

# Submission by Kilkenny LEADER Partnership to the Kilkenny County Development Plan 2020-2026 based on the consultations for *The Nore Vision* initiative.

## Introduction

Kilkenny LEADER Partnership welcomes this opportunity to input into the consultation on the Pre-Draft Issues Paper of the Kilkenny County Development Plan 2020-2026 (hereafter, 'Development Plan').

This submission will outline proposals and ideas generated by *The Nore Vision* consultations conducted in Kilkenny for the future of the Nore catchment that the Development Plan could incorporate (please see appendix 1 for a map of the Nore catchment). The consultation process of *The Nore Vision* identified consensus among a diverse range of stakeholders that the following were desirable priorities:

- better water quality
- the conservation of natural heritage and sustainable floodplains
- improved access to and amenity value of built and natural heritage, and
- greater public awareness and pride in Kilkenny's rivers.

These priorities can influence the quality of life in Kilkenny across age groups and social classes, improve resilience in an era of climate change, benefit tourism and the broader economy, including through visionary land-use planning and place-making, and promote civic responsibility.

## ***The Nore Vision* – a valuable input to the Development Plan**

Firstly, this submission outlines the background to *The Nore Vision* consultation process and explains why it is a valuable input to the Development Plan. While this submission pertains to the Nore catchment in Kilkenny, its proposals may also have relevance for Kilkenny's other two major river systems – the Barrow and the Suir.

*The Nore Vision* consultation process has recorded the shared aspirations of stakeholders for the future of the River Nore and all of its tributaries, the land that drains into them, and the people who live and work there. It sets out the future that stakeholders wish to see for the Nore catchment within their lifetime and what they wish to leave as their legacy to the next generation. Consequently, the Development Plan's cross-cutting issues of sustainable development, climate change and social inclusion are also to the fore in *The Nore Vision* initiative.

From October 2017 to March 2018, over 200 people participated in consultation workshops for *The Nore Vision* including residents, landowners, community groups, development organisations and government agencies (appendix 2). *The Nore Vision* consultations revealed that while people, groups, bodies and agencies have a range of perspectives and priorities when it comes to the River Nore and its tributaries, there is a great deal of common ground when it comes to their 'Vision' for its future.

## ***The Nore Vision* consultation outputs and their relevance to the Development Plan**

Secondly, using the structure of the Pre-Draft Issues Paper, this submission outlines outputs recorded from *The Nore Vision* consultations. The relevant proposals and ideas set out in bullet points below are taken directly from consultations<sup>1</sup> with statutory, resource, interest and community stakeholders.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> In relation to the bullet points of outputs recorded at *The Nore Vision* consultations and presented in this submission, care has been taken not to stray beyond the material that was received, or to elaborate either issues or proposals beyond aligning those that are related or complementary and presenting them in clear and simple English. The intention is to ensure that stakeholders who participated in the workshops would be able to recognise outputs from the meetings in which they engaged.

<sup>2</sup> The report of *The Nore Vision* consultations is currently under review by all of its stakeholders. Thus, these key points are taken from the review draft of the report.

Where material in this submission is presented in paragraph form, this has been compiled by Kilkenny LEADER Partnership, a constituent member of voluntary steering group of *The Nore Vision* (appendix 3), supported by the independent researchers facilitating *The Nore Vision*.

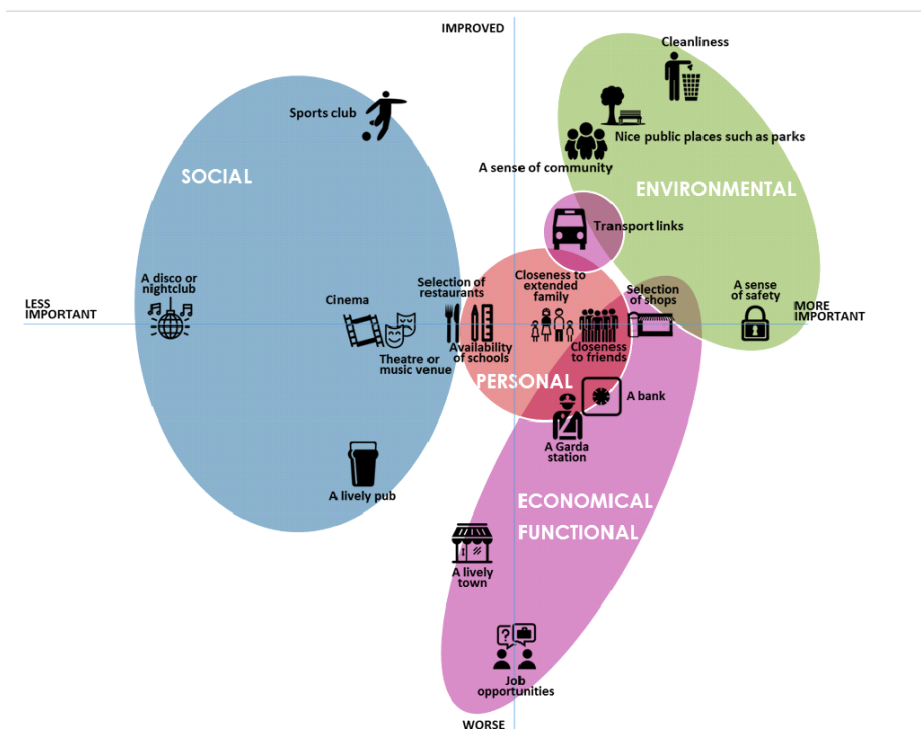
The outputs of *The Nore Vision* consultations are not directed at any one organisation, body or agency, nor are they solely relevant to any one community or economic sector. As is the case with the Nore catchment and its diverse resources, the end users of the outputs of *The Nore Vision* consultation process transcend social and political boundaries and have relevance to many stakeholders of different compositions. The Pre-Draft consultation phase of the Development Plan offers a welcome opportunity to share relevant outputs of *The Nore Vision* consultation process with Kilkenny County Council. This is done on the understanding that the Council is one of the many stakeholders for which this information is relevant and can be used to help inform future plans.

