region. Of the three Gateway Towns, Mullingar has by far the largest percentage commuting to the Greater Dublin Area (18%) compared to Tullamore (8%) and Athlone (3%). By comparison with the other Gateway Towns, Athlone exhibits the most sustainable travel to work pattern with 70% commuting to work from within the town and

its environs. This is reflective of the strong employment base which has been established in the town. Corresponding rates for Mullingar and Tullamore are 56% and 62%.

Analysis of the census data for County Westmeath and the sub-county areas discussed above (ie Mullingar Town and catchment area, Athlone Town and catchment Area and the remaining Rural areas) reveal notable variations in relation to travel to work patterns, place of work, means of travel, average time of travel. Data in relation to Athlone town catchment does not include that which pertains to County Roscommon. The following section reviews POWCAR data for each of these areas in turn.

### **5.1 Commuting Patterns within and from Co. Westmeath**

Figure 15 shows the work destinations for the working population of Co. Westmeath. The census returns provide data in relation to travel to work patterns for a total of 31,873 persons in employment who reside in County Westmeath.

22.8% of the County's working population are employed in the Mullingar town catchment area. There is significant travel to work patterns evident to locations outside the county with approx. 47% commuting. Travel to the greater Dublin area is the predominant location for employment outside the County, including Dublin city and suburbs, Leixlip, and Kildare rural area. The private car is, at 66 %, by far the most frequently used mode of travel, as shown in Figure 16. Travel to work by means of bus, coach, or train is recorded at 3%. Access to work on foot for County Westmeath was recorded at 16.5 %. The percentage of resident workforce working from home is recorded at 7.5 %. The largest industrial group is wholesale retail, transportation, accommodation and food services activities at 26.6%, displayed in the table seen in Table 11; education, human health and social work activities comprise 22.1%. Fig. 17 shows the principle socio-economic group of workers living in the county is non-manual (26%), followed by employers and managers (14.2%). Farmers constitute 5.1% of the county's resident workforce. A Journey to work time of between 10 and 20 minutes is the most frequent of all journeys times made, at 32.6%.

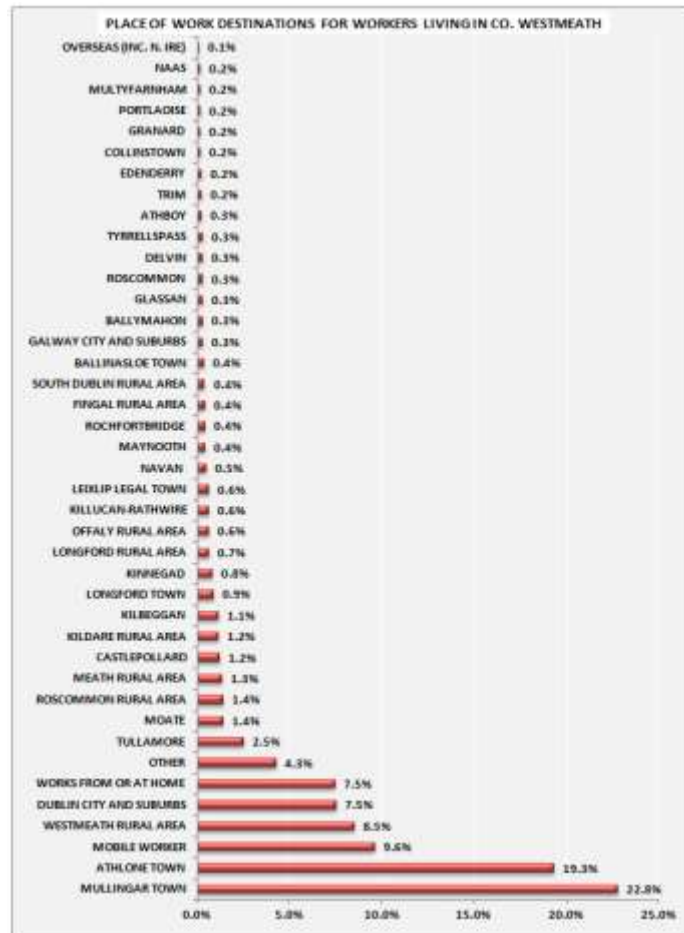


Figure 15 Place of work destinations for workers living in Co. Westmeath, 2011

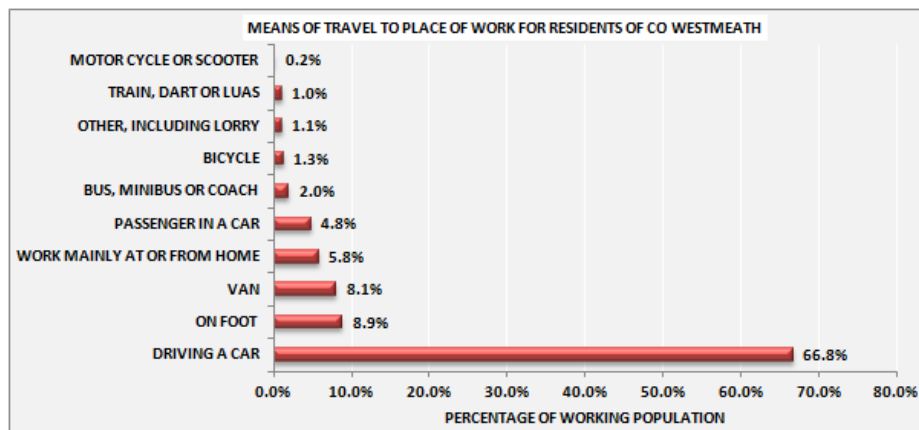


Figure 16 Means of Travel to place of work for residents of County Westmeath

Industrial Group	Percentage	Number
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	6.1%	1845
Manufacturing, mining and quarrying, Electricity, Gas, Water supply and Waste Management	14.1%	4249
Construction	5.6%	1688
Wholesale, Retail Trade, Transportation and Storage, Accommodation and Food Service Activities	26.6%	8025
Information and Communication, Financial, Real Estate, Professional, administration and support service activities	13.3%	4009
Public Administration and Defence; Compulsory Social Security	8.2%	2468
Education, Human Health and Social Work Activities	22.1%	6669
Other Service Activities	3.9%	1173

Table 11 Industrial groupings of workers living in Co. Westmeath -2011

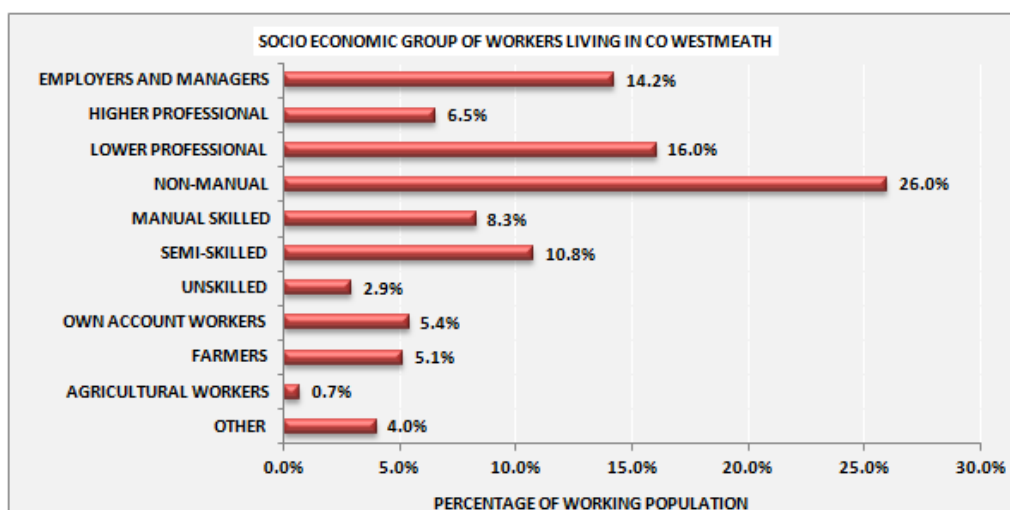


Figure 17 Socio-economic groupings of workers living in County Westmeath, 2011

## 5.2 Athlone Commuting Patterns

19.3% of the County's resident working population are employed in the Athlone town catchment area. A total of 60.9% of the areas workforce both work and reside in the Athlone and catchment area (Figure 18, below), which is a relatively high figure for towns of similar size in the region and is reflective of a sustainable travel to work pattern. The place of work for 4.4 % of the areas resident workforce is Roscommon rural area, the rate for Dublin city and suburbs being 2.2%. Rates of Travel to Mullingar and Tullamore for the resident workforce are respectively 1% and 1.2%. The principle socio-economic group of workers living in the Athlone catchment area is non-manual (32%) followed by lower professional 16.3%, and employers and managers (13.3%). The largest industrial

groups are wholesale retail, transportation, accommodation and food services activities (32%), and manufacturing (17.5%). The private car is, at 60.5 %, by far the most frequently used mode of travel albeit less than the rate for the county. The second most popular mode of travel to work is by means of walking, the rate being 16.5%. Travel to work by means of bus, coach, or train is recorded at 3.5%; use of the train for travel to work is 0.9%. Noteworthy is the higher relative rate of travel to work by bicycle which was recorded at 3.2%. A journey to work time of between 10 and 20 minutes is the most frequent of all journey times recorded, at 46.1%, representing almost half of the resident workforce. The percentage of journey to work times in the 60 minutes and over categories is less for Athlone than for the other aggregate areas examined.

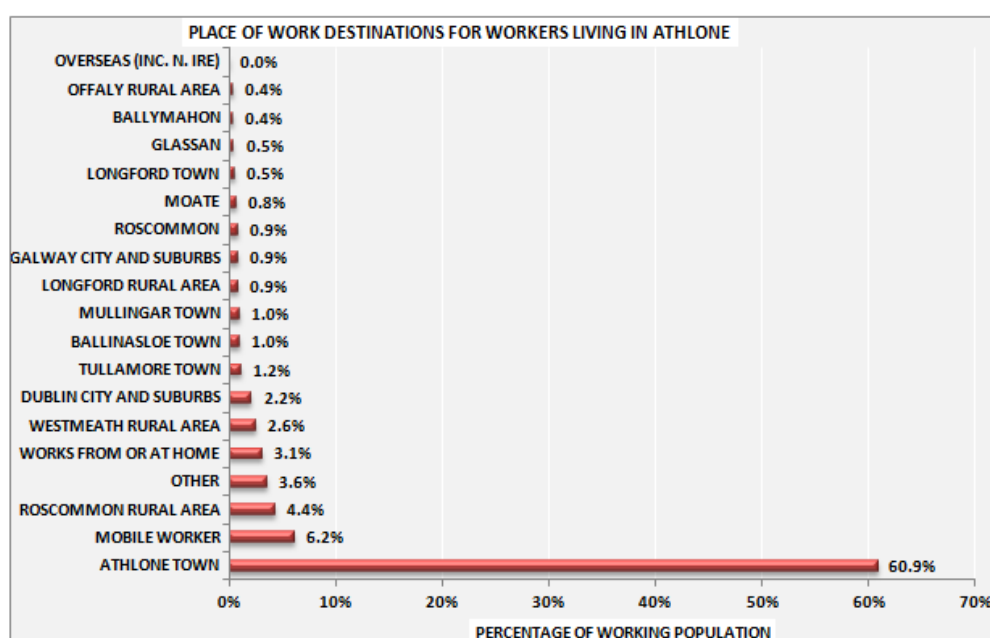
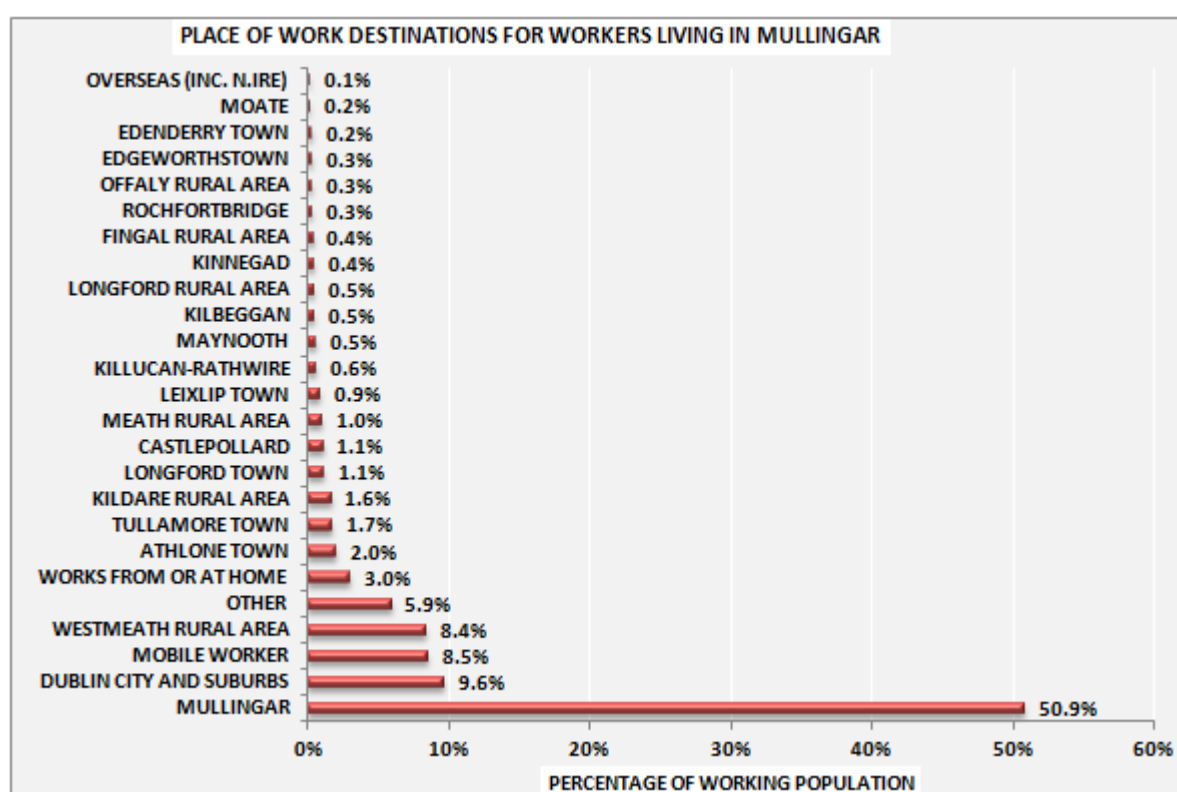


Figure 18 Place of work destinations for workers living in Athlone, 2011

### 5.3 Mullingar Commuting Patterns

22.8 % of the County's resident working population are employed in the Mullingar town catchment area. Half of the resident working population find employment within the town and catchment (Figure 19, below). In contrast to the rate for Athlone, almost 10% of the resident working population commute to Dublin city and suburbs, the figure for the greater Dublin area being 18%. Westmeath rural area (8.4%) is another prominent destination in this regard. There are low rates of travel from Mullingar recorded for employment to both Athlone and Tullamore. Socio-economic categorisation of workers broadly follows that of Athlone, with non-manual (28.4%), lower

professional 18.2%, and employers and managers (14.1%) forming the three largest groupings. The largest industrial groups are wholesale retail, transportation, accommodation and food services activities (29.2%) and education, human health and social work activities at 25.2% forming the second largest group. The private car is, at 66.4%, by far the most frequently used mode of travel, which is consistent with rates for the county. Another popular mode of travel to work is by means of walking, the rate being 13.4%, which is less than the rate for Athlone. Travel to work by means of train travel is undertaken by 2.3% of workers, two and a half times the rate recorded for Athlone. Use of bus/coach is recorded at 1.4%, which is less than half the rate for Athlone, as is the rate for travel to work by means of bicycle which was recorded at 1.7%. Athlone, at a rate of 3.5%, records the highest percentage of workers who travel to work by means of bus, minibus or coach. The most frequent of all journey times recorded for the area, is between 10 and 20 minutes, with 36.1% in this category. On average the travel to work time is greater for Mullingar than that which pertains in Athlone.



**Figure 19 Place of work destinations for workers living in Mullingar, 2011**

## 5.4 Westmeath Rural Commuting Patterns

The data for the remaining rural area indicate that Mullingar (18.4%), Athlone (10.4%), and Dublin (8.4%) (Figure 20 below) are the principle urban destinations for employment. For residents of the rural area, working from home constitutes 10.7% of all employment locations and a further 10.5 % work within the Westmeath rural area. The principle socio-economic group of workers living in the rural area is non-manual (23.5%), followed by lower professional (15.5%), and employers and managers (14.6 %). Farmers constitute 8.6% (i.e. 1546 persons) of socio-economic groups living in the rural area. The largest industrial groupings are wholesale retail, transportation, accommodation and food services activities at 23.7% and education, human health and social work activities comprising 22.2%. Agriculture forestry and fishing comprise a total of 9.9% or 1702 persons. The private car is again, at 69.1%, by far the most frequently used mode of travel, this rate being the highest for each of the aggregate areas examined. The rate of travel to work by bus, minibus or coach at 1.7% is the second lowest within the aggregate areas. A Journey to work time of between 10 and 20 minutes is at 26.2%, the most frequent of all journey times recorded; a further quarter of respondents recorded a journey time of between 20 and 40 minutes. Within the rural area, 15.8% of workers travel in excess of one hour to work.

