

DRAFT DONEGAL INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK LOCAL  
ECONOMIC COMMUNITY PLAN 2023-2029

Welcome Address *(to follow)*

Chair of LCDC

Chair of EESSPC

CE- Donegal County Council

Cllr Niamh Kennedy

Cllr Ciaran Brogan

John McLaughlin

DRAFT



## Executive Summary

The Integrated Framework LECP is a key document for County Donegal, providing a framework for advancing economic, community, social and cultural development in the county.

It sets out a Shared Vision, informed by extensive consultations with community, statutory, and sectoral stakeholders throughout the county.

At the outset of the LECP process, the Joint LCDC/ESSPC stated that they wished the Plan for the county to reflect hope, ambition, and positivity. The LECP which has been prepared over recent months does this.

This is an ambitious Plan with Goals, Objectives and Actions set out to achieve this ambition, and to sustainably develop the county's natural, human, and capital resources, recognising the challenges facing the county in a volatile, uncertain and everchanging global environment, and seeking to address these challenges. Even more importantly, the LECP recognises the advantages and the potential for sustainable development that County Donegal has to offer, and it seeks to capitalise on this potential for the benefit of the community as a whole. This Plan seeks to make the county an innovative, creative, accessible, and inclusive county, with opportunity and a good quality of life for all sections of the community.

The consultation process informing the detail of the LECP was positive, with a wide range of resources identified for development. There was an expressed desire and willingness to work together to achieve best results for the county, and an ambition to develop and firmly establish Donegal as a world class region which is competitive, viable and attractive in a global environment.

There is an eagerness to work in partnership, and collaboration and to cooperate across all sectors. Collaboration is a key component of this plan, at local, regional, national, and transnational levels.

This will be built on over the lifespan of the LECP, adhering to the principles of

*Ní Neart go Cur le Chéile'*  
*agus 'Ar Scáth a Chéile a Mhaireann na Daoine'.*

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*Chair of LCDC/Chair of EESSPC/CE- DCC*

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## The Donegal Local Economic and Community Plan.

The Donegal Local Economic and Development Plan sets out, for a six-year period to 2029 the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic, local and community development of County Donegal, and fulfils the requirements as set out in the Local Government & Reform Act 2014, informed by the Local and Economic Development Guidelines 2021.

The LECP is a statutory plan.

There are two core statutory plans informing the sustainable development of Our County.

The *Draft* County Donegal Development Plan 2024-2030 informs the spatial development of the County and the Donegal Local Economic and Development Plan, informs and guides the quality of life of those who live in the County, collectively, informed by *'our shared vision'* these two strategic documents will guide the strategic sustainable development in County Donegal to 2029/30

Working together, the Integrated LECP identifies a number of goals, objectives and actions we need to sustainably promote the economic and community development of County Donegal, both by the local authority directly as well as in collaborative partnership with our economic and community stakeholders and will help guide the growth and development of our County's communities, voluntary sector, economic stakeholders and all those living in the County.

The first Donegal LECP (2016-2021) outlined seven priority goals. Following on from the substantial progress made in delivering on these 7 goals, this second LECP to 2029 will continue to build upon the excellence that has already been established in our work and our collaborative partnerships and will continue to exemplify real activity, of benefit and change for the people of Donegal, growing toward and aligning with the vision set out in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region to make the region *'a vibrant, connected, natural, inclusive and smart place to work.'*

The Donegal LECP is a shared vision to 2029, reflective of Our Ambition, Our People and Our Commitment to Our Place in Donegal and will seek to ensure –

***“Donegal is climate resilient, healthy, diverse, socially, and culturally inclusive, connected, innovative, collaborative, and economically vibrant - offering an excellent quality of life for all its people”.***

## 1. Introduction:

The current LECP plan period 2023-2029 has seen a new all of government approach to plan/policy development, which reinforces the importance and value of local led initiatives working collaboratively in partnership with stakeholders including sectoral agencies and local communities, while recognising this most recent and ongoing unprecedented rate of change and the need for agility and consideration of changing emerging needs across the country.

In this regard and as is outlined in the LECP Guidelines 2021, the LECP comprises two distinct though integrated elements:

### (a) The LECP Framework.

The framework covers the 6-year lifetime of the LECP to 2029, and outlines the rationale and evidence base, in the form of High -Level Goals, Objectives and Outcomes which then in turn inform the detail of the Implementation Plan and emerging Actions.

The High-Level Goals establish the strategic development of County Donegal in relation to both community and economic development, drilling down to specific measurable sustainable objectives and the desired outcomes represent key targets to be achieved over the plans 6 year period.

### (b) The LECP Implementation Plan.

The Implementation Plan sits within the framework and details the actions to be delivered over a 2-year period, allowing for a combined total of three Implementation Plans over the lifetime of the LECP Framework. The actions outlined in the Implementation Plan will deliver on the objectives as outlined in the Framework, detailing inputs, actions, and resources over a specific period of time.

This approach allows for greater flexibility, as well as the opportunity to update data as it becomes available, to consider newly emerging programs, funding streams and policies, and further enhances the ability of Donegal County Council with our partners to meet the High-level Goals as set out in the LECP framework.

While this approach to LECP is positioned within the regulatory context, local authorities must also be mindful of their responsibilities under all relevant regulatory frameworks.

This document is an integrated plan, outlining the overall framework supported by an Outline Implementation Plan and will:

- Describe how the Donegal LECP was developed and prepared.
- Outline some of the key economic and social factors shaping the County.
- Describe our programme of communications including interactive workshop engagement across the County and outline key emerging themes.
- Identify the key strengths, challenges, opportunities, and threats impacting the County.
- Present the HLG, Objectives and Desired Outcomes.
- Identify actions.
- Explain how the Donegal LECP will be monitored and evaluated over the 6-year plan period to 2029.

In line with Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, Donegal County Council is committed to promoting equality, preventing discrimination, and protecting the human rights of employees, customers, services users and everyone affected by their policies and plans.



## 2. How We Prepared.

### Oversight:

The Donegal integrated LECP framework is a cross directorate/cross sectoral and cross community plan administered by Project Lead within Donegal County Council; is evidenced based, guided, and informed by a communications strategy and programme of interactive workshop, and considered by the LECP Advisory Steering Group, the Joint Local Community/Development Committee, the Donegal County Council Cross Directorate Advisory Group, the 37 Elected Members of Donegal County Council, and the Northern and Western Regional Assembly.

### Donegal LECP Advisory Steering Group:

The LECP Advisory Steering Group (ASG) includes representatives from the local authority and the agencies and organisations that are most directly responsible for the LECP's formulation and implementation. The ASG was established and subsequently further expanded to facilitate and support the start of this plan process in December 2022.

The role of the ASG is to advise and assist in the preparation, drafting, adoption, implementation and monitoring of the LECP, reflecting a balance of public/private interests.

Membership of the Donegal LECP Advisory Steering Group include:

- The Chairperson of the Local Community & Development Committee
- 2No Members of the LCDC
- The Chairperson of Economic & Emergency Services Strategic Policy Committee
- 2No Members of the EESSPC
- Director of Community Development & Planning Services
- Director of Economic Development, Emergency Services & Information Systems
- Head of Economic Development
- Chief Officer of the LCDC
- Age Friendly /Social Inclusion Officer
- Project Co-ordinator Donegal LECP 2016-2021
- 3No Support Staff

### Joint Local Community Development Committee/Economic & Emergency Services Strategic Policy Committee

Typically, the Local Community Development Committee offers oversight and guidance for the preparation and development of the community elements of the plan, while the Economic & Emergency Services Strategic Policy Committee considers the preparation and development of the economic elements of the plan. Reflective of Our Shared Vision and given the cross-cutting nature of the economic and community needs in Donegal, the integrated development of the LECP has been further supported in the decision-making process through a dedicated forum, the **Joint** LCDC/EESPC.

### Donegal County Council Cross Directorate Advisory Group:

Additionally, a Donegal County Council Cross Directorate Advisory Group was also established, providing a platform for Divisional/Area Managers within Donegal County Council to share their knowledge and experience in relation to ongoing projects, programmes and initiatives across the County, to inform the emerging goals, objectives and actions of the Donegal LECP to 2029.

### Donegal County Council Elected Members:

The 37 Elected Members of Donegal County Council are the conduit between the community and the local authority and through scheduled quarterly workshop continue to play a key role in the direction setting and preparation of the Donegal LECP to 2029.

### Northern & Western Regional Assembly:

A number of in-person meetings convened with the NWRA to inform the ongoing development of the Donegal LECP, thereby ensuring consistency and alignment with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

### Step Process:

The process for the development of the LECP initially consists of four broad phases: preparation, public consultation, development of High-Level Goals, development of objectives and outcomes, and finalisation of the LECP.

This will be followed by a fifth stage for implementation that will include the Implementation Plan process and a sixth stage of monitoring, evaluation, and review of the plan.

The Donegal Integrated Framework LECP has been developed and as is outlined in the LECP Guidelines 2021 above in a staged step process to Stage 4 from December 2022 through to March 2024 as follows:

#### Stage 1

Stage 1 of the LECP formulation process focuses on preparation, evidence-building and data collation and includes:

##### Review of LECP 2016-2021

A review of the Donegal LECP 2016-2021 was completed in Spring 2023, which involved a mixed-methods approach – a questionnaire survey, one to one meetings and targeted focus group engagement. The review identified how stakeholders can build on the previous LECP and how they can refine its strategic approach. It noted satisfaction with LECP-related achievements over the past six years, the merits of a collaborative framework and approach, and the need for more systemic and robust monitoring and evaluation.

##### Preliminary Policy Context Review

A preliminary policy context review was also undertaken and provides a synthesis of the EU and Irish policies that are most relevant to the formulation and delivery of the LECP. It situates this synthesis in the context of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs), and it notes how the UNSDGs provide the framework and set of imperatives for the LECP.

##### Development of Socio-Economic Profile/Statement

A profile was developed of the County and includes 2016 census data, preliminary data from the 2022 Census of Population and recently published data from the 2020 Census of Agriculture. The profile also incorporates, where available current data on relevant socio-economic features, including housing, ecology and citizen well-being. Where possible, County Donegal values were bench-marked against those of the State and NUTS II and III regional tiers. The profile also includes data and indicators for the North-West Metropolitan Area Spatial Plan area, a key spatial economic geography for the Northern and

Western Regional and Spatial Economic Strategy (RSES). Moreover, the profile provides sub-county data, including at municipal district and settlement levels. Thus, it represents a significant body of objective data and information to enable the LECP Advisory Group to undertake a SCOT analysis, identify needs, potential and priorities and to formulate high-level goals.

The profiles' primary purpose is to provide some of the evidence base that will inform the County Donegal Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) for the period 2023- 2029. Moreover, this profile can be used, for a much broader set of functions, by Donegal County Council and by other organisations, individuals, and the private sector.

The summary profile is based on a range of key facts along with an accompanying infographic and set of key maps and graphics. The data in this summary profile is presented under the following headings, and while these themes are discrete, they also have many intersections and interactions:

- Demographics.
- Social Indicators.
- Education.
- Economy.
- Health.
- Housing.
- Environment and
- Agriculture.

See Appendix A: Socio Economic Profile of County Donegal for further detailed information.

Collectively the findings derived from Stage 1 informed the detail of the Draft Socio-Economic Statement.

Stage 1 was completed towards the end of Q2 of 2023, thereafter the Draft Socio-Economic Statement was issued as part of the programme of engagement which ran from May 2023 through to December 2023.

## Stage 2

Stage 2 of the LECP outlines a process with a focus on meaningful stakeholder engagement, collaboration, participation, and partnership.

### Communications Strategy – Programme of Engagement

The importance of stakeholder engagement in formulating the LECP, having a focused approach and promoting partnership in its implementation were the key messages from the review of the first LECP 2016-2021 and informed the detail and methodology of the Communications Strategy and Programme of Engagement informing the development of the Donegal integrated LECP framework to 2029.

Coincidentally the development of the Peace Plus programme and the Local Development Strategy were ongoing at the same time as the LECP. In this regard and building further on our shared vision and supported by considered feedback from our elected Members, a Joint Programme of Public Engagement was designed in the first instance concentrating on public/community engagement.

This approach delivers on Objective 1 of *Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities* a five-year strategy to support the Community and Voluntary sector in Ireland 2019-2024 (C&V Strategy) strengthening participative approaches to the development of public policy and programming. In addition, Objective 9 commits to strengthening the LECP process enhancing community participation in the development and implementation of plans and securing more effective collaboration and partnership working nationally, regionally, and locally.

In this regard a programme of interactive workshops ran over nine nights in May/June the outcome of which informed key emerging themes and a further focused programme of 28 sectoral/agency workshops hosted in-person and hybrid during the month of November through to the end of December 2023

The findings from the Communications Strategy informed the review of the DRAFT Vision and High-level Goals and the subsequent development of Sustainable Community Objectives (SCOs) and Sustainable Economic Development Objectives (SEDOs), considering also the emerging actions linked to and across the 7 High-Level Goals.

Please refer to Chapter 5 of this document Our Stakeholders - Programme of Engagement and Appendix B Consultation Report for further detail.

### Stage 3

Stage 3 of the LECP process considers emerging objectives and outcomes.

#### Development of Objectives and Outcomes

Following the programme of engagement, and working with the Advisory Steering Group, guided by the Revised Shared Vision and 7 HLGs, the objectives and emerging associated actions were developed in collaboration with key stakeholders and included the identification of lead agencies/partners and supporting agencies/groups for each action. Specific Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are also being considered and an approach for monitoring and evaluation of progress on implementation is also under review working with our colleagues cross-directorate and specifically in relation to the targets of the 17SDG Goals.

A FINAL DRAFT Integrated LECP Framework informed by a policy alignment review specifically in relation to the RSES and Donegal CDP, a summary of the socio-economic profile, an analysis of the programme of engagement and an updated SWOT analysis, the detail of which guided the development of the objectives, outcomes and actions of the Donegal LECP to 2029 was presented for consideration to the Joint LCDC/EESSPC in the first instance; a copy of which subsequently forwarded to the NWRA for commentary.

Additionally, working with our Elected Members a further programme of dedicated LECP workshops convened across all 5 Municipal Districts in February 2024 to further consider the detail of the emerging Framework LECP.

This stage of the process is hugely important in ensuring consistency with the relevant regional and county development plans and providing a further opportunity to review the economic and community objectives, outcomes, and emerging actions of the Framework LECP.

Please also refer to Appendix C: A Strategic Environmental Assessment Determination and Appropriate Assessment Screening for further detail.

#### Stage 4

Stage 4 of the LECP process considers policy consistency with the Draft Donegal County Development Plan 2024-2030 and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

#### Finalise The Integrated Framework LECP

Building on the feedback received from the Northern & Western Regional Assembly and from our Members in Donegal, Glenties, Inishowen, Letterkenny/Milford and Lifford/Stranorlar, the Draft LECP was duly amended, the detail of which informed the further refinement of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening report and Appropriate Assessment Screening report.

This FINAL Draft Integrated LECP Framework informed by stakeholders, guided by the Advisory Steering Group and endorsed by the Joint LCDC/EESSPC was presented and formally approved by Donegal County Council in Full Plenary on DATE DD/MM/YY

#### Stage 5 & 6

Stage 5/6 of the LECP process focuses on implementation, and subsequent monitoring and evaluation.

#### Implementation, Monitoring & Evaluation.

The LECP Integrated Framework was formally launched on DATE DD/MM/YY and which included actions outlined in the Donegal LECP Implementation Plan, seeking to deliver on the objectives of the LECP Framework.

In accordance with the LECP Guidelines 2021, while the Shared Vision, Goals and Objectives will inform the sustainable development of the County over 6 years, the Implementation Plan, in response to a continually and rapidly changing environment is subject to review and revision every 2years.

As such there will be 3 iterations of the Implementation Plan over the 6-year period to 2029

### 3. Policy Context

#### Sustainable Development Goals

The Donegal LECP, 2023-2029 is informed by objective research and stakeholder engagement, as it articulates local needs and potential, and responds to local challenges and opportunities. The initial research findings and preliminary stakeholder engagements confirm the significance of the wider policy milieu in enabling the LECP to attain its high-level goals. Additionally, the LECP offers a mechanism for the local-level delivery of EU and national policy objectives, while local-level experiences and feedback are integral to ensuring responsive and evidence-based policy development. Thus, stakeholders in County Donegal are cognisant of the interactions between the various policy tiers and how policy provisions and interfaces shape the development context.

#### Sustainable Development Imperatives – linking the Global to the Local.

EU and Irish (national) policies are evolving in response to needs and opportunities, and their orientation has become increasingly focused on enabling, promoting, and delivering sustainable development objectives. The maxim *'think global –act local'* is probably even more relevant today than when it was first advocated in the 1980s, following the publication of Our Common Future.

As evidenced by the ongoing COP gatherings and supported by a growing volume of independent scientific data, the attainment of sustainable development objectives requires global and supranational frameworks, and this realisation underpins the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs). Thus, the UNSDGs provide the overarching global framework for the entire policy milieu in which the Donegal LECP is situated.

The seventeen goals articulate a vision for humanity that requires more even economic development and equality of opportunity for all peoples regardless of geography, gender, or other social factors. Their attainment requires a commitment to ecological conservation and the restoration of biodiversity – at sea and on land.





The UNSDGs also provide for improved social, health and educational services and better governance – at all tiers, the principle of which wholly aligns with the 7 High- Level Goals of the Donegal LECP.

Climate change is a cross cutting theme across all 7 Goals of the Donegal Integrated Framework LECP and most specifically; Goal 1 seeks to ensure ‘*Donegal is a climate resilient society*’, considering both adaptation and mitigation advocating for a just transition to a post carbon society.

Given the transboundary nature of the issues the UNSDGs address and considering the growing interconnectedness between peoples and places, the UNSDGs require geographical, sectoral, and institutional collaboration.

Indeed, the transboundary nature of the UNSDGs and the wider application of sustainable development principles is particularly relevant to County Donegal, given the county's border with Northern Ireland, our relations with Derry City and Strabane District Council and with Omagh and Fermanagh District Council informing and reinforcing cross-border ecosystems.

Thus, the Donegal LECP is underpinned by intra-county, inter-county and interjurisdictional collaborative approaches that enable the county to realise a more sustainable development trajectory, thereby improving economic, educational, and socio-economic outcomes for all our residents while protecting natural resources and making tangible contributions to our global responsibilities.

### EU Policy and Frameworks

The EU interface with, and give effect to, the UNSDGs.

Through its policies, funding streams and inter-governmental mechanisms, the EU is enabling, encouraging, and obliging member states to become more resilient – so that societies and communities are better able to withstand current and anticipated shocks such as those caused by climate change for example. EU goals in these regards relate to stakeholders in Donegal as we strive to develop and implement the LECP, and we anticipate keeping abreast of EU research and policy trajectories. Moreover, we are committed to working with national and regional authorities to leverage opportunities arising from inter-territorial collaboration and support mechanisms. The EU policy frameworks relate to specific sectors, and in operational terms, are bound together by a realisation that public policy needs to support firms, institutions, communities, and our residents to become more ecologically responsible, innovative, adaptive, and creative.

The EU Green Deal seeks to incentivise all sectors of the economy to be more ambitious in reducing their ecological footprints and to embrace new technologies in maximising energy efficiency, while increasing productivity and generating new employment and training opportunities. Spatial policies, in respect of urban and more rural settlements are oriented towards improving the attractiveness of spaces – enticing and sustaining investment, strengthening local economies and networks, and making neighbourhoods more accessible, walkable and self-contained advocating a SMART Village approach. The EU anticipates further rollout of smart village approaches over the next decade. Digitisation and smart specialisation feature across policy domains as enablers of innovation and as offering means through which public service delivery can be enhanced. Society's ability to avail of the associated opportunities is contingent on improving digital literacy.

Thus, stakeholders in Donegal envisage investments in hard and soft enabling infrastructure – training and capacity building.– as the county strives to avail of the economic, human resource and service delivery opportunities associated with smart technologies and our obligations in respect of environmental protection.

The forthcoming Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) will have a significant impact on County Donegal, given the importance of the rural economy. The CAP endeavours to support farmers in continuing to produce high-quality food, while protecting the natural resources on which sustainable food production is contingent. This can be challenging, particularly for dairy and beef farmers, and working with colleagues in the LEO and building on the Food Coast initiative the entire food industry in Donegal will need to be particularly innovative and adaptive over the next decade. The CAP provides funding and strategic signposts for LEADER, and the implementation of the next iteration of LEADER (2023-2027) runs parallel with the rollout of the LECF.

### Cross-Border Collaboration

County Donegal is the largest county in Ulster, and it is the largest and most populous county in the Border Region, sharing extensive and far-reaching, historical, and contemporary, connections with Northern Ireland in all sectors and at all levels. Shared physical resources including the River Foyle and Lough Foyle and shared societal, community and familial bonds unite County Donegal with its neighbouring counties in both jurisdictions– Ireland and Northern Ireland. Moreover, there are strong and important pre-existing governance and institutional linkages and cooperation mechanisms that transcend the border with Northern Ireland, and these provide platforms for cross-border collaboration and for the delivery of mutual benefits for all communities on both sides of the border.

### North-West Strategic Growth Partnership

Donegal County Council is a founding member of the North-West Strategic Growth Partnership (NWSGP), which was established in 2016 through the North South Ministerial Council. The NWSGP brings together senior officials from all government departments in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland along with Donegal County Council and Derry City and Strabane District Council to deliver on the strategic priorities aimed at bringing real and positive change for the Northwest City Region. Donegal County Council and Derry City & Strabane District Council have worked closely on attracting and retaining inward investment, and they have recently developed a joint Inward Investment Strategy for the region. Ireland’s National Planning Framework recognises the importance of the cross-border North-West Metropolitan City Region - encompassing Derry City, Letterkenny, and Strabane - as a key driver for growth and is supported by both governments on the island through the North South Ministerial Council.

### Irish Central Border Area Network

Donegal County Council is a member of the Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN), which provides a platform for elected members from eight local authorities – three in Northern Ireland and five in Ireland – to promote collaboration in areas of mutual interest. ICBAN has devised a framework of regional priorities, and which advocates specific catalyst projects as well as providing an impetus towards the realisation of sustainable developments in respect of the regional economy, infrastructure, connectivity, human resources, liveable communities, and the greening of the region.

