



Comhairle Chontae Chill Chainnigh
Kilkenny County Council

**2023-
2028**

**Kilkenny County Council
Tourism Development Strategy
and Action Plan**



**COME SEE
COME DO**

**Kilkenny County Council
November 2023
Tourism Development Strategy**

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Message from Chief Executive

I am delighted to welcome our new Tourism Development Strategy together with its Action plan for Kilkenny County Council. It allows us to refresh and refocus our vision and objectives for Tourism Growth and Development throughout the county for the coming years and to keep supporting the sustainable growth of our local economy and communities.

Kilkenny County Council has always understood the importance of the Tourism and Hospitality Sector here in Kilkenny for our local economic prosperity.

We have strived to continuously support the sector by working in partnership with our colleagues both locally and nationally to ensure Kilkenny continues to develop and be recognized as a world class tourism destination.

The Objectives and Outcomes that we set out in this plan are simple; to motivate people to come to visit our City and County, to encourage visitors to stay longer in Kilkenny by providing more things to see and do throughout the county, to make it easier to navigate the county and to continuously build and strengthen our partnerships with stakeholders in the industry.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Strategic Policy Committee for Economic Development, Enterprise Support & Tourism, Planning & Development Policy (SPC) for leading the development of the Plan, alongside the Tourism team.

An extensive process of engagement in partnership with Failte Ireland, capturing the views of communities and businesses throughout our County, has been critical in shaping the ambition and priorities set out within the plan. All actions have been identified with access and inclusion for all and protecting the environment at the core of our activity. I would like to thank all those who have participated in the process of developing this plan and encourage others who have a desire to affect change to contribute to its delivery and implementation. I look forward to working with you all and seeing the positive impacts of our work over the coming years.



**Lar Power
Chief Executive
Kilkenny County Council**

1. Introduction

Kilkenny County Council plays a significant role in promoting and developing tourism in Kilkenny. The council is responsible for developing and implementing policies and initiatives that enhance the visitor experience to our county and promote the county as a world class tourism destination. Kilkenny County Council has always taken a holistic approach to the development of the city and county and considered the benefits to our local communities, our investors and our visitors.

Some of the principal activities undertaken by the council in pursuit of these objectives include:

1. **Destination Marketing:** Kilkenny County Council supports Kilkenny Tourism clg in various marketing and promotional activities to attract visitors to Kilkenny. This includes advertising campaigns, social media, website development, and content creation. The council also works closely with local tourism businesses to promote the county and its attractions.
2. **Destination Management:** The council is responsible for managing the tourism sector locally in Kilkenny. This involves developing and implementing priorities and objectives for sustainable tourism development in the county. The council works closely with stakeholders from the local community, business sector, and tourism industry to identify opportunities for growth and development.
3. **Infrastructure Development:** Kilkenny County Council is responsible for the development and maintenance of tourism infrastructure in the county. This includes the provision of tourist information, wayfinding and orientation services, the maintenance and enhancement of Public Realm, the development of tourist trails and amenities, and the improvement of transport links and parking facilities.
4. **Partnership working:** The council works closely with local tourism businesses, community groups, and tourism organizations to develop and implement initiatives that enhance the visitor experience and promote Kilkenny as a destination. The council also works in partnership with the national tourism agency, Fáilte Ireland, to deliver capital investment projects of national significance.
5. **Festival and Event Support:** Kilkenny County Council supports and promotes a range of festivals and events throughout the year, including the Kilkenny Arts Festival, the Cat Laughs Comedy Festival, and the Savour Kilkenny Food Festival. The council provides funding, logistical support, and promotional assistance to ensure the success of these events.

Our Tourism Strategy 2023-2028 will play an important role in promoting and developing tourism in Kilkenny. The council's activities help to attract visitors to the county, enhance the visitor experience, and support the growth and sustainability of the tourism industry in partnership with our colleagues on the Irelands Ancient East team at Failte Ireland.