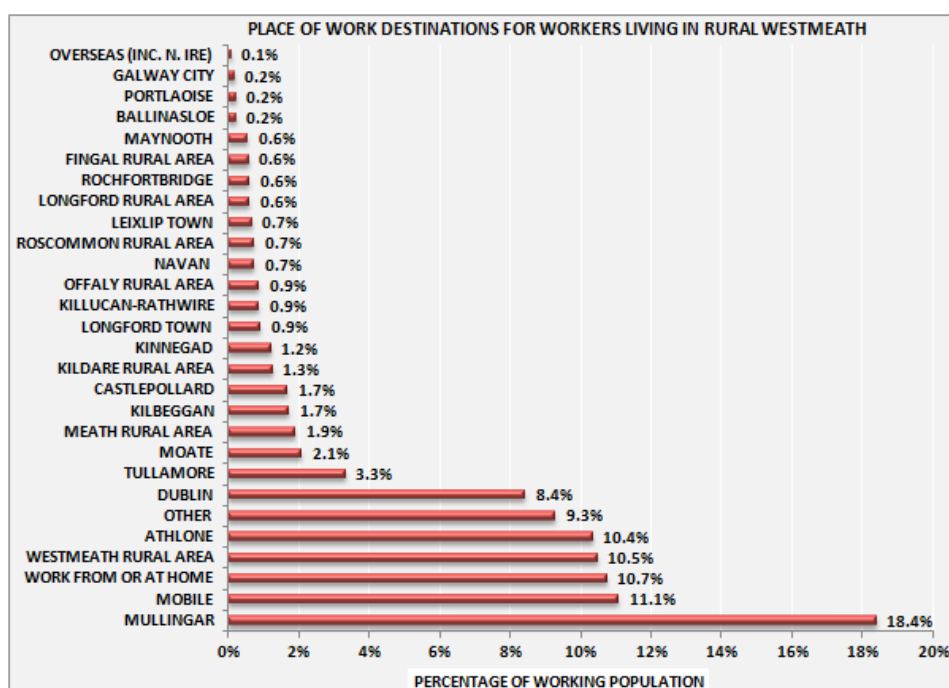


Figure 20 Place of work destinations for workers living in Rural Westmeath, 2011

## **6. HOUSING**

This section explores the housing profile of the county and includes information on housing tenure, vacancy rates, Local Authority Housing, housing land availability across the county and income per household.

### **6.1 Housing Profile**

The number of dwellings in Westmeath was recorded in 2006 as 32,817 and has increased to 36,836 in 2011. Of these 36,836, 7,128 were single person households. Of the 22,274 families in the area, 6,352 were couples with no children. The average number of children per family was 1.4, which was equal to that found across the State.

91.9 per cent of households in the county lived in houses or bungalows while a further 7.7 per cent lived in apartments, flats or bedsits. 21,995 dwellings (71.8 per cent) were owner occupied while 8,175 dwellings (26.7 per cent) were rented. 29.8 per cent of the dwellings in this area were built in the ten years before the census. The average number of persons per household was 2.8 compared with 2.7 nationally. In 2011, 52% of the housing stock in Westmeath was detached houses, with apartments comprising 7.6%.

With regard to the nature of occupancy of houses in Mullingar in 2011, 61% were owner-occupied, whilst 27% were rented from Private Landlords. Only 10% of private houses in the town were rented to the Local Authority or Voluntary Bodies.

With regard to the nature of occupancy of dwellings in Athlone in 2011, 54.6 % were owner-occupied, whilst 31.8% were rented from Private Landlords. Only 10.9% of private dwellings in the town were rented to the Local Authority or Voluntary Bodies.

### **6.2 Residential Vacancy**

Between 2006 and 2011, 4018 new dwellings were constructed in Westmeath with a reduction in vacant units of 36. Based on Census 2011 results, the number of occupied dwellings in Westmeath was 30,890. This represents a vacancy rate of 13.4%, which is less than the Midlands rate of 14% and below the national rate of 15%. The average occupancy rate across the county was 2.8 persons per

occupied dwelling. In 2015, there was a widespread distribution of vacant properties recorded in both the urban centres and across rural Westmeath with the highest concentration in the larger towns. The spatial distribution of vacant housing units in the county as of Q2 2015 is presented in Appendix 9. It is noted that highest vacancy rates occur in the larger towns, in particular Athlone and Mullingar.

### 6.3 Local Authority Housing

As of July 2015, the total number of Local Authority rented housing stock in the county was 1,798 units. The total number of approved housing applicants at that date was 2,940. The Council own 510 housing units and leases 104 dwellings in Mullingar. It is noted in the Westmeath Housing Strategy 2014-2020 that the highest demand for housing in the future will consist of two bedroom houses, due to declining family size and an increase in single person households.

### 6.4 Housing Land Availability

It is Council Policy that new residential development would be located within the county's towns and villages, in particular Athlone and Mullingar. In this regard, 309 ha of land has been zoned for residential development in Westmeath up until 2020, which will facilitate the development of approximately 8,000 new residential units. The breakdown land zoned for residential development in each settlement is outlined in Table 12.

**Table 12 Breakdown of land zoned for residential development in each settlement in Westmeath**

Undeveloped Residential Land (Ha)	
Athlone	139.312
Ballinagore	11.38
Ballinlack	0
Ballymore	1.106
Clonmellon	0.304
Collinstown	0.007
Coole	1.197
Kilbeggan	2.916
Killucan Rathwire	0.127
Kinnegad	1.549
Milltownpass	0.42
Mullingar	130.227
Raharney	4.36
Rathowen	0.09
Rochfortbridge	0.39
Tyrrellspass	16.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>309.985</b>

## **7. COMMUNITY, RECREATIONAL & AMENITY FACILITIES**

This section presents an overview of the community, amenity and recreational facilities in the county.

Community facilities include schools, community centres, health centres and childcare facilities, religious meeting places, cemeteries, sports and recreation areas, sports facilities, parks, open spaces and walking routes. There are many publicly accessible community and sports facilities across Westmeath, in particular a high number of rural based sports clubs and facilities. Appendix 10 outlines the distribution of playgrounds throughout the county. It is noted that the highest concentration of same are in the larger towns. Appendix 11 provides the location of childcare facilities in Mullingar. It is noted that provision is lacking in the rural areas.

The county is a hive of creative activity and possesses a wide variety of cultural amenities such as two Arts Centres, two theatres, two museums and two Art Galleries. Such facilities contribute towards the intellectual, artistic and social quality of life of people in Westmeath. The county towns in particular have shown their capacity to host significant national and international events including the European Triathlon Championships, the RTE Drama Festival, Festival of Fires and the National Community Games.

The unique landscape and heritage associated with peat boglands, uplands and waterways (incl. River Shannon, Royal Canal, and many lakes offers a range of outdoor activities from cycling and hill-walking to fishing, canoeing and leisure cruising. The existing Royal Canal Greenway provides an attractive waterside greenway that not only provides a scenic route for cyclists and walkers without the hassle of motor traffic, but creates a safe and attractive destination for the cycling enthusiast and the novice alike. The Royal Canal Way, comprising of 22km is open from the Meath County Boundary to Mullingar. The Old Rail Trail, which forms part of the National Cycle Network is a 40km rural route through the heart of the Irish Midlands, starting in the bustling town of Athlone and continuing on a converted stretch of the Midlands Great Western Railway to Mullingar. Both initiatives will significantly add to the tourism product in the county.

## **8. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSETS**

This section provides a brief overview of the nature of the natural environment in the county. Westmeath is known as the “Lake County”, and is uniquely positioned having regard to the majestic lakes of Lough Owel, Lough Ennell, Lough Derravaragh, the River Shannon and the Royal Canal. It is characterised by a high quality environment boasting 16 Special Areas of Conservation, 11 Special Protection Areas, 9 Natural Heritage Areas and 31 Proposed Natural Heritage Areas, the spatial distribution of which is outlined in Appendix 12.

### **8.1 Water Bodies**

Westmeath County Council has lands in two river basin districts; the majority being in the Shannon River Basin District. There are five lakes and five groundwater bodies in Westmeath County. The majority of Westmeath’s river water bodies are at moderate status. The main pressures affecting rivers are generally agriculture, wastewater discharges and septic systems.

The five lakes in Westmeath County are at good or moderate status. The main pressures affecting lakes are generally forestry and agriculture and urban generated development.

### **8.2 Natural Heritage**

There are 46 esker systems in Westmeath covering 1,681 hectares or 0.91% of the area of the county.

Peatlands are a characteristic part of the landscape of County Westmeath covering about 17,000 ha or 9% of the county. This includes cutover, cutaway, raised bog and fen. Peatlands represent a valuable repository of the past, archaeology, cultural heritage and natural history and development of the landscape.

There are also many important local biodiversity sites in County Westmeath which act as stepping stones in a wider ecological network. These include rivers and river banks, ponds, small woods and hedgerows which are essential to the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species.

### **8.3 Water & Wastewater**

According to the 2011 Census, 73% households in Westmeath are connected to a Public Main water system. The remainder of the water supply in the county is classified as Group Scheme with Local Authority (7%), Private Group Scheme (2%) and Other Private Source (15%).

57% households in Westmeath are connected to a Public Sewage Scheme (57%). The remainder of the sewage facilities used in Westmeath households are Individual Septic Tank (36%), or Other Individual Treatment (4%) and Other/None/Not Stated (3%).

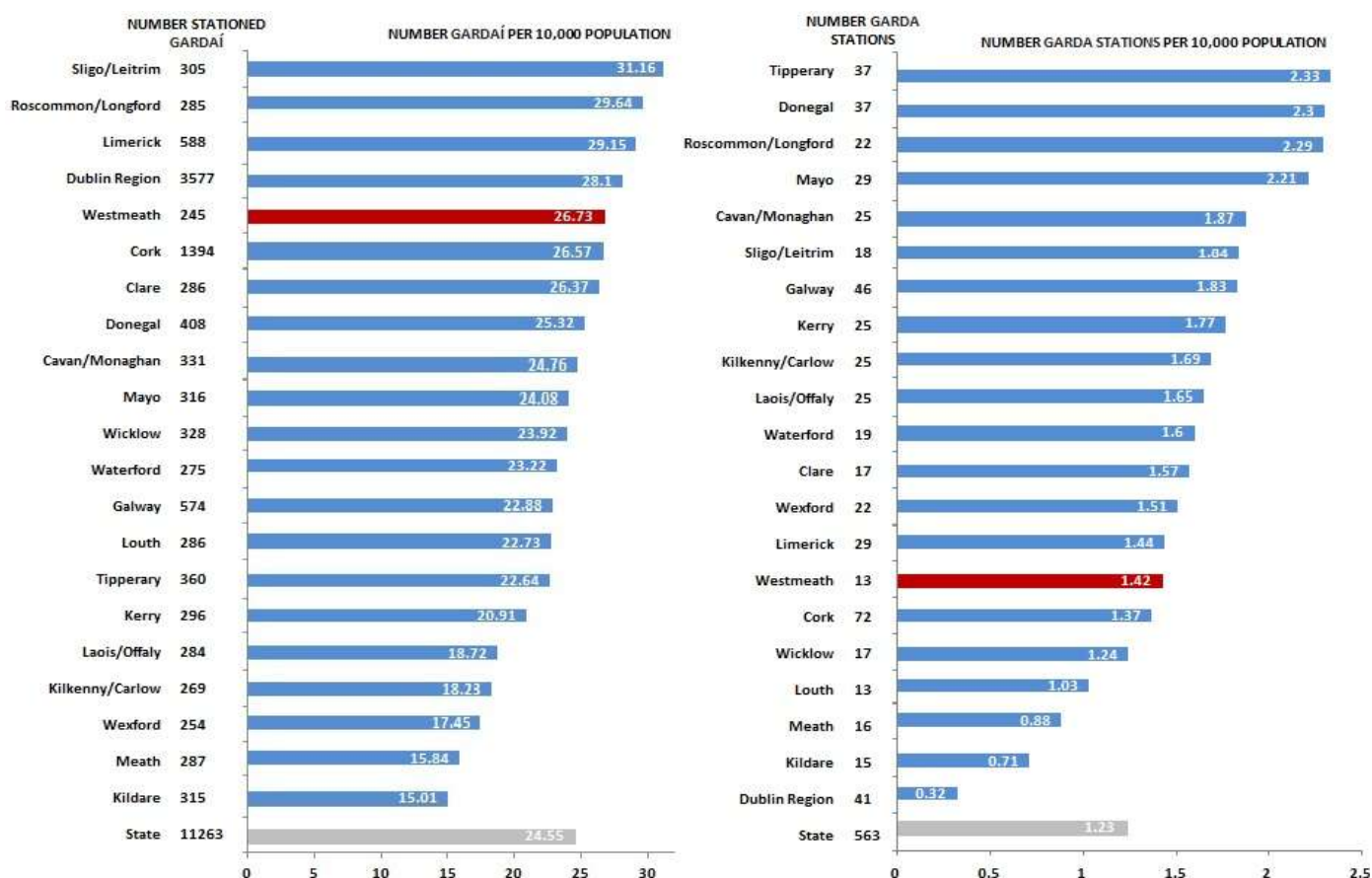
## 9. SAFE COMMUNITIES

This sections looks into data relating to community safety including road safety in Westmeath. Crime data is categorised using the Irish Crime Classification System (ICCS) and is available at Garda Station level and at division level. Reference is also made to the Irish Independent News article “Crime Nation –How safe is your county” by Sean McCarthaigh and Shane Phelan, 8<sup>th</sup> November 2014.

### 9.1 Policing

According to the Garda Stations and Gardai per 10,000 population 2011 (Source: CSO), there were 13 Garda stations in Westmeath with a total of 245 Gardai stationed in the county. This equates to 1.42 stations per 10,000 of the population, which is slightly above the state average (1.23). Appendix 13 shows the distribution of Garda Stations, districts and subdistricts across Westmeath.

**Fig. 21 No. of Gardai & Garda Stations in Ireland**



In November 2014, the crime rate in Westmeath was 479.3 per 10,000 population, which was higher than the then national crime rate of 495.4. The highest ranking offence was offences against the Government/justice procedures. The lowest ranking offence was attempts/threats to murder/assaults. The crime rate in the county decreased by 4% between 2012 and 2013.

## 9.2 Road Safety

According to the Road Traffic Injuries and Fatalities 2011-2012, RSA, the annual average of road traffic injuries in Westmeath for the period 2011-2012 was 130 or 1.5 per 1,000 of the population, which is consistent with national trends. Table below illustrates the average number of fatalities in the county between 2009-2013. There were 5 fatalities recorded in Westmeath in 2013 down from 7 in 2010. This is the tenth highest rate of fatalities in the country, which equates to 58 per million population, which is considerably higher than the State average of 39 fatalities.

**Table Total Fatalities in Westmeath, the Midlands and the State, 2009-2013**

Road Deaths						
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	
<b>Westmeath</b>	4	7	6	5	5	
<b>Midlands</b>	15	22	13	16	15	
<b>State</b>	239	212	186	162	190	

\*Source – Road Safety Authority (RSA)

## **10. HEALTH**

This section explores data relating to the health status of the Westmeath population as well as data relating to the nature and extent of disabilities within the county, in addition to Mullingar and Athlone.

### **10.1 Health & Wellbeing**

According to the 2011 census, 75,903 persons in the county stated they were in very good or good health, representing 88.1 per cent of total persons. This compares to 88.3 per cent of total persons nationally. 1,399 persons stated they were in bad or very bad health, representing 1.6 per cent of total persons in this area. Again this compares with 1.5 per cent of total persons nationally.

After Sligo, Westmeath has the highest rate of hospital admissions for respiratory illness in the country, 3,000 -3,250 per 100,000 based on figures compiled by the Institute of Public Health. Respiratory issues aside, the county also has the second highest rate of hospital discharges of children per 1,000, which suggests that either more children in Westmeath are being hospitalised than anywhere else in the country or children are being re-admitted to hospital with greater frequency.

The suicide rate in the county is also worth highlighting. At 14.6% suicides per 100,000, the county has the fifth highest rate of suicide in Ireland, well ahead of the national rate of 11.5 per 100,000.

### **10.2 Disability**

According to the 2011 census, the total population classed as having a “disability” in the county was 11,303 persons, which represents 13.1% of the county. Of this 11,303, 59.3% were children, which represents a higher proportion than the national average of 57.8% and a further 33% were aged 65 and over. 3,607 persons provided regular unpaid personal help to a friend or family member with a long-term illness, health problem or disability. 22.7% of these provided care for more than 6 hours a day.

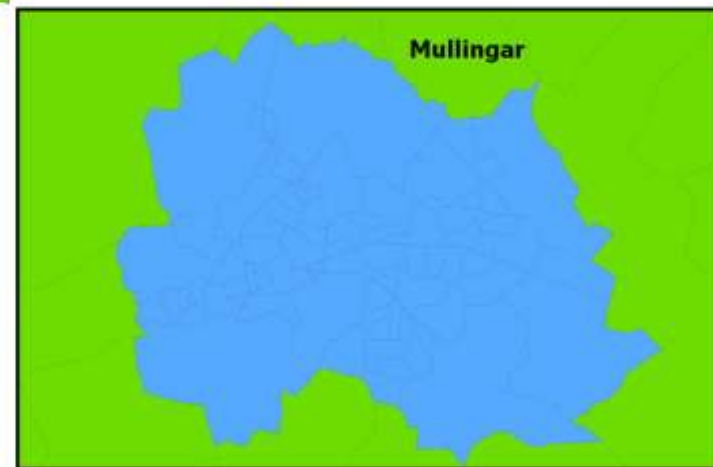
The 2011 census recorded that there were 2,329 persons with a disability in Athlone. Of this number, 61% were aged 45 -65 and over. In comparison, there was a higher rate of disability found

in Mullingar with 2,628 persons indicating that they had some degree of disability, 59% of which were aged 45-65 and over.

