



Arklow Local Area Plan Submission - Report

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Submission to the Public Consultation: Pre-Draft Stage of the Arklow Local Area Plan

This submission underscores the economic potential and strategic significance of Arklow, emphasising the need to envisage its future beyond the upcoming local area plan's six-year lifespan. *Economic development and job creation are fundamental for building sustainable communities*¹. With its rich industrial and maritime heritage, as well as its strategic location on Ireland's east coast, Arklow is well-positioned to play a crucial role in our country's regional development.

Building on a Strong Foundation

The existing local area plan for Arklow and its surroundings 2018 – 2024, has laid a robust foundation for sustainable growth. It strikes a balance between economic, social, and environmental infrastructure, ensuring a high standard of living for residents.

Looking Ahead: An Economic Vision 2024-2050

As we approach the end of the current plan's term, it is essential that the forthcoming draft plan articulates a vision that propels Arklow into the future. This vision should extend beyond the new plan's six-year lifespan and include a dedicated section titled "An Economic Vision 2024-2050."

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Arklow's Strategic Importance

The expanding economic growth and unfolding opportunities position Arklow as the most strategically significant town on Ireland's East Coast. This point in time offers a prime opportunity to harness this potential. The plan must encompass a vision for the forthcoming decades, adeptly managing expected growth while ensuring inclusivity and benefits for all sectors of society.

Arklow's Economic Evolution

Historical Roots

Arklow, a town steeped in industrial and maritime heritage, owes its significance to its strategic location along the Avoca River. The town played a vital role in trade and fishing, with copper ore from Wicklow mines being shipped during the summer season. Notably, Arklow shipbuilders, John Tyrrell & Sons, pioneered the construction of the first motor fisherboat in the British Isles, exporting pre-packed fishing vessels to distant shores.

In 1895, Kynoch Ltd acquired Arklow Chemical Works, spanning over 300 acres along North Beach. During World War I, this facility employed a staggering 4,000 people. Additionally, Arklow Pottery, established in 1934, remained an economic pillar for six decades. Meanwhile, Nitrigin Éireann Teoranta (N.E.T.) took root in Shelton during the early 1960s.

Present Landscape and Potential

Arklow's industrial landscape is diverse, housing enterprises of varying sizes across sectors such as Pharmaceuticals, Maritime, Administration, Extractive, and Manufacturing. Recent years have witnessed remarkable growth, both in emerging and established industries. Companies like LMH Engineering and NUA Manufacturing have spearheaded this industrial success.

The renewable energy sector is also on the rise, with SSE Renewables' Arklow Bank Wind Park leading the charge. This ambitious project aims to develop an 800MW offshore wind farm known as Arklow Bank Wind Park II, driving the transition toward sustainability.

Furthermore, Echelon Data Centres provide essential data infrastructure while maintaining an environmentally conscious approach. Their imminent major announcement sets a new standard for zero carbon emissions for the industry, positioning Arklow as a preferred location for global tech giants.

Cumulatively, these industries are projected to inject over €8 billion into the local economy. During the development phase, approximately 2,500/3,000 construction jobs will be created, followed by over a 1,000 permanent positions upon project completion. This economic upswing reflects not only job growth but also a commitment to sustainable innovation within the region.

Future Potential

Arklow is poised to enter a transformative era, fuelled by significant government policy reviews that beckon a broader vision to seize emerging opportunities.

The Department of Transport's review of the 2013 National Ports Policy ⁱⁱ opens the door to enhancing Arklow's strategic importance through the establishment of a deep-water port. This alignment gains further weight from the *Dublin Port Post 2040 Dialogue* ⁱⁱⁱ, which identifies Arklow as a potential port location. Stakeholders have also submitted a detailed proposal to support this vision.

Simultaneously, the *Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU)* ^{iv} is reevaluating its policy on connections for Large Energy Users. This includes a forward-thinking approach advocating placing these users near zones rich in renewable energy sources and storage capabilities. Arklow has a substantial strategic advantage in meeting to these requirements.

Arklow's imminent tourism transformation owes much to the upcoming wastewater treatment plant and flood defences. These enhancements will harness its maritime heritage and pristine river, offering unique experiences.

The revival of the river Avoca will illuminate Arklow's seafaring history. Clean waters will facilitate kayaking, fishing, and birdwatching, attracting nature enthusiasts and adventure seekers, enriching the tourist experience. The river's transformation will also give rise to riverside dining and accommodation, creating a vibrant hub for both locals and visitors.

Backed by purposeful economic growth, Arklow's revitalisation can serve as a beacon of optimism for a brighter future. It exemplifies how targeted funding and strategic planning can uplift every facet of the community, setting a benchmark for others to emulate. As Arklow advances, it must embrace the commitment to foster a wealthier, fairer, and greener society for generations to come, guided by a far-sighted vision.

Conclusion

A thriving economy is the backbone of any society, serving as a catalyst for improvement across all sectors. It's not just about the numbers and statistics; it's about creating opportunities for everyone to succeed. When the economy flourishes, it generates jobs;

increases income, and improves the standard of living. This, in turn, can lead to better education, and infrastructure, which are essential for a well-rounded and prosperous society. Moreover, a robust economy can foster innovation and creativity, leading to advancements in technology and industry that propel society forward. It's a ripple effect where success in one area can lead to progress in others, lifting the spirits and prospects of the entire community.

In summary, I propose that the plan must incorporate a dedicated section outlining Arklow's Long Term future goals beyond the lifetime of the proposed plan. This approach will foster comprehensive planning and encourage active engagement from all stakeholders, underscoring Arklow's significance. I firmly believe that Arklow deserves recognition, not only as a major influence in Wicklow but also as a town of vital importance along Ireland's entire Eastern coastline. This represents a unique opportunity for Arklow, and we must seize it without delay."

Regards



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ⁱ Wicklow Co Co

<https://arklow-lap-wicklow.hub.arcgis.com/pages/economic>

ⁱⁱ Department of Transport Review of National Ports Policy 2013

<https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/274074/fba467e2-4371-46bf-982a-88b581a8772d.pdf#page=null>

ⁱⁱⁱ Dulin Port Company

<https://www.dublinportpost2040dialogue.ie/dpc-papers/>

^{iv} Commission for Regulation of Utilities: Review of Large Energy Users connection policy

https://cruie-live-96ca64acab2247eca8a850a7e54b-5b34f62.divio-media.com/documents/CRU2024001_Review_of_Large_Energy_Users_Connection_Policy_Consultation_1.PDF