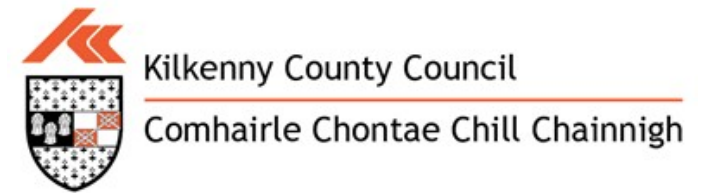


Graiguenamanagh Town Centre First Plan



Stakeholder engagement

Strategic analysis

Provisional actions

18-9-2025 v.2



Contents

1. Summary of what emerged during community engagement
2. Revised SCOT analysis
3. Competitive advantage and likely avenues for change
4. What winning looks like
5. Lessons from other towns
6. Proposed actions



1. Stakeholder engagement

29 total engagements completed (22 with the community)

Took place: July 28th – August 11th

- Town team – 2 x site walkabouts & 1 meeting
- Community – 2 x site walkabouts
- Community groups – 9 x meetings held & 1 written submission received
- 1 x Creative Ireland meeting
- Businesses – 9 x meetings & 1 x workshop
- Council staff – 1 x site walkabout, 1 x workshop & 1 x meeting
- Public sector agencies – 3 x meetings (Kilkenny Leader Partnership, Waterways Ireland, An Garda Síochána)

A semi-structured interview approach was typically used during meetings. The four pillars of conversation were:

1. What is going well in Graiguenamanagh?
2. What is not going well?
3. What does winning/success look like?
4. What are the actions needed to get there?

What follows are summaries of what was discussed organised under key issues of importance for multiple stakeholders.



Key issues that frequently arose

1. River flooding: differences of opinion to reaction
2. Navigation (access, the quays)
3. Parking and buses
4. Safety on the roads and bridge
5. Beauty of the town (the golden goose!)
6. Vacancy/dereliction
7. Housing
8. Business conditions
9. Tourism: the opportunity and threat
10. Social infrastructure
11. Poor community collaboration but also proven ability to get stuff done



River flooding: differences of opinion to reaction

- Risk of flooding impacting the town's rejuvenation.
- Flooding on the Duiske River is a significant risk to businesses in the town.
- Several stakeholders wanted the silt in the Duiske and Barrow cleared out. Belief that this will improve the flow and reduce flood risk.
- Restoring the Clapper Bridge regularly came up during engagements from a variety of stakeholders.
- Potential of the Duiske River as a social space where people can engage with nature not being fully realised.
- Although little resistance was heard to dealing with the flood risk from the Duiske using hard engineering, there was a reluctance to the construction of flood defences along the Barrow. The likely negative visual impact was thought to be too high. At least one business owner likely to be impacted is content to deal with irregular flooding rather than the permanent visual impact of defences.
- Several people advocated for nature based solutions involving landscape management to address flooding on both the Duiske and Barrow.
- The year round presence of sandbags in Tinnahinch is unsightly. A better solution is needed.
- Consultation on proposed flood defences seen as being inadequate by some. Perceived unwillingness to consider approaches that would cause a lesser visual impact.



Navigation (access, the quays)

- Access to the town by barges and cruisers is currently blocked to the north at Clashganny and the south at Tinnahinch. This seriously reduces its economic value.
- The quays are effectively full. Boats rarely move. Despite a shabby appearance of some boats, the vast majority of boat owners have paid their subscription to Waterways Ireland. This results in limited ability to remove boats and allow greater economic use.
- The pump for extracting boat effluent is not working. There are plans to repair it in place. Likely that vast majority of boats tied up at the quays do not have effluent tanks. By-laws have been proposed to ensure boats have effluent tanks.
- Lack of power points and shower facilities for boat users.
- Quays being impacted by spread of silt. One area on the Kilkenny side of the bridge is no longer usable. Extent is growing.
- Diving board on the river is sorely missed by many in the community, including businesses.
- Water quality of the Barrow is a worrying issue. The 2025 Regatta was cancelled. Fear of more no-swim warnings in the future. During the summer, the river is the town's most important amenity (e.g. swimming, rowing, kayaking, etc.). Still used during the winter. Pollution also impacts on town's reputation/brand image.



Parking and buses

- Need for better bus services. Ensure strong level of connectivity to Kilkenny, Bagenalstown train station, Carlow and Waterford (including the SETU campuses in Carlow and Waterford). Timetabling needs to be consolidated and match needs of residents to travel for work and study.
- Some of the buses are not universally accessible.
- There is no bus shelter. Some buses do not cross the bridge.
- Overall, there are low traffic levels except when the weather is good and visitors come to the town, especially during summer weekends.
- Visitors should be directed to park away from the town core and quays. Car park at the Rowing Club/Scouts Hall is frequently under pressure during the Summer weekends.
- Need to use existing parking better by erecting signage to encourage visitors to park there.
- Possibly create a car-park outside the core but easily walkable to the river.
- Does parking need to remain on the quays?
- How can the Market Square be used more as a public space? Need to consult deeply on this and offer compensatory parking elsewhere.
- Need for dedicated parking spaces for disabled, older people, adults with young children, and parents with autistic children. Routes to key services and associated parking needs to be maintained.
- No charge for parking in Graiguenamanagh is perceived positively.
- Likely need some additional enforcement of parking if provision is enhanced. Lots of poor parking practices.
- Car charging for EVs needed.



