

Westmeath Recreation and Sport Strategy 2022-2026

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Introduction/Foreword

We are delighted to present Westmeath County Council's Recreation and Sport Strategy 2022-2026.

This strategy is informed by detailed consultation, analysis and review of recreation and sport in County Westmeath. It will pave the way for the development of the sector across Westmeath as we aim to increase and improve the number and range of opportunities for our communities and visitors to the area to participate in healthy activities. I would like to thank everyone that was involved in the consultation process for their valuable contribution.

Westmeath has a vibrant recreation and sport community, with local clubs, groups, organisations and facilities offering a diverse range of opportunities for people to get involved. The potential economic benefits of an integrated recreation and sport approach are manifold, creating synergies across social activities, sport, health and wellbeing, and leading to an active and prosperous county.

Recreation and Sport can play a vital role in building and developing communities, as well as encouraging and promoting active healthy lifestyles for participants, both residents and visitors. This strategy seeks to ensure that all aspects of recreation and sport are considered and planned for in an integrated and strategic manner.

A thorough evaluation and monitoring process will be implemented through a multi-agency approach, overseen by the Westmeath Recreation and Sport Forum. This will ensure that the strategic aims and actions are delivered.

Westmeath County Council and the Westmeath Recreation and Sport Forum look forward to working collaboratively with our partner agencies and communities to deliver the outcomes envisaged in this strategy.

Cathaoirleach/Chief Executive

Mission Statement

Working with our community and partners, we will establish Westmeath as a county with a positive and forward-thinking culture of recreation and sport. We will actively look to provide an integrated approach to developing more opportunities for all needs, ages and abilities to get involved in recreation and sport, whether they be residents or visitors.

Why are we doing this?

We believe that recreation & sport should be enjoyable, make us feel good, improve our health and wellbeing, increase our skills and introduce us to new people and places. We also know that people are more likely to sustain their participation in recreation & sport when it is enjoyable, it enhances physical health and mental wellbeing, and improves social interaction and inclusion.

Where are we now?

In designing a recreational strategy for the county for the next 5 years, it is important to understand the demographic profile of the county. POBAL provide useful summary data on demographics, based on the Central Statics Office (CSO) census data, which was reviewed for the research. There is also national data that gives us a picture of participation levels across the country.

46% regularly participate in sport (1.78 million)

34% meet National Physical Activity Guidelines through participating in at least 30 minutes of moderate or greater intensity physical activity at least 5 times in the previous 7 days

66% regularly walk for recreation

Levels of non-participation in sport or recreational walking have reduced from 22% in 2017 to 20% in 2019

Westmeath is a predominantly rural county at the heart of Ireland, bordering counties Meath, Longford, Cavan, Roscommon and Offaly, respectively, covering an area of 1,756 square kilometres. and is historically known as the 'Lake County', rich in arts, culture, heritage and natural amenities.

The population of the county is 88,770 (Census 2016), clustered in the main population centres, including 21,349 in Athlone and 20,928 in Mullingar. 49% of the county's population were recorded as living in urban areas and 51% living in rural areas. The two main towns provide much of the economic and commercial activity for Westmeath. Key towns include Moate, Kilbeggan, Castlepollard and Kinnegad, while many villages including Tyrrellspass, Multyfarnham and Finea provide services to the rural population of the county. 11.3% of Westmeath people indicated that they were non-Irish nationals. Polish nationals form the largest group, followed by the UK.

The county is home to a large young population, with almost 30% below the age of 20 years, or almost 46% under 40 years. Approximately 26% are in the middle years of 40-59, with 15% aged 60-79 years of age. A small but significant 3% of people are over 80 years of age, but this will increase as the latter group ages.

Analysis of the demographic data for Co. Westmeath suggests that:

- With median levels of affluence in the county, citizens will have resources to engage in recreational activity.
- With increasing educational attainment, citizens in the coming decades will likely actively engage in positive sporting and leisure activities.
- With increasingly sedentary lifestyles, proactive measures at local government level will be required to encourage active participation in moderate levels¹ of daily / weekly physical activity.
- The numbers of people living with disability in Westmeath will challenge all service providers to provide appropriate recreational infrastructure through excellent design and delivery.