### ISSUE 1 – Population

Up to 150,000 people live in the Nore catchment (appendix 4), approximately half of them in County Kilkenny. Thus, three-quarters of Kilkenny’s population lives in the Nore catchment and this is projected to rise to about 90,000 by 2040.<sup>3</sup>

***How can towns become more attractive in order to “encourage people to want to live in towns”?*** From discussion at Ballyragget Information Evening 22 May 2018.

Research into people’s attitudes to towns<sup>4</sup> found that the elements of most importance in their daily lives tend to relate to the surrounding area, including the physical and natural environment. Public areas, including parks, are considered important or very important by 78% of people (this rises to 81% among people who would like to live in towns but currently live outside the centre). For cleanliness of their area, the figures rise to over 90% and 95%, respectively. This suggests that a policy to attract more people to live in towns in Kilkenny will be supported by investment in (1) increasing public areas and (2) enhancing the cleanliness of people’s environs.



Based on Kilkenny’s Core Strategy, the River Nore and its tributaries runs through (or directly adjacent to) the hub of Kilkenny city, the three district towns of Callan, Castlecomer and Thomastown, and the smaller towns and villages of Bennettsbridge, Clogh, Dungarvan, Freshford, Inistioge, Johnstown, Kells, Kilmanagh, Moneenroe, Stoneyford, Urlingford. Thus, investing in the River Nore and its tributaries to optimise (1) its amenity value as a public area so central to many Kilkenny settlements and (2) its environmental ‘cleanliness’ will support the objective of making those towns and village more attractive to new residents.

<sup>3</sup> Based on a population growth projection of 21-24% (Issues Paper, p.4).

<sup>4</sup> Source: Ignite Research (2015) *Irish Towns*. Kilkenny: The Heritage Council

Relevant points from outputs recorded at *The Nore Vision* consultations to the question - “**What can we do to incentivise living in these towns?**” (raised in the discussion at Mullinavat Information Evening 16 May 2018).

### Reconnect towns with their River

- The River as a focal amenity in the towns; accessible, enjoyable, e.g. like the Discovery Park.
- Link business and centres in town with the River.

### Pilot projects

- Carry out pilot projects to show families what free fun you can have by/in the River. Pick easy, quick wins. This needs good, safe access.
- Pick a tributary of the Goul (near Freshford) as a pilot or model for some quick wins from actions. Do everything possible to raise appreciation and use of the River and make use of the huge potential of the community-owned park.
- Optimise the use of existing facilities, e.g. Freshford Millennium Park, great for accessible use by young families.
- Amenity area near Parks Grove, near Ballyragget.
- Recreation at the Abbey Meadow – canoeing, fishing, swimming.
- Hold a catchment-wide river festival.<sup>5</sup>

Supporting the development of trails along the River Nore and its tributaries [see also – **ISSUE 4 – Rural Development**] could form the basis for planning the addition of appropriate infrastructure from parking and storage facilities to signage and seating, especially in urban areas.

### Walking

- Establish a Blueway along the River. Everybody should be able to use it and people should use it responsibly, taking a “leave no trace” approach. For example, develop recreational facilities such as the proposed Erkina Blueway which will benefit tourism and local interest.
- Establish joined-up walkways along the whole main channel and the main tributaries of the River (from source to sea), using the Tidy Towns model to get buy-in (from those along the route). Stretches proposed for walks include (or should encompass):
  - o Walkways to the River from Ballyragget.
  - o Along the King’s River.
  - o Browns Barn, where there is a walk in Freshford for the kids (and another swimming place), and where all that is of interest in the area could be highlighted (e.g. by signage).
  - o Walk out to Kells.
- Create walking routes between river spots and forestry walks, using Coillte forestry road network and adding information boards, picnic tables (e.g. in granite).
- Provide more family friendly opportunities, for example proper walkway and cycle path (combined), with signs about local wildlife, and seating in prime locations, such as areas of wildlife interest.
- Provide funding for stiles, kissing gates and benches/seats.
- Control overgrowth at Linear Walk so that the River can be seen. Further from the River, plant more woodland as this will help with drainage and to support the riverbanks. Extend the walk to the proposed new road, so that you can walk from road bridge to road bridge. And maintain the walk.
- Provide access in Callan town at Motte field and Abbey meadow. Walkway around the Motte ...