Safety on the roads and bridge

- Increased popularity during the summer and sunny weekends means growth in traffic and level of parked cars. Camper van parking also an issue. Associated increase in risks to pedestrians.
- Bridge is seen as particularly dangerous. Poor surface. Bridge needs a solution to increase safety (e.g. shared space, one-way stop go system, cantilever bridge, separate pedestrian/active travel bridge).
- Any solution to increasing safety for pedestrians and cyclists on the bridge must be very mindful to the beauty of the bridge and overall setting.
- People are worrying about the pressure on the bridge (large tractors and trucks) and its overall condition. Need to address vegetation with woody roots.
- Many of the footpaths are poor. Gaps in provision of footpaths in many places in the town.
- Access for wheelchair users and those with buggies across the public domain is poor.
- Better street lighting needed in the town and on the bridge. Increases visibility to traffic and perception of safety. Lighting should be mindful of impact on biodiversity.
- Increased need for pedestrian crossings and adequate footpaths. Shared space as a safety measure was raised by a stakeholder.
- Works to the public realm should be done along universal access principles with strong local engagement at an early stage. Need to be mindful of those with diverse needs.
- Speed in the town should be limited to 30kph. Complementary traffic calming needed to achieve this. Needs to be safer for everyone, especially older people and children. Car has priority.
- Need for more places to sit, especially for older residents, so they can rest.
- Provision for cyclists is low. However, there was resistance evident to the possibility of cycle lanes. Regardless, the town is small. Walkability was the focus amongst stakeholders as regards active travel.



Beauty of the town (the golden goose!)

- A beautiful town in a wonderful setting (built heritage, River Barrow, Brandon Hill, Soleir Woods). Almost every stakeholder mentioned the town's beauty.
- There is a sense of biodiversity in the town. Actions that support biodiversity and educate people about its importance should be supported.
- Cars badly parked along the quays take away from the setting. Also add a safety issue when they're moving.
- Town is generally clean but dog poo is a regular problem. Increase in tourism numbers has increased litter. More bins needed.
- Significant risk that new flood defences will significantly impact appearance of the town.
- Risk that pedestrian bridge and/or cantilever pedestrian bridge on the existing bridge will significantly impact appearance of the town.



Vacancy/dereliction

- High levels of vacancy and dereliction in the town, particularly the core.
- Some new business in the town. This has reduced vacancy. Some concern over the quality of shopfronts.
- Prominent structures unused and derelict.
- Other structures only have ground floor used with perhaps some storage above.
- Can relevant property owners be assisted in reusing these structures for businesses and/or accommodation?
- High levels of vacancy particularly galling when demand for housing is so high in the town but the provision is low.
- Protected structure status seen as a barrier to reuse. Planning regulations in general seen as barrier to reuse. Wish to see a more pragmatic approach.
- People don't know about incentives to reuse their buildings. The current penalties are minimal/non-existent. Minimal rates paid on structures vacant pre 2024.



Housing

- Affordability of housing is an issue. Very few places available to rent.
- Difficult to get planning permission due to infrastructure constraints (water).
- No new housing developments.
- Vacant properties should be used for housing. There is a need for studio apartments.
- Fear that newcomers to the town are raising the price of housing making it harder for locals to buy and rent. Housing stock remains low.
- Possible impact of tourism sector encouraging greater provision of short term accommodation rather than long term rental.



Business conditions

- Cost of business is high but more businesses now in Graiguenamanagh than previously. There is a sense that the town is improving.
- Little fibre broadband in the town. Commercial options are poor. Some forced to use Starlink. No co-working hub.
- Commercial rates generally not seen as excessive but don't see the value. Need to be careful that appropriate rates are charged.
- Electricity grid is poor. There have been outages.
- Need to maintain convenient parking for customers.
- Need to increase footfall. Tourism is seen as the main way to increase footfall.
- Want stronger relationship with the Council and more communication.
- Good grocery trade in the town. Supervalu in town centre. Aldi on edge of town centre. Despite this, the main commercial street is performing poorly. High vacancy.
- The Hub has been of significant benefit to hospitality and grocery businesses in the town.
- Businesses are frustrated by planning objections lodged by locals. Slows down their efforts to grow business and create employment.
- Some businesses feel they don't get enough local support.
- Frustration that there is no industry in the town. Realisation that given poor infrastructure this is unlikely to change. Town needs more employment.
- Tourism is the most viable avenue to create employment.
- Although there are some cafes, there is a poor provision of restaurants. Constrains tourism. Night time economy largely confined to pubs.
- Poor bus service limits flow of customers and workers to the town.



