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meath county council

MEATH COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN
2027-2033

PRE-DRAFT STRATEGIC ISSUES PAPER

Submission Deadline:
Tuesday, November 18th at 4.00 PM



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→ INTRODUCTION



Meath County Council is now commencing the review of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 (as varied). This process begins on September 22, 2025, with the publication of this Pre-Draft Strategic Issues Paper and will take two years to complete.

The new Meath County Development Plan 2027-2033 will set out a vision for the future planning and sustainable development of the county by providing a strategic framework for growth, setting out key policies and objectives for a new integrated land-use strategy, and for the proper planning and sustainable development of the whole county.

As part of this process Meath County Council is inviting all stakeholders and interested parties, including residents, retailers, institutions and businesses, as well as community and sporting groups to participate in the process.

Details of how to get involved and how to make submissions are located at the end of this document.

The purpose of this Issues Paper is to present a broad overview of the main issues for consideration in the Development Plan review process and to give interested parties an opportunity to engage in the review process.

The Paper outlines a series of questions aimed at stimulating discussion on the key themes, which will form part of the development plan chapters.

6

The Plan is for a 6 year period

22nd

Process begins on September 22, 2025

→ THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Importance of the County Development Plan

The preparation of a County Development Plan is one of the most important functions of a Planning Authority. The review of the Meath County Development Plan 2021–2027 will take two years to complete and that process begins with the publication of this Pre-Draft Strategic Issues Paper. The new Meath County Development Plan will set out a vision for the future planning and sustainable development of County Meath up to 2033.

This review has come at a time of significant challenges and opportunities for Meath. Such challenges and opportunities include the unprecedented rate of population growth, economic opportunities, the delivery of climate change and adaptation measures, sustainable mobility, the protection and enhancement of amenity and heritage and the delivery of necessary infrastructure to support future population growth.

It is essential that the County Development Plan responds to these challenges and opportunities by identifying a strategy to support the delivery of these themes.

Environmental Reports

In preparing the Plan, the environmental impact of change as a result of new development must be considered at each step in an iterative process. This will ensure that the implementation of the Plan will not result in a negative or adverse impact on the environment.

There are three formal environmental processes, which form part of the County Plan preparation :

- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)
- Appropriate Assessment (AA)
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)



→ THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

What Guides a County Development Plan?

It is a statutory requirement of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) that every Planning Authority prepare a Development Plan for its functional area. The policies and objectives of this Development Plan must align with national and regional planning policy.



National Planning Framework

At the top of the planning hierarchy is the **National Planning Framework (NPF)**. The NPF is the Government's high-level strategic plan for the future growth of the country. It sets out 10 key National Strategic Outcomes and in-turn influences growth and change within the regions.



Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES)

The NPF is implemented at a regional level through the Regional Spatial & Economic Strategies (RSES) and at county level through the development plan. The aim of the **Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES)** is to strengthen the settlement structure of a region and to translate the objectives of the NPF into actionable regional policies.



The Development Plan must also have regard to guidelines issued by the Government, known as Section 28 Guidelines. Examples include: NPF Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements, Guidelines for Design Standards for Apartments and The Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines, etc.

How long will it take to prepare the new Meath County Development Plan?

The review of the current Meath CDP 2021-2027 begins on the 22nd of September 2025, and the process to prepare a new Development Plan for the period 2027-2033 will take 2 years. An indicative timeline for the preparation of the review of the Development Plan is shown on the next page.



Stage 1

Pre-Draft

September 2025
to August 2026

- ✓ Public Consultation (Strategic Issues Paper)
- ✓ Chief Executive's Report on Consultation
- ✓ Direction from Elected Members
- ✓ Preparation of Draft Development Plan



Stage 2

Draft Development Plan

September 2026
to May 2027

- ✓ Public Consultation of Draft Plan
- ✓ Chief Executive's Report on Submissions
- ✓ Consideration of Chief Executive's Report by Elected Members
- ✓ Material Amendments being prepared