### Facilities & infrastructure

- Increased provision of amenities: picnic areas, playgrounds, fishing shelters, parking, signage.
- Provide public toilets. Look at cost-effective models used on the Continent, for example, where payments are made to local business owners (coffee shops, pubs, etc.) to provide access to a well-maintained toilet. This

---

<sup>5</sup> Examples given at meetings included the Abhainn Rí Festival in Callan and the Open Waters Festival in Thomastown.

supports local businesses too. An App tells people where these toilets are. This can be a catalyst to support other activities.

- Better signage and interpretation (e.g. on heritage and wildlife) around the River, with information and notice boards for locals and tourists (joined-up thinking).
- Create stop points along the River.
- Establish an interactive and interpretive centre in the Old Brewery Area.
- Decking/pontoons at each town along the River for kayakers, swimmers, fishermen, etc.
- Provide slipways to the River (as in Millstreet, Cork).<sup>6</sup>

### ISSUE 3 – Economic development and employment

Agri-food - Challenging in the era of Brexit as the UK is a crucial market.<sup>7</sup>

There is a range of vegetation types in the catchment; the most extensive is pasture (see map in appendix 5). The Nore catchment is an agricultural stronghold, dominated by dairy and beef farming, with tillage farming too. Agriculture is a key economic sector in Kilkenny and it is one that depends on two environmental resources in particular – soil and water. The quality of both can be negatively impacted by water pollution and flooding.

The outputs of Kilkenny's agriculture are used by food processors such as Glanbia, a major local employer. The good reputation of Kilkenny's farm produce that is vital for access by food processors to premium markets at home and abroad depends on consumers' perception of the quality of Kilkenny's environment, especially its water. High quality water and a clean environment also sustain other sectors, especially tourism, and can help to encourage enterprise, attract inward investment and increase employment by attracting well-educated, highly mobile workers in the knowledge-based economy. This quaternary sector is key to Kilkenny's future economic development and employment as it includes ICT, information services, media, R&D, design, entertainment, consultation, education and financial planning. Thus, protecting the quality of water in Kilkenny's rivers is vital not only to its environmental future, but to its social and economic future as well.

### ISSUE 4 - Rural development

Enabling people to live, work and access services in a high quality rural environment.

The River Nore is a Special Protection Area (SPA) – [see also **ISSUE 9 – Infrastructure**]. While this designation can restrict agricultural activity on riverside farmland, it also offers opportunities. The success of the Greenway model (e.g. in Waterford and Westport) and progress with South Kilkenny Greenway highlights the recreational and tourism value of long-distance, family-friendly trails along disused railway lines.

Rivers and the land adjacent to them offer another option – the Blueway model, defined by Waterways Ireland as “a network of multi-activity recreational trails, based on or alongside idyllic lakes, canals and rivers in Ireland”.<sup>8</sup> In terms of rural development “the development of Blueways presents valuable opportunities for rural communities to attract more visitors. These values lie not only in the recreational opportunities that they offer but also in their potential to stimulate local businesses and regenerate local areas. Blueways also provide an effective model of partnership between private, community, and voluntary sectors and relevant state bodies.”

The Nore is a natural corridor that connects many of Kilkenny's villages, towns and city throughout the north and most of central Kilkenny. While much of the infrastructure of the Nore comprises the river channel, bordered by natural vegetation or farmland, in places the recreational and tourism potential of the river has been optimised in both urban and rural areas, e.g. the River Nore Linear Park Walk through Kilkenny city (5km), and the Nore Valley Walk that runs from Kilkenny City to Bennettsbridge (12km), and from Thomastown to Inistioge (11km). The Walk Scheme (DCHG) subsidises farmers in Kilkenny to provide access for this linear green infrastructure and to maintain the trails. Some participants in *The Nore Vision* workshops identified further potential synergies to be gained by

---

<sup>6</sup> Under the 2017 Town & Village Renewal Fund, Millstreet was granted funding for the development of a Blueway, pontoon, slipway and carpark.

<sup>7</sup> Source: Presentation on Economic Development by Brid Hynes, Kilkenny County Council, Ballyragget Information Evening, 22 May 2018.