Tourism: the opportunity and threat

- Fantastic ecclesiastic heritage not used enough. Access to abbey church is sometimes curtailed. High crosses degrading. Abbey ruins inaccessible and degrading.
- Growth in tourist numbers leads to increased number of businesses, which in turn provides services and jobs for locals.
- Need for restaurant frequently mentioned. Tourism increases viability.
- Provision of guest accommodation is low. No hotel, hostel or campsite. Even the provision of B&Bs and short term rental is comparatively low.
- Can businesses be encouraged to reuse existing structures? Can some of the structures be converted to guest accommodation?
- The Hub has had a strong economic benefit. However, its social benefit has been questioned. Site can also be noisy.
- Little interpretation of natural heritage. Also need more interpretation of built heritage to deepen visitor experience and local pride.
- Risk of long term rental properties being shifted to short term rental.
- Risk of housing being used for holiday/second homes. Reducing stock for residents and increasing prices.
- Increase in traffic levels during the summer months. Poor parking habits. Camper vans parking along the quays and trying to access the Hub via the pedestrian entrance.
- Subject to no roosting bats being present, could the bridge and abbey be lit at night to highlight their architectural qualities? (e.g. Newport)
- Increase in visitors is increasing litter.
- Tourist office requested. Awareness levels about Graignamanagh outside of Kilkenny and Carlow is low.



Social infrastructure

- Sporting provision is excellent. However, if not interested in sport then there is not much to do.
- Tow path can be inaccessible for much of the year due to poor ground conditions.
- Difficult to find out information about what is on in the town.
- Need for greater awareness of social services that are available. Is a social prescriber in the town possible?
- Need for exercise equipment (outdoors) and public gym.
- Park with allotments is missing.
- More arts activities and arts spaces needed. Existing community buildings are approaching capacity.
- Lots of good festivals during summer months, but little outside of those. How can the existing festivals grow?
- What is distinctive about Graiguenamanagh? Can a distinctive festival be created outside of summer months?
- Develop spaces for teens.
- No creche in the town. This limits employment options for women. Is the provision of afterschool sufficient?
- If amenities are moved to the edge of the town (e.g. new healthcare centre), that will encourage more car use and take away activity from the town's core.
- Excellent library and schools but bus transport to third and further education options in Kilkenny, Carlow and Waterford is poor. Secondary school site is constrained.
- Needs to be easier for younger people to get involved in the town. Systems in many groups dissuade this.
- Meals on wheels needs to be expanded.
- Need for greater provision of accessible toilets in the town.



Poor community collaboration but also proven ability to get stuff done (e.g. Hub, GAA clubhouse, Town of books)!

- Generally a very friendly community how there does seem to me a high degree of infighting and a lack of collaboration.
- Need for better coordination generally across community groups.
- Need to improve coordination of festivals and events. Little happens during the tourist shoulder season. Currently, there are several high quality events but publicity can be poor.
- Frequently, groups do there own thing to avoid negativity or excessive compromising on ideas.
- Considerable talent in the town, especially around the arts but not being maximised.
- Businesses fear planning objections and complaints.
- One town split into two. Kilkenny and Carlow County Councils need to work together better and for this good relationship to be known about.
- There is low morale in the council estates, especially in families with intergenerational unemployment.



2. Revised SCOT analysis (strengths, constraints, opportunities, threats)

The town's strengths

- Although not on major roads or rail, the town is not far from major employment and education centres by car: Kilkenny City - 29mins; Carlow Town - 36mins; Waterford City - 45mins; Wexford Town - 47mins. Train stations not far away: Bagenalstown - 19mins; Thomastown - 17mins.
- Particularly strong built heritage. Abbey is impressive but much is hidden.
- Strong community groups. Friendly community.
- River Barrow and associated water activities. Internationally significant. Likely to be most beautiful stretch of river in Ireland.
- Good business community but small
- Good tourist offering but local sector is weak due to lack of accommodation.
- Good provision of recreational amenities for outdoor, summer activities. Poor evening time.
- Provision of community buildings but reaching capacity
- Good programme of events but little/no coordination
- Town is generally clean.
- Low crime rate
- Key crossing point on the Barrow
- Cushendale Woolen Mills (international quality craft)



The town's constraints

- Particularly bad vacancy and dereliction rate, especially in the town core.
- Tourism sector will be limited unless towpath accessibility is improved. Accommodation is critical. Food important.
- Priority of cars and heavy vehicles over pedestrians. Safety is an issue. Tough to address but doable.
- There is little cycling infrastructure but this is potentially a toxic issue. Constrained in certain locations by tight streets.
- Significant flood risk which is likely to worsen. Challenge of how to address this sensitively.
- Dependence on larger settlements for services and retail. Likely be an ongoing issue. Grocery is strong. Overall, services are good given the size of the town (e.g. new health centre, education).
- Limited recreation facilities in the evening and during winter.
- Very poor economic infrastructure: Freshwater (wastewater has capacity!); Electricity grid; Fibre broadband (not in NBI Plan); Roads (not on motorway or national road); Bus services (improving but still poor).
- Inability to build new houses. Population growth is largely stagnant.
- Unattractive for industrial development
- Heavy vehicles going through the town (bridges 7km to north, 16km to south)
- Post industrial town with intergenerational poverty (Kilkenny's poorest town economically).
- Siloed community efforts to improving the town.



The town's constraints (cont.)

- Infighting and undermining of efforts within community is relatively high.
- Inability/unwillingness of property owners to address vacancy.
- Reality/fear of heritage legislation which can dissuade action.
- Council personnel constraints. There is a limit to how much people can assist the town.
- Beauty of the town needs to be protected (killing the golden goose!).