The NWSGP and ICBAN objectives align with those that are set out in the Regional Economic and Spatial Strategy 2020-2032 (RSES), and they relate to the agendas and capacity of local government and other local level actors, who have a stake in the formulation and implementation of this LECP. Moreover, the RSES envisions the North-West City Region as a driver of regional growth, and it specifically notes the importance of building on the positive working relationships that have been nurtured by the Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) and further and higher education and training bodies, including the Atlantic Technological University (ATU), Donegal Education and Training Board (DETB), North West Regional College (NWRC) and University of Ulster - Derry/Londonderry Campus (UU)

### National Policies & Frameworks

The National-level policies that shape and relate to the County Donegal LECP are nested within the UN and EU framework. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and to enable societies to recover from its adverse effects, each EU member state, including Ireland has prepared a recovery and resilience plan, the implementation of which is enabled by EU and Exchequer funds. The overall objective of Ireland's National Recovery and Resilience Plan is to contribute to a sustainable, equitable, green and digital recovery effort, supported by three over-arching and interlocking priorities:

- Advancing the green transition.
- Accelerating and expanding digital reforms and transformation.
- Social and economic recovery and job creation.

The six pillars of Ireland's National Recovery & Resilience Plan resonate with the UNSDGs, and they provide a set of reference points for stakeholders implementing the Donegal LECP.

These pillars are:

- Green transition.
- Digital transformation.
- Smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth.
- Social and territorial cohesion.
- Health, economic, social and institutional resilience.
- Policies for the next generation

These strategic priorities embrace and give effect to the over-arching EU policy trajectory, and the rollout of associated projects is impacting on firms, institutions, and communities in Donegal, and will have direct and indirect bearings on the implementation of the County Donegal LECP. It is important for stakeholders to be mindful of their impact, ensuring that firms, institutions, and communities in Donegal avail of the opportunities that flow from the plan's implementation and the structural and legislative reforms that may follow.

### Key National Policies

There are several national-level sectoral and inter-sectoral policies that relate to the formulation and implementation of the Donegal LECP.

#### Project Ireland 2040

Project Ireland 2040 is the Government's long-term overarching strategy to make Ireland a better country for all its people. Since its launch, Project Ireland 2040 has been enhancing regional connectivity and competitiveness, improving environmental sustainability, and building a fairer, more equal Ireland for everyone. Project Ireland 2040 is underpinned by a shared set of goals or National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) for every community across the country.

#### The National Planning Framework 2018

The National Planning Framework is a planning framework to guide development and investment over the coming years, wholly aligned to the National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) of Project Ireland 2040. Its companion document is the National Development Plan 2021-2030, a ten year strategy informing public capital investment.

### Climate Action Plan 2024

Our climate is changing rapidly and is transforming our world. Ireland's Climate Action Plan and associated legislation, commit us to significant reductions in our carbon emissions, and will have far-reaching implications for all sectors of the economy and society. Underpinned by scientific data and driven by moral imperatives, the obligation to reduce our carbon footprint will pose short- and medium-term challenges in some sectors, most notably energy, transportation, and agriculture. There will also be financial implications on households and will necessitate policy and practice interventions, including actions at community level, to ensure a just transition to a zero-carbon society. In Donegal climate change mitigation and amelioration factors underpin the principles, and objectives of the Donegal County Development Plan (2018-2024) and are further reinforced through the Draft County Donegal Development Plan 2024-2030, which operates in parallel with and aligned with this LECP. The Donegal County Development Plan and its associated local area plans (LAPs) govern spatial planning, including land-use, transportation, and place-making. While the LECP has a broader functional remit, its provisions comply with the planning policy objectives that are set out in the Donegal County Development Plan (CDP).

At the same time, the CDP can provide supports and leverage to enable the delivery of the LECP's objectives, providing for positive synergy between both sets of plans and as is reflected in **Our Donegal Shared Vision**.

### National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Innovation 2022-2027

Ireland's Smart Specialisation Strategy embraces a regional approach to addressing Ireland's Research, Development, and Innovation (RD&I) challenges. It will provide a 'bridge' between regional and national innovation strategy building and decision making, bringing coherence to RD&I planning for the benefit of enterprise and advancing the RD&I agenda regionally and nationally. Chapter 6 specifically refers to the Northern Western Region.

### The National Digital Strategy (NDS) 2022

The National Digital Strategy (NDS), Harnessing Digital: The Digital Ireland Framework, presents a consolidated approach to maximising the economic and societal benefits from digitalisation and to ensure that all can enjoy those benefits, driving and enabling the digital transition across the Irish economy and society.

### Housing for All 2021

Housing for All is a new housing plan for Ireland to increase housing availability and affordability, and to create a sustainable housing system into the future. The plan is supported by significant investment in the construction of housing, and it behoves stakeholders in Donegal to avail of the associated opportunities and to work collaboratively in enabling place-making and community development. The LECP will provide tools to enable the construction of communities and social supports that are necessary to accompany any investment in physical infrastructure.

### Our Rural Future

Our Rural Future provides a framework for the development of rural Ireland to 2025 and addresses both the challenges facing rural areas and the opportunities which rural economies and communities can benefit from in the coming years. Ireland's current rural development policy presents opportunities for sectoral interests in areas such as tourism, the social economy and digitisation, and its provisions in respect of remote working tally with, and accentuate, the provisions in other policies – thereby opening-up possibilities for transformative projects that could benefit rural economies, address rural decline, and improve people's health and quality of life.

### Town Centre First

The Town Centre First Policy provides a co-ordinated, whole-of-government policy framework to proactively address the decline in the health of towns across Ireland and support measures to regenerate and revitalise them. Key to Town Centre First are local communities and local businesses who now have the opportunity to reimagine and shape the future of their town/ village through the development of a Town Centre First Plan, such as the ongoing work in Milford working with the Town Regeneration Officer and Donegal County Council. Irish towns are facing significant challenges and opportunities that require a coordinated and comprehensive response. This Town Centre First policy will facilitate that response by towns of all sizes across the country so that their centres can function as the sustainable and vibrant heart of the communities they serve, in ways that are adaptable and appropriate to 21st century needs, and aims to create town centres that function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community.

### Our Living Islands

Our Living Islands is a 10-year national policy for off-shore islands, including the 10 Donegal Islands and seeks to ensure that sustainable, vibrant communities can continue to live - and thrive - on the offshore islands for many years to come, and that visitors to the islands can continue to experience and appreciate the unique culture, heritage, and environmental richness that Our Donegal islands have to offer.

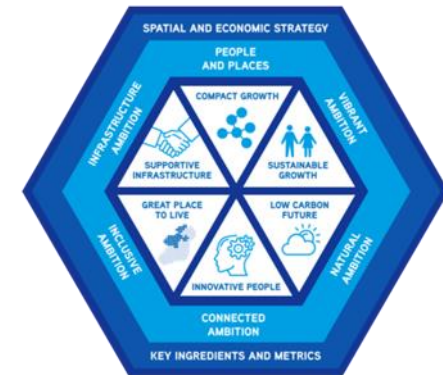
### Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy RSES

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Northern and Western Region is a high-level plan based on partnership, collaborative leadership, with a clear focus on **place-based** development, and provides a strategic planning and economic framework for the region’s sustainable growth and development. The vision of the RSES is ‘*to play a leading role in the transformation of the region into a vibrant, connected, natural, inclusive and smart place to work and live,*’ and introduces a ‘Growth Framework’ to deliver this vision. There are ‘Five Growth Ambitions’, recognising that regional growth cannot be achieved through linear steps and that isolated interventions will not achieve the ambitions of the region, wholly reflective of the principle of alignment and collaboration driving the LECP in Donegal.

The five growth ambitions of the RSES are:

1. To be a Vibrant Region (Economy & Employment)
2. To be a Natural Region (Environment)
3. To be a Connected Region (Connectivity)
4. To be an Inclusive Region (Quality of Life)
5. To be an Enabled Region (Infrastructure)

The 7 High Level Goals of the Donegal LECP to 2029, seeks to deliver on these five growth ambitions.



The RSES aligns with the NPF in emphasising sustainable development patterns and seeks to focus growth within existing urban areas and in regional growth centres including Letterkenny and provides a framework for growth and investment to build its function as the primary urban centre in Donegal. Letterkenny is also part of a Cross Border Network - the North West Metropolitan City Region (Letterkenny/Derry/Strabane), as is identified in the National Planning Framework (Ireland 2040) as a key enabler of Regional growth and prosperity across Donegal, Derry and Tyrone.

As a Regional Growth Centre, Letterkenny will grow to a centre of at least 27,300 people, with an expanded employment base, an additional 4,000 houses, together with an enhanced offering in education, public services, and civic spaces. The regeneration of Letterkenny town centre is a key consideration creating a centre that is pedestrian friendly, well served by public transport, with an emphasis on well-being, supported by a healthy environment, and quality spaces in the public realm.



County Donegal Development Plan 2018-2024/Draft County Donegal Development Plan 2024-2030

The County Donegal Development Plan and the emerging Draft County Donegal Development Plan 2024-2030 governs land use and guides the development of infrastructure in County Donegal for the entire plan period of the LECP. Developing a *Donegal Shared Vision* delivers a strong message to our stakeholders and wider region, and further evidences the alignment and complementarity in respect of both strategies.

The County Development Plan also includes provisions for environmental protection, the development of housing, the provision of connectivity, cultural resource development and quality of life, and impacts on all sectors of the economy. While the CDP seeks to regulate activities, the CDP with the LECP is and continues to be a significant enabler and stimulant of initiatives across all sectors.

The CDP and the associated Local Area Plans in the key towns across the County, considers the Letterkenny Regeneration Strategy and the number of Regeneration Strategies and Town Centre First Plans across the County including for example Killybegs, Ballybofey/Stranorlar, Ballyshannon, Dungloe, Milford, Ardara, Carrick, Newtowncunningham, Manorcunningham, Moville

These policies as referred to above are already finding local level expression and implementation in the various strategies that have been put in place in County Donegal, and the LECP can provide a mechanism to re-enforce, tailor, sharpen and strengthen these policies and strategies and to promote further collaboration among those who are delivering them.

At EU and national level, there are a number of policies and programmes in place to support particular population cohorts including young people, those with disabilities, migrants and older people, all of which are relevant to the Donegal LECP.

Some are already reflected in, and given effect by, local-level strategies and initiatives in County Donegal, including the Age-Friendly Strategy, Children and Young People's Plan and Migrant Integration and Inter-cultural Strategy, and the emerging Donegal Disability Inclusion Strategy 2024-2029.

Over the course of the LECP (2023-2029) organisations will continue to implement these strategies, and some of them will come up for review and renewal within this timeframe. Their renewal will provide opportunities for maximising complementarity and the alignment of strategic objectives with one another and with respect to the priorities outlined by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission namely economic equality; justice; respect.

In this regard there will continue to be changes in EU and national-level policy, legislation, and funding streams over the lifetime of this LECP.

There are a number of additional local polices, listed below though not exhaustive including:

- Donegal County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029

- Donegal Culture & Creativity Strategy
- Donegal Heritage Plan
- Donegal Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2023-2029
- Donegal Remote Working Strategy for Business
- Donegal 2030: Donegal Strategic Enterprise Development Plan
- Draft Donegal County Council Tourism Strategy 2024 – 2029.
- Donegal Age Friendly Strategy
- Black and Minority Ethnic Inclusion: A Strategy for County Donegal 2021 – 2026
- Emerging DRAFT Donegal Disability Inclusion Strategy

DRAFT

## 4. Our People/Our Place – Our Donegal

Our People are ambitious, creative, warm, and welcoming, Our Place is real, green, wild and wonderful.... and we are inextricably linked.

Our People and Place are connected - living on the edge.

### Where We Are/Who We Are

Donegal is a coastal county, situated in Ireland's most north-westerly region, on the edge of the Atlantic.

Located in the border region Donegal is magnificently bounded on the southwest, west, and north by the Atlantic Ocean and on the east by counties Derry, Tyrone, Fermanagh and Leitrim. We share 93% of our entire land boundary with Northern Ireland, and in a post Brexit situation will hold the largest land border between Britain and the European Union.

We are a region in transition and part of the Northern and Western Regional Assembly area with close cross-border relations with Northern Ireland, through for example the NWRDG, ICBAN and the NW City Region.

Donegal is the fourth largest county in Ireland, and with just over 1100km, we have the third-longest coastline in the country, the sea and our coast inform the psyche of Our Place.

We are predominantly a rural county, and while the population of the North-West Metropolitan City Region – encompassing Derry, Letterkenny and Strabane – has been growing over recent years, the majority of the county's population resides in smaller towns, villages and the rural countryside. There are 61 settlements in Donegal ranging in size from 200 residents, to just over 22,500 people living in Letterkenny. Most of our residents (c.88%) live in smaller towns, villages or farming areas.

We are the most northerly county in Ireland in a border region and have managed to retain much of our rich and unique cultural identity. How we speak, how we celebrate our traditions, how communities have carved out an existence in some of the most remote and inhospitable locations in Europe are all features of life in Donegal which are as relevant today as they were centuries ago. How we have defended our lands in the past, how we have influenced and have been influenced by new immigrants, such as the Planters, the Celts, the coming of Christianity and how invaders such as the Vikings and the

Normans have shaped our place and our way of life, how our coastal waters were used as important shipping routes, how we farmed, fished and travelled, have all left us with a unique legacy upon which we will continue to build a socially, economically and environmentally sustainable community.

County Donegal has a varied landscape comprising mountains, fertile plains, a deeply indented coastline of loughs, bays, and peninsulas, we have 10 islands including the permanently inhabited islands of Toraigh (Tory) and Árainn Mhór (Arranmore).

Donegal is home to a range of assets, such as Malin Head-Ireland's most northerly point, Fanad Lighthouse, Sliabh Liag - one of the highest sea cliffs in Europe, and Glenveagh National Park, and is consistently among the highest number of Blue Flag beaches in the country. There are many excellent recreation, leisure and amenity facilities which reflect significant investment over the past decade in improving the physical, economic, and social infrastructure of the County.

Our landscape of County Donegal is distinctive, unique -synonymous with the identity of County Donegal, of which the extensive coastline and seascape is an integral and constituent element, informed by a myriad of factors including its geology, landcover, natural heritage, built heritage and cultural heritage that together combine to define our character.

We are a Gaeltacht County with a strong bedded love of our Irish language.

All the above factors have played a very important role in influencing the economic, social, cultural and political landscape of today's Donegal and have informed the detail and evidence base of the socio-economic analysis, which is integral informing the development of the Framework LECP, as well as the Leader Local Development Strategy and the Peace Plus Local Action Plan.

## Summary of the Socio-Economic Profile

A Socio – Economic Profile was developed of the County and includes 2016 census data, preliminary data from the 2022 Census of Population and recently published data from the 2020 Census of Agriculture. The profile also incorporates, where available current data on relevant socio-economic features, including housing, ecology, and citizen well-being.

Where possible, County Donegal values were bench-marked against those of the State and NUTS II and III regional tiers. The profile also includes data and indicators for the North-West Metropolitan Area Spatial Plan area, a key spatial economic geography for the Northern and Western Regional and Spatial Economic Strategy (RSES).

Moreover, the profile provides sub-county data, including at municipal district and settlement levels. Thus, it represents a significant body of objective data and information to enable the LECP Advisory Group to undertake a SCOT analysis, identify needs, potential and priorities and to formulate high-level goals.

The profiles' primary purpose is to provide some of the evidence base that will inform the County Donegal Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) for the period 2023- 2029. Moreover, this profile can be used, for a much broader set of functions, by Donegal County Council and by other organisations, individuals, and the private sector.

The information as outlined below provides a summary outline about the economy and the communities in Donegal.

In line with the Socio- Economic Profile the summary is categorised as follows:

- Demographics/Social Indicators.
- Health.
- Education.
- Housing.
- Economy.
- Environment and
- Agriculture.

To ensure the LECP delivers for the communities in Donegal , over the course of the LECP 2023-2029, Donegal County Council will review and update this data to inform emerging actions and in response to an ever-changing environment.

Please refer to Appendix A Socio-Economic Profile – Q1/2023 for further detail. Please also note statistics as presented are the most current available data up to Q1/2023.

An additional and very serious issue impacting communities in Donegal is the impact of defective concrete blocks.

The issue of damaged homes and other priorities affected by defective concrete blocks in County Donegal has been the topic of much conversation for many years at this stage. The Government has introduced an Enhanced Defective Concrete Blocks Grant Scheme, to remediate affected homes. The Council administers the Scheme on behalf of Government. While the Enhanced Scheme is in place to remediate homes, it must be acknowledged that there are broader wellbeing impacts on households in the county. The fear and concerns within households has dominated family life for years, and a cross agency approach is required to support those families in this regard, separate from the actual Scheme to remediate homes.

The issue of DCBs is referenced in the Socio – Economic Profile, though hard data in terms of numbers is scant. It is entirely appropriate and given the scale and impact of the issue that specific reference to DCB is provided for in the Integrated Framework LECP.

Defective Concrete Block is having, and will continue to have a severe impact, economically, socially, and in terms of health and wellbeing in the county, affecting communities and homeowners in very substantial numbers. The full extent of the issue is not yet clear, and cannot be fully assessed at this time, and it is likely there will not be full clarity of the scope of the issue for some time to come.

It is clear however that DCB is a challenge which will have to be addressed in all of its aspects.

There is a serious issue in relation to the replacement of dwellings and ensuring that there is adequate capacity in the building sector to address this need and to meet the ongoing emerging demand. There is also an opportunity in this context to adopt a green and sustainable approach in terms of construction, to best serve homeowners and tenants long term needs and welfare.

There is also a need to recognise and to work to address the detrimental effects of this crisis on the wellbeing of communities, including young people, and on the health of individuals. The LECP will act as a platform for cooperation and collaborative actions between all relevant stakeholders to address the various issues relating DCBs in the most effective and sustainable way possible.

## Our Communities.

County Donegal is the fourth largest county in Ireland with a surface area of 4,860 km<sup>2</sup> with 1,106km of coastline - the third-longest in the country. According to the most recent Census of Population (2022), County Donegal has a resident population of 167,084. Thus, population density is 34.2 persons per km<sup>2</sup> – the fifth lowest among the counties of Ireland.

Donegal is predominantly a rural county, and while the population of the North-West Metropolitan City Region – encompassing Derry, Letterkenny and Strabane – has been growing over recent years, the majority of the county’s population reside in smaller towns, villages and the rural countryside. County Donegal has experienced an overall population increase over recent decades, though this increase is not immediately nor equally evident across the county, and rural depopulation remains a challenge in several communities. The data presented here indicates that while the City Region has attained a level of demographic vitality, there are persistent structural weaknesses in the south and west of the county associated with an ageing of the population and, until recently little inward migration.

In terms of nationality and ethnicity, County Donegal is more homogenous than most other Irish counties, 7% of our population have non-Irish residency compared to a national average of 12%. This profile has changed dramatically in most recent years, and over the past year, communities across the county have been welcoming and hosting people coming from Ukraine, many of whom are now working in the county and contributing to civic life. Donegal is home to the second highest number of persons who have arrived from Ukraine and proportionally the highest number of asylum seekers in the country.

While there is a high rate of vacancy, informed in part by the number of holiday homes in the county, housing in Donegal remains relatively affordable. Census 2022 reports that in Donegal 70% of households own their own home, with a further 23% renting. This compares with 66% of households owning their home nationally and 28% renting.

There has been employment growth across most sectors, 67,977 people (aged 15 and over) are at work in Donegal, an increase of 9,624 people (+16%) between 2016 and 2022.

Health-related data show positive features, such as better access to primary care and lower cancer incidence, but preparations are needed to support our ageing population. Census 2022 reports that 83% of Donegal people stated their health as good or very good, similar to the national trend.

The Pobal Deprivation Index outlines swathes of the county as areas of disadvantage, and while statistics are quantitative, they may not wholly reflect the quality of life in Donegal.

### Demographics/Social Indicators

- Of the 26 counties, Donegal has the 12th highest population in the State at 167,084 and accounts for just over 3% of the national population.
- The county's population increased by 4.5%, compared with 8.1% for the State.
- Donegal's population is projected to increase by 10% over the next 20 years, accompanied by significant ageing.
- 12% of our population live in our larger urban areas of Letterkenny and Buncrana.
- There are considerable variations within the county in terms of demographic vitality; Inishowen MD - a growth rate of 2.4%, Letterkenny-Milford MD growth rate of 7%.
- The Letterkenny-Derry Axis has the fastest-growing and most youthful population in the County, 33.6% of our population in the County is -24years old.
- Southwest Donegal experiences the lowest population growth and has the oldest age profile.
- There are over 9200 refugees living in Donegal.
- County Donegal has the highest level of disadvantage in Ireland according to the Pobal HP Index, with almost 30% or c.50,000 people living in areas classified as disadvantaged.
- 88% of our residents live in smaller towns, villages, or farming areas, and over 40% of the population resides in areas classified as highly rural/remote.
- Almost 7% of the county's resident workforce is employed in the primary sector - agriculture, fishing and forestry
- Killybegs and Greencastle account for est 10% of the population employed in AFF
- Agriculture plays a crucial role in society and the economy, with Donegal being the 6th largest county acreage farmed relative to other counties:
- Farming in East Donegal is more intensive due to low-lying position and fertile soils, while coastal areas have marginal farming conditions.
- Specialist sheep farms make up 45% of farms in Donegal, the highest proportion in Ireland.
- Specialist beef farms account for 32.8% of farms, and field crops are present in just over 7% of farms (confined to east of county)
- Almost 15% of the population resides in the Gaeltacht, which is mainly located in the West and Southwest as well as along coastal fringes.
- 59,130 (35%) of people in Donegal stated they could speak Irish, with 7,750 (5%) using Irish daily.
- Around 23% in Donegal work from home at least one day per week, compared to a 32% national average.

