Issues Papers

Review of the County Development Plan 2007-2013 and preparation of a new Plan for the County

- Introduction
- Strategic Planning Context
- Core Strategy, Settlement and Housing
- Economic Development and Employment
- Rural Development
- Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy and Waste
- Environment
- Heritage and Conservation
- Community Facilities, Recreation and Education
- Urban Village and Rural Design

Wexford County Council
Planning & Development

Introduction

What is the County Development Plan?
The Development Plan sets out the overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development for the County for a period of 6 years. It sets out the Local Authorities policies and objectives with regard to its own development and that of others. It sets the parameters and standards against which applications for planning permission will be assessed.

The Plan is made by the Elected Representatives of the local authority and through the Elected Representatives reflects the broad aims and wishes of the people of the County.

The Local Authority is obliged to make the Plan under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

What is Sustainable Development?

Sustainable Development is development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

The most important objectives of Sustainable Development are:
- the efficient use of resources
- the protection of the environment
- the creation of an attractive and safe living environment

In order to achieve these objectives it is necessary to align transport and land use polices and service provision. The Development Plan is crucial in this regard.

While the Development Plan cannot create economic development, it can provide a level of certainty in the planning process which creates a climate where economic development can flourish.

Development Plan Process

The Development Plan process follows a strict 99 week time-frame which commences with a notice in the newspaper announcing the Review of the County Development Plan and the preparation of the new Plan.

Week	Stage
1-8	Initial public consultation and display of 'Issues Papers'
8-16	Manager prepares report on submissions received during consultation stage and recommends polices to Elected Members
16-26	The Members have 10 weeks during which they may issue directions to the Manager with regard to the policies to be contained in the plan
26-38	Preparation of Draft Development Plan
38-46	Members consider Draft Plan
46-48	Prepare Draft for public consultation
48-58	Public consultations on Draft Plan
58-70	Manager's Report on submissions received on Draft Plan
70-82	Members consider Manager's Report & make amendments
82-85	Prepare amended Draft Development Plan
85-89	Public consultation on amended Development Plan
89-93	Manager's Report on submissions
93-99	Members consider Manager's Report and adopt

As can be seen above this is the first of three formal public consultation periods. During these periods we will also be holding public meetings, details of which will be advertised in the local newspapers and on www.wexford.ie

What must a Development Plan contain?

The Plan must cover a set of mandatory objectives contained in the Act and must comply with Ministerial Guidelines. The Plan must contain;

- a strategy for sustainable development which shall include a written statement incorporating a Core Strategy;
- a statement to show the development objectives are consistent with conservation and protection of the environment, and
- information on the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the Plan and a Strategic Environmental Assessment and an Appropriate Assessment if appropriate (required under the EU Habitats Directive).

1 There is provision for the Manager to order an additional period to carry out and Appropriate Assessment or Strategic Environmental Assessment of material alterations to the Draft Plan

The Act also provides list of objectives which must be incorporated in the Plan. These include:

- zoning
- infrastructure including transport, energy and communication facilities, water supplies and waste water treatment and waste.
- the conservation and protection of the environment including the archaeological and natural heritage and landscape
- compliance with River Basin Management Plans
- the protection of structures of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest;
- the provision of accommodation for travellers, and the use of particular areas for that purpose;
- the control and siting of sites covered by Major Accidents Directive
- amenities and recreational amenities, public rights of way, schools, crèches and other education and childcare facilities
- the promotion of sustainable settlement and transportation strategies in urban and rural areas including the promotion of measures to; reduce energy demand; reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, address the necessity of adaptation to climate change.

Further Reading

There are a wide range of policy, guidance and legislative documents, produced at local, regional, national and European level which the Council will consider in the formulation of the new Development Plan. A non-exhaustive list of these documents, entitled 'Issues Papers – Further Reading' may be found at www.wexford.ie.

What are these Issues Papers for?

It is imperative that the Development Plan reflects the wishes and aspirations of the people who live in County Wexford. These papers present some of the issues which the Council consider important to include in the plan. They are intended to stimulate debate but do not purport to cover all the issues. We want you to tell us what the issues are? Tell us:

What do you think?
Have we left out any of the issues?
How should we address these issues?

How to make a Submission

Submissions should be made in writing to Wexford County Council between

Friday 08/04/11 and Friday 03/06/11

to the following address:

County Development Plan Submissions
Forward Planning Section,
Wexford County Council,
County Hall,
Wexford.

Submissions may also be emailed to **forwardplanning@wexfordcoco.ie**

Strategic Planning Context

The County Development Plan sits in a hierarchy of plans and takes its guidance from those above and directs those below.

The **National Development Plan 2007-2013** entitled ***Transforming Ireland – A Better Quality of Life for All***, sets out the roadmap to Ireland's future. It outlined the programme for government investment over the period. This resulted in the preparation of the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) which aims to achieve a better balance of social, economic and physical development across Ireland. In order to drive development in the regions, the NSS proposes that areas of sufficient scale and critical mass will be built up through a network of 'gateways' and 'hubs'. The NSS identified 9 Gateways and 9, strategically located, medium-sized "hubs" which will support, and be supported by, the gateways and will link out to wider rural areas. In the South- East Region Waterford was identified as a 'Gateway' and Wexford Town and Kilkenny City as 'Hubs'. The NSS also identifies an important need to support the role of smaller towns, villages and rural areas at the local level.

Wexford is located in the area of the South-East Regional Authority. The Authority covers Waterford City and counties Carlow, Kilkenny, South-Tipperary, Waterford and Wexford. The Regional Planning Guidelines for the South-East Region 2010-2022 (RPGs) provide a strategic planning framework for the South-East Region to implement the NSS at a regional level to achieve balanced regional development. The guidelines set population targets for the individual counties in the region and for the larger towns in the region.

The RPGs also contain regional policies with regard to sustainable development emphasising the importance of integrating transport and land use strategies, economic development and employment, infrastructure, heritage and environment and flood risk.

The Plan must also have regard to Guidelines issued by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). These include guidelines on retailing, quarrying, childcare facilities, rural housing and wind energy.

Facts

- In 2006 Wexford contained 4 of the region's 10 largest settlements.
- In 2006 County Wexford had the largest population of the region's counties.
- Wexford sits at the confluence of two Euro-routes, has two commercial ports and a rail line which gives it strategic advantages in terms of the transport network.

Questions

- What should our vision for County Wexford be?
- How can we use planning and land use policies to create synergies between the gateway of Waterford and Hubs of Wexford and Kilkenny to drive development within the urban and rural areas of County Wexford?
- How can we maximise on our competitive advantages to ensure we hold a strong position at the national and regional level?

What do you think?
Have we left out any of the issues?
How should we address these issues?

Core Strategy, Settlement and Housing

Core Strategy

The Plan will contain a 'Core Strategy', which is a new requirement for Development Plans in the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010. The purpose of the Core Strategy is to set out a medium to longer term evidenced based strategy for the spatial development of the County, and it must demonstrate that the Plan and the Housing Strategy are consistent with the objectives of the NSS and the RPGs.