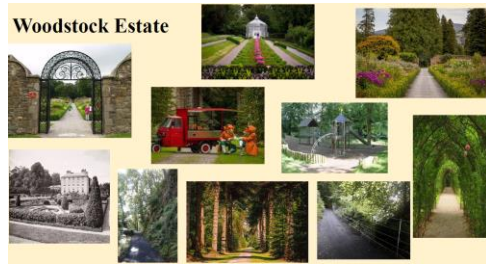
Kilkenny County Councils Tourism strategy will implement the overarching objectives set out for the sector outlined in Kilkennys Destination Experience Development Plan 2023-2028, in the Local Economic and Community plan 2023-2028 and in our Local Authority Corporate Plan 2019-2024

2. Background

Kilkenny County Council has always considered a holistic approach to the planning and sustainable development of the City and the County. Kilkenny County Council has also always understood the importance of the Tourism Industry for the economic growth of the County. Throughout previous strategies many projects have been supported financially by the Local Authority. Priority has also always been given to the enhancement of public realm and open spaces throughout the city and county for the pleasure of both our citizens and our visitors alike.

Some of these projects include:

Woodstock Gardens and Arboretum



Kilkenny County Council currently owns 50 acres within the Woodstock Estate, known as Woodstock Gardens and Arboretum, with expenditure of c€300,000 per annum on maintenance works. Our annual visitor numbers to Woodstock Gardens are in the regional of 45,000.

Castlecomer Discovery Park

Set in the former grounds of the Wandesforde Estate, the park comprises of 80 acres of stunning natural woodland and lakes and began as a community project to rejuvenate the town of castlecomer following the closer of the coal mines in 1969. This relatively young park opened to the public in 2007 and continues to evolve in its offering, actively developing a range of exciting recreational, cultural and educational activities for visitors of all ages.



Lighting of the Medieval Mile

The objective of lighting the Medieval Mile was to deliver the objectives underpinning Ireland's Ancient East, by creating memorable visits to iconic built attractions;



- timed to capture an after dark atmosphere, leading through medieval lanes and historic slipways, facilitating easy exploration of unique visitor attractions in Kilkenny
- After dark accessible locations will provide new possibilities for festivals and events, where Kilkenny's best assets come to life in a new innovative and safe manner.

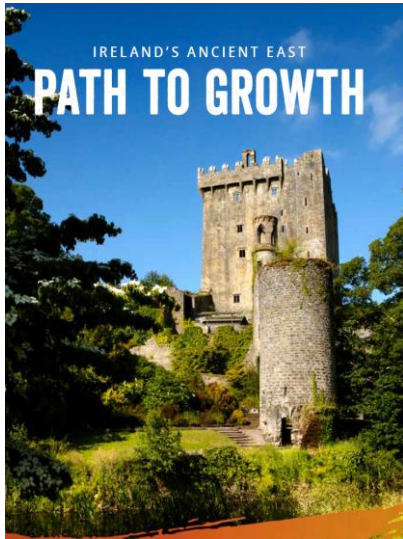
Riverside Park and Skatepark Project was delivered in 2021

This project meets Kilkennys aim to improve and enhance the Citys outdoor offering and to link attractions and strengthen the visitors experience when discovering Kilkenny.



3. Policy Context

Ireland's Ancient East and Kilkenny Destination Experience Development Plans contain the following objectives to which Kilkenny County Council have fully committed to;



