
CHAPTER 8



Sustainable Communities



Comhairle Contae Mhaigh Eo
Mayo County Council

CHAPTER 8 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

8.1 Strategic Aim:

The strategic aim of this chapter is to develop and support vibrant sustainable communities in Mayo where people can live, work and enjoy access to a wide range of community, health, educational facilities and amenities, suitable to all ages and needs, in both urban and rural areas, thereby supporting a high quality of life for all to enjoy.

Related UN Sustainable Development Goals



Related NPF National Strategic Outcomes



Related RSES Regional Growth Ambitions



8.2 Introduction

This chapter has been guided by the above strategic aim, sustainable development goals and national strategic objectives to create sustainable communities in County Mayo. The chapter has also considered the key legislative and policy documents set out in Appendix III, including the NPF and RSES for the Northern and Western region.

8.3 National and Regional Planning Position

A core objective of the NPF and RSES is to provide comprehensive social, economic and cultural infrastructure, for all people to flourish, so that together we can create a better society. The NPF and RSES also place a strong emphasis on access to a range of quality education and health services, as well as promoting healthy placemaking and quality of life. The RSES also includes growth ambitions to create an inclusive and vibrant society for the Northern and Western region. The RSES highlights the importance of the physical and social environment and place in which we live or work, and its impact on the health of people. The RSES aims to create a sustainable and competitive region that supports the health and well-being of our people and places, from urban to rural, and ensures access to affordable housing, travel and employment opportunities for all.

8.4 Mayo in Context

Mayo County Council is at the centre of local community and is a key provider of economic and social development supports and services in the county. The Council represents the people, while delivering vital local services which are central to the quality of life of everybody who lives in, works in and visits Mayo. Mayo has a thriving community sector and there are a vast number of agencies, organisations and services that contribute to this. The work of these entities in providing health, education, wellbeing, outreach supports and physical infrastructure to individuals, groups and communities is very relevant and necessary in ensuring sustainable, healthy and inclusive communities across the county. A priority of this plan is the creation of sustainable, healthy, inclusive neighbourhoods, which support thriving communities and provide for a wide range of household types, age groups, diversity, including those with a disability or illness, lone parent young families, older people, travellers and members of ethnic minority groups, with community facilities located close by.

8.4.1 Mayo Local Community Development Committee

Mayo Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), established in 2014, consists of public private partnerships of socio-economic interests. Mayo LCDC has a number of functions, one of which is to prepare and agree the local community elements of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP). The purpose of the LECP is to identify objectives and implement actions to strengthen and develop both the economic and community dimensions of the county. Central to the Mayo LECP and Action Plan 2016-2021, is the understanding that economic, local and community development is mutually supportive in building sustainable communities with strong local economies. The LECP seeks to progress the following goals: community development; social inclusion; health and wellbeing; education training and skills and culture, heritage and the Arts. The LCDC also coordinates, manages and oversees the implementation of local and community development programmes of the LECP, including the Rural Development Programme and Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme.

In addition, it coordinates local and community development activity within the operational area of the LCDC.

8.4.2 Community Development in Mayo

The Mayo ‘Community Futures’ Programme facilitates community action planning by assisting communities preparing action plans which identify existing services, key priority areas and opportunities for development and growth within their community. ‘Community Futures’ encourages more people to become active in their communities, helps strengthen and develop local community organisations, enables communities to identify and progress priority projects and actions and enables them to effectively represent their interests at local, county and national levels.

The Mayo Public Participation Network (PPN) provides a mechanism to facilitate and enable the public and the community and voluntary organisations to articulate a diverse range of views and interest within the local government system. The aim of the PPN is to encourage and enable public participation in local decision making, to actively support inclusion of socially excluded groups and to identify issues of collective concern and working to influence local policy in relation to these.

‘Pride of Place’ has been a successful initiative in Mayo and is another example of active community participation in the county, whereby communities work in partnership with the Council to encourage best practice, innovation and leadership in providing vibrant sustainable communities, which improves the quality of life for all, through environmental improvements to towns and villages.