The Core Strategy will:

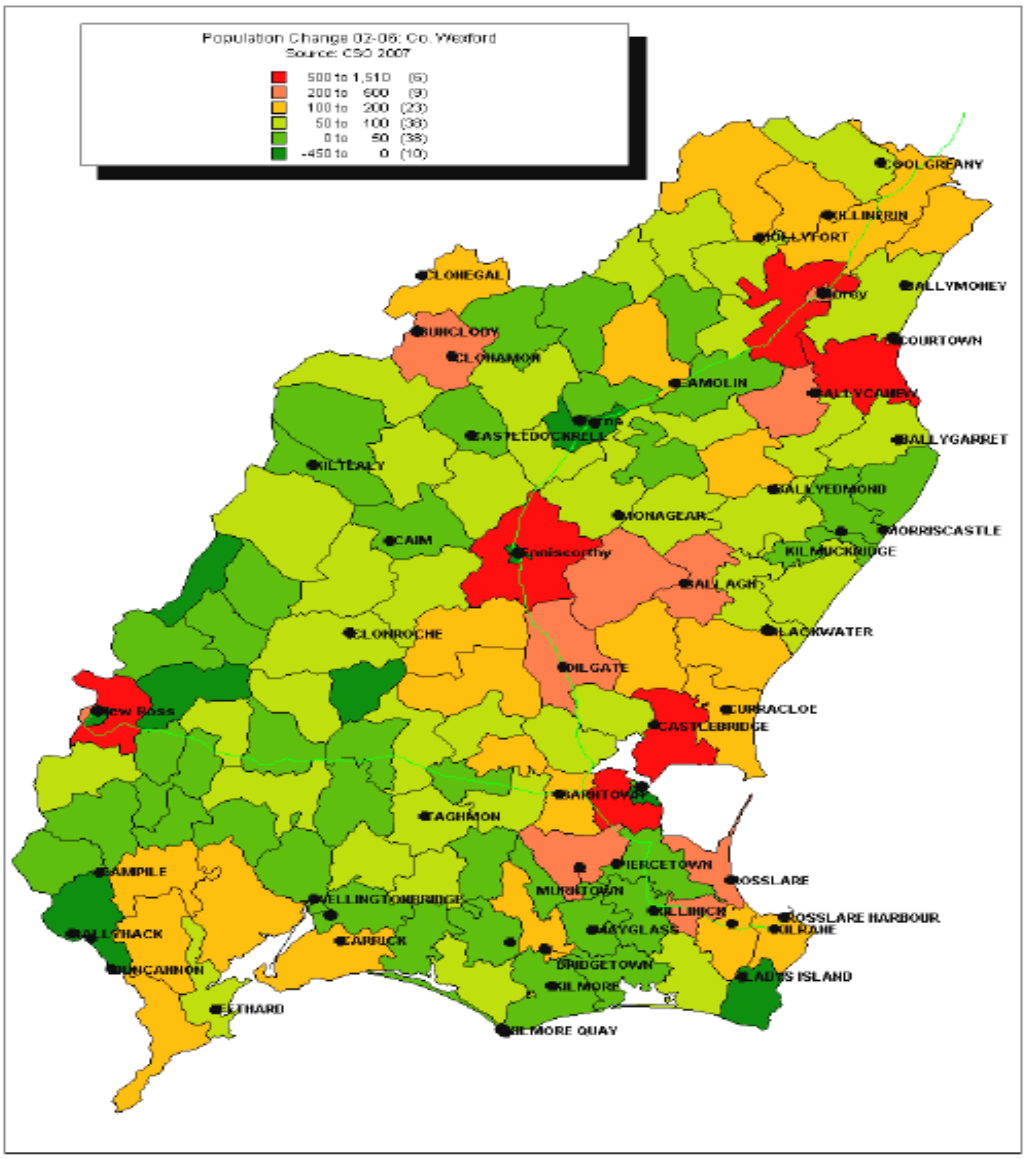
- Set out a settlement hierarchy for the County. The upper tiers of this
- hierarchy have been set by RPGs. The smaller towns, villages and rural areas in the County will be assigned their position in the hierarchy by the Plan itself,
- Allocate projected population growth to towns, villages and the rural areas in the County. The population projections will be based on the targets set out in the RPGs,
- Provide details of
  - (a) the amount of existing residential zoned land and the number of residential units that it could yield and
  - (b) the amount of proposed residential zoned land and how the zoning proposals accord with national policy that development of land shall take place on a phased basis,
- Provide details to show that the retail development objectives have regard to the Government's Retail Development Guidelines,
- Provide details on national road network and the inter-urban and commuter rail routes in the County, and
- Provide details on rural areas in accordance with the Government's 'Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines'.

Population

In 2006 the population of County Wexford was 131,749 persons. This represented a significant increase on the County's 2002 population which was 116,596 persons. The increase has been attributed mainly to inward migration which accounted for 71% of the population growth. Areas of the county within commuting distance of Dublin witnessed substantial increases in population. This is reflected in the growth rates for Gorey Rural ED which increased by 53.3%, Ardamine ED grew by 90.7% and Monamolin ED by 43.4%.

Some of the county's smaller villages and towns experienced significant growth. Castlebridge grew by 60.3%, Courtown Harbour by 183%, Tagoat by 91%, Murrintown by 43% and Bunclody-Carrickduff by 36.9%. Such rapid population increase has had an effect on the social fabric, community, services and infrastructure of our small towns and villages.

The level of growth has not been equal across the County. The following map demonstrates the varying population changes between the period 2002 to 2006. There was significant variation with some areas experiencing a decline in population. Ferns, Kilmore Quay, Coolgreany, Duncannon, Clongeen, Ballyhack and Adamstown all experienced population decline in this period.



Population decline has knock on effects for the provision and maintenance of adequate resources such as shops, community and recreational facilities. While most of the town centres, except Gorey Town, experienced a decline in population, the environs of all towns significantly increased in population. The environs of New Ross experienced the highest proportional increase at almost 78%, the environs of Gorey increased by 69.4%, Wexford by 19.6% and Ennis-corthy by 21.2%.

Population Profile

The population profile of a county has implications for the type of services re-quired now and in the future, for example schools, health services and employ-ment opportunities. Wexford has a high proportion of its population under the age of 14 and over the age of 65 which places demands on childcare, educa-tion and health services.