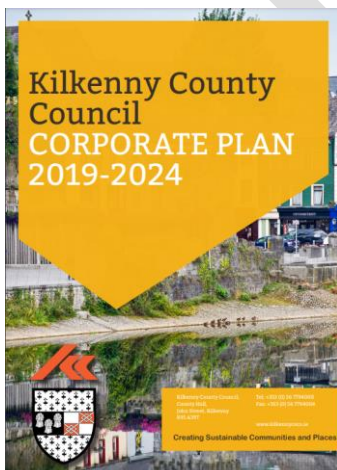
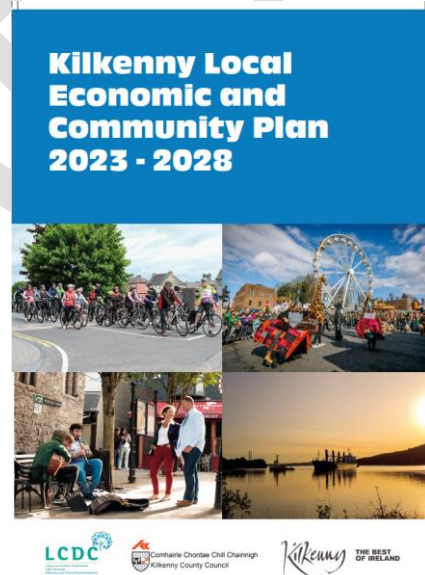
- Motivating the domestic and international consumer to visit Kilkenny/Ireland's Ancient East
- Providing the visitor with more reasons to stay, increasing the economic impact of tourism
- Ensuring the region is easy to access, navigate and consume for the visitor
- Enabling and assisting the industry to grow its capacity and capability to ensure it can thrive in the period of the strategy and create sustainable jobs in local communities
- Building committed stakeholder and industry partnerships to guide sustainable destination development across the region

Kilkennys Local Economic and Community Plan Goal Three aims to;

“realise the economic and social value of Kilkennys built and natural heritage, its cultural reputation and its growing tourism, creative and cultural sectors”

by implementing the actions identified in Kilkennys Destination Experience Development plan and

by continuing in our support to local tourism partners in Kilkenny to continue to develop the visitor experience to Kilkenny City and County.



Kilkenny County Councils Corporate plan states that the Council will;

- Support the sustainable development of Tourism in Kilkenny and elevate Kilkenny into a “must see” experience.
- Support local tourism structures.
- Add depth to Kilkennys Tourism experiences by supporting Medieval Mile Museum, South East Greenway, Woodstock Gardens and Arboretum, Butler Gallery projects and
- Promote local brands, visit and taste Kilkenny

4. Vision

Kilkenny County Council has worked in partnership with Failte Ireland to agree our vision for Kilkenny in consultation with all stakeholders engaged in the tourism industry in the County.

Kilkenny is a sustainable year-round international destination recognised for a creative city experience blending medieval with contemporary. A revitalised Medieval Mile is at the core of the Kilkenny City visitor experience motivating visitors to explore the wider city by linking Kilkenny Castle with iconic attractions who captivate audiences through a new experiential approach.

The City and County is animated by vibrant festivals and events hosted in a mix of venues that reflect the creativity of the destination. Kilkenny is globally recognised as Ireland's home for design, craft and creative experiences. A growing number of county-wide cultural, heritage and outdoor experiences are easily accessed by walking and cycling trails connecting visitors to the city with our vibrant rural communities. Our communities are connected and engaged with the South East Greenway. Kilkenny is established as a centre of excellence for river-based activities supported by an enhanced outdoor proposition delivered through our woodlands, trails and activity centres.

Kilkenny Vision 2033 ~ Kilkenny will be;

Ireland's best year-round destination by 2033, providing an exceptional visitor experience that blends medieval with contemporary, design with creativity and the great outdoors

Kilkenny is

1. A world class medieval and contemporary city experience linked together by an immersive Medieval Mile experience that motivates the visitor to explore more and stay for longer.
2. Recognised for an iconic Kilkenny Castle experience and a Kilkenny visitor attractions network across the city and county committed to creativity and innovation.
3. Ireland's creative city and county is established among the leading World Craft and Design designated destinations brought alive by an engaged craft and design community.
4. An integrated urban and rural destination providing a seamless experience between city and county accessed through best in class Kilkenny Trails, river activities, blueways and bike trails.
5. Connected to the South East Greenway representing the catalyst for developing a trail linking the city with local communities and the greenway.
6. A city regenerated by the riverside development of the Abbey Quarter introducing creative ways of orientating the visitor to explore the wider city experience.
7. Delivering great rural community experience where the visitor explores the north and south of the county motivated by the diversity of local cultural, heritage and activity experiences.