Stage 3

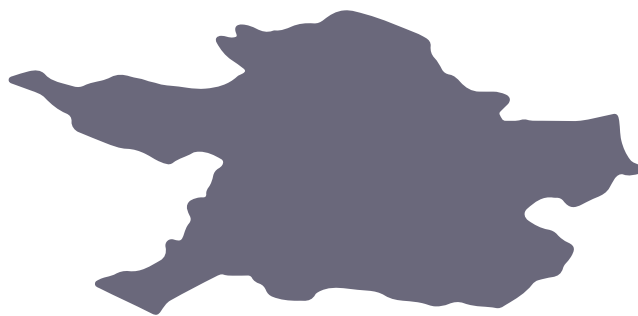
Amendments to Draft

May 2027 to
October 2027

- ✓ Public Consultation (Amendments)
- ✓ Chief Executive's Report on Submissions
- ✓ Consideration of Chief Executive's Report by Elected Members
- ✓ Adoption of New Development Plan

→ MEATH AT A GLANCE

The administrative area of Meath covers an area of over 230,000 hectares and is the second largest county in Leinster. The latest census data for the country was carried out in 2022. The graphics below highlight some information from that census which provides a profile for the county.



Census Population 2022:
220,826



50,232 23% Aged 0-14
140,535 64% Aged 15-64
27,059 13% Aged 65+



Average Age of
Population in Meath
= **36.9 years**
Average Household Size
= **3.05 People**