<sup>8</sup> Source: <https://www.waterwaysireland.org/what-is-a-blueway>

creating a joined-up approach between the Walk Scheme and GLAS, the agri-environment scheme (DAFM) that subsidises farmers for fencing off the riparian strip of land on their farms. This would bring together schemes that support farmers to set-aside their farmland along the river and that supports farmers to give access to and maintain walking trails across their farmland. Working with partners e.g. in DCHG, DAFM, KLP, NPWS and others, and co-ordinating such a process in a strategic way, through the Development Plan, could encourage the development of more trails and the joining up with existing trails along the river. *The Nore Vision* consultees sought that trails be designed and maintained in such a way as to promote native vegetation and biodiversity.

The relevant points from outputs recorded at *The Nore Vision* consultations are:

- Promote a more natural environment:
  - o Leave the land to be more natural near the River for a certain distance creating a wildlife corridor.
  - o Remove fallen trees but leave the roots to secure riverbanks and let vegetation be natural, not manicured.
- Plant riverbanks with coppice of varying sizes depending on location: willow, hazel, ash, oak, alder plus reeds ... that combined with nearby fen habitat would provide a bird sanctuary. Walkway to be located within this planted area along the riverbanks, fenced off from adjoining farmland, and with a rustic bridge over the river channel. Altogether this creates an inter-related attraction.
- Need to *re-open* Walk Scheme and *improve* the GLAS Scheme to support agri-tourism e.g. through use of the 1.5m/5ft setback corridor to accommodate walkways and angling pitches, and promotion of native vegetation and biodiversity.
- Collaboration across LEADER companies, Teagasc and [local authorities] to help to improve agri-environment schemes e.g. pilot an option for a watercourse buffer margin that is adaptable to the local area with a points-based system based on the land quality. Buffer areas could double-up as access routes → good for biodiversity, for derogations, for carbon-fixation / climate change. Pilot through a European Innovation Partnership (EIP).
- Collaborate on funding applications for ‘hard science’ projects e.g. LIFE, EIP, agri-environment initiatives.

## **ISSUE 5 – Transportation and mobility**

Greenways and Blueways tend to be discussed in terms of recreation and tourism. But could they, if suitably planned and designed through the Development Plan, also encourage more people to walk and cycle between settlements for school and for work, and to leave the car behind?

## **ISSUE 6 – Environment and climate change**

The Issues Paper refers to climate change adaptation, an emphasis on sustainable development and the need for the protection of green infrastructure. With regards to flooding, there is a recognition of the importance of the planning system taking account of the risk to people, property, the economy and environment. Responses recorded in *The Nore Vision* consultations to the risk of flooding in Kilkenny are presented under **ISSUE 11 – Landscape, heritage and green infrastructure**.

## **ISSUE 7 – Tourism**

This is a challenging time for Kilkenny tourism due to Brexit as the UK is a crucial market.<sup>9</sup> The ambition for tourism in Kilkenny includes:<sup>10</sup>

- o being “consistent with Ireland’s Ancient East”
- o where “heritage, design, craft and creativity, culture and sporting achievement is celebrated”
- o the “careful management and coherent presentation of Kilkenny’s rich built and natural assets”
- o where “Kilkenny becomes a stage upon which the festivals can be presented” and
- o there are “world-class food experiences”.

---

<sup>9</sup> Source: Presentation on Economic Development by Brid Hynes, Kilkenny County Council, Ballyragget Information Evening, 22 May 2018.

<sup>10</sup> Source: Presentation on Tourism by Brian Tyrell, Kilkenny County Council, Kilkenny City Information Evening, 10 May 2018.

According to the Issues Paper (p.19), history, heritage and landscape provide “an invaluable tourism asset”. There is an awareness that Kilkenny has many “untapped tourism resources, including its people, its heritage and its natural environment”. Of most significance to *The Nore Vision* is the recognition that a “major opportunity is the exploitation of the untapped tourism potential associated with the three major rivers flowing through the County, being the rivers Barrow, Nore and Suir.” Common topics at *The Nore Vision* consultations were river maintenance and litter and these relate to the Development Plan in terms of optimising the tourism potential of the Nore.

Points from outputs recorded at *The Nore Vision* consultations relevant to the Development Plan in terms of its questions – “**How can the Development Plan assist in supporting and expanding both urban and rural tourism?**” & “**How can Kilkenny best utilise its natural environment, including its major rivers, to expand and enhance its tourism product?**”