8. A renowned international festival and cultural events destination where the quality of year-round programming across interesting venues attracts international and domestic visitors.

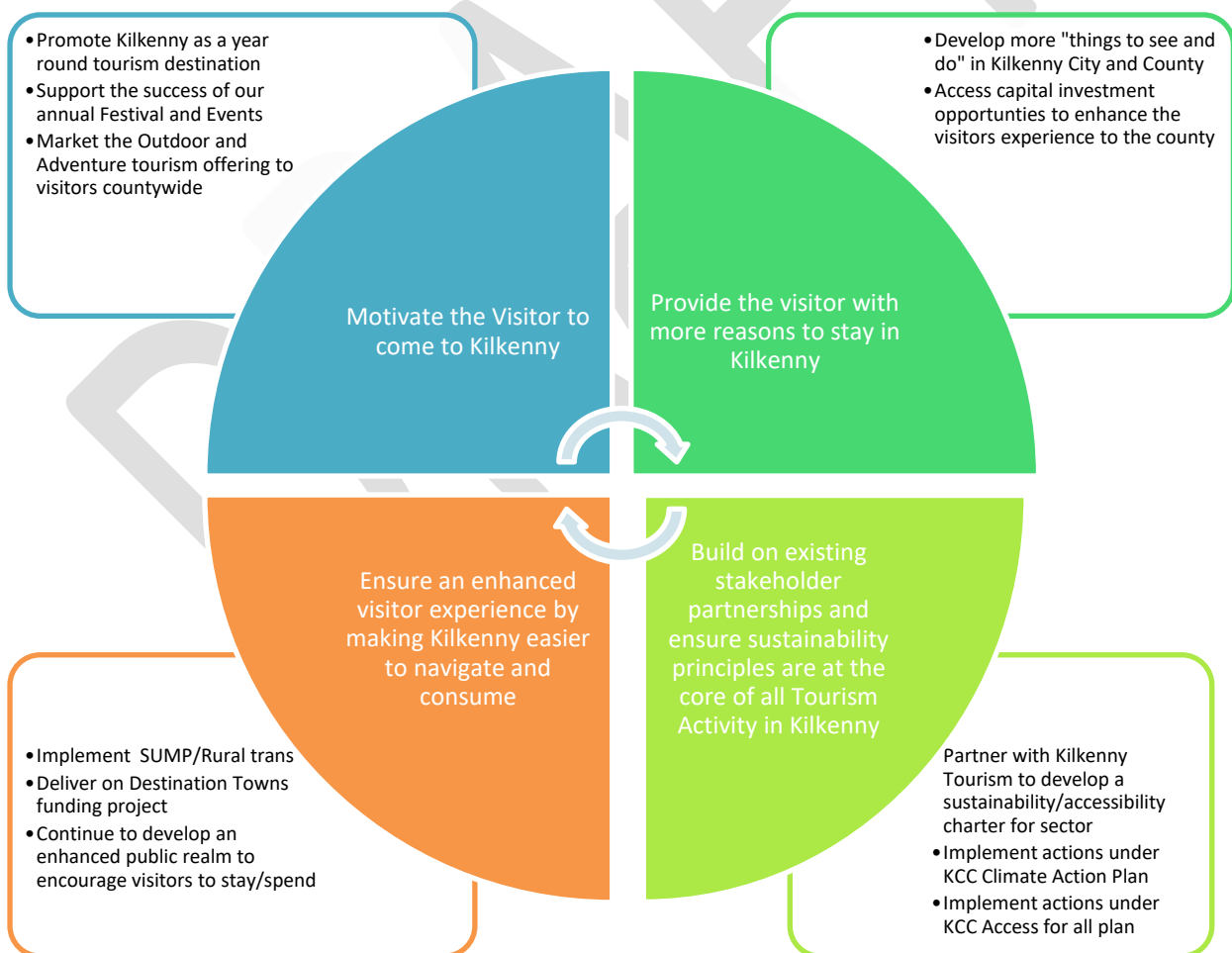
9. An internationally focused destination where a collaborative tourism industry approach has grown its share of the overseas market.