The town's opportunities

- Very significant potential for building reuse.
- Improved use of greenfield and brownfield sites.
- Heritage sites as community and economic assets (e.g. tourism, events).
- Traffic management to create a safer, more inviting town for people to walk around.
- Geographically small town, albeit hilly. Walking should be the focus.
- Greatest level of public funding ever available for urban regeneration.
- Enhanced quality of life by creating a greener, healthier Graiguenamanagh.
- High quality of life attractive to high earning individuals wishing to not live in a city (i.e. hybrid workers, entrepreneurs).
- Using the Barrow navigation and quays to bring people to the town via boat.



The town's threats

- Crime is and anti-social behaviour relatively low. Nonetheless, this needs to be reduced where possible and could grow.
- Threat that a growing population will impact accessibility to services. This is a common perception in places with relatively high levels of social disadvantage
- Over reliance on tourism sector. However, there is little else economically that the town can pursue.
- Vacancy currently unlikely to grow significantly. However, dereliction may grow.
- Impact of climate change, with flooding being the most significant risk. Also associated risk of climate actions being badly designed.
- Community undermining itself.
- Funding schemes reduce/end.
- Pollution of the river undermining quality of life for residents and brand image.
- Success leads to house prices growing even more (second homes, Airbnb) although this may also increase economic viability of housing.
- Services in the town core moving to the edge, possibly leaving behind vacant structures.



3. Competitive advantage and avenues for positive change

A sustainable competitive advantage is a characteristic that allows a place to outperform its rivals that is difficult for those rivals to replicate. Below is Graiguenamanagh's sole identified competitive advantage:

The outstanding beauty of the town and its setting: river, historic buildings, mountains.

Poor infrastructure means no real chance of industry being established. The only real chance by from a resident directly.

How to bring money into the town?

1. Tourism (low wages but enhances quality of life by providing services and provides employment for those with low skills)
2. High earners and creatives coming to live in Graiguenamanagh



4. What winning looks like for the community

Below is an amalgamation of the responses to the question asked during stakeholder engagement of what winning/success looks like?

Low vacancy, high building reuse. A vibrant core with more businesses and employment. Being able to buy a house and live in the community. Being able to have a nice meal at night and walk around the town safely. A great place to live in and visit but not lose its authenticity. Develop greater community spirit to get more stuff done!



5. Lessons from other towns

Lessons from five towns were taken:

- Abbeyleix, Co. Laois (pop 1,897)
- Ballydehob, Co. Cork (pop 296)
- Boyle, Co. Roscommon (pop 2,915)
- Cahersiveen, Co. Kerry (pop 1,297)
- Dungarvan, Co. Waterford (pop 10,081)

Graiguenamanagh 2022 pop 1,506

A population of just 300 but it attracts A-listers, artists and a Michelin star – is this Ireland’s coolest town?

From blow-ins to travelling bands, foodie pop-ups to melting pots, this town has become a cultural crossroads. What’s its secret?



a cultural crossroads

Home / Irish News

Abbeyleix crowned Ireland’s Tidiest Town 2023



Irish Examiner Special Report: Local landowners give greenway CPO the red light

After years of discussions with landowners, an agreement, Kerry County Council has decided for a Greenway by compulsory purchase order resistance, reports Michael Clifford

NEWS REGIONAL Connacht Dublin Leinster Munster Ulster

Former Roscommon coaching inn turned into cultural hub

Updated / Wednesday, 19 Jul 2023 20:09



Irish Examiner The Menu: Déise delights as Waterford's food reputation goes from a whisper to a roar

Paul and Máire Flynn, of The Tannery, are Waterford food heroes, contributing immeasurably to the transformation of Dungarvan into one of Ireland's most popular tourist destinations ever before the Greenway arrived, but its opening has only compounded the seaside town's success



Formula for long term success

Competent businesses and community groups able to make things happen (Cahersiveen)

+

Community groups and businesses working well together to share resources, support each other and make a bigger impact than possible by working in siloes (Ballydahob)

+

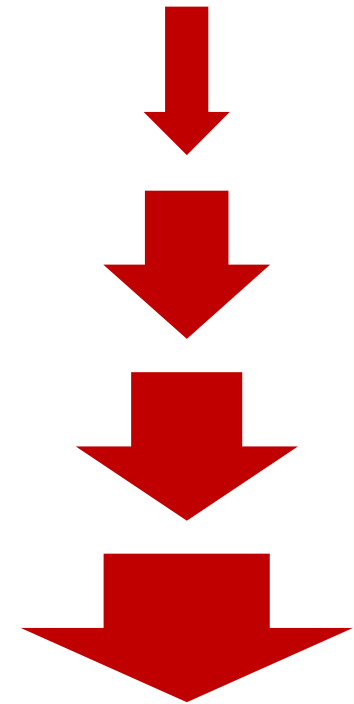
Saying yes to public and private investment (Dungarvan)

+

Being able to collaborate closely as a community with the Council to develop large scale projects as part of a long term strategy (Abbeyleix & Boyle)

=

Long term social and economic success and greatest positive IMPACT



6. Proposed actions

Action numbers and selection for implementation

Currently, there are 31 actions, across 6 themes.

Selection of actions recommendations:

- The community chooses a maximum of 16. Less is more!
Strategy is about what you don't do.
- 8 Long term/strategic: 3 High priority, 3 Medium priority, 2 Low Priority
- 8 Short term/momentum = 3 High priority, 3 Medium priority, 2 Low Priority
- At least one action per theme selected as a high or medium priority action.
- High priority actions are the clear focus of the Council and Town Team. Medium priority actions are only worked on once high priority actions are well progressed or a clear funding opportunity arises that may be discontinued. Likewise, low priority actions are only worked on once medium priority actions are well progressed.

