Mayo Local Authority Climate Action Plan (LACAP) – Pre-Draft Consultation Report

September 2023

Introduction

As required by the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, Mayo County Council is preparing their first Local Authority Climate Action Plan (LA-CAP) which must be adopted by the Elected Members before 23rd February 2024.

Local authorities are key drivers in advancing climate policy at the local level and our LA-CAP aims to strengthen the alignment between national climate policy and local circumstances with the prioritisation and acceleration of evidence-based measures, to assist in the delivery of the climate neutrality objective for Mayo.

Mayo County Council will use its LA-CAP in planning how it will reduce greenhouse gas emissions from across its own assets and infrastructure, whilst also taking on a broader role to influence, facilitate and co-ordinate the climate actions of communities and other stakeholders and what it will do to advocate for climate action in Mayo.

While the Climate Action Plan will be ambitious to reflect the leadership role of Mayo County Council on climate action, the Plan will not include actions whereby their implementation and achievement fall outside our role, remit, and governance.

One of the five guiding principles for developing the LACAP is to ensure the process is Participative, that it "Involves a range of stakeholders to contribute to both the development of the climate action plan and the practical delivery of actions. Inclusive, coordinated, and collaborative climate action stems from cooperation of a diverse range of stakeholders from the earliest stage possible."

Mayo County Council recognises the importance of public and stakeholder engagement in the development of the Climate Action Plan and has undertaken substantial pre-draft engagement to inform the Strategic Priorities and Actions in the plan.

Summary of Pre-Draft Consultation

Mayo County Council invited pre-draft input from all sectors of society to co-create our LA-CAP, to help to shape appropriate actions that will facilitate and enable effective climate action at a local and community level. Engagement included:

- Information sessions were held in libraries in each of the municipal districts – Ballina, Castlebar, Swinford and Westport.

- Sectoral workshops

- Workshops with Mayo County Council Leadership team

- Workshops with elected members through SPCs, sub-committees and full council.

- Agriculture report commissioned.

- 8 stakeholder pre-draft submissions from organisations such as ATU, Clean Coasts, Science Foundation Ireland, Heritage Council, LAWPro, MSLETB, INHFA

- Enterprise survey – for which we received which we received 43 responses from businesses across the county.

- Pre- Draft Public Survey – for which we received 517 submissions from the Mayo public.

- Promotion of the LACAP pre-draft engagement was undertaken on print, radio, social media, WhatsApp and through Mayo County Councils wide range of networks including the PPN and enterprise unit.

Key Findings from the Pre-draft Public Engagement

Key Findings from the Pre-draft Public Engagement include;

- 92% of respondents are worried about climate change.

- Conditions for future generations is the greatest worry. Other common worries include extreme weather events and loss of nature.

- 99% of public respondents and 74% of enterprise respondents are currently trying to reduce GHG emissions through various actions. However, cost and lack of sustainable options were highlighted as the main barriers to making further reductions.

- 90% of respondents believe their community would benefit from climate action training/advice. 73% of businesses believe they would benefit from training.

- From the public survey improved sustainable travel options e.g., Walk/cycle paths, enhanced public transport were the most commonly identified benefit of climate action, followed closely by increased nature and biodiversity. Other main benefits identified include health benefits and energy independence and security.

- Enterprise identified Energy independence and security and Community cohesions/ Reinvigorated town centres as the main benefits they hope to see from climate action by 2030.
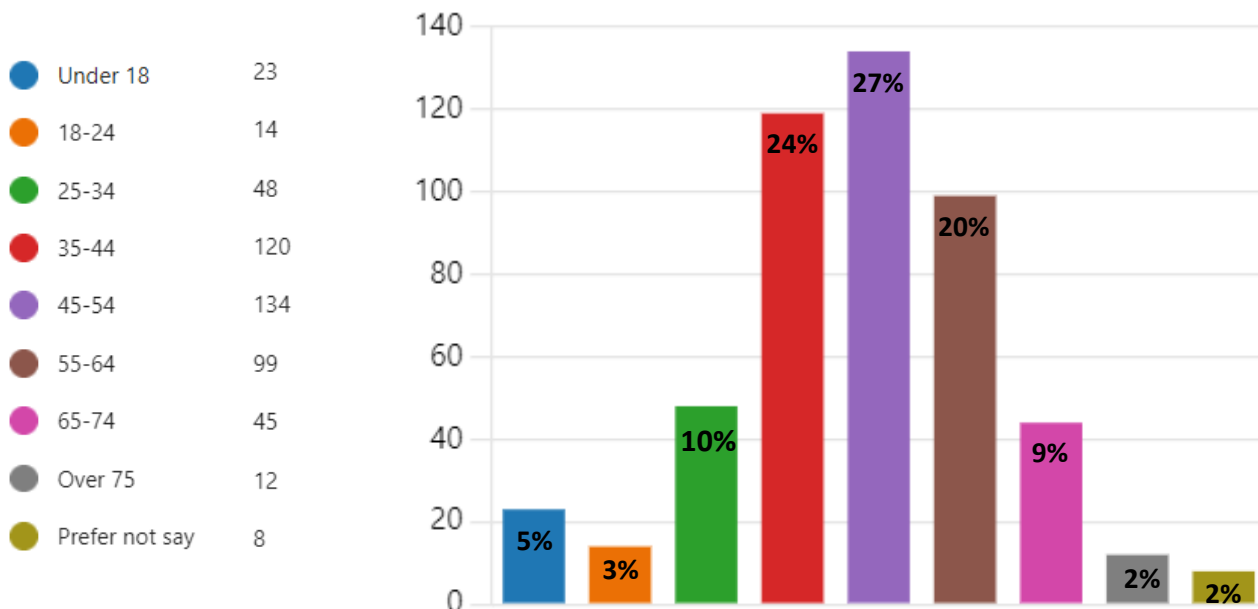
Results of Public Pre-Draft Consultation Survey

