

# Chapter 27.

## Community and social infrastructure

The Council has an important role to play in the creation of healthy and inclusive communities. Access to social and community infrastructure is essential to well-being, social inclusion and the creation of sustainable communities. Such infrastructure should be easily reached by walking, cycling and public transport.

Communities require opportunities to meet, interact and form bonds, all essential in creating a sense of place and belonging. Shared use and co-location of facilities should be encouraged, in order to use land more efficiently and increase community cohesion.

This County Development Plan is concerned with improving existing facilities and making adequate provisions for the development of new facilities.

### 27.1 Local policy documents

Several policy publications specific to Sligo provide guidance on social, community and cultural development. The most important is ***Sligo 2030: One Voice, One Vision***, which also serves as the Local Economic and Community Plan 2023.

Given the County's aging population, two other documents are of particular interest: *Sligo Healthy Ireland Strategy 2023-2025* and *Sligo Age Friendly Strategy 2023-2026*.

Further relevant provisions can be found in the following strategies:

- Sligo PEACE PLUS Action Plan 2023-2027
- Sligo Traveller Accommodation 2019-2024
- Sligo Arts Plan 2020-2025
- Sligo Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023-2027
- Sligo Digital Strategy 2020-2023
- Library Services Development Plan: Our Libraries, Our Futures 2019–2023

The above documents outline Sligo's commitment to meeting the identified local needs of all members of the community, through community regeneration, creating thriving and peaceful communities and building respect for all cultural identities.

The mainstreaming of the creative arts is intended to enable people to achieve their full creative potential, thereby promoting individual, community and national wellbeing.

The strengthening of the library service will improve its ability to advocate for equitable access to information. By embracing digital innovation, Sligo can realise its vision of becoming a 'Smart City'.

## 27.2 Delivering community facilities

Sligo County Council recognises the importance of community participation in the improvement of existing community facilities, and encourages increased involvement of local groups, independently and in association with the relevant statutory bodies, in the future development of the county.

The Council will ensure that local-level participation is facilitated and reinforced through stronger partnerships particularly with Sligo Public Participation Network (PPN), thereby enabling the development of an effective social infrastructure to cater more adequately for the needs of the current and future population.

The development of effective social and community infrastructure is supported through the zoning and strategic objectives included in the Town and Village Plans (Volumes 2 and 4 of this CDP).

Outside areas zoned specifically for community requirements, a flexible and supportive approach will be adopted towards proposals for community facilities on suitable sites within other zoning categories (e.g. residential, mixed uses, industry/enterprise etc). Any such proposal should be located within the development limits of the relevant settlement and should be easily accessible for all sections of the community.

The **future Local Area Plan for Sligo and Environs** (to be prepared after the adoption of this CDP) will identify further specific requirements that should be addressed at local or neighbourhood level in the County's main urban centre.

The Council adheres to the principle of *universal accessibility*, which is a key concept meaning that "all environments should be accessible by everyone, regardless of ability". Universal accessibility will benefit everyone, affording people with disabilities, older persons, parents with buggies etc. greater access to the built environment.

### Community facilities policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-CF-1** Assist as far as possible in the provision of universally accessible and well-connected social, community, cultural, and recreational facilities by reserving suitably-located land and through the use of the development management process to ensure provision is made for such facilities as the Council considers appropriate.
- P-CF-2** Require high standards in the design and finishes of community facilities in accordance with the recommended standards set out in *Building for everyone – a Universal Design Approach (NDA, 2012)*.
- P-CF-3** Optimise existing and proposed physical resources and infrastructure by supporting multi-functional building use and provision, such as the accommodation of small-scale community enterprise units within existing and proposed community facilities.
- P-CF-4** Encourage the siting of community facilities in suitable locations, especially within settlement centres and residential areas or close to existing facilities and public transport routes.

## Community facilities policies

**P-CF-5** Adopt a flexible approach towards the provision of community facilities within a variety of land-use zoning categories, in particular on lands zoned for mixed uses, residential development and business / industry / enterprise. Such proposals should be located within settlement development limits and should be easily accessible for all sections of the community.

It is acknowledged that some community facilities may be better accommodated in rural areas, outside settlement development limits, subject to site suitability and subject to compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive.