Population Targets

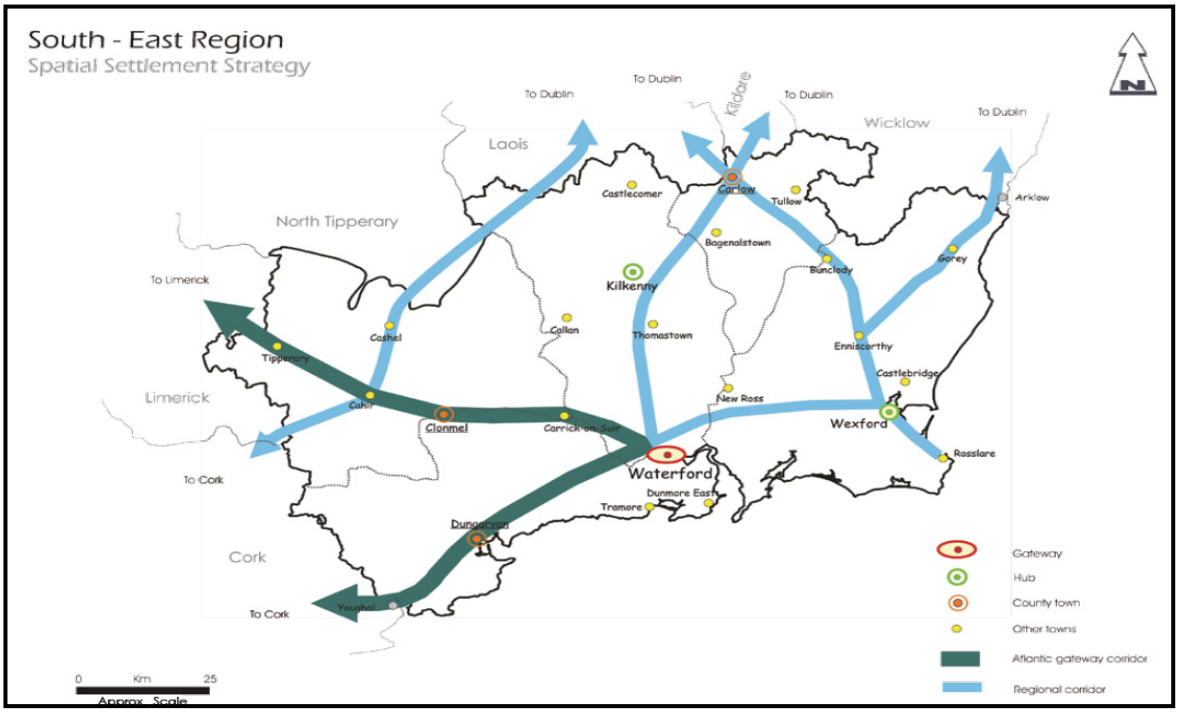
The RPGs has set a population target for Wexford of an additional 19,944 persons in the period 2010-2022. This equates to a housing unit target of approximately 7,122 over this period. The Plan and its Core Strategy will have to provide guidance on how and where to accommodate this additional population.

The next Census will be carried out on April 10th 2011. The Census will provide updated information on population change in the County. It is expected that the population will have started to decline reflecting the economic situation and evidence of outward migration. The Census will provide a comprehensive picture of the social and living conditions of people in the county, which will be used to guide and formulate effective policies and objectives in the Plan.

Settlement

The Core Strategy will set out a Settlement Hierarchy for the County. The purpose of this hierarchy will be to guide where new development should take place in the county, prioritise areas for investment and infrastructure and set out the role of all settlements in the hierarchy. The ability of people to move around and access work, education, shops and services is fundamental to the success of the Core Strategy. Improved public transport and reduced commuting times and distance are the key to providing improved quality of lie. The hierarchy will therefore be supported by Infrastructure and Transport Strategies that seek to provide alternatives to private transport through improved public transport and better, safer facilities for cycling and walking.

The RPGs includes a Settlement Strategy for the region which sets out the role of the Gateway (Waterford City), Hubs (Wexford Town and Kilkenny City), County Towns and other settlements and rural settlement objectives. The Plan has to have regard to this Settlement Strategy.



The following settlements have been identified in County Wexford's hierarchy in the Regional Planning Guidelines:

Hub	Wexford Town
Large Towns	Enniscorthy
	New Ross
	Gorey
District Towns	Bunclody
	Castlebridge

Rural Housing
Demand for rural one-off housing generally arises from two different circumstances:

(i) housing needed in rural areas within the established rural community by persons working in rural areas or in nearby urban areas (rural generated housing), and
(ii) housing in rural locations sought by persons living and working in urban areas, including second homes (urban generated housing).

The rural housing policy in the Plan must have regard to the Government's Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines. Subject to satisfying good practice in relation to site location and access, drainage and design requirements rural generated housing requirements will be accommodated in the locality in which they arise.

Housing

Household Size
The national trend is one of decreasing household size from an average of 3.14 persons per household in 1996 to 2.81 persons in 2006. County Wexford has followed the same trend with an average of 3.28 persons per household in 1996 and 2.85 in 2006.

While the average size of the household is decreasing, the actual number of households is increasing. This will have implications for the number and type of housing units required to meet the housing needs of County Wexford over the lifetime of the Plan. In addition to house size, future housing accommodation must meet the needs of all sectors of society including the elderly and persons with disabilities.

Social and affordable housing has been traditionally provided by Wexford Local Authorities. More recently, the voluntary housing sector has been strongly involved in this area.

Housing Strategy
A Housing Strategy will be integrated into the Plan. The strategy will be concerned with the overall supply of housing to meet the housing needs of the county. It will address issues such as:

- Identifying existing need and the likely future need for housing in the county,
- Ensuring housing is available for persons who have different levels of income and, in particular for those in need of social or affordable housing,
- Ensuring a mixture of house types and sizes is developed to reasonably match the requirements of the different categories of households, including the special requirements of elderly persons and persons with disabilities.
- Counteracting undue segregation in housing between persons of different social backgrounds

Facts

- County Wexford experienced the highest population growth in the Region in the Census period 2002 to 2006 growing by 13%, compared to 6.3% in Waterford, 9.4% in Carlow, 9% in Kilkenny and 5.2% in South-Tipperary.
- 10,700 (71%) of the population increase is estimated to be the result of inward migration.
- In 2006 68% of the County's population were natives of Wexford. This indicates that people born in County Wexford will more than likely remain in or return to the county.
- In 2006 34.6% of the county's population lived in an urban area, 65.4% lived in a rural area.
- In 2006 there were 45,096 households in County Wexford.
- House completions decreased from a high of 3,391 units in 2006 to 659 units in 2010.
- There were 6,601 holiday homes, 5,236 houses and 855 flats vacant on Census night in 2006. This represented a vacancy rate 21.5% of the County's housing stock.