10. One of the leading family destinations in Ireland's Ancient East recognised for the mix and variety of family focused experiences attracting a growing share of the family market.



5. Strategic Objectives

Kilkenny County Councils Tourism Development plan provides a strategic, collaborative framework to facilitate the consolidation and sustainable growth of the Tourism sector throughout Kilkenny City and County. The strategy addresses the challenges facing the sector as well as embracing the many strengths Kilkenny has for our communities and visitors, including economic and social benefits. Policies and strategies at national level, and in particular Kilkennys Destination Experience Development Plan, have set the context for the development of the Visitor Experience. Given that the natural environment is the setting for outdoor recreation, protection of the environment is central to this strategy, with a focus on minimising recreational pressure on sensitive habitats and species. Over the next five years, this strategy will address the challenges and embrace the opportunities for Tourism Development by achieving four key objectives;



6. Implementation and Action Planning

1. To Motivate the Visitor to come to Kilkenny

	Project	Action	Timeframe	Lead	Partner
1	COME TO KILKENNY				
1.1	Market Kilkenny as a year-round “must see” tourism destination	Continue to deliver strong marketing campaigns in partnership with Kilkenny Tourism and grow the brands; Visit Kilkenny, Taste Kilkenny, Outdoor Kilkenny and Made in Kilkenny. Access all funding streams available to promote Kilkenny as a destination e.g. Dept of Ag, ORIS, Annual KCC Revenue budgets	2023-2028	KCC	KKT
1.2	International Events and Festivals Strategy	Develop a five-year international events and festivals strategy for Kilkenny City and County to grow key events across the year and examine new event opportunities. This will include a re-appraisal of successful events hosted in Kilkenny.	2023-2024	KCC	Festivals, FI
1.3	Supports to Festivals	Continue financial supports to Kilkennys Festivals and Events and incorporate a review of existing Festivals Grant Scheme Continue to promote Kilkenny as an “always on” destination in the promotion of our Calendar of Events	2024	KCC	
1.4	Night Time Economy Innovation	Implement the night time economy pilot and identify a number of key night time opportunities for development aligned with Kilkenny DEDP.	2023-2024	KCC	
1.5	NTE	Develop Kilkenny City as a regional night time economy hub growing the range and diversity of things to do and see in the evening through NTE Implementation Plan	2023-2024	KCC	

1.6	World Crafts Council Craft City and Region Vision & Action Plan	Develop a World Crafts Council Craft City and Region Vision and Growth Action Plan to create international visibility for Kilkenny supported by the associated experiences to realize the global opportunity. This will also examine the requirements to dedicated resources to grow the craft and design opportunity for Kilkenny as evident in comparable international destinations.	2023-2024	KCC	MADE
1.7	World Crafts Council Craft City and Region Vision & Action Plan	Undertake an opportunity assessment on buildings in or adjacent to the Abbey Quarter that have the potential to contribute to the international vision for craft, design and cultural provision in the city.	2025-2028	KCC	
1.8		Examine the opportunity to develop a creative/design and arts centre in the Abbey Quarter to grow the scale of creative and design experiences in Kilkenny.	2025-2026	KCC, AQ	
1.9	County Creative & Design Focal Points	Develop a series of county creative focal points and visitor experiences in Callan, Graiguenamanagh and Thomastown to develop community, arts and creative experiences linked to the Kilkenny creative, craft and design story.	2025-2026	KCC	
1.10	River Tourism	Develop a coordinated approach to the regulatory requirements to capitalize on the opportunity for River Tourism throughout the County	2023-2024	KCC	
1.11	Three Sisters River Experience - River Tourism Destination	Develop the river tourism opportunity for Kilkenny City and County linking accessible river points and the creation of a co-ordinated river tourism product base and an overall master plan for a co-ordinated product development of a Three Sisters River Experience.	2023-2024	KCC, FI	
1.12		Grow the scale of river experiences through the development of three river tourism centres of excellence linked to water activities, local heritage and community tourism to develop the Three Sisters River Experience with a priority focus in the initial phase on the River Nore and River Barrow.	2023-2026	KCC	