Location of survey respondents
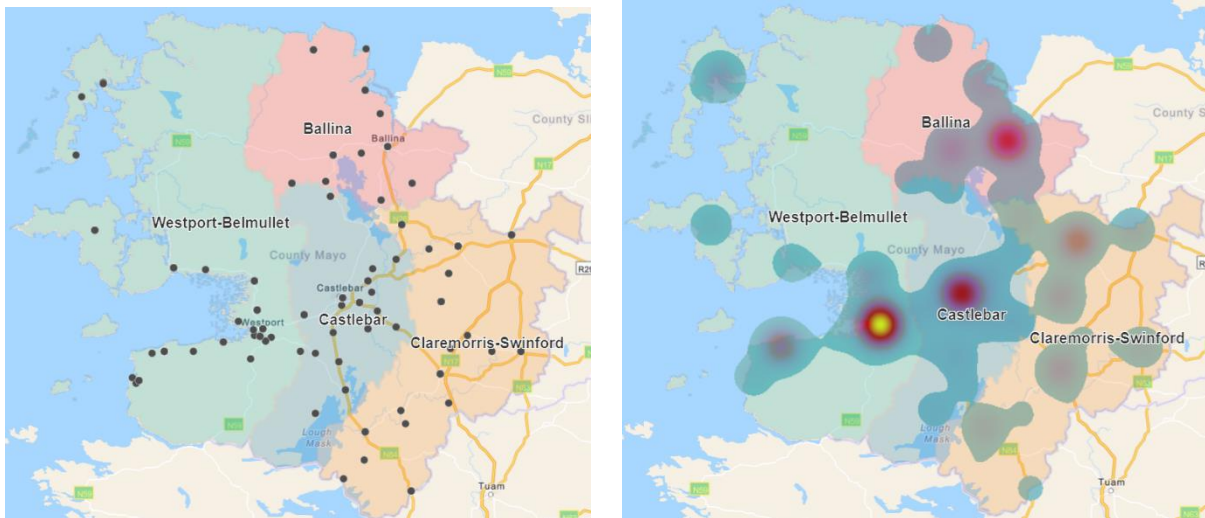
Total respondents: 517

Age Profile of Respondents

The main respondents of the survey fell in the 45-54, 35-44 & 55-64 age groups. As consultation period took place during the summer months, it was difficult to get more input from those under 18. Hard copies of the survey were made available in all libraries in the county, to make it more accessible to those who may not have access/ability to fill the survey out online.

Age Group	Count
Under 18	23
18-24	14
25-34	48
35-44	120
45-54	134
55-64	99
65-74	45
Over 75	12
Prefer not say	8

AT HOME

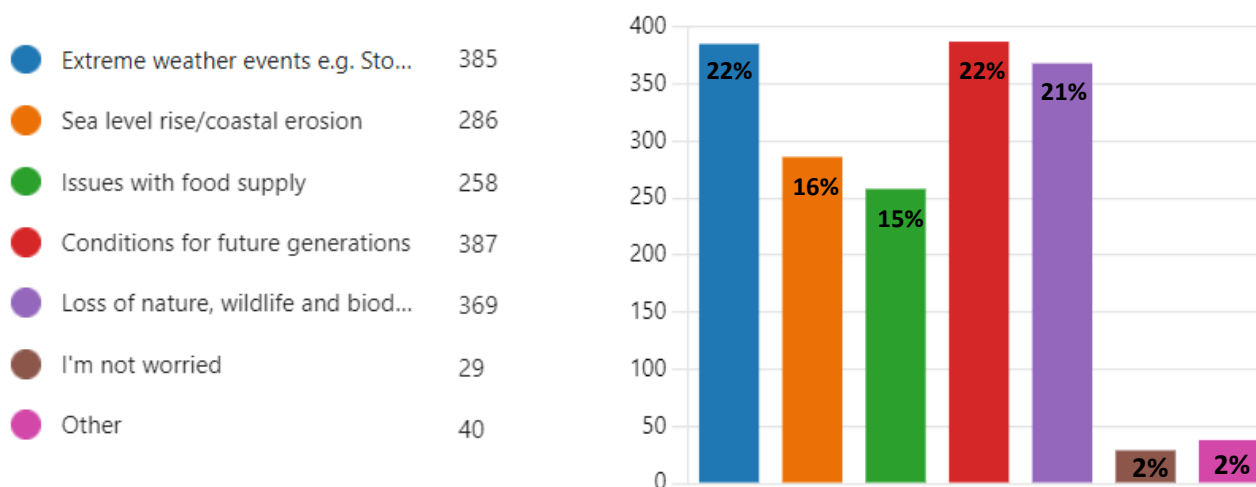### Question 1: Are you worried about climate change?