Questions

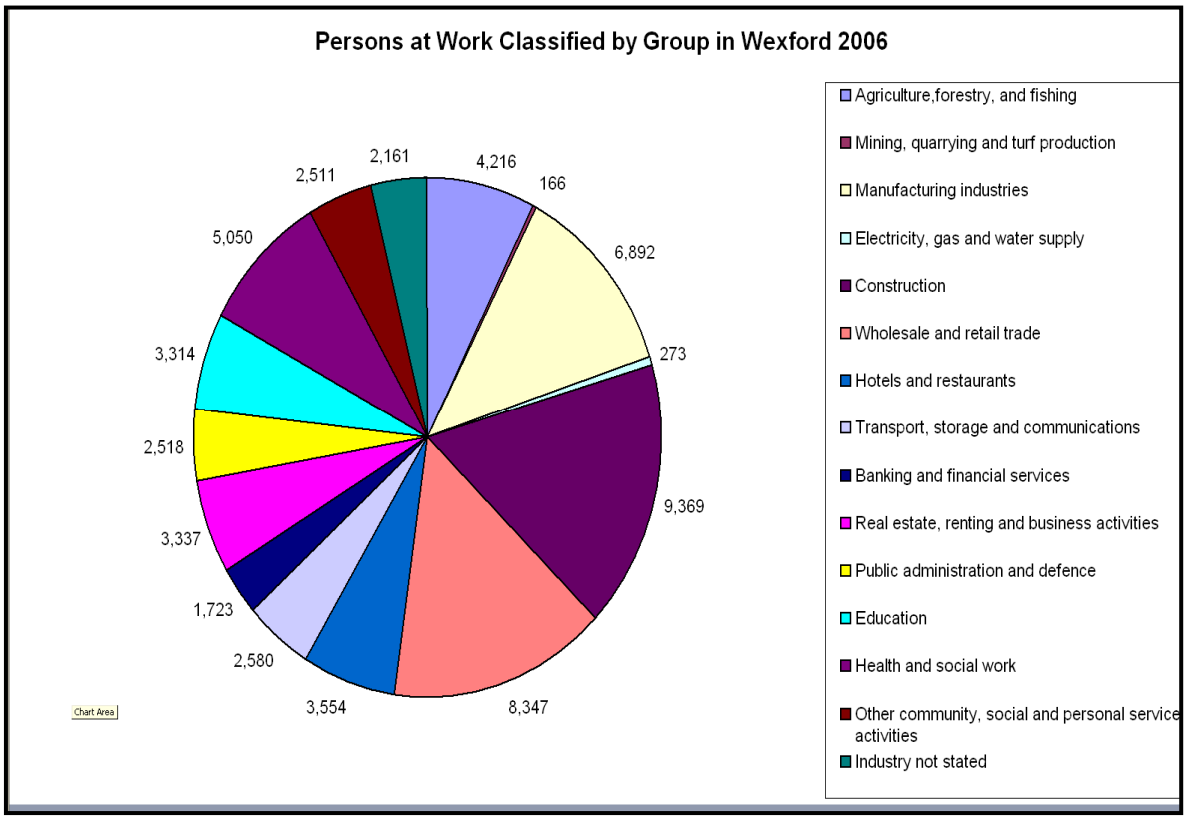
- How can the population targets for the County be achieved?
- What factors do you think should guide the placing of towns and villages in the settlement hierarchy?
- What criteria do you think should be used to determine how housing is distributed across the County?
- How can the Council's policy on rural housing be improved?
- How can we ensure that housing development occurs at the same pace as supporting services?
- How can new housing be integrated effectively into existing communities?
- How best can the Plan cater for different household sizes and needs?
- Are the housing needs of all sectors of our community being adequately addressed?
- What do you think is the best way of delivering social and affordable housing? Where and how should social and affordable housing be provided?
- What is your opinion on holiday homes? Where should they be located?

What do you think?
Have we left out any of the issues?
How should we address these issues?

Economic Development and Employment

Employment

The economic climate has changed significantly since the preparation of the last County Plan. In the 2006 Census 56,011 were employed in Wexford, with the largest proportion employed in the Construction Industry (16.7%). Since then, nationally this sector has seen the greatest contraction (2008 showed a decrease of 20.2%). The following graph demonstrates the breakdown of those in employment in 2006 according to industrial groups.



In February 2011 the numbers on the Live Register in County Wexford stood at 19,565, compared to an unemployment figure of 4,754 in the 2006 Census. However, the Register does not record unemployment per se, as it includes part-time workers, seasonal and casual workers entitled to Jobseekers Benefit or Allowance. Unemployment presents serious challenges for the future and the new Development Plan. The Plan must facilitate the different emerging types of employment. It will aim to encourage and facilitate employment opportunities in Wexford by building on the County's strengths to create employment opportunities for all sectors. It is also imperative that planning aids the creation of jobs by facilitating growth of existing businesses, and that the needs of the employers and employees are met.

Economy and Enterprise

The County benefits from a strategic location with access from road, rail and sea. It has the benefit of many ports; Rosslare Europort handles the largest volume of pedestrian traffic in Ireland, New Ross port is Ireland's only inland port and specialises in handling dry and liquid bulk and Kilmore Quay, a busy fishing port and a thriving marina. Other ports include

Since the period of the last plan huge improvements have been made in road infrastructure such as the Gorey bypass, N30 Enniscorthy-Moneytucker bypass and N25 Camross bypass. This greatly improves inter-regional connectivity. The routes of the Enniscorthy and New Ross bypasses have also been selected. This has increased and will further increase the County's access to markets. The presence and development of the Wexford Campus of Carlow Institute of Technology has provided local access to further educational opportunities, which can attract inward investment with the increased number of skill-sets within the area.

Wexford County Development Board prepared a document titled 'Positioning Wexford for the Upturn – Towards Sustainable Growth and Development' which highlighted the following sectors as the pillars of growth for Wexford:

- Tourism
- Financial Services
- Health Life Sciences (a collective term used to describe the pharmaceutical, biotechnology and medical devices and diagnostics sectors).
- Food
- Sustainable Construction (renewable energies and the retrofitting of buildings)

The Plan should ensure infrastructure is provided to accommodate growth in these sectors and that policies and objectives provide planning certainty and flexibility.

Retailing

The retail sector is important for the inhabitants of the county, for visitors and businesses and also as it creates demand for local suppliers and provides local employment. It is important to retain the vitality and viability our town centres in an economic climate that has seen many premises cease operation leaving a multitude of vacant properties. The retail policies in the Plan must have regard to the 'Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities produced by the DEHLG.

These guidelines designate Wexford as a 'third tier' retail centre. They also point towards New Ross and Enniscorthy as being 'third tier' but to a more limited extent, acting as urban anchors for the rural economy.

A challenge of the Plan will be to reduce the leakage of retail spend to other counties whilst maintaining the essential retail services in a downward economy. The Plan will aim to facilitate growth in the sector whilst also aiming to retain existing units and encourage redevelopment of vacant units.

Tourism

Tourism plays an important role in the economy with overseas tourism alone worth $64 million to the Wexford economy in 2007 (Fáilte Ireland, 2009). Holidaymakers come to enjoy the county's extensive coastline, rich architectural, natural and cultural heritage. Wexford County Development Board produced a document in 2009 titled 'Action for Change' which advocates maximising tourism 'Brand' identity of Wexford –as a 'Natural Heritage and Culture Destination' of Ireland. The Plan will aim to promote and facilitate the tourism role of Wexford while protecting and improving the quality of all available resources.

Facts

- 11.4% of the population are qualified to degree level compared to the national average of 18.5%. The largest proportion of Third Level graduates are qualified in the Social Sciences, Business and Law areas.
- In Ireland in 2009, the Life Sciences sector generated almost one third of total exports and employed in excess of 52,000 people.
- The character of the Irish landscape is one of the most important factors cited by visitors to Ireland as the reason for their visit. In 2007, 80% of international visitors rated it as such, coming second only to the Irish people themselves.

Questions

- How can Wexford attract investment into the economy?
- How can the development and growth of indigenous/local enterprises in the County be facilitated?
- What are the competitive advantages that need to be protected to improve economic development of the County?
- Should we allow out of town retail parks?
- What can the Plan do regarding vacant shop units?
- How can the Plan adopt a flexible approach to planning to facilitate new economic development formats?
- What role can the Plan take in promoting tourism?

What do you think?
Have we left out any of the issues?
How should we address these issues?

Rural Development

Wexford remains predominantly rural with a large rural population. The percentage of persons employed in the agricultural sector has declined from 5.1% in 2002 to 4.68% in 2006. However, agriculture is diversifying and as such the Plan must encourage and facilitate a living, active and economically dynamic rural area. Therefore, the demand to accommodate population growth, while also protecting the environment and also supporting appropriate rural activities and enterprises will be a key consideration for the Plan.