# Athlone, Mullingar and Rural Westmeath

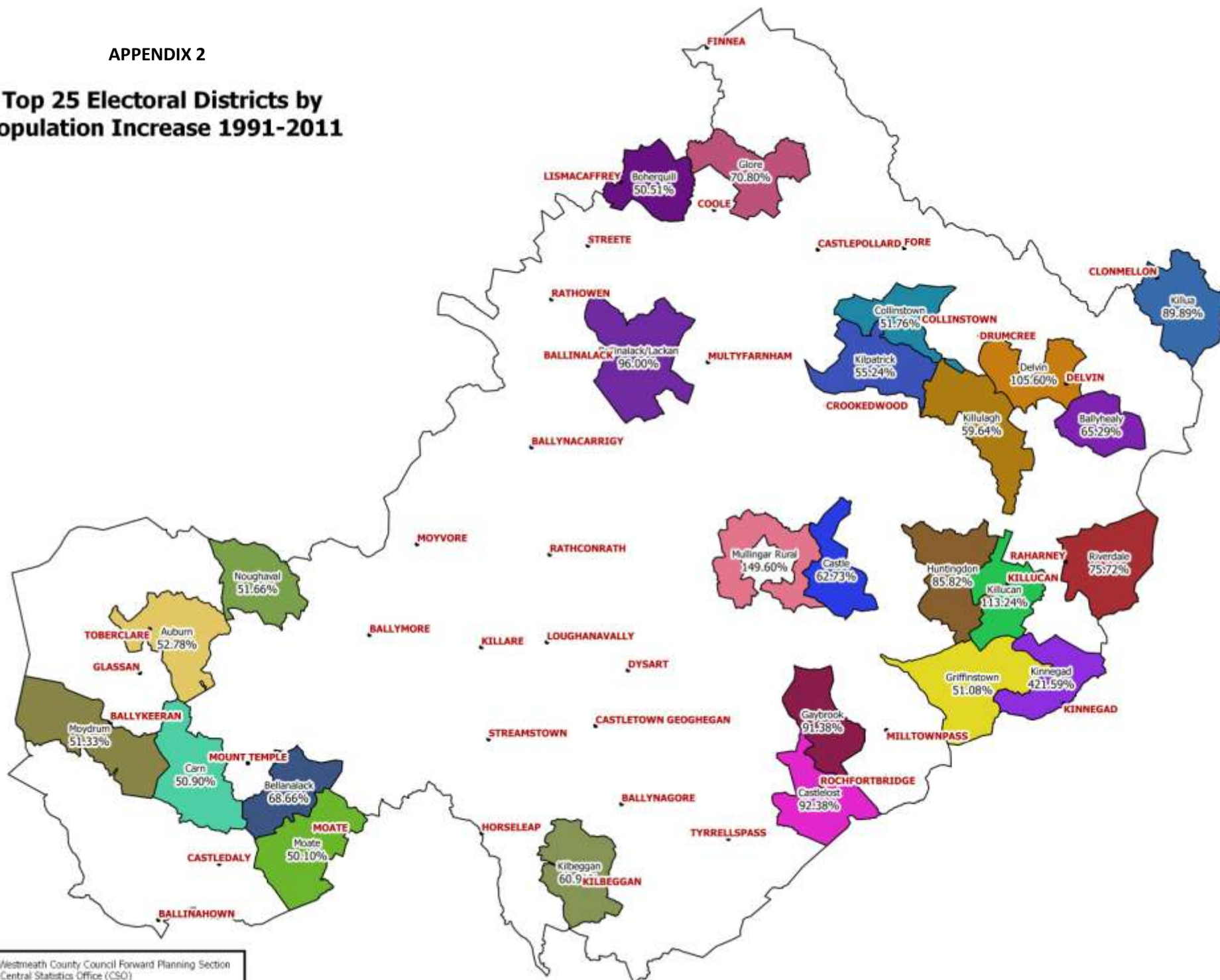


- Towns
- Rural
- Athlone
- Mullingar
- Small Areas



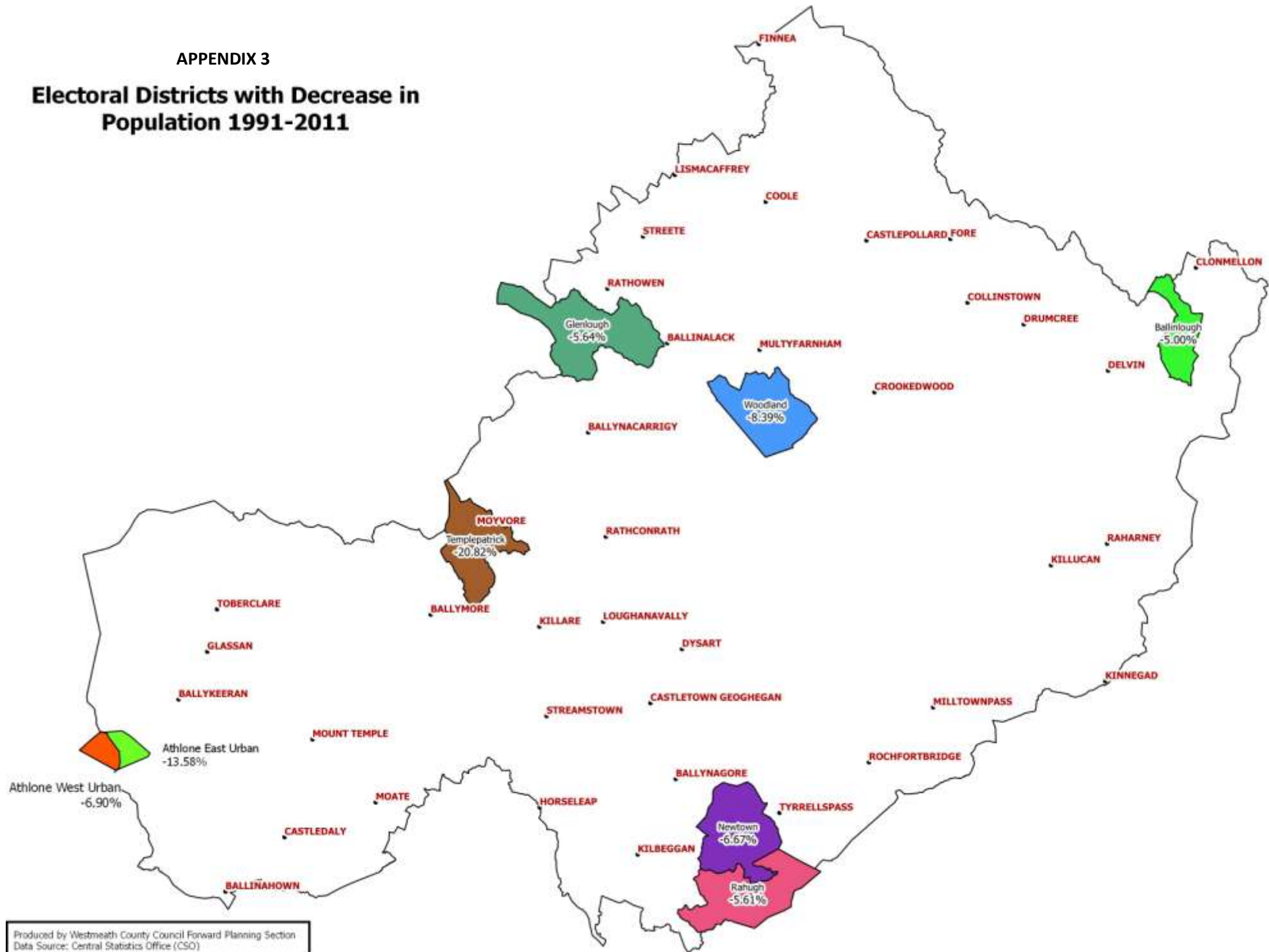
## APPENDIX 2

### Top 25 Electoral Districts by Population Increase 1991-2011

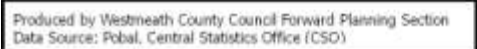


## APPENDIX 3

### Electoral Districts with Decrease in Population 1991-2011

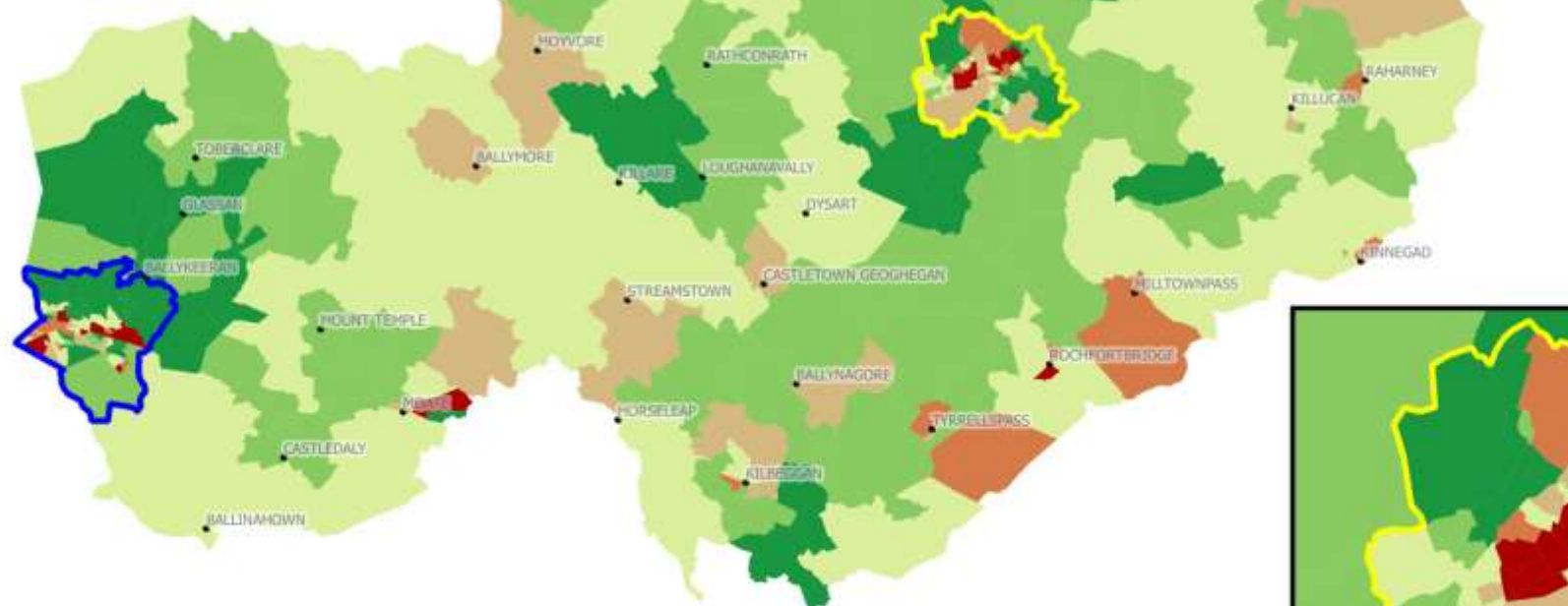
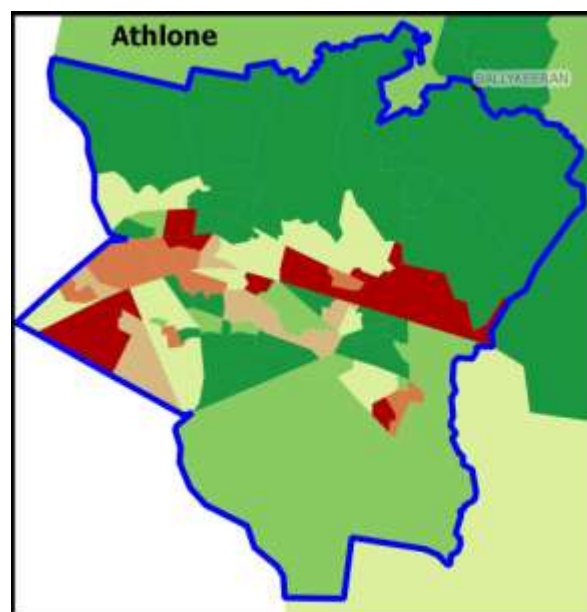


### Total Dependency Ratio 2011 by Small Area

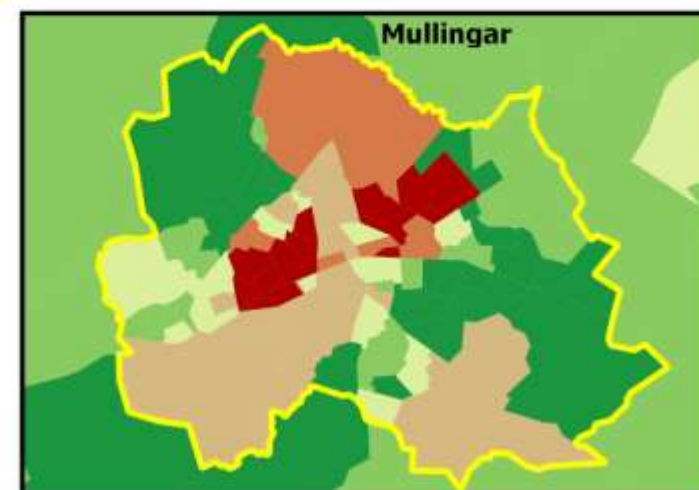


# APPENDIX 5

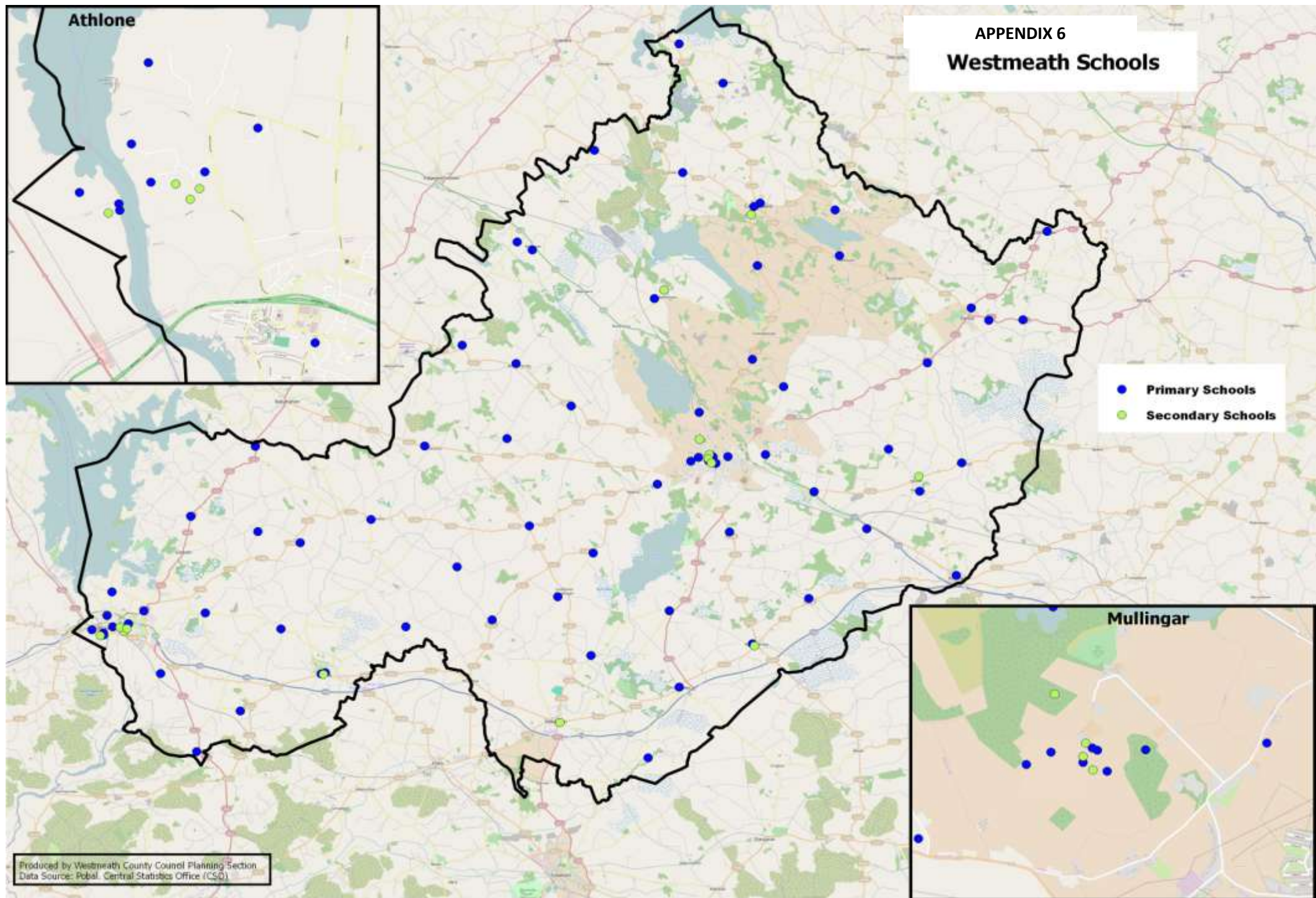
## 2011 Deprivation Score by Small Area



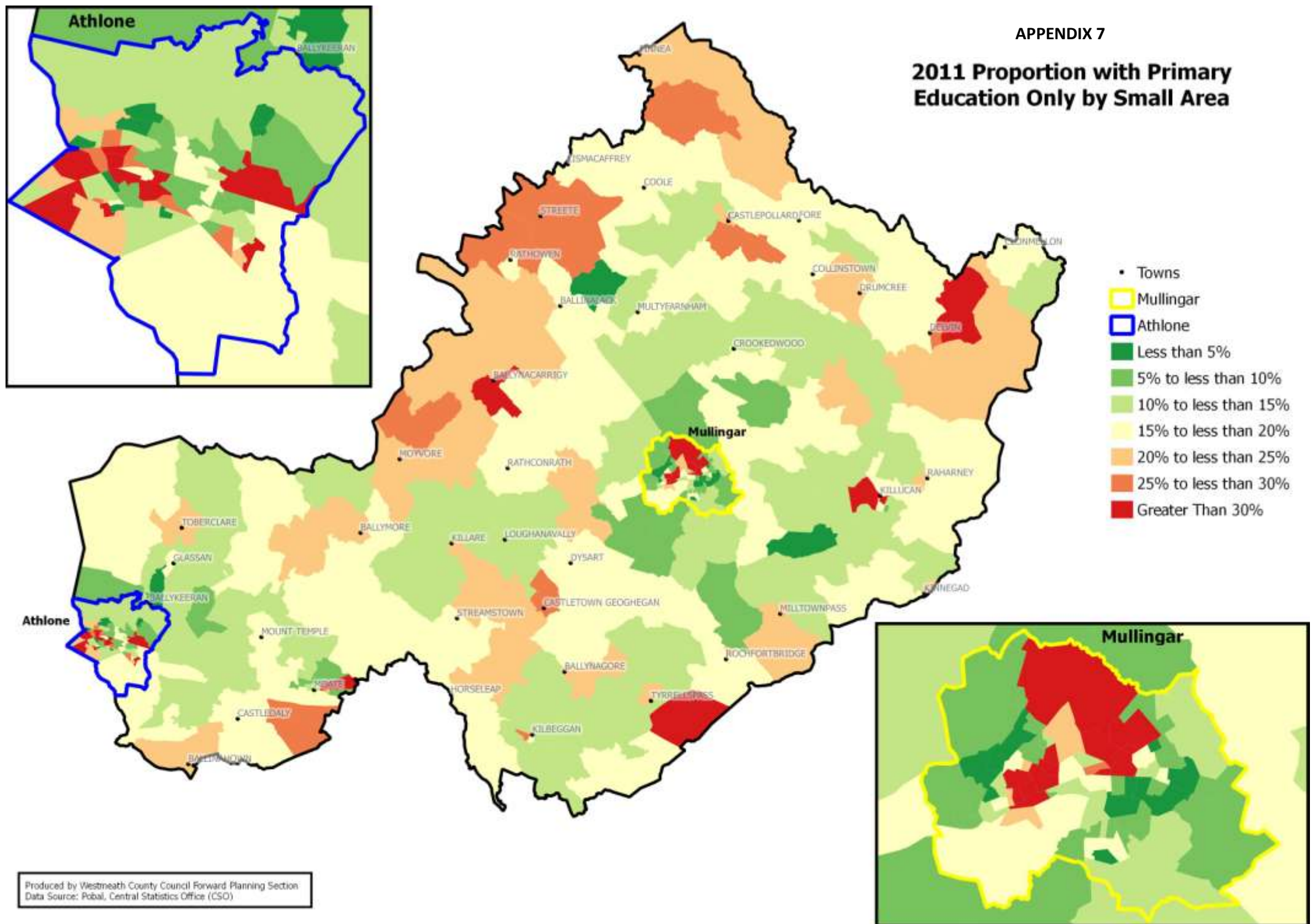
- Towns
- Mullingar
- Athlone
- Deprivation Score
- Greater than -15
- -15 to less than -10
- -10 to less than -5
- -5 to less than 0
- 0 to less than 5
- Greater than 5