Housing Stock



2016: 70,649

2022: 78,759

Urban & Rural Split



Urban: 59%

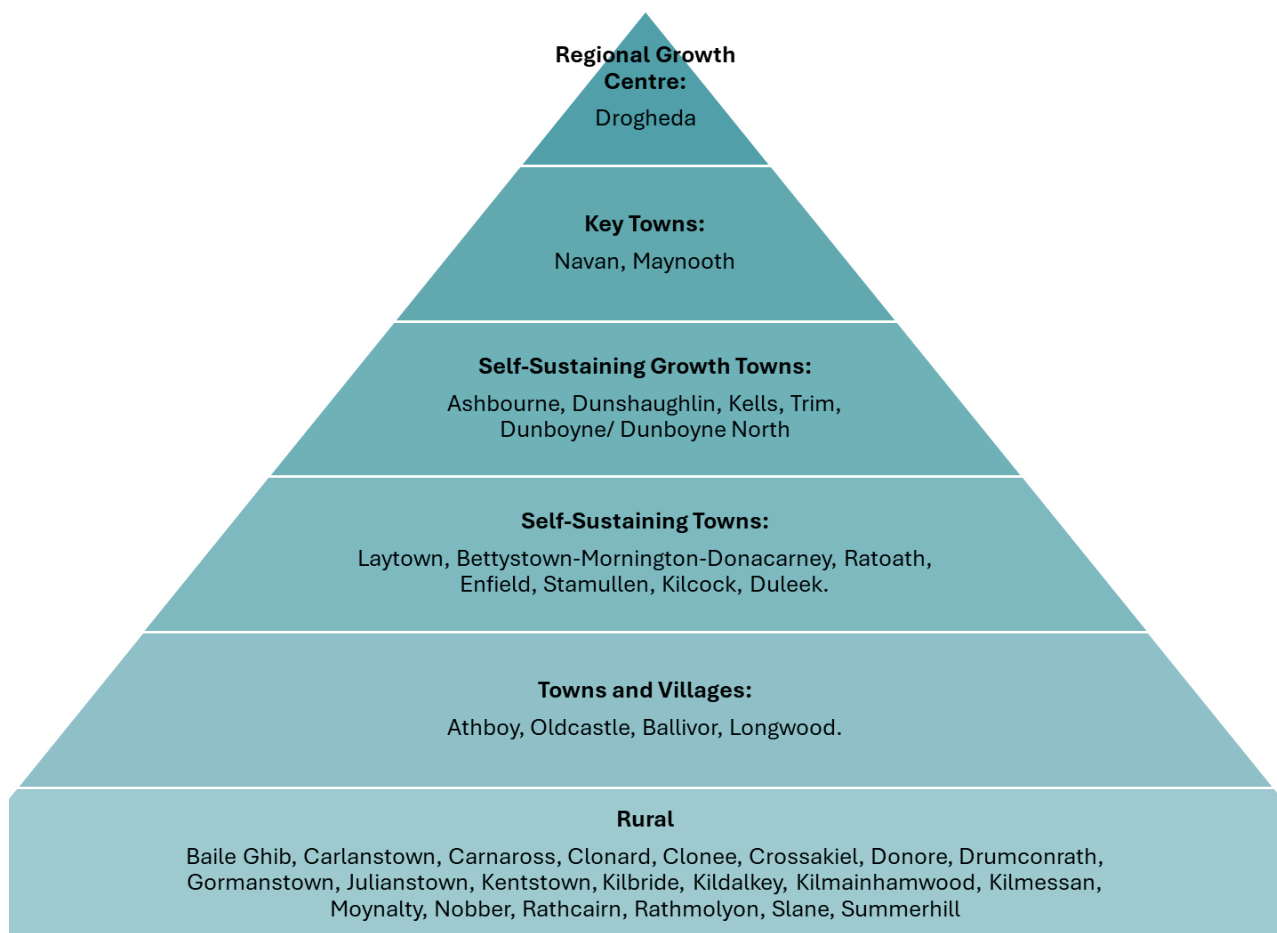
Rural: 41%

→ WHAT IS A CORE STRATEGY

The purpose of the Core Strategy is to set out an evidence-based strategy for the future spatial development of the Plan area and in so doing, to demonstrate that the development plan and its objectives are consistent with national and regional development objectives set out in the National Planning Framework (NPF) and Regional Spatial Economic Strategy (RSES)

The Core Strategy includes details of the settlement hierarchy and where future growth is to be distributed in the County together with details of population and household projections and the quantum of lands to be zoned for residential and mixed-use.

Settlement Hierarchy of County Meath



→ SETTLEMENT & HOUSING

The settlement structure in Meath consists of different categories of settlements ranging from small rural villages to large urban towns. The population of Meath has increased by 13.2% from the 2016 to 2022 census showing the constant and growing need for housing. The Plan must recognise the importance of creating a robust network of settlements with a wide range of services, amenities and job opportunities to contribute to a balanced and healthy quality of life for our communities. The quantum of housing that is required for the county over the plan period is determined by the National Planning Framework's Housing Growth Targets. The Core Strategy will guide where the future growth should occur within the county in line with the National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

Key Questions



Where do you think new housing should be located without contributing to urban sprawl and ensuring consolidated sustainable growth?



What issues relating to housing do you think should be addressed?



What is needed to make your town or village a more desirable place in which to live?



What types of homes are required to meet future demand? How should the new Plan ensure housing choice for all residents?



How should we ensure the protection of the countryside and the regeneration of our towns and villages while providing for sustainable rural housing?

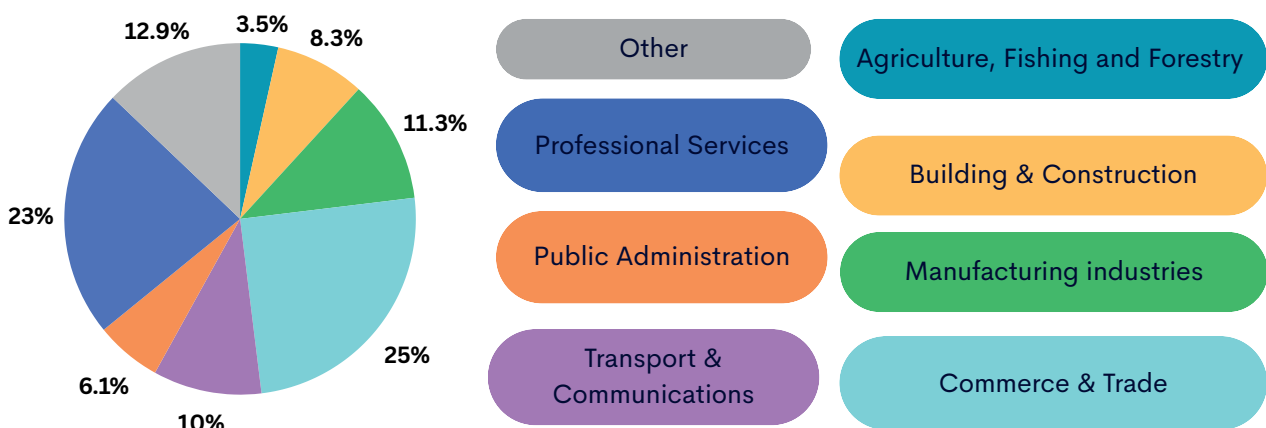


→ EMPLOYMENT & ECONOMY

Meath possesses significant economic potential to prosper as a successful, diverse and vibrant social, civic, commercial and residential centre that is recognised locally, nationally and internationally as a highly attractive and distinctive location in which to live and conduct business. The county has an unparalleled and unique competitive advantage within Ireland, due to its strategic location, its infrastructure and amenities and its highly skilled workforce.