Local development companies continue to remain at the forefront promoting community development through a bottom-up approach in the areas of social inclusion, inequality, and local development. Mayo has 4 local development companies which deliver a wide range of programmes, including but not limited to LEADER, Local Community Development Programme, Rural Social Scheme, Tus, Rural Recreation, Community Employment, Local Employment Services and local training initiatives. Local development companies also develop additional projects using a range of other funding sources, for example Comhar na nOileán Teo delivers the LEADER programme to Mayo’s inhabited islands.

Other agencies that assist community development in Mayo include Family Resource Centres which provide practical assistance to community groups, such as training, information, advice and use of shared facilities, in addition to educational and training opportunities. Sectoral communities are also assisted in the county by agencies, such as Mayo Intercultural Action, Mayo Traveller Support Group, Mayo Traveller Inter Agency Forum, The Regional Drug Task Force, The Mayo Joint Policing Committee, The Disability Federation of Ireland and Outwest.

Community Development Policies	
SCP 1	To support empowerment and capacity building in communities and support participation in community development initiatives.
SCP 2	To recognise and support the Mayo diaspora worldwide through the implementation of the Mayo Diaspora strategy.

Community Development Objectives

SCO 1	To identify and facilitate the development of suitable sites for community facilities within the county, particularly in newly developing areas. These sites should be easily accessible (walking and cycling) and promote the use of public transport.
SCO 2	To support and assist communities to plan for the future of their villages and towns through a bottom up, participative and inclusive approach of the Mayo Community Futures process of community action planning.
SCO 3	To facilitate voluntary and community groups through the ongoing development of the Mayo Public Participation Network.
SCO 4	To promote and advance the attractiveness of the towns and villages throughout the county by assisting in the enhancement of the natural and built environment, through initiatives such as Pride of Place and the coordinated efforts of Mayo County Council, tidy towns organisations, community groups and local development companies.
SCO 5	To retain existing community facilities and public open spaces, unless a sustainable alternative can be provided in the immediate locality.

8.4.3 Community Facilities and Social Infrastructure

Social Infrastructure in this Plan includes health care services, education facilities, burial grounds, fire and emergency services and recreational and cultural facilities. The Council are responsible for the provision of some social infrastructure while the remainder is provided by Government departments, state and local agencies, and private providers and in such cases the Council works to facilitate the provision of social infrastructure. The Mayo LCDC provides oversight of all local and community development programmes in the county. Investment in social infrastructure assists in achieving economic growth, employment and improves the well-being and quality of life of our citizens.

Community infrastructure is an essential part of all communities. Facilities such as community centres, sports centres, libraries and playgrounds can serve as a focal point for the communities they serve. They also provide venues for local sporting, cultural, community, education and social events. The provision of good quality community facilities in existing and developing areas is a key element in the development of sustainable, healthy communities across the county. The *Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas Guidelines (2009)* emphasise the need to integrate housing with the provision of supporting community and social infrastructure. The guidelines acknowledge that community facilities should be located within, or close to, neighbourhood centres and well served by public transport. Different levels of service provision are appropriate to settlements of different sizes, it is therefore important that the Council ensures that an appropriate range of community facilities are provided in all communities, taking account of the population profile and growth targets identified in the Core Strategy.

Community Facilities and Social Infrastructure Policies

SCP 3	To ensure that County Mayo is equipped with physical and other infrastructure (including blue and green infrastructure) necessary to allow communities the capacity to develop and flourish.
SCP 4	To support the provision of a modern and effective fire and rescue services for the county.
SCP 5	To support and facilitate the development of places of worship and multi-faith facilities at appropriate locations, such as town and village centres.
SCP 6	To promote new social infrastructure developments which are accessible and inclusive for a range of users, by adopting a universal design approach and providing for an age friendly society in which people of all ages can live full active, valued and healthy lives.
SCP 7	To protect the cultural heritage of historical burial grounds within the county and to encourage their management and maintenance in accordance with conservation principles.
SCP 8	To facilitate the development of new or extended burial grounds and crematoria by the zoning of land at suitable locations, where appropriate, and providing local authority burial grounds, subject to appropriate safeguards with regard to environmental, noise and traffic impacts.
SCP 9	To ensure that all buildings, public open spaces, recreational and amenity areas are accessible for people with disabilities.
SCP 10	To direct residential care homes for older people, retirement homes, nursing homes, independent living units, assisted living units, retirement villages and sheltered accommodation into towns and villages, ensuring that they are appropriate in scale to the size of the settlement.