Westmeath Sports Partnership is very active in the promotion of recreation and sporting opportunities across the county, offering a variety of programmes for people to be physically active. These opportunities are formal and informal, allowing people to engage in active recreation and sport at a level of their choosing. Last year (2021), Westmeath Sports Partnership worked with nearly 5,000 participants across the county incorporating a wide range of programmes from walking,

cycling and swimming to specifically targeted projects with identified groups such as women and girls, people with disabilities, older adults, socially excluded groups.

For the purposes of this strategy, we will be looking at recreation and sport in the context of promoting forms of physical activity that can be formal or informal, competitive or non-competitive but are additional to everyday forms such as active travel or work based physical activity.

The following diagram highlights the different types of physical activity, and this strategy will focus on the 'Active Recreation' an 'Sport' category.

EVERYDAY ACTIVITY

Active travel
Housework
Gardening, DIY
Occupational activity

ACTIVE RECREATION

Recreational Walking
Recreational Cycling
Active Play
Dance

SPORT

Structured competitive activity
Informal sport
Regular cycling exercise & fitness training

Policy Context

There are several local and national strategies and policies that feed into and influence this Recreation & Sport Strategy.

Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport -National Sports Policy 2018-27

Vision: "People will be inspired, their lives enriched, their enjoyment enhanced, and their quality of life improved as a result of their own active and social participation in sport"

Increased Participation: A significantly higher proportion of Irish children and adults from all sectors of society are regularly involved in all forms of active and social participation in sport.

Sport Ireland Statement of Strategy 2018-2022

Vision: A world class sports sector operating to the highest standards of governance and accountability and contributing towards the National Policy objectives for sport.

Healthy Ireland: A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2013-2025

Vision: "where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential, where wellbeing is valued and supported at every level of society and is everyone's responsibility."

Goal: Increase the proportion of people who are healthy at all stages of life

National Physical Activity Plan Mission Statement

"The aim of this plan is to increase physical activity levels across the entire population thereby improving the health and wellbeing of people living in Ireland, where everybody will be physically active and where everybody lives, works and plays in a society that facilitates, promotes and supports physical activity and an active way of life with less time spent being sedentary".

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly, 2019

This Strategy specifically highlights the region as a “key destination for tourism, leisure and recreation activities”, with a policy to support the development of an integrated network of greenways, blueways and peatways, while ensuring that high value assets and amenities are protected and enhanced. Athlone is emphasised as a visitor destination town with particular potential as a base to explore the Hidden Heartlands, while Mullingar is described as a potential ‘tourism hub’.

County Development Plan 2021-27

The Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027 sets out the Council’s proposed policies and objectives for the development of the County over the Plan period. The Development Plan seeks to develop and improve, in a sustainable manner, the social, economic, environmental and cultural assets of the County.

For the purposes of the Westmeath Recreation & Sport Strategy, the most relevant sections of this Plan are:

Tourism: To provide for the continued expansion of the tourism sector, with a focus on creating strong visitor destination towns and enough high-quality visitor services and the continued development and enhancement of visitor attractions and activities to provide memorable, immersive visitor experiences, capitalising on our natural and cultural heritage assets, whilst safeguarding these resources for future generations.

The recreational tourism offering has also received significant investment, with greenways developed along the Royal Canal and historical Old Rail Trail “*Midlands Great Western Greenway*” from Mullingar to Athlone. These greenways will form part of the first coast-to-coast greenway from Dublin to Galway, to be completed in the coming years.

Sustainable Communities - To develop and support vibrant sustainable communities in Westmeath where people can live, work and enjoy access to a wide range of community, health and educational facilities and amenities, suitable for all ages and needs, in both urban and rural areas, thereby supporting a high quality of life for all to enjoy.

Westmeath Local Economic and Community Plan

Mission statement: To enhance the well-being and quality of life of the people of Westmeath through sustainable economic and community development”.