Meath's proximity to Dublin, international airports and ports provides easy access to a large pool of skilled workers, suppliers and customers. This makes it an attractive location for businesses looking to expand their operations in Ireland or to establish a presence in Europe.

Sectors of Employment



Key Questions



What do you think are Meath's key economic strengths or opportunities?



Are there new ways of working that should be facilitated in the Plan e.g. co-working hubs, working from home, live-work units?



How do you think Meath should be promoted to attract inward investment in employment and enterprise?



How do we protect traditional on-street retailing with the increase of online shopping?



What policies should be introduced to further support town centre retail and commercial activities?



What are the main infrastructural constraints to economic development in Meath?

→ TRANSPORT & MOVEMENT





It is vital to have an efficient strategic transport system for the future economic, social and physical development of the county. The Development Plan must promote and facilitate movement to, from, and within the County, by integrating land use with a high-quality, sustainable transport system that prioritises walking, cycling and public transport.

Meath County Council recognises that public transport and the offering of alternatives to the private car are crucial in supporting Meath's ambitious sustainable transport and active travel objectives. Priority infrastructure investments include transformational projects such as the Navan Rail Link, DART + Coastal North and Dart + West. The priority focus for the next Development Plan will be to reduce the negative impacts of car use in tandem with appropriate land use policies, which will promote and facilitate effective travel options.

Journey time to Work, School or College

>15 mins : 39,900 or 27.7%
¼ hour - > ½ hour : 35,172 or 24.4%
½ hour - > ¾ hour : 24,840 or 17.2%
¾ hour - > 1 hour : 12,089 or 8.4%
1 hour - > 1 ½ hours : 15,750 or 10.9%
1 ½ hours and over : 5,361 or 3.7%
Not stated : 11,013 or 7.6%

Means of Travel to Work & Education

	12% (19,585)
	1.2% (2,013)
	10% (17,087)
	39% (62,869)

Key Questions



What are the key transport and movement issues affecting residents, workers and visitors?



How can rural transport and accessibility be improved?



How can the Plan best promote walking, cycling, and the use of public transport, and what improvements can be made?



What are the top priorities in meeting the mobility needs of all citizens in a fair and inclusive way?



How should we manage private car access and parking in our towns while at the same time making our towns vibrant places?



Do we need more Electric Vehicle (EV) charge points in our towns/ villages? if so, where?



What would encourage you to use walking and cycling as a means of transport?



Where are the most suitable locations for Park and Ride or Park and Stride facilities?

→ INFRASTRUCTURE & UTILITIES

The County Development Plan must put in place a framework that promotes and provides high-quality physical infrastructure to allow development to progress in a sustainable manner. The availability of infrastructure such as **water, wastewater, surface water drainage, energy, and telecommunication networks** will play a key role in securing economic investment. A key challenge of the county is the ability to address and keep up with the infrastructural demands of the growing county .

Whilst responsibility for the delivery of many of the services is outside the remit of Meath County Council, the County Development Plan will nonetheless provide a policy framework for the delivery of infrastructure services throughout County Meath.



Uisce Éireann starts construction on a €20 million upgrade to Trim Water Treatment Plant.



Ballymacarney Solar Farm is Ireland's largest solar farm with a capacity of 200 MW, and provides renewable energy to over 40,000 homes.

Key Questions



What physical infrastructure is needed to support people living, working, and visiting Meath?



What more can be done to improve broadband services?



Are there any issues in relation to water or wastewater facilities in your area?



How can we encourage greater use of renewable energy sources?



What nature-based solutions are there for surface water management and how can these be integrated into the Plan?