Rural Enterprises

Given the decline in the traditional agricultural sector the Council will encourage rural diversification. The food sector has been highlighted by the Wexford County Development Board for its potential for growth given the growing artisan companies already in existence.

Agriculture and Horticulture

Wexford has traditionally had a strong agricultural base and horticulture is synonymous with Wexford. The County is renowned for its strawberries. The Plan will endeavour to protect the existing agricultural and horticultural base. The Council recognise the important role these rural industries play in terms of the economy and for rural communities.

Forestry and Fisheries

With the decline in the traditional agricultural sector many farmers are diversifying into forestry. The national target is to plant 10,000 hectares per year. It is important that forestry is developed in a sustainable manner while protecting the environment. The sea and inland waterways are an asset to the County. Protecting the aquatic environment is important in terms of the economy and tourism. The Council recognises that it is imperative that these resources are managed to protect and enhance these industries in the County.

Quarrying

The extractive industry is an important resource to the economy of the County but also has the potential to impact negatively on the landscape and people. The Plan will contain policies and objectives with regard to the development of the extractive industry in a sustainable manner. The Council will endeavour to balance demands for extracted materials such as stone and sand with the need to protect environmentally sensitive landscapes and communities from undue harm.

Facts

- 65.4% of the population of Wexford live in a rural area.
- Agriculture, forestry and fishing contribute 9% to overall employment in the South-East region and 7.5% in County Wexford. This is greater than the national average of 6%.
- Courtown Harbour is a well known mullet fishing venue with fish over 5lbs recorded.
- The County has almost 6 weeks of a head start on other parts of the country in the production of seasonal produce because of its temperate Climate.
- There are a total of 26 quarries in County Wexford which have planning permission or are registered to continue operations under the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

Questions

- What role can the Council take in promoting the diversification of the rural economy?
- What alternative industries/business to farming should be allowed in rural areas?
- Should the Council seek to prevent non-quarry development on lands identified as holding deposits of regional or national importance?
- How close should quarries be allowed to houses?

What do you think?
Have we left out any of the issues?
How should we address these issues?

Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy and Waste

County Wexford will require transportation networks which enhance quality of life and further economic development. These networks will need to be provided in a balanced way which ensures the efficient use of resources, maximises safety and protects the best of our natural and built environments. As mentioned previously since the period of the last plan huge improvements have been made in road infrastructure such as the Gorey by-pass, N30 Enniscorthy-Moneytucker bypass and N25 Camross bypass. This greatly improves inter-regional connectivity. The routes of the Enniscorthy and New Ross bypasses have also been selected.

Wexford's public transport systems are limited. In order for public transport systems to be economically viable they require a certain density of population which presents challenges in a county which has a pre-dominantly rural population. The County has two rail lines however one has been recently closed. The operation of this rail line was a consideration in placing certain towns on the hierarchy in the last County Development Plan.

Killurin Bridge

The document 'Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future' (2009) sets out the Government's transport policies and objectives. The 4 main objectives are:

1. To encourage smarter travel i.e. to reduce overall demand;
2. To maximise the efficiency of transport networks;
3. To reduce reliance of fossil fuels;
4. To improve accessibility to public transport.

The Council and the Plan will encourage smarter travel (i.e. reduce overall travel demand) in accordance with this document. The Plan will seek to reduce the number and length of car journeys through the careful integration of transportation and land use planning. The policies and objectives in the Plan will be informed by an analysis of available information on work travel distances, the types and limits of public transport etc.

The Plan will also contain policies and objectives relating to:

- Development at the ports in the county;
- Roadside services;
- Rights of way;
- Traffic safety;
- Access to roads and parking standards;

Infrastructure

County Wexford will continue to require high quality infrastructure which enhances quality of life and furthers economic development. This infrastructure will need to be provided in a balanced way which maximises financial resources and protects the best of our natural and built environments. The availability of infrastructure will be a key consideration in deciding which towns and villages will be placed in the Settlement Hierarchy and where they will rank in the hierarchy.

Public Water

The Council is responsible for the operation of 30 public water supplies and receives resources from the DEHLG to maintain and extend the public water network and to improve water conservation within the system.

Under the Water Services Investment programme 2010 -2012 produced by the DEHLG, the Council was allocated approximately €34,000,000 for water supply and conservation schemes across the County. There are proposals to improve the Enniscorthy and Sow Regional Water Supply Scheme, the Gorey Regional

Public Sewerage Schemes

In 2010 sewage from a population equivalent of approximately 100,000 was treated at 148 installations throughout the County. 582,620km of public sewer is maintained. There is sewerage capacity in Wexford Town and the recently completed New Ross Town and Bunclody Town treatment facilities. Proposals to upgrade the sewerage schemes in Gorey Town and Enniscorthy Town are nearing finalisation.

The Council receives resources from the DEHLG to maintain and extend the public wastewater schemes. Under the Water Services Investment programme 2010 -2012 the Council was allocated approximately €67,000,000 for waste water schemes across the County. The programme includes the provision/upgrading of schemes in Arthurstown, Ballycanew, Ballyhack, Campile, Clonroche, Duncannon and Wellington Bridge.

Flooding

Flooding is a natural event that can be exacerbated by manmade developments and climatic change. As more development takes place the disposal of surface water and potential for flooding becomes more of an issue. Flood risk is a concern which has gained a high profile in recent years. The Plan will be informed by the Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities issued by the DEHLG (2009). The Plan will need to ensure that new development should not individually or cumulatively give rise to new flood risks through effective management of development. Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SuDS) techniques play an important role in flood risk management.

Telecommunications
The Council will continue to support the development of high quality communications systems, accessible to all residents of the county. Economic development and competitiveness will depend on the provision of these systems. Siting proposals for telecommunications masts will be assessed under policies and objectives to be contained in the new Plan, which will have regard to potential visual and other impacts.

Energy
Use and Supply of Energy
The Plan will contain policies and objectives regarding energy efficiency and the development of electricity generation and gas supply networks in the County. The availability of reliable and affordable energy supplies will be a key factor in economic development and its efficient use is important for economic and environmental reasons. The Plan will contain policies and objectives regarding the siting and design of physical infrastructure (e.g. pylons and cables) that will be required to facilitate enhanced and more efficient networks.

Generation of Renewable Energy
The Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources produced a White Paper in 2007 'Delivering a Sustainable Energy future for Ireland – Energy Policy Framework 2007 -2020' which contained a target of generating 40% of energy output from sustainable sources by 2020.

Wind energy is an important potential energy resource in County Wexford but proposals for wind turbines can be controversial due to potential impacts on sensitive landscapes and rural housing.

The Plan will review the implementation of the Wind Energy Strategy contained in the 2007 – 2013 County Development Plan as part of the preparation of new wind energy policies and objectives. The Plan will also contain policies and objectives regarding the generation of all other forms of renewable energy in the County, including thermal energy, bio-energy, anaerobic digestion etc.

Waste
Management of Waste, Dumping and Litter
The Council, together with other organisations, is responsible for waste management, including recycling, in the county. The Council is currently bound by the South East Joint Waste Management Plan 2006, commissioned by the 5 South-Eastern County Councils and 1 City Council. This Plan is to be subject to a review in 2011. The Plan will have regard to the Joint Waste Management Plan, as reviewed, in policies and objectives to:

- facilitate the efficient, safe and environmentally sensitive management and disposal of waste,
- maximise recycling and to minimise waste generation.

