

Climate Action Strategy

Executive summary



#MAKEITMEATH
#MEATHCLIMATEMATTERS

OUR VISION

‘To make County Meath a climate ready region that supports jobs, growth and healthy lifestyles’

TARGETS

1. Reducing Meath County Councils emissions by 33% by 2020.
2. Reducing CO2 emissions of the county by at least 40% by 2030.
3. Increasing our resilience by adapting to the impacts of climate change.
4. Sharing our vision, results, experience and know-how with fellow local and regional authorities within the EU and beyond through direct cooperation and peer-to-peer exchange, namely in the context of the Global Covenant of Mayors.

BENEFITS

- Saving households and businesses money. Using energy more efficiently and reducing emissions would help all families—especially low-income families—lower their energy bills. It is crucial that this strategy helps to deliver cost-savings to families in order to provide additional spending power, which could be spent on local businesses.
- Competing internationally. The clean energy economy is poised to be the growth industry of the future. With increasing numbers of big businesses signing up to commitments including 100% renewable energy and science based carbon reduction targets, Climate Action will become increasingly important if County Meath wants to continue to attract inward investment from big businesses.
- Helping avoid the costs of climate change. The impacts of climate change are already being felt across Ireland, with many counties experiencing the costly effects of climate change already. A strong adaptation strategy will help to ensure that the county can continue to run effectively during more extreme weather and avoid unforeseen shocks to our services, residents and businesses.
- Creating jobs. Irish corporate leaders on climate change have identified that tens of thousands of jobs could be created across Ireland by moving to a low carbon economy. For example, SEAI estimate that more than 10,000 Irish jobs will be created by the implementation of Smart Grid infrastructure and its associated technologies.
- Health and wellbeing. By moving to more active modes of transport, transport policy changes that reduce private car use and increase walking and cycling would reduce obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. In addition, by moving to cleaner modes of transport, we can improve air quality. Good quality, accessible green space and infrastructure can provide many potential health and well-being benefits including increased life expectancy and reduced health inequality
- Less congestion. By getting people out of cars and into shared modes of transport, we will future proof against congestion on our roads, which is one of our key USPs in the economic development plan.
- Energy security. Power generation in Ireland relies essentially on gas, imported mainly from the UK. Increasing our renewable energy will improve our resilience.
- Improve profits. A business can now be an energy generator as well as a consumer. Self-generation of renewable power to cover a firm’s own needs and selling the surplus to the grid in effect makes energy a profit centre rather than a cost.
- Stronger communities. Community renewable energy schemes can deliver a range of social and economic benefits to local communities including increased autonomy, empowerment and resilience by providing a long term income and local control over finances, often in areas where there are few options for generating wealth.
- Land regeneration. Previously developed, derelict, underused or neglected (brownfield) land in and around urban centres can deliver social, environmental and economic benefits via conversion to green infrastructure.

OUR PLAN

Our plan is linked to the County Development Plan and covers the period from 2019-2025. We want our strategy to be ambitious but grounded in pragmatism. The success of this is dependent on recognising what is within Meath County Council's control, where we can enable others to take action, and inspiring others to lead.

This means our actions will focus on the following key areas;



Lead:

We will take action ourselves

We have a unique leadership opportunity to influence and drive significant changes through our own operations.

However, much more needs to be done and Meath County Council must provide leadership through our own operations and continue to develop further initiatives to tackle climate change across the domestic, commercial, industrial and transport sectors.



Enable:

We'll support others to deliver

The responsibility for changing our energy system and adapting to climate change lies not only with Meath County Council, but with many of our businesses, social enterprises, public bodies and communities.

Furthermore, there may be opportunities where Meath County Council does not have appropriate jurisdiction to take a lead role and we will therefore strive to collaborate, empower and enable these organisations through initiatives that may help in securing funding, providing resources, sharing skills, knowledge and expertise and providing political support.