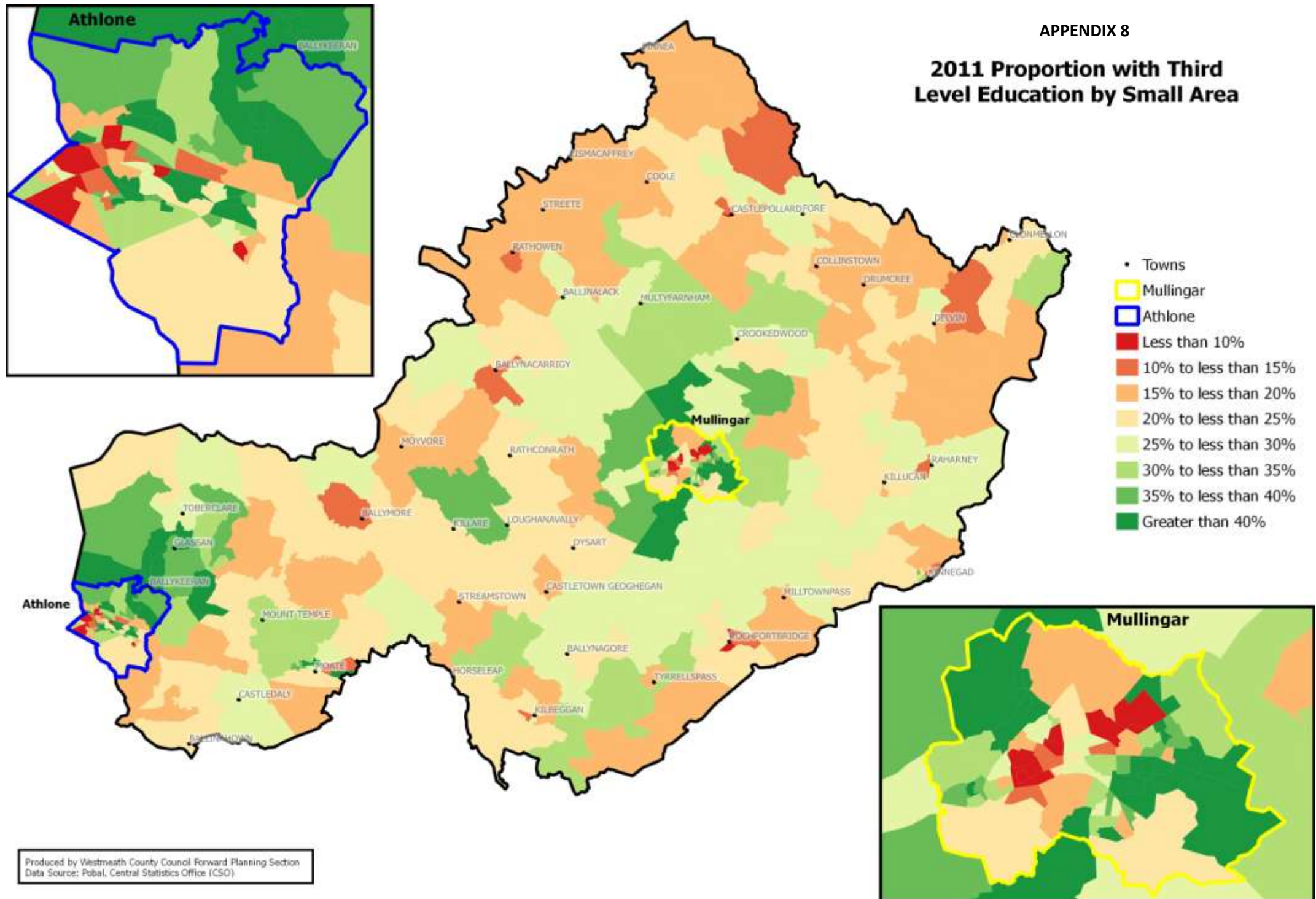
APPENDIX 6  
**Westmeath Schools**



### 2011 Proportion with Primary Education Only by Small Area



### 2011 Proportion with Third Level Education by Small Area

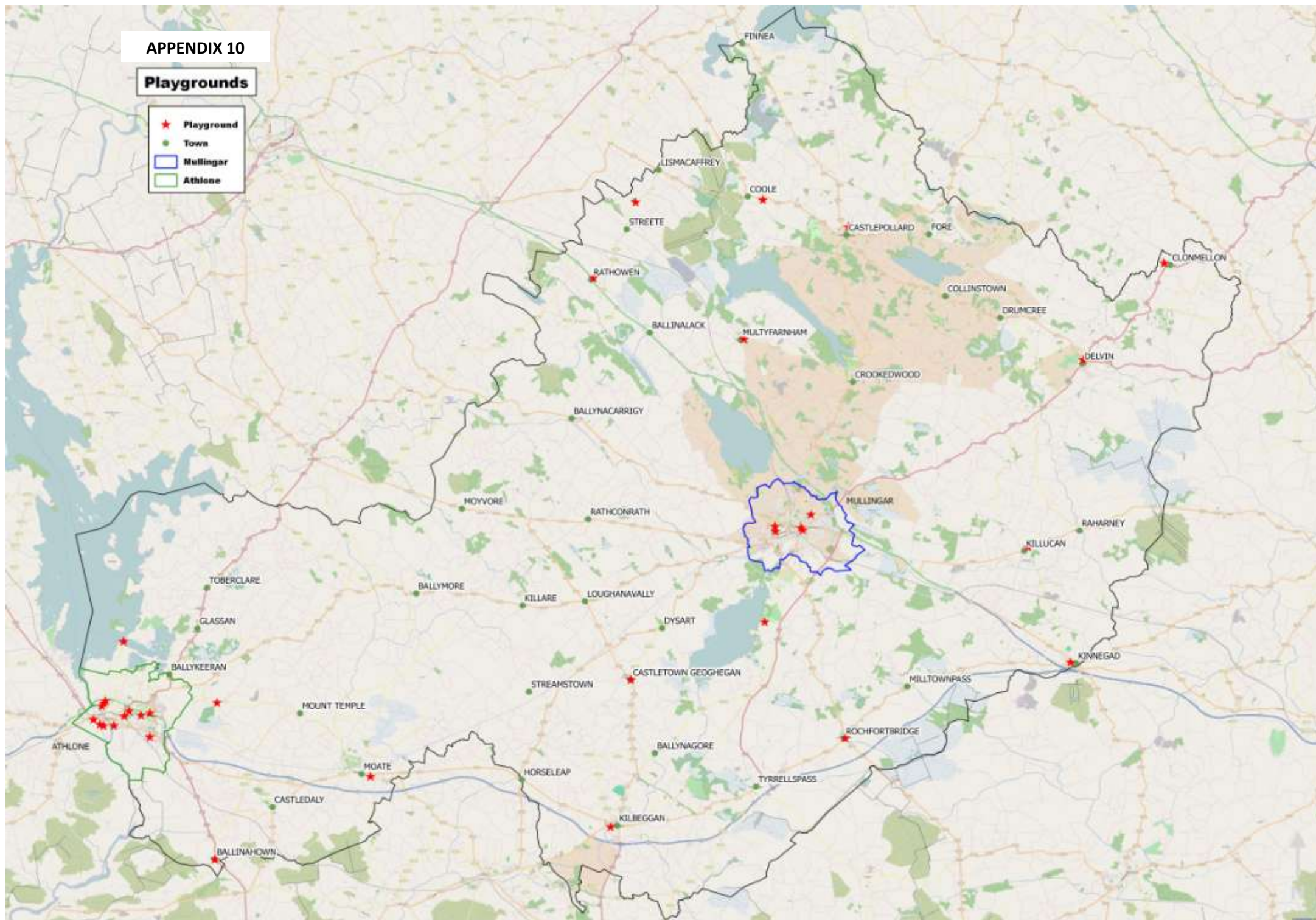


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## APPENDIX 10

### Playgrounds

- ★ Playground
- Town
- ▭ Mullingar
- ▭ Athlone



# Westmeath Childcare Providers 2014

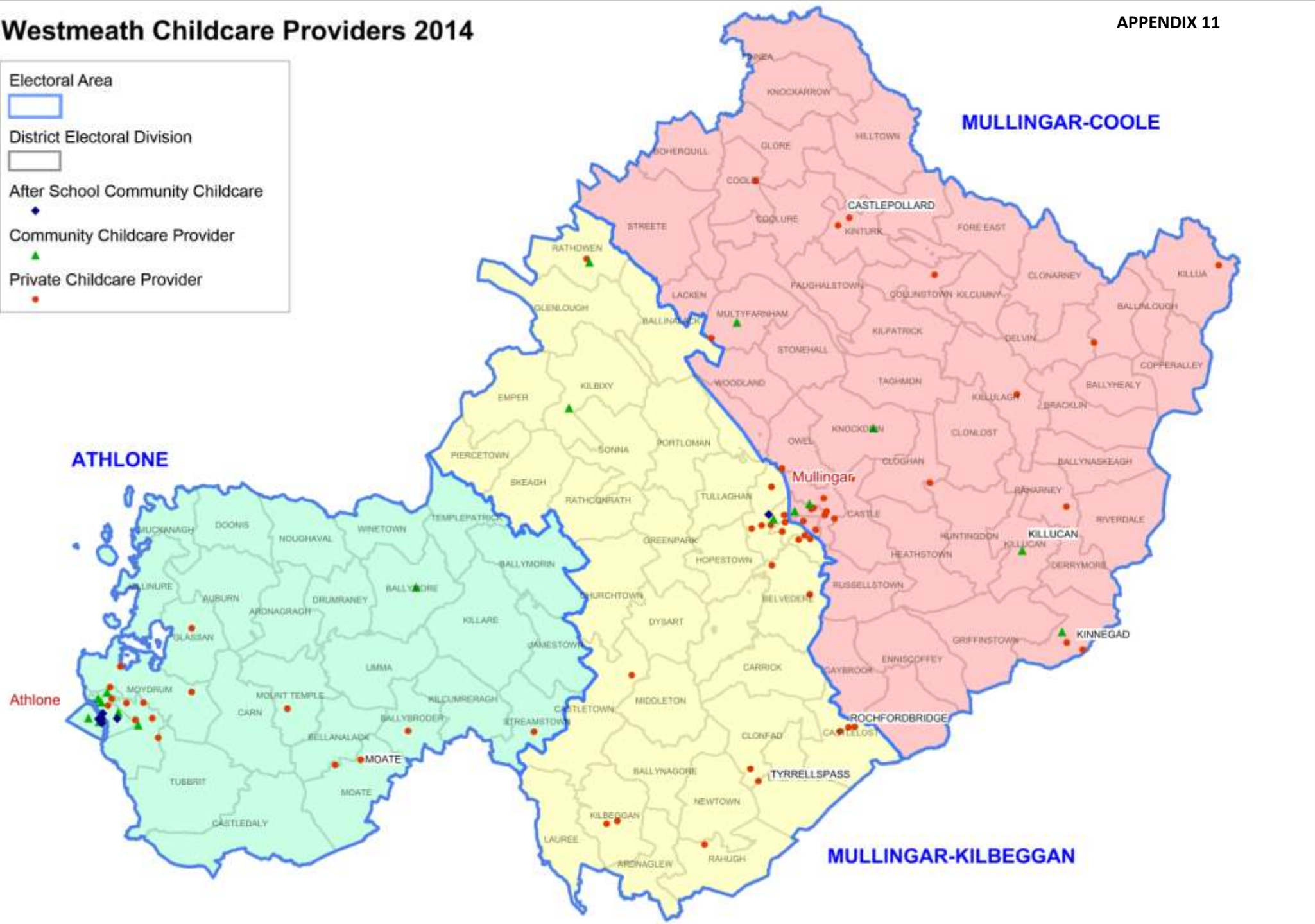
Electoral Area

District Electoral Division

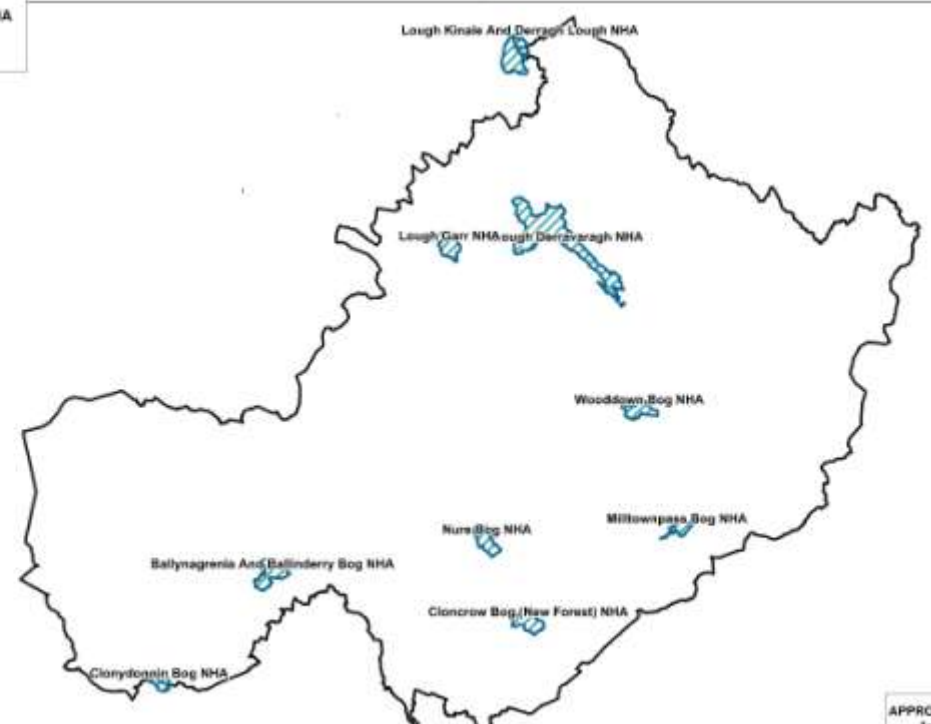
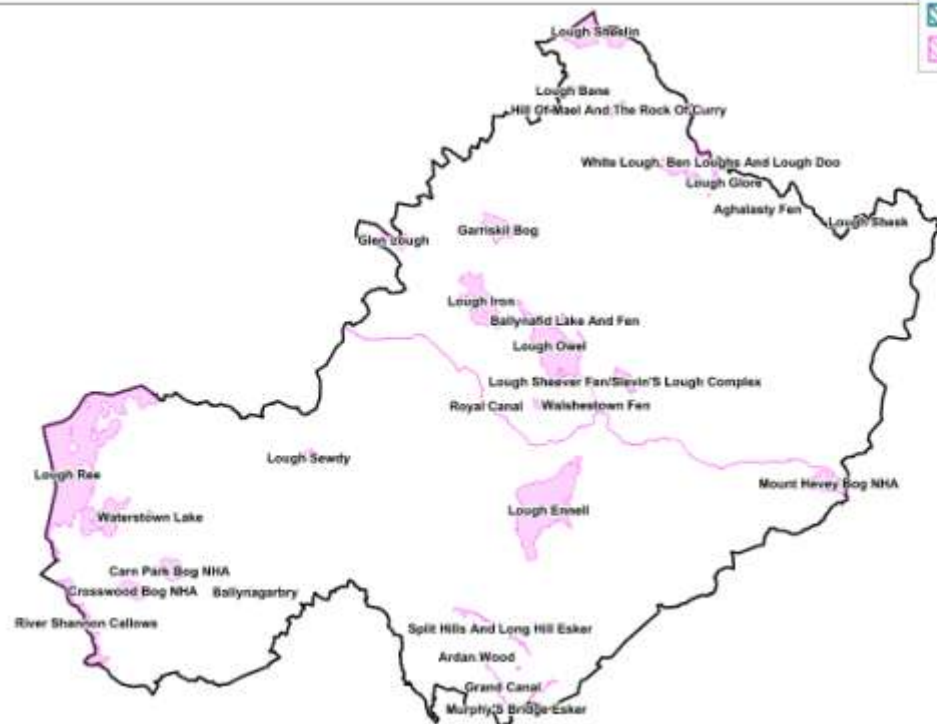
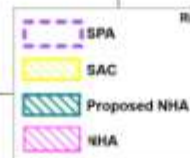
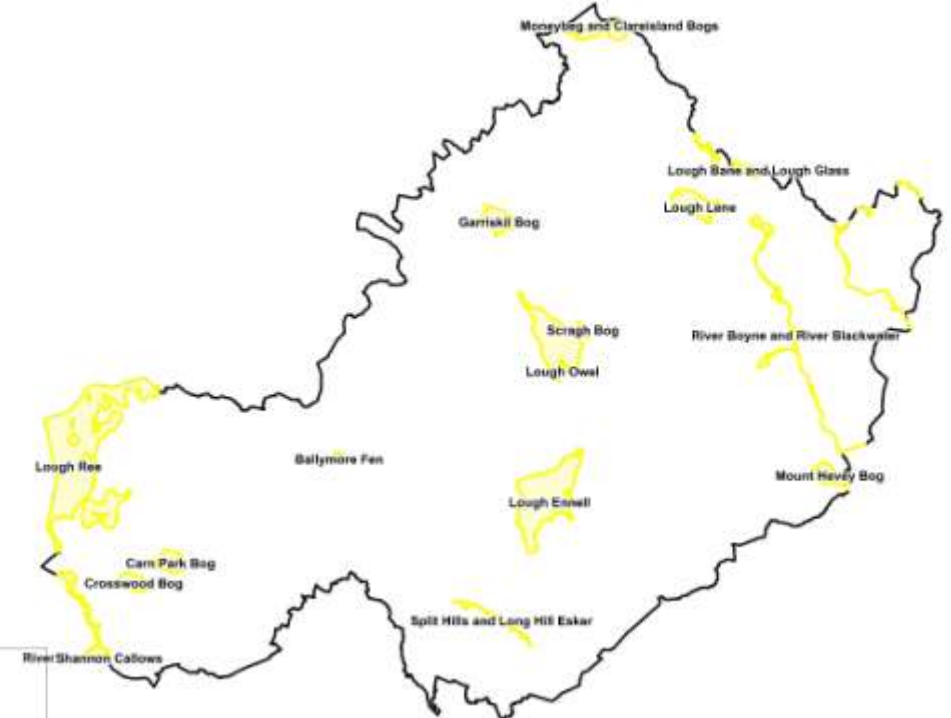
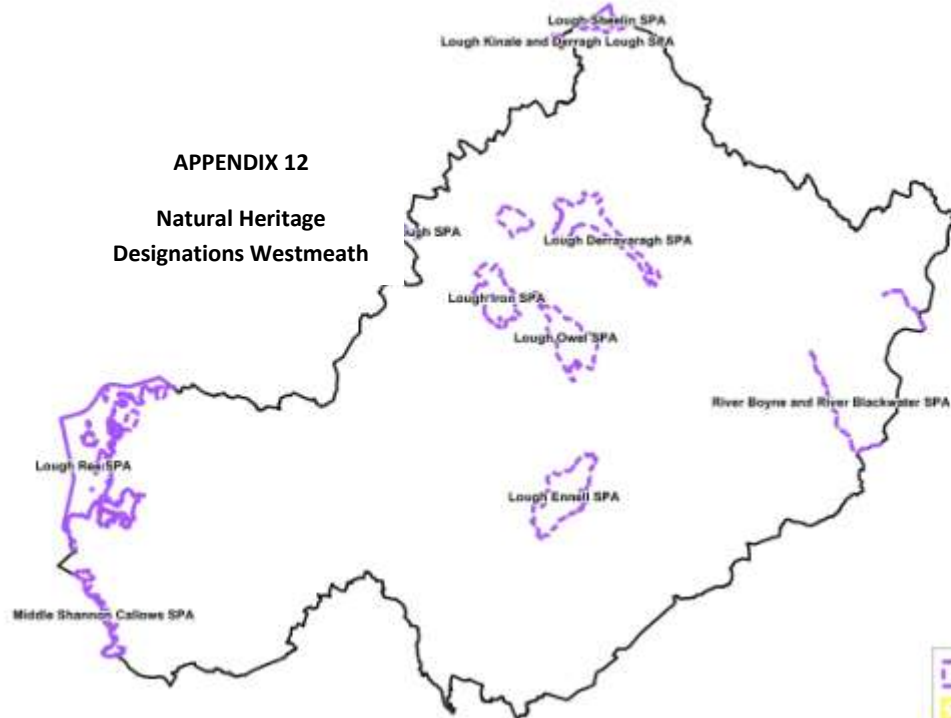
After School Community Childcare

Community Childcare Provider

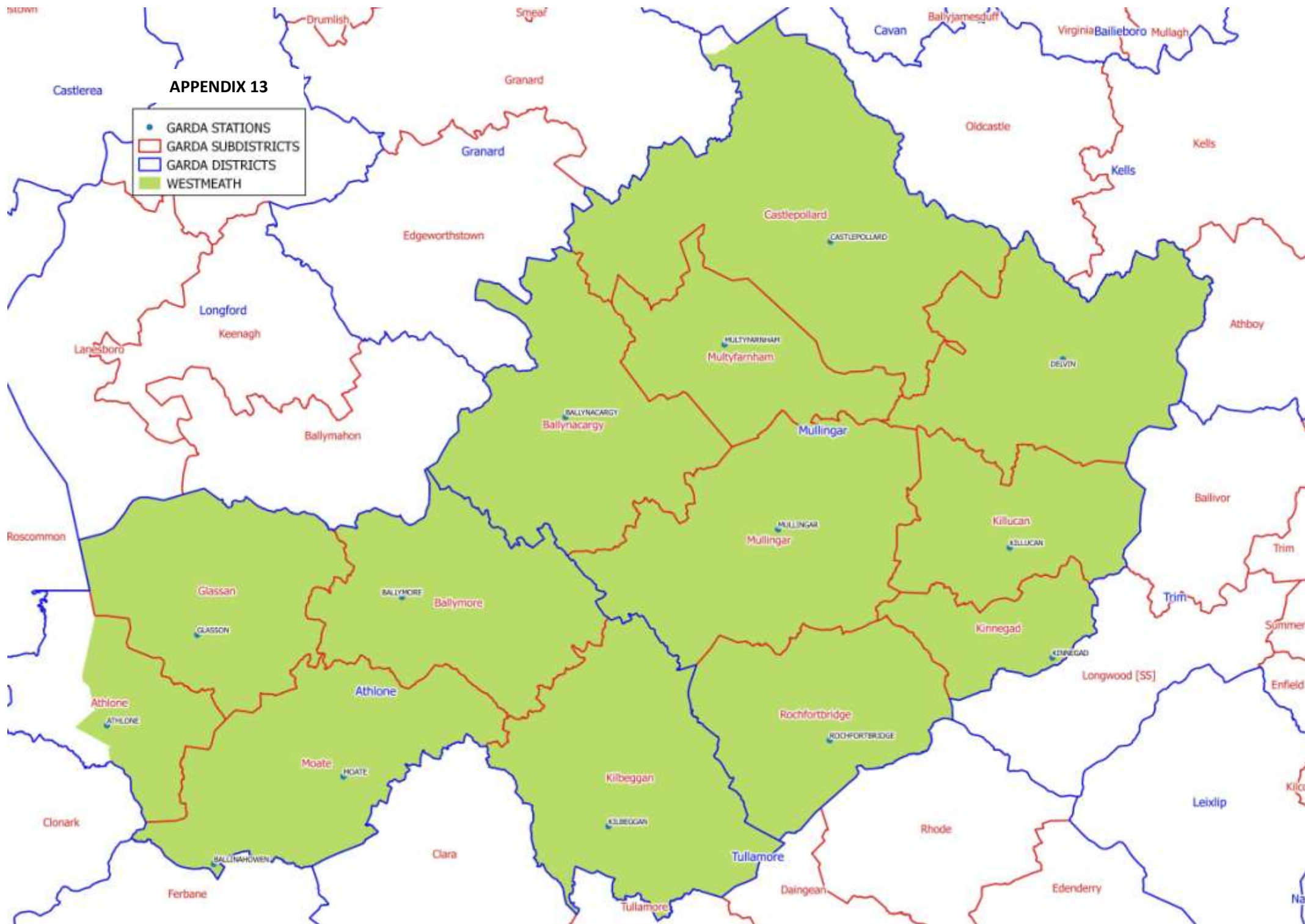
Private Childcare Provider



**APPENDIX 12**  
**Natural Heritage**  
**Designations Westmeath**



- GARDA STATIONS
- GARDA SUBDISTRICTS
- GARDA DISTRICTS
- WESTMEATH



# Appendices





Disadvantaged Disability Employment Enterprise Facilities Health and Wellbeing  
Education Networking Build Communities Sustainability Youth Tourism Information  
Inclusiveness Skills Database Environment Culture Transport Infrastructure Branding  
Volunteering Broadband

# Appendix 3 Summary Report on the Initial Public Consultation for the Local Economic and Community Plan for County Westmeath

September 2014

Poverty Housing Homelessness  
Safety Networking  
Diversification Isolation  
Childcare Rural Development  
Research and Development  
Investment De-population Food  
Competition Mental Health  
Influence Policy Village  
Enhancement D  
Universal A

## **A Summary Report on the Initial Public Consultation for the Local Economic and Community Plan for County Westmeath - Sep 2014**

### **Background**

As part of the preparation process of the Westmeath Local Economic and Community Plan, the Local Community Development Committee and Westmeath County Council conducted an initial public consultation process. The primary purpose of this consultation was to assist in identifying the needs and priorities for economic and community development of the county.

The initial consultation consisted of seeking submissions and observations by way of public advertisement in the local press, further information on the Councils website, and facilitated workshops. The local press advertisements were published in early July 2014. A facilitated workshop with the Public Participation Network was held on 16<sup>th</sup> July and a consultation workshop with stakeholder organisations was held on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2014. Both workshops were well attended given the time of year with a total of 35 participants, representing 20 stakeholder organisations, attending the July 23rd workshop.

In addition, all stakeholder organisations were asked to complete a questionnaire outlining the key needs for the county under the Economic and Community headings. This allowed those organisations not in attendance at the workshops to provide input. So far some 33 organisations/groups have submitted completed questionnaires. The opinions, views and ideas set out in the written submissions and expressed and recorded at the Stakeholders Consultation workshops related to a range of aspects of Economic and Community development in the county.

### **Observations and Submissions received**

A summary of the content of the submissions, questionnaires responses, and workshops output, are outlined in this document. This is followed by the opinions and conclusion of the LECP Steering Group on the principal issues identified in the initial consultation process. The content of this document is as follows:

<b>SECTION</b>	<b>RESPONSE</b>	<b>NO.</b>
One	Summary of Questionnaire responses	26 groups
Two	Submissions from the Newspaper	7 groups
Three	Consultation Workshop with PPN	12 Reps
Four	Consultation Workshop with Statutory and non- Statutory Stakeholder organisations	35 Reps
Five	Narrative Conclusion and Recommendation: Advisory Steering Group's opinion on issues raised	

### **Acknowledgement**

The Council and the Local Economic and Community Development Committee wishes to express its appreciation to those who made submissions and/or attended the Stakeholders Consultation meetings. The issues raised in the submissions and observations will inform the priorities and goals for inclusion in the preparation of the draft LECP plan.

## **Section One-**

### **Summary of the questionnaire responses**

**Submission No:** LECP PD001

**Name:** Mullaghmeen Country Enterprises Ltd Network

**Date Received:** 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2014

#### **Summary of Submission:**

##### **Economic:**

1. Tourism, Food Sector, Science, Engineering, Employment, Agriculture- Diversification

##### **Community:**

1. Cultural Needs
2. Climate Change – increased rainfall-Flooding –requires Research & Development
3. Youth

**Submission No:** LECP PD002

**Name:** Athlone Community Services Council

**Date Received:** 21<sup>st</sup> July 2014

#### **Summary of Submission:**

##### **Economic:**

1. Training to promote employment and recruitment Services
2. Transport Development
3. Energy Efficiency
4. Promote and support existing enterprises
5. Promote enterprise awareness and culture/link with other groups to improve services

##### **Community:**

1. A realistic evaluation of the extent of domestic violence and its impact on the victims and their community
2. A process of building on the wants and needs of local communities' from the bottom up rather than the top down.