1.13	International Canoe Trail	Examine the feasibility of an international canoe trail associated with the Three Sisters River Experience.	2027-2028	KCC	
1.14	River Nore Centre for Paddle Sports	Examine the requirements to develop the River Nore as an international centre for paddle sports building on the Nore Vision Strategy.	2025-2026	KCC	
1.15	Platforms for Growth Activity Centre	Develop the Platforms for Growth activity centre in Kilkenny City supported by a programme of training for the activity industry to maximise the river amenity opportunity and the enhancement of Three Sisters River Experience.	2025-2026	KCC	
1.16	Kilkenny City / Thomastown River Navigation Project	Examine the feasibility of a river navigation project linking Kilkenny City with Thomastown.	2027-2028	KCC	
1.17	Regional Conference Centre	Examine the feasibility of developing an opportunity site in Kilkenny City to deliver a regional conference centre.	2027-2028	KCC	FI

	Project	Action	Timeframe	Lead	Partner
2	STAY IN KILKENNY				
2.1	New Unified Visitor Experience Museum of Medieval Kilkenny	Deliver the New Unified attraction at the Tholsel and Medieval Mile Museum. Undertake an experience review and commercial performance assessment after one year following the opening of MOMK to examine learnings and adjust commercial planning if required.	2025-2026	KCC	FI, KCT
2.2	City Gaol Development	Undertake feasibility analysis into the development of the City Gaol (underneath the Courthouse that currently houses ten gaol cells with an isolation unit with an opportunity to develop a visitor experience to create a new visitor experience linked to the Medieval Mile cluster.	2027-2028	KCC	
2.3	Urban Animation	Finalise "Creative Kilkenny" our Urban Animation of the City Core, to complete the Watergate Urban Park, Brewery Square, the Selfie Spot, Murals, Lighting of City Laneways and Outdoor Screens	2023-2024	KCC	FI
2.4	Outdoor Dining/ Performance Space	Complete capital projects at Market Yard and Watergate Outdoor performance and dining spaces to encourage the visitor to "stay and play" longer in the City	2024	KCC	FI
2.5	Jewellery/ Goldsmith and Ceramics Centres of Excellence	Complete the development of the Crafts Centres of Excellence in jewellery/goldsmith and ceramics and pottery in Thomastown supported by an experience development programme that links the city with the Thomastown craft experience.	2025-2028	KCC	FI, PS
2.6	Woodstock House and Gardens Master Plan	Develop a visitor experience master plan for Woodstock House and Gardens to become a key catalyst for sustainable tourism and outdoor product excellence in Kilkenny. This will include an analysis to identify the requirements to develop the Woodstock Estate and Gardens to become a significant visitor attraction, examining the activity opportunities and possible sustainable accommodation development options.	2025-2026	COILLTE, KCC	