92% of respondents are worried about climate change, with 59% very worried and 33% somewhat worried. Only 8% of the 517 respondents said they are not worried about climate change.

● Very worried	305
● Somewhat worried	167
● Not worried	41

Question 2: What worries you the most?

Respondents were worried most about 'Conditions for future generations,' 'Extreme weather events e.g., Storms, flooding, rising temperature/drought' & 'Loss of nature, wildlife & biodiversity.'

Under 'other,' the worry of 'migration, climate refugees and displacement of people globally' came up several times. ('Other' responses here.)

|	
● Extreme weather events e.g. Sto...	385
● Sea level rise/coastal erosion	286
● Issues with food supply	258
● Conditions for future generations	387
● Loss of nature, wildlife and biod...	369
● I'm not worried	29
● Other	40

Question 3: Do you currently try to reduce your Greenhouse Gas emissions at home in any of the following ways?

On the topic of reducing emissions in the home 'reducing energy use,' 'Reducing waste' and 'shopping sustainably' were the most common actions respondents are currently undertaking.

Under 'other,' several respondents mentioned reducing overall consumption, using what you already have and using refill shops. ('Other' responses here.)

● Reduce your energy use e.g. Ret...	412
● Choose low carbon food option...	226
● Reduce waste e.g. Composting	374
● Plant trees/increase biodiversity	274
● Shop sustainably e.g. Buy energ...	362
● None	14
● Other	56
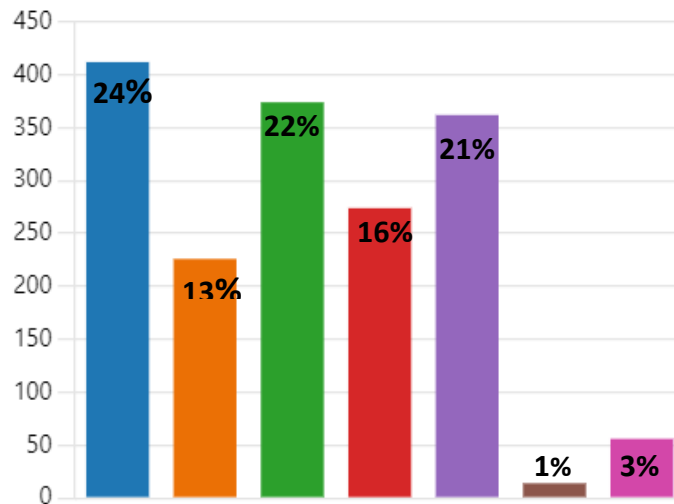
Question 4: What are the current barriers to reducing your emissions at home?

Almost half of respondents identified 'Cost' as the main barriers to stopping them from reducing their emissions at home. Lack of sustainable options and lack of knowledge were the next biggest barriers, respectively. ('Other' responses here.)

|	
● Lack of knowledge	92
● Cost	361
● Lack of sustainable options	180
● Renting/Do not own property	70
● No barriers	47
● Other	34
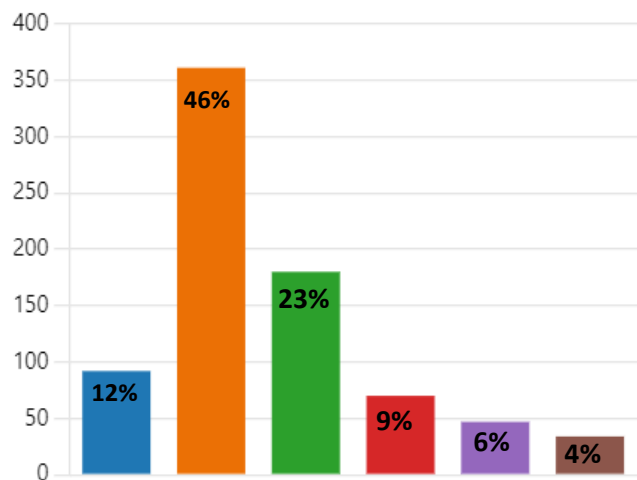
TRANSPORT

Question 5: Do you currently undertake any of the following actions to reduce your transport emissions?