Where should renewable energy developments be located given the national targets for this sector?



Are there adequate public recycling facilities and services in Meath, and if not where should they be located?

→ COMMUNITY SERVICES

The creation of healthy, socially inclusive communities will be a cross-cutting theme of the Development Plan. Community facilities include the provision of libraries, schools, childcare facilities, open space, playing grounds, leisure facilities and health centres.

A Development Plan is required to include objectives for the provision of services to the community. The development of these facilities is of high importance to ensure that the communities in the county continue to thrive and that housing is supported by the provision of appropriate community facilities.

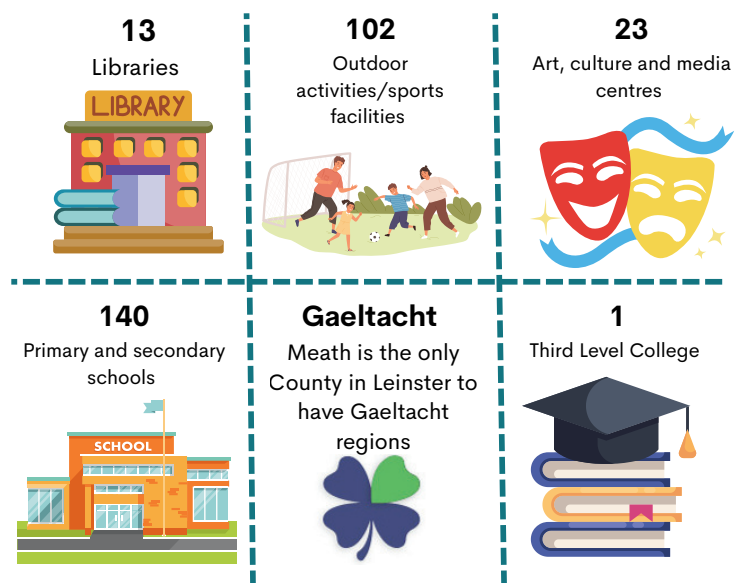
Meath in Numbers

Population

2nd fastest growing population in the Country

Age Profile

Meath has the highest proportion of the population aged 14 years (39%) or younger in the County (32.3%). The number of people **aged 65 and over** continues to grow increasing by 30% from 2016 census to 2022 census.



Key Questions



How should the Plan ensure the provision of social and community infrastructure (Schools, creches, community & sports centres) in Meath?



What measures can be taken to encourage greater delivery of community facilities?



Which public open spaces do you like and why? What types of new public spaces should be provided?



Is there anything that can be done to incentivise the delivery of community facilities in the Development Plan?



What improvements to the provision of sports, play facilities, parks and open spaces should be included in the Development Plan?



Should there be increased emphasis on universal design and improved accessibility?



What outdoor facilities for adults (including older citizens) should be planned for in the Development Plan?

→ RURAL DEVELOPMENT

County Meath is a predominantly rural county in terms of land use, with a large rural population. The rural landscape which includes scenic river valleys and rolling farmland provides a tranquil setting. Rural areas within Meath are home to a diverse range of uses ranging from agriculture and equine industries, centres of local food production, recreational and tourist activities, established villages and one-off rural housing. Ensuring the continued vitality and viability of the rural area is a challenge for the county, particularly in terms of how best to manage competing social, economic and environmental considerations.

Agriculture, agri-tourism and other forms of agricultural diversification are some of the most important contributors to the rural economy of County Meath.

Meath County Council recognises the long tradition of people living in rural areas and promotes sustainable rural settlements as a key component of delivering balanced regional development.

Forests and woodlands play an important role in terms of supporting rural employment and rural diversity, climate change management and carbon sequestration, biodiversity and as a source of renewable/alternative energy sources.

Meath is one of the country's most important centres for the bloodstock industry. Fairyhouse Racecourse, Navan Racecourse and Tattersalls Bloodstock Auctioneers are highly prominent enterprises in the area.

Key Questions



What type of development and services are required in rural areas in order to support existing rural communities?



What type of economic development is appropriate for rural areas?



Are there sufficient policies in place to protect the countryside?



Is there a need for changes to rural housing policy for the new development plan?



How can the Plan support sustainable agriculture, the equine industry and rural based industry?