2.7	Kilkenny to Inistioge Walking Trail	Undertake feasibility study and route selection report to deliver missing section of the Nore Valley Walk from Bennettsbridge to Thomastown. The realization of same would provide a contentious link from Kilkenny City to Inistioge	2025-2026	KCC	
2.8	Woodstock (Inistioge) to South East Greenway Link	Advance feasibility, route selection and planning for the provision of a ped/cyclist connectivity link from Woodstock (Inistioge) to the South East Greenway.	2027-2028	KCC	
2.9	Glenmore to the South East Greenway	Seek to progress through planning to construction stage a walking / cycling connectivity link from the South East Greenway to the village of Glenmore	2027-2028	KCC	
2.10	Slieverue to the South East Greenway	Seek to progress through planning to construction stage a walking/cycling connectivity link from the South East Greenway to the village of Slieverue	2027-2028	KCC	
2.11	Barrow Way - Graiguenamanagh Cycle Bridge	Examine the infrastructural requirements to unlock the tourism and activity potential of the Barrow Way and Tinnahinch Castle with the addition of a pedestrian/cycle bridge connecting the Barrow Valley Activities Hub and Motorhome Aire and Graiguenamanagh (downstream of road bridge).	2027-2028	KCC	
2.12	Barrow Way - Graiguenamana gh Pedestrian / Cycle Bridge	Examine the infrastructural requirements to deliver a pedestrian/cycle bridge over the River Barrow to open up identified lands to tourism and land / water-based activity potential (upstream of road bridge).	2027-2028	KCC	
2.13	Castlecomer Discovery Park	Work with stakeholders to develop a) a masterplan to unlock the full tourism potential of area and b) deliver a dedicated bike trail within the park	2024-2025	<u>CDC</u> <u>Ltd</u> <u>Coillte</u> <u>KCC</u>	
2.14	Kilkenny Countryside Park	Deliver a new 17acre countryside park at Dunmore which focuses on recreation and biodiversity immersion, which will expand the outdoor recreational offering within the City Environs.	2024	KCC	

2.15	Callan Friary Complex Master Plan	Examine the tourism elements of the Friary complex master plan in Callan to develop associated tourism opportunities for the area and cultural, heritage and creative experiences.	2025-2026	KCC	
2.16	Heritage Site Event Venues	Engage with stakeholders to explore the extended use of heritage sites as potential event venues and deliver niche Kilkenny experiences e.g. St. Canice's as a concert/gala dining venue.	2025-2026	KCC	
2.17	Accommodation – Opportunity Sites	Grow the accommodation base in opportunity sites across Kilkenny City and county focused on developing a mix of new hotel bedroom stock combined with a mix of sustainable accommodation options suitable for rural locations.	2023-2028	KCC	
2.18	RV / Camper Van Accommodation	Undertake a review of possible county wide sites to expand the recreational vehicle (RV/camper van) options in the county aligned with the growth of the outdoor product base. Undertake a county wide accommodation audit to establish accommodation growth requirements and the opportunities that exist to support rural communities and the outdoors e.g. campsites, RV/glamping and niche accommodation.	2025-2026	KCC	
2.19	Lingaun Valley	Support and promote Lingaun Valley Tourism Initiatives	2023-2028	KLP	KCC
2.20	ORIS Capital Investment	Secure funding under the ORIS scheme to enhance and develop the Countys Outdoor Recreational Offering	2023-2028	KCC	Trail KK

3. To make Kilkenny easier to navigate and consume

	Project	Action	Timeframe	Lead	Partner
3	Orientation and Wayfinding				
3.1	Destination Towns Project	Implement Destination towns project for Kilkenny to deliver on consistent and visitor focused signage and wayfinding throughout the City Core. Street signage and visitor orientation to be made easier by de-cluttering existing signage and installation of clear, uniform signage. Capital works at Parade Junction to be determined by Traffic Mgmt system	2023-2024	KCC	FI
3.2	Public Realm	To ensure that all areas of Public Realm are maintained to the highest standards and universally designed across the City and County (Nursery Programme/Cleaning & Maintenance/Public facilities)	2023-2028	KCC	KKB
3.3	Kilkenny Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan	Undertake an assessment of the future orientation and way finding requirements based on the Kilkenny Living City model and potential mobility projects around the city core and future investment in the public realm to include a focus on the visitor experience.	2023-2026	KCC	
3.4	Kilkenny Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan	Develop a roadmap and vision for the Kilkenny Outdoor Spaces and their future incorporation into how the urban open spaces contribute to the tourism economy, visitor experience and link with existing attractions and community amenities.	2025-2026	KCC	
3.5	Kilkenny City Interpretation	Examine the opportunity to develop new standards of interpretation of key historical/heritage buildings across Kilkenny City through an innovative approach to information delivery that enhance walking and cycling tours of the city for all levels of ability to receive information.	2025-2026	KCC	FI
3.6	City Links Project	Develop a creative destination approach to way finding, orientation and place making that builds on the previous success of the 'Kilkenny Catwalk' installations across the city.	2023-2028	KCC	KCC