### New Communities.

DONEGAL – REV/C

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In the previous couple of years Ireland has seen an upsurge in asylum applications, most particularly in 2023 – Donegal currently is home to the highest proportion of asylum seekers nationally, relative to county population. While further consideration is now necessary in terms of the impact on tourist accommodation, most especially in seaside villages, these new communities also present opportunities to develop and encourage social and knowledge capital from in-migration, especially given the rapid increase in refugees from Ukraine:

- There are over 9200 refugees living in Donegal.
- 1660 persons with International Protection Status are living in commercial accommodation.
- c. 7550 new arrivals from Ukraine
- Non-Irish nationals made up just over 7% of the population in Census 2022

#### Health and Wellbeing

- According to census data, there is better access to primary care services and lower cancer incidents in Donegal, 86% of Donegal people declared their health as good or very good, similar to the national trend.
- About 10% of the population live alone
- Pobal Index identifies particular economic and social disadvantage in the Glenties, Donegal, and Inishowen Municipal Districts.
- The average age of the population is 40.1 years, compared to the national average of 38.8 years.
- There were +25,900 retired people in Donegal in 2022, an increase of 16% from 2016, 16% of the population are aged 65+ , with the highest percentage of older people living in Southwest Donegal.
- 22.2% of the population identify with a disability to any extent and which is comparable with the rest of the Country. (2022)

#### Education

- Letterkenny is home to the Atlantic Technological University ATU, who working in partnership with the Ulster of University - provide a strong third level educational offering servicing Donegal and the wider North and Western Region, along with FET provider Donegal ETB
- There are 127 Primary Schools teaching almost 180,000 children.
- There are 27 Post Primary Schools in Donegal.

- County Donegal has a relatively low pupil-to-teacher ratio at primary level and a higher proportion of mixed-gender (co-educational) schools compared to the state average, which is welcome.

- The number of DEIS schools in the County

Nonetheless there are a number of ongoing challenges to be addressed:

- County Donegal has the lowest level of educational attainment among adults in Ireland.
- Over 20% of the population aged 15 and above in County Donegal do not have a second-level education qualification, c.8% higher than the State average.
- The proportion of adults who did not progress beyond primary school is over 30% in several rural parts of the county.
- County Donegal has the fifth-lowest proportion of persons with a third level qualification.
- The county, especially its rural parts, has a relatively low proportion of persons with a technical, apprenticeship or certificate qualification.
- Then need for Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) provision is more comprehensive in County Donegal than in any other local authority area in Ireland.

### Housing

- 73% of homes in Donegal are owner-occupied - 44% of which do not have a mortgage.
- The average sale price of a home in Donegal in December 2022 was €188,060, the fourth lowest among the thirty-one local authority areas in the country.
- Only 12.7% of households rent from a private landlord, the lowest proportion among counties in Ireland.
- Almost 10% of the population rent their homes from the Local Authority or an approved housing body.
- The average monthly rent in Donegal is €721.00, the lowest in the country.
- Typically, houses make up a substantial portion of housing stock in Donegal while flats/apartments constitute for less than 4%
- The housing vacancy rate in Donegal is 11.4%, higher than the state average. While the figures in respect of vacancy might suggest that there is a significant untapped housing stock, the reality is that almost half of the houses are vacant because the owner is deceased (22%) or because the property is a rental property (24%)
- There are substantial numbers of holiday homes in Donegal, over one in seven housing units in Donegal is an unoccupied holiday home – the highest proportionally in Ireland.

- 8% of assessed housing stock in Donegal boasts a Building Energy Rating (BER) of B2 or higher, ranking the county as the third lowest performing in the State.
- 85% of households in Donegal rely on fossil fuels for home heating, with oil being the predominant source and coal usage in Donegal ranking highest in the country at 11%.

### Partners and Networks

There is a well-established culture of partnership which has been engendered and pursued in the county from the time of preparation of the Donegal Strategy for Economic, Social, and Cultural Development 2002-2012. We work with 37 Elected Members, the LCDC, 6 Strategic Policy Committees: Community Social & Culture, Economic Development, Enterprise & Emergency Services, Roads and Transportation, Housing & Corporate, Climate Action & Environment and Planning, a number of cross border networks including for example ICBAN, North-West Regional Growth Partnership, and a strong PPN network - there are over 715 community groups registered with the PPN. Including the Donegal Tourism Forum, the Donegal Agricultural Committee and the Donegal Fisheries Committee.

The LCDC, the Donegal Local Community Development Committee, is made up of public and private sector members, including local authority members and officials, State agencies, private sector and local and community development representatives, who working in partnership, prepare the community elements of the 6-year Local Economic and Community Plan -LECP, coordinate, manage and oversee the implementation of local and community development programmes, and coordinate local and community development activity in Donegal with the aim of reducing overlaps, avoiding duplication and improving the targeting of resources. There are 19 members on the LCDC, with administrative and technical support provided by Donegal County Council.

### Our Economy

We are part of the North-West City Region, which along with our partners in DCSDC is the fourth largest urban agglomeration on the island of Ireland; and the only functional economic region of such scale on the island which experiences a national jurisdictional border. Through the RSES, Letterkenny is identified as a Regional Growth Centre, and provides a framework for growth and investment to build its function as the primary urban centre in Donegal. Letterkenny is also part of a Cross Border Network - the North-West Metropolitan City Region (Letterkenny/Derry/Strabane). This network is identified in the National Planning Framework (Ireland 2040) as being a key enabler of regional growth and prosperity across Donegal, Derry and Tyrone.

## NWRA/Region in Transition/NUTS

The value of economic activity in Ireland is measured by the CSO in accordance with Eurostat Nomenclature of Territorial Units (NUTS) classification used by Eurostat. Donegal is included in the Border NUTS2 Region for statistical purposes along with Leitrim, Sligo, Cavan, and Monaghan. CSO figures show that the Border region lags significantly behind all other regions in Ireland in terms of economic activity and value added.

Donegal is part of this border area, which has developed as a unique region within the North-West. This border region evidences many unique challenges and opportunities, for both economic collaboration and community development, and this will be further enhanced through the improved interconnectivity at Lifford-Strabane as a result of the A5/N14/N15 link, providing significant potential for further economic, social and cultural development. This unique border region has particular characteristics as regards trade, currency fluctuation, shared history, culture and heritage as well as the shared legacy and impact of the troubles. It is also distinctive in terms of its role in providing the backbone of strategic roads infrastructure to the County. Through the collaborative work of the Local Authorities in the region, significant partnerships, such as the North-West Strategic Growth Partnership have been established in recognition of the cross-border dynamic, and in order to promote a coordinated approach with regard to economic, social and cultural development on a cross border basis.

In terms of infrastructure and connectivity, the county is poorly connected both internally and externally. There are no rail or motorway links to Donegal from the rest of Ireland.

Economically, County Donegal boasts a largely indigenous enterprise base, with most employers being Irish firms, and a smaller proportion in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)-based companies. Small local firms dominate the business landscape, employing over 75% of the population.

The nature of work in County Donegal has seen limited change over the medium term, with the agricultural, and construction sectors retaining a significant share of employment. The county struggles with persistently high unemployment rates, especially in the western region and in some eastern blackspots. Low disposable income, dependence on state transfers, and a concerning level of educational under-achievement contribute to the economic challenges faced by the population.

The Common Fisheries Policy has had a significant impact on the fishing sector in Donegal. In more recent years this sector has seen a substantial decrease in tonnage, and in quota levels and this has had a detrimental impact on employment in the industry (including inshore fishing), and on the processing sector in the county. There is substantial activity in the county which is seeking to address this at policy and at industry levels. The DCC Fisheries Committee, and fishermen's and producers' representative bodies are to the fore in this effort. It is recognised that the county, and ports such as Killybegs, Burtonport and Greencastle and small coastal fishing communities across the county have suffered from decline, but that they still offer a significant resource for future activity and employment in the region.

Despite these challenges, County Donegal holds further significant untapped potential in tourism. Renowned for its scenic beauty, the county has been recognised internationally, with *Lonely Planet* ranking it as the "Fourth Best Place to Visit in the World" in 2024. However, tourist numbers and business lag other Irish counties, presenting an opportunity for growth. The Wild Atlantic Way Strategy 2022-2026 by Fáilte Ireland aims to unlock this tourism potential, emphasising year-round appeal, improved infrastructure, branding and marketing, and strengthening links across the island.

#### Largely Indigenous Enterprise Base

- There has been an increase in the number of active enterprises in the county, mainly in the construction sector (25%) and the motor trade (10%)
- County Donegal's employment growth has been stronger in indigenous enterprises than in FDI enterprises in recent years.
- Small firms (<50 employees) dominate the business demography in the county, employing over 75% of people, and 90% of these firms employ fewer than 10 people.
- The County Donegal Local Enterprise Office (LEO) supported 259 client businesses and helped create 1,539 jobs. A total of 321 new jobs were created in 2023.
- County Donegal has the second-lowest level of out-bound commuting in Ireland (10% of workforce), with County Derry being the main destination.
- Letterkenny and its environs, followed by Buncrana, Ballybofey-Stranorlar, Donegal Town, Carndonagh and Killybegs are the most significant employment locations.
- Highest unemployment rates are in West Donegal, and Lifford/Raphoe in East Donegal

#### Our Changing Workforce

- Census 2022 reports there were 67,977 people (aged 15 and over) at work in Donegal, an increase of 9,624 people (+16%) between 2016 and 202, most of whom were in full-time employment, with nearly 48,000 people in this category, compared with over 13,700 who were working part-time.
- Over 25% of jobs in County Donegal are in professional services (3rd highest rate in Ireland), with higher values in the north and west of the county especially Letterkenny.

- County Donegal has lower participation rates in the labour force and workforce at 57% compared to the state at 61% and other counties in the Border Region; among females the rate was 52% while for males it was 63%. Nationally the trend was similar at 56% for female labour force participation and 67% for males.
- There are almost 8,500 persons, and the largest cohort of employees working in the Human Health and Social Work Activities sector in Donegal, wholesale and retail trade was the next largest, employing over 8,300 workers followed by Education with more than 7,600 workers.
- Relative to the State, the county has a higher proportion of workforce employed in sectors like agriculture, forestry, and fishing; building and construction; public administration; professional services; and 'other'
- Manufacturing employment at c.9% is less significant in County Donegal compared to the state and other border counties – most of this employment is in southwest Donegal.
- Commerce and trade employ around 20% of the workforce, with higher values in larger towns
- Letterkenny and its environs, followed by Buncrana, Ballybofey-Stranorlar, Donegal Town, Carndonagh, Killybegs and industries supported by Údarás na Gaeltachta in West Donegal, are the most significant employment locations in the county, as has been the case for many years.
- Primary sector employment (agriculture, fishing, and forestry) is around 7% in the county, with higher values in certain areas such as Killybegs, Greencastle and East Donegal.
- Farming in East Donegal remains intensive due to low-lying position and fertile soils, while coastal areas continue to have marginal farming conditions.
- Specialist sheep farms remain dominant: making up 45% of farms in Donegal, the highest proportion in Ireland.
- Specialist beef farms account for 32.8% of farms, and field crops are present in just over 7% of farms - typically to east of county.
- The median standard output per farm in 2020 at €7,316 in Donegal continues to be the lowest in Ireland compared to other counties.
- There is an east-west gradient in farm types, land utilisation, and standard output in Donegal - with larger acreages in the upland farms but more intensive production and output in the Finn and Foyle River Valleys to the east.

#### Unemployment

- Unemployment in Donegal has dropped from 18% in 2016 to 11% in 2022, though is still high compared to 8.8% in the Northern & Western Region and 8.3% in the State. The highest unemployment rates are in West Donegal, Lifford, Raphoe, and their surroundings.

- County Donegal consistently has a higher level of unemployment compared to most other local authority areas in Ireland , with 6% of the population is in long term unemployment which is one of the highest in the country.

#### Disposable Income

- The median household income in County Donegal at €32,259 is €13,000 lower than the state average and is the lowest among all local authority areas in Ireland.
- Over 20% of households rely on social welfare transfers for most of their income, and over 18% depend on the State pension.
- Disposable income per person in County Donegal is the fourth lowest among the twenty-six counties in Ireland.

## Our Environment.

Donegal is home to the Sliabh Liag cliffs located in the south of the County - among the highest seas cliffs in Europe, Ireland's highest sea arch, Pollet Arch, close to Fanad Lighthouse in Fanad - Ireland's most northerly point, Malin Head, and Glenveagh National Park - which is one of only six National Parks in Ireland.

Nestled within the protective embrace of its special conservation areas, County Donegal continues to demonstrate a commitment to preserving its natural treasures.

Glenveagh National Park and its magnificent coastal inlets are among the designated Special Protection Areas (SPAs) in the County, safeguarding the landscapes that form the backbone of the county's wonderful quality of life and growing tourism industry. Legal protection of sea and landscapes under the Natura 2000 Framework is predominantly concentrated in the picturesque west, with much of West Donegal designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), encompassing the majestic Glenveagh National Park and other significant sites.

Donegal's resource value and high-quality environment is reflected in the significant number of environmental designations across the County:

- 30% of the County is designated including, Natural Heritage Areas, National Park, Ramsar sites, Nature Reserves, Geological Heritage Sites and Special Protected Areas and Special Areas of Conservation.
- In 2023 Donegal has 12 designated blue flag beaches and 2 blue flag marinas, together with 4 green coasts.

In terms of energy generation, County Donegal is emerging as a pioneering force, hosting the highest number of connected wind farms in Ireland at 30%. These contribute to over 10% of the nation's total wind energy export capacity.

In contrast to these eco-conscious strides, Donegal faces challenges in waste disposal, sending the highest proportion of domestic waste in Ireland to landfill. In addition, septic tank use is estimated to be servicing in excess of 30,000 homes.

While the county is doing well in sustainable energy, its transportation landscape requires further strategic investment.

We are a rurally dispersed county with scattered public transport provision, as such personal vehicles remain the primary mode of domestic travel, with most people relying on private car ownership, 63% using cars for travel to work, and almost all agricultural, commercial, and public transport serviced by diesel power.



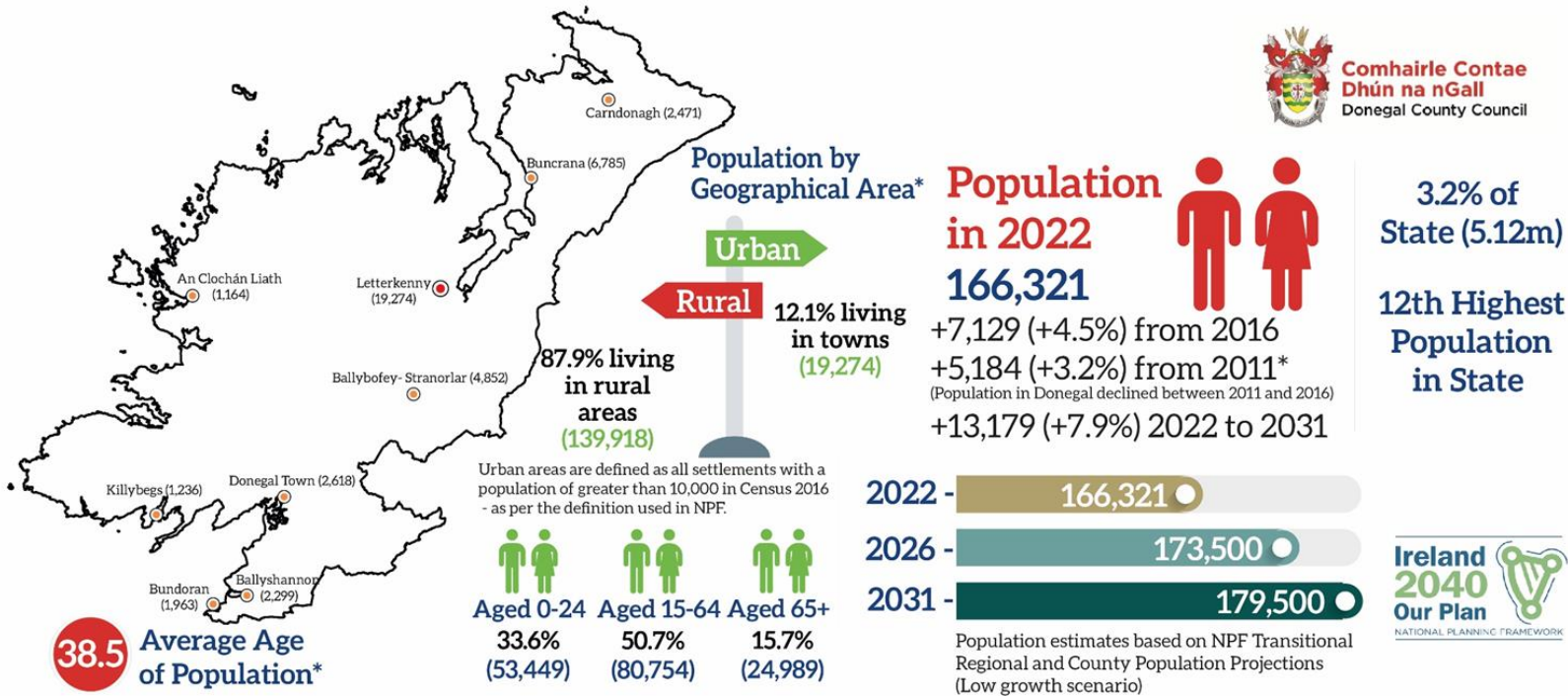
Most people in Donegal travel an average of 19.6km to work while 20,458 of the county's residents have a less than 15-minute commute. The majority of people in Donegal travel by car: 40,918 are drivers while 26,613 are passengers.

There is a growing interest in electric and hybrid cars, evidenced by a significant increase in car sales in the county in 2022/23, and a further need to improve the current network of fast-charging points to accommodate the changing preferences of drivers, with a focus on sustainability and energy efficiency driving car production.

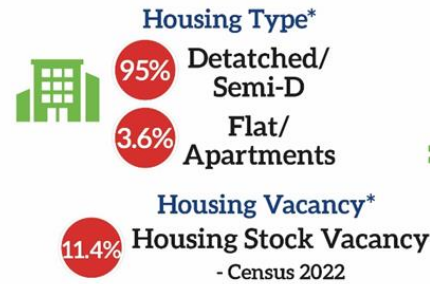
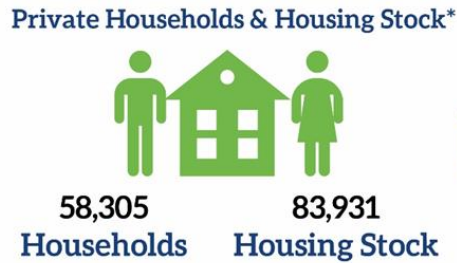
As the county strives for sustainability under the Donegal County Council Climate Action Plan 2024 – 2029, balancing conservation efforts with energy-efficient practices remains a critical task for Co. Donegal.

DRAFT

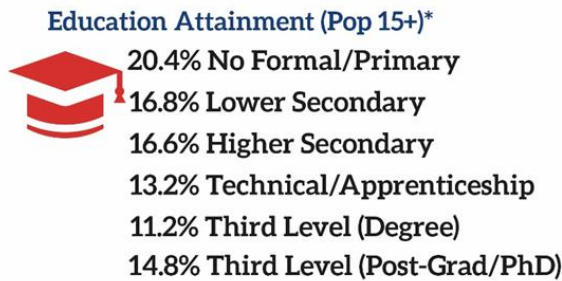
Key Facts & Figures



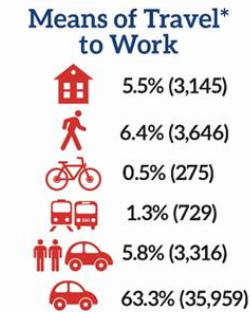
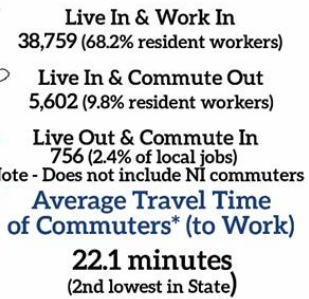
Homes & Housing



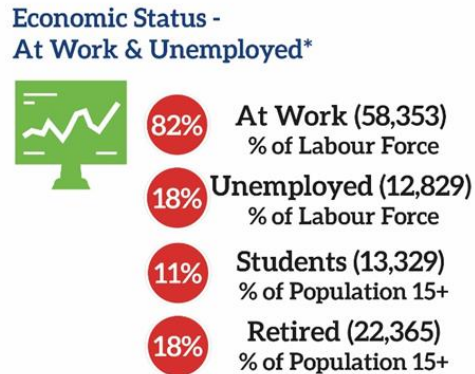
Education



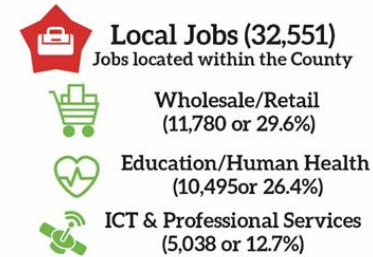
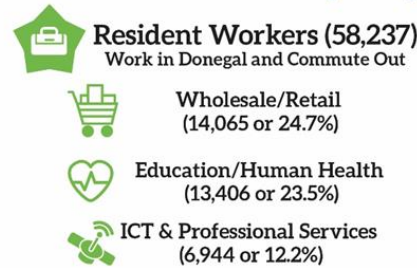
**Commuter Flows in Donegal County\***



Economy, Jobs & Income



**Top 3 Employment Sectors\***



## 4. Our Stakeholders

### Principle of Engagement

The approach implemented in developing the Donegal LECP 2023-2029, is based on one of *Collaboration, Cooperation and Partnership*.

There is a well-established culture of partnership which has been engendered and pursued in the county from the time of preparation of the Donegal Strategy for Economic, Social, and Cultural Development 2002-2012. This was the approach adopted in the previous LECP, and one which has been built upon in delivering this current LECP to 2029.

There are substantial benefits to be gained working collaboratively in partnership, going some way to ensure that best results can be achieved in the preparation, and in the implementation of plans. It is an approach that must be and is constantly refreshed and reinforced in all ways possible. The investment of time and effort in nurturing this approach is recognised as being worthwhile and as one that produces positive results and a good return on the effort expended. The value of the various partnership and collaborative platforms that operate in the county is recognised as providing the key enabling infrastructure for the planning and for the implementation of actions, providing a basis for synergy, shared learning, ensuring optimum use of resources.

This approach will ensure that the Plan is based on a *'Shared Vision'* and *'buy in'* from all relevant stakeholders. This shared ownership provides access to the broadest possible base of knowledge, experience, expertise, and networks, and adds considerable value to the content of the plan. The creation of synergies and the pooling of resources is acknowledged as the best way, not only to prepare the plan, but also to ensure the most effective implementation.