3. Harness the skills available in the community to build a more supportive and inclusive community.
4. Document the level of suffering, poverty and poor mental health in the community.
5. People with appropriate skills to carry out appropriate tasks. De-bunk the myth of "we are professional, you're only a volunteer".

**Submission No:** LECP PD003  
**Name:** An Taisce  
**Date Received:** 17<sup>th</sup> July 2014

**Summary of submission:**

**Economic:**

1. Employment/Job creation
2. Rural Poverty
3. Real -Sustainability
4. Renewable Energy
5. Greater Self Sufficiency
6. Social Cohesion
7. Communications
8. Infrastructure

**Community:**

1. Rural - Social Isolation
2. De-Population reversal
3. Services
4. Communications
5. Withdrawal of key Services – reversed
6. Sustainability
7. Human Wellbeing

**Submission No:** LECP PD004  
**Name:** Athlone Community Taskforce  
**Date Received:** 17<sup>th</sup> July 2014

**Summary of submission:**

**Economic:**

1. Development of programmes to learn entrepreneurial skills and encourage entrepreneurship
2. High speed Broadband Services
3. Office/unit space at low cost for start up business
4. Mentoring services for specific areas
5. Programmes for Employment Law, Health & Safety

**Community:**

1. Access to financial community based programmes
2. All agencies to work in partnership with the community to identify and support programmes.

**Submission No:** LECP PD005

**Name:** Independent People with Disabilities Ltd

**Date Received:** 30<sup>th</sup> July 2014

**Summary of submission:**

**Community:**

1. Bus Service to new Health Centre in Athlone
2. Public Park in Athlone to be upgraded- footpaths to be replaced and more playground areas for young children
3. Extra seating on the strand (in Athlone)
4. Public footpaths to be upgraded with proper ramps on them in Athlone and Mullingar towns
5. Manhole covers to be replaced on footpaths in Athlone and Mullingar towns
6. Bus shelters to be provided for town services in particular for the Health Centre and the resource centre in Athlone
7. Pedestrian crossing to be installed outside Behan's fruit & veg shop in Irishtown, Athlone
8. The Disability Housing Adaptations grant be increased back to their original levels and that more money be given from the department for 2014, as money already allocated has been spent
9. Shelters be provided for the homeless in Athlone and Mullingar towns
10. That the grant coming from the department of the Environment for housing adaptation for people with Disabilities be increased by 75% to make up for the loss over the last four years
11. That the grant for people accessing rented accommodation be increased by 25% and also the threshold for people being allowed rent allowance be increased by 25%
12. That more space is provided for tapes in our libraries and that a better exchange of tapes between the libraries is available and extra funding to be made available to purchase up to date tapes (new tapes) as people with disabilities and the older person make a fairly large demand on our libraries for these tapes".

**Submission No:** LECP PD006

**Name:** Leo – Local Enterprise Office Ltd

**Date Received:** 16<sup>th</sup> July 2014

**Summary of submission:**

**Economic:**

1. To bring a coherent approach to economic development planning from state funded agencies
2. To ensure that Westmeath maximises it's potential in leveraging funding for both economic and community development

**Community:**

1. To bring a coherent approach to community development planning from state funded agencies

**Submission No:** LECP PD007

**Name:** Citizens Information

**Date Received:** 14<sup>th</sup> July 2014

**Summary of submission:**

**Economic:**

1. Improve access to and uptake of social, community and family supports in order to build healthy communities; improving participation and inclusion in designated communities

**Community:**

1. All agencies to work in partnership with the community to identify and support programmes.
2. Age Friendly Initiative for Co. Westmeath

**Submission No:** LECP PD008

**Name:** Athlone Women's Network

**Date Received:** 15<sup>th</sup> July 2014

**Summary of submission:**

**Economic:**

1. Provide adequate supports for Women to take up part-time jobs
2. Provide training courses to improve Women's confidence
3. Support the development of the NEW indoor market initiative in Athlone

**Community:**

1. Ensure Women's Groups operating in Athlone are sustained & developed
2. Integration events supported & encouraged
3. Encourage more Women to get involved in decision making
4. Recognise the achievement of groups such as AWN in winning awards at National Level "Spar Community Award" Westmeath County Project

**Submission No:** LECP PD009

**Name:** Monsignor McCarthy Family Resource Centre

**Date Received:** 16<sup>th</sup> July 2014

**Summary of submission:**

**Economic:**

1. Routes to employment – skilled taster courses – relevant to job market
2. Follow-up supports & further entry opportunities after that
3. Build relationships with local businesses to fill low skilled positions at local level
4. Promote Tourism to include area such as Battery Heights (History)
5. Develop a Recycling Centre in the area
6. More places required through labour market schemes ie. CE, Gateway

**Community:**

1. Another premises urgently required for FRC to facilitate demand in services.
2. Sustain and develop the women's groups that operate in area.
3. Sustain and develop men's shed project to support disadvantaged men.
4. Platform where achievements are highlighted. Cathaoirleach Awards are good but needs to recognise achievements of groups.
5. Tots – new programmes. Kids need to be sustained and developed.