Facts

- 'Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future' contains national targets to reduce the modal share of car commuting to drop from 55% to 45%, increase to 10% the total number of journeys made by cycle and stabilise the total kilometres travelled by car between 2009 and 2020.
- Wexford County Council supplied approximately 15 million cubic metres of water in 2009.
- In 2006 13% of homes in Ireland had a broadband connection (EU average of 30%) In 2010 58% of homes in Ireland had a broadband connection, close to the EU average of 61%.
- Approximately 10,400 tonnes of domestic waste and 3,800 tonnes of recyclable waste was collected through the Council's doorstep collection service to over 15,000 households in 2010.
- Litter collection in County Wexford cost tax and ratepayers €1.4m in 2010.

Questions

- Can the Council reduce car dependency in the county?
- How can the Council maximise the benefits of its limited budget for road improvements and maintenance?
- How can the Council enhance the safety of pedestrians and cyclists?
- How can the Council encourage greater use of public transport in the county?
- How should the Council maximise the benefits of its limited public water and sewerage expenditure budgets?
- How can the Council enhance access by all sections of the population to high quality broadband systems?
- Where should masts be located?
- Should wind turbines be allowed to be erected anywhere in the County?
- How should the Council deal with proposals for off-shore fossil fuel exploration and associated pipelines?
- How can the Council minimise unauthorised dumping?
- Where should recycling facilities be located in the County?
- How can the Council increase recycling in the County?

What do you think?
Have we left out any of the issues?
How should we address these issues?

Environment

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)
Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of Development Plans is required under the EU SEA Directive 2001/42/EC. SEA is a separate parallel process carried out in tandem with the preparation of the Development Plan. This process ensures a high level of protection of the environment and contributes to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of the plan with a view to promoting sustainable development.

Appropriate Assessment
The Development Plan will also be subject to Appropriate Assessment, as required by the European Habitats Directive. Appropriate Assessment is a focused and detailed impact assessment of the implications of the Plan, alone and in combination with other plans and projects, on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites in view of the conservation objectives of the sites. Natura 2000 sites consist of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) or Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). SPAs are largely concerned with protecting bird species while SACs relate to habitats and wildlife. Wexford has 16 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and 10 Special Protection Areas (SPAs).

Water Quality
The water that is supplied to residents and businesses in Ireland comes from different sources, such as lakes, rivers, streams, springs and boreholes. Depending on the quality of the source, the water that comes from your tap will almost certainly have to go through some form of treatment to make it safe for you to drink. All public water supplies that are used for human consumption must meet certain standards, which have been laid down by the EU.

Water Framework Directive
The EU Water Framework Directive was adopted in 2000 and applies to all water bodies and requires that we manage our water systems and protect water quality. The Directive and associated Regulations aim to ensure that all natural waters (including rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal waters and groundwater) achieve “good ecological” status by 2015. The Water Framework Directive will be implemented in Ireland, through River Basin Districts and River Basin Management Plans which have been prepared for each of these districts. The Development Plan is also a means for implementing the objectives of these plans.

South East River Basin Management Plan 2009-2015
The South Eastern River Basin District (SERBD) Project is the first project set up in Ireland to support the implementation of the Water Framework Directive. The Barrow, Nore, Suir and Slaney are the main rivers included in the SERBD. The Plan sets out the measures to be taken by all stakeholders and the tools to prioritise the application of available resources to those measures, with the aim of achieving the objectives of the Directive.

Climate Change
Since the adoption of the current Wexford County Development Plan 2007, climate change has been brought very much to the fore at international and national levels. It is acknowledged that climate change presents a serious threat to the global environment and that the effects of climate change are due in part to anthropogenic actions (man-made effects). Of key importance to mitigating these effects is reduced CO2 production as a result of energy use and transportation.

In March 2007, the government published its White Paper on "Delivering a Sustainable Energy Future for Ireland" which was followed in April 2007 by the "The National Climate Change Strategy 2007-2012". Both documents highlight energy efficiency and climate change as important challenges and significant policy issues that need immediate addressing. The Government has taken measures to reduce CO^2 emissions by introducing schemes such as the EU Energy Performance of Building Directive (EPBD) and CO^2 emission ratings for private cars in determining car tax. Addressing the challenges of climate change will require continued policy development at national level and local level.

Coastal Zone
The coastal zone is of intrinsic natural and special amenity value. It contains an integrated series of fragile habitats many of which are of international and national importance. Coastal erosion poses a serious threat to public infrastructure, private property, tourism and recreation amenities, sites and areas of nature/conservation value and agricultural land. It is not possible or appropriate to protect the entire coastline from erosion however necessary protection and repairs are carried out by the Council in certain areas. Many areas requiring costal protection are designated SACs so careful consideration must given to the need to protect property and the potential impact coastal zone works might have on these natural habitats.

Seveso Sites
The Seveso II Directive 96/82/EC is concerned with the prevention of major accidents that involve dangerous substances and the limitation of their consequences for humans and the environment. It applies to establishments where dangerous substances are produced, used, handled or stored. The Seveso II Directive includes provisions in relation to land use planning. Article 12 of the Directive requires Member States to ensure that the objectives of preventing major accidents and limiting the consequences of such accidents are taken into account in land use policies and/or other relevant policies.

Facts

- There are six proposed '*identified bathing waters'* in County Wexford; Ballymoney North Beach, Courtown North Beach, Morriscastle Beach, Curracloe Beach (White Gap), Rosslare Strand and Duncannon.
- In 2010, there were 4 Blue Flag Beaches, 1 Blue Flag Marina and 4 Green Coast Beaches in County Wexford.
- County Wexford has 246km of coastline on mainland and an additional 18km on the islands, with 125km of sandy beaches, 12% of the national total.
- The mean annual rise in sea level is likely to be of the order of 0.2mm with an overall rise between 1990 and 2030 of 0.3m.
- Sections of County Wexford's soft coastline are severely affected by erosion losing an average of one metre per year.
- The Wexford Coastal Path extends for 221 kilometres from Kilmichael point in the North East corner of County Wexford to Ballyhack village in the South West.
- There are 2 Upper tier and 2 lower tier Seveso sites in the County.

Questions

- What do you consider are the main environmental issues facing the county? What additional measures can we take to protect the environment?
- What more can be done to protect our water supply from pollution?
- How can good quality water be protected and secured whilst ensuring the sustainable development of our County?
- How can flooding be prevented or alleviated?
- How can pressure for development and flooding/surface water considerations be reconciled?
- Should flood control measures be incorporated with open space areas and landscape features?
- What can the Council do in respect of providing measures to adapt to climate change?
- To what extent should planning consider the extent of future coastal erosion risk? How far should buildings be set back from the edge of the coast or associated dune systems and shorelines?
- How do we balance the need to protect property and the potential impact coastal zone works might have on natural habitats?
- Where should coastal zone protection efforts be concentrated in the county?

What do you think?
Have we left out any of the issues?
How should we address these Issues?