**P-CF-6** Support local communities and development agencies that apply for funding programmes designed to improve the stock of amenity and recreational facilities which are consistent with both the County Development Plan and the Local Economic and Community Plan.

### 27.3 Educational facilities

It is recognised that education is a critical driver of economic success and social progress. The provision of quality education and training is central to the skills, knowledge and innovation-based economy that will underpin future prosperity. Improved access to education and training opportunities is also crucial to helping achieve the objectives of a more sustainable and inclusive society.

#### Primary and post-primary schools

There are 66 primary schools, two special schools (St. Cecilia's at Cregg and St. Joseph's at Ballytivan) and 13 post-primary schools in County Sligo. In the past two decades, there has been a continuous improvement in the level of education amongst the population in County Sligo. In 1991, 36.1% of adults had primary education only. This percentage fell to 20.1% in 2006, 16.6% in 2011 and 11.1% in 2016.

#### Atlantic Technological University

The County used to have two third-level education providers: the Institute of Technology Sligo (IT Sligo) and St Angela's College. Both institutes now form part of the Atlantic Technological University (ATU), which has also incorporated Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology and Letterkenny Institute of Technology.

This consolidation of the third-level institutes has greatly enhanced the range of under-graduate and post-graduate degree programmes already available in the County. The proportion of Sligo's population with third-level education has grown from 13% in 1991 to 29% in 2006, 30% in 2011 and 32.7% in 2016. The most common qualifications are in the areas of social sciences, health and welfare, engineering, science and education.

## Planned educational facilities

The Department of Education and Skills is responsible for the delivery of educational facilities and services. The 2023 School Building Programme included two large-scale projects in County Sligo: Gaelscoil Chnoc Na Re and the Ursuline College.

The County Council's role in the delivery of educational facilities is to ensure that adequate serviced or serviceable land is available to meet current and future requirements, by reserving suitable sites in settlements through the development plan preparation process.

In addition to site reservation through the specific zoning of land for the provision of community facilities, education and related uses will also be favourably considered within other zoning categories, thereby ensuring sufficient flexibility to accommodate future needs.

### Educational facilities policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-ED-1** Support the provision of additional land for education-related uses through the consideration (on suitable sites) of such facilities in a variety of land-use zoning categories, in particular lands zoned for community facilities, mixed uses and residential development.
- P-ED-2** Direct new educational facilities to locate within existing settlements, preferably near community facilities (such as community centres, playing fields and libraries) and public transport services. Only in exceptional cases will out-of-town locations be considered and will be subject to compliance with habitats directive assessment.
- P-ED-3** Support Sligo's schools in the upgrading and modernisation of their building stock, so as to ensure that these institutions can accommodate population growth.
- P-ED-4** Ensure that appropriate infrastructure is provided concurrent with the development of an educational facility. Such infrastructure may include footpaths, pedestrian crossings, cycle lanes, parking facilities and facilities for those with special needs.

## 27.4 Arts and cultural facilities

Sligo County Council supports and promotes opportunities for everyone to participate in the cultural life of the county by facilitating the provision of well-managed, sustainable cultural infrastructure, suitable for all ages, and by adopting a flexible approach to the incorporation of cultural facilities in the development or refurbishment of community facilities.

### 27.4.1 Sligo Arts

Sligo County Council's Arts Plan, 2020-2025, entitled *Sustain Renew Collaborate*, redefines the Council's role as a leading agency and strategic partner in arts development. The local authority intends to invigorate the artistic and creative life of Sligo with additional resources including funding streams, connection, co-ordination and deepened relationships among artists and communities.

The Public Art Commission Plan 2022-2025 acts as the framework for Sligo County Council to continue to develop a public art programme, co-ordinated by the Public Art Project Manager (Sligo Arts Service) under the auspices of the Public Art Steering Group. Commissions are funded through the government-supported *Percent for Art* scheme.

### 27.4.2 Libraries, museum and archives

Sligo County Council currently operates a Central Library in Sligo Town, two community libraries in Ballymote and Tobercurry, one part-time branch library in Enniscrone, a mobile library, as well as a County Museum and County Archive service. These services play an important role in connecting and empowering communities.