The diagram above outlines the interactions and consultations that have taken place between the various stakeholders involved in the preparation of the Donegal LECP 2023-2029.

### Communications Strategy.

The importance of stakeholder engagement in formulating the LECP; having a focused approach, and promoting partnership in its implementation, were the key messages from the review of the first LECP 2016-2021, and in turn informed the detail and methodology of the Communications Strategy and Programme of Engagement informing the development of the Donegal Integrated Framework LECP to 2029.

Coincidentally the development of the Peace Plus programme and the Local Development Strategy were ongoing at the same time as the LECP. In this regard and building further on our shared vision and supported by considered feedback from our elected Members, members of the LCDC and members from the EESSPC, a Joint Programme of Public Engagement was designed, in the first instance, concentrating on general public/community engagement.

Flowing from this a programme of interactive workshops ran over nine nights in May/June 2023, where we shared the DRAFT Vision and HLG, asked those in attendance for written feedback and to share their aspirations and concerns for Donegal, the outcome of which then informed key emerging themes.

A further focused programme of 28 workshops, concentrating on these key emerging themes took place later in November through to mid-December 2023 with a range of Sectoral Platforms, Representative Groups, Local Authority Committees (both elected members and various executive fora) and specific engagements with relevant Agency Representatives. Attendees at these workshops were drawn from the Local Authority, State Agencies, Educational Bodies, the Local Development Sector, Social Partners, the Community and Voluntary Sector, Elected Representatives, Business Interests, and Sectoral Representatives.

The workshops during both stages were well attended, and there was active engagement from the various attendees who represented Communities and relevant Stakeholders from the Economic, Social, Cultural, and Environmental Sectors. This active engagement was informed by experience of the previous LECP, and by the very well-established *Cooperative, Partnership and Collaborative Approach* that has been developed, and that has been nurtured in the county. This recognition of the integrated nature of the Plan, and of the *commonalities, interdependence, and potential for synergies across sectors, underpinned the discussions* which took place in and around the workshops. The combined knowledge, experience and expertise that was brought to bear in these workshops was invaluable in analysing, refining, and adding value to the draft goals, and to the identification of the objectives and actions which form the building blocks for achievement of these goals, and of the overall *Shared Vision*.

The issues most affecting the county, the challenges being faced, and the opportunities that can be sustainably harnessed were identified across all sectors. It was recognised that the county was working in an uncertain and volatile environment, and was subject to unprecedented, ongoing, and inevitable change.

The workshops addressed and discussed the considerable challenges facing the county, but also viewed the LECP as an opportunity to highlight the areas of potential for the county, and to identify ways of sustainably managing this potential for achievement of the greatest community benefit. The participants in the process also recognised as an imperative that the Plan be ambitious for the county, and for communities in the county, and that all stakeholders should be encouraged and supported in stretching to achieve best results.

A variety of engagement methods were provided to ensure access to discussion was available to as many people across the county as possible, including, in person interactive workshop, in person one to one meetings, telephone and virtual conversations, sectoral meetings and written submissions.

In total approximately 620 persons attended the interactive/in person workshops, followed up then with further virtual meetings, one to one conversation and an estimated 85+ written submissions.

The process was hugely productive and as well as informing the detail of the LECP, facilitated introductions across sectors most especially in relation to climate and the bioeconomy. Stakeholders were overwhelmingly positive in their involvement, generous in their time and in sharing of knowledge. It is acknowledged there are some particular challenges to be addressed in Donegal, equally and arguably more important, the willingness, indeed eagerness to work together, align our thoughts, pool resources and to work together will guide and go some way to address these challenges.

As part of this process, it is important Our Stakeholders are acknowledged for the time and energy they have afforded, working with the local authority and with wider related sector agencies informing the detail of the LECP, guiding the strategic sustainable development of the County. The principle of engagement is to work together collaboratively, the value of collaboration nurtures creativity and fosters ownership.

The comments learned through the programme of engagement and collaboration where considered, the detail of which informed the review of the Draft Vision and High-Level Goals and as is illustrated in the table below:

Please also refer to Appendix B Consultation Report for further information.

Draft Vision	Stakeholder Feedback	What We Did
<i>County Donegal is climate resilient, healthy, socially inclusive, culturally diverse, connected, innovative and economically vibrant - offering an excellent quality of life for all its people.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is a Shared Vision</li> <li>• Strong endorsement of reference to climate</li> <li>• Aligned with CDP/Strong Message</li> <li>• Reference to people is important</li> <li>• Donegal is already culturally diverse</li> </ul>	<p>To Read as 'Shared Vision'</p> <p>Retain and amend to read: <i>'socially and culturally inclusive'</i></p>
Draft High Level Goal	Stakeholder Feedback	What We Did
D/HLG1: <i>County Donegal is a climate-resilient society, with environmental sustainability being central to all our decisions and actions.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate climate is the 1<sup>st</sup> HLG</li> <li>• Timely</li> <li>• Ambitious</li> <li>• Demonstrate how we value our land/sea scape</li> </ul>	Retain and include to read: <i>'valuing our rich natural capital'</i>
D/HLG2: <i>Our Communities and places are strong resilient, active, healthy, connected, inclusive, serviced and empowered</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Important Goal</li> <li>• Local volunteers driving community development</li> <li>• Reflect the people in our communities</li> <li>• Importance of Identity and Belonging/Pride of Place</li> </ul>	Retain and expand to include; <i>'proud' and 'drivers for sustainable development and placemaking'</i>
D/HLG3 <i>Donegal is a welcoming and accessible place, which is enriched by our unique culture, diversity, heritage, scenic amenities and natural environment.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Important Goal</li> <li>• Local volunteers driving community development</li> <li>• Reflect the people in our communities</li> <li>• Importance of Identity and Belonging/Pride of Place</li> </ul>	Proposed redraft to merge the first parts of HLG3 & HLG4 reference to accessibility, inclusivity and community
D/HLG4 <i>County Donegal is a network of great communities with place-making, place-based identity and enabling infrastructure as key drivers.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confusing/Not really sure what it means</li> <li>• Is there too much going on</li> <li>• Enabling Infrastructure warrants a dedicated Goal</li> </ul>	Proposed redraft to include a separate Goal for enabling infrastructure
D/HLG5 <i>County Donegal is a competitive, innovative and attractive location for investment, supporting quality employment.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reference to SME's in the County</li> <li>• The need to maintain/retain employment</li> <li>• Provide adequate supports to expand</li> <li>• Reference to Local/Global economy</li> </ul>	Retain and expand to include reference to: <i>maintain/support</i>
D/HLG6: <i>County Donegal is a place of opportunity for life-long learning, creativity and innovation driven by collaborative partnership</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Importance of apprenticeships</li> <li>• Value of ATU in the County and supporting our people in education</li> <li>• Links to industry/importance of options</li> </ul>	Retain and expand to include reference to; <i>support/nurture/enable</i>

The stakeholder feedback as outlined above informed a revised Shared Vision and 7 High-Level Goals as outlined below:

The SHARED VISION of the Donegal LECP to 2029 seeks to ensure that:

***Donegal is climate resilient, healthy, socially, and culturally inclusive, connected, innovative, collaborative, and economically vibrant - offering an excellent quality of life for all its people.***

The 7 High Level Goals of the Donegal LECP - 2029 seek to ensure:

- HLG1:** *“Donegal is a climate resilient society, valuing our rich natural capital, with environmental sustainability central to all our decisions and actions.”*
- HLG2:** *“Donegal values, protects, and sustains our rich culture, heritage, languages, and landscape.”*
- HLG3:** *“Our communities are drivers for sustainable development and placemaking – and are strong, resilient, active, healthy, safe, connected, serviced, proud and empowered. ”*
- HLG4:** *“Donegal is an inclusive, accessible, and welcoming place, offering opportunity and a good quality of life for all sections of the community.”*
- HLG5:** *“Donegal is a SMART connected county, internally and externally, supported by the necessary enabling infrastructure – human, capital and governance”*
- HLG6:** *“Donegal is a competitive, innovative, attractive, supportive location for investment and enterprise, offering and maintaining quality employment.”*
- HLG7:** *“Donegal is a place of opportunity for lifelong learning and skills development, nurturing and driving creativity and innovation.”*



## 5. SCOT Analysis

This section identifies key Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities and Threats (SCOT) relevant to the development of Donegal over the lifetime of the plan to 2029.

This has been prepared following the development of a detailed socio-economic analysis of the county, a review of a number of recently published documents and strategies, an analysis of the previous LECP -2022 for Donegal, and feedback from the Programme of Engagement 2023.

It has also been supplemented through feedback and comments received from the LECP Advisory Steering Group, LCDC, Economic & Emergency Services SPC and Donegal County Council Divisional Managers.

The SCOT can be defined as :

- Strengths      Current Advantages
- Challenges    Current Challenges
- Opportunities Future Strengths
- Threats        Future Challenges

Please also refer to Appendix A: Socio Economic Profile SCOT Analysis Page 119 for further information.

Celebrating our strengths and acknowledging these challenges informs the work we strive to do across the County through the LECP.

Strengths	Challenges
<p>Our People Our Coastline – Our Access to the Sea Our Landscape Our Location Our Welcome</p> <p>Our Ambition</p> <p>Our Diaspora</p> <p>Strong Donegal Brand/Identity Established &amp; Strong Collaborative Culture of Working Together Strong Global Network Strong Community Network Strong Health Sector</p> <p>Good Quality of Life/Living Good Water/Air Quality? Increasing and younger population Aging Demographic</p> <p>Affordable Housing Letterkenny – University Town Strong SME Sector – typically family run/intergenerational Good Digital Connectivity Good Digital Infrastructure – Hubs Established Destination - WAW Large Gaeltacht Region Rich Island Culture</p>	<p>Defective Concrete Blocks</p> <p>Our Location Access – Road Infrastructure is Poor Fractured Public Transport Provision No Rail Access</p> <p>Limited Availability of public realm in Towns and Villages High Rate of Housing Vacancy Low Availability of Childcare Declining Use of the Irish Language High Car Dependency Shortage of Skills/Apprenticeships</p> <p>No Gas Network High dependency on landfill for waste disposal</p> <p>Aging Demographic High Level of Unemployment High Level of Dependence on State Low Disposable Income</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>Build the Donegal Brand</p> <p>Improve Educational Attainment Develop Research and Innovation – food/marine/Agric sector. Support SME's Attract FDI - MedTech Our Access to the Sea Roads Increase Housing Supply Improve Building Energy Ratings Aging Demographic - Silver Economy</p> <p>Encourage social and knowledge capital from in-migration. Improve Electrical Infrastructure – EV charging points. Enhance recreational amenity, cycleways, walks, paths, trails. Eco-Tourism/Regenerative Tourism Improve Option Awareness Nurture Strong Creative Support Networks Improve Public Realm in Towns and Villages</p>	<p>Brexit Currency Fluctuation Rates AI – Virtual Technology</p> <p>Increased Reliance on Community &amp; Voluntary Sector Declining Numbers of Volunteers</p> <p>Compromise Our Landscape Brain Drain of Young People Loss of traditional skills/knowledge</p> <p>Lack of Understanding &amp; Awareness Lack of Preparedness</p> <p>Increased/Continued disparity in demographic social and economic indicators between County Donegal and the rest of IE Changing Consumer Behaviors</p>

Concentrating on the opportunities as outlined, the potential to develop further include:

- To attract and/or retain more people to live in the county—celebrating our people, our high quality of life, low housing density, low rents and affordable home prices, low pupil-to-teacher ratio, growing tertiary education facilities, clean environment, recreation, and great outdoor activities.
- To build on investments in primary/secondary/tertiary education to **improve educational attainment**, making the county more attractive to young people, who leave in large numbers, to stay in the County and further their education.
- To develop **research opportunities and innovation partnerships** with small business and industry through the Atlantic Technological University, the Northwest City Region and via cross-border collaboration with neighbouring Local Authorities.
- To further grow the wind energy and maritime sectors in Donegal
- To work with the new Failte Ireland Wild Atlantic Way Strategy 2022-2026 to invest in **high-quality tourism** attractions and activities based on the wild outdoors and stunning scenery –**benefiting particularly rural populations and coastal areas.**
- Given the demonstrated strength and creativity of **small business** in Donegal, this sector has the potential **to further provide support services** to a growing tourism sector e.g., visitor facilities and attractions, food and drink, accommodation, outdoor and water-based activities, camping etc.
- To further enhance environmental quality through the recently launched Government EV Strategy 2022-2025 (€100 million investment over 3 years) ‘to rapidly increase the number of **high-speed charging stations** in the county. 40% of new cars purchased in Donegal in 2022 were electric or hybrid, and manufacturers are phasing out fossil fuel cars guided by the European Commission in relation to **Climate Change**
- To expand farmers' participation in ecological initiatives and **high-nature value farming and/or diversification into other businesses** to assist in meeting Climate Change targets.
- To encourage and support more households, businesses, and communities to undertake **BER assessments and building/energy upgrades** to reduce fuel inefficiencies, improve comfort, and contribute to a reducing carbon footprint.
- To further harness the potential of the **Irish language and Gaeltacht** via networking with Gaelic-speaking communities in Scotland
- To develop and encourage **social and knowledge capital from in-migration.**
- To **attract FDI industry and high-tech workers to live in the county** combined with **improved transportation to the county** and clever branding around quality of life e.g., **motorway access** to Dublin and Belfast within 2.5 hours/‘work to live’ branding.
- To **promote active and public transport** for positive place-making, positive aging, and environmental protection
- To revitalise town and village centres, and address housing vacancy

## 7 Consistency of LECP with RSES and *DRAFT* Donegal County Development Plan 2024-2030

The LECP is responsible for implementing national and regional strategies at the local level, as such and as outlined in the LECP Guidelines 2021 it is critical the LECP integrates and complements the Northern and Western Regional Assembly's (NWRA) Regional Spatial Economic Strategy (RSES).

The RSES includes Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) organised under five main growth ambitions:

- Economy and Employment - Vibrant Region
- Environment - Natural Region
- Connectivity - Connected Region
- Quality of Life - Inclusive Region
- Infrastructure - Enabling our Region

These five growth ambitions are considered with a strong focus on **People and Places**, and aim to support a region that is: *Vibrant, Natural, Connected, Inclusive, and a Great Place to Live*, emphasising a new *place-based* approach that involves tapping into the economic potential that remains unused, so that all parts of the Northern and Western Region – whether they be cities, towns, or their rural hinterlands – can contribute to national development.

As noted in the 2021 guidelines of the LECPs – and in line with the Local Government Reform Act 2014 – the Donegal Integrated Framework LECP must be consistent with the NWRA RSES and the Donegal County Development Plan.

Considering this policy requirement, the NWRA prepared an *LECP Briefing Note for Donegal County Council* to highlight priority areas for inclusion in the County's LECP objectives and actions, the detail of which informed the development of the Donegal Integrated Framework LECP.

<b>LECP HIGH LEVEL GOALS</b>	<b>LECP OBJECTIVES 2023-2029</b>	<b>ALIGNMENT WITH CDP 2024-2030 <sup>1</sup></b>	<b>ALIGNMENT WITH RSES 2020-2032</b>
<p><b>GOAL 1 – Donegal is a climate resilient society, valuing our rich natural capital, with environmental sustainability central to all our decisions and actions.</b></p>	<p>Objective 1.1 To raise awareness, to nurture a greater understanding of climate-related issues and the potential benefits arising from climate action in the County.</p>	<p>CA-0-1: To promote sustainable settlement and transportation strategies in urban and rural areas including the promotion of measures to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. reduce energy demand in response to the likelihood of increases in energy and other costs due to long-term decline in non-renewable resources,</li> <li>b. reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions; and</li> <li>c. address the necessity of adaptation to climate change.</li> </ul>	<p>RPO 5.1: The Assembly will support through CARO and Local Authorities the preparation and implementation of Local Climate Strategies which will, inter alia, address vulnerability to climate risks and provide prioritised actions in accordance with the guiding principles of the National Adaptation Framework.</p>
	<p>Objective 1.2 To ensure that Environmental Sustainability is central to Planning and Decision Making:</p>	<p>AH-002: Promote the sustainable and sensitive re-use of the existing built heritage as a positive response to climate change and promote the circular economy and climate mitigation and adaptation through proper maintenance, repair, and appropriate retrofitting, adaptive re-use and regeneration employing best conservation practice.</p>	<p>RPO 9.4: Create Resilient Places and Low-Carbon Infrastructure by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Managing Natural Resources through adhering to the principles of the circular economy .....</li> </ul>
	<p>Objective 1.3 To raise awareness of and to support actions to protect and sustainably develop the county's natural capital and environment.</p>	<p>CA-0-2: To support and implement: the UN Sustainable Development Goals; Climate Action Plan 2023; Environmental Regional Policy Objectives of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy; and the Donegal Climate Adaptation Strategy.</p>	<p>S. 1.2 Policy Context: States that “The Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment has lead responsibility for promoting and overseeing national implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 SDGs.</p>
	<p>Objective 1.4 To promote and to support the development of the Circular Economy with particular</p>	<p>AH-002: As above</p>	<p>RPO 9.4: As above</p>

<sup>1</sup> The LECP Objectives closely mirror the Donegal County Development Plan 2018-2023, Parts A and Part B. However, specific cross-cutting themes from the emerging DRAFT CDP 2024-2030 are identified and set out in the table as these will be contemporaneous with the LECP Objectives 2023-2029.

LECP HIGH LEVEL GOALS	LECP OBJECTIVES 2023-2029	ALIGNMENT WITH CDP 2024-2030 <sup>1</sup>	ALIGNMENT WITH RSES 2020-2032
	reference to Objective SR2/SR3 of the LACAP		
<p><b>GOAL 2:</b> <i>Donegal values, protects and sustains our rich culture, heritage, languages and landscape.</i></p>	Objective 2.1 To promote and sustain the county's rich and diverse tapestry of culture.	CC-0-3: To protect and enhance the vibrancy of Donegal's cultural resource in a sustainable and socially inclusive manner including providing new arts and cultural infrastructure, new spaces for arts and culture in the public realm, quality public art, and enhanced creative/artistic spaces.	RPO 9.3: Nurturing the rural economy through protecting and promoting the sense of place and culture and the quality, character, and distinctiveness of the rural landscape, whilst facilitating the appropriately scaled development.....
	Objective 2.2 To promote and nurture the growth of Irish as a living community language in Donegal.	GAE-0-1: To sustain and strengthen the Irish Language, to protect the cultural heritage of, and facilitate the sustainable social, physical, cultural, and economic development of the Gaeltacht.	RPO 5.12: Support and assist the formulation and implementation of Irish Language Plans through the lead agency Údarás Na Gaeltachta, across the Gaeltacht areas and within Gaeltacht areas and within Gaeltacht service Towns. All future Development Plans and Local Area Plans shall be consistent with the Irish Language Plans, where applicable.
	Objective 2.3 To protect and enhance our unique and extensive heritage resource.	BIO-P-2: Ensure that all developments seek to conserve/protect the qualifying interests of Ramsar Sites, Nature Reserves, Natural Heritage Areas (NHA), proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA), and any species protected under the Wildlife Act ...	RPO 5.6: Develop awareness and create a greater appreciation of the benefits of our natural heritage, including on the health, wealth and well-being of the region's ecosystem services.
	Objective 2.4 To protect and nurture the county's authentic landscape and seascape.	L-0-1: To protect, manage and conserve the character, quality, and value of the Donegal landscape. L-P-3: To safeguard the scenic context, cultural landscape significance, recreational/tourism amenities, and environmental amenities of the County's coastline from inappropriate development, save for strategic infrastructure	RPO 5.2: Protect manage and conserve the quality, character and distinctiveness of our Landscapes and seascapes.

LECP HIGH LEVEL GOALS	LECP OBJECTIVES 2023-2029	ALIGNMENT WITH CDP 2024-2030 <sup>1</sup>	ALIGNMENT WITH RSES 2020-2032
		provision of overriding regional or national public interest.	
<b>GOAL 3:</b> <i>Our communities are drivers for sustainable development and placemaking – and are strong, resilient, active, healthy, safe, connected, serviced, proud and empowered.</i>	Objective 3.1 Working in partnership with our communities, prioritise the regeneration and revitalisation of our towns and villages.	TV-0-2: To support initiatives, including collaboration across the public, private and community and voluntary sectors, to strengthen and improve the physical environment of towns and village and encourage positive place-making.	RPO 3.4: To support the regeneration and renewal of small towns and villages in rural areas.
	Objective 3.2 To promote and support the Community and Voluntary Sector as drivers of development, service provision, and in maintaining vibrant communities.	TV-0-2: To support initiatives, including collaboration across the public, private and community and voluntary sectors, to strengthen and improve the physical environment of towns and villages and encourage positive place-making.	RPO 7.15: Encourage multi-agency approaches for delivering the health, social care, education and community services needed by growing, diverse or isolated communities.
	Objective 3.3 To support the upgrading of existing, and the development of additional Community Infrastructure, serving all sections of the community.	CC-P-1: Support the provision of new social and community infrastructure/service-related developments (e.g. childcare, education, healthcare, sports/recreational facilities, playgrounds, community resource centres sheltered housing, residential care/nursing homes, large scale cultural facilities etc)	RPO 7.15: Encourage multi-agency approaches for delivering the health, social care, education and community services needed by growing, diverse or isolated communities.
	Objective 3.4 To promote and support the participation of Young People in all aspects of community life.	CC-P-1: As above	S. 7.2 Inclusive Growth : To invest in our workforce, particularly our young people, develop our future workforce and ensure all of our people benefit from economic activity (Resilience: p.251).
	Objective 3.5 To promote and to support the development of Social Enterprises as economic, social , environmental, and cultural resources.	CC-P-1: As above	RPO 3.7.36: To deliver the Letterkenny Social Enterprise Centre and associated improved access to lands to the West of Neil T Blaney Road, as part of a wider Urban Regeneration project.
<b>GOAL 4:</b> <i>Donegal is an inclusive, accessible, and welcoming</i>	Objective 4.1 To ensure Donegal is socially inclusive facilitating access to opportunity for all sections of the Community.	CCG-0-1: To create sustainable, healthy, socially inclusive, and culturally vibrant communities with an optimum quality of life and high-quality childcare, education, recreational, and cultural	S.7.1 Growth Ambition 4: Over the past several years, a national consensus has emerged on the need for a more socially inclusive approach to generating economic growth (Introduction, para. 2, p. 246).