Action types

Long term/strategic = complex projects that will likely take 3 years plus to complete. Structural importance to long term economic and social success of the town.

Short term/momentum = projects able to be started within 2 years and have a noticeable positive impact in less than 3 years. Builds belief and confidence in the community. Enhances the ability of the community to work on longer term, more complex strategic projects.

Passing the test!

Every action should be:

- A **desirable** solution, one that community really needs.
- A **feasible** solution, building on the strengths and capabilities of the community and Council, with funding likely to be available.
- A **viable** solution with a sustainable model over a long term.



Theme 1. Vacancy and dereliction

1.1 Reusing the Anchor bar and bank as a possible hostel, co-working hub, and centre for arts and culture

Reuse the Anchor bar and Bank buildings as a social enterprise with multiple uses. The prime use would likely be as a hostel. Other possible uses are as a co-working hub, arts space and tourism information hub. Finally, the venue could offer evening meals. Look to building reuse example in Boyle, Co. Roscommon which was funded under RRDF. Another example of the reuse of a historic structure is the CellB hostel in Bleanau Ffestiniog, Wales (<https://cellb.org/eng/>). Care should be taken to ensure any co-working hub element is sustainable over the long term. The co-working hub in Youghal, Co. Cork, has several small units for makers/crafts people.

Final use proposals will be subject to a feasibility study.

Funding: RRDF, Thrive

Benefits: Use of prominent buildings. Additional services. Greater economic vitality. Direct support to entrepreneurs and remote workers. Greater social vitality.

Trade-offs: Possibility of CPO being needed which has cost and legal implications.

Action type: Long term/strategic

1.2 Providing assistance to owners of vacant and derelict buildings: reuse clinics and building surveys

Develop a programme of bookable clinics whereby building owners can easily reach out to KCC for advice on building regulation, building repair, available grants (e.g. Croí Conaithe, Built Heritage Investment Scheme, SEAI) and financing in general. Importantly, advice should also be provided on the commercial opportunities of reuse provides and the tax implications. A complementary leaflet of use across the entire county could also be created.

Pilot low-cost building survey which provides property owners with detailed report and prioritises repairs. It should be conducted by an engineer or surveyor with considerable experience of dealing with older structures. A similar programme exists in Stirling Scotland. <https://www.stirlingcityheritagetrust.org/traditional-buildings-health-check>

There is a risk if services are moved from the town core to edge (e.g. healthcare centre) that the previous building becomes vacant long term. Suitable strategies should be put in place to avoid this.

Funding: KCC with some funding from property owners for surveys

Benefits: Less vacancy and dereliction. More accommodation. More economic activity. A more vibrant town centre.

Trade-offs: -

Action type: Short term/momentum



Theme 1. Vacancy and dereliction (cont.)

1.3 Vacant building policy: rates and Repair and Leasing schemes

All vacant premises should only be able to be entitled to avail of a vacancy strike off up to a maximum of 50% of the total Rates due (less arrears for previous years). Currently, buildings vacant prior to 2024 can avail of a 90% vacancy strike off. Applicable to all county towns and village cores.

Enhance the existing rates incentive scheme where businesses not already can avail of rates rebates of decreasing levels over 5 years, (i.e. years 1 & 2 - 75% reduction, years 3 & 4 – 50% reduction, year 5 – 25% reduction). Applicable to all county towns and village cores.

Apply a flexible approach to building regulations to addressing vacancy above the shop units. These are typically complex sites. The Repair and Leasing scheme has been proven to be a useful tool in addressing this issue. The scheme is particularly good at delivering one and two bed units. Applicable to all county towns and village cores but early focus on Graiguenamanagh.

Funding: KCC own budget for administration. Repair and Leasing scheme

Benefits: Reduced vacancy. Increased economic vitality. More properties available for accommodation.

Trade-offs: The stick of the rates payments may impact elderly owners. Likely to meet resistance. Repair and leasing scheme solely for the provision of social housing.

Action type: Short term/momentum



Theme 2. Economic infrastructure

2.1 Fibre broadband

Provision of internet fibre in the town is not uniform with certain areas having no access to high-speed broadband. Use the Piltown and Fidown scheme as a possible model to address this (<https://b4oc.ie/>; <https://cklp.ie/rural-broadband-case-study/>). Support provided by Kilkenny Leader Partnership. Other option is to investigate Starlink.

Funding: Kilkenny Leader Partnership

Benefits: Economic viability of enterprises increases. Greater opportunities to engage in education. Greater social connectivity.

Trade-offs: -

Action type: Long term/strategic

2.2 Water supply

It is essential for Graiguenamagh's economic and social future that an adequate freshwater supply be delivered to permit new housing to be constructed. KCC should continue to provide all necessary assistance to Uisce Éireann on this matter. Sewage treatment also needs to match future demand. The community could lobby politicians and Uisce Éireann until the water supply issue is addressed.

Funding: Uisce Éireann for works. Community funds for lobbying.

Benefits: Housing for local population. Economic development. Higher footfall in town core. Ability to house high income households to Graiguenamanagh.

Trade-offs: Possible sprawl away from the town core. Pressure on existing services.

Action type: Long term/strategic



Theme 2. Economic infrastructure (cont.)