Community Facilities and Social Infrastructure Objectives

SCO 6	To work with public service delivery bodies to improve the level of accessibility and facilitate the delivery of more effective and integrated services in communities.
SCO 7	To support and assist the provision of a broad range of community facilities within settlements or in close proximity to existing facilities or multi-purpose centres or public transport routes to meet the changing needs of all sectors of the community.

SCO 8	To support, promote and facilitate the development of an inter-county coastal path linking Mayo, Galway and Sligo, subject to no significant adverse impacts on the environment including the integrity of any Natura 2000 site.
--------------	--

8.4.4 Social Inclusion in Mayo

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, employment, health and housing. It incorporates the need to ensure that minority groups, people of different nationalities and cultural backgrounds, the travelling community, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, the elderly, children and young people are recognised as valuable members of the community. Mayo County Council supports a socially inclusive county for all communities. Inclusive communities are achieved by improving the lives of people living in disadvantaged areas and building social capital. Priorities to achieve inclusive communities include access to and availability of services, housing and infrastructure provision.

8.4.4.1 Children, Young People and Family Support

Mayo has a multi-agency approach in assisting and supporting families, children and young people. The work of the Children and Young Persons Strategic Committee (CYPSC); Mayo County Childcare Committee; Family Resource Centres; the Traveller Inter Agency Forum; local development companies; Mayo Disability Federation and the HSE are fundamental in this regard. The provision of childcare facilities is recognised as a key piece of social infrastructure required to enable people to participate in accessing employment, education and social networks. There continues to be a demand for childcare services and the provision of good quality and affordable services close to local communities. Mayo County Childcare Committee assists in the development and coordination of preschool services in the county.

8.4.4.2 People with Disabilities

There are different types of disability, including physical, intellectual, mental health and chronic illness. In order to ensure an inclusive county, it is imperative that the requirements of people with disabilities are met appropriately and positively. There are many organizations in Mayo who assist in improving the lives of people with disabilities in areas of health, transport, accessibility and in ensuring that people with disabilities are encouraged and supported in all aspects of their lives and make positive contributions in the communities in which they live.

8.4.4.3 Older People

Mayo has a significant level of older residents, many of which live in rural areas. It has the highest rate of older people in the state. Priorities for older people at risk of social exclusion in Mayo include maintaining their health and wellbeing, reducing social isolation, improving access to support, information, services and accessibility and mobility generally and also to provide for the needs of carers. The implementation of the 'Age Friendly' programme in Mayo assists in the inclusion and improved health and wellbeing for older people in the county. Housing is also a key social policy area that needs to adapt to meet the changing needs of older people. The NPF supports national policy to assist older people to live with dignity and independence in their own homes and communities, for as

long as possible. It highlights the need for well-designed lifetime adaptable infill and brownfield development, close to existing services and facilities, supported by universal design and improved urban amenities. Accommodation for the elderly, should be located in existing residential areas, well served by social infrastructure and amenities, such as footpath networks, public transport (where possible) and local facilities and services, to allow for better care in the community, independence and access, ensuring that residents are not isolated. New developments will be required to provide accommodation suitable and adaptable for the elderly.

Social Inclusion Policies

SCP 11	To support initiatives that foster social inclusion amongst groups that are vulnerable to poverty and exclusion.
SCP 12	To support the implementation of the Mayo Local Economic and Community Plan in collaboration with the Local and Economic Development Committee to reduce the number of people in or at risk of social exclusion.
SCP 13	To support and promote a more diverse and socially inclusive society that targets equality of opportunity and a better quality of life for all citizens, through improved integration and greater accessibility in the delivery of sustainable communities and the provision of associated services.
SCP 14	To support the implementation of the Mayo Age Friendly County Programme 2016-2020 as implemented by the Mayo Age Friendly Alliance (and any updated editions) and any key actions in relation to the physical environment.
SCP 15	To promote universal design and well-designed lifetime, adaptable and age friendly housing in accordance with best practice and with the policies and principles contained in Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach (National Disability Authority, 2012) and Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Area: Guidelines for Planning Authorities and its companion document Urban Design Manual (DEHLG, 2009) and particularly on infill and brownfield sites, walkable to existing services and facilities.