Goal3: Community Development To secure the creation of vibrant communities in County Westmeath through community development and quality of life initiatives.

3.2 Availability and utilisation of good quality community, recreational and amenity facilities.

Westmeath County Council's Corporate Plan 2020-24, which sets out the authorities identified priorities for the next 5 years. The plan has 7 strategic goals, and this Recreation and Sport Strategy fits into the following goal:

1. Strategic Goal Inclusive, Active and Empowered Communities –
To enable the active participation and development of all communities in the county and provide for their recreation and cultural activities.
- 1.6 Prepare Westmeath Recreation and Sport Strategy and facilitate increased participation levels and thereby enhance the health and wellbeing of our community

Developing the Strategy

The Consultative Process

Significant consultations were held in the development of the Recreation and Sports Strategy to identify priorities for future actions. The consultations were structured as follows:

1. Online Survey targeting a broad range of interested Westmeath stakeholders;
2. Focus group sessions with specific groups;
3. Two public consultative workshops, held in Mullingar and Athlone in early March 2019; and
4. Consultations with key consultees, including the project partners; senior officers of Westmeath County Council, Westmeath Community Development and Westmeath Sports Partnership; statutory agencies including Sport Ireland, Waterways Ireland; Coillte; National Trails Office, NPWS and Fáilte Ireland; and members of the Irish Wheelchair Association.

The results of the consultations were used to inform the overall strategy development.

A 'Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, Threats' (SCOT) Analysis was also carried out as part of the development of the strategy, using the results from the consultation exercises.

Strengths

- ☐ Scenic landscapes, rivers, lakes, bogs and eskers offering opportunities for outdoor recreation across Westmeath
- ☐ Dublin - Galway National Cycleway crosses the county, with the Westmeath section fully complete
- ☐ Royal Canal Greenway traverses the county
- ☐ High quality off-road walking trails through woodlands, scenic lakes and natural heritage sites
- ☐ Public lakeshore facilities offer recreation, sports amenities, with parking, picnic areas, boat access, WC, etc.
- ☐ Strong sports club provision, including GAA, FAI, Tennis, Soccer, Rugby, Handball etc

- ☐ Athlone Regional Sports Centre provides sports/recreation opportunities, with funding for expanded facilities
- ☐ Athlone Institute of Technology is home to the national Indoor Athletics Arena
- ☐ Private operators providing opportunities for recreation, bike and boat hire, angling etc
- ☐ Positive collaboration with neighbouring counties, Sport Ireland, Waterways Ireland and other state authorities;
- ☐ Very active community and voluntary sports and recreation sector throughout County Westmeath.
- ☐ Increased awareness of health benefits, reflected in Increased rates of participation in sport and recreation
- ☐ Increased focus on recreational tourism potential through Ireland's Hidden Heartlands brand and other initiatives
- ☐ Festivals and events promoting recreation: Mullingar Half Marathon, TriAthlone and Trifest, Athlone River Festival

Challenges

- ☐ Updating and aligning strategies of different partners so that they complement each other
- ☐ Closer collaboration between stakeholders to promote clear understanding of roles and opportunities and a more coordinated approach to maximising funding opportunities.
- ☐ Increasing the awareness of clubs/groups/organisations of potential funding opportunities, including participation, coaching, funding, governance and first aid.
- ☐ Maximise potential of natural resources/facilities e.g. Greenways, trails, waterways.
- ☐ Link provision of facilities to local planning policies.
- ☐ Stronger links between schools and clubs/groups/organisations, including community use of facilities.
- ☐ Ensuring inclusive access for participants to complete walking/cycling routes.
- ☐ Providing appropriate opportunities for isolated communities
- ☐ Attracting new volunteers to clubs/groups/organisations and ensuring volunteers have appropriate training.
- ☐ Ensuring that the structure and governance of existing clubs/groups/organisations is adequate.
- ☐ Developing an evidence-based understanding of recreation and sports needs in the county.