'Remote work/hybrid working' was the most common response to the question of what people are already doing, followed closely by 'fly less' and 'commute by foot/bike/scooter/skateboard.' Additional actions included assessing the need to travel, not making unnecessary journeys, and grouping journeys together where possible. ('Other responses here.)

|	
● Commute by foot/bike/scooter/...	150
● Use public transport/ Carpool/C...	131
● Drive electric	52
● Fly less	160
● Remote work/hybrid working	173
● None	119
● Other	43
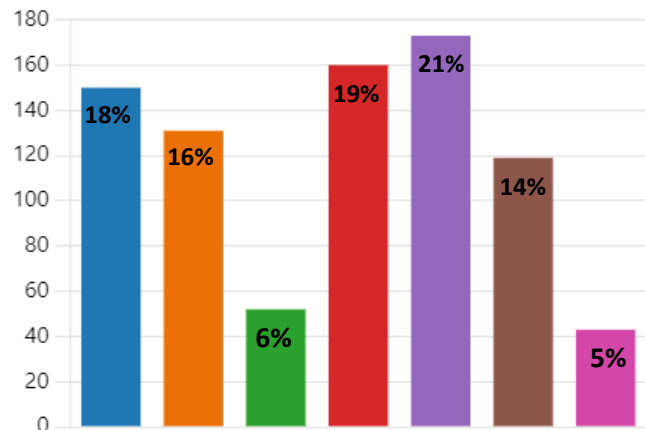
Question 6: Which of the of the following actions would you like to undertake to reduce your transport emissions?

When asked what respondents would like to do in the future 'using public transport/carpooling/carsharing' was the most popular choice, followed by 'Drive Electric' and 'Commute by foot/bike/scooter/skateboard.'

However, additional comments highlighted that private car use is mandatory for a lot of respondents as many of these options are not accessible or realistic for those in rural Ireland, with the key issues being lack of infrastructure for active travel, dangerous roads for cycling/walking and limited rural public transport options. Specific mentions came for the development of the East Mayo Greenway. ('Other' responses here.)


● Commute by foot/bike/scooter/...	195
● Use public transport/ Carpool/C...	248
● Drive electric	232
● Fly less	63
● Remote work/hybrid working	145
● None	45
● Other	29
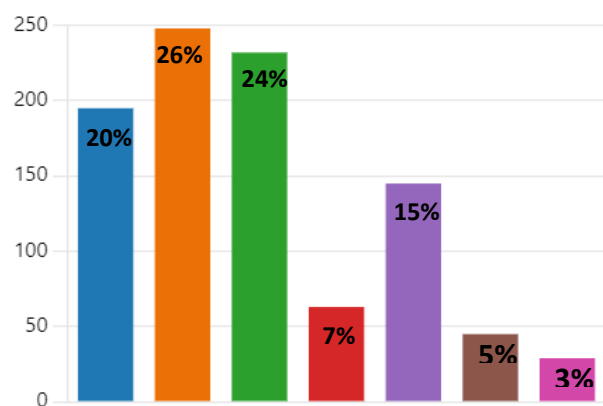
Question 7: Which of the following improvements would encourage you to travel more sustainably?

38% of respondents said that 'Improving Public Transport Services through the development of more stops and frequency' would encourage them to travel more sustainably while 31% identified that 'Improving/enhancing Pedestrian & Cycling Infrastructure' would encourage them. ('Other' responses here.)

|	
● Improve/ enhance Pedestrian & ...	305
● Improve Public Transport Servic...	381
● Improve EV infrastructure	243
● None	24
● Other	41
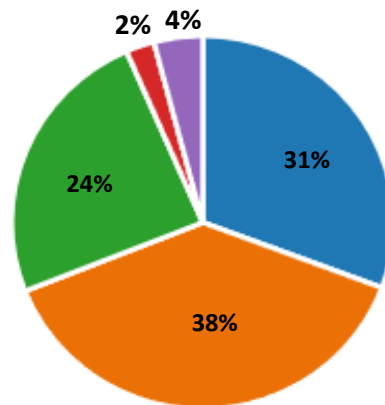
IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Question 8: Are you part of a community climate/environmental group?

Half of respondents are not currently in any environmental community groups, however, in a lot of cases this is not due to no interest, but rather other commitments/factors preventing them from doing so. ('Other responses here.)

|	
● Tidy towns/other community cle...	82
● GAA Green Clubs	22
● Decarbonising Community	35
● Biodiversity Group	58
● Sustainable Energy Community	52
● None	304
● Other	40
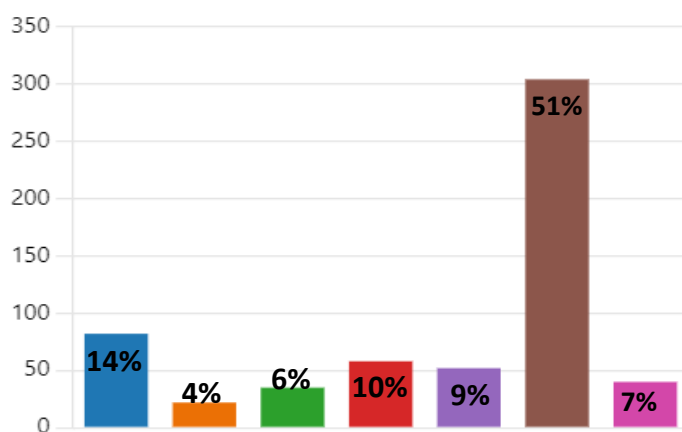
Question 9: Would your town/village/community benefit from climate action training/advice?

90% of survey respondents believe their community would benefit from climate action training/advice. This is a great opportunity for the council to raise awareness and build capacity in communities.

10%

450

52

90%

Question 10: Do you feel your town/village/community is at risk from any of the following?