Social Infrastructure Objectives

SCO 9	To facilitate the provision of community and resource centres and youth clubs/ cafes, recreational amenities and other facilities for younger people by the identification of suitably located sites, including Council landbanks and by assisting in the provision of finance, where possible.
--------------	---

SCO 10	To secure the implementation of the Council's Traveller Accommodation Programme (2019-2024) and to review this programme if required and/or deemed to be necessary, during the Plan period.
---------------	---

8.4.5 Health and Wellbeing

At a national level, the Government, through the implementation of Healthy Ireland: A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2013-2025, aims to improve the health and wellbeing of people living in Ireland. The Health and Wellbeing Working Group of Mayo LCDC, together with Mayo Children and Young Persons Services Committee (CYPSC), have received funding through the Healthy Ireland Fund for a series of actions, which will implement the national plans at county level. Mayo County Council has also received 'Healthy County Status' under The National Healthy Cities and Counties of Ireland Network and is committed to making Mayo a healthier county. Additionally, the Council are actively promoting healthy communities through Mayo Sports Partnership, a multi-agency forum, that works to increase participation in sports and physical activity throughout the county.

8.4.5.1 Health Care facilities and Provision

The Planning Authority has a significant role in supporting suitable healthcare provision through ensuring that there are sufficient lands reserved in the Development Plan to accommodate the development of adequate healthcare facilities for the population of an area. These facilities, together with community support services, are directed towards suitably zoned lands in close proximity to new and existing residential areas, to allow communities access to multi-disciplinary health care, mental health and wellbeing services, in easily accessible locations throughout the County.

Health and Wellbeing Policies

SCP 16	To promote the improvement of health and wellbeing services throughout the county, in particular to encourage the integration of health and wellbeing services and facilities with new and existing community facilities, where feasible.
SCP 17	To look favourably upon the development of primary care centre, clinics and facilities for the specific needs of an ageing population, in accessible locations, particularly town centres, which comprise / provide access to a range of healthcare services.
SCP 18	To support the Health Service Executive and other statutory and voluntary agencies in the provision of appropriate healthcare facilities, including the development of both the system of hospital care and the provision of community-based primary care facilities.
SCP 19	To support the key priorities of the Mayo Health and Wellbeing Plan 2018-2022 (as updated in the future) to promote health and well-being.
SCP 20	To support the key priorities and actions of the Mayo Children and Young People's Plan 2018-2020 (as updated in the future) to secure better outcomes for children and young

	people through more effective integration of existing services and interventions at local level.
SCP 21	To support health and wellbeing initiatives and healthcare provision so that Mayo is a healthy and caring county for all.

Health and Wellbeing Objective

SCO 11	To support the provision of improved health services on suitably zoned lands in the Tier I and II towns in the settlement hierarchy, on lands in the town centres or immediately adjacent to town centres (based on the sequential approach) which are appropriately serviced (water service, footpaths, lighting etc.)
---------------	---

8.4.6 Recreation Facilities and Provision

Mayo County Council recognises the role recreation, amenity and open space facilities can play in creating healthy environments and facilitating more active lifestyles, to ensure the well-being and improved quality of life for communities. In this regard, high quality open spaces, green linkages, such as walks, cycle ways, access to the lakes, beaches, sports and recreational facilities that are usable and accessible to all, should be provided in tandem with development and changing community needs. The connectivity of open spaces between urban areas, urban fringe and rural areas allows for the interaction of people and wildlife and connects people with places of work and community facilities. In order to achieve optimum accessibility and effective provision of open space and recreational facilities, such facilities should be located and designed on a hierarchical basis according to the needs of a defined population. In addition, community gardens are increasingly becoming popular in the county and play an important function in serving communities.