Heritage and Conservation

Landscape & Natural Heritage

Ireland's natural heritage is an integral part of our national inheritance and forms part of our sense of identity, providing resources of social, educational, recreational and aesthetic value. 'High quality landscapes are directly linked to a successful economy' (Department of the Taoiseach, 2008). They also underpin the tourism industry and can deliver economic, social and environmental benefits. In 2002 Ireland ratified the European Landscape Convention which aims to promote the protection, management and planning of all landscapes.

The Wexford Landscape Character Assessment completed under the previous County Development Plan 2007 details how combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land-use and human settlement patterns create character and local distinctiveness. The need to manage landscape change in a sustainable manner is important.

Biodiversity & Nature Conservation

Biodiversity means the variety of all living things and we depend on it to provide clean air and water, healthy soils, food, building materials, and medicines.
The Council has commenced the preparation of its first County Biodiversity Action Plan 2011-2016. It will provide a framework for the conservation of biodiversity and natural heritage at a local level.

While Wexford has a number of European and Nationally designated sites most of the county's land cover lies outside these designated areas. These areas are an essential resource in maintaining a diversity of species and habitats throughout the county, linking local biodiversity features throughout the landscape. The interaction of human activity with biodiversity through agriculture or development of land must be carefully managed and the Plan must attempt to achieve an appropriate balance in this regard.

The County hosts many sites of European importance such as 16 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and 10 Special Protection Areas (SPAs). The objective of these European designations is to conserve and maintain plants, animals, wildlife habitats or threatened species along with their habitats. Areas identified in the County as Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) or proposed NHAs contain plants, animals and wildlife habitats that are of national importance for conservation, some of which may also be included within the Natura 2000 network. NHAs can also protect geological forms.

Trees are an environmental, economic and landscape resource of great importance. Species rich hedgerows are important habitats in their own right, and they also act as wildlife corridors for many species, allowing dispersal and movement between other habitats.

Green Infrastructure

Green infrastructure refers to the networks of green spaces which perform a wide range of vital environmental, social and economic functions that enrich our quality of life. These include our parks, nature conservation areas, river corridors, floodplains, wetlands, woodlands, and coastal areas. The County Development Plan can play a key role in developing a green infrastructure network.

Geological Heritage

Geology is now recognised as an intrinsic component of natural heritage. The Heritage Act and the Planning Regulations in particular, place responsibility upon Local Authorities to ensure that geological heritage is adequately addressed within Heritage Plans, and County Development Plans. The Plan can play a key role in protecting our geological heritage.

Facts

- Wexford evolved from the name *Weisfjord* which was an old Scandanavian name for an "inlet of flat mud lands".
- Over 60% of the land in Ireland (4.3 million hectares) is devoted to agricultural activities, with an additional 10% given to forestry.
- Tools such as Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) can inform planning for sustainable development.
- The bird nesting season runs from March 1st to August 31st, and not cutting hedges during this period benefits hedges and their associated wildlife.

Questions

- How can we manage Wexford's landscape and natural heritage while sustaining local populations and facilitating economic and rural development?
- What do we want for the future of our natural heritage and landscape?
- Should polices on hedgerow removal be less/more restrictive?
- Should we develop a strategy for managing our green infrastructure, i.e. network of green spaces and natural heritage?
- Are there other habitats outside NHAs and SACs that we should protect? How can we do this?
- How can we help protect the varied range of habitats in the County?

What do you think?
Have we left out any of the issues?
How should we address these issues?

Built Heritage & Cultural Heritage
Our built and cultural heritage is an important resource that must be passed on to future generations. The protection of our built and cultural heritage is important for many reasons including tourism as it is something that attracts many visitors to the county each year. Sites such as Ferns castle, the Irish National Heritage Park and Tintern Abbey attract thousands of cultural tourists each year.

Archaeology
The history and customs of past generations can be traced through the rich legacy of archaeological sites, monuments and complexes imprinted on the Wexford landscape. All archaeological monuments which are listed in the Record of Monuments and Places are protected under the National Monuments Acts. As archaeological remains are a finite, nonrenewable resource which is vulnerable to partial or total destruction, there is an onus on Wexford County Council to preserve and protect the archaeological heritage of the county. Under the National Monuments Acts 1930-1994, all shipwrecks over one hundred years old, underwater archaeological structures, features and objects are also

Protected Structures
County Wexford has a wealth of architectural heritage including country houses and demesnes, planned towns, industrial heritage, churches, farmsteads and vernacular buildings. The council has a legal responsibility to include a Record of Protected Structures (RPS) in the Development Plan. There are 501 Protected Structures currently registered on the RPS in the County Development Plan 2007-2013.

The Heritage Council have carried out a National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) surveying heritage in County Wexford. This survey highlights a representative sample of 2,800 important buildings and structures in the county. This survey highlights a representative sample of important architecture in the county. Our built heritage is an important resource that must be passed on to future generations.

Arts and Culture
A distinctive cultural identity can contribute to a sense of place and enhance an area as a place to live and work. It can also boost the local tourism industry in terms of attracting visitors and spending. One of the biggest cultural events in the County is the Wexford Opera Festival which continues to attract a growing number of visitors each year. There are also a number of other events held around the county as well as permanent displays such as the Ros Tapestry in New Ross and the 1798 Centre in Enniscorthy. The Plan will provide a policy framework to promote the development of the arts and culture throughout the County.

Facts

- Augustus Pugin, who was an acclaimed early nineteenth-century English ecclesiastical architect, most noted work in Ireland is concentrated in County Wexford and includes “Pugin’s Irish Gem” - Enniscorthy Cathedral.
- Parts of Steven Spielberg's 1998 Oscar winning film 'Saving Private Ryan' were filmed on Curracloe Beach.
- One of the oldest operating lighthouses in the world can be found in Wexford – Hook Head Lighthouse. It was listed as one of the top 14 attractions in Ireland by Lonely Planet.
- Wexford’s Opera Festival combined with the Wexford Fringe Festival is one of the top three festivals of opera in the world, (Frommer’s Travel Guide, 2009).

Questions

- Is there something special about the built heritage of the place/town in which you live?
- Are there structures that you consider should be added/removed from the Record of Protect Structures?
- Are there other policies we could put in place to ensure the survival of our built heritage?
- How can we increase awareness, understanding and access to the heritage of County Wexford?
- Should we identify and protect areas of special landscape quality?
- How can we encourage the re-use of redundant or derelict buildings?

What do you think?
Have we left out any of the issues?
How should we address these issues?

Community Facilities, Recreation and Education

Gaelscoil Mhoshiolog, Gorey

Community facilities are a vital component in contributing to quality of life and the sustainable development of an area. Such facilities range from schools, childcare facilities, community centres, recreational facilities, libraries, health centres and facilities for the elderly and people with disabilities. The Council is committed to providing accessible community facilities to serve the needs and expectations of a growing and diverse population. The Plan review will identify the social infrastructural requirements in the County and will incorporate policies that will require the provision of services and facilities in parallel with future development.

Education

While Wexford County Council has no direct role to play in the provision of educational facilities, it does work closely with the Department of Education and Skills in the identification of suitable sites. The main role of the Plan in terms of education will be to provide the framework for the provision of educational facilities in the County having regard to the guidelines 'The Provision of Schools and the Planning System' (July 2008).