### Tourism

- A ‘whole catchment’ approach is necessary, particularly regarding the tourism visitor potential. All that is needed (to support walkers) is a pristine environment and access to it.<sup>11</sup>
- The River is a tourism attraction and should link with a Greenway/Blueway and have a heritage trail linking heritage sites. This would have economic benefits across the catchment.
- A greater emphasis on water tourism, and for Kilkenny and its surrounding areas to become a hub for outdoor/river activities.
- Restore angling tourism as this will lead to increased revenue generation. The value of salmon fishing is approximately €5,000 per fish. This value needs to be taken into account when considering the potential and importance of the River.
- Clear, pure, uncontaminated river water for insect life/larvae will lead to better fish stocks and improved fishing.<sup>12</sup>
- Tie in with *Three Sisters 2020* – Kilkenny, Waterford & Wexford.
- Create a ‘Wild Atlantic Way’ for the River Nore: from (the headwaters) to ... New Ross. Look at the Norman influence, medieval city, bridges, castles, etc., and other heritage and wildlife along the way and support this with signage. The Nore as a focus for ‘middle-Ireland’ tourism ... River Valleys of Midlands ...
- o Fáilte Ireland’s Visitor Experience Development Plan (VEDP) approach aims to create a cluster of experiences to help spread visitors around Ireland and across the year (fewer honeypots and less seasonality). Research in Ireland’s four main international markets shows a high interest in outdoor activity / being out in nature and that visitors expect water experiences. The new insight is that people want to be on the water rather than in it e.g. boat trips rather than canoeing. The extent of this interest surprised Fáilte Ireland (FI).

### Maintenance

- Establish a proper programme of reasonable maintenance of the River and associated areas and ensure sufficient access to the River for informed maintenance. Ensure it is clear who is responsible for the work and that people, particularly landowners, are aware of this system. An interactive map showing who is responsible for what along all stretches of the River should be produced and responsibility for keeping this up-to-date be given to a named agency.
- Provide a simplified system for contacts regarding getting maintenance/clearance done or enabling citizens to do this appropriately.
- Clear silt build-up under the arches of bridges, remove trees in the river channel, ensure no pipes are discharging into the River, that trees are not causing a tunnelling effect, establish buffer zones and integrated wetland areas.
- Plan to deal with the “collateral damage” of increasing numbers of people engaging with the River, e.g. for litter disposal, maintenance of fences, etc.
- Enable local action:
  - o Set up a Tidy Towns-style competition for all towns and villages along the River Nore.

---

<sup>11</sup> Nearly 2.1 million overseas visitors to Ireland in 2016 engaged in cross-country walking and hiking, compared with 821,000 who engaged in cycling, golf, angling and equestrian activities combined. One quarter of domestic holidaymakers engaged in walking or hiking compared with 20% for the other four activities combined. Source: Fáilte Ireland (2018). Tourism Facts 2016.

<sup>12</sup> The last 2 points highlight the links from water quality to biodiversity to fish stocks to revenue generated from angling.

- Along the tributaries make a scheme like the CIS (Community Involvement in Road Work Scheme) where communities can apply for support where they undertake recognised work (like the Dinin, a good practice model) – being proactive rather than reactive.

### Litter

- Littering should not be a painless crime ...
- Install cameras in beauty/tourist spots to prevent dumping.
- Public and youth education to prevent litter and dumping of rubbish.
- Introduce returnable glass bottles scheme.
- Ban chewing gum.

### Pride in Kilkenny's Rivers

- Actively celebrate the importance of the River:
  - Organise and deliver a series of events that encourage river use; a calendar of events, with a small grants scheme similar to Waterways Ireland.
  - Replicate the World Rivers Day initiative in Thomastown in communities all along the Nore catchment.
- Wider public education initiatives were also identified:
  - Provide signs and interpretive information boards (on wildlife, heritage, etc., that can be seen along the River) at specific 'stop points'.
  - Celebrate our heritage; the history of the River is important and it is good to celebrate this precious lifeblood of the community.

## **ISSUE 9 – Infrastructure**

### (a) Water and waste water & (b) Water conservation and water quality

People live and work throughout the Nore catchment. And everyone from local residents and workers to visitors and tourists impact on the quality of water in Kilkenny. From households to hotels, from farms to factories, from cafes to the county council, people use potable water and discharge wastewater throughout the day. Therefore, water quality is everyone's responsibility (see map of water quality in appendix 6).

As the population grows and as more tourists visit Kilkenny, the demand for water and the need for more wastewater treatment capacity will increase. Over 27 million litres of water are used in Kilkenny every single day and discharged as wastewater back into the county's rivers (Issues Paper, p.23). Thus, raising public awareness and fostering a duty of care towards Kilkenny's most visible and attractive water sources – its keystone rivers – will help to make the county a more attractive and a more sustainable place to live, work and visit.

Points from outputs recorded at *The Nore Vision* consultations relevant to the Development Plan in terms of its question – ***“What measures can be taken to improve water quality?”***

- All waste water treatment plants<sup>13</sup> to have adequate capacity and deliver tertiary treatment<sup>14</sup> of sewage throughout the catchment.
- Particular attention is needed to remove the phosphates both at treatment plants and through the use of reedbeds where streams meet tributaries of the Nore. Grants should be made available for farmers/landowners to do this (e.g. to establish reedbeds).
- Similarly, screens and filters should be used to capture micro-beads from toiletries, micro-fibres from laundry, and other undesirable elements before they enter the river system. Such screens and filters could be installed at the outflow of reedbeds (see above), in water treatment plants or domestic units.