**Submission No:** LECP PD0010

**Name:** Foroige-GATEWAY Project

**Date Received:** 18<sup>th</sup> July 2014

**Summary of submission:**

**Economic:** None

**Community:**

1. Improve the Health & Wellbeing of children and Young People
2. Ensure Children and Young People Stay Safe
3. Enable Children and Young People to Enjoy and Achieve
4. Enable children and Young People to Make Positive Contributions

**Submission No:** LECP PD0011

**Name:** Barnardos Lir Youth and Family Project

**Date Received:** 18<sup>th</sup> July 2014

**Summary of submission:**

**Economic:**

1. Employment opportunities for local community
2. Opportunity to up-skill & retrain locally
3. Educational & training opportunities for older age groups
4. Increased training opportunities for early school leavers
5. Financial supports for start up companies

**Community:**

1. Universal youth service that's accessible to all
2. Danger of unfinished estates & lack of amenities
3. Activity spaces for teenagers such as skateboard parks etc
4. Sense of isolation within large communities particularly for lone parents

**Submission No:** LECP PD0012

**Name:** IDA

**Date Received:** 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2014

**Summary of submission:**

**Economic:**

1. Create jobs for the region and work with the existing enterprises to sustain their presence and support their growth.
2. Working closely with key stakeholders in the region, build a strong regional image and brand as a 'place for doing business' and look to the advantages of being part of the wider assembly and region to position the county more effectively for business generation – how does Westmeath contribute to this? This should highlight the quality of life available outside the Urban Centres
3. Work in close co-operation with EI to further develop the relationships between the EI supported supplier base and the FDI multinational
4. Work collaboratively to enhance support mechanisms for business start-ups and small enterprises
5. Work together to establish the county's differentiator both national and internationally and how that can be presented to potential investors, as part of the regional offering
6. Work together (EI, IDA, Solas Polymer First, AIT, Etc) to implement the national skills agenda and identify and address the current skill requirements of enterprises to support their growth
7. Implement the infrastructural requirements in water, energy, fibre broadband, access and (cost savings) required to support business to deliver, establish and develop appropriate property solutions to meet the needs of a range of enterprise clients.

**Community: None**

**Submission No:** LECP PD0013  
**Name:** Barnardos Athlone  
**Date Received:** 21<sup>st</sup> July 2014

**Summary of submission:**

**Economic:**

1. Opportunity to access employment
2. Ample Housing

**Community:**

1. Community Childcare Facilities to support with employment
2. Tackling anti-social behaviour
3. Encouraging and building Community spirit

**Submission No:** LECP PD0014  
**Name:** Westmeath Community Development Ltd  
**Date Received:** 21<sup>st</sup> July 2014

**Summary of submission:**

**Economic:**

1. Enterprise
2. Employment
3. Rural Development
4. Tourism
5. Environment and Infrastructure

**Community:**

1. Community Development
2. Environment and Infrastructure
3. Active Citizenship
4. Community Services
5. Education and Training

**Submission No:** LECP PD0017  
**Name:** Athlone Women's Forum  
**Date Received:** 1<sup>st</sup> August 2014

**Summary of submission:**

**Economic:**

1. Thriving Businesses
2. Diversified businesses
3. Start-up hubs
4. Must start making use of migrant talents and skills

**Community:**

1. Migrant Centre
2. Quota system
3. Funding of Migrant Community Groups
4. More migrant community groups
5. Appreciation of migrant effort in county

**Submission No:** LECP PD0018

**Name:** Pavee Point

**Date Received:** 31<sup>st</sup> July 2014

**Summary of submission:**

**Economic:**

1. Employment .....2011 census 84% of Travellers unemployed
2. Education.....55% of Travellers cease formal education at 15yrs of age

**Community:**

1. Traveller participation
2. Address Racism

**Submission No:** LECP PD0019

**Name:** Portlick Campsite Athlone

**Date Received:** 6<sup>th</sup> August 2014

**Summary of submission:**

**Economic:**

1. Generate local Employment
2. Market Research
3. Be aware of our sustained environment
4. Protect what is there and develop its use for the generation of income to sustain
5. Our facilities are open to all to enjoy. We offer concessions to those less well off

**Community:**

1. Address long-term-and short-term unemployment
2. Assess the potential to grow
3. Protection and awareness of our environment
4. Consultation and professional advice on what is the best strategy to adopt
5. Work with Youth groups and other community groups that foster the needs of the socially disadvantaged

**Submission No:** LECP PD0020

**Name:** BWM Regional Assembly- Midlands Region

**Date Received:** 16<sup>th</sup> July 2014

**Summary of submission:**

**Economic:**

1. Wider range of job opportunities

**Community:**

1. Wider range of job opportunities

**Submission No:** LECP PD0022

**Name:** **Bord na Mona**

**Date Received:** 18<sup>th</sup> July 2014

**Summary of submission:**

**Economic:**

Bord na Mona had developed a Land Review System (LURS) which provides a dynamic framework to assess the future potential uses of its cutaway peatlands. Further details of this as well as the complex issues that need to be considered in the context of future uses of cutaway bogs are outlined in the Strategic Framework document.

Cutaway peatlands can provide excellent sites for wind farms. In general terms, peatlands are flat and open with little or nothing to impede wind flows. In addition the isolated location of many peatlands away from population clusters enhances their suitability.

The peatlands in the Ballivor Group, Derrygreenagh Group and the Boora Group as outlined in the attached map present potential as sites for Wind Farms in the medium to long term and we would welcome a classification of these areas in the CDP as suitable for wind energy development. The LURS analysis also identified the peatlands in the Derrygreenagh Group as having potential for industry/infrastructure uses by virtue of their proximity to M6 motorway, gas pipeline and high tension electricity.

**Submission No:** LECP PD0023

**Name:** **Tusla**

**Date Received:** 5<sup>th</sup> August 2014

**Summary of submission:**

**Economic:**

1. Employment
2. Housing
3. Transport
4. Social Programmes

**Community:**

5. Youth Programmes
6. Safe Policing
7. Facilities
8. International Families
9. Homework Clubs or study groups.

**Submission No:** LECP PD0024

**Name:** **Athlone Institute of Technology**

**Date Received:** 20<sup>th</sup> August 2014

**Summary of submission:**

**Economic:**

10. Sustainable Jobs
11. Relevant Skills
12. Research, Development & Innovation
13. Regional Collaboration

**Community:**

14. Community Infrastructure
15. Community Employment
16. Community Engagement
17. Quality of Life & Environment

**Submission No:** LECP PD0025

**Name:** **Mullingar Credit Union**

**Date Received:** 21<sup>st</sup> August 2014

**Summary of submission:**

**Economic:**

1. Increase employment opportunities
2. Up skilling redundant workers
3. Competition

**Community:**

1. Enhancement of localities
2. Outdoor Play park/ new modern swimming pool/facilities
3. Teen/late teen facilities – not sport related for those not into sports
4. Increased hours for home-carers

**Submission No:** LECP PD0026

**Name:** **Health Service Executive - HSE**

**Date Received:** 25<sup>th</sup> August 2014

**Summary of submission:**

**Economic:**

1. Joined up thinking
2. Inward Investment
3. Promote Midlands as an attractive place to live and rear a family
4. Examples of best practice

**Community:**

1. Empowerment
2. Encouragement of volunteerism
3. Funding

**Submission No:** LECP PD0027

**Name:** Irish Farmers Association

**Date Received:** 25<sup>th</sup> August 2014

**Summary of submission:**

**Economic:**

1. To promote the Agri-industry, enterprise and tourism in the County
2. Better Rural Transport system
3. Rural Broadband, better mobile phone coverage
4. Reduce development charges on one off housing
5. Development of Natural resources i.e. forest products

**Community:**

1. Local services
2. Rural isolation
3. New medical equipment
4. Re- opening of Post Offices, Garda Stations & a proper Fire service more presence of Garda in Rural areas – Day and Night
5. Community Alert system improvement

**Submission No:** LECP PD0028

**Name:** Congress of Trade Unions - ICTU

**Date Received:** 27<sup>th</sup> August 2014

**Summary of submission:**

**Economic:**

1. Development

**Community:**

1. Social Cohesion

**Submission No:** LECP PD0033

**Name:** Westmeath County Childcare

**Date Received:** 21<sup>st</sup> July 2014

**Summary of submission:**

**Economic:**

- None

**Community:**

- To develop comprehensive childcare supports, infrastructure and services where the holistic well-being of children and families are fundamental for County Westmeath.
- To enhance quality early childhood education and care and school-age provision for County Westmeath.
- To consolidate investment in the sector in order to support the continuing development of a stable, integrated and sustainable infrastructure that will help with social and economic development of the County.

- Through ongoing professional development, to build on the capacity of the ECCE sector to enhance and develop quality services for children and their families
- To ensure effective and transparent collaboration, communication and consultation and optimum use of resources by all stakeholders in early childhood care and education in County Westmeath.

**Submission No:** LECP PD0034

**Name:** Moate Business College

**Date Received:** 29<sup>th</sup> September 2014

**Summary of Submission:**

**Economic:**

- Education and skills training to match the needs of local, national and international employers
- A model for Educational attainment of the wider community.
- Strengthen and develop the local economy and community.

**Community:**

- Advancing the educational, cultural, social and economic development of the wider community.

## Section Two-

### Submissions from the Newspaper Advertisements

**Submission No:** LECP PD0015

**Name:** Mr. Peter Hogan

**Date Received:** 14<sup>th</sup> July 2014

#### Summary of submission:

- Interested in the opening of the new cycle path between Mullingar and Athlone. Volunteered services for any works involved in this very worthwhile project. As I live in Athlone it would be advantageous for me to begin any reclamation works from the Athlone end on the old railway line.

**Submission No:** LECP PD0016

**Name:** Brawney Women's Group Athlone

**Date Received:** 18<sup>th</sup> July 2014

#### Summary of submission:

##### Economic:

1. Access to part-time training and employment opportunities for Women
2. Appropriate childcare facilities with more places
3. Lack of transport in Brawny, people have to pay for taxis, hard on low income families

##### Community:

1. People waiting too long to get houses, the process should be speeded up, people too long waiting on keys once house approved
2. New Women's group established in area by WCD to help women. This group is a lifeline for many women. This group needs to continue and supports from WCD need to continue.
3. Residents group would benefit from support
4. Need for all agencies in Brawny to work together for betterment of area. This is starting to happen and needs to continue.

**Submission No:** LECP PD0021

**Name:** New Horizon Asylum Seekers Support Group

**Date Received:** 31<sup>st</sup> July 2014

#### Summary of submission:

1. A ONE STOP INFORMATION SHOP
2. EMPLOYMENT
3. RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT
4. POVERTY / SOCIAL EXCLUSION

**Submission No:** LECP PD0029

**Name:** Westmeath Environmental Group

**Date Received:** 5<sup>th</sup> August 2014

**Summary of submission:**

**Economic:**

1. Employment
2. Develop Farmers Markets
3. Farm Tourism Development

**Community:**

1. Encourage and Evaluate Ideas from the Community
2. Networking
3. Reach out to Communities for input and ideas.

**Submission No:** LECP PD0030

**Name:** RENEW Kilbeggan

**Date Received:** 17<sup>th</sup> July 2014

**Summary of submission:**

**Economic:**

1. Develop Kilbeggan as a Brand
2. Promote Enterprise

**Community:**

1. Strengthen Physical Environment
2. Build on existing Activities and Attractions
3. Drive Community Development

**Submission No:** LECP PD0031

**Name:** Westmeath Community Development Ltd

**Date Received:** 31<sup>st</sup> July 2014

**LECP Priority:** To enhance the quality of life and well-being of communities, including measures aimed at tackling poverty, disadvantage and social inclusion; supporting training, up-skilling and employment creation; and the provision of infrastructure and community facilities

**Submission No:** LECP PD0032

**Name:** Mr. Des Walsh

**Date Received:** 31<sup>st</sup> July 2014

**Summary of submission:**

**Economic:**

- Broadband
- Tourism

**Community:**

- Increase the involvement of the Community in the plan

**Submission No: LECP PD0033**

**Name: Pavée Point Submission - Response to Advertisement**

**Date Received: 1<sup>st</sup> October 2014**

**Summary of Submission:**

- The need to prioritise Traveller and Roma inclusion and identify a number of actions which can make this possible.
- Need for equality proofing/social impact assessment of LECP and the implementation of community development principles.

Pavée Point Submission: Please see Submission. Appendix 1.

**Submission No: LECP PD0034**

**Name: Irelands Age Friendly - Response to Advertisement**

**Date Received: 18<sup>th</sup> September 2014**

**Summary of Submission:**

Age Friendly Submission: Please see submission Appendix 2.

The aim of the submission is to consider the incorporation of age friendliness, in terms of both the Irish programme and the Global movement as a cross cutting theme.

**Submission No: LECP PD0035**

**Name: Stepping Stones Pre-School/After School - Response to Advertisement**

**Date Received: 7<sup>th</sup> October 2014**

**Summary of Submission:**

- Need for a purpose built child care Community facility to cater for Rathowen and surrounding areas.

## **Section Three-**

**Consultation Workshop held on Wednesday the 16<sup>th</sup> July 2014**

### **The Interim Public Participation Network (PPN)**

#### **Economic:**

##### **Group 1 Rural:**

1. Rural areas not swallowed up by Municipal Authority
2. Rebuild & preserve the social structure
3. Water
4. Universal accessibility
5. Security, safety – peace of mind
6. Rural Isolation
7. Create employment to employ more 18 – 25 year olds.
8. Enterprise supports at County level

##### **Group 2 Mullingar Town:**

1. Employment
2. Environment
3. Transport
4. Tourism

##### **Group 3 Athlone Town:**

1. Tourism-need to further develop potential in Athlone and surrounding areas
2. Promote and develop indoor market initiative, helping very small micro traders i.e. crafts, cakes
3. Young People – not leave school early, no progression plans, fall through the system.
4. Part-time employment opportunities needed – especially for women & people with disabilities.
5. Enterprise Supports for long-term unemployed
6. Investment in Villages

#### **Community:**

##### **Group 1 Rural:**

1. Education - Free for all – creative education
2. Rural Transport
3. Access to Health Service
4. Renewal of Summer Scheme

##### **Group 2 Mullingar Town:**

1. Community
2. Poverty
3. Tourism
4. Business

**Group 3 Athlone Town:**

1. Community & Voluntary sector needs to be strengthened & voices heard.
  - Capacity building & getting people to engage
  - Recognition of volunteers\*
2. Young people at risk need early intervention supports; 9-10yrs
3. Comhairle na Nóg needs to work with more young people-Youth participation
4. Work with disadvantaged groups re: Women, Travellers, Roma, ethnic groups, people with disabilities – outreach work
5. Need for more staff employed to work with marginalised groups in Athlone

## Section Four-

Consultation Workshop held on Wednesday the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July

### Statutory and Non-Statutory organisations

#### Economic:

1. Broadband County Wide
2. Education/Training Database
3. Tourism Development
4. Employment
5. Encourage the development of small Businesses
6. Influence policy decisions
7. Policy decisions  $\implies$  3% disability employed @ Public and EU level, Need Policy for Private level – Government support and EU level
8. Identify sectors for Economic development
9. Develop government agency involvement in groups
10. One business and community platform is needed
11. Create job opportunities for those with a disability
12. Create a database where the skills needed are matched to the jobs
13. Increase the number of Community Services Projects
14. Social Enterprise at County Level
15. Culture Change
16. Affordable Childcare and extend the hours of Childcare facilities
17. Flexible working day/week – Work Life Balance
18. Environmental Cohesive Development
19. I.T. development
20. Town Initiatives – Parking/Late opening –Markets
21. Identify Key Stakeholders
22. Create a local and regional CEO forum to feed into local policy development
23. Start engaging with businesses to learn how to create business
24. Develop policy in conjunction with neighbouring counties
25. Enterprise Ireland and IDA to provide or open the channels to attract business developers to Westmeath
26. Co-ordinate – Group Discussions / Network – the Colleges, the Schools, the IDA, Enterprise Ireland, LEO, LEADER and the potential end user- who will do this?  
Answer = The LCDC
27. Have a plan of Competitiveness  $\rightarrow$  Make all the players AWARE therefore All work together towards an end goal.
28. The provision of necessary Services to attract New Business e.g. Well equipped facilities i.e. property to house new businesses  $\rightarrow$  Turn Key solutions  $\rightarrow$  Broadband especially in Rural Communities.
29. Marketing
30. Strong Business employers group to do consultation involvement  $\rightarrow$  Needs identified by employers'  $\leftrightarrow$  Education and Training system meet this.
31. Branding and Advertising

32. Agencies highly dependent on department of Social Protection Scheme ↔ Break the cycle of not wanting Education and Training
33. Work experience programme developed more ↔ Education and Training at a lower level. Transition year BCDL
34. Proper Career guidance both in schools and mainstream ↔ Link students / Public to jobs/ Courses of interest rather than forced training
35. Niche employment sectors such as software, technology, I.T. and medical/pharmacy and invest in structural community programmes promoting well being and engagement & employment in the Community
36. Local training with ETB and Solas for Training. ↔ From Primary level school exposed to self employment and entrepreneurship

## Community:

1. Investment in Pre-Development Work and Outreach Work
2. Supports for Volunteers e.g. Training, Recognition, Financial Rewards, Support the agencies supporting Volunteers, Be more volunteer led.
3. Reward Volunteerism →? ( Not agreed by all groups)
4. Change of Attitude → Consultation should always be at ground level, not just expert group.
5. Develop a mechanism for educating Communities about applying for and knowledge of funding, grants and resources available
6. Increase the networking /Co-operation between all the community organisations
7. Barriers to Community groups to access funding or carry out certain events need to be lessened.
8. Rural Transport
9. Community Facilities
10. Resources and Expertise to tap into it.
11. Volunteering –Build on it
12. Promotes Opportunities for people to change – Work More – Warmer/Caring Environment
13. Diversity
14. Flexibility and Willingness to adapt
15. Community Education
16. Voice of the Community
17. Sports facilities
18. Job Creation – Rural Enterprise
19. BROADBAND
20. Networking – Deliveries or Collections
21. Information & Access to Services
22. Rural Transport (2)
23. Awareness Education appropriate to an area → Education and Training Community (2)
24. Rural Development Programmes → Funding
25. Recreational activities → Supports → Grant Aid
26. Provision of Health Services → GP Services → Recruitment of GP's into Rural Areas (2)
27. De-Population of Rural Areas

28. Local Services Disseminated
29. Business Tourism for Rural Areas
30. Access to Services Investigate potential social enterprises particularly in Rural areas
31. Funding needed
32. Infrastructure in place, utilise more
33. Expanding CIC services ( Citizens Information)
34. Better use of facilities available
35. Networking
36. Mapping exercise to get a thorough understanding of what services are out there so that a partnership model can be fostered to deliver into the Community
37. More Co-operation and working between voluntary organisations and statutory bodies
38. Update contact directory for Community Groups ↔ Transparent and viable information ↔ training Support
39. Playground and Sports facilities → Suitable and Appropriate Housing → Address unoccupied houses → Active Community Groups
40. Road Safety → Cycling → Walking → Community Pride
41. Improved Recreational Facilities
42. Temperature check for the Community – knowing what's @ the heart of Community (Issues,) promote mindfulness in support of Community Well being
43. Involvement of Community Gardai in Local Communities i.e. Empower the Community ↔ Find out what is impacting on your Community's well-being. Talk to the people
44. More focused targeted services to those disadvantaged areas of families → Twinning of Urban and Rural areas-Exchange of resources and ideas (Pilot)
45. Active Involvement of Community
46. Sustainability for Communities after the funding is gone

## Section Five-

### Narrative Conclusion and Recommendation:

#### Advisory Steering Group's Opinion on Issues Raised

The following is a synopsis of the main issues raised during the consultation process, which will provide the building blocks for the socio-economic framework. These will also inform Stage 2 of the process to develop the Economic and Community Elements of the Local Economic and Community Plan for Westmeath. This summary is provided as a quick guide to the consultation process and all submissions will be considered further during the preparation of the Plan. Submissions were wide and varied and here you are presented with a flavour of those received. In the footnotes are references to high level documents that are being considered as part of this consultation process as set down in the guidelines by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government.

