



Comhairle Contae Thiobraid Árann
Tipperary County Council

Submission by Tipperary County Council on

Draft Territorial Just Transition Plan

This submission has been prepared by the Planning Section, Tipperary County Council. Submissions to the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications to be received by 14th February 2022



Submission to the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications.

Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Territorial Just Transition Plan. Comments and suggestions of Tipperary County Council are set out below.

Draft Territorial Just Transition Fund Submission:

Tipperary County Council welcome the publication of the Draft Territorial Just Transition Plan and the opportunity to make a submission on this Plan. As the Plan acknowledges, the closure of the peat briquette plant in Littleton, Tipperary in early 2018 has had a significant effect on the availability of local employment opportunities in the area, both through direct and indirect employment. Given the employment significance of the plant in the community, the plant had also played a social and cultural role in the community, an evolution of the way local communities had worked the land.

Tipperary County Council wish to express support for the general thrust of the Draft Plan to support a Just Transition through green and climate neutral actions, and in particular to support the pillars identified, namely:

1. Modernise the Business Environment and Create New Employment Opportunities
2. Enhance the Skills Profile
3. Focus on Environmental Sustainability and Industrial Heritage
4. Enhancing potential of region as a place to live and work

However, it is considered that there are further opportunities that could be explored upon and included within the Draft Plan.

Tourism Potential

It is noted that pillar 3, *'Environmental Sustainability and Industrial Heritage'* references the tourism potential opportunities within the peatlands. It is also noted that Action 11 makes specific reference to *'Developing the Midland's Tourism Potential'* and *'Ireland's Hidden Heartlands'*. However, it is considered that the Plan should include greater emphasis on the multi-faceted tourism opportunities available within the peatlands.

The remoteness of the peatlands offers significant opportunity for a burgeoning sector of the tourism industry related to 'slow tourism'. This sector includes hiking, wilderness walking, ecological and biodiversity tourism. The peatlands have a rich ecological, cultural, archaeological and social history, attractive to this sector of tourism and should be promoted in this way to order to create and diversify employment in the locality. The peatlands are a unique landscape which could support other types of tourism, such as adventure sports, bushcraft and orienteering, while also providing



learning opportunities related to the worked landscape, biodiversity and the bioeconomy. These unique tourism opportunities should be reflected in the Plan.

Connecting the Communities

The loss of significant centres of employment within the communities has had social as well as economic impacts, fracturing the network of social interaction that existed previously. It is noted that the Draft Plan makes reference to enhancing the region as a place to live and work. However, creating physical, sustainable transport and social connections between the settlements and communities in the region is a critical element of attracting people to live in the communities. In seeking to attract people to live and work in the region, in addition to the actions outlined, the Draft Plan should include a greater emphasis on the creation of physical infrastructure for connections as well as community building projects.

An Exemplar of Carbon Sequestration

Given the scale of the raised bog, the peatlands is a unique landscape in a European context. As outlined within the Draft Plan, the re-wetting of the bogs offers a significant opportunity for the development of new ecological habitats but also the significant natural sequestration of carbon. The development of an exemplar landscape of carbon sequestration would have significant resonance in a European context, would align with the climate change aspects of the Just Transition, and would further open opportunities for funding. A project of this type would also offer the opportunity for upskilling the local communities in developing and managing the peatlands.

Renewables and Bio Economy

Tipperary County Council has long recognised the importance of the low carbon energy transition, both to the quality of lives of citizens and the opportunities it brings in terms of rural economic growth and development. The partnership approach of Tipperary County Council, Tipperary Energy Agency (TEA), Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT), business and communities was formalised in 2017 with the establishment of 'Sustainable Tipp'. This partnership has led to some key achievements and initiatives, including:

- The Council is the leading local authority and one of the leading public bodies in meeting energy efficiency targets, having exceeded the 33% 2020 target in 2017;
- The Council has met and exceeded national targets for energy efficiency in public buildings, is the owner of the largest solar installation in the country and has switched 90% of its heat use from fossil fuels to renewable combined heat and power;
- Tipperary is home to Cloughjordan eco-village and Templederry community owned wind farm;
- TEA is leading research and delivering exemplar community initiatives such as 'Superhomes', 'Better Energy Communities', 'Insulate Tipp' etc.

Curteen College, through micro-generation of wind and solar PV and energy efficiency measures, has reduced its energy demand in heating and electricity by half. Tipperary is at the heart of the



global bio-economy opportunity and is designated as a 'European Model Demonstrator Region'. The location of the National Bio-Economy Campus is at Lisheen, Co. Tipperary. This National Campus was developed through the Irish Bio-economy Foundation bringing together relevant stakeholders, including universities, private enterprise and is supported through Enterprise Ireland. The campus will have a range of facilities which will enable industry, entrepreneurs and researchers to scale technologies that convert Ireland's natural resources (including residues) to products of high value for use in a wide variety of sectors including food ingredients, feed ingredients, pharmaceuticals, natural chemicals, biodegradable plastics and more.

The plan should specifically support the synergies that could be created with the National Bioeconomy Hub at Lisheen (RPO 59 RSES South Region).

No reference is made within the Plan to the opportunities for developing renewable energy sources within the peatlands. The peatlands offer significant opportunities for the development of renewable technologies and the creation of employment through the development of these projects. It is considered that these should be referenced within the Plan.

Specific Comments

- The final Plan should make reference to 'NPO3: Strengthened Rural Economies and Community' within section 2.3.
- No reference is made within the Draft Plan to the '*National Raised Bog Conservation Management Plan*'. This Plan should be referenced within the final Territorial Just Transition Fund.

Conclusion

Tipperary County Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Draft Plan and supports the overall objectives of the Draft Plan. However, as outlined above, there are a number of areas in TCC consider the Plan could be strengthened in order to deliver the overall objectives of the Plan. TCC would appreciate if these comments are noted and considered in the evaluation and final publication of the Plan.