**The County Museum** facilitates the preservation and exhibition of Sligo's rich archaeological and historic heritage.

**The Archives Service** conserves and catalogues the archives of with a view to making records available for future generations.

**The Library Service** in County Sligo delivers its core services as envisioned in the policy document *Strategy for Public Libraries 2023-2027*, published by the Department of Rural and Community Development

**The City Campus project** (funded under the URDF) will see the provision of a new Central Library and Headquarters alongside a purpose-built County Museum and Archive.

Public libraries in County Sligo are being upgraded as fully accessible, neutral spaces, with a view to facilitating communities to avail of arts, business and cultural activities and services.

The Council's Libraries Development Plan 2019-2023, entitled *Our Libraries, Our Futures*, charts the future direction of Sligo's library service through strategies which aim to meet the evolving needs of the County's communities.

The Library Service will explore the concept of 'Smart Libraries', including the roll-out of digital learning spaces and the delivery of a multi-functional library service using the latest technology, such as virtual reality.

## Arts and cultural facilities policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-AC-1** Encourage and assist in the development of the arts and to support the ongoing development of cultural infrastructure throughout the County.
- P-AC-2** Continue to enhance the public domain by encouraging the provision of public art, both temporary and permanent, across all art forms and artistic disciplines throughout County Sligo, supported by the *Percent for Art* funding scheme.
- P-AC-3** Support the improvement of library facilities and services, particularly in those communities which have undergone substantial increases in population or are designated for future development.
- P-AC-4** Support the delivery of the objectives and actions set out in the Sligo County Council's Library Services Development Plan: *Our Libraries Our Futures 2019–2023* (and subsequent revisions) in providing community-based educational, cultural and lifelong learning centres.
- P-AC-5** Facilitate the use of vacant or unused Council premises (i.e. land and buildings) for exhibitions, performances and other uses related to community arts, where appropriate.

## 27.5 Childcare facilities

The provision of childcare facilities is recognised as a key piece of social infrastructure required to enable people to access employment, education and social networks. Access to good quality childcare facilities is a high priority for many families in County Sligo.

During the consultation phase of the Local Economic and Community Plan, the need for more quality childcare at affordable prices was highlighted as a key issue that needs addressed. It was also indicated that childcare facilities are nearing capacity.

Sligo County Council will support the Sligo County Childcare Committee (SCCC) in the delivery of additional childcare places mainly by zoning lands for community facilities (which include childcare) in suitable locations within settlements.

The Council will also require the provision of childcare facilities as an integral part of new large-scale residential developments, as recommended in the 2001 *Childcare Facilities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities*. Generally, one childcare facility with places for 20 children should be provided for every 75 dwellings.

### Childcare facilities policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-CC-1** Work with the Sligo County Childcare Committee in the delivery of additional childcare places at suitable locations.
- P-CC-2** Encourage the establishment of appropriate childcare facilities in suitable locations, such as village centres, areas of concentrated employment, in the vicinity of schools, adjacent to public transport corridors and /or pedestrian areas, and in larger new housing estates.
- P-CC-3** Apply the recommendations of the *Childcare Facilities – Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (2001) when considering proposals for large-scale residential developments. In certain cases, the provision of multi-purpose community facilities may be acceptable.
- P-CC-4** Support proposals that provide an improved variety of childcare services (both in terms of childcare providers, i.e. private / community, childcare type, i.e. sessional services / full-day care) and related outdoor facilities.
- P-CC-5** Optimise existing physical resources/infrastructure within the County by supporting multi-functional building use and provision, to include childcare facilities.

## 27.6 Healthcare facilities

The Health Service Executive for the North-West is the primary body responsible for the delivery of health and personal social services to Sligo's population. Of equal significance is the role it plays in promoting health and wellbeing. Sligo University Hospital plays an important role in serving the catchment area of Sligo, Leitrim and south Donegal.

In line with the government policy of decentralisation of healthcare facilities, certain services are now being provided outside major hospitals. Residential services for the elderly, mental health services and learning disability services are now distributed throughout a number of settlements within County Sligo.