*"The State recognises the role of local government in providing a forum for the democratic representation of local communities, in exercising and performing at local level powers and functions conferred by law and in promoting by its initiatives the interests of such communities."*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bunreacht na hÉireann art.28a

## Theme 1: Employment and Economic Activity <sup>2</sup>

### <sup>3</sup>Economic Development

*“to maximise the continued, sustainable and balanced economic development of our county.”*

There certainly is great awareness among the high level stakeholders that jobs and the creation of jobs are of high priority. There is a need to up-skill redundant workers and to create a wider range of job opportunities. To achieve this, investment in rural villages to create enterprise hubs is necessary.

There is a desire to influence policy decisions but in particular a need for policy at private sector level to equate with the public sector, where there is an embargo in place that at least 3% of all staff employed has a disability.

Also the present condition of premises for both enterprise and community activities featured highly. The impression is that our community facilities are not up to the standard required for the needs in the community and therefore require substantial investment. In contrast the enterprise units available for start up enterprise fall short of the modern fixtures and fittings required to attract progressive entrepreneurs to the county and encourage the inventors and entrepreneurs at present to stay and maintain and/or set up their business within the county.

In addition Tourism and Rural Development featured often within the submissions. There is great enthusiasm for building on the great natural attractions already in place (e.g. Bogs, Waterways, Agriculture, Food, Equine etc.) the marketing of these abroad is a consideration for the LECP as there are many competitors in other parts of the country and Westmeath needs to have something different to offer but complementary.

In addition there is a proposal to promote competitiveness and to develop a competition plan for the County. A unique brand for Westmeath needs to be developed followed by the marketing of same as an action for the LECP.

Also highlighted strongly was the need to implement the infrastructural requirements in water, energy, fibre broadband, access and the cost savings required to support business to deliver, establish and develop appropriate property solutions to meet the needs of a range of enterprise clients.

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<sup>2</sup>Progress towards National Europe 2020 Targets.

#### Target 1 - Employment

Ireland's Headline Target: To raise to 69-71% the employment rate for women and men aged 20-64, including through the greater participation of young people, older workers and low-skilled workers, and the better integration of legal migrants, and to review the target level of ambition in 2014, in the context of a proposed mid-term review of the Europe 2020 Strategy. **National Reform Programme 2014 at page 7**

<sup>3</sup> Westmeath County Council Corporate Plan 2010 – 2014 page 9

## Theme 2: Education, Training and Skills

### <sup>4</sup> Education

*“To reduce the percentage of 18-24 year olds with at most lower secondary education and not in further education and training to 8%.”*

Throughout the submissions education featured as the basis for all actions going forward. There is a great belief that joining up forces with the education providers, the enterprise promoters, the community and the CEO's of businesses in and bordering the county to come together to form links through a prescribed network to develop training courses to match the employment needs of businesses both present and future and create a number of plans and activities to create the environment to provoke job creation. This network would hope to target young people while in the education system to target careers that are required by the present businesses.

There is a great opportunity here to promote the development of well educated, trained staff to sustain the future of these businesses. The development of a skills database would also be helpful to employers and potential employees so that jobs and skills could be matched when opportunities arise.

There should be measures introduced at community level to enable up-skilling of people who need to change their career path, expose students to the idea of self-employment and entrepreneurship.

In the communities there is a aspiration to decrease the number of early school leavers and do so by developing education in a more creative style for those young people who do not excel to the best of their ability within the present academic model.

There is a request that ideas that are presented by the community are evaluated on merit.

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### <sup>4</sup> Target 4 – Education:

Ireland's Headline Target: To reduce the percentage of 18-24 year olds with at most lower secondary education and not in further education and training to 8%; and to increase the share of 30-34 years olds having completed tertiary or equivalent education to at least 60%; **Tackling Early School Leaving:** The percentage of early school leavers in Ireland fell from 11.4% in 2010 to 9.7% in 2012. This represents positive progress towards achievement of our 8% target. A number of measures have been put in place to support achievement of the target; **National Reform Programme 2014 at page 20**

### Theme 3: Poverty and Social Inclusion<sup>5</sup>

#### <sup>6</sup>Social Inclusion and Community Participation

*“To facilitate the broadest possible participation by citizens in the development of their communities and their county, including participation in the formation, development and implementation of policies and programmes.”*

Under the theme of poverty and social inclusion there is a variety of ideas and groups highlighted.

A need for increased Active Citizenship and Volunteerism emerged from the public consultation.

Traveller participation at both voluntary and statutory level is lacking and needs to be addressed with measured results.

Rural Transport while it is in place needs to grow to cope with the demand.

Safety was another issue and that was highlighted and there is a plea from the community that the community policing section within the Garda Síochána is equipped with the staff numbers required.

Homelessness and housing needs featured highly and is a national crisis, there is a call for the supply of ample housing to be made available.

Isolation is an increasing feature of our rural areas and actions to encourage young people to return to their rural roots to work and live to ensure that these areas don't become depopulated entirely.

To address a lot of the needs the level of community facilities need to be upgraded to meet the requirements and expectations of young and older people.

Childcare facilities need to be increased and the opening hours of same need to be flexible in order to achieve a work life balance.

Information on all things Community and Entrepreneurial should be made available at a one stop shop. There needs to be a change of attitude and encourage people to welcome diversity and welcome difference into the community.

Also suggested in the submission process is that a mapping exercise should be carried out to get an understanding of what services are available in the county, so that a partnership model can be fostered to deliver into the community and help sustain communities after the funding is gone.

At all times a good quality of life is the end goal of all plans and strategies.

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<sup>5</sup> “A child-specific poverty target: As part of the review of the national poverty target, the Government agreed to set specific sub-targets. In recognition of the higher risks and life-long consequences of child poverty, a new child-specific poverty target has been set in the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020 (Better Outcomes: Brighter Futures): To lift over 70,000 children out of consistent poverty by 2020, a reduction of at least two-thirds on the 2011 level.” ; **National Reform Programme 2014 at page 45**

<sup>6</sup> **Westmeath County Council Corporate Plan 2010 – 2014 page 9**

#### Theme 4: Cross- Cutting Themes<sup>7</sup>

<sup>8</sup> “**Environmental Quality** – *to improve, protect, and promote our natural environment, in the interests of present and future generations.*”

Research and Development and Environment were also evident across the submissions.

A need expressed to create awareness of climate change, among the community.

Research and development is required to get an understanding of how it affects on the planet and put in place actions, locally to address it.

Utilising our bogs for the development of enterprise and therefore job creation e.g. wind farming enterprises, Gas Pipeline, High Tension electricity.

Protection and awareness of our environment through development of our natural resources e.g. forest products

Water to be protected as a resource.

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<sup>7</sup> **Target 2 - Research and Development (R&D) Ireland’s Headline Target:** To raise combined public and private investment levels in this sector to 2.5% of GNP (approximately equivalent to 2.0% of GDP).

**Target 3 - Climate Change and Energy Ireland’s Headline Target:** To reduce emissions in the non-traded sector by 20% compared to 2005 levels; to increase the share of renewables in final energy consumption to 16%; and to move towards a 20% increase in energy efficiency.

National Reform Programme 2014 at page 13 and 16 respectively.

<sup>8</sup> **Westmeath County Council Corporate Plan 2010 – 2014 at page 15**

Disadvantaged Disability Employment Enterprise Facilities Health and Wellbeing  
 Education Networking Build Communities Sustainability Youth Tourism Information  
 Inclusiveness Skills database Environment Culture Transport Infrastructure Branding  
 Volunteering Broadband Poverty Housing Safety Enterprise Diversification Isolation  
 Childcare Rural Development Research and Development Investment De-population  
 Food Competition Mental Health Influence Policy Village Enhancement Diversity  
 Water Universal Accessibility Disadvantaged Disability Employment Enterprise  
 Facilities Health and Wellbeing Education Networking Build Communities  
 Sustainability Youth Tourism Information Inclusiveness Skills database Environment  
 Culture Transport Infrastructure Branding Volunteering Broadband Poverty Housing  
 Safety

Diversification  
 Development  
 Development  
 population  
 Health  
 Enhancement  
 Universal  
 Disadvantaged  
 Enterprise  
 Wellbeing  
 Build  
 Sustainability  
 Information  
 database  
 Transport  
 Volunteering  
 Housing Safety  
 Diversification  
 Development  
 Development  
 population  
 Health  
 Enhancement

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 Initial Public  
 Consultation for the  
 Local Economic and  
 Community Plan for  
 County Westmeath  
 September 2014*

Enterprise  
 Isolation Childcare Rural  
 Research and  
 Investment De-  
 Food Competition Mental  
 Influence Policy Village  
 Diversity Water  
 Accessibility  
 Disability Employment  
 Facilities Health and  
 Education Networking  
 Communities  
 Youth Tourism  
 Inclusiveness Skills  
 Environment Culture  
 Infrastructure Branding  
 Broadband Poverty  
 Enterprise  
 Isolation Childcare Rural  
 Research and  
 Investment De-  
 Food Competition Mental  
 Influence Policy Village  
 Diversity Water

Universal Accessibility Disadvantaged Disability Employment Enterprise Facilities  
 Health and Wellbeing Education Networking Build Communities Sustainability Youth  
 Tourism Information Inclusiveness Skills Database Environment Culture Transport  
 Infrastructure Branding Volunteering Broadband Poverty Housing Safety Networking  
 Diversification Isolation Childcare Rural Development Research and Development  
 Investment De-population Food Competition Mental Health Influence Policy Village  
 Enhancement Diversity Water Universal Accessibility Disadvantaged Disability  
 Employment Enterprise Facilities Health and Wellbeing Education Networking Build  
 Communities Sustainability Youth Tourism Information Inclusiveness Skills Database  
 Environment Culture Transport Infrastructure Branding Volunteering Broadband  
 Poverty Housing Safety Networking Diversification Isolation Childcare Rural  
 Development Research and Development Investment De-population Food Competition  
 Mental Health Influence Policy Village Enhancement Diversity Water Universal  
 Accessibility

# Appendices



## Appendix 4: Public Consultation on Draft LECP Plan.

### Introduction:

On the 9th November 2015 the public were invited to comment on the Draft Local Economic and Community Plan. This consultation ran for 2 weeks from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> November. In total two submissions were received and are summarised below.

**Submission No:** LECP PC0001

**Name:** National Transport Authority

**Date Received:** 20<sup>th</sup> November 2015

### Summary of submission:

#### Integrated Economic and Community Plan:

**Goal 2 Objective 2.3: Critical physical infrastructure in place including energy, water, broadband, transportation and other necessary services to facilitate economic development.**

**Comment:** An assessment of existing and future transport demand within and to/from the county, especially demand for regular travel within the county's large towns, which would inform the development of actions within the plan, should be presented.

In addition, this objective should encourage the increased use of sustainable modes of transport i.e walking, cycling and public transport.

It is recommended that the local authority should decide on the wording of an overarching objective for delivering its transport actions for all trip types, based on the existing and future demand for travel.

#### Community Plan:

**Goal 3 Objective 3.4: Provision of accommodation and infrastructure to meet the needs of the community.**

**Comment:** We welcome the opportunity to work with Westmeath County Council to define the existing and future needs of Mullingar for regular public transport services, as expressed in **3.4.10** and **3.4.12** regarding Athlone. The role of Westmeath County Council is critical to the improvement of the operating environment for buses, cyclists and pedestrians in both towns.

**Submission No:** LECP PC0002

**Name:** Mullingar Chamber of Commerce

**Date Received:** 20<sup>th</sup> November 2015

**Summary of submission:**

**The Economic Plan:**

**Comment:** The chamber would like to take this opportunity to outline their proposals;

- An international Start Up Incubator & Growth Hub
- The Purple Flag

Encourage the enlivenment of LECP plan to create a legacy and linkage between urban and rural enterprise.

# Appendices



## Appendix 5

## Appendix 5: SEA Screening Report of the Westmeath Local Economic & Community Plan 2016-2021



## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The European Union Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive (2001/42/EC) requires an environmental assessment be carried out for certain plans and programmes including the proposed Local Economic and Community Plan for Westmeath. The following Regulations transposed this Directive into Irish law: The European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 435 of 2004), the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 436 of 2004) and further amended by: S.I. No. 200 of 2011 (European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011) and S.I. No. 201 of 2011 (Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011).

The Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations, 2004 (as amended) state that SEA is mandatory for certain plans while screening for SEA is required for other plans that fall below the specified thresholds. Where plans fall below or outside of the specified thresholds a screening report is required to be carried out to determine whether the making and implementation of a particular plan will or will not, lead to significant environmental consequences for the Plan.

The purpose of this report is to undertake a screening assessment to consider whether the LECP will require a Strategic Environment Assessment. This Screening Assessment is set out below.

### **1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE LECP**

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 provides a stronger and clearer role for local government in economic development and community development. This is a key element in achieving the vision set out in the Action Programme for Effective Local Government, Putting People First (DECLG, 2012) which states that *'local government will be the main vehicle of governance and public service at local level, leading economic, social and community development'*.

The LECP is prepared in accordance Section 44 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 and consists of two elements: A local economic element (prepared and adopted by the Local Authority) and a community development element (prepared and adopted by the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) in place of the City and County Development Boards).

The purpose of the LECP is to identify objectives and implement actions to strengthen and develop the economic and community dimensions of County Westmeath over a six year period. In this regard, the delivery of objectives and/or actions may be through partnership with economic and community stakeholders, via the programmes of other stakeholders as well as Westmeath County Council.

## **2.0 SCOPE OF THE LECP**

The LECP must be consistent with the Core Strategy and the objectives of both the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020 and the statutory plan for Athlone town, namely the Athlone Town Development Plan 2014-2020 and is complimentary to the hierarchy of plans which pertain to physical, economic and social development. The requirements in relation to the scope and context of the LECP are set out in detail under Section 66B of the Local Government Reform Act 2014. The Act requires that each Local Authority shall make a six year Local Economic Plan for

- (a) The promotion of economic development in its functional area

(b) The promotion of local and community development in its functional area

Section 66B (2) and (3) provides a detailed list of subject areas to be included in the Plan, which includes creating and sustaining employment, tourism and agriculture, infrastructure, quality of life, competitiveness, innovation, engagement with local government, addressing poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion, training and up-skilling, provision of community facilities, social enterprise, volunteering and active citizenship, community wellbeing, coordinating funding sources and promoting community involvement in policy development. The Act states that the list provided is not exhaustive.

### 3.0 SEA SCREENING

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

‘Screening’ is a process for deciding whether a particular plan, other than those for which SEA is mandatory, would be likely to have significant environmental effects, and would warrant SEA. The criteria for determining whether a particular plan is likely to have significant environmental impacts, is set out in Annex II of the SEA Directive. These criteria are reproduced in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as inserted by Article 12 of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations, 2004.

Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 sets out two main criteria for determining whether a plan would be likely to have significant environmental effects:

- Characteristics of a Plan;
- Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected.

The LECP is accompanied by a Socio Economic Report of Co. Westmeath. The aim of this report is to provide a detailed profile of Co. Westmeath based on an extensive set of social, economic and community indicators to inform the Local Community & Economic Plan for the county. The Socio-Economic Report is based on the following nine themes: (1) demographic profile, (2) education, (3) labour force, (4) commuting, (5) housing, (6) community, recreational & amenity facilities, (7) environment, (8) safe communities and (9) health. Where appropriate, the results for Westmeath are compared to regional or national results to provide a degree of relative context in assessing the county’s performance in relation to indicators such as socio-economic development and general well-being.

The SEA Screening assessment is undertaken through examination of the proposed LECP against the criteria provided in Schedule 2a of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2001-2011.

#### THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PLAN

Table 1.1 below provides an assessment as to whether, having regard to the characteristics of the plan, the proposed LECP for County Westmeath is likely to have significant impacts on the environment.

**Table 1.1: SEA Screening Assessment: Characteristics of the LECP**

<b>The characteristics of the LECP having regard, in particular, to:</b>
<i>(a) The degree to which the LECP sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources</i>
The LECP has been developed in a way which is consistent with existing higher level plans. It is not intended to be a detailed operational programme but aims to complement existing frameworks and statutory plans and policies of both the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020 and the

Athlone Town Development Plan 2014-2020. The Plan does not set a framework for projects rather it supports the strategic aims and objectives of the CDP 2014-2020 and provides for greater engagement through community participation and social inclusion measures.

In addition, through the application of both the SEA and Appropriate Assessment process to both the Westmeath CDP 2010-2020 and the Athlone Town Development Plan 2014-2020, protective and precautionary objectives have been included in these plans to ensure no significant effects on the environment.

The LECP will not set a framework for projects and other activities with regard to location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources. The Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020, Athlone Town Development Plan 2014-2020 and their associated Core Strategies set out clearly the spatial framework for development locations and land use in the County and the LECP must be consistent with and will be bound by said plans.

