

**NOTICE OF DRAFT MINISTERIAL DIRECTION IN THE MATTER OF SECTION 31
OF THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACT 2000 (AS AMENDED)
WESTMEATH COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021-2027**

Notice is hereby given pursuant to Section 31 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), that on 29 April 2021, the Minister of State at the Department of the Housing, Local Government and Heritage, consequent to a recommendation made to him by the Office of the Planning Regulator under section 31AM(8) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), has delivered notice of the Minister's intent to issue a Direction to Westmeath County Council (being the Planning Authority for County Westmeath).

The Draft Ministerial Direction relates to the Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027.

The Reasons Stated for the Draft Direction are:

- I. The Development Plan as made is inconsistent with Ministerial Guidelines issued under Section 28 of the Act, specifically items 2 and 3 of the Specific Planning Policy Requirement contained in the Interim Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Statutory Plans, Renewable Energy and Climate Change (July 2017), noting the requirement for the Planning Authority to comply with the aforementioned Specific Planning Policy Requirement under section 28(1C). In particular, the Development Plan fails to identify the wind energy production (in megawatts) which County Westmeath can contribute in delivering its share of overall Government targets on renewable energy and climate change mitigation over the plan period.
- II. Policy objective CPO 10.143 renders it impossible to progress a wind energy project with a wind turbine tip height of over 100 metres or over 150 metres in the vast majority of the county which would significantly limit or constrain renewable energy projects to the extent that is inconsistent with the requirement to demonstrate the contribution of County Westmeath to realising overall national targets on renewable energy and climate change mitigation.
- III. The Development Plan contains conflicting objectives on wind energy development such that the Policy objectives supporting wind and renewable energy development in chapters 10 and 11 of the adopted Development Plan cannot be achieved having regard to the separation distances required by wind energy policy objective CPO 10.143.
- IV. The Development Plan has therefore not been made in a manner consistent with the recommendations of the Office of the Planning Regulator under Section 31 AM and that the Development Plan as made fails to set out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Public Display:

A copy of the Draft Direction may be inspected from **11 May 2021 to 24 May 2021** (inclusive) at <https://consult.westmeathcoco.ie> and during normal office hours (in line with Covid-19 arrangements), at the offices of Westmeath County Council, Áras an Chontae, Mount Street, Mullingar.

Submissions or Observations in Respect of the Draft Direction:

Written submissions or observations, in respect of the Draft Direction, may be made (one medium only) to the Council between 11 May 2021 and 24 May 2021 (5.00pm) as follows:

Online via the Council's Public Consultation Portal: <https://consult.westmeathcoco.ie/en/browse>

or

In writing to: Administrative Officer, Central Planning, Westmeath County Council, Áras an Chontae, Mullingar.

All submissions or observations made in respect of the Draft Direction, during this period, shall be taken into consideration by the Office of the Planning Regulator before it makes a recommendation to the Minister on the matter.

Please note that observations or submissions will be made public on the Council's website and at the offices of Westmeath County Council and will also form part of the statutory Chief Executive's Report subsequently published on Westmeath County Council's website. The details including the names of those making submissions may be shared with relevant Council and Government Departments or their agents involved in the process and may form part of reports linked to the making of any Direction.

The personal information (data) collected during the consultation process (which may include the collection of sensitive personal data) is collected for the purpose of receiving and dealing with submissions and any data collected is subject to Westmeath County Council's privacy statement which can be found at <http://www.westmeathcoco.ie/en/ourservices/yourcouncil/privacy/privacynotice/>

Deadline for Submissions: 5.00pm 24 May 2021.

Dated this 11 Day of May 2021