Emerging in recent years throughout the County, Primary Healthcare Centres will continue to be facilitated, to allow communities access to multidisciplinary healthcare in convenient locations.

The provision and expansion of healthcare facilities and their integration within new and existing communities will continue to be supported by the County Council.

### Healthcare facilities policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-HC-1** Encourage the integration of healthcare services and facilities with new and existing community facilities, where feasible.
- P-HC-2** Co-operate with the HSE, with statutory and voluntary agencies and with the private sector in the provision of healthcare services and facilities within existing settlements, on sites convenient to pedestrian access and public transport.
- P-HC-3** Support the provision of healthcare services and universally accessible facilities for people with all types of disabilities and special needs in accordance with the recommended standards set out in *Building for everyone – a Universal Design Approach (NDA, 2012)*.
- P-HC-4** Accommodate the provision of accessible care facilities throughout the County to cater for the specific needs of the elderly and those of young people.



## 27.7 Outdoor recreation

Outdoor recreational spaces and facilities are essential for the health and wellbeing of people living in County Sligo. The natural amenities available in Sligo, such as the Atlantic beaches, lakes, rivers, mountains, forests and trails, make the county an ideal location for outdoor sport and recreation, both active and passive. These natural amenities need to be augmented by parks, playing fields, playgrounds, green networks for walking and cycling, which should be easily accessible to all the county's communities, urban or rural.

Open spaces, both public and private, can fulfil a variety of functions in addition to recreation, such as providing visual amenity, protecting habitats and biodiversity, drainage management (particularly storm water control) etc.

Playing fields and other open spaces are an important resource for sport. They also make a significant contribution to passive recreation and possess amenity value. There is a need to safeguard such facilities from unacceptable development in order to continue to provide for the needs of both current users and future generations. The Council will therefore generally discourage development on, or the removal of existing playing fields, pitches and other recreational open spaces.

*Embracing Ireland's Outdoors* (Department of Rural and Community Development, 2022) is a collaborative cross-government strategy designed to bring a joined-up approach to the development of outdoor recreation infrastructure at national and county level. This will include the creation of county stakeholder forums and county outdoor recreation committees to ensure that local needs are identified and local voices are heard. Building on this ground-up approach, the government will provide funding for outdoor recreation amenities.

The Council will ensure that adequate land is zoned for the development of outdoor recreational and sporting facilities, which should be equally accessible to the youth, the older adults and those who are disadvantaged or marginalised.

### 27.7.1 Open space and parks

The provision of quality green space, for people of all age groups and levels of physical fitness, is paramount, particularly in the context of urban, higher-density development.

Open spaces and outdoor recreational facilities will be required to be an integral part of the design of new development. At the same time, the Council will adopt a more proactive approach with regard to the provision of larger open spaces, such as parks, for the benefit of the city, town and village communities. Special attention should be given to targeting recreational facilities to teenagers.

Sligo County Council will continue to develop its hierarchy of parks and open spaces incorporating a network of areas for passive and active recreation, as funding becomes available. The hierarchical approach seeks to achieve a balanced provision of parks of different sizes and functions distributed throughout the County, and particularly in Sligo Town and its Environs.

### 27.7.2 Children's play

The Council will support the provision of playgrounds in a variety of land-use zoning categories, from residential areas and community facilities to areas zoned for sports and recreation or green belts, where appropriate. The development of a primary and secondary network of playgrounds, based on size of catchment, will continue to be progressed as funding becomes available.

### 27.7.3 Sports

The National Sports Policy 2018–2027 (Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport) sets out a vision and 57 actions to transform the sporting landscape over the next decade. Action 13 of the Policy focuses on how the wider natural and built environment can facilitate participation in sport and physical activity such as running, cycling, outdoor adventure pursuits and recreational walking.

The National Sports Policy requires local authorities to prepare a Local Sports Plan. This plan will involve the development of sports facilities for all ages and abilities, and will be implemented in cooperation with Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership, clubs, communities, partner organisations and other stakeholders.

Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership (SSRP) was established in 2001 to increase levels of participation in sport and physical activity in County Sligo. One of the objectives of the SSRP is to support the development of more quality sports facilities, promoting multi-usage, a life-course perspective, accessibility and inclusion.