Mayo County Council recognises the importance of indoor and outdoor play in the development of children and continues to promote participation in sports and recreation through a range of measures, including the operation of leisure centres in Castlebar, Westport and Claremorris,ital and the development of parks, playground, outdoor gyms and Multi Use Games Areas (MUGA's) throughout the county. The Council has prepared a playground policy, and the Health and Wellbeing Working Group of Mayo LCDC is preparing a Play and Recreation Strategy for Mayo 2020-2030, through the Healthy Ireland fund. The Council will continue to support future health and wellbeing initiatives.

Recreation Facilities and Provision Policy

SCP 22	To promote the improvement of health and wellbeing services throughout the county, in particular to encourage the integration of health and wellbeing services and facilities with new and existing community facilities, where feasible.
---------------	---

Recreation Facilities and Provision Objectives

SCO 12	To support and facilitate the implementation of the recommendations of Mayo County Council Play and Recreation Strategy or any subsequent strategy, in conjunction with all relevant agencies.
SCO 13	To support and facilitate the provision for the development of an indoor all-weather multi-sport dome for Ballina to serve clubs and organisations in North Mayo/ West Sligo.

8.4.7 Education, Training and Skills

The provision of investment in education and training are central to reinforcing the delivery of sustainable communities, promoting inclusion and offering choice and accessibility to a high standard of education and employment. Education, training and life-long learning are key enablers, around which personal fulfilment, a fair society and a successful population revolve. All are central to sustaining economic success and building strong communities. The planning system can facilitate the provision of schools through land use zoning and designation of particular sites. The provision of school facilities in tandem with new development is also critical to supporting sustainable communities and reducing the need to travel.

Mayo County Council recognises the important role of higher education in providing for the economic and social wellbeing of the county's population. The Castlebar campus of the Galway Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT) provides 3rd level education in the county. GMIT forms part of the Connaught-Ulster Alliance, which is a strategic partnership with Letterkenny IT and Sligo IT aimed at achieving Technological University status.

The Council has been proactive, through the Education and Training Working Group of the LCDC and various other organisations within the county, to develop third level initiatives. The Mayo Sligo Leitrim Education and Training Board promote Adult Learning Services, Community Education, Back to Education Initiatives, Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme and Adult Guidance. In addition, the Mayo Local Enterprise Office offers business information and advice, business skills training and mentoring support, as well as other skills and training options to support businesses in the county.

Education, Training and Skills Policies

SCP 23	To support initiatives which provide opportunities for people in Mayo to access appropriate education and training provision necessary to allow them to realise their full potential.
SCP 24	To ensure the provision of new educational facilities are located within existing settlements.

Education, Training and Skills Objectives

SCO 14	To support and facilitate the establishment of co-working/ remote working hubs and creative hubs as either standalone facilities themselves or ancillary to public buildings, libraries and community centres or in towns and village centres, as appropriate.
SCO 15	To support and promote the growth, development and success of the Connacht Ulster Alliance consortium's (including GMIT Mayo) ambition towards becoming a Technological University serving the west and northwest.
SCO 16	To support the provision of childcare facilities and new and refurbished schools on well located sites, within or close to existing built-up areas, that meet the diverse needs of local populations.
SCO 17	To assist the County Childcare Committee in identifying priority areas within the county for the provision of childcare facilities.

8.4.8 Culture, Heritage and The Arts

Mayo has many unique physical and cultural characteristics which contribute to its distinctive heritage and identity as a special place along the western seaboard. Music, dance, art and the Irish language also contribute to Mayo's thriving arts and creativity culture. All of these areas form a rich tapestry which add to Mayo's uniqueness. It is important that the distinct culture and heritage of our county is protected and enhanced.

8.4.8.1 The Arts and Library Service

The Arts Service of Mayo County Council has long been a leader in delivering a quality programme and promoting meaningful engagement in the Arts for all. The areas of Disability Arts, Public Art, community interaction with Mayo Artsquad and Film Mayo are exemplars of providing an inclusive Arts offering in Mayo. Mayo County Council's *Strategic Arts Plan 2018 – 2022* provides supports to the sector, taking into account the resources at its disposal.

Organisations such as The Linenhall Arts Centre, The Heinrich Boll Cottage, Ballina Arts Centre, the Custom House Studios, Ballinglen Arts Foundation, Town Hall Arts Centre, Charlestown and Áras Inis Gluaire/Erris Arts Centre provide access to high quality, lively and diverse Arts programming across the county. The venues provide key services for their locality and the wider county and provide important spaces for artists in which to practice, exhibit, network and create.