3.7	Smart County Wayfinding	Develop a digital bank for the provision of virtual exhibitions/imagery and investigate enhanced county signage through Smart Orientation solutions	2023-2028	KCC	FI
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4. To work in Partnership to ensure Kilkenny works towards being recognised as a sustainable Tourism Destination, accessible to all

	Project	Action	Timeframe	Lead	Partner
4	Partnership & Collaboration				
4.1	County Wide Sustainable Tourism Initiative	Develop a county wide sustainable tourism initiative to develop the profile of Kilkenny as a sustainable visitor destination that incorporates a focus on the environment, community, food, culture and heritage.	2023-2028	KCC	KKT
4.2		The Kilkenny Tourism CLG 'Green team' will engage with appropriate advisory supports and the Failte Ireland sustainability team and work to develop appropriate awareness and training initiatives for the full membership of Kilkenny Tourism.	2023-2028	KCC	KKT
4.3	Improve Access to all Visitor Attractions in Kilkenny	KCC will work in partnership with Kilkenny Tourism to carry out an audit of attractions to establish access issues both in their buildings and on web-sites	2024-2025	KCC	KKT
4.4		Investigate Virtual Reality experiences for visitors to inaccessible sites in the county and look at applying for funding opportunities to deliver these experiences (eg St Canices Round Tower & Dunmore Caves)	2024-2028	KCC	FI, Attraction
4.5	Kilkenny Sustainable Transport Model	Support the development of a sustainable and universally designed transport model linking Kilkenny City and county to provide visitors with the opportunity to visit key attractions, activities and communities countywide.	2023-2024	KCC	KLP

4.6	Destination Experience Development Plan	Work in partnership with Failte Ireland to drive and implement our overarching DEDP for tourism development in Kilkenny.	2023-2028	KCC	FI
4.7	Kilkenny Tourism Marketing and PR Plan	Work in partnership to support Kilkenny Tourism to deliver on annual work plans for the marketing and promotion of Kilkenny to both national and international audiences	2023-2028	KKC	KKT

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7. Monitoring and Evaluation

This Tourism Development Strategy will be implemented by multidisciplinary teams throughout Kilkenny County Council, the Tourism team, Parks Department & Special Projects Office, Local Enterprise Office, the City Engineering Department and by Local Area Offices.

SPC 1 will have oversight, monitoring and evaluation of the plan.

The SPC will monitor the delivery of the strategy by way of quarterly updates and a mid-term review. Through ongoing engagement with relevant government departments, local stakeholders and Failte Ireland, the plan will be continuously assessed to identify and review the actions and indicators which will allow us to determine the impact of the implementation of the strategy.

SPC 1:
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENTERPRISE SUPPORT & TOURISM, PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT POLICY
CHAIRPERSON: CLLR. GER FRISBY

ELECTED MEMBERS

NAME	ADDRESS	E-MAIL
John Coonan	17, Willow Close, Ardmore, Kilkenny	cllrjohn.coonan@kilkennycoco.ie
Michael Doyle	Ballinbarna, The Rower, Co. Kilkenny	cllr michael.doyle@kilkennycoco.ie
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NOMINATED MEMBERS

NAME	SECTOR	PILLAR
Bill O Keeffe	Agriculture/Farming	IFA
Deirdre Shine	Business/Commercial	Chambers Ireland
Marion Acreman	Development/Construction	Chambers Ireland
Brian Hamilton	Environment/Conservation	PPN
Fiona O'Neill	Social Inclusion	PPN
Jimmy Duggan (new)	Community & Voluntary	PPN
Eileen Moyles	Trade Union	ICTU

Kilkennys Destination Experience Development Plan Implementation team will also oversee the plans implementation to ensure its delivery aligns and delivers on the overarching tourism plan for the City and County.