LECP HIGH LEVEL GOALS	LECP OBJECTIVES 2023-2029	ALIGNMENT WITH CDP 2024-2030 <sup>1</sup>	ALIGNMENT WITH RSES 2020-2032
<p><i>place, offering opportunity and a good quality of life for all sections of the community.</i></p>	<p>Objective 4.2 To ensure that Diversity is valued and recognised as a valuable community resource.</p>	<p>infrastructure and facilities and to integrate the planning and sustainable development of the County with the social, community and cultural requirements of its population.</p>	<p>S.4.3 Place-Based Assets: Achieving the vision for the whole region also means acknowledging its diversity in terms of place, people, and parts of the economy as well as how the region operates in the national and international arena (Para.1, p.146).</p>
	<p>Objective 4.3 To promote and support the health, community wellbeing and social care of all.</p>		<p>S.9.2 Working Together for Economic Advantage: Collaborative work at a sub-regional level on a cross-border basis is critical to the social, economic, cultural, and environmental wellbeing of communities (para.1, p.279).</p>
<p><b>GOAL 5:</b> <i>Donegal is a SMART connected county, internally and externally, supported by the necessary enabling infrastructure –human, capital and governance.</i></p>	<p>Objective 5.1 To ensure that Donegal adopts a Smart approach to all aspects of development across all sectors.</p>	<p>ED-0-21: To facilitate, where appropriate, proposals to enhance the Metropolitan Area Networks, all ICT resources and infrastructure to achieve sustainable economic development and support the initiatives contained in the Donegal Digital Action Plan.</p>	<p>RPO 6.47: Promote a local and regional ‘Open Data’ policy and build a Regional Data Infrastructure platform - data is at the basis of the smart approach. Data infrastructure is a shared technological platform where data can be collected, processed, shared, and analysed from across the region.</p>
	<p>Objective 5.2 To facilitate coordinated, collaborative and effective development and service delivery across the County.</p>	<p>S-0-4: To support the development and implementation of a sustainable economic model for County Donegal embracing growth in areas such as innovation, research and development, rural diversification, tourism initiatives, energy advances and the promotion of sustainable start up enterprises as an integral component of accelerating socio-economic growth throughout the County and in a Regional, Cross Border and National context.</p>	<p>RPO 10.1: Within six months of the adoption of the RSES, a RSES Oversight Committee(s) will be established to ensure oversight of the implementation, monitoring, and reporting of progress in implementation of the RSES to the Regional Assembly, as well as identifying opportunities to drive Regional Development, and suggest sources of funding, fostering partnerships/new collaborations.</p>
	<p>Objective 5.3 To ensure the provision of necessary enabling physical and capital infrastructure to enable the county to remain competitive and viable in the global economy.</p>	<p>ED-0-20: To progress the delivery of key strategic enabling infrastructure including roads, rail, broadband, gas, electricity, water, and wastewater as identified in this plan in close collaboration with government departments, agencies, and utilities operators in order to align the Core Strategy and the economic development objectives of this plan with the</p>	<p>S.8 Growth Ambition 5: In this Growth Ambition, we focus on how we plan to manage our critically enabling infrastructure over the next 20 years, to support the vision we have for the region, and how we will deliver and manage our infrastructure assets in response to our changing environment.</p>

LECP HIGH LEVEL GOALS	LECP OBJECTIVES 2023-2029	ALIGNMENT WITH CDP 2024-2030 <sup>1</sup>	ALIGNMENT WITH RSES 2020-2032
	Objective 5.4 To consolidate existing and nurture new internal and external partnerships and networks accessing resources, knowledge, and expertise.	development and roll out of their respective investment programmes.  CS-0-6: To coordinate and promote the delivery of key roads and access infrastructure (including the A5 Western Transport Corridor and A6 road projects, the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal and improvements to the TEN-T network generally and the Bridgend Bypass Project) with the other relevant authorities including partners in the North West Strategic Growth Partnership and within the Northern and Western Regional Assembly so as to result in effective strategic connections to and throughout the County.	Chapter 9 All Island Cohesion is of particular importance to the NWCR and the North West Metropolitan Area Spatial Planning Framework.  RPO 10.1: As above
<p><b>GOAL 6:</b> <i>Donegal is a competitive, innovative, attractive, supportive location for investment and enterprise, offering and maintaining quality employment.</i></p>	Objective 6.1 To promote and support enterprise and sustainable job creation across a range of sectors.	All of the CDP Economic Development proposals in Chapter 7: in particular, ED – Policies 3, 7, 8 and 11, most specifically 7.4 Economic Framework 7.4.1 aligning economic development and job creation.  Jobs growth will, to a large extent, be connected with population growth during the lifetime of this plan. The core strategy sets the location and quantum of population growth across the county's settlement hierarchy over the next six years. Alongside these population targets the National Planning Framework and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy identifies jobs targets for key settlements at a ratio of 1.0 representing one job for each resident worker indicating a balance between the residential and employment functions of a settlement.	S.4.1 Growth Ambition 1 - Economy & Employment: The RSES must equip this region with enabling objectives to encourage innovation, commercialisation, and investment. Uniquely this region can be a leader in 'Place-Based Development' because we have a strong existing foundation in partnership, collaboration, and success (para.1, p.142).
	Objective 6.2 To promote and further develop Donegal as an attractive and	CDP Section 7.2.5: work with government agencies, various industries and academia to	S.4 Growth Ambition 1 - Economy & Employment: The region boasts over 140 FDI multinationals



LECP HIGH LEVEL GOALS	LECP OBJECTIVES 2023-2029	ALIGNMENT WITH CDP 2024-2030 <sup>1</sup>	ALIGNMENT WITH RSES 2020-2032
	competitive location for FDI and other forms of investment.	attain sustained enterprise growth and value, expand business activity within the SME sectors, generate more and better employment opportunities, attract new talents and skills, enhance the competitiveness of the sector in order to increase exports, accentuate the development of human resources in tandem with key sectors (ICT Digital, Patient Centre Healthcare, Tourism +, Engineering/Advance Manufacturing, Blue Economy, Creative and Food) and increase foreign direct investment inflows and improve the governance of the local economy.	supported by the IDA employing over 26,000 people. Enterprise Ireland support SME's employing over 20,000 people in the region, and Údarás Na Gaeltachta support enterprises that employ almost 6,000 people in Counties Mayo, Galway, and Donegal (para.3, p.142).
	Objective 6.3 To support the development of Tourism Infrastructure and Projects in the county.	TOU-0-1: To facilitate the sustainable development of Donegal's tourism product as a key economic driver and social catalyst for the County	S.4 Growth Ambition 1 - Tourism: The sustainable development and promotion of a successful well managed tourism industry is critical to the economy of this region.
	Objective 6.4 To promote Donegal as a world class tourism destination.	CDP Chapter 10 has a wide range of policies that align with this objective.	RPO 4.3: To support the preparation and implementation of Visitor Experience Development Plans (VEDPs) within the Northern and Western Region, to underpin the overarching regional tourism benefits and to promote the natural and cultural assets of the region.
	Objective 6.5 To promote and support the development of all facets of the Creative Economy in the county.	CDP Section 7.4.5: The County Development Plan supports and promotes the development of traditional sectors such as agriculture and fishing, as well as emerging growth sectors such as the blue economy, the business and financial technology sectors, life sciences, advanced manufacturing and engineering, tourism development and other more indigenous sectors such as food and the creative industries.	RPO 6.48: To enable Public and Private Sector creation of a digitally connected innovation corridor connecting existing, emerging, and new incubation spaces ... that will attract businesses and industries working in the digital economy and creative industries.
	Objective 6.6 To promote and support development of the Bioeconomy and Agriculture as integral parts of the county's Green Economy resource.		RPO 4.27: It is an objective to support the National Policy Statement on the Bioeconomy (2018).... RPO 4.24: To support the growth of the region's agri-food industry, and its SME's.

LECP HIGH LEVEL GOALS	LECP OBJECTIVES 2023-2029	ALIGNMENT WITH CDP 2024-2030 <sup>1</sup>	ALIGNMENT WITH RSES 2020-2032
	Objective 6.7 To promote and to support the development of Renewable Energies as a sustainable resource in the county.		RPO 9.4: Furthermore, pursue the generation of renewable energies and their local applications through, for example, green infrastructure planning, innovative design solutions, the promotion of energy-efficient buildings and homes.
	Objective 6.8 To promote and to support development of the Blue Economy as a sustainable resource in the county.		RPO 4.32: To enable the expansion of our regional assets in the Blue Economy..... including Seafood innovation through Greencastle, Killybegs, Pairc Na Mara and other BIM fishery centres.
	Objective 6.9 To promote and develop the Digital Economy and the Digital Transition as an enabler and provider of sustainable employment in the county.		RPO 9.2: Para. C - Strengthening Digital Infrastructure by supporting the expansion and investment in third-level education and leveraging cross-border knowledge networks to strengthen access to skills and talents that support a digital economy, nurtures entrepreneurship, anticipates and responds to the demand for innovative services that are socially inclusive, attractive, and supportive of the local workforce, and contributes to quality public realm.
<p><b>GOAL 7:</b> <i>Donegal is a place of opportunity for lifelong learning and skills development, nurturing and driving creativity and innovation.</i></p>	Objective 7.1 To promote and to support Lifelong Learning and Skills Development across all sectors.	CDP Sections 7.4.5 (Industry & Business), 12.2 (Childcare), 12.7 (Age and Disabled Friendly Communities), 13.4 (Gaeltacht) all refer to the need for lifelong learning and skills development.	S.7.5 Growth Ambition 4 – Lifelong Learning: Education has been critical to Ireland’s transformation over recent decades. Education, training, and life-long learning are key enablers, around which personal fulfilment, a fair society and a successful nation revolve. All are central to sustaining economic success and building strong communities (para.2, p.257).
	Objective 7.2 To foster and celebrate a culture of innovation and creativity across all sectors in the county.	S-0-4: To support the development and implementation of a sustainable economic model for County Donegal embracing growth in areas such as innovation, research and development, rural diversification, tourism initiatives, energy advances and the promotion of sustainable start	PO1: A Smarter Europe, through innovation, digitisation, economic transformation and support to small and medium-sized businesses.

LECP HIGH LEVEL GOALS	LECP OBJECTIVES 2023-2029	ALIGNMENT WITH CDP 2024-2030 <sup>1</sup>	ALIGNMENT WITH RSES 2020-2032
		<p>up enterprises as an integral component of accelerating socio-economic growth throughout the County and in a Regional, Cross Border and National context.</p> <p>ED-0-14: To facilitate and support the future development of the ATU campuses in Letterkenny and Killybegs, including their innovation, research, and development functions.</p>	<p>S.4.1 Growth Ambition 1 - Economy &amp; Employment: Our RSES must equip this region with enabling objectives to encourage innovation, commercialisation, and investment (para.1, p.142).</p>

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## Outline Implementation Plan

The LECP will be delivered through a rolling programme of Implementation Plans, every two years over 6 years.

**The Outline Implementation Plan sets out the initial actions that will be undertaken to work towards achieving the Vision, Goals and Objectives set out in the LECP. This initial phase will be reviewed at the end of 2025, as set out in the guidelines.**

Ongoing monitoring of the LECP Work Programme will be carried out by the LCDC and the partner stakeholders across all sectors. It is recognised that the LECP has been prepared, and that it will be implemented in an environment that is volatile, disruptive, and changing at an unprecedented rate. In this context it is recognised that the LECP as a living document is alert to changing circumstances, and that it maintains the agility and flexibility to respond to ongoing and inevitable change, and that it can address new and emerging challenges, and grasp opportunities.

The LECP, and the actions set out in the Implementation Plan, is based on sustainable development, and on the optimum use of the county's natural, human, and capital resources. Clear targets are set out, as are details of the responsible leads and partners for all actions.

Lead and supporting agencies have been identified for each action, specific KPIs and outputs to follow, indicative timeframes at this time are:

- Short term (ST) – 2 years.
- Medium term (MT) – 2/4 years.
- Long term (LT) – 4/6 years

As above the monitoring and ongoing evaluation of the outline Implementation Plan will be undertaken on an ongoing basis, with a report prepared and submitted to the Donegal Local Community and Development Committee. Case studies will also be developed as part of the evaluation process, following the template used for the SICAP programme to ensure and support consistency.

The Implementation phase, as with the preparatory phase, is based on the principles of cooperation, partnership, and collaboration in order to create synergies, and to ensure access to, and most effective use of, all available resources.

## Objectives, Outcomes and Actions

### GOAL 1 –

*Donegal is a climate resilient society, valuing our rich natural capital, with environmental sustainability central to all our decisions and actions.*

#### Rationale:

Climate Action and Environmental Sustainability is at the core of the Donegal LECP. There is a global crisis regarding Climate Change in terms of the impacts we are already seeing and the potential for this to get worse in the future. Ireland is on a legally binding path to Net Zero (GHG emissions) by 2050. This goal seeks to integrate Donegal’s climate action with our economic activity. This will be achieved through a coordinated and proactive local response, supporting actions to enhance our resilience to the effects of climate change while mitigating against further global warming by promoting low carbon activity and energy efficiency and exploiting opportunities in e.g., the renewable energy sector. Working with the Climate Action Team, the Donegal County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 is a key component of this response.

The opportunities arising from this goal in terms of green economy , renewable energy, and for communities in the county will be advanced through the LECP.

#### **Objective 1.1 To raise awareness and nurture a greater understanding of climate-related issues and the potential benefits arising from climate action in the County.**

Climate action is central to the LECP, considering most specifically the implementation of adaptation measures - to boost our resilience to climate change, and mitigation measures - to reduce our GHG emissions and improve our energy efficiency, helping to prevent further global warming. The county has responsibilities, across all sectors, in advancing the UN SDGs, adhering to the ESG principles and in implementing the Donegal County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029.

#### **Objective 1.2: To ensure environmental sustainability is central to the decision- making process.**

Sustainability, and ensuring that sustainable principles are promoted and adhered to across all sectors, is integral to the development and delivery of the LECP. Stakeholders recognise that any development activity undertaken in the county must align with sustainability principles, to achieve this aim, it is

essential to ensure that best sustainability practice is understood and implemented in all plans and in all projects to be undertaken. Towards this end, mechanisms will be put in place to provide for the proofing of all plans and projects against SDGs and ESGs.

**Objective 1.3 To protect, restore and sustainably develop the county's environment and associated natural capital.**

Donegal's natural capital, and its high value Environment are key resources for the community and for sustainable development, in adapting to and mitigating for climate change, the maintenance of quality water supply, and for quality of life in the county. The sustainable management of the county's natural capital in terms of its land, freshwater and marine resources is an integral element to the ongoing sustainability of our environment nurturing and maintaining our communities.

**Objective 1.4 To develop the Circular Economy across all sectors in County Donegal**

The Circular Economy will be a key component advancing and consolidating sustainable development in the county as an area of relevance across all sectors. The circular principles of reducing, reimagining, rethinking, recycling, reusing, and repurposing will provide environmental benefits in reducing waste, and economic benefits in extending the use and value of goods and materials. The Circular Economy is relevant to and can improve the environment, increase efficiency, and add value to community life and to economic activity, where sectors such as manufacturing, textiles, seafood, agriculture, and the bioeconomy will benefit.

**GOAL 1 –**

*Donegal is a climate resilient society, valuing our rich natural capital, with environmental sustainability central to all our decisions and actions.*

	Actions	KPIs	Lead Agency	Supporting Agency	Timeframe Short (S) Medium (M) Long (L)
<b>Objective 1.1 To raise awareness, to nurture a greater understanding of climate-related issues and the potential benefits arising from climate action in the County.</b>					
1.1.1	Support the adoption and implementation of the SDG principles and Agenda 2030, aligning the actions of this LECP with targets of the 17 SDG Goals across all sectors.	•	LCDC / PPN	PPN, DLDC, IBEC, Chamber of Commerce, IDP ,Alpha Innovation, SEAI.	
1.1.2	Support the implementation of the Donegal County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029	•	DCC	DECC, CARO, DLDC, IDP, Comhar na nOileán, ATU, DETB.	
1.1.3	Establish the Donegal Climate Resilience Learning and Collaborative Platform.	•	DCC	ATU, DETB, SEAI, PPN , DLDC, LCDC, DLDC, IDP, Comhar na nOileán, Údarás, NW BE Hub.	
1.1.4	Support the upgrading, retrofitting, and utilisation of renewables in community, public and domestic buildings.	•	DCC / LDCs/ SEAI	SEAI, Enterprise Ireland, DLDC, Comhar, IDP, Údarás, , PPN.	
1.1.5	Support the preparation of an Electric Charging Infrastructure Strategy for Co. Donegal in line with ZEVI Guidance and contribute to progression of the measures contained within.	•	DCC	DCC, Rural Link, ATU, SEAI, Alpha Innovation,	
1.1.6	Explore the feasibility of provision of electric buses in a number of pilot locations across the county	•	DCC/LCDC	DCC, Rural Link, ATU, SEAI,	
1.1.7	Support enterprise/s in greening and energy efficiency	•	Enterprise Ireland	DCC, LEO, Údarás, LDCs, SEAI	
1.1.8	Develop Micro Credentials in the climate sector.	•	ATU / DETB	DLDC IDP, PPN, Comhar, Údarás, UCD, NW Bioeconomy Hub	
<b>Objective 1.2 To ensure that environmental sustainability is central to planning and decision making:</b>					
1.2.1	Ensure sustainability proofing is an integral element of project development and is reflected in project/programme criteria and assessment processes across all sectors.	•	LCDC / DCC	IDA, EI, LEO,DLDC, IDP, FAILTE Ireland , Comhar na nOileán, Údarás NPWS, Failte Ireland.	



1.2.2	Information sharing, examples of best practice and capacity building in relation to sustainability proofing is provided across all sectors, through the Donegal Climate Resilience, Learning and Collaborative Platform	•		DCC/ LDCs	ATU, DETB, SEAI, PPN , DLDC, LCDC, DLDC, IDP, Comhar na nOileán, Údarás, NW BE Hub.	
1.2.3	Leverage data to inform the decision-making process as an aid to measure performance and process, set strategic goals, and guide improvement.	•		DCC	LGMA, ATU, DETB, DLDC, IDP, Comhar na nOileán, Údarás,	
<b>Objective 1.3 To raise awareness of and to support actions to protect and sustainably develop the county's natural capital and environment:</b>						
1.3.1	Support initiatives to promote and raise awareness of biodiversity and climate issues, natural capital, and ecosystems-based adaptation in Donegal	•		DCC	ATU, DETB, SEAI, PPN , DLDC, LCDC, DLDC, IDP, Comhar na nOileán, Údarás, NW BE Hub, LAWPRO, IRT.	
1.3.2	Prepare and begin to implement a Biodiversity Action Plan for the County to protect and enhance local biodiversity, contributing to the Green Economy, including climate-resilient measures.	•		DCC	PPN, IDP, DLDC, Comhar na nOileán , ATU, An Taisce, Golden Eagle Trust, Machar Project, NW Bioeconomy Hub, WAN, LAWPRO	
1.3.3	Establish the Donegal Biodiversity/ Environmental Learning and Collaborative Platform.	•		DCC	LCDC, ATU, IDP, DLDC, PPN, Comhar na nOileán , Teagasc, WAN, LAWPRO,	
1.3.4	Promote and support conservation and regenerative practices in the county.	•		LDCs	LCDC, Teagasc, IDP, DLDC, Comhar na nOileán , NW Bioeconomy Hub An Taisce. NPWS, WAN, LAWPRO	
1.3.5	Support and explore further peatland and wetland restoration projects in the County	•		DCC	PPN, NPWS, IDP, DLDC, WAN, LAWPRO	
<b>Objective 1.4 To promote and to support the development of the Circular Economy with particular reference to Objective SR2/SR3 of the LACAP</b>						
1.4.1	Support R & D, Innovation and Entrepreneurship in the Circular Economy, across all sectors: a) Support for projects adapting to and engaging in the Circular Economy. b) Support for the development of a best practice demonstration model, relating to the Circular Economy, and sustainability in the county	•		ATU	IDA, EI, DETB, Údarás, DLDC, IDP, Comhar na nOileán, NW BE Hub, Comhar na nOileán. SFI, UCD, ETB, SEAI, Alpha Innovation/LE	
1.4.	Develop Micro Credentials to support the Circular Economy in the County.	•		ATU	UCD, DLDC, IDP, Comhar na nOileán, Údarás, DETB, Alpha Innovation. Colab	

**GOAL 2:***Donegal values, protects, and sustains our rich culture, heritage, languages and landscape.***Rationale:**

Donegal is a culturally diverse place, with a strong and vibrant native culture, nurtured as a valuable resource for community, social and economic purposes. This appreciation of culture and place is ever more important in a global environment. The LECP will seek to value and enhance our native and broader local cultural resource, valuing and promoting the diverse range of newer cultures and cultural perspectives that form part of the Donegal community. It is recognised that culture, the arts, and heritage, and the authenticity they represent are key components of community life and wellbeing, and this plan will provide a platform for collaborative action in consolidating and advancing this sector. Culture, and cultural wellbeing is central to the LECP. The LECP will seek to consolidate, and to further develop Donegal as a culturally inclusive community.

**Objective 2.1 To promote and sustain the county's rich and diverse tapestry of culture.**

The county has a rich and increasingly diverse cultural sector, centred around the practice of and engagement with the performing arts, visual arts, film, spectacle, traditional arts, music, and literature. It comprises a broad network of individual practitioners, companies, cultural organizations, arts centres, theatres, galleries, and workspaces. The LECP will advance actions which will support and sustain the sector, which will prioritise cultural inclusion and which will assist the newer cultures that now exist to further add to the overall cultural resource of the county. In the furtherance of same, awareness raising, and educational activities will be undertaken and cultural appreciation and sensitivity will be promoted and supported. The lessons from previous Peace programmes and other initiatives undertaken in Donegal and other relevant locations, will be utilised to ensure that a positive and inclusive mindset is engendered with regard to cultural diversity and inclusion. The LECP recognises a vibrant and diverse cultural sector as being central to community viability, place making and quality of life.