Inspire:

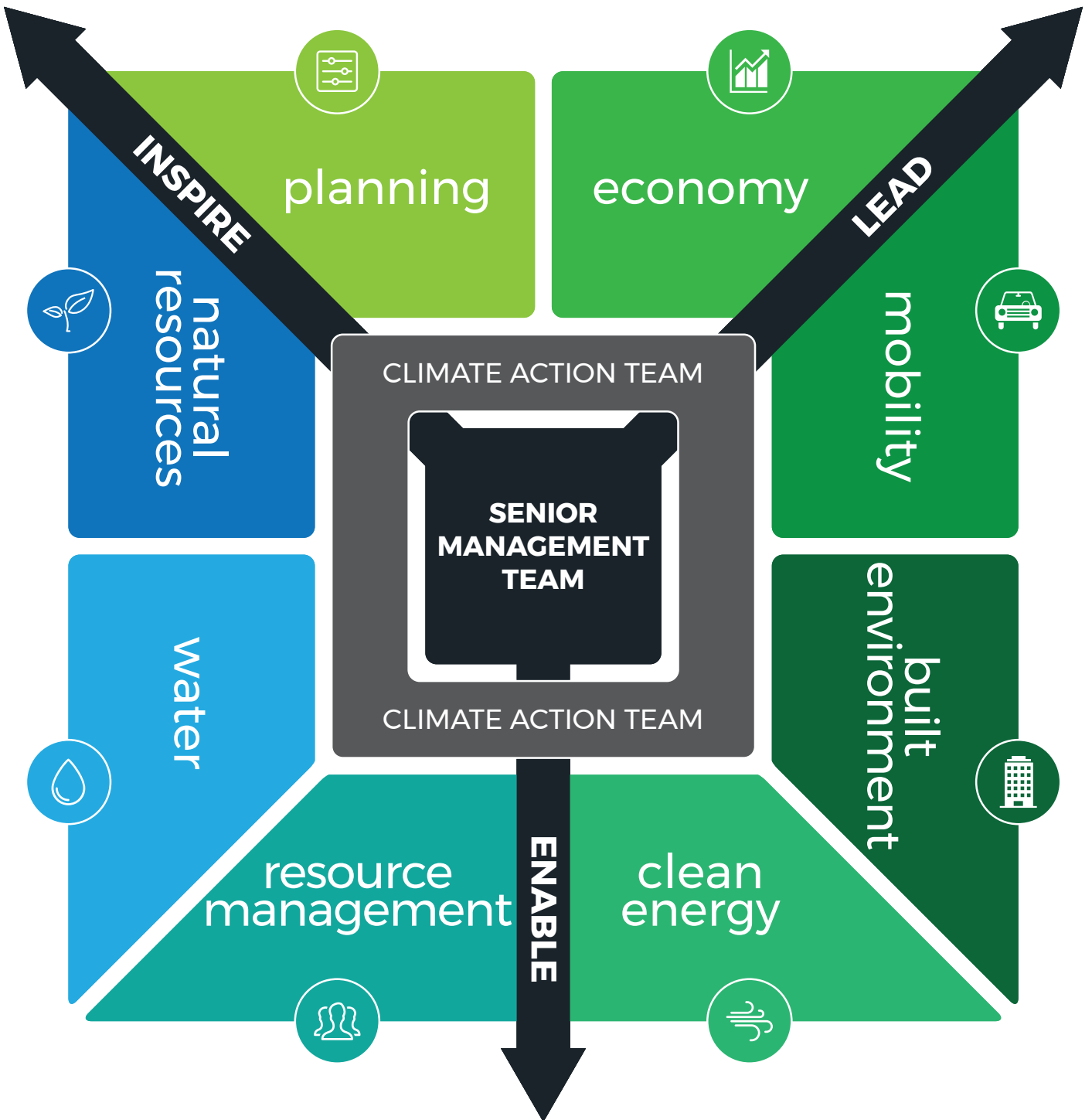
We'll inspire others to take action

Ensuring that County Meath is a thriving, climate resilient county, is an opportunity to inspire active public participation.