<sup>13</sup> “Since January 2014, Water and Wastewater has been the responsibility of Irish Water and Kilkenny County Council treats water and wastewater in accordance with a service level agreement with Irish Water.” From the Development Plan, p.23.

<sup>14</sup> In waste water treatment, primary treatment removes the solids or sludge from sewage, secondary treatment begins to break down the biological content in the remaining sewage liquor, and tertiary treatment is an additional step to improve effluent quality before its discharge into the River.

- Increased education to reduce household chemical use, and other initiatives to support this such as the re-introduction of the “Chem Car” (collection for hazardous household chemicals). This may in turn reduce the need for de-sludging of septic tanks.
- Initiatives to reduce abstraction and demand for treated water supply, such as harvesting/collecting of rainwater and use of grey water for flushing toilets.
- Provide education on waste that can damage the River:
  - o that what goes into the sink or down the toilet ends up in the River,
  - o what not to flush or throw down your drain (including medicines),
  - o the need to reduce detergent use and how this can be done.

#### (g) Renewable energy

Points from outputs recorded at *The Nore Vision* consultations relevant to the Development Plan in terms of renewable energy:

- Develop small hydro-power stations for local communities using new technology.
- Use water to generate energy to power community facilities and/or generate income to support community facilities.

### **ISSUE 10 – Social, community and cultural development**

The Issues Paper (p.27) explains that “... a diverse range of recreation and open space facilities such as ... public parks ... and walking and cycling routes, are vital to the health and wellbeing of the residents of the county .... there continues to be a need for additional facilities and improvements to existing resources to raise standards and serve an expanding population.” It continues: “Older people need to be catered for and the inclusion of the needs of the older citizen should be central to any good community policy.” At the community workshops for *The Nore Vision*, retired people were a key demographic in terms of the numbers who attended and their participation. Older people expressed strong interest in natural and cultural heritage.

Supporting the development of trails along the River Nore and its tributaries [see also **ISSUE 4 – Rural Development**] could form the basis for planning the addition of appropriate infrastructure to encourage activity that benefits the health and wellbeing of residents, such as parking facilities near river access points, signage and seating, especially in urban areas [see also **ISSUE 1 – Population**].

Points from outputs recorded at *The Nore Vision* consultations relevant to the Development Plan in terms of – **water sports facilities**.

#### Boating, kayaking & canoeing

- The River to be made navigable again for small boats, without creating any environmental damage.
- Provide boat and equipment storage for clubs involved in recreation and high-performance water sports.
- Establish a kayaking centre with parking, showers and boat wash-down facilities. Create a beginner’s section and a more advanced section.
- Structured development of kayaking, to address the risk that clubs are not sufficiently trained, insured, qualified.
- Establish a canoe trail on the King’s river.
- Build and maintain features on the River for watersport activities (e.g. Clonmel slalom courses, weirs, etc.).
- Realise the potential of water sports to increase participation in sports, both recreational and competitive.

#### (e) Social inclusion

The Development Plan plays a role “through promoting good placemaking, for example ensuring new developments are designed with good connectivity and permeability for all” (Issues Paper, p.28).



The fact that the River Nore and its tributaries flow through or adjacent to so many settlements in the Core Strategy, and that social housing tends to be concentrated in urban areas, creates an opportunity to integrate new residential developments with a Blueway along the Nore. This would bring together social housing with an amenity that delivers connectivity and is free – especially beneficial to low-income and unemployed households.

#### (f) The Arts

“Culture is a key factor in attracting people to live, work and visit and is an essential ingredient in local place-making and quality of life for its citizens” (Issues Paper, p.29).

Points from outputs recorded at *The Nore Vision* consultations relevant to the Development Plan in terms of its question - **“Are the needs of different cultural, ethnic, youth, elderly, and persons with a disability being accommodated in our community?”**

#### Youth

- Young people need to get to know the River in order to like it. It is important that they get to touch, feel, and experience the River directly (for which access is required). How many kids have seen frogspawn (or similar natural wonders)? Several different initiatives are identified that support this goal:
  - o *Keep Kilkenny Beautiful* and *Kilkenny Anglers* clubs initiatives (and others) for primary and secondary school children to support education, and indirectly help inform parents.
  - o Provide affordable, locally accessible, swimming lessons for kids. This will increase swimming activity as kids are keen and parents will be less worried about them swimming. This will increase interest in, exposure to, and care for the River.
  - o Geological Survey of Ireland’s ‘Discover your tap water’; The Heritage Council’s school heritage programme; Inland Fisheries Ireland’s ‘Something Fishy’™, staff from Irish Water, Kilkenny County Council’s Environment Section visit schools, and Kilkenny LEADER Partnership plans to develop youth-focused education on river, water and biodiversity of the Nore catchment.<sup>15</sup>
- Opportunities for swimming throughout the catchment to be facilitated, such as:
  - o Swimming area for Kilkenny – near Green’s bridge (like at Thomastown) or at 3<sup>rd</sup> field in the meadows at the Linear Park at very low water. There’s a river lifeguard.<sup>16</sup>
  - o The Paupers’ Hole was a sandy place where the children from the workhouse in Tramore were brought to wash. There was a weir there for the mill race. The weir was never reinstated after the bypass (around Callan) was built, so that the “Paupers Hole” (swimming hole) is gone and there is now nowhere to swim.
- Provide ropes, swings, diving boards and access to swim in the River.
- Make use of the standing waves for surfing in Ballyragget and in Kilkenny at Green’s bridge. These are hard to find (rare).
- White-water centre with river education unit for school tours, to learn about wildlife, fish, flora, tributaries, the Nore catchment area: a fun centre.
- Hold regattas with races, greasy pole to encourage enjoyment of the River, etc.