**Objective 2.2 To promote and nurture the growth of Irish as a living community language in Donegal.**

Donegal is the location of one of the country's largest and most populous Gaeltacht regions, and it also contains communities of Irish Language interest in different parts of the county, evidenced e.g., by the prevalence of Gaelscoileanna at primary and secondary levels. The LECP recognises the importance of the Irish language, and its centrality to local plans and to national and regional policies that impact on the county. The LECP will support, will coordinate

where appropriate, and will seek to add value to Strategies, Plans and Actions, being implemented in the county. These will include the Language Planning Process, being undertaken by communities in partnership with relevant agencies.

**Objective 2.3 To protect and enhance our unique and extensive heritage resource.**

The county has a rich store of Heritage relating to Culture, Language, Music, History, Archaeology, Traditional Architecture, Traditional Livelihoods, Customs, and Art forms of various types. The importance of protecting, nurturing, sustainably developing where appropriate, and valuing this broad resource is reconciled in the LECP. The efforts of all stakeholders will be supported through the plan, which will seek to coordinate activity, to promote partnership and collaboration, and have new activities identified and undertaken where necessary and feasible, with a view to adding value. The LECP recognises this sector as one with potential to be a community resource, as the basis for social enterprise and tourism projects, and as being central to community viability and quality of life.

**Objective 2.4 To protect and nurture the county's authentic landscape and seascape.**

Donegal's landscape and seascape is an integral part of its natural capital, and a key resource across a range of sectors - environmentally, culturally, socially and as a sustainable economic resource. The county's landscape and seascape impact all aspects of community life. The LECP recognises this and will work to raise awareness of and to support actions which will protect, nurture, understand and sustainably develop this resource as it impacts on agriculture, recreation, marine activities, communities, culture, and language.

**GOAL 2:**

*Donegal values, protects, and sustains our rich culture, heritage, languages and landscape.*

	Actions	KPIs		Lead Agency	Supporting Agency	Timeframe Short (S) Medium (M) Long (L)
<b>Objective 2.1 To promote and sustain the county's rich and diverse tapestry of culture.</b>						
2.1.1	Establish and support a forum to inform the strategic development of culture and creativity in the County	•		DCC	DCC, Creative Ireland, LCDC	
2.1.2	Explore, research, record and document the culture, heritage, and creative resource of County Donegal	•		DCC		
2.1.3	Curate and host events, activities, and exhibitions as part of the national festival celebrating Ireland Culture such as Seachtain na Gaeilge, Bealtaine, Criunniú na nóg, Heritage Week, Culture Night and Wainfest.	•		DCC	Creative Ireland, Heritage Council, Arts Council, LCDC	
2.1.4	To assist and support professional cultural practitioners and creative support workers from all backgrounds inc. diverse, ethnic, social, and cultural to build sustainable careers in the county.	•		DCC	Údarás/Ealaíon na Gaeltachta, DLDC, IDP, Comhar na nOileán, LCDC.	
2.1.5	Support the provision of dedicated workspaces, exhibition and interpretive spaces and performance spaces, for the practice, sustaining and appreciation of Donegal's rich and diverse cultural heritage.	•		DCC	Údarás/Ealaíon na Gaeltachta, DLDC, IDP, Comhar na nOileán, LCDC.	
2.1.6	Support and mentor existing and aspiring professional cultural practitioners and support workers through the provision of opportunities for further education mentorship, training, and continuous professional development.	•		ATU	LEO, DCC Culture Division, Údarás/Ealaíon na Gaeltachta, DLDC, IDP, Comhar na nOileán, LCDC	
2.1.7	Support the long-term viability of professional cultural organizations by enabling them to develop and resource appropriate staff structures, thereby building relations, fostering networks, and developing partnerships, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.	•		DCC	Údarás/Ealaíon na Gaeltachta, DLDC, IDP, Comhar na Oileán, LCDC,	
2.1.8	To support the provision of quality library services in all parts of the County and to explore opportunities for the development of new libraries and the upgrading of existing libraries where required.	•		DCC	LDC,PPN,Udaras,DD	

Objective 2.2 To promote and nurture the growth of Irish as a living community language in Donegal.					
2.2.1	Implement Community Based Irish Language Plans in Gaeltacht areas.	•		Údarás	DCC, Community Language Projects, PPN.
2.2.2	Implement Irish language plans in Gaeltacht Service Towns ie Letterkenny and Donegal Town	•		Foras na Gaeilge.	DCC, Lionra Leitir Ceanainn, Lionra Baile Dhun na nGall.
2.2.3	Develop and promote Irish Language based tourism products	•		Údarás	DLDC, Failte Ireland, Donegal Tourism, Comhar na nOileán,
2.2.4	Support the practice and appreciation of the contemporary and traditional arts through the Irish language.			Údarás Ealaíon na Gaeltachta	DCC DLDC, Comhar na nOileán, LCDC,
2.2.5	Work to preserve, promote, and increase the use of Irish language and deliver high quality Irish Language services and programmes.			DCC	Creative Ireland, Irish Language Office, LCDC
Objective 2.3 To protect and enhance our unique and extensive heritage resource:					
2.3.1	Support the implementation of the County Donegal Heritage Plan (2023-2030).	•		County Donegal Heritage Forum	DCC Culture Division, The Heritage Council, DHLGH, Údarás na Gaeltachta, LCDC
2.3.2	Celebrate and sustain the rich architectural heritage of Donegal's Heritage Towns in Ardara, Ballyshannon, Moville, Ramelton and Raphoe as valuable community and tourism resources.	•		DCC	DCC, The Heritage Council, DHLGH, Údarás na Gaeltachta, LCDC
2.3.3	Develop and celebrate heritage-based tourism projects based on best conservation practice.	•		DCC / Failte Ireland	Donegal Tourism
2.3.4	Supporting the objectives as outlined in the DORS, add value and develop Heritage Trails further sharing and celebrating our language, people and place	•		DCC	DLDC, IDP, PPN, Údarás, Comhar, na nOileán
2.3.5	Identify and support projects which will sustain and interpret the county's rich place name/logainmeacha heritage.	•		DCC	LDC, PPN, Udaras
Objective 2.4 To protect and nurture the county's rich authentic land and seascape:					
2.4.1	Protect and sustain the county's seascape raising awareness and building capacity in relation to the effects of climate change impacting our coastal towns, villages, and rural areas	•		DCC	NPWS, OPE, DAFM, DLDC, IDP.
2.4.2	Working with communities raise awareness, educate, and build capacity in relation to the sustainable regeneration of our land.	•		LDCs	Teagasc, IFA An Taisce, NPWS, IDP, DLDC, Comhar, na nOileán OPW, PPN.
2.4.3	Support the preparation and implementation of the 6 Water Framework Directive Catchments in Donegal; Donagh/Moville, Swilly, Foyle, Gweebarra/Sheephaven,	•		DCC/LAWPRO	NWPS, IDP, DLDC, Uisce Eireann.

	Donegal Bay North, Erne proposed as part of the delivery of the National River Basin Plan/Water Action Plan for Ireland				
2.4.4	Explore the use and implementation of Nature Based Solutions to Environmental Issues, e.g. Water Quality Management, Climate, Biodiversity.	•		DCC/LAWPRO	NWPS, IDP, DLDC, Uisce Eireann.

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**GOAL 3:**

***Our communities are drivers for sustainable development and placemaking – and are strong, resilient, active, healthy, safe, connected, serviced, proud and empowered.***

Rationale: The Community and Voluntary Sector is a key driver for sustainable development across all sectors in the county. There is a well-established resource of organisations within this sector, operating under the auspices of the Donegal Public Participatory Network (PPN). Community based groups lead on local development and service delivery in a range of projects, in locations throughout the county, and serving all sections of the community. There is a strong partnership approach between the sector and the range of state agencies operating in the county, and existing and emerging opportunities for collaboration to deliver best results for all stakeholders in the county. The importance of consolidating and growing this sector and the well-established ‘bottom up’ approach in the county is a cross cutting theme emanating through the LECP. The energy, skills, and experience that the community brings to bear is recognised, as are the challenges in maintaining the necessary levels of volunteerism entailed in this. The Social Economy, and the key importance of Social Enterprise in sustainable development across all sectors, and in maintaining viable communities is recognised in this goal.

**Objective 3.1 Working in partnership with our communities, prioritising the regeneration and revitalisation of our towns and villages.**

There is a recognised need to address the issue of vacant properties and of dereliction in the county's towns and villages. Our towns and villages have been at the centre of communities for generations, although recent years have seen the closure of businesses and of local services. There is a need, and an opportunity to identify new and innovative ways to utilise vacant premises for business, service provision, and living purposes and to seek to advance actions through the LECP to stem and to reverse this decline. There is also the very real need to ensure that essential infrastructure is in place to support sustainable development in our towns and villages, including eg broadband and provision of adequate water services. The Town Centre First policy and the work of the DCC Regeneration Unit, as well as the active involvement of local communities supported by DCC Community Development will be central to achieving this objective.

**Objective 3.2 To promote and support the Community and Voluntary Sector as drivers of development, service provision, and in maintaining vibrant communities.**

Donegal has an extensive and vibrant community and voluntary sector which has been involved in the development of projects and in the delivery of a range of programmes over recent decades. This ‘bottom up’ element has and will continue to add substantial value to the development process, and to the

delivery of services, bringing local knowledge, skills, experience, resources, and energy to the process. This aspect of volunteerism has been and will continue to be a key resource for community action, and by extension of the development process in general. The LECP recognise the need to nurture this resource and to animate and build community capacity and to provide necessary support to maintain community participation, leadership and the delivery of community-based projects.

**Objective 3.3 To support the upgrading of existing, and the development of new community infrastructure, serving all sections of the community.**

In most recent times there has been substantial development invested in community infrastructure for recreation, education, culture and art, and service provision, where these interventions have facilitated social, cultural, health, sport, youth, older people, and other community goods. The community sector is a key enabling driver availing of relevant state and other supports as appropriate and available. There is a recognised continued need to upgrade existing and develop new supporting infrastructure, with a renewed focus and emphasis on climate efficiency, utilising appropriate materials and various forms of renewables, developed in partnership as appropriate with relevant agencies.

**Objective 3.4 To promote and support the participation of Young People in all aspects of community life.**

Our young people are central to the maintenance of our communities and to the future viability of the county and they need our support in addressing the challenges they face, socially and economically. Our young people must be provided with the necessary skills and capacity to participate in their communities and to obtain gainful employment and undertake careers across all sectors.

**Objective 3.5 To promote and to support the development of Social Enterprises as economic, social, environmental, and cultural resources.**

The Social Economy has been and will continue to be a key component of community and voluntary activity in the county, and with regard to local resource development, enterprise and job creation in the county. There are a wide range of social enterprises operating in the county at the present time, with community-based organisations having developed, and now managing a range of projects, and delivering a range of services. These enterprises are rooted in their local communities and employ best principles of community development and cooperative action. This sector is important, in that local communities often have access to resources not readily available to external actors, bringing capacity and agility to deliver services on behalf of authorities in an efficient and cost-effective manner. The LECP will utilise and build on existing activity and expertise and provide the necessary support to nurture and grow this sector.



**GOAL 3:**

*Our communities are drivers for sustainable development and placemaking – and are strong, resilient, active, healthy, safe, connected, serviced, proud and empowered.*

	Actions	KPIs		Lead Agency	Supporting Agency	Timeframe Short (S) Medium (M) Long (L)
<b>Objective 3.1 Working in partnership with our communities, prioritising the regeneration and revitalisation of our towns and villages</b>						
3.1.1	Explore innovative ways of using town and village centre spaces for business, creatives spaces, community and living purposes eg pop-up shops.			DCC	DETB, ATU, PPN, LEO, Donegal Tourism, Chamber of Commerce, Tidy Towns, IDP, DLDC	
3.1.2	Prioritise the revitalisation and regeneration of our rural towns and villages and working in partnership: a) Seek to empower communities to achieve excellence and innovation in project development and delivery b) Deliver on the actions as outlined in the Town Centre First Policy c) Support actions to assess utilisation of brownfield site in towns for educational, cultural and community purposes. d) Organise Flagship Event to highlight and to assist in progressing town centre regeneration and revitalisation. e) Identify and celebrate local champions as examples of best practice.			DCC	DETB, ATU, PPN, LEO, Donegal Tourism, Failte Ireland Chamber of Commerce, Tidy Towns, IDP, DLDC	
3.1.3	Support and pilot community driven initiatives seeking to bring vacant and derelict buildings back into use			DCC	PPN, LEO, Donegal Tourism, Failte Ireland, Tidy Towns Chamber of Commerce, IDP, DLDC	
3.1.4	To identify and assess the challenges that threaten the sustainability of small businesses in the county's towns and villages, and to seek to identify potential actions to support the long-term viability of such businesses as key components of the economic, social and community fabric .			DCC/LEO	ATU, IDP, DLDC, PPN, Donegal Vintners, Failte Ireland, Donegal Tourism. Chamber of Commerce, Comhar, Udarás, Donegal Digital.	
3.1.5	Deliver transformational projects across the county through programmes such as URDF, RRDF, TVR, ORIS and with Failte Ireland and Shared Island and Enterprise Ireland			DCC	DETB, ATU, PPN, LEO, Donegal Tourism, Failte Ireland Chamber of Commerce, Tidy Towns, IDP, DLDC	
3.1.6	Promote and facilitate the reuse of vacant and derelict properties in the County			DCC	DRCD	

Objective 3.2 To promote and support the Community & Voluntary sector as drivers of development, service provision, maintaining vibrant communities.						
3.2.1	Support and promote the PPN as the coordinating and collaborative platform for the community and voluntary sector in the County and seek to prepare an audit of the organisations and activities in the Community and Voluntary Sector across the county.	•		DCC LCDC/PPN	IDP, DLDC, Comhar na nOileán, Intercultural Platform, ATU, DETB, Údarás, HSE.	
3.2.2	Develop and maintain a 'One Stop Shop' to access information in relation to community development and associated supports.	•		DCC	LCDC, IDP, DLDC, Comhar na nOileán,, ATU, DETB, Údarás,	
3.2.3	Establish a Donegal Community Development Observatory, to support and assist in developing all aspects of community leadership including activity, research, animation, and capacity building.	•		ATU	PPN, DETB, IDP, DCC, DLDC, Comhar na nOileán, Intercultural Platform, Donegal Youth Services, Older Peoples Council.	
3.2.4	Develop and deliver of a Degree Programme in Community Development and Social Enterprise, supported by a programme of certified training and education for the community and voluntary sector	•		ATU/DETB	IDP, LEO, DLDC, DCC Comhar, Údarás, PPN.	
3.2.5	Promote, support, and build capacity, recognising volunteerism as an integral resource for the community and voluntary sector.	•		Donegal Volunteer Centre.	DLDC, IDP, Údarás, Comhar na nOileán,, ATU, DETB, Intercultural Platform, DCC.	
3.2.6	Support the development of more sustainable digital communities	•		DCC/Donegal Digital	LGMA, LCDC, IDP, DLDC, Comhar na nOileán,, Údarás, PPN, ERNACT	
3.2.7	Explore the use Digital and Disruptive technologies to support the management of outdoor facilities	•		DCC/Donegal Digital	DLDC, IDP, Údarás, Comhar na nOileán,, ATU, DETB, DSP, COILLTE	
Objective 3.3 Support the upgrading of existing, and the development of new Community Infrastructure, for all in the community.						
3.3.1	Develop and monitor an audit of community facilities in the county.	•		PPN / DCC	DLDC, IDP, Comhar na nOileán, HSE, Intercultural Platform, Údarás.	
3.3.2	Support and guide the upgrading of existing community facilities/hubs and development of new community facilities/hubs, adapting facilities to provide access to essential services eg culture, health, youth, training, digital access, recreation, childcare as appropriate	•		DCC/PPN	HSE, DETB, ATU, DLDC, IDP, Donegal Digital, ERNACT, Údarás, DSP, DLDC, Comhar	
3.3.3	Foster and nurture the development of Community Renewable Energy Infrastructure and projects as a means to finance community activity considering in the first instance the designated Decarbonising Zones of Carndonagh and Gortahork/ Falcarragh in line with the Donegal Climate Action Plan 2024 – 2029.	•		DCC	SEAI, ATU, PPN, DLDC, IDP, Údarás, Comhar.	

**Objective 3.4 To promote and support the participation of young people in all aspects of community life:**

3.4.1	Delivering on the findings of the Youth Needs Assessment provide support, spaces/facilities and services for young people, to facilitate inclusion, and enable access to opportunity.	•		Donegal Youth Services.	DCC, Foroige, DETB, HSE, IDP, DLDC, ATU, CYPSE	
3.4.2	Provide leadership training and capacity building, for young people's personal development, and to enable participation in the community, including: a) the development and provision of intergenerational Skills programmes b) the development of mentoring programmes and workshops c) Identify and celebrate local champions in the community providing for a shared learning experience as examples of best practice.	•		DETB, Foroige, HSE, Donegal Youth Services.	Donegal Youth Council, DCC, ATU, DLDC, NW Bioeconomy Hub, Teagasc, IDP, Cill Ulta, Spraoi agus Spóirt	
3.4.3	Listen to the voice of young people, support the further development and operation of Donegal Youth Council both within and outwith the County	•		DCC	Foroige, Donegal Youth services. LCDC, DLDC, IDP, CYPSE	
3.4.4	Establish new digital participatory mechanisms to increase youth participation in the community and decision making	•		DCC	Donegal Youth Council, DCC, ATU, ERNACT	
3.4.5	To carry out Inclusion and Wellbeing Capacity Building with Young People.	•		DSP	Foroige, Donegal Youth services. LCDC, DLDC, IDP, CYPSE	
3.4.6	Working on a cross agency collaborative basis deliver on the emerging Children & Young Peoples Plan 2024-2026	•		CYPSE	DCC, Foroige, DETB, HSE, IDP, DLDC, ATU, Donegal Youth Service	

**Objective 3.5 To promote and support the development of Social Enterprises as economic, social, environmental and cultural resources:**

3.5.1.	Support the establishment of new social enterprises, and for the consolidation and growth of existing projects, providing skills training and building capacity in relation to the social economy sector	•		LEO/DETB/ ATU	DCC, DLDC, IDO, DETB, ATU, Údarás, IDL, PPN	
3.5.2	Develop an interactive mapping audit of the Social Economy Sector in the County.	•		DCC/ LDCs	ATU, DLDC, IDL, Údarás, PPN, IDP	
3.5.3	Explore the potential, through research-based analysis of the role of social enterprises in sustainable local resource development and regeneration.	•		ATU	DLDC, LEO, IDP, Údarás. DCC, PPN.	

**GOAL 4:**

***Donegal is an inclusive, accessible, and welcoming place, offering opportunity and a good quality of life for all sections of the community.***

Rationale: It is recognised by all stakeholders that Inclusivity and access to opportunity for all sections of the community, in all parts of the county, must be a key goal of the LECP. Donegal is a diverse county, in terms of its geography and its cultures. The county has undergone significant change over recent decades and the LECP is focussed on addressing the challenges, and the opportunities presented by this change. All parts of the county, and all sections of the community must have ready access to essential services - education, health. Recreation, state, and local authority services, to training and sustainable livelihoods, informing a good quality of life. Partnership and collaboration between the Community Sector, Sectoral Interest Groups and various agencies has been, and will continue to be promoted and supported through the LECP. The realisation of Goal 4, the promotion and support of inclusion activities, and an emphasis on an inclusive approach across all sectors, is how we work in Donegal and is integral to the delivery of the Donegal LECP.

**Objective 4.1 To ensure Donegal is socially inclusive facilitating access to opportunity for all sections of the Community.**

Social Inclusion is key to community coherence and community viability and wellbeing. The LECP recognises the importance of ensuring that all sections of the community, in all parts of the county have access to essential community and personal services and will support and seek to add value to a range of social inclusion and community activation measures which will be implemented in the county over the course of the Plan. The LECP also seeks to ensure that there is access to opportunity for all in the county, and that all are able to participate in and to contribute to community life. This objective recognises the need to address marginalisation, and also recognises the often-latent resource that exists in peripheral groups that can be activated for individual and for community benefit.

**Objective 4.2 To ensure that diversity is valued and recognised as a valuable community resource.**

The county has a rich and diverse culture, and communities and the county's economy have benefitted from this in various ways. Recent years have seen an increase in the cultural diversity of the county, with 9200 non-EU newcomers to the county in the past 2 years. This is a change which the LECP seeks to address, for the benefit of the new residents themselves, for the communities in which they have located, and for the county as a whole. The rapid change and increase in diverse groups in the county present challenges in terms of integration and assimilation. The LECP will seek to address these challenges. This influx is also an opportunity for the county with a substantial additional resource of skills, energy and expertise now available to the county.

**Objective 4.3 To promote and support the health, community wellbeing and social care of all.**

The LECP will work to identify needs and opportunities for provision of essential services in the county - transport, health, housing, exploring innovative and collaborative ways of delivering programmes and services, seeking to assist in making the county socially inclusive, ensuring access to necessary services and to opportunity, is available to all sections of the community, where Donegal is welcoming, safe, inclusive, and healthy ( physically and mentally), with access to education, to training and to employment opportunities.