Opportunities

- ☐ Further enhancement and development of walking trails and greenways in the county
- ☐ Improve access to existing recreational facilities.
- ☐ Improve linkages from population centres to nearby recreation amenities.
- ☐ Further enhancement of public parks/green spaces for recreation purposes
- ☐ Use of public lands for ambitious recreational provision

☐ Development and further enhancement of water-based recreational activities on the county's lakes and rivers

Explore opportunities to develop and enhance recreation and sport infrastructure under grant schemes such as Sports Capital Grant, Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme, LEADER etc...

☐ Development of Sports Hub/ Regional Sports Centre in Mullingar

☐ Communications Officer post to widen the audience and increase the awareness of recreation and sport in the county.

☐ Outdoors Development Officer post to unlock the untapped potential of outdoor spaces, facilities and resources in the county.

☐ Recreation and Sport Forum will allow us to harness and make use of the range of skills, knowledge and experience of its membership.

Threats

☐ Lack of collaboration by critical supporting agencies

☐ Inadequate co-operation and buy-in by required bodies and sporting clubs/groups

☐ Inadequate level of funding available to achieve objectives

☐ Decline in volunteerism

☐ Low level of participation in activities

☐ Increase in sedentary behaviours

☐ Increasing risk and Insurance costs

☐ Lack of cooperation from property and landowners for access

☐ Inadequate transport and access to facilities and events

☐ Increase in barriers to participation due to social, cultural, ability or other constraints.

Strategic Priorities

Westmeath County Council has established 4 key strategic priorities. Each priority will look to develop and strengthen an identified area of importance for recreation and sport in County Westmeath. These strategic aims will be supported by a number of identified actions with associated outcomes.

Strategic Goal 1 – Active People

To underpin the provision of a wide range of opportunities for people to access and participate in a wide range of active recreation and sport, in a variety of locations, and at a level of their choosing. This strategy will endeavour to identify and develop new opportunities to become active in addition to supporting and developing existing provision.

There will be a focus on inclusion and offering opportunities for everyone, but particularly for target groups including people with disabilities, older people, disadvantaged communities, women and girls and minority communities.

There will be a focus on a diverse programme/portfolio of opportunities, for people to be involved in Recreation & Sport in Westmeath at whatever level they wish to engage, whether it is active recreation or sport. This can include residents of Westmeath as well as those coming into the County for recreation & sporting opportunities. We will be looking to develop community wide programmes in multiple settings that mobilise and integrate community engagement.

Objective 1.1 – Coordinate, support and promote a diverse range of quality recreation and sport opportunities for everyone to participate in, with a focus on targeted groups.

Strategic Actions

- Co-ordinate and support the development of, directly and in partnership with relevant partner organisations, a diverse range of quality programmes, events and initiatives to support engagement and participation in sport and physical activity. We will deliver a universal offer but will also specifically target and prioritise those from the following groups:
 - Disadvantaged communities
 - People with a Disability
 - Women/girls
 - Older Adults
 - Ethnic Minority groups.

Outcomes

A wide range of inclusive active recreation, sport and physical activity opportunities which meet the needs of participants and support lifelong activity resulting in increased participation for all members of the community, and specifically our identified target groups.

Increased collaboration between WCC, existing and new partners, key local stakeholders

Increase in participation numbers for target groups

Objective 1.2 - Lead and co-ordinate collaborative, sustainable and community-led approaches in the development of active recreation, sport and physical activity in disadvantaged areas.

Strategic Actions

- Support a range of sport and physical activity programmes which offer diverse sport and physical activity opportunities that are appropriate for the different members of the community and are appropriate for different levels of readiness of potential participants.
- Promote accessibility, inclusion and a multi-use approach in the development and usage of the natural and built environment and outdoor recreation amenities.
- Collaborate with WCC and other relevant agencies in the identification of needs and advocate for the development of quality and accessible facilities and infrastructure where appropriate.