Respondents believe that 'loss of nature and wildlife' and 'extreme weather events e.g., storms, flooding rising temperature/drought' are the greatest risks to their communities. ('Other' responses here.)

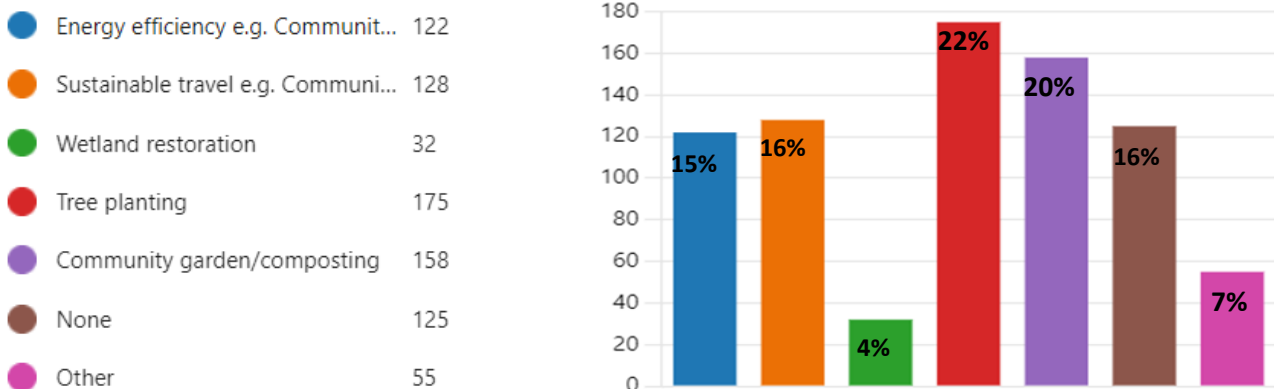|		
🔵	Extreme weather events e.g. Sto...	326
🟠	Sea level rise/coastal erosion	207
🟢	Loss of nature and wildlife	381
🔴	Don't know	49
🟣	Other	38
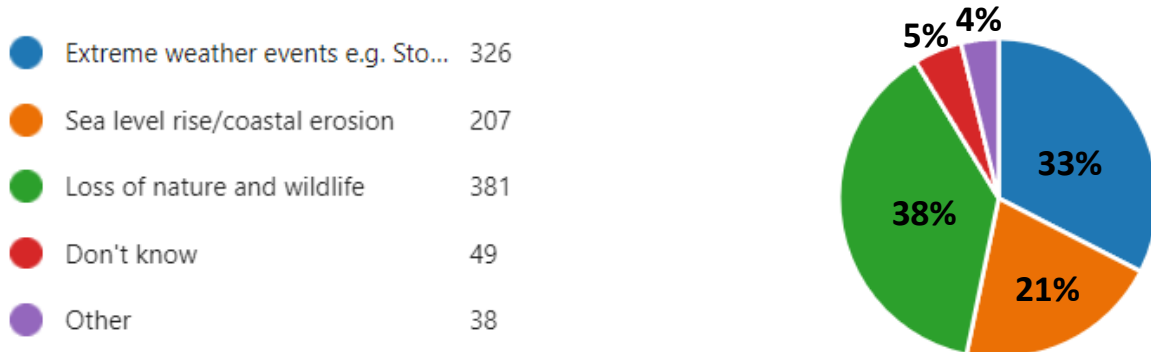
Question 11: How can Mayo County Council help reduce the climate risks (e.g., Flooding, Coastal Erosion, etc) to your town/village/community?

Selection of points emerging: (Please see Annex for more detailed list of responses).

• Better maintenance of drainage systems in towns and along roads needed.
• Installation and improvement of flood prevention and defence infrastructure.
• Coastal protection works – Sea Wall Barriers, Sand Dune regeneration.
• Flood risk assessments, identifying and focusing on flood risk zones.
• Implementation of Flood Relief Schemes
• Implement Nature Based solutions.
• Regenerate the land enabling it to hold back excess rainfall.

Question 12: Is your town/village/community actively trying to reduce its emissions by any of the following?

'Tree planting' and 'Community Garden/composting' were identified as the most common initiatives taking place in communities. 16% of respondents were not aware of any actions taking place in their area. Many respondents provided further details on projects and initiatives they are involved in. ('Other responses here.)

|		
🔵	Energy efficiency e.g. Communit...	122
🟠	Sustainable travel e.g. Communi...	128
🟢	Wetland restoration	32
🔴	Tree planting	175
🟣	Community garden/composting	158
🟤	None	125
🌸	Other	55

Question 14: What are the current barriers to reducing emissions in your town/village/community?

Once again 'cost' is seen as the main barrier to reducing emissions in the community, similar to on an individual level. 'Lack of knowledge' and 'community resources' are the next biggest barriers to community groups.

Additional comments identified the difficulty of changing people's mindsets and lack of government and local authority support as other barriers to reducing emissions within a community. ('Other' responses here.)