#### Persons with a disability

- Make stretches of walkways wheelchair accessible but try to avoid hard surfaces elsewhere and develop as “green” walkways and routes where possible.

---

<sup>15</sup> Staff from the National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) and from the Waters and Communities Office (LAWCO) are very active in the education of children and young people in matters related to rivers and wildlife.

<sup>16</sup> A lifeguard is on duty in July/Aug at the Weir-Kilkenny and Bishop’s Meadows.

## ISSUE 11 – Landscape, heritage and green infrastructure

According to the Issues Paper (p.30), “Kilkenny’s heritage ... gives it its special character and its ‘sense of place’. It is a valuable economic resource. It is the basis for Kilkenny’s tourism industry, and .... is also vital for the health, well-being and quality of life of communities.”

### (a) Natural heritage

Biodiversity, geology and landscape “... provides significant economic benefits .... underpins ... agriculture, tourism and recreation and is a core component of the county’s green infrastructure.” Its protection is “necessary to sustain economic growth” e.g. SACs and SPAs.

The River Nore comprises Kilkenny’s Special Protection Area. This means that the Nore is an area of international importance under the EU Birds Directive (Kingfisher). The SPA extends along the course of the river through Kilkenny to Coolnamuck (~3km south of Inistioge), including the tributary of Kings River from Mill Island (near Callan Golf Club) to where it joins the Nore.<sup>17</sup>

Points from outputs recorded at *The Nore Vision* consultations relevant to the Development Plan in terms of its question – “**How can natural heritage and biodiversity be enhanced?**”

- Provide specific support for ecology and biodiversity within the catchment including:
  - o Provision of bird boxes, bat boxes, etc. – at bridges and elsewhere.
  - o Restrict cutting of hedgerows and encourage best practice management to benefit birds and wildlife.
  - o Diversified [tree] planting, with emphasis on broadleaf and native species.
- Promote a more natural environment:
  - o Limit light pollution (Dark City/County accreditation may be possible for some stretches of the River).
- Freshwater pearl mussel preservation:
  - o Steady small steps to recover floodplain function along the River (and so species-rich wetland in riparian zones) and have more sustainable upper catchment land use with peat restoration wherever possible. This will help restore a functioning freshwater pearl mussel (*Margaritifera durrovensis*) population in key areas of the River where there remains good near-bed velocity flow and thus more natural riverbed habitat and cleaner conditions. (This is mainly driven by areas of higher gradient and the persistence of boulders and larger stones in the River, which create good preferential velocities.) Keep the population functioning through the release of short-term captive bred mussels with the view to having some small, sustainable habitat areas for this mussel into the future.
  - o For this to happen, potential key habitat areas need to be mapped, and the floodplain function assessed. If the landowner would agree, a management plan would need to be prepared to provide the necessary riparian management. The habitat would be supplemented with captive bred mussels. The habitat areas will of course be influenced by all the outputs to the River from upstream, so some level of protection of the upper catchment and downstream would be needed, but this could be done in steady small steps. The protection and recovery of the best habitat areas is very urgent, as the number of mussels continues to decline and with it the remaining genetic diversity of this population.
- An education programme to raise awareness of invasive species and ways to tackle them.
- A catchment-wide, long-term, strategy to eradicate invasive species. Invasive plants should be removed in one co-ordinated sweeping movement starting at the top (headwaters) of the catchment. Get all angling clubs, farmers, and other community groups, involved.

### (b) Built heritage

Architectural heritage (including industrial heritage along the Nore). The Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) of Kilkenny City and 8 of the 10 county ACAs are in the Nore catchment.