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**GOAL 4:**

*Donegal is an inclusive, accessible, and welcoming place, offering opportunity and a good quality of life for all sections of the community.*

	<b>Actions</b>	<b>KPIs</b>	<b>Lead Agency</b>	<b>Supporting Agency</b>	<b>Timeframe</b> Short (S) Medium (M) Long (L)
<b>Objective 4.1: To ensure Donegal is socially inclusive facilitating access to opportunity for all sections of the Community.</b>					
4.1.1	Implement the Social Inclusion and Activation Programmes through a range of Social Inclusion Initiatives and Projects.	•	LCDC	PPN, LCDC, DCC, DLDC, IDP, HSE, DETB, ATU, Comhar. Intercultural Platform, Peace Partnership.	
4.1.2	To support the delivery of actions outlined in the emerging Draft Donegal Disability Inclusion Strategy, most specifically to establish a Task Force Empowering Inclusive Employment with a particular focus on developing links between ATU, ETB and NLN, promoting business awareness for more inclusive employment practices and promoting good models of accessibility and ‘champions’ across the employment industry	•	DCC / LDCs	DLDC, DETB, IDP, ATU, Comhar, HSE, Peace Partnership.	
4.1.3	Fully identify, and address constraints to provide necessary supports to enable women to fully participate in the workforce, the community, political life, and economic activity in the county	•	DCC/LEO	IDP, DLDC, Údarás, Comhar na nOileain, PPN, Intercultural Platform	
4.1.4	Provide the necessary and applicable local government services available online for members of the public, while ensuring that members of the public who cannot or do not want to interact digitally will not get left behind.	•	DCC	LGMA, ERNACT	
	.	•			
<b>Objective 4.2 To ensure that diversity is valued and recognised as a valuable community resource.</b>					
4.2.1	Utilise SICAP to further the integration of new communities in the county.	•	DCC	DLDC, IDP, PPN,	
4.2.2	Deliver on the actions identified in The Black and Minority Ethnic Inclusion Strategy for Donegal 2021-2026 building capacity and enabling access to education and employment opportunities, and most specifically the seven flagship initiatives of the BME Strategy	•	DCC/ Intercultural Platform	IDP, DLDC, Údarás, PPN, ATU, DETB, HSE Comhar na nOileain Intercultural Platform, Donegal	

				Travellers Project, Lionra Leitir Ceanainn	
4.2.3	Building on the work of the Peace Plan supporting cross community and cross border engagement and programming thereby nurturing a greater understanding and mutual respect of place and identity.	•	DCC /LCDC	Peace Partnership, DLDC, IDP, ATU, ICBAN, NWRCBG.	
4.2.4	Support the work of the Local Authority Integration Team to provide ongoing integration supports, information, advice and guidance to International Protection applicants and refugees.	•	DCC	DLDC, IDP, PPN,	
<b>Objective 4.3 To promote and support the health, community wellbeing and social care of all.</b>					
4.3.1	Develop Health Checks for towns and villages in partnership with the HSE to enable and support the allocation for service provision across the county	•	DCC/HSE	DLDC, IDP, Údarás, Comhar na nOileain, PPN,	
4.3.2	Support Health and Social Welfare Activities in the community, including the provision of general and targeted Health and Wellbeing supports, for example education, early intervention, and mental health.		HSE	DCC, DLDC, IDP, DETB, PPN, Comhar na nOileain, ATU, IC Platform, Jigsaw, C&VS, Tusla	
4.3.3	Promote and develop Healthy Donegal and the Healthy Ireland Framework working in partnership with HSE, to help create and sustain a healthy place for people to be born, grow, live, work and age in.	•	DCC / HSE	IDP, DLDC, Comhar na nOileain, Údarás, PPN, DETB, ATU, DSP	
4.3.4	Delivering on the actions of the Donegal Outdoor Recreation Strategy support the provision of recreational amenities and facilities providing opportunities for all in the community to participate in outdoor recreation, meet others and engage in exercise eg Woodland Walks, Walk of the Week, Walk and Talk	•	DCC/ Donegal Sports Partnership	HSE, DETB, DLDC, IDP, DCC, ATU, Older Peoples Council, Donegal Youth Services, Donegal Youth Council.	
4.3.5	Support the implementation of the Donegal Age Friendly Strategy	•	Donegal Age Friendly Cttee.	LCDC, DCC, IDP, HSE, DLDC, Garda Síochana	
4.3.6	Identify and collaborate to provide supports for independent living for older people, exploring the opportunities for development of retirement villages in the County providing further options informing a good quality of life.	•	Donegal Age Friendly Cttee	DCC, HSE, Garda, DETB, DLDC, IDP. Comhar na nOileain, PPN,	
4.3.7	To undertake wellbeing programmes, for communities and individuals adversely affected by the DCB crisis.	•	IDP	DLDC, HSE, Comhar na nOileain.	
4.3.8	To implement the Donegal Sports Partnership Strategy.	•	DSP	DCC, HSE, DLDC, IDP	

**GOAL 5:**

**Donegal is a SMART connected county, internally and externally, supported by the necessary enabling infrastructure –human, capital and governance.**

**Rationale:**

Working together, stakeholders will continue to build on existing initiatives, developing a SMART Ecosystem across all sectors and areas of activity in the county. It is essential that the county is connected, externally and internally which is a key part of developing comparative advantages in the county, and of maintaining competitiveness and viability. The provision and maintenance of the necessary Enabling Infrastructure towards this end is a cross cutting theme and forms a key part of the LECF. This includes physical infrastructure - roads, broadband, water, power etc. Donegal is at a disadvantage in terms of road and rail access. Goal 5 also refers to the key collaborative and coordinating mechanisms in the county. This collaborative and organisational infrastructure facilitates the partnership approach, which is central to development, and to service delivery in the county.

**Objective 5.1 To ensure that Donegal adopts a SMART approach to all aspects of development across all sectors.**

The LECF recognises the importance of making Donegal a SMART region, and of promoting and supporting this across all sectors and areas of activity. There is a need to ensure that the necessary infrastructure, the necessary collaboration, and clusters are in place, and that a SMART enterprise ecosystem is created and nurtured. Donegal has opportunities to build on its natural, human, and capital resources, to develop competitive advantage. This is essential to remain a competitive and viable region in an ever changing and challenging global environment. There are a number of areas where a strategy of SMART specialisation will be pursued in order to optimise the resources available to the county, and to gain sustainable and positive outcomes for the regional economy. These areas include Regulation Technology, Engineering, the Blue Economy, and Green Economy. Donegal can and will work to be a global leader in these sectors, building capacity, collaborating, innovating and investing to achieve best results.

**Objective 5.2 To facilitate coordinated, collaborative and effective development and service delivery across the County.**

The LECF recognises the importance of and centrality of coordination and partnership platforms, and of fit for purpose governance structures, which support sustainable development, and which ensure that there is communication and a joined-up approach between all sectors and stakeholders. These



structures can be sectoral or cross sectoral, and were identified during the LECP consultation process, as being key to and adding considerable value to the development process.

**Objective 5.3 To ensure the provision of necessary enabling physical and capital infrastructure to enable the county to remain competitive and viable in the global economy.**

The infrastructure needs of the county were highlighted during the community and sectoral consultation processes. It is recognised that the county will not achieve its full potential, and that communities will lag, if these needs are not addressed. The LECP will highlight these needs and make proposals to seek to address them where possible and feasible. It is recognised that partnership and collaboration with external authorities and funds will be key in addressing needs and opportunities in this regard.

**Objective 5.4 To consolidate existing and nurture new internal and external partnerships and networks accessing resources, knowledge, and expertise.**

The LECP recognises and will address the need to ensure that enabling infrastructure, in terms of external networks and collaborative arrangements, are consolidated, further developed, and proactively managed, to ensure that the county is well connected and positively engaged with all relevant stakeholders for the economic, social, and cultural benefit of the county. This engagement is of critical importance in an ever changing and volatile global environment in which Donegal must remain relevant and competitive.

**GOAL 5:**

*Donegal is a SMART connected county, internally and externally, supported by the necessary enabling infrastructure –human, capital and governance.*

	Actions	KPIs	Lead Agency	Supporting Agency	Timeframe Short (S) Medium (M) Long (L)
<b>Objective 5.1 To ensure Donegal adopts a SMART approach to all aspects of development across all sectors.</b>					
5.1.1	Develop the necessary SMART Ecosystem, based on adoption and implementation of Smart Principles across all sectors in the county	•	LCDC	DCC.HSE.PPN.DLDC.IDP, Údarás, Comhar na nOileain, , ATU, DETB.	
5.1.2	Promote and support the development and operation of SMART Sectoral Clusters in the county.	•	EI/ATU	DCC, Donegal Tech Advocates NW RegTech Cluster Engineering Cluster Donegal Food Coast, IDA, EI, LEO, Udarás, DETB, Colab, ERNACT	
<b>Objective 5.2. To facilitate coordinated, collaborative and effective development and service delivery across the County.</b>					
5.2.1	Support enabling agency infrastructure, to facilitate interagency/cross sectoral partnership, collaborative, and governance structures in the county.	•	LCDC	DCC.HSE.PPN.DLDC.IDP, Údarás, Comhar na nOileain, , ATU, DETB	
5.2.2	Support the work of Donegal Tourism CLG and the Associated Members Committee as important vehicles for meaningful engagement, co-ordination and collaboration with key stakeholders including the industry, in the development of the tourism sector in Donegal	•	Donegal Tourism	FI, DCC, LDC,	

**Objective 5.3 To ensure the provision of necessary physical and capital infrastructure to enable the county to remain competitive and viable in the global economy.**

5.3.1	Delivering on Housing for All support the provision of housing as a key element of enabling infrastructure in the county, working cross directorate/cross sectoral in partnership exploring new and innovative viable ways to address housing needs in the county including: a) Examine the feasibility of developing community-based models for the provision of accommodation, utilising vacant and semi derelict properties in villages, towns, and rural areas.	•	DCC	PPN, DLDC, IDP, Comhar na nOileain, Údarás, UE and state agencies	
5.3.2	Explore new and innovative opportunities for the provision of student accommodation in key locations such as Letterkenny and Killybegs.	•	ATU,	DCC	
5.3.3	Aligned with the Donegal Climate Action Plan support the delivery of enhanced public transport and transport infrastructure in rural areas by a) supporting delivery of the Donegal rural public transport routes in the national Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan (Phase 2 Implementation) and b) advocating for the inclusion of additional routes in Donegal under subsequent phases.	•	DCC	DCC, PPN, ATU, Failte Ireland, DLDC, Donegal Tourism, Letterkenny Chamber of Commerce, HSE, Bus Eireann,	
5.3.4	Raise awareness and disseminate information to address the infrastructural deficit in Donegal that impacts negatively on business development opportunities and increases the cost of doing business in Donegal, including access through road, rail, air and ports as well as limited choice of energy options due to lack of gas network and high-capacity electricity connectivity.	•	DCC	DCC, PPN, ATU, Failte Ireland, DLDC, Donegal Tourism, Letterkenny Chamber of Commerce, HSE, Bus Eireann,	
5.3.5	Support and promote the development of Letterkenny Regional Transport and Mobility Hub as a key strategic infrastructural intervention reinforcing connectivity across the County.	•	DCC	PPN, ATU, Failte Ireland, DLDC, Donegal Tourism, Letterkenny Chamber of Commerce, HSE, Bus Eireann, Private Transport Providers	
5.3.6	Support work of the Donegal Transport Taskforce in consolidating and further expanding Rural Transport Services in the county and consider: a) Explore the feasibility of developing an integrated and comprehensive transport website to serve the community, and visitors to the county. b) Support for disability access and supports services on bus services.	•	LCDC	DLDC, IDP, DCC, PPN, HSE Rural Link, Bus Eireann, Private Transport Providers.	

	c) Support for the development and delivery of Bus Driver Training. d) the upgrading of bus stops to cater for increased traffic, provision of shelters and disability access.				
5.3.7	Assess the staffing needs of Childcare facilities in Donegal, identify sustainable solutions to address staff deficits in the sector, and develop and deliver Training Programmes in Childcare, to provide a qualified workforce for Childcare Centres in the county.	•		Donegal Childcare Committee	DCC, CYPSE, DLDC, IDP, DETB, PPN, ATU, Intercultural Platform.
5.3.8	To support the ongoing development of Donegal Airport, and the provision of PSO support, as a key resource for the community, and for investment and tourism purposes, while taking account of Ireland's Action Plan for Aviation Emissions Reduction (Dept of Transport).	•		Comhlacht Aerfort Dhun na nGall.	DCC EDU, Udarás na Gaeltachta, Failte Ireland, Donegal Tourism, IDA, HSE.
5.3.9	To support and promote, understand and further define the Letterkenny/Letterkenny/Strabane North West Metropolitan City Region (NWMCR) as a cross-border metropolitan place of scale, on a par with Limerick, Cork, Waterford and Galway, thereby delivering on the NPF and the objectives of the RSES, in particular those within the North West Metropolitan Area Spatial Planning Framework and, working with all partners including the North West Strategic Growth Partnership (NWSGP) and the North West Regional Development Group (NWRDG), build inclusive and compact places, plan for a vibrant economy and nurture economies, and create resilient places and low carbon infrastructure. Additionally seek to identify opportunities to further support the NWCR through revisions to NPF and RSES thereby recognising the importance of the NWCR to the managed growth of the island, guiding fundamental infrastructural investment and enabling the NWCR to grow sustainably.	•		DCC/DCSDC	NWSGP/ NWRDG/NWRA
5.3.10	Position Donegal strongly in the context of the North-West City Region, working closely with partners and stakeholders in Derry City and Strabane District Council area to showcase the skills, talent and opportunities in this unique cross border strategic investment location, and to identify potential projects to strengthen and further grow cross border collaboration and linkages.	•		DCC / DCSDC	IDA, Invest NI, UU, NWCCE, ATU, ETB, AI, EI,LEO, NWRA, Udarás na Gaeltachta,
5.3.11	Identify further the interrelationship with the development of the Atlantic Economic Corridor northwards to functionally link with the Letterkenny/Derry/Strabane North-West Metropolitan City Region as a key aspect to the success of any regionally focused approach to national growth and to clearly position Donegal as a net contributor to the economies of the island as a whole.	•		DCC	WDC, NWRA
5.3.12	Work with all key stakeholders in the provision of a range of essential infrastructure and amenities required to attract and retain talent and skills to and in Donegal	•		DCC	PPN, IDP, Udarás na Gaeltachta,DLDC,

	including for example childcare, schools, sporting, arts, culture, and other recreational amenities.				Comhar na nOileain,	
<b>Objective 5.4 To consolidate existing and nurture new internal and external partnerships and networks accessing resources, knowledge and expertise</b>						
5.4.1	Continue the work of the Strategic Funding Unit continue to participate in Regional, National, Cross Border and Transnational Programmes so as a) to share resources and experience learning from examples of best practice to inform the work we do in the County b) support networking and develop sustained and meaningful links with relevant external stakeholders	•		DCC	LCDC, DCC, DLDC, IDP, ERNACT, AER, CPMR, WDC, NWRA, Peace Partnership, Committee of the Regions, NW Partnership.	
5.4.2	Continue to build on opportunities relating to Donegal's unique strategic cross border location with a view to building our comparative strengths across key sectors. This includes focusing the opportunities presenting through collaborations with Derry City and Strabane District Council in the context of the North-West Metropolitan City Region and with Omagh and Fermanagh District Council.	•		DCC	NWRA, ERNACT, IDA, EI, Údarás, DFA, LEO,DCSDC,OFDC, DLDC, IDP	
5.4.3	Leverage the Donegal Digital network through a redefined Action Plan to further develop Donegal's digital landscape, promoting digital ready and open access new developments in Donegal.	•		DCC/ Donegal Digital	ERNACT, IDA, EI, Údarás	
5.4.4	Promote SMART development of existing infrastructure networks to future proof connectivity within and to Donegal e.g. 5G corridors, open access ducting,	•		DCC/ Donegal Digital	DLDC, IDP	
5.4.5	Support the Donegal 2040 DAC as a platform for strategic economic project development in the county.	•		DCC	DLDC, IDP, NWRA, WDC, IDA, EI ATU DETB	

**GOAL 6:**

**Donegal is a competitive, innovative, attractive, supportive location for investment and enterprise, offering and maintaining quality employment.**

Rationale: The LECP will seek to sustainably develop all sectors in Donegal to consolidate and to grow employment in and across the county seeking to achieve the RSES and NPF Population Growth to Employment Growth ratio of 3:2 (population/jobs). Additionally, the LECP will seek to support the alignment of job creation with the Core Strategy's Settlement Hierarchy to achieve a jobs ratio of 1.0 and above in Letterkenny and in those settlements identified as County Growth Drivers in the DRAFT County Development Plan, supporting a balanced approach to development, fostering enterprise and innovation by identifying the key linkages between place-making and business investment. There is an already well-established and strong base of companies to work with in the county, building on the hugely successful Donegal brand, further investment branding, and marketing the county as a viable and competitive location for investment, is a key goal of the Plan.

The cross-cutting themes of enabling infrastructure, town and village renewal, skills development, innovation, and investment will all combine to make Donegal attractive for investment, and as a region which can support and sustain viable enterprises, across the county and across a range of sectors.

**Objective 6.1 To promote and support enterprise and sustainable job creation across a range of sectors.**

Promoting and supporting endogenous, micro-enterprises, SME's and entrepreneurs is a key component in the creation and maintenance of sustainable employment and in maintaining viable communities throughout the county, supported by a range of financial and other relevant support provided by Development Agencies, Local Development Companies and Training and Innovation Support Bodies. The LECP will promote and facilitate cooperation, partnership and collaboration in the enterprise sector, through shared learning, adoption of best practice, synergies and the pooling of resources eg access, connectivity and high quality workspace. There will be support for research and development, innovation and on product and service development. The necessary skills to ensure competitiveness and viability in a global economy will be identified and provided for.

**Objective 6.2 To promote and further develop Donegal as an attractive and competitive location for FDI and other forms of investment.**

Donegal is host to a number of FDI related enterprises which have established bases in the county, and which are operating successfully on a global stage. To remain and to grow as a region which is competitive and attractive for investment, Donegal must be agile and SMART, in the face of an ever more

competitive and changing global context. The LECP will focus on SMART Specialisation across relevant sectors and areas of activity in which the county can establish and grow competitive advantage recognising the need to ensure the necessary enabling infrastructure is in place and is continuously upgraded to ensure the county maintains its competitiveness. Access, connectivity, high quality workspace, a skilled and agile workforce, Research and Development and Innovation will be supported to develop new products and processes and to attract new investment, the promotion of the Donegal Brand and engagement with the regions Diaspora will be a key part of this work.

**Objective 6.3 To support the development of tourism infrastructure and projects in the county.**

The development of new key infrastructure and attractions, and the upgrading of existing amenities and facilities, is key to the optimum sustainable development of the county's tourism offering, enhancing the county, and providing quality visitor experiences, in term of, where possible, accessible walks, trails, greenways, cycle routes, beach access and facilities, EV chargers, camper van facilities etc. This work will entail partnership and collaborative effort between the local authority, agencies, community groups and the tourism trade. The county's natural capital, its hills, landscape, seascape, and offshore islands inform the rich eco-tourism offering of Donegal.

**Objective 6.4 To promote Donegal as a world class tourism destination.**

Donegal's tourism product, built on its capital, human, and natural resources is recognised as a key and sustainable resource which provides the county with comparative and competitive advantages. The LECP recognises the necessity, and the opportunity to brand, promote and to market Donegal at home and abroad, as a world class tourism destination. It will build on existing partnership and collaborative efforts and address the ongoing challenge of consolidating and improving on Donegal's performance in attracting visitors. In 2023 Donegal has been identified by National Geographic as ' the Coolest Place on Earth' and the 4<sup>th</sup> best place in the world to visit according to the Lonely Planet. Donegal's product is based on authenticity, on its natural and human capital, and on the infrastructure which has, and which continues to be developed in the county, which collectively brings an excellent product to market. The Plan will assist in ensuring that the necessary actions are undertaken to capitalise on this.

**Objective 6.5 To promote and support the development of all facets of the Creative Economy in the county.**

The Creative Economy is recognised in the LECP as a sector in which Donegal possesses a comparative advantage, and one in which the county can continue to develop a competitive advantage, drawing on its cultural, creative, and human resources. The Plan will act as a platform for partnership and collaboration to advance activity in various areas of culture, in crafts, in music production, in animation and gaming, and in relation to the emerging screen sector in the county, it is recognised that this is a sector which can provide further economic, community, social and cultural benefits across the county. the

LECP will provide for partnership and for collaborative actions, and will develop enabling infrastructure, in terms of capital infrastructure, collaborative platforms, and the necessary skills base across the broad sector.

**Objective 6.6 To promote and support development of the Bioeconomy and Agriculture as integral parts of the county's Green Economy resource.**

The bioeconomy, and the agricultural sector will contribute to innovation, employment creation and sustainable resource development in the county. The bioeconomy sector will also draw from raw materials on Donegal's marine resources, its seaweed, and its fish landings. There is a recognised need to work to increase landings, and to extract optimum levels of added value from this marine resource. Research and Development, innovation, and product development will be undertaken, utilising land and sea resources in a sustainable way, supporting the development of Research and Development and of necessary workspace to support this sector. The sector will encompass the development of new and innovative products based on agricultural products, utilising them for food, pharma, and sustainable building materials.

**Objective 6.7 To promote and to support the development of Renewable Energies as a sustainable resource in the county.**

Donegal is in a strong position to utilise its potential with regard to renewable energies, not only to reduce carbon footprint, but also as a means of promoting economic development and job creation. There are substantial opportunities for the county in terms of land-based wind, offshore wind, biomass, biofuels, photovoltaic, hydro, tidal, and geothermal. The research and development of these areas of activity will be promoted and supported through the LECP. Other areas, such as the production of green hydrogen, will also be researched and pursued where feasible.

**Objective 6.8 To promote and to support development of the Blue Economy as a sustainable resource in the county.**

Donegal has a significant coastline, and generations have gained viable livelihoods from fishing and other marine activities. Recent years have seen substantial challenges impacting the livelihoods of fishermen and coastal communities. The LECP recognises the valuable resource that the county possesses in relation to marine resources, and the potential that exists to build on the capital, natural and human resources that are already in place. This plan will place a strong emphasis on innovation, investment, entrepreneurship and added value to the sector, and every effort will be made to sustainably develop and benefit from all marine resources, including from fishing, added value processing, and the development of the county's ports and harbours.



**Objective 6.9 To promote and develop the Digital Economy and the Digital Transition as an enabler and provider of sustainable employment in the county.**

The LECP will support the Digital Transition in the county and will support development of the Digital Economy across all sectors in the county and will assist in supporting and adding value to the county's digital strategy, raising awareness and building capacity in the sector, and building on the county's digital hub network in all parts of the county.