Childcare

The Council continues to work closely with Wexford County Childcare Committee in responding to the changing needs of society in terms of childcare demand and services. An Assessment of Childcare Needs in County Wexford (2008), notes that there have been major population increases in the county over the past 10 years and this has put considerable pressure on all services within the county, including, education, housing and childcare. The Assessment recognises the need to expand current childcare provision and develop additional childcare provision that is affordable, flexible, accessible and of high quality.

Healthcare

Changing demographics resulting in a rise in the elderly population presents care and accommodation challenges for the healthcare sector. The strategic direction of the Health Service Executive regarding care for the elderly is moving from institutional care to community care, raising issues of accessibility and services. The Plan will provide the framework to accommodate the development of adequate healthcare facilities to serve the County.

Social Inclusion

Social inclusion refers to the manner in which all members of the community are integrated in an equal manner. It seeks to reduce barriers to participation in areas such as education, recreation, transport and the workforce. The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016 recognises that social exclusion is multi-faceted and can affect all age groups. It adopts a lifestyle approach to tackling the issue of social exclusion of children, people of working age, older people, people with disabilities and communities.

Combating social exclusion is also a key objective of the County Development Board's strategy 'Action for Change: Wexford County Development Board Strategy 2009-2012' and the Revitalising Areas by Planning Investment and Development (RAPID) programme. The main role of the Plan will be to provide a framework for the delivery of high quality services and facilities which are accessible to all members of the community.

Recreation and Open Space

The provision of good quality open spaces and recreation facilities are a key part of sustainable communities and contribute to quality of life, personal health and well being. Facilities can range from open space in a housing estate to a purpose built sports facility. The Plan will play a key role in ensuring there are positive policies and objectives which relate to play, recreation and sport to complement the assistance and funding provided in the development of playgrounds and other facilities.

Wexford Local Sports Partnership prepared the document 'Sports Active Wexford Strategic Plan 2009-2012'. A key objective of which is to improve access to existing facilities and resources for physical activity and sport. A Recreation Strategy is also currently being prepared by the County Development Board. This broad ranging strategy will consider existing and future recreation trends, assess service provision in current facilities and future demand.

Town Park, New Ross

Natural Amenities

County Wexford has a range of natural amenities which can be enjoyed by residents and tourists alike. With its extensive coastline, mountains and rivers there is potential to develop outdoor activities and maximise the use of our natural surroundings while at the same time ensuring protection of the environment. There are already a number of forest trails, scenic mountain passes, coastal paths and heritage walks around the County.

Rights-of-way

The Plan will include objectives for the preservation of public rights of way which give access to seashore, mountain, lakeshore, riverbank or other places of natural beauty or recreational utility. The Council will develop policies to help to preserve and maintain public rights-of-way and promote their greater use in amenity areas.

Beach at Rosslare Harbour

Facts

- Wexford has a higher percentage of 0-14 year olds with 22.2% for County Wexford as opposed to 20.4% nationally.
- Wexford has one of the highest ratios per capita of people with a disability in Ireland, with 9.6% of the present population registered as disabled as opposed to 9.3% nationally.
- Approximately 140 childcare providers are registered with the Wexford County Childcare Committee.
- There are 28 playgrounds (including one skate park) and 2 MUGAS (Multi-user games areas) in the County.
- The towns of Wexford, Enniscorthy and New Ross are designated as RAPID areas. This means that they will be prioritised for investment by local agencies and under the National Development Plan.

Questions

- What community facilities are most needed in the County and where should they be located?
- How can the Plan support the provision of affordable, appropriately designed and adequate childcare facilities in the right locations?
- Is there an adequate provision of educational facilities throughout the County? How can the Plan facilitate the provision of new educational facilities?
- What do you think of 'Retirement Villages'? Where should Retirement Villages/Homes be located? What ancillary services should be provided in the 'village'?
- What can the Plan do to promote social inclusion?
- What planning policies are needed to cater for the needs of our multi-cultural society?
- What policies should be included in the Plan to ensure the provision of quality play spaces in new developments for children and young people?
- How can the Plan promote and facilitate universal access for all?
- How can public rights of way be identified in the Plan?

What do you think?
Have we left out any of the issues?
How should we address these issues?

Urban Village and Rural Design

Well designed buildings are those which enhance their setting, either urban or rural, and which continue to be enjoyable and efficient to use through the decades. The quality of the built environment and public realm can affect the quality of life and health of residents of an area. A good quality public realm enables people to walk or cycle through the provision of safe footpaths and cycleway routes or by including spaces for play areas in residential schemes.

Urban Design

Urban design is concerned with the relationships of buildings to one another and to the spaces around them. It is not simply about the physical structure but is also concerned with integration, permeability, connectivity and creating a sense of place and belonging. The document 'Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas' and its companion document Urban Design Manual (DEHLG, 2008) provide advice on urban design and illustrate how design principles can be translated into practice for the creation of sustainable communities. The basic principles of good urban design include:

Impression of Gorey Civic Offices & Library

Character:	A place with its own identity, the character of an area refers to its existing layout, form, content and fabric
Enclosure:	A place where public and private spaces are clearly defined
Legibility:	A place that has a clear image and is easy to understand
Permeability:	A place that is easy to get to and move through
Quality of Public Spaces:	A place with attractive and successful outdoor spaces. The treatment of surfaces, landscaping and street furniture must be an integral part of the overall design.
Diversity:	A place with variety and choice, containing a mix of compatible developments
Adaptability:	A place that can respond to changing social, technological and economic conditions.

Village Design
In order to offer an effective alternative to the provision of single houses in rural areas the 'Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas Guidelines' recommend the phased development of smaller towns and villages in a manner that is appropriate to their size and scale. The guidelines recommend that layout design and space standards of new residential developments should relate successfully to the structure of the village.

Rural Design
The Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines (DEHLG, 2005) state that planning authorities have a key role to play in ensuring that new housing development in rural areas integrates well with its physical surroundings. The Council will continue to encourage new and innovative design that respects local vernacular house designs and is sympathetic to the receiving environment.

Rural Dwelling on the Hook Peninsula

Facts

- Re-use of the existing building stock can contribute to a reduction in the consumption of fossil fuels and carbon dioxide emissions.
- Designing spaces and places which give priority to pedestrians and cyclists can reduce demand for travel by private car, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving air quality
- In 2006, 2.57 million people (approximately 60% of the population) resided in 600 urban areas (*i.e.* cities, towns and villages).
- 34.6% of the population of County Wexford lived in an urban area in 2006 compared to 32.5% in 2002.
- 298 one-off houses were granted permission in County Wexford in 2010 compared to 452 in 2009.

Questions

- How can the Plan ensure that design, layout and density of development is appropriate to its location?
- How can we develop public spaces for a variety of uses including events, markets, entertainment and relaxation?
- What kind of guidance should the Plan contain in respect of building design in rural areas?
- How should the Council approach design guidance? Should village design statements be prepared in consultation with the residents of the village?

What do you think?
Have we left out any of the issues?
How should we address these issues?

And finally….

This document outlines the process for preparing a Development Plan and provides details of the sort of information we must include. It also includes many of the issues that the Council intend to cover in the Plan.

However, we have not decided how each of these issues should be dealt with and we would like your views.

Wexford County Council is encouraging everyone to get involved in the review of the County Development Plan. The new Plan will shape the future of our County not just for next 6 years but for many more years to come.

Please get involved and have your say in the way our County should develop.

Your County
Your Plan
Your Future

NOTES