	Response	Count
🔵	Lack of knowledge	260
🟠	Cost	312
🟢	Community resources	253
🔴	Don't know	59
🟣	Other	96

Pie chart values: 27%, 32%, 26%, 6%, 10%
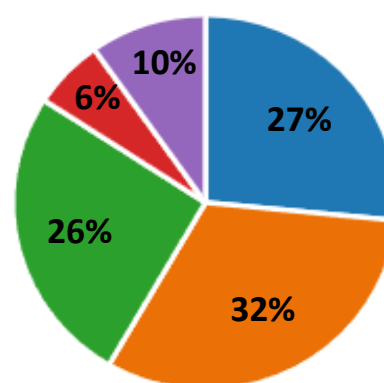
Question 15: What benefits would you hope to see in your town/village/community from climate action by 2030?

Most respondents selected all of the benefits listed, however two benefits that came out slightly higher were 'improved sustainable travel options e.g., walk/cycle paths, enhanced public transport' & 'increased nature & biodiversity.' ('Other' responses here.)

|		
🔵	Clean air/watercourses	280
🟠	Increased nature and biodiversity	392
🟢	Health benefits	306
🔴	Economic opportunities	255
🟣	Community cohesion/ Reinvigor...	269
🟤	Energy independence and secur...	306
🩷	Eco-hub/Community garden/co...	268
⚪	Improved sustainable travel opti...	404
🟡	Other	54
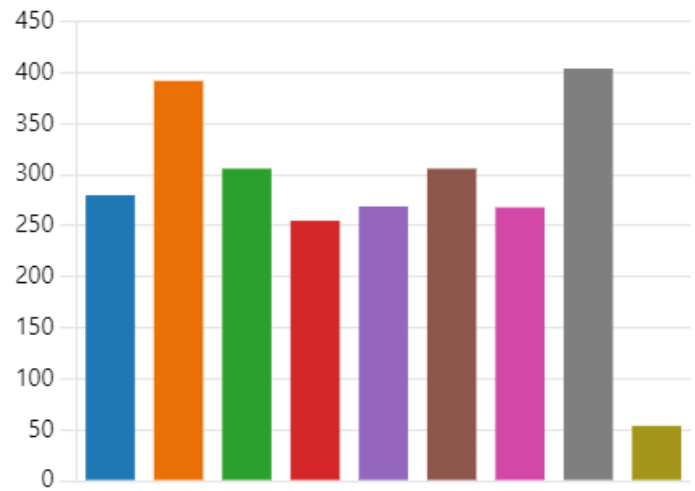
Results of Enterprise Pre-Draft Consultation Survey

Mayo County Council surveyed local businesses to inform development of the LA-CAP. The closing date for submissions was 27 August 2023 and 43 businesses responded.

Survey respondents self-described themselves according to business sector. Manufacturing was notably more responsive than other sectors, however responses were also received from a range of businesses in other sectors, and many only described themselves as "Other".