***(b) The degree to which the LECP influences other plans, including those in a hierarchy***

The Socio-Economic Statement forms part of the LECP plan preparation. The LECP will be the mechanism to support at local level actions arising from measures under the Action Plan for Jobs for the Midland Region and other statements of Government policy including the report of the Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA). The LECP must also be consistent in the first instance with the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022 and subsequently the Regional Spatial Strategies (RSEs) to be prepared by the Regional Assemblies. It is also consistent with the National Spatial Strategy and will be required to align with the new National Planning Framework which it is envisaged once developed, will replace the National Spatial Strategy.

The LECP will be central to the role of the local authority in the implementation of economic development and local/ community development policies and initiatives in existing plans. It is influenced by existing and future national, regional and statutory local hierarchy of plans across the economic, social and planning and land use areas/ sectors but does not in itself influence other plans. Therefore, the LECPs role is complementary and it is not anticipated that the LECP is likely to have significant effects on other Plans.

***(c) The relevance of the LECP in the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development***

Both the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020 and the Athlone Town Development Plan 2014-2020 were subject to SEA. This process allowed for the consideration of the environmental implications of implementing these plans. The integration of SEA assessment led to a variety of environmental protection policies and objectives which were incorporated within the plans. The LECP will be consistent with the policies and objectives of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020 and the Athlone Town Development Plan 2014-2020. The principles of sustainable development and the creation of sustainable communities are enshrined in the strategic goals and objectives of the LECP.

***(d) Environmental problems relevant to the proposed LECP***

The SEA ER of both the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020 and the Athlone Town Development Plan 2014-2020 provide detail on environmental issues relevant to the County. The strategic goals and objectives contained in the LECP which support sustainable economic and community development, rely on the maintenance of a good quality environment for living, working and leisure. There are numerous areas of environmental sensitivity within the County, many of which are designated under the legislative framework. These include: Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Natural Heritage Areas, Proposed National Heritage Areas (pNHA), views and prospects, Architectural and Archaeological Conservation Areas, protected structures, recorded monuments and structures, and recreational and amenity areas. Details of these areas together with aims and policies for their protection are set out in both the Westmeath CDP 2014-2020 and the Athlone Town Development Plan 2014-2020 and the accompanying SEA and AA and the socio-economic profile, which is part of the LECP.

The following actions in the LECP were identified for potential to give rise to environmental impacts on implementation:

In relation to economic development actions 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.3.1, 1.3.4, 1.3.5, 1.3.6, 1.3.7, 1.3.8, 1.3.9, 1.4.1, 1.4.4, 1.4.5, 1.5.2, 1.5.4, 1.5.5, 1.5.6, 1.5.7, 1.5.8, 1.5.9, 1.5.10, 1.5.11, 1.5.12, 1.5.13, 1.5.14, 1.6.2, 1.6.4, 1.6.5, 1.6.6, 1.6.8, 1.6.9, 1.6.10.

In relation to the integrated economic and community Actions 2.1.1, 2.3.1, 2.3.3, 2.3.4, 2.3.5, 2.3.6, 2.4.2, 2.4.3, 2.4.4, 2.4.5, 2.4.6, 2.4.7, 2.4.8, 2.4.9.

In relation to community actions: 3.2.2, 3.2.3, 3.2.5, 3.2.6, 3.2.8, 3.2.9, 3.2.10, 3.3.2, 3.3.5, 3.3.6, 3.3.7, 3.3.11, 3.3.12, 3.4.1, 3.4.2, 3.4.3, 3.5.4, 3.5.7, 3.6.5.

It is noted that the LECP makes specific reference in paragraph 2.8 to the primacy of the Westmeath County Development Plan and to the fact that individual actions identified in the LECP plan must comply in the first instance with relevant policies as set out in that plan.

It is concluded that policies in existing statutory land-use plans namely the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020 and the Athlone Town Development Plan 2014-2020 provide the policy framework for the protection of the environment in relation to the above actions.

The environmental reports conducted as part of the SEA process on the County Development Plan 2014-2020 and the Athlone Town Development Plan 2014-2020 discussed various issues of concern in the plan area and recommended mitigating measures for incorporation into the Plans.

The LECP must be consistent with the CDP which sets out the framework for development and land use. The CDP sets out an economic development strategy (Chapter 3), policies in relation to the natural and built environment in Chapter 5 and addresses social inclusion, community, educational and cultural development in Chapter 7. The Core Strategy (Chapter 2) sets the overall strategic framework for economic development, settlement hierarchy and environmental protection. The LECP is also consistent with the Athlone Town Development Plan 2014-2020. Both the County Development Plan and the Athlone Town Development Plan in their entirety, including the Core Strategies provide a framework under which the LECP will be developed, and the policies and objectives seeking to protect and conserve environmental sensitive areas will not be altered or affected by the LECP.

***(e) The relevance of the LECP in the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g. plans linked to waste-management or water protection).***

The LECP must be consistent with existing national and regional policy documents which includes policies relating to environmental protection, water supply, water quality, ground water, waste management, landscape and cultural heritage in compliance with EU legislation.

These include the following EU Directives:

*Water Framework Directive (Directive 2000/60/EC)*

*Groundwater Directive (Directive 2006/118/EC),*

*Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC),*

*Birds Directive (Directive 79/409/EEC),*

*and Flood Directive (Directive 2000/60/EC)*

### 3.3 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EFFECTS AND OF THE AREA LIKELY TO BE AFFECTED.

Table 1.2 below provides an assessment as to whether, having regard to the characteristics of the effect and of the area likely to be affected that the proposed LECP for County Westmeath is likely to have significant impacts on the environment.

**Table 1.2: SEA Screening Assessment: Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected**

<b><i>(a) The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects</i></b>
<p>The LECP is for a six year period, and as stated above must be compliant and consistent with the statutory planning framework.</p> <p>Therefore it is considered that effects arising from the LECP will be addressed and regulated under the existing statutory planning framework and probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects are not assessed as being significant.</p>
<b><i>(b) The cumulative nature of the effects</i></b>
<p>There are two key aspects to the LECP which are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(a) The promotion of economic development in its functional area</li><li>(b) The promotion of local and community development in its functional area</li></ul> <p>Both of these aspects will, where relevant, be advanced within the framework and the policies and objectives set out in the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020 and the Athlone Town Development Plan 2014-2020.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the cumulative effects of the LECP will be positive in terms of generating economic activity and required community development in County Westmeath and will maximise synergies between the various initiatives within the spheres of community and economic development. Providing environmental protection measures within both the County Development Plan and the Athlone Town Development Plan are adhered to and implemented, it is anticipated that the cumulative effects of the LECP on the receiving environment will not be negative.</p>
<b><i>(c) The trans-boundary nature of the effects</i></b>
<p>The LECP will be consistent with National and Regional strategies and guidelines and will be subject to environmental protection policies set out and objectives contained in the adopted County Development Plan and the Athlone Town Development Plan. No negative trans-boundary environmental effects are predicted.</p>
<b><i>(d) The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)</i></b>
<p>The LECP is not identified as giving rise to effects that would present as risks to human health or the environment given its consistency with the objectives contained in the Westmeath CDP 2014-2020 and the Athlone Town Development Plan. There are no Seveso sites within the county.</p> <p>Policies P-MA1 and P-MA2 in the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020 provide a policy context in relation to the prevention of major accidents.</p>
<b><i>(e) The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)</i></b>
<p>Effects should they arise are identified as positive where consistency with the County Development Plan and the Athlone Town Development Plan are achieved and/or effects are addressed through the statutory planning framework. The LECP does not zone additional lands and the quantity of lands zoned in both the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020 and the Athlone Town Development Plan 2014-2020, has been determined by reference to projected population growth, housing demand and the Core Strategies.</p>
<b><i>(f) The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</i></b>
<b><i>(i) Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage</i></b>
<p>The County has numerous areas designated under natural and cultural heritage, which are listed in</p>

the County Development Plan and Athlone Town Development Plan including 6 Special Areas of Conservation, 11 Special Protection Areas, 9 Natural Heritage Areas and 31 Proposed Natural Heritage Areas. There are a number of other sites across the County that have been designated for environmental and/or ecological protection eg local biodiversity sites and nature reserves.

Archaeological sites which are recorded in the Sites & Monuments Record within the county include urban Archaeological Zones of Potential, including Mullingar, Athlone, Kilbeggan, and Kilbixy. Over 1,800 protected structures are listed in the County and a number of landscapes and listed views are also designated.

**(ii) Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values**

It is anticipated that environmental quality standards will not be exceeded by the LECP. The Plan will be consistent and compliant with the Westmeath CDP 2014-2020 and Athlone Town Development Plan including specific policies and objectives regarding environmental quality standards including those contained in the Water Framework Directive, Air Quality and other environmental standards.

**(iii) intensive land-use,**

The LECP does not in its self allow for additional land use or intensification of land uses or additional zonings which would contravene either the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020 or the Athlone Town Development Plan 2014-2020. Therefore such effects are not anticipated.

#### 4.0 DETERMINATION IN TERMS OF ARTICLE 9 (2)

The LECP is a comprehensive Plan with goals and objectives and actions across community and economic spheres intended to support the sustainable development of the County. The Plan does not set the framework for future development consent of projects listed on foot of EIA Directives. On the basis of the above assessment and in consideration of the criteria set out in Schedule 2a of the Regulations 2011 (as amended) and further to consultation with prescribed environmental authorities, it is considered that the LECP for County Westmeath is, on implementation, unlikely to give rise to significant environmental effects and the determination is hereby made that a full SEA is not required in relation to this Plan.



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Terence McCague  
Senior Planner

9<sup>th</sup> November 2015

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Date

# Appendices



## Appendix 6

**Statements  
by MDs  
and EMRA**

## Appendix 6: Statements

### **MullingarMunicipal District**

#### Certified Extract

**Minutes of Mullingar Municipal District Meeting held at 2.00pm on 9th November, 2015 in the Council Chambers, Áras an Chontae, Mullingar.**

Item No.2- To approve Statement by Mullingar Municipal District in respect of Draft Westmeath Local Economic and Community Plan.

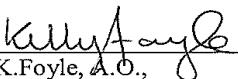
On the proposal of Cllr.Dollard, seconded by Cllr.Glynn, the following Statement was adopted by the Members:-

“Mullingar Municipal District has considered the Draft Westmeath Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021 and is satisfied the economic and community elements of this plan are consistent with the following:

- (i) The core strategy and the objectives of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020;
- (ii) The Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022;
- (iii) The economic and community elements of a draft Plan are consistent with each other”.

#### **Certified a True Extract**

Signed on behalf of Mullingar Municipal District.



K.Foyle, A.O.,  
District Administrator,  
Mullingar Municipal District.

Dated this 3rd day of December, 2015.

## Athlone Municipal District

**Extract from the Minutes of the November Monthly Meeting of Athlone Municipal District, which was held in the Civic Centre, Church Street, Athlone at 2.00 p.m. on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2015:**

It was proposed by Cllr. O'Rourke,  
Seconded by Cllr. Keena and resolved,

"That having has considered the Draft Westmeath Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021 the Athlone Municipal District members are satisfied that the economic and community elements of this plan are consistent with the following:

- (i) The core strategy and the objectives of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020.
- (ii) The Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022
- (iii) The economic and community elements of a draft Plan are consistent with each other"

Signed:   
Gerry McCormack,  
Meeting Administrator



## Tionól Reigiúnach Oirthir agus Lár-Tíre Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly

30 Uirlár 6 Thuaidh | Ionad Cathartha | An tSráid Mhór | Baile Múna | Baile Átha Cliath 9  
3rd Floor North | Ballymun Civic Centre | Main Street | Ballymun | Dublin 9



### **Statement by Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly**

#### **Statement on Westmeath Draft Local Economic and Community Plan**

The formal statement on the Westmeath Draft Local Economic and Community Plan was approved at the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2015.

#### INTRODUCTION

The Local Government Act 1991 (Regional Assemblies) (Establishment) Order 2014 (S.I. 573 of 2014) came into effect on the 1st January 2015 establishing the new Regional Assemblies. The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, has twelve constituent local authorities split into three Strategic Planning Areas (Dublin, Eastern and Midland). The functions of the new Regional Assemblies include the formulation, adoption and implementation of Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES), management of EU Operational Programs and implementation of national economic policy.

#### LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

The Regional Assemblies' role in the LECP process is set out under Section 66C of the Local Government Act 2001, in particular section 66C 2(c) and 3(c) which states that the consideration of an LECP by the Regional Assembly shall relate to its consistency with (i) the core strategy and the objectives of the development plan of the local authority concerned, (ii) any Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy or, as appropriate, Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) that may apply, and (iii) between the economic and community elements of the Plan.

#### CONSISTENCY

Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020: The draft LECP demonstrates consistency with the core strategy and the objectives of the County Development Plan by periodically linking select actions with Development Plan policy and objectives.

Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022: The draft LECP is considered to be consistent with the RPGs. Regionally significant plans, such as the Regional Action Plan for Jobs, have been included in the draft LECP.

Economic and Community elements of the LECP: The draft LECP inherently demonstrates consistency between economic and community objectives. This is demonstrated in Economic Objective 1.6 on the tourism sector which has a community objective dealing with festival and event support schemes including for the diaspora Events.

#### CONCLUSION

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly considers, in line with Section 66C of the Local Government Act 2001, that the Westmeath Draft LECP satisfies the requirements in terms of consistency with the core strategy and the objectives of the Development Plan, consistency with the RPGs and the integration and coordination of the economic and community elements of the plan.

# Appendices



## Appendix 7: Community Impact Proofing

### Screening Checklist for the Community element of the Plan

<b>Assessment Criteria</b>	<b>Potential significant impact Yes /No/ Uncertain</b>	<b>Comments: nature of impact (e.g. positive, negative, direct, indirect, etc) and justification</b>
Sustainability	No	Positive as can be seen in the SEA at appendix 5.
Equality	No	Positive because equality is at the heart of the LECP.
Poverty	No	Positive because this plan assists those who are excluded and marginalised to become more involved in the community and decision making at local level.
Rural	No	Positive as this plan takes cognisance of the level of disadvantage in the rural areas.
Age	No	Positive because all age groups are catered for in this plan.
Disability	No	Positive because disability is represented at all levels i.e. local, LCDC, PPN, SPCs and participated in the development of this plan and consultation of this plan.

# Appendices



## Appendix 8

## Appendix 8: GLOSSARY AND ACRONYMS

### ACRONYMS

ABP	An Bord Pleanála
AEC	Athlone Education Centre
AHBs	Approved Housing Bodies
AIT	Athlone Institute of Technology
AOB	Advanced Office Building
ATB	Advanced Technology Building
BGE	Bord Gáis Energy
BIC	Business Innovation Centre
BTEA	Back to Work Enterprise Allowance
CADS	Community Alcohol and Drugs Service
CD	Community Development
CDO	Community Development Objective
CDP	County Development Plan
CE	Community employment
CEDRA	Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas
Comhairle na nóg	Child and Youth Council
CSO	Central Statistics Office
CYPSC	Children and Young Persons Services Committee
DAFM	Department of Agriculture Food and Marine
DAHG	Dept of Arts, Heritage & Gaeltacht
DCENR	Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources.
DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
DECLG	Department of Environment, Community and Local Government
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DFI	Disability Federation of Ireland
DJE	Department of Justice and Equality
DSP	Department of Social Protection
DTTAS	Dept of Tourism, Transport and Sport
DVAS	Domestic Violence Advocacy Service
EI	Enterprise Ireland
Eirgrid	Deliver a safe secure & reliable source of electricity
EMRA	Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ETBs	Education and Training Boards
EWO	Education Welfare Officer
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
Foroige	Youth Organisation
FRC	Family Resource Centre
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HSE	Health Service Executive
ICMR	Irish Centre for Manufacturing Research

## Appendix 8: GLOSSARY AND ACRONYMS

ICT	Information Communication Technology
IDA	Industrial Development Agency
IFA	Irish Farmers Association
INTREO	A single point of contact for all employment and income supports. (Department of Social Protection)
IW	Irish Water
JI	Job Initiative
JPC	Joint Policing Committee
LA	Local Authority
LAG	Local Action Group
LCDC	Local Community Development Committee
LDS	Local Development Strategy
LECP	Local Economic and Community Plan
LEO	Local Enterprise Office
LG	Local Government
LWCT	Longford Westmeath community Transport (Local Link)
LWETB	Longford Westmeath Education Training Board
MAPP	Midland Area Parenting Partnership
MCOC	Mullingar chamber of Commerce
MD	Municipal District
MEA	Midlands Environmental Agency
MG	Music Generation
MNCs	Multinational Companies
MRDATAF	Midland Regional Drug and Alcohol Taskforce
MRYS	Midland Regional Youth Service
NRA	National Roads Authority
NSS	National Spatial Strategy
NTA	National Transport Authority
NUIM	National University of Ireland Maynooth
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPW	The Office of Public Works
Pobal	Work on behalf of government and in partnership with various stakeholders to improve outcomes, particularly for people experiencing disadvantage and social exclusion.
PPN	Public Participation Network
PRTB	Private Residential Tenancies Board
IPWD	Independent People with Disabilities
RAPID	Revitalising Areas through Planning and Investment
RDP	Rural Development Programme
REDZ	Rural Economic Development Zones
RPG	Regional Planning Guidelines
RSES	Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies
SCOT	Strengths Challenges Opportunities and Threats
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SEAI	Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland
SICAP	Social Inclusion and Community Activation Plan
Skillnets	Funding to grow skills and sustain jobs

## Appendix 8: GLOSSARY AND ACRONYMS

SMEs	Small Medium Enterprises
SPC	Strategic Policy Committee
STEa	Short Term Enterprise Allowance
SVP	St Vincent de Paul
TCU	Transport Co-ordination Unit
TII	Transport Infrastructure Ireland
Triple “P”	Parenting Programme
TUS	Is a community work placement scheme
TUSLA	Child and Family Agency
WAFA	Westmeath Age Friendly Alliance
WCC	Westmeath County Council
WCCC	Westmeath County Childcare Committee
WCD	Westmeath Community Development
WHO	World Health Organisation
WLCDC	Westmeath Local Community Development Committee
WSP	Westmeath Sports Partnership
WTIG	Westmeath Traveller Interagency Group
WVC	Westmeath Volunteer Centre