2.3 Bus connectivity

Work with relevant stakeholders (e.g. Transport for Ireland/NTA) to ensure that Graiguenamanagh is well connected by bus with Kilkenny City, Carlow Town, Waterford City, Bagenalstown Train Station, SETU Carlow and SETU Waterford. The times should be conducive to those working and studying in Kilkenny, Carlow and Waterford.

Create a bus shelter in the town centre with timetable information clearly available.

Work with the providers to ensure that all buses are accessible for those with additional needs.

Funding: NTA

Benefits: Better connectivity. Easier for workers and students to get to their destination. More visitors to Griaguenamanagh.

Trade-offs: Some people may not like a bus shelter being located close to their home or residence.

Action type: Short term/momentum

2.4 Car connectivity

Much of the road to Kilkenny is now classified as 60kph. In consultation with the Guards, assess the possibility of redesignating where possible the road via Goresbridge to 80kph.

Given the strong rise in EV sales (now exceeding diesel cars), ensure that the town has adequate public Fast or Superfast EV charging facilities.

Funding: KCC for car parking signage. Dept of Transport for EV charging.

Benefits: Less illegality. Stronger connectivity with Kilkenny City. Greater adoption of zero emissions EVs.

Trade-offs: Road less friendly for pedestrians and cyclists. However, it appears that the 60kph designation is frequently flouted by motorists.

Action type: Short term/momentum



Theme 3. Social infrastructure and amenities

3.1 Awareness of social and community services

Run quarterly awareness clinics locals about available social services, community initiatives and training opportunities. Investigate creating the part-time role of Social Prescriber. Work with local GPs on social prescribing.

Funding: HSE's Sláintecare Healthy Communities initiative

Benefits: Improved mental and physical health. Improved community cohesion and spirit.

Trade-offs: -

Action type: Short term/momentum

3.2 River pollution

The community and Council should do what it is within its control to ensure that pollution into the river is minimised (e.g. septic tank inspections, farm inspections). Promote the generous grants available to address problems with domestic septic tanks. Collaborate with stakeholders upriver to ensure that pollution is minimised.

Work with Waterways Ireland to repair the boat wastewater pump at Graiguenamanagh. Support the creation of by-laws to ensure that boats on the quays have an effluent tank.

Funding: Dept. of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

Benefits: Cleaner river. Reduced risk of no-swim warnings. More economic opportunities.

Trade-offs: Some stakeholders may not like additional inspections.

Action type: Long term/strategic



Theme 3. Social infrastructure and amenities (cont.)

3.3 River swimming

Develop river swimming facilities to enhance useability, safety and overall enjoyment by residents and visitors. Examine the possibility of installing diving boards.

Funding: RRDF, Healthy Ireland

Benefits: Increased swimming. Improved mental and physical health. Increased economic activity. Stronger connection between people and nature. Strong advocacy for water quality.

Trade-offs: Possible impact on natural heritage, especially during construction.

Action type: Long term/strategic

3.4 Swimming pool

Create a year round swimming pool close to the river. A possible model is the pool at Bagenalstown.

Funding: Dept of Culture, Communications and Sport Large scale sport infrastructure fund

Benefits: Year round swimming. Increased safety.

Trade-offs: May reduce the connection between community and the river.

Action type: Long term/strategic



Theme 3. Social infrastructure and amenities (cont.)

3.5 Community park with Teenspace

Although the towpath functions as a linear park and there is an excellent playground, there is no large place where the community can congregate, relax, run and play.

In addition, there is little outdoor space in the town designed for teens. Accordingly, a Teenspace should be part of the design. South Dublin County Council has done considerable work on rolling out teenspaces. <https://www.sdcc.ie/en/services/sport-and-recreation/teenspace/>

Depending on its location, the park may be a point of entry to the river for swimmers and other recreational users of the river.

Any design should include the possibility of holding cultural and music events.

Finally, subject to an appraisal on likely demand, the park could contain allotments.

The park should be designed and managed to encourage biodiversity.

Funding: RRDF, Play and Recreation Grant Scheme, Dept. of Children, Disability and Equality

Benefits: More Improved physical and mental health. An additional space for festivals and events. More economic activity.

Trade-offs: Possible anti-social behaviour.

Action type: Long term/strategic

3.6 Reinvigorating the Duiske River as a social space and restoring the Clapper Bridge

The Duiske River is a corridor of biodiversity through the middle of Graiguenamanagh. Further enhancing the surrounding public realm along its route through the town would better connect locals with nature. It may also unlock possible economic opportunities such as the existing outdoor seating along the river outside Mick Doyle's Pub.

The Clapper Bridge is in a ruinous state. Reconstructing it would make a strong statement about community rejuvenation beyond its apparently modest scale. It would also enhance connectivity within the town. Any works to the Clapper Bridge should be done in keeping with the *Managing visitor safety in the historic built environment*. The reconstruction of the bridge should also be mindful of the possible impact of anti-social behaviour with appropriate management controls put in place. The Clapper Bridge is likely to be the only clapper bridge in an urban environment in Ireland.

Funding: RRDF, Community Monuments Fund

Benefits: Greater connection between residents and nature. More economic opportunities. An improved active travel network.

Trade-offs: Possible anti-social behaviour.

Action type: Long term/strategic



Theme 3. Social infrastructure and amenities (cont.)