How can we improve the design of rural dwellings and buildings in County Meath



What measures should be put in place to protect the amenities of the rural landscape while providing sustainable rural housing?

→ CULTURAL & NATURAL HERITAGE

Meath has an exceptionally rich heritage resource with a number of nationally and internationally renowned sites. Including one of the world's most significant complexes of Neolithic passage tombs at Brú na Bóinne, as well as the ancient capital and seat of the High Kings of Ireland at Tara; the passage tombs of Loughcrew; the largest Anglo-Norman castle in Ireland at Trim; the historic towns and streetscapes of Navan, Trim and Kells; a significant industrial heritage of canals and mills and a diverse natural heritage of scenic river valleys, rolling farmland, a network of mature hedgerows and coastal habitats.

Meath's heritage is a key strategic asset and a valuable economic resource, for which the Development Plan shall seek to protect, restore and enhance the natural environment and biodiversity whilst satisfying economic and social need.



Key Questions



How can the new County Plan protect and enhance Meath's existing natural, built and cultural heritage?



How can we prevent the loss of thatched and vernacular structures?



Are there views, trees or locally important biodiversity sites that should be afforded protection as part of the County Development Plan?



How can the Development Plan facilitate and conserve the use of the Irish language in County Meath?



Are there any buildings or structures of special interest in your area or anywhere in Meath that should be added to the Record of Protected Structures (RPS)?



How can the protection and conservation of biodiversity be integrated into the planning, designing and delivery of public projects and private developments?

→ CLIMATE CHANGE

One of the cross-cutting principles of this Development Plan must be to initiate a transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society. The Meath Climate Action Plan 2024 –2029 will inform the policies and objectives throughout the Development Plan process with increased emphasis on sustainable development and travel patterns, energy use and the protection of green infrastructure.

Targets of the Meath County Council Climate Action Plan



Energy Efficiency

50% improvement in energy efficiency by 2030



Resilience

Making Meath a climate resilient county by reducing the impacts of future climate change-related events



GHG Reduction

51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030



Awareness

Actively engaging and informing citizens, communities and businesses on climate change



Net Zero by 2050

Key Questions



How can the Plan best address the challenges of climate change?



How can the Plan address flood risk and build resilience to better cope with the increasing frequency of extreme weather events?



How can we work with Community Groups to address Climate Change?



How do you suggest the transition to a low carbon economy be best achieved?

→ HOW TO MAKE A SUBMISSION

Get Involved

Given that the new County Development Plan will set out the policy position for the development of the county, it should reflect the needs and ambitions of all communities and residents of County Meath. It is important that you have your say on the key issues which will shape the county, including topics such as housing, economic development, infrastructure provision, environmental protection and climate change.

This Issues Paper represents the first step in preparing the new County Development Plan. The paper presents a broad overview of the main issues of consideration and poses a number of questions. The Issues Paper is intended to provoke thought and encourage discussion and involvement from the general public as we plan for the future development of the county. Your input from this early stage onwards is an important part of the plan preparation process.

Get involved, attend a public consultation evening, make a submission and keep up to date on the plan process at www.meath.ie

It is proposed to hold public consultation events and further details of venues, dates and times will be published at www.meath.ie in due course.

Meath County Council hereby invites any interested persons or parties to make a submission or observation on the preparation of the new Meath County Development Plan 2027-2033.

In respect of the making of submissions/ observations, please note the following:

The Planning Authority **cannot** consider submissions/observations relating to the zoning and/or re-zoning of any lands at this Pre-Draft stage of the County Development Plan review process. These more detailed matters will be considered during the Draft Plan stage of the process.



Make a submission online at:
<https://consult.meath.ie/>



Make a submission in writing marked "**Pre-Draft Strategic Issues Paper**" to:
Senior Executive Officer, Planning Department,
Meath County Council, Buvinda House, Navan
Co. Meath C15 Y291

DEADLINE

**Deadline for the receipt of submissions/observations is
Tuesday, November 18th, 2025 at 4.00 pm**

*Please note late, emailed or faxed submissions cannot be
considered and will be returned*

Do chontae, do todhchaí!

This is your opportunity to get involved in shaping
the future of your County!

Share your vision | Your County | Your Future



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