- Promote multi usage, a life course perspective, accessibility and inclusion in the development and utilisation of facilities incorporating walking/ running/cycling / watersports etc.
- Facilitate opportunities for participation and utilisation of recreational amenities in the natural and built environment.
- Strengthen and enhance the capacity of communities, agencies and organisations to further develop physical activity programmes and events

Outcome

Improved capacity and readiness in the places that provide opportunities resulting in increased engagement in active recreation, sport and physical activity in the community. Improved and more accessible facilities and infrastructure making it easier for more people to be active.

Objective 1.3 - To Provide children and young people with a positive introduction to active recreation, sport and physical activity, regardless of ability, to promote and support lifelong involvement.

Strategic Actions

- Co-ordinate and support the development, directly and in partnership with relevant partner organisations of quality programmes, events and initiatives to support engagement and participation in active recreation, sport and physical activity of children and young people
- Work with the education sector in promoting increased participation in active recreation sport and physical activity and identify priority actions that best support the sector within our responsibility area.
- Identify and facilitate opportunities to strengthen links and pathways between schools, clubs and community groups and organisations involved in recreation, sport and physical activity.

Outcomes

A wide and varied range of inclusive active recreation, sport and physical activity opportunities available suitable for children and young people resulting in increased participation.

More young people participating in quality and age appropriate inclusive sport and physical activity.

Increased awareness by parents of the importance of their children being physically active

Strategic Goal 2 -Strengthening/Developing the network.

This section will focus on building, strengthening and supporting the capacity of the recreation & sport network of people, organisations and facilities in Westmeath.

There will be a focus on:

- training and education;
- support for volunteers,
- clubs and community organisations;
- improving access to facilities both built and natural e.g. green spaces, parks green and blue ways;
- promotion of recreational tourism opportunities;
- building & strengthening relationships with partner organisations through Recreation & Sport Forum. A strong network of connected organisations in the County, who all work together towards the same goals is vital for the success of this strategy.

Objective 2.1 - Support the providers of active recreation, sport and physical activity in Westmeath through the provision of quality training and education opportunities.

Strategic Actions

- Assess the needs of the providers of active recreation, sport and physical activity, identify any gaps in the current provision of training and education and develop training opportunities where relevant.
- In line with the Cara Training and Education Framework, continue to promote and provide disability training courses
- Build the capacity and readiness of coaches and volunteers to promote inclusion and engage with people with disabilities and other target groups.
- Invest in and provide resources for the training and development of the volunteers, staff and tutors who develop, coordinate, promote and deliver WCC initiatives to enhance and promote a quality active recreation, sport and physical activity culture in Westmeath which is safe, inclusive and well governed.
- Extend and enhance current training opportunities to clubs, communities, agencies and organisations to further enhance their capacity to influence physical activity participation and provide

Outcomes

Key volunteers and staff working with various groups, clubs and community organisations, empowered in their capacity to provide more quality active recreation, sport and physical activity opportunities for more people in an inclusive, enjoyable and positive way.

Objective 2.2 - Empower local agencies, organisations and community-based networks to foster a positive attitude to active recreation, sport and physical activity and to support opportunities for all.

Strategic Actions

- Engage with and provide support, where required, to local agencies, organisations and community-based networks

- Provide and promote links to relevant information or resources that will enhance the understanding of the benefits and positive impact of active recreation, sport and physical activity to non-sporting organisations.

Outcomes

A greater understanding of the positive impact of active recreation, sport and physical activity leading to a positive attitude to sport and physical activity, increased promotion and greater investment in resources.

Objective 2.3 - Support and enable a network of shared and multipurpose quality facilities in the built and natural environment through engagement with relevant individuals and organisations.