This Development Plan supports the partnership approach to the delivery of sports and recreational activities, in particular the objectives set out in Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership's Strategic Plan 2018-2023 and future plans.

Sligo County Council will facilitate the development of existing sports and outdoor recreation facilities and will support the provision of additional facilities at suitable locations.

### 27.7.4 Outdoor recreational amenities

Sligo's natural environment lends itself to a large variety of outdoor pursuits, including walking, hill-walking, mountaineering, rock-climbing, cycling, mountain biking, and all types of water sports including swimming, surfing, kite surfing, sailing, kayaking, rowing, and supping. These are all recognised as growing leisure activities that can largely be facilitated with a minimum of supporting infrastructure.

Sligo County Council will facilitate the provision of infrastructure to enable improved access to such activities. The Council supports the ongoing development of the National Mountain Bike Centre at Coolaney, the Beachery in Rosses Point and water sports facilities at key locations along the Wild Atlantic Way.

The National Surf Centre (NSC), which opened in Strandhill in 2023, is a state-of-the-art facility regarded as Ireland's premium surf and outdoor activity centre. The NSC caters for those providing advanced surfing training, up to international standards. The Centre includes an interpretative display of the history of surfing in Ireland and of the many local tourist attractions. It also functions as a central meeting and promotional point for local tourism businesses, including walking and adventure tours providers.

#### **Public rights of way**

Coastal zones, uplands, lake and river banks as well as forests are among the most attractive areas for outdoor pursuits. Access to such areas is essential for both local residents and tourists.

Public rights of way enable the enjoyment of landscape, natural and archaeological heritage, and provide links to valuable assets such as lakes, mountains, bogs and forests. A public right of way is a person's right of passage, established by usage or grant, along a road or path, even if the route is not in public ownership.

The Council recognises the importance of protecting existing public rights of way and will pursue the creation of additional ones, by agreement with landowners, to facilitate the development of walking trails in areas of high amenity value.

A public right of way will only be included in the Development Plan when the following criteria have been satisfied:

- There must be actual dedication by the landowner to the public use of the route in question or there must be sufficient evidence to show that such a dedication was intended;
- A public right of way must be open to the public and not just a class of persons or limited number of the public;
- A public right of way must start in and finish in a public area (i.e. it cannot terminate in private property);
- A public right of way cannot be obtained by stealth, by force or by licence i.e. it must be a route to which the public have a right of access as a right not by way of permission.
- The Council has identified six routes which are considered to fulfil the above criteria. These routes are listed in **Table 27.1** (below) and shown on a set of maps grouped in **Appendix H** of this Plan.

It is important to note that this is not an exhaustive list of public rights-of-way within the County. The omission of a right of way from this list shall not be taken as an indication that such a right of way is not a public right of way.

Over the life of this Plan, the Council will endeavour to add rights of way to this list, where it has been established that the above criteria have been satisfied and after consultation with the communities and landowners involved.

**Table 27.1 Public rights of way in County Sligo**

Reference no.	Location	Description
<b>PROW 1*</b>	Lissadell	From the centre of the Bunbrenoiqe Bridge for a distance of 263 m west to the point where the former Lissadell House was situated along the coast
<b>PROW 2</b>	Ballysadare	Quarry walk from the existing road to the foreshore and Abbey
<b>PROW 3</b>	Rosses Point	From the public car park to the second beach
<b>PROW 4</b>	Enniscrone	Walk north from the Pier along the seashore, exiting 870 m north onto L-66018
<b>PROW 5</b>	Trawane Bay	From the road L-7604-13 to the shoreline of Trawane Bay
<b>PROW 6</b>	Mullaghmore / Cliffony	From the R-297 to the beach at Trawalua

**\* Additional details on PROW 1**

In accordance with Supreme Court Rulings No. 89 and 92 of 2011:

— A right of way exists between point A (Easting 162505.674, Northing 344090.033) and point B (Easting 162261.274, Northing 344008.744)

— There is no right of parking off the route of PROW 1;

The right to pass and repass the nine-foot avenue does not extend to the lawns, gardens or any other land on either side of the right of way.