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**GOAL 6:**

*Donegal is a competitive, innovative, attractive, supportive location for investment and enterprise, offering and maintaining quality employment.*

	Actions	KPIs	Lead Agency	Supporting Agency	Timeframe Short (S) Medium (M) Long (L)
<b>Objective 6.1 To promote and support enterprise and sustainable job creation across a range of sectors.</b>					
6.1.1	Support the delivery of a range of interventions to address the low levels of business start-up and scalability in Donegal.	•	LEO	DCC,EI, IDA, Udarás, , ETB	
6.1.2	Work to increase the number of High Potential Start-ups (HPSU's) in Donegal by providing tailored supports and assistance from early-stage pre-start up interventions to pre-accelerator and accelerator programmes.	•	EI	LEO, Udarás, Alpha Innovation, Colab, ERNACT	
6.1.3	Promote and support a range of sectors where Donegal has a comparative advantage through the facilitation of effective networks and/or clusters that will strengthen competitiveness through greater levels of collaboration and co-ordination.	•	Enterprise Dev Agencies	EI, IDA, Udaras, ATU. DCC, LEO. DETB	
6.1.4	Support the growth and scaling of indigenous businesses through the provision of appropriate property solutions including fully serviced sites, good quality workspace and office accommodation in various locations in the county.	•	DCC	EI, DCC, Udaras, ATU, IDA	
6.1.5	Work to enhance the levels of innovation capability in businesses across various sectors through a range of appropriate and effective interventions.	•	Alpha Innovation	Colab, Ernact, IDA, EI, Udaras, LEO SFI	
6.1.6	Work to enhance effective engagement between industry and academia across a range of sectors to allow for a more commercial focused approach to research & development and innovation in Donegal and the wider region.	•	ATU	DCC, IDA,EI DETB, LEO,SFI,BIM, Udaras	
6.1.7	Support the scaling of small and micro businesses by assisting in enhancing their competitiveness, innovativeness, export-orientation, management and digital capabilities and sustainability	•	LEO/DCC	IDA, EI, LEO Udaras ATU	

6.1.8	Deliver a quality suite of support services that equip entrepreneurs, owners and managers with the knowledge to plan, grow and sustain their businesses in particular through innovation and internationalisation and enhanced efficiency and competitiveness.	•	LEO	IDA, EI, LEO Udaras ATU, DETB	
6.1.9	Provide a series of green & climate-based supports to indigenous companies to help with the transition to a sustainable future.	•	DCC	DCC, LEO,EI, LDC	
<b>Objective 6.2. To promote and further develop Donegal as an attractive and competitive location for FDI and other forms of investment.</b>					
6.2.1	Invest in the ongoing development and promotion of the Donegal DNA place brand positioning the county as a great place to live, work, study, invest and do business in. This includes the delivery of an ambitious brand activation programme supported by various stakeholders across Donegal and beyond.	•	DCC	IDA, EI, LEO Udaras ATU,Failte Ireland, PPN, Donegal Associations,	
6.2.2	Support the activities of enterprise development agencies in promoting Donegal as an attractive location for foreign direct investment including the development of digital and non-digital assets, content and collateral for the joint marketing and promotion of Donegal as a location to invest in.	•	DCC	Donegal Digital, CoLab, Alpha, ATU, EI, IDA, Udaras	
6.2.3	Support the provision of appropriate property solutions for FDI companies including town centre Grade A office accommodation, soft landing opportunities, advance building solutions and serviced lands.	•	IDA	DCC,EI,Udaras	
6.2.4	Work with key agencies in the provision of after care services and supports for FDI companies so as to enable them to develop and grow their business opportunities from Donegal.	•	IDA	DCC, ATU, DTB, Udaras,Letterkenny Chamber of Commerce	
6.2.5	Support the provision of good quality and affordable housing to address the ongoing challenges facing FDI companies and other businesses in attracting and retaining talent to and in Doneg	•	DCC	Voluntary Housing Associations, CD Grps,	
<b>Objective 6.3 To support the development of tourism infrastructure and projects in the county.</b>					
6.3.1	Support the development of the tourism sector bringing socio-economic benefits across the county while ensuring that the natural and cultural assets are fully protected.	•	DCC	Udaras, NPWS, Coillte, FI, IDP, DLDC, Comhar	
6.3.2	Promote and support eco-tourism and regenerative tourism in the County and explore further mechanisms for sustainability proofing of tourism actions.	•	FI	NW BE Hub, DLDC, Comhar, PPN, Donegal Tourism, FI, ATU, DETB	

6.3.3	Support the delivery of Failte Irelands Visitor Experience and Development Plans in Donegal.	•	FI	DCC, Donegal Tourism, ATU, DLDC, IDP, Comhar, PPN
6.3.4	Work on a cross border basis to create appealing visitor propositions and experiences including opportunities to connect the Wild Atlantic Way, the Walled City and the Causeway Coastal Route as well as connections with key propositions in Omagh and Fermanagh District Council area.	•	FI/NI Tourism	DCC/DCSDC
6.3.5	Support the sustainable development of the Wild Atlantic Way as a key attractor for visitors to Donegal in line with Failte Ireland’s WAW Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023 – 2027.	•	FI	DCC/Donegal Tourism, ATU, DLDC, IDP, Comhar, PPN
6.3.6	Support the sustainable and viable development of the Caravan and Camping sector by implementing the recommendations of the KPMG Study (2022) commissioned by Donegal County Council.	•	DCC	FI, DCC/Donegal Tourism, ATU, DLDC, IDP, Comhar, PPN
6.3.7	Support the development of sectoral clusters within the tourism sector e.g. Golf, Donegal Distillery Trail where there is a strong competitive advantage and opportunity for the county with a view to raising the profile of the county in this market and increase high yield visitor numbers.	•	DCC	DCC/Donegal Tourism, PPN, DLDC, IPD, Comhar, Udaras
6.3.8	Support new business start up and existing businesses in the tourism sector through a range of interventions and support programmes	•	FI	DCC, FI, Udaras, DT, DLDC, IDP, Comhar
6.3.9	Work with businesses to enable them to maximise opportunities presenting from recent and future investments by the state including for example investments in trail development, greenways, blueways and visitor attractions.	•	DCC/ FI	FI, DLDC, IDP, Udaras, Comhar, DSP,PPN,DSP
6.3.10	Support tourism businesses in the twin transition of digitalization and climate resilience through a range of interventions including via EU funded projects and other programmes.	•	FI/LEO	DCC, Udaras, ATU ETB, LDC, SEAI
6.3.11	Work to ensure meaningful engagement and collaborations with the tourism industry in Donegal through a range of activities including joint collaborations, seminars, workshops, training programmes, regular e-zines and online resources	•	DCC/Donegal Tourism	DCC, FI, LDC
6.3.12	To support the development of new and upgrading of existing flagship tourism visitor attraction	•	FI	DT,DCC,LDC, Udaras, PPN
6.3.13	Support the development of disruptive technology projects to monitor the environment impact of tourism related projects	•	DCC	DCC/Donegal Tourism, FI, PPN, LDC’s

**Objective 6.4 To promote Donegal as a world class tourism destination.**

6.4.1	Capitalise on recent growth in the domestic market, whilst bringing a renewed focus on international marketing capacity across key target markets including GB, France, Spain, Germany & US, across traditional and emerging segments such as Outdoor Adventurers and Nature Lovers, Dream Fulfilment/Passion Travellers, those seeking new destinations and the Irish diaspora.	•		DCC/Donegal Tourism/FI	DCC, FI, LDC, PPN, ATU	
6.4.2	Capitalise on recent international accolades including Lonely Planets ‘Top Destination in the World to visit’ and National Geographics ‘the Coolest Place on the Planet’ to increase overseas visitor numbers and spend through a range of effective marketing campaigns.	•		DCC/Donegal Tourism/FI	DCC, FI, LDC, PPN, ATU	
6.4.3	Work to ensure an agile approach to availing of opportunities presenting to position and promote Donegal and the wider region in the international marketplace including for example in hosting TBEX the largest gathering of travel bloggers, writers, new media content creators, and social media- savvy travel industry professionals, in Donegal in 2025.	•		DCC/Donegal Tourism/FI	DCC, FI, LDC, PPN, ATU	
6.4.4	Build on the Donegal place brand and ‘Go Visit Donegal’ consumer brand as the key calling cards for tourism in Donegal.	•		DCC/Donegal Tourism/FI	DCC, FI, LDC, PPN, ATU	
6.4.5	Build on the existing online digital assets for Go Visit Donegal including website and social media platforms ensuring that these mechanisms are properly resourced, developed and maintain to ensure effective delivery of campaigns and targeting of specific markets.	•		DCC/Donegal Tourism/FI	DCC, FI, LDC, PPN, ATU	
6.4.6	Ensure continued investment in the creation of digital and non-digital assets and collateral needed to market Donegal effectively	•		DCC/Donegal Tourism/FI	DCC, FI, LDC, PPN, ATU	
6.4.7	Work closely with Tourism Ireland to ensure that Donegal is featured strongly in various campaigns and on their platforms. This includes working with businesses to ensure that their offerings are ready for promotion on international markets and the creation of unique and appealing content.	•		DCC/Donegal Tourism/FI	DCC, FI, LDC, PPN, ATU	
6.4.8	Develop a bespoke Donegal Travel Concierge Service providing specialized knowledge and support to tour operators and travel agents with a view to securing Donegal as a key feature on their itineraries.	•		DCC/Donegal Tourism/FI	DCC, FI, LDC, PPN, ATU	

**Objective 6.5 To promote and support the development of all facets of the Creative Economy in the County.**

6.5.1	Provision of capacity building and skills training, across all parts of the sector	•		ATU	DET, LEO, Údarás,	
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6.5.2	Support the development of enterprise in the Creative Economy Sector	•	LEO	DCC, DLDC, IDP, EI, Údarás, Comhar, ERNACT, Fáilte Ireland.
6.5.3	Explore the value of establishing a creative hub with incubation units for those emerging creative eg. film industry and music industry to support our vibrant cultural resources.	•	IDP	DCC, DLDC, Donegal Film Office.
6.5.4	Support for the development of a Screen Studio in the county and through the Donegal Film Office continue to support the development of the Animation Sector, and of enterprises in the sector.	•	Donegal Film Office.	DCC, 2040, LEO, DCC Cultural Services, Údarás.
6.5.5	Establish the Donegal Screen Development Platform	•	Donegal Film Office	DCC, IDA, DI, ATU, DETB, Údarás, IDO, DLDC.
<b>Objective 6.6 To promote and support development of the Bioeconomy and Agriculture as integral parts of the County's Green Economy resource.</b>				
6.6.1	Undertake the mapping of the Bioeconomy Sector in Donegal	•	Cill Ulta /IDP	UCD, Teagasc, DLDC, Alpha Innovation, DCC, LEO. Údarás, Spraoi agus Sport
6.6.2	Develop a Northwest Bioeconomy Hub in Donegal.	•	Cill Ulta/UCD.	DCC, Teagasc, LEO, STU, DETB, DCRD, Údarás,
6.6.3	Develop Micro Credentials for participants in the Bioeconomy Sector.	•	ATU	DETB, UCD, NW Bioeconomy Hub, IDP, DLDC, Údarás, Comhar, Teagasc, DCC.
6.6.4	Promote and support r&d and innovation with regarding new products and processes in the bioeconomy sector based on the County's natural resources.	•	Cill Ulta/UCD	Teagasc, DLDC, IDP
6.6.5	To explore and support the development of alternative agricultural products to assist the viability of Donegal Farm Holdings	•	Cill Ulta/UCD	Teagasc, DLDC, IDP, SFI, DCC, LEO
6.6.6	To explore and support the development of innovative and sustainable products based on agricultural raw materials eg sheeps wool for building insulation products	•	Cill Ulta/UCD	Teagasc, DLDC, IDP, SFI, DCC, LEO
6.6.7	To support the promotion and development of added value to quality products in the agricultural sector	•	Teagasc	DLDC, IDP, SFI, DCC, LEO

**Objective 6.7 To promote and support the development of Renewable Energies as a sustainable resource for the County.**

6.7.1	Identify a plan for the development of the region’s offshore wind resource and other renewable energy sources within an overall Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategy in accordance with DCC’s Climate Action Plan (Action BE 4.3).	•	DCC	ATU, IDA, EI, Údarás, DETB, LEO, SEAI
6.7.2	Capitalise on the county’s rich heritage, skills and expertise in marine activity and the wider blue economy and the benefits that this can bring to the development of the emerging offshore renewable energy sector.	•	DCC	ATU, IDA, EI, Údarás, DETB, LEO, SEAI, LDC,
6.7.3	Working with key stakeholders maximise the potential of the significant port infrastructure in Donegal including Ireland’s premier fisheries harbour and deep water port in Killybegs as key competitive advantage for the development of the offshore renewable energy sector with a particular focus on floating offshore wind.	•	DCC	ATU, IDA, EI, Údarás, DETB, LEO, LDC, Dep of Marine
6.7.4	Work to ensure that Donegal and the wider North West region will benefit socially and economically from the production of energy off the north west coast.	•	DCC	DO Energy, EI, IDA, BIM, DoM, LDC,
6.7.5	Work to ensure the early development of the Designated Marine Area Plan (DMAP) for the north west as per the requirements of the Marine Spatial Planning Framework and legislation.	•	DCC	EI, IDA, BIM, DoM, LDC, DECC
6.7.6	Work to address key infrastructural deficits that are and will curtail the development of the offshore renewable energy sector including the lack of high capacity grid connectivity which is essential to ensure viable route to market for energy.	•	DCC	Eirgrid, DoE, DECC
6.7.7	Maximise the potential of engagement in EU and international networks to support the development of the Blue Economy in Donegal including through involvement in the CPMR, the Laurentic Forum and Sister Counties Agreement with Plymouth.	•	DCC	ATU, Ernact, CoLab, BIM, IDP, Laurentic Forum

**Objective 6.8 To promote and support development of the Blue Economy as a sustainable resource in the County.**

6.8.1	Support industries and communities impacted negatively by the outcome of the Brexit Trade and Co-operation Agreement to ensure their longer-term sustainability and viability particularly in the fishing industry.	•	DCC	LDC, IDA, EI, Udaras,
6.8.2	Recognise and value the traditional and artisanal marine skills and expertise that are off intrinsic heritage value to coastal communities through interventions that will safeguard these skills and knowledge for future generations.	•	DCC	LDC, BIM, DETB,

6.8.3	To explore the potential for development for a Marine Innovation Park to be situated at appropriate locations across the County	•	IDP	BIM,Udaras, DLDC, Comhar, ATU, ETB	
6.8.4	Support the Atlantic Technological University's plans for the development on an Ocean Innovation Centre in Donegal that will be a key driver of research, development, and innovation across a range of areas within the blue economy.	•	ATU	DCC,SFI,EI,IDA, Udaras, Ernact	
6.8.5	Enhance the innovative capability of businesses operating in the marine / blue economy with a view to enabling them to fully avail of the opportunities emerging from renewable energy and other blue economy sectors through the work of the Alpha Innovation Centre and in collaboration with other key stakeholders.	•	Alpha Innovation	DCC,ATU,ETB, Ernact, BIM, KC, DoM, IDA, EI, LEO	
<b>Objective 6.9 To promote and develop the Digital Economy and the Digital Transition as an enabler and provider for sustainable employment in the County.</b>					
6.9.1	Build a strong narrative and proposition focusing on Donegal's excellent broadband digital connectivity, talent, and skilled workforce.	•	DCC	DD,IDA,EI,LEO,Ernact, LDC, Alpha	
6.9.2	Promote Donegal's unique proposition as a flexible working location with an excellent network of highly connected state of the art co-working spaces and digital hubs.	•	DCC	IDA,EI,Udaras,ATU,ETB	
6.9.3	Build on and promote Donegal's strong talent base and cutting-edge expertise in a range area including Cybersecurity, AI and Data Analytics.	•	ATU	DCC, CoLab,DD,Ernact, EI,LEO,IDP,DLDC, Comhar, Udaras	
6.9.4	Facilitate collaboration and co-ordination of digital activities and resources through the Donegal Digital initiative.	•	Donegal Digital	DCC, CoLab,Ernact, EI,LEO,IDP,DLDC, Comhar, Udaras	
6.9.5	Support the development of a clustering approach to enable strong and effective collaboration between industry, academia, and public sector agencies to support the development of the tech industry across a range of areas in Donegal.	•	Donegal Digital,	DCC, CoLab,Ernact, EI,LEO,IDP,DLDC, Comhar, Udaras	
6.9.6	Enable the digital transition of businesses across a range of sectors in Donegal through the delivery of a range of supports and interventions.	•	EI, LEO	DCC, CoLab,Ernact, EI,LEO,IDP,DLDC, Comhar, Udaras	
6.9.7	To build capacity in disruptive technologies, IoT, AR, VR, Blockchain and Artificial Intelligence in the Public Sector in Donegal	•	DCC, Donegal Digital,	ENAIBLER, INNOCAP,	
6.9.8	Implement an open data strategy for the county to support the creation of new business opportunities and improved public services	•	DCC/Donegal Digital,	DCC, Alpha, EI, IDA, Údarás, LEO, IDP, DLDC, ATU, DETB.	



**GOAL 7:****Donegal is a place of opportunity for lifelong learning and skills development, nurturing and driving creativity and innovation.**

Rationale: Donegal is part of an uncertain, disruptive, ever changing, and ever more competitive global economy. To this end there is a need to ensure that Donegal sustainably harnesses all opportunities to consolidate, improve and grow existing enterprises and to identify and develop new products, processes and projects that can maintain the competitiveness and viability of the county and wider region, where Donegal can compete in this global environment as a world class 'Region of Excellence'. There is an increasing awareness and emphasis on the areas of Innovation and Creativity, across all sectors in the county. The promotion and the undertaking of actions to brand Donegal as a 'Learning Region' is also central to achieving this goal. Activities will be undertaken to ensure that a talent pool is created and maintained, and that skills are developed, including upskilling and reskilling, to support existing and emerging areas of potential for the county.

**Objective 7.1 To promote and to support lifelong learning and skills development across all sectors.**

The provision of skills, skills development, upskilling/reskilling is key to ensure the potential for people, especially young people, are able to gain employment, and to carve out viable careers for themselves in the county, informing the development and growth of enterprise in the county. Access to skills is essential to ensure ongoing competitiveness and viability of Donegal firms in an ever more competitive global economy. Existing skills needs must be catered for, and future skills needs projected, and prepared for; an example of future needs relates to the emerging offshore wind industry.

**Objective 7.2 To foster and celebrate a culture of innovation and creativity across all sectors in the county.**

Innovation must be central to all aspects of development in the county. The LECPC will see the promotion and the provision of supports to advance innovation and to instil an innovative mindset and culture in the county. The Plan will support the development of essential infrastructure to provide the necessary space at various locations in the county, and the provision of animation and capacity building support will be assisted. A collaborative platform to share learning and best practice regarding innovation and creativity will be established and supported.

**GOAL 7:**

*Donegal is a place of opportunity for lifelong learning and skills development, nurturing and driving creativity and innovation*

	Actions	KPIs		Lead Agency	Supporting Agency	Timeframe Short (S) Medium (M) Long (L)
<b>Objective 7.1 To promote and to support Lifelong Learning and Skills Development across all sectors:</b>						
7.1.1	Prepare an audit of existing, emerging, and future skills needs in enterprises, and sectors in the county, to inform skills needs and the provision of training across the county to underpin viable economic activity in the county	•		ATU/ DETB	DI, IDA, EI, LEO, PPN Údarás , DLDC, IDP, Comhar na nOileán, BIM, Bord Bia, NW Bioeconomy Hub,	
7.1.2	Design and provide support services for lifelong learning, skills development, upskilling and reskilling in enterprises across all sectors.	•		DETB / ATU	DLDC, IDP, Údarás, Comhar na nOileán , BIM, EI, IDA.	
7.1.3	To undertake training and skills development programmes in relation to sustainable building skills, develop the necessary capacity to address severe housing shortage promoting renewables/green economy	•		DETB	IDP, DCC, DLDC, CIF, Comhar na nOileain. ATU.	
7.1.4	Establish a Donegal Education and Skills Forum to act as a platform for cooperation, partnership, and collaboration, and to coordinate, create synergies, and ensure best use of resources.0	•		DETB	ATU, DCC, DLDC, IDP, Údarás, Comhar na nOileán, NW Bioeconomy Hub, BIM, Killybegs Marine Cluster.	
7.1.5	Establish regional training hubs across the County to promote and improve access to training opportunities for all and a) promote the provision of apprenticeship opportunities across all sectors inc ‘new’ apprenticeships. b) Offer Certified Training and Education Courses to provide a skills base, and thereby support viability of enterprises across all sectors.	•		DETB/ATU	IDP, DLDC, ATU, Údarás , DCC. PPN, BIM, Bord Bia, UCD, NW Bioeconomy Hub.	
7.1.6	Build on the strong collaborative relationship between industry and education and training providers, including the North West Tertiary Education Cluster to develop a resilient pipeline of talent to support the business needs of existing and new FDI’s.	•		ATU	DETB, AIPha, CoLad, DCC, EI, Udaras,	

7.1.7	Promote and support delivery of STEM Programmes in schools in the county, with a particular emphasis on female participation	•		DET/ATU	LEO, EI, 2040, IDP, DLDC. Údarás, Comhar, DCC /Alpha Innovation	
7.1.8	Work closely with education and training providers to ensure the availability to essential talent and skills for the development of the renewable energy sector.	•		ATU/ETB	ATU,LDC,DCC,LEO,Udaras, Comhar	
7.1.9	Work to position tourism as an attractive career opportunity by working with key stakeholders including employers, employees and education and training providers.	•		ATU/DET/ETB	ETB,FI,DT,DCC,DLDC, IPD, PPN Udaras, Comhar	
<b>Objective 7.2 To foster and celebrate a culture of innovation and creativity across all sectors in the county.</b>						
7.2.1	Support the delivery of the Alpha Innovation Centre as a hub to drive innovation capability and enhance the regions competitiveness.	•		DCC /EI	IDA, ATU, DETB, Údarás na Gaeltachta, DLDC	
7.2.2	Establish a Donegal Creative Resources Collaborative & Learning Platform, to coordinate activity, and support development.	•		IDP	DCC, ATU, IDA, Údarás na Gaeltachta, UCD, Alpha Innovation, DLDC, Comhar na nOileán, Enterprise Ireland, WDC, Laurentic Forum	
7.2.3	Support training and education in innovation and creativity.	•		ATU/DET/ETB	DLDC,IDP, Comhar na nOileán, Údarás, Failte Ireland, NW BIM, Bord Bia, UCD, DCC.	
7.2.4	Provide support for Research and Development, Innovation and Product Development in Enterprises, develop partnerships and collaborations to advance development of best practice and establish Donegal as a Region of Innovation Excellence.	•		ATU	DLDC, IDP, ATU, SFI, Teagasc, BIM, Bord Bia, Comhar na nOileán. ATU, ERNACT, AER, IDA, EI, DCC, Údarás,	

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*Ní Neart go Cur le Chéile'  
agus 'Ar Scáth a Chéile a Mhaireann na Daoine'.*

*go raibh míle maith agaibh a chairde*