Strategic Actions

- Facilitate and develop opportunities to promote and support models of good practice for multi-use amenities in the natural and built environment.
- Promote accessibility, inclusion and a multi-use approach when engaging with key stakeholders about the infrastructure development and utilisation of facilities incorporating walking/running/cycling / water sports etc.
- Secure requisite financial resources for delivery of the Recreation and Sport Strategy; e.g. Outdoor Recreational Infrastructure scheme, RDP/ LEADER, Sport Ireland, National Greenways Strategy Fund; National Walk Scheme; and national and local funding sources.
- For targeted areas, examine the provision and usage of community-based facilities in the built and natural environment and explore possible opportunities to widen access and usage.
- Facilitate opportunities for participation and utilisation of recreational amenities in the natural and built environment, including greenways, blue ways and walking trails
- Engage with commercial providers and facility operators to promote participation programmes and events.
- To liaise with and advise the Local Authority and relevant agencies to support the development of sports and recreation facilities through processes such as:
 - County Development Plan
 - Local Economic and Community Plan
 - Local area plans
 - The general planning process

Outcomes

A strong network of shared and multi-use facilities operating in Westmeath resulting in more opportunities for people to participate in sport and physical activity.

Objective 2.4 - To provide coordination & collaboration between key agencies and to positively influence the development of new partnerships

Strategic Actions

- Facilitate, coordinate and administer the Westmeath Recreation & Sport Forum.

- Engage with and support the work of local, regional and national organisations in working towards common goals to increase participation in active recreation, sport and physical activity.
- Continue to develop relationships and structures of engagement to develop ideas, exchange information, and identify gaps in provision e.g. Local Sports Partnership forums and seminars, HSE network, Volunteer Centres etc

Outcomes

Increased collaboration between WCC, existing and new partners, and key local stakeholders, leading to two-way contact and communication.

Strengthening the capacity of the local active recreation, sport and physical activity network to develop and deliver a joined-up approach.

Strategic Goal 3 – Enhanced Communication

This section will focus on building and enhancing communication with the aim of promoting opportunities for active recreation and sport. It will look to effectively and consistently deliver clear messages on active recreation and sport, will develop and strengthen effective channels and platforms for communication of these messages. By doing this we will engage with current and new partners who can contribute to the development of recreation and sport in Westmeath

Objective 3.1 - Effectively and consistently deliver a clear message on active recreation, sport and physical activity, and the roles of Westmeath County Council, and Westmeath Recreation and Sport Forum.

Strategic Actions

- Identify and promote the important message of active recreation, sport and physical activity and ensure staff, stakeholders and delivery partners are clear on the message and their role in the development and delivery of the strategy
- Review, update and implement formal and consistent branding guidelines for staff and partners for Westmeath Recreation and Sport Forum activities.

Outcomes

A clear and consistent message delivered with regard to recreation, sport and physical activity and clarity among key stakeholders on the role of Westmeath Sports Partnership

Objective 3.2 - Review, develop and strengthen effective channels and platforms for communication of clear messages both internally and externally.

Strategic Actions

- Review, develop and strengthen a diverse range of communications channels and approaches appropriate for the various WCC audiences while continuing to provide traditional forms of communication and promotion where appropriate.

- Prioritise effective and progressive use of social media and other digital communication channels to reach target groups and communities.
- Review and update the structure and content of the Westmeath Sports Partnership website including the effective promotion of WSP and other active recreation activities.

Outcomes

A wide range of effective channels of communications used resulting in quality interactions, increased awareness and quality promotions.

Objective 3.3 - Engage with current and new partners and funders to improve understanding and strengthen relationships.

- Cultivate a partnership approach with clubs, community groups, health, education and project partners to increase understanding, strengthen and deepen relationships and influence current and future engagement in active recreation, sport and physical activity.
- Support awareness and networking across the core and periphery of the recreation and sports network

Outcomes

Stronger relationships and improved collaboration with and investment by key stakeholders.

Objective 3.4 - Develop efficient and effective data management systems to support targeted communications and sharing of knowledge.

Strategic Actions

- Identify additional approaches to interpreting our data, our collective experience and existing research to identify insights into the development and promotion of active recreation, sport and physical activity.
- Use research and evaluation findings to measure and communicate the positive role and impact of recreation, sport and physical activity.

Outcomes

More effective use of data to support the Recreation and Sport Forum and Westmeath Sports Partnership to better engage with our audiences and partners through targeted communications.

Strategic Goal 4 – Governance, Management and Evaluation.