Through our engagement, we have identified a number of areas to inspire community action, from community energy projects, to planting trees. The key to working with citizens will be expanding and finding new ways to engage, from social media to a variety public events across the region.

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ECONOMY

Meath County Council now has primary responsibility for the economic development of the county. We will seek to enhance our economy through climate action by:

- Using Climate Action as a driver for growth in County Meath.
- Promoting and marketing County Meath as a Climate Ready region.
- Promoting local jobs and local workspaces.



MOBILITY

Mobility is fundamental to how we live and work. A well-performing transportation system is essential to the functioning of society and the economy as a whole.

The promotion of use and increased delivery of sustainable modes of transport is fundamental to achieving Ireland's carbon emission reduction requirements of 20% by 2020 and 30% by 2030. We will seek to make mobility climate ready by;

- Increasing the efficiency of the transport system.
- Exploring policies to help the transition to a climate resilient low carbon society, with emphasis on transportation modes and types.
- Promoting and encouraging active transport.



BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The world's buildings account for a large share of the global final energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, with major potential for energy savings of up to 50–90% in existing and new buildings. We will seek to make the built environment Climate Ready by:

- Ensuing that climate adaptation is mainstreamed into all activities and operations.
- Ensuing that climate resilience is considered for all council-lead developments.



CLEAN ENERGY

Energy use is changing fast. The shift to renewable sources, however, needs to happen faster. This is not just in terms of how power is generated but also in terms of how it is used in heating, buildings and transport. We will support the transition to clean energy by:

- Encouraging a robust evidence based approach to inform policy and decision making in relation to the promotion of clean energies.
- Supporting and encouraging communities in their pursuit of sustainable energy capacity building.



RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Demand for raw materials has seen exponential growth due to a rapidly expanding global population coupled with rising standards of living. Yet the resources on which we all rely are depleting quickly which is exacerbated by our culture of single use of resources, which uses significant amounts of energy to extract and process. We will seek to make our Resource Management Climate ready by:

- Continuing to inspire communities to sustainably manage waste.



WATER

Climate change will increase the frequency of heavy rainfall events, storm surges and their duration, thereby increasing the risk of flooding in vulnerable areas of the county. Equally, increased temperatures and prolonged dry spells will increase the likelihood of drought and water shortages. We will seek to make our Water Resources Climate Ready by:

- Liaising and working with other bodies, agencies responsible for the management of water courses.
- Providing for adequate and quality water supply in times of extreme weather conditions.



NATURAL RESOURCES

Future trends mean that the benefits we get from biodiversity, green infrastructure and our wider natural resources have never been so valuable. Using our natural resources more effectively will not only play a key role in helping us to adapt to a changing climate but will also create multiple benefits for our residents, including improved health and wellbeing. We will seek to make our Natural Resources Climate Ready by:

- Liaising and collaborating with the agricultural community in their pursuit and climate resilience.
- Promoting and encouraging the use natural resources to help us mitigate and adapt to climate change.
- Using natural resources to mitigate and adapt to climate change.
- Building capacity and resilience within communities.



PLANNING

One of our key roles is to ensure County Meath is properly planned. If we can do this with climate change in mind, it will help us to avoid 'locking in' high carbon and climate-vulnerable developments and land use patterns in the long-term.

By planning properly, we can increase the viability of new public and active transport routes renewable energy projects and business cases for investing in areas of currently underused and low quality greenspace. New developments served by such infrastructure will become a significant part of the appeal for existing and new domestic and commercial occupants. We will make sure our Planning is Climate Ready by:

- Promoting and integrating climate action policy into all regional and local planning policies.
- Integrating climate action considerations into landuse planning policy.
- Promoting and maximising the most efficient and sustainable use of land.
- Mitigating the risk and impact of flooding.
- Building capacity and resilience within communities.
- Protecting and encouraging climate resilient transport Infrastructure.