Business responses to Mayo LACAP Survey - Municipal Districts

- 🔵 Ballina
- 🟧 Castlebar
- ⬜ Claremorris-Swinford
- 🟨 Westport-Belmullet
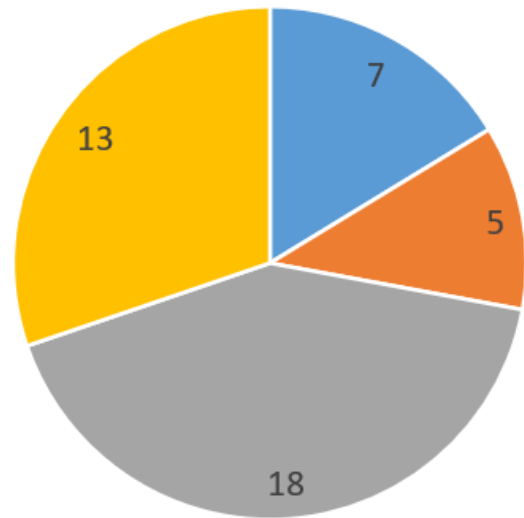
🔵 Accommodation & food	2	
🟠 Administrative & support	2	
🟢 Construction	4	
🔴 Electricity, gas etc	0	
🟣 Financial & Insurance	0	
🟤 Information & communication	1	
🩷 Manufacturing	15	
⬜ Mining & quarrying	0	
🟡 Motor trade	0	
🩵 Professional, scientific etc	4	
🔵 Real estate	0	
🟠 Retail trade	1	
🟢 Transportation & storage	0	
🔴 Water supply etc	0	
🟣 Wholesale trade	1	
🟤 Other	12	
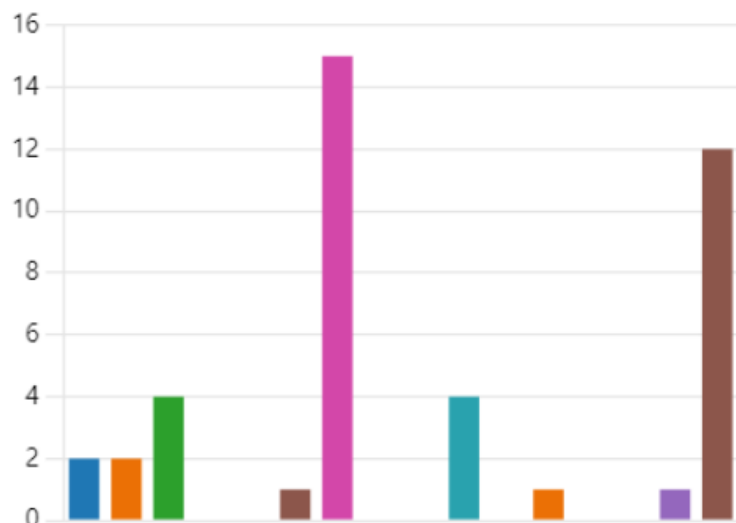
Question 1: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about climate change?
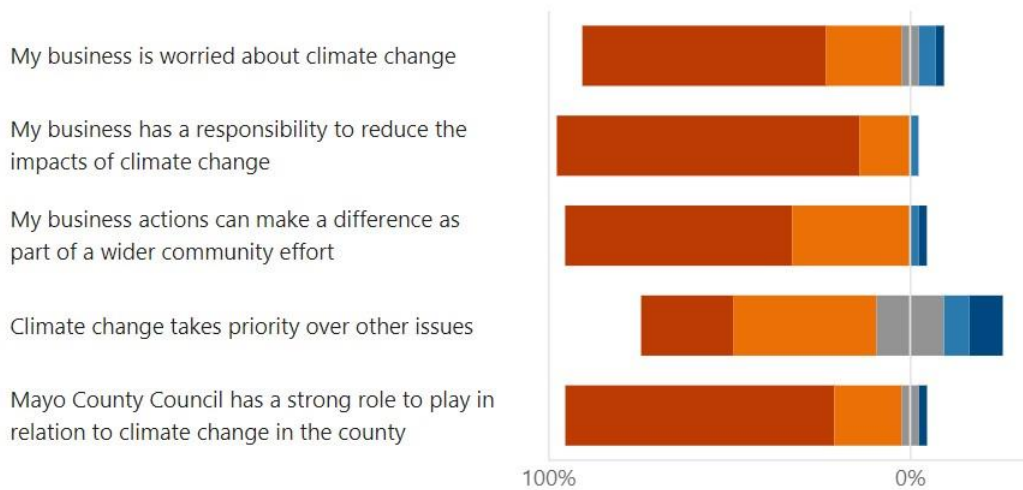
Mayo businesses have a strong sense of responsibility over climate change. 97% agree that they themselves have a responsibility to act, and 93% also believe Mayo County Council has a strong role to play.
They also believe that their actions can make a difference, as part of a wider effort (95%). However, although a majority of businesses (65%) see climate change as taking priority over other issues, the support for this statement was not universal; suggesting some Mayo businesses see climate change as an important challenge among other challenges.

Question 2: How important are the following areas of environmental sustainability when thinking about a Climate Action Plan for Mayo?
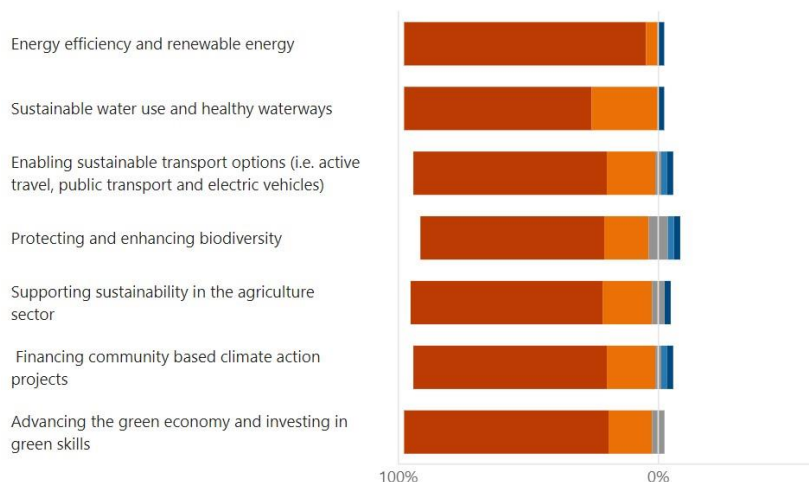
Respondents strongly feel that all of the suggested areas of environmental sustainability belong in the LA-CAP.

Question 3: Do you currently have a Sustainability Strategy for your business?

● Yes	18
● No	24

A little over 1/3rd of Mayo businesses already have a strategy.

The Green for Business programme is available to Mayo businesses. It provides a free consultation to develop a sustainability strategy for their business. A local and national promotional campaign is currently underway to encourage businesses to apply for this support.

Questions 4-6: Does your business currently take any actions to decrease emissions?

● Yes	31
● No	11

Questions 5 and 6 asked respondents what actions they are currently taking to decrease emissions and also what barriers they perceive have prevented action. Several businesses have invested in renewable energy. Others have changed their behaviour to save energy or have considered the onward recycling of their products.

Of the businesses that identified barriers to reducing emissions, cost was most frequently cited as a barrier to reducing emissions.

A full list of responses is included in the Appendix.

Question 7-9: Does your business intend to take future actions to decrease emissions?