3.7 River Barrow Towpath

For much of the year, due to adverse weather, the towpath is unusable. Regardless of the month, it is difficult to use for people in wheelchairs and others with additional needs. The economic and social benefits of an improved surface as evidenced by other more accessible towpaths are well proven. The current surface ensures that Graiguenamanagh and the other settlements along the Barrow do not benefit to the same degree. Although the previous surfacing proposal proved controversial, due to the likely social and economic benefits, the appropriate surface treatment of the towpath is worth reconsidering.

As a first step, an in-depth stakeholder engagement programme should take place before any designs are proposed to create a balanced approach, acceptable to the vast majority of residents along the towpath.

Funding: Transport Infrastructure Ireland

Benefits: Year round use. Useable by more people with additional needs. Improved physical and mental health. Facilitates long-distance cycling. More economic activity.

Trade-offs: Impact on nature, especially during construction. Possible increase in visitor numbers on certain days to uncomfortable levels.

Action type: Long term/strategic

3.8 Disabled toilets

Encourage and assist consumer facing businesses in the town to utilise grants to make their toilets more accessible for those with additional needs.

<https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/employment/employment-and-disability/workplace-equipment-adaptation-grant/>

Funding: Workplace Adaption Grant

Benefits: More economic and social activity in the town. Improved mental and physical health of those with additional needs by facilitating accessibility in the town.

Trade-offs: Administration to business. Disruption to operations.

Action type: Short term/momentum



Theme 4. Food

4.1 Evening food trucks

For the summer months create a programme where 3 licences are provided to food trucks to operate in Market Square or similar central location from 5pm-9pm, at least five nights a week. Benches and a tarpaulin/marque should be provided (e.g. Freshford). The food trucks should not provide food already available by existing takeaway restaurants.

Funding: KCC

Benefits: Greater economic and social activity. Better use of public realm. Possibility of food trucks establishing permanent restaurants in the town.

Trade-offs: Loss of parking. Possibility of anti-social behaviour. Litter.

Action type: Short term/momentum

4.2 Farmers market

Work with stallholders to develop a weekly market. Look to the successful market in Borris as a model. A possible location is in Market Square.

Funding: KCC

Benefits: Greater economic activity. Higher footfall. Supports creation of stronger food culture.

Trade-offs: Loss of parking. Litter.

Action type: Short term/momentum



Theme 5. Public realm

5.1 Increasing pedestrian safety

The public domain in the town centre is generally not welcoming to vulnerable users (e.g. older people, children). A programme of traffic calming, possibly involving pedestrian crossings, shared space, a 30kph zone in the town and improved footpaths is needed.

Works to the public realm should be done along universal access principles with strong local engagement at an early stage. Need to be mindful of those with diverse needs, including those who need the car to access services.

Funding: National Transport Authority

Benefits: Increased safety. Increased footfall. Increased social and economic activity.

Trade-offs: Slower for motorists. Possibly some low level loss of parking spaces.

5.2 Bridge

The crossing over the main bridge needs to be made safer for vulnerable users. Viable options include shared space and pedestrian bridge(s).

The view from the Scouts Hall/Rowing Club towards the bridge is of particular importance to the community.

Plants with woody roots should be removed by a competent contractor with experience of working on protected masonry structures.

Funding: RRDF

Benefits: Enhances safety and the perception of safety. Degradation of the structure by vegetation with woody roots halted.

Trade-offs: Depending on the solution taken to addressing safety, the appearance of the bridge may be negatively impacted.

Action type: Long term/strategic



Theme 5. Public realm (cont.)

5.3 Car parking and connectivity within the town

Encourage parking by visitors to existing car parks at Aldi and Fair Green (current use levels are low). If deemed necessary, develop a new car park for visitors to the town. Any new car park should be located close but away from the town centre with good walking conditions to the river.

There is a need for dedicated parking spaces for disabled, older people, adults with young children, and parents with autistic children. Routes to key services and associated parking needs to be maintained. Strong public consultation with residents and businesses will be needed.

Following improved parking signage and creation of dedicated parking spots for disabled, older people, adults with young children, and parents with autistic children, work with the Guards to ensure compliance.

Funding: KCC

Benefits: Improved public realm and safety.

Trade-offs: Some local resistance to creation of dedicated car parking for those with additional needs is likely.

Action type: Short term/momentum

5.4 Benches

There is an insufficient number of benches available in the town for people to sit. Accordingly, a series of seats should be installed along the quays and other locations in the town centre. Benches should be located along the routes from housing estates to the town core to provide places of rest for older residents and others with additional needs as they go to and from the town centre. Several benches should have the capacity to charge phones (i.e. smart bench). This would be particularly useful for teenagers and visitors to the town.

Funding: KCC

Benefits: More footfall. Greater use of the town centre. More economic activity. Walking encouraged which will lead to improved mental and physical health.

Trade-offs: Some businesses and residents may not like the presence of a bench outside their premises.

Action type: Short term/momentum



Theme 5. Public realm (cont.)

5.5 Lighting streets and prominent structures

Gaps in the provision of public lighting provision need to be addressed with energy efficient LED technology. External lighting to highlight the structure qualities of the bridge, abbey and other historically significant buildings in the town should be considered. Any lighting should be environmentally friendly and be in keeping with guidance published by Dark Sky Ireland.