## Established walking routes

A number of long-distance walking routes exist throughout the county, e.g. Sligo Way, Miners' Way. These long-distance walks, together with local walks, represent important recreational resources. Their integrity should be protected. The impact of any proposed development on these routes should be taken into account when considering applications for permission for developments in their vicinity.

## Greenways

Greenways are routes shared by non-motorised users, such as walkers, cyclists, roller skaters, and sometimes horse riders. The greenways can be used for recreation, tourism and even daily commuter journeys. They are often created out of disused railways, canal towpaths, utility rights-of-way, or along river corridors. They predominantly utilise established paths but can also cross and link to public roads.

Greenways can become a framework for community-based initiatives and projects related to nature conservation, cultural heritage preservation, sustainable tourism and mobility. As they provide recreational opportunities for walking, jogging and cycling, these routes should meet satisfactory standards of width, gradient and surface condition to ensure that they are both user-friendly and low-risk for users of all abilities.

There are three major types of greenways: long-distance (connecting countries, regions and major settlements), local greenways and urban greenways.

The main purpose of **long-distance greenways** is sustainable tourism (typically cycle tourism). Please refer to **Chapter 29 Transport infrastructure** for details on the Council's objectives for long-distance greenways.

**Local greenways** are usually shorter paths developed in rural areas for recreation, heritage interpretation and week-end tourism.

**Urban greenways** are shared-use trails built along rivers, abandoned railways or natural corridors in urban areas. In addition to the recreational uses, they also provide safe mobility for daily trips.

As part of the preparation or review of settlement plans, the County Council will identify green corridors suitable for the creation of urban and local (rural greenways).

## "NeighbourWood Scheme"

The Council recognises the recreational potential of forestry and will support local communities seeking to establish a "NeighbourWood". The NeighbourWood Scheme, which is operated by the Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), supports the development of attractive close-to-home woodland amenities (or 'NeighbourWoods') for public use and enjoyment. The scheme is available to public and private landowners who work in partnership with local communities and focus on providing environmental education.

## Outdoor recreation facilities policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-OR-1** Protect and enhance public open spaces and established recreational green areas.
- P-OR-2** Support the provision of a variety of accessible, multifunctional, high-quality open spaces and facilities for active and passive recreation, which meet the needs of residents and visitors to County Sligo, are fit for purpose and are economically and environmentally sustainable.

### Parks and open spaces

- P-OR-3** Reserve land for new parks and other recreational green spaces as part of the preparation of settlement plans
- P-OR-4** Extend the range of recreational facilities provided within parks and other types of open spaces, as budgets allow.
- P-OR-5** Develop and improve physical linkages and connections between the network of parks and public open spaces in the County.
- P-OR-6** Where feasible, develop walkways and cycleways between green spaces or green corridors in built-up areas and recreational areas located outside settlements, including coastal, upland, lakeland and forestry sites and subject to compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive.

### Playgrounds

- P-OR-7** Support the provision of playgrounds in a variety of land-use zoning categories, from residential areas and community facilities to areas zoned for sports and recreation or green belts, where appropriate.

### Sports facilities

- P-OR-8** Support the objectives of the Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership's 'Building a Culture of Sport and Physical Activity in Sligo 2018-2023' and any successor strategic plans.
- P-OR-9** Support the implementation of the Local Sports Plan by reserving land at suitable locations and facilitating the extension/upgrading of existing premises and the construction of new ones
- P-OR-10** Preserve existing public or private recreation areas, including sports clubs, grounds, built leisure facilities and open space. If a change of use is sought, ensure that alternative recreational facilities are provided in a suitable location.
- P-OR-11** Facilitate shared use of sports and recreation facilities, particularly school facilities.

## Outdoor recreation facilities policies

**P-OR-12** Support local sports and community groups in the development of sports and recreational facilities through appropriate land use zoning and ensure that all new facilities are appropriately located where they can best meet the needs of all sections of the community that they are intended to serve.

**P-OR-13** Encourage the provision of sports and recreation infrastructure as an integral part of new residential schemes.