Mayo County Council recognises the potential of Mayo's Arts and creative industries sector to contribute to economic growth and job creation. It also supports the commercial development of theatres, cinemas and other cultural and entertainment uses. The incorporation of public art in public spaces, civic buildings and town centre locations is also encouraged. Mayo County Council also recognises the importance of cultural events, festivals, activities and facilities which contribute towards the intellectual, artistic and social quality of life for people in the county and attracting visitors

from both within and outside the county to Mayo. The Council, through its Art's Office, seeks to promote the cultural life of the county and increase accessibility to arts and culture facilities for all members of the community.

County Mayo's public library service provides an increasingly important community, information, cultural and outreach facility role within the county. Its county headquarters is situated in Castlebar and there are 11 branches in total throughout the county including a mobile library service. The Council will continue to support the provision of library facilities across the county, as resources allow.

Arts and Libraries Policies

SCP 25	To implement the Creative Ireland Programme 2017-22, Council's Arts Strategy 2018-2022 and the Mayo Culture and Creative Strategy 2018-2022 or any subsequent strategy over the lifetime of the plan.
SCP 26	To recognise and project Mayo's unique identity in an appropriate manner and to promote and market the county to derive optimum social, cultural and economic benefits.
SCP 27	To continue to promote the use of the library service and further develop each library as a community gathering place and learning hub.

Arts and Libraries Objectives

SCO 18	To implement the Mayo County Library Development Plan 2015-2020 (as extended) and any subsequent Library Development Plans.
SCO 19	To support the implementation of the Mayo County Council Strategic Arts Plan 2018-2022 (and any superseding version) and to ensure comprehensive provision of arts infrastructure incorporating spaces suitable for the arts and a variety of arts practices throughout the County.

8.4.8.2 Mayo Islands and Gaeltacht Mhaigh Éo

Mayo is a peripheral rural and coastal county with nine inhabited islands. Clare Island and Inishturk are the most populated islands, outside of Achill with populations of 168 and 53 persons respectively. Significant emigration over the past fifteen years has led to a decrease in population, resulting in an older cohort of residents and high levels of deprivation. There is a dependence on small scale farming and marine based activities. Island communities continue to face significant challenges such as maintaining population, services and their unique identity.

There are three Gaeltacht areas in the county, which include Iorras, Acaill and Tuar Mhic Eadaigh. It is important to recognise the significance of our Gaeltacht areas from a cultural, linguistic and also

economic viewpoint. Udaras na Gaeltachta have an important role in facilitating the improvement and quality of life of the Gaeltacht community. This is through the provision of economic and social infrastructure, in addition to employment and economic supports so that the Gaeltacht community can be maintained and sustain itself as the primary source of the Irish language, a vibrant, living community language.

Islands and Gaeltacht Policies

SCP 28	To support initiatives at promoting Gaeilge, the Irish language, and the need for access to social supports in terms of language, education and employment for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.
SCP 29	To promote and protect Mayo’s heritage and culture and the advancement of the Irish Language.
SCP 30	To support the inhabited islands in County Mayo and recognise the special planning and development needs of islands and islands communities, particularly access, infrastructure and services.

Islands and Gaeltacht Objectives

SCO 20	To ensure that the Irish language and our unique linguistic heritage becomes more visible and audible and integrated into all activities in Mayo.
SCO 21	To strengthen the unique linguistic and cultural heritage of Gaeltacht Mhaigh Éo, by supporting and facilitating improved physical, social and economic infrastructure at appropriate locations throughout the Gaeltacht areas and require a Language Impact Statement in respect of significant developments within or close to Gaeltacht areas, or where deemed appropriate, to determine their impact on the usage of Irish as the community language.
SCO 22	To maintain and support the communities of Mayo’s inhabited islands by facilitating sustainable social and economic development through the provision of, or facilitating the provision of, infrastructure (social and physical), housing and services, having regard to the traditional building patterns of the Islands and the need to protect, support and enhance, the cultural and natural heritage of the Islands.