<https://dpgay9x1sxad.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2024/11/DSI-Environmentally-Friendly-Lighting-Guide-1.pdf>

Funding: KCC, Climate Action Fund

Benefits: Greater safety and perception of safety. Supports nighttime economy. More social activity in the evening.

Trade-offs: Additional energy cost. Possible impact to biodiversity.

Action type: Short term/momentum

5.6 More bins, recycling bins

There is a need for additional bins in the town. New bins should be able to facilitate recycling. An alternative is to pursue a Leave No Trace approach to waste management. <https://www.leavenotraceireland.org/>

Funding: KCC

Benefits: Less litter. More recycled materials.

Trade-offs: Possible domestic refuse thrown into bins. Overflowing bins. More bin collections.

Action type: Short term/momentum



Theme 6. Tourism development

6.1 Publicising the town

Develop a strategy to publicise Graiguenamanagh as a place to visit, live in and open a business. A website is likely to be central to this. The Borris website could be a useful model to follow (<https://www.borriscarlow.ie/>). The website could be publicised in the town as large sticker displays on vacant shop fronts with a QR code linking to the site. An events page would be an important part of the page. This will need to be updated regularly.

Funding: Community and KCC

Benefits: Greater awareness about the town. More visitors. More economic activity. More high earners living in the town.

Trade-offs: Possible additional development pressure on existing social and economic infrastructure.

Action type: Short term/momentum

6.2 Festival coordination

Encourage greater collaboration between festival committees in the creation of an annual events programme that includes the shoulder season (i.e. April, May, September and October). Investigate how governance, admin, project management, etc. can be consolidated to permit greater efficiencies. Mentoring may be useful. Provide training on project management, marketing, etc.

Funding: KCC, Creative Ireland

Benefits: Improved events. Less burden on volunteers. More events during the shoulder season.

Trade-offs: Some committees may not appreciate the offer of assistance. They may see it as impacting their approach.

Action type: Short term/momentum



Theme 6. Tourism development (cont.)

6.3 Abbey conservation and masterplan

Create a masterplan investigating the conservation needs of the whole abbey site and how it can be best utilised for the community. The study should include the church, graveyard, abbey ruins and high crosses. Any plans will have to carefully consider the impact on the sacred nature of the site.

In Kilkenny City, the Black Abbey is often used for concerts, including during the Arts Festival and is one of the city's top visitor attractions. After closure during Covid, St Mary's Collegiate Church in Gowran is now open on a limited timetable for visitors. Holycross Abbey in County Tipperary offers school tours, group tours and Sunday tours for general visitors.

Funding: The Heritage Council, Community Monuments Fund

Benefits: Conservation of archaeological material. Improved sense of pride. Greater social and economic use of the site.

Trade-offs: Sacred character of the site may be impacted.

Action type: Long term/strategic

6.4 Tinnahinch Castle

Create a masterplan investigating the conservation needs of the castle and how it can be best utilised for the community.

Funding: The Heritage Council, Community Monuments Fund

Benefits: Conservation of archaeological material. Improved sense of pride. Additional tourist attraction.

Trade-offs: -

Action type: Long term/strategic



Theme 6. Tourism development (cont.)

6.5 Interpretation and wayfinding

Although considerable work has been done to highlight the town's built and cultural heritage (e.g. plaques and heritage trail map), there is little interpretation of the town's natural heritage. The interpretation that exists about the cultural heritage could also be significantly added to.

There is little physical wayfinding to aid the navigation of visitors through the town. Wayfinding will be necessary if visitors are directed towards car parks at the edge of the town core.

A suite of interpretation and wayfinding signage is needed to deepen visitors' knowledge of the town and their enjoyment.

Funding: The Heritage Council, Fáilte Ireland

Benefits: Improved visitor experience. More economic activity. Improved pride of place by locals.

Trade-offs: Possible clutter in the public domain.

Action type: Long term/strategic

6.6 Glamping/camping site

Additional accommodation is essential for the town to gain the economic rewards from tourism. Creating a glamping and camping site will partially address this.

Funding: LEADER, Private sector

Benefits: More economic activity. Increased economic viability of current and future hospitality businesses.

Trade-offs: Possible anti-social behaviour

Action type: Long term/strategic



Theme 6. Tourism development (cont.)

6.7 Historic townhouses managed as tourism accommodation by the Irish Landmark Trust

Work with the Irish Landmark Trust to bring one or two townhouses in the middle of the town back into use as high end tourist accommodation. Another option is to work with Waterways Ireland and the Landmark Trust on developing the Lock Houses.

Funding: Croí Cónaithe, Historic Structures Fund, SEAI

Benefits: Building reuse. Visitor accommodation provided. Economic activity in the town centre.

Trade-offs: Building could have possibly been used for long term accommodation.

Action type: Long term/strategic

6.8 Canal boat facilities

Develop the facilities at the quayside to facilitate canal boats. This includes power points, shower facilities and effluent extraction. Improved facilities will increase the attraction of the town for visiting boats. Once facilities have improved, investigate the possibility of having static boat rental via AirBnB.

Adequate space at the quayside would be required.

Funding: Waterways Ireland

Benefits: Greater economic and social use of the quays. Additional accommodation provided. Wide geography to the economic benefit.

Trade-offs: Space taken up at the quays.

Action type: Long term/strategic