The intention of this goal is to ensure that the organization (WCC) has enough resources and good governance to lead and influence a culture of participation in active recreation and sport. This will be done through working closely with the Recreation & Sport Forum to secure appropriate resources, both human and financial to ensure the success of the strategy. Seeking funding opportunities,

training and development of staff and a robust process for evaluating activities will be included in this goal. Research and the gathering of evidence to support recreation & sport initiatives will also be included. We will seek to use data and insight more effectively to inform the design and programming of recreation & sport opportunities.

Objective 4.1 - Develop the leadership and competency of the organisation and partners through effective Forum and staff support and development

Strategic Actions

- Review Forum membership and update as appropriate, including roles and responsibilities of the Forum, induction and training needs.
- Engage Forum members in WCC activities and in communicating the WCC message within their own representative organisations and as widely as possible externally.
- Annually review the competencies and skills mix on the Forum and address any gaps through the co-opting process. Make the best use of the skills and experience of our Forum members.
- Ensure appropriate staffing support for WCC in consideration of the high labour requirements to engage the 'hard to reach' target groups. This includes continuous professional development, ongoing staff reviews and addressing ongoing training needs.

Outcomes

Clear and shared understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the Recreation and Sport Forum and staff, and support in place for training and development needs.

Objective 4.2 - Secure resources for effective operations consistent with the Recreation and Sport Forum's work programmes and future initiatives.

Strategic Actions

- Strategically respond to appropriate funding opportunities as they arise, ensuring they are consistent with Recreation and Sport Forum priorities, roles and responsibilities, in line with national policy and can be delivered within the scope of available staff resources.
- Ensure compliance with the financial planning, monitoring and reporting systems in place within Westmeath County Council

Outcomes

WCC, partners and stakeholders operating effectively and making best use of available resources

Objective 4.3 - Strengthen and promote good governance and best practice and support meaningful oversight and direction.

Strategic Actions

- Adopt and comply with the Governance Code for Sport, as required by Sport Ireland
- Hold an annual staff and Forum planning workshop to agree key actions for coming year
- Development of new forum operating policies and procedures as required.

Outcomes

High standards of governance, and efficient use of resources in place, supported by Forum oversight and direction.

Objective 4.4 - Develop and support a robust process to evaluate activities and gather evidence and research to support and guide our work.

Strategic Actions

- Develop and implement appropriate evaluation processes which will be guided by national strategies and recognised best practice, using evidenced based research
- Identify, secure and implement appropriate evaluation tools for programmes and initiatives.
- Develop a process to capture and include insights and best practice from staff and delivery partners regarding the critical success factors.
- Communicate, distribute and profile evaluation findings of WCC programmes with relevant agencies and stakeholders.

Outcomes

A robust evaluation process in place to support the gathering of evidence and increased awareness internally and externally of the impact of WCC's work on participation in active recreation, sport and physical activity.

How will we achieve these goals?

- The Westmeath Recreation and Sport Forum will work collaboratively to develop a series of action plans relating to each strategic goal. These action plans will be collectively agreed and have measurable, deliverable outputs and outcomes attached to them.
- The action plans will be regularly reviewed and updated at meetings of the Westmeath Recreation and Sport Forum, in conjunction with Westmeath Sports Partnership staff.
- Use data and insight more effectively, using an expanded evidence base to inform the design and programming of activities for all user groups.
- Build the capacity of local clubs, community organisations and other partners to support the delivery of the strategy.
- Maximise the local voluntary sector as a resource to support an increased and wider variety of recreation and sporting opportunities for local people and communities.
- Widen the network of contributors to the delivery of the Recreation and Sport Strategy, engaging a wide range of appropriate partners to reach priority groups, people and

communities and organisations. Work with them to understand the role and contribution they can make to achieve the vision of the Strategy.

- Develop a shared set of values for those participating, leading, supporting, coaching and volunteering in recreation and sport in Westmeath.
- Develop a 2-year implementation plan aligned to the strategic objectives of the Recreation and Sport Strategy, and supported by the development of Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) to ensure delivery of strategic objectives.
- Regularly report on progress with the outcomes envisaged by the Recreation and Sport Strategy.