---

<sup>17</sup> Source: <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/spa/004233>

- There should be more **markers** to alert people and inform them about the heritage along the River, and signage to engage people to make them aware of the heritage and features as they walk along the River.
- Restore and find new uses for old buildings.
- **Preservation plans** should be developed for heritage in the catchment. Consider using village enhancement projects to support these.
- Aspects of heritage to highlight:
  - o Nore mythology, e.g. Eoir (old name for the River), the Salmon of Knowledge, etc.
  - o Names of the bridges over the River.
  - o Norman history along the Nore - linking it with the Norman Way (in Wexford).
  - o Castle and the River coming in the Durrow Road – the history. Link in with history groups.
  - o Callan was named after King Caille who drowned in the River trying to save a servant. Make this a feature to be proud of and empower the community to organise maintenance of amenity; Abbey Meadows, riverbank treatment to include the historic Motte and Bailey.

(d) Green infrastructure – network of green spaces

“The multifunctional role of green infrastructure enhances opportunities for recreation and tourism, encourages new business to invest in the county and has a role in climate change adaptation. The current Development Plan identifies green infrastructure as a key strategic asset for the county” (Issues Paper, p.32).

Points from outputs recorded at *The Nore Vision* consultations relevant to the Development Plan in terms of its question - **“How can we encourage the use of ... green infrastructure approaches (e.g. tree planting) ... to provide solutions in relation to water management and the need to adapt to the predicted impacts of climate change?”**

- There are potential business opportunities with developing expertise in building e.g., leaky dams. Anticipated that over next 5 years, Natural Flood Management will be deployed nationwide and there will be high demand for people with specific experience. Researchers can help train local people who may have potential to develop this soft engineering technology.
- Community participation and ownership of flood risk management interventions is central to the natural flood risk management approach, and to holistic catchment management more generally. This means developing research methods and approach to flood risk that actively involves affected communities from the start.

Points from outputs recorded at *The Nore Vision* consultations relevant to the Development Plan in terms of its question – **“How can greater access to the natural, built and archaeological heritage be facilitated, while having regard to the sensitive nature of many sites?”**

Access

- Create clear access to walk and fish the River, with accessible and affordable opportunities for all to fish (rather than just corporate entities).
- Provide increased provision of safe access for water users and land-based recreationalists (walkers, anglers, etc.) along the riverbank. This includes provision of adequate visual access to the River.
- Prevent the loss of Rights of Way leading to or along the River. This is in the interest of tourism; consider the trails down to New Ross from Ballacolla on the Barrow.
- Access issues for landowners are valid and need to be recognised.
- Walking is free and walkers spend their money elsewhere in the area – this is proven. But there is a need for funding support for the provision of the walks. Provide an adequate return to landowners for provision of access and maintenance, so that it is worthwhile for farmers.
- Payment of an annual grant to landowners for allowance of walkway, like work done by LEADER. Cover routes throughout the catchment. For example, GLAS (agri-environment Scheme) provides extra payment as incentive (to landowners to deliver public goods like wildlife habitat). This should be improved and expanded.
- Provide clarity on public liability for landowners e.g. *Trails Ireland* can help with this.
- Provide insurance for farmers to allow access, with clear explanation of the cover provided.

- Consider the careful provision of parking. There is a balance to be achieved here.

#### Serenity and wellbeing

- Protect the River as a serene place where a person can slow down and enjoy the simple things in life. Some places need to be kept *peaceful*, others should be *playful*, e.g. have amenities.
- Enable the public to enjoy the River and walks feeling secure and safe.
- Dogs to be kept under control along the riverbank.

#### Safety & oversight

- River wardens on Linear Park.
- Engage the local community to take ownership of their River. This will encourage more care and oversight and a greater ability to ensure safety.

### **Conclusion**

Kilkenny LEADER Partnership appreciates this opportunity to comment on the Pre-Draft Issues Paper of the Kilkenny County Development Plan 2020-2026. The proposals and ideas generated from *The Nore Vision* consultation process and contained in this submission intersect with three of the Development Plan's four cross-cutting issues, namely: sustainable development, climate change, and social inclusion. Furthermore, they strongly complement a range of the Development Plan's 11 'big issues', namely: (1) population; (3) economic development and employment; (4) rural development; (5) transportation and mobility; (6) environment and climate change; (7) tourism; (9) infrastructure; (10) social, community and cultural development; and (11) landscape, heritage and green infrastructure. The many synergies of the outputs from *The Nore Vision* consultation process with the Development Plan reflect the central role that Kilkenny's rivers play in the quality of experiences of all those who live, work and visit the county. Therefore, Kilkenny LEADER Partnership would welcome the incorporation of proposals and ideas contained in this submission into the Development Plan.

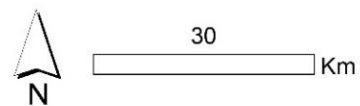
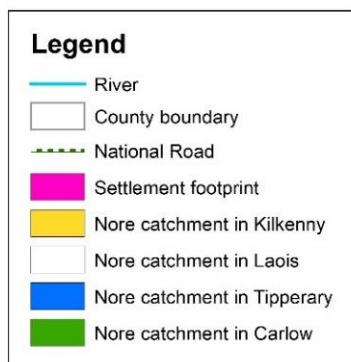