### Access to outdoor recreational amenities

**P-OR-14** Continue to maintain and enhance existing walkways and expand the walking network subject to availability of resources, collaboration with stakeholders and subject to compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive

**P-OR-15** Preserve and improve access for the public to lakes, beaches, coastal, riverside, upland and other areas that have traditionally been used for outdoor recreation and subject to compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive. Where feasible, apply or support the application of universal design principles, as recommended in *Building for everyone – a Universal Design Approach (NDA, 2012)*.

**P-OR-16** Support the sustainable development of water-based leisure, tourism and related activities in County Sligo, subject to compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive.

**P-OR-17** Actively promote and protect public access to the coast and uplands, and designate traditional walking routes thereto as public rights-of-way.

**P-OR-18** Protect existing known rights of way and seek the establishment of additional rights of way, by agreement with landowners, to extend existing walking trails or create new ones and subject to compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive.

**P-OR-19** Provide adequate signposting and waymarking on rights of way.

### Greenways

**P-OR-20** Protect existing local greenways and consider designating them as public rights of way.

**P-OR-21** As part of the preparation or review of settlement plans, identify corridors suitable for the creation of urban greenways and seek to connect and integrate them with local and long-distance greenways in the adjoining rural areas.

**P-OR-22** Seek to protect the integrity of established long-distance walking routes. When assessing applications for developments in the vicinity of

## Outdoor recreation facilities policies

established walking routes, the Planning Authority shall consider the proposed developments' potential impact on such routes.

### Recreational woodlands

- P-OR-23** Protect access to forestry and woodlands – in co-operation with Coillte and private owners or operators – for walking routes (including long distance and looped walks), mountain trails, nature trails etc. for the benefit of local people and tourists.
- P-OR-24** Support local communities that wish to apply for grants under the Forest Service's *NeighbourWood Scheme* (DAFM) or any other initiative aiming to establish or enhance woodlands for recreation.

## 27.8 Allotments

An allotment is defined as an area of land comprising not more than 1,000 square metres that is let for cultivation by someone who is a member of the local community and lives close to the allotment. The purpose of allotments is the production of vegetables or fruit for consumption by the cultivators and their families.

Sligo County Council recognises the public's interest in growing fruit and vegetables locally. Cultivating food on allotments offers economic and health benefits, and can contribute to a decrease in the consumption of energy involved in the production and transportation of food.

The Planning Authority will therefore facilitate the development of allotments at suitable locations throughout the County. Such locations should be consistent with the terms of the definition above and should be located within or close to existing settlements, where they will be easily accessible to all sections of the local community.

## Allotments policy

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-A-1** Facilitate the development of allotments at suitable locations throughout the County. Any such facility should be located within or close to an existing settlement and should be easily accessible.

## 27.9 Burial grounds and cremation facilities

Sligo County Council is responsible for the acquisition of land for the provision of burial grounds, for undertaking any necessary works on these lands and for delineating burial plots. The Council monitors the operation of burial grounds and reviews requirements in this regard on an ongoing basis. The Council's Burial Grounds Policy highlights the fact that 48 of the 76 burial grounds in the county are designated National Monuments and, as such, require appropriate consultation and consents prior to carrying out any works on site.

The use of crematoria has increased significantly in recent years in Ireland. In 2022, planning permission was granted for a cremation facility located in the business and enterprise zone in Collooney, in a converted warehousing unit. In recognition of the increasing cultural diversity of the County's population and of the changing trends in end-of-life services, the Council will support the development of crematoria in the county, subject to normal planning considerations.

### Burial grounds and cremation facilities policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-BGC-1** Provide or assist in the provision of new burial grounds and, where feasible, extensions to existing burial grounds, by reserving sufficient land in suitable locations.
- P-BGC-2** Encourage the development of burial grounds to take account of cremation and 'green lawn' principles, to promote more efficient use of land and to facilitate maintenance.
- P-BGC-3** Ensure that appropriate archaeological assessment is carried out in relation to any proposals to extend or for works to burial grounds which are designated National Monuments, in accordance with the requirements of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 2004.
- P-BGC-4** Consider the provision of crematoria and associated facilities, including a chapel/funeral service building, at suitable locations in the county, subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria and with the development management standards contained in **Chapter 33** (Development Management Standards), **Section 33.7.7 Crematoria**.