

# Kilkenny/Carlow County Councils Joint Local Area Plan for Graiguenamanagh-Tinnahinch

Kilkenny / Carlow County Councils

## Gas Networks Ireland Response

25<sup>th</sup> January 2021





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## **1 Introduction**

Gas Networks Ireland (GNI) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Kilkenny/Carlow County Councils Joint Local Area Plan for Graiguenamanagh-Tinnahinch consultation.

GNI is involved in one initiative which can benefit Graiguenamanagh-Tinnahinch from both an economic and environmental perspective:

- Development of renewable gas<sup>1</sup> injection infrastructure.

GNI has provided suggested changes and text for inclusion in the Local Area Plan in some of the sections below.

#### **2 Consultation Comments**

#### **Chapter 10 Infrastructure and Environment**

GNI welcomes the inclusion of policy objective INFO4.2 "To promote and encourage the use of renewable energy technologies in existing and proposed building stock within the Draft Joint LAP area subject to consideration of environmental, conservation and visual requirements" in the local area plan.

Renewable gas produced by anaerobic digestion (AD) is a clean, renewable and carbon neutral fuel that can be used in heat, transport and electricity production. It is identical in function to natural gas so the existing gas network can be used, and gas customers do not need to change their boilers or gas-powered appliances. There is potential for renewable gas production in the region from sources including grass, animal waste, crop residue, food and other waste streams. The production of indigenous renewable gas in Ireland, not only enhances security of supply but will provide significant benefits to the local agriculture sector and economy in the region. The AD process captures greenhouse gases and therefore, agricultural sector emissions are reduced that would otherwise be released to the atmosphere. Renewable gas can help Graiguenamanagh - Tinnahinch reduce its carbon emissions.

Renewable gas should also be considered as a way to decarbonising the domestic heat sector. Ervia, GNI's parent company, commissioned KPMG to develop and evaluate scenarios for decarbonisation of the one million Irish residential homes currently connected to, or within close proximity to the existing gas network. The study concluded that renewable gas is the lowest cost option to decarbonise the domestic heat sector. Furthermore, the need for deep retrofits to convert properties to a BER rating for electric heat pumps to work effectively, is avoided. This could be a relevant consideration for both Councils when evaluating the options for decarbonising council housing stock.

GNI also welcomes the inclusion of section 10.6, Natural Heritage, of the local area plan. GNI is cognisant of the natural environment. Transportation of gas is unobtrusive and particular attention is taken to minimise the impact on local flora and fauna. GNI is committed to biodiversity and archaeology through the minimisation of the environmental impact of any construction and development activities. This involves a partnership approach with environmental and heritage groups on all construction projects, as well as employing engineers and environmental specialists to carry out environmental assessments at the planning and construction phases of developments. GNI returns all land to its original state following construction.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Renewable Gas: <u>https://www.gasnetworks.ie/corporate/company/our-commitment/environment/renewable-gas/</u>

### **3 Conclusion**

GNI asks that Kilkenny and Carlow County Councils consider the above comments and would welcome the opportunity to discuss this response in more detail.