🔵 Yes	37
🟠 No	4

Questions 8 and 9 asked respondents what future actions they intend to take to decrease emissions, and the barriers they perceive. Most of the replies dealt with renewable energy investments. Electric vehicles were also mentioned by some respondents.

A full list of responses is included in the appendix.

The following word cloud was generated from the question – what actions do you intend to take?

solar - increase
local community
energy usage
business
energy intensive solar power
solar / fuel
energy efficient use **energy** solar panels solar PV
renewable energy low carbon energy source
energy use electric vehicles sustainable practices
energy efficiency

Questions 10-12: Is your business willing to invest in measures to help your business become more sustainable?

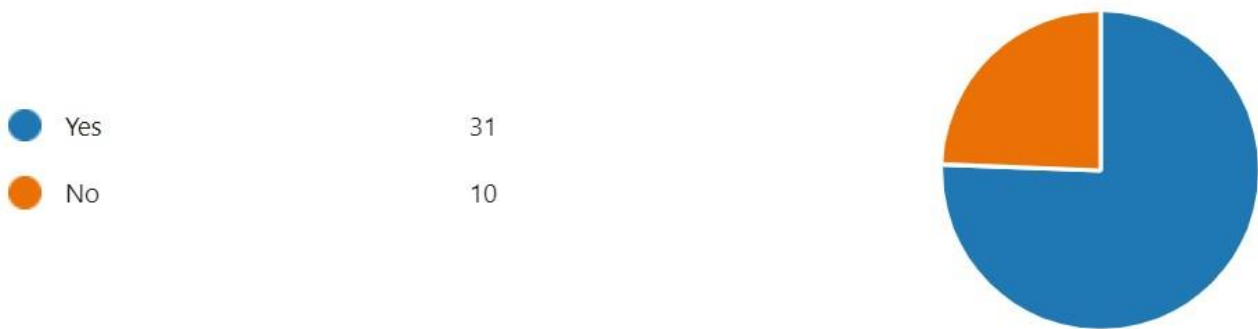|	
🔵 Yes	35
🟠 No	6

Questions 11 and 12 asked respondents what measures would help them become more sustainable, and the barriers they perceive to investing in them. Energy efficiency and renewables were highlighted by respondents.

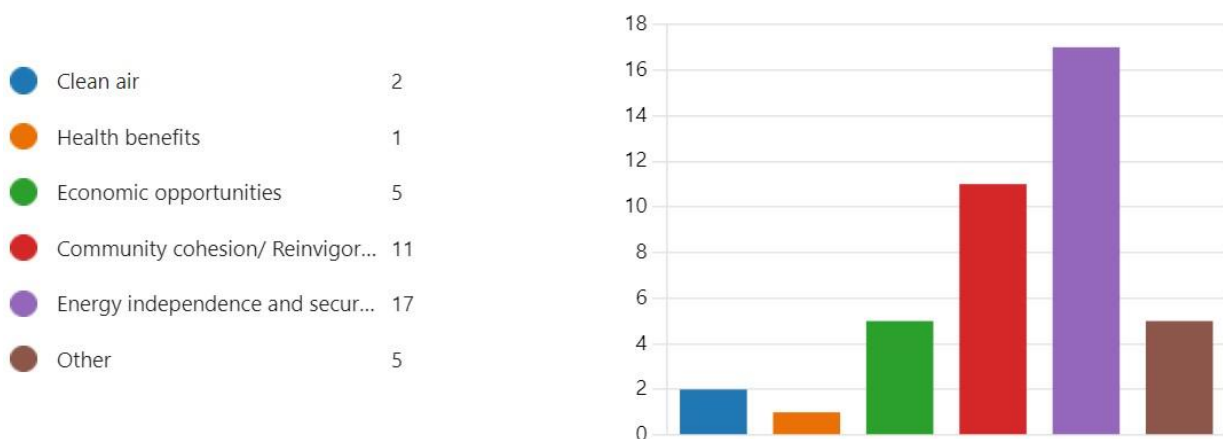The following word cloud was generated from the question – what are the barriers to investing in measures?

edge most of the time

additional costs

knifes edge

costs are not

Cost business

Affordability

Question 13: Would your business benefit from climate action training/advice?

🔵 Yes	31
🟠 No	10

Again, the Green for Business programme is available to provide free expert advice to Mayo businesses wishing to improve their environmental sustainability.

Question 14: What benefits would your business hope to see from climate action by 2030?

🔵 Clean air	2
🟠 Health benefits	1
🟢 Economic opportunities	5
🔴 Community cohesion/ Reinvigor...	11
🟣 Energy independence and secur...	17
🟤 Other	5

Question 15: In your opinion, what is the best way(s) for the Council to influence and support businesses in their journey to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy?

The most frequently cited issue is training/education (15 respondents). Financial incentives were also cited (6 respondents). Transport was also a recurring issue (5 respondents).

Question 16: Do you have any additional suggestions, ideas, or comments for inclusion in the climate action plan for Mayo?

A wide array of suggestions was received, but no clear themes emerged. The following topics were raised: Town regeneration, dumping/litter, an exhibition of green technologies for business to adopt, engagement with individual businesses to plan environmental changes, restrictions on slurry spreading, grants for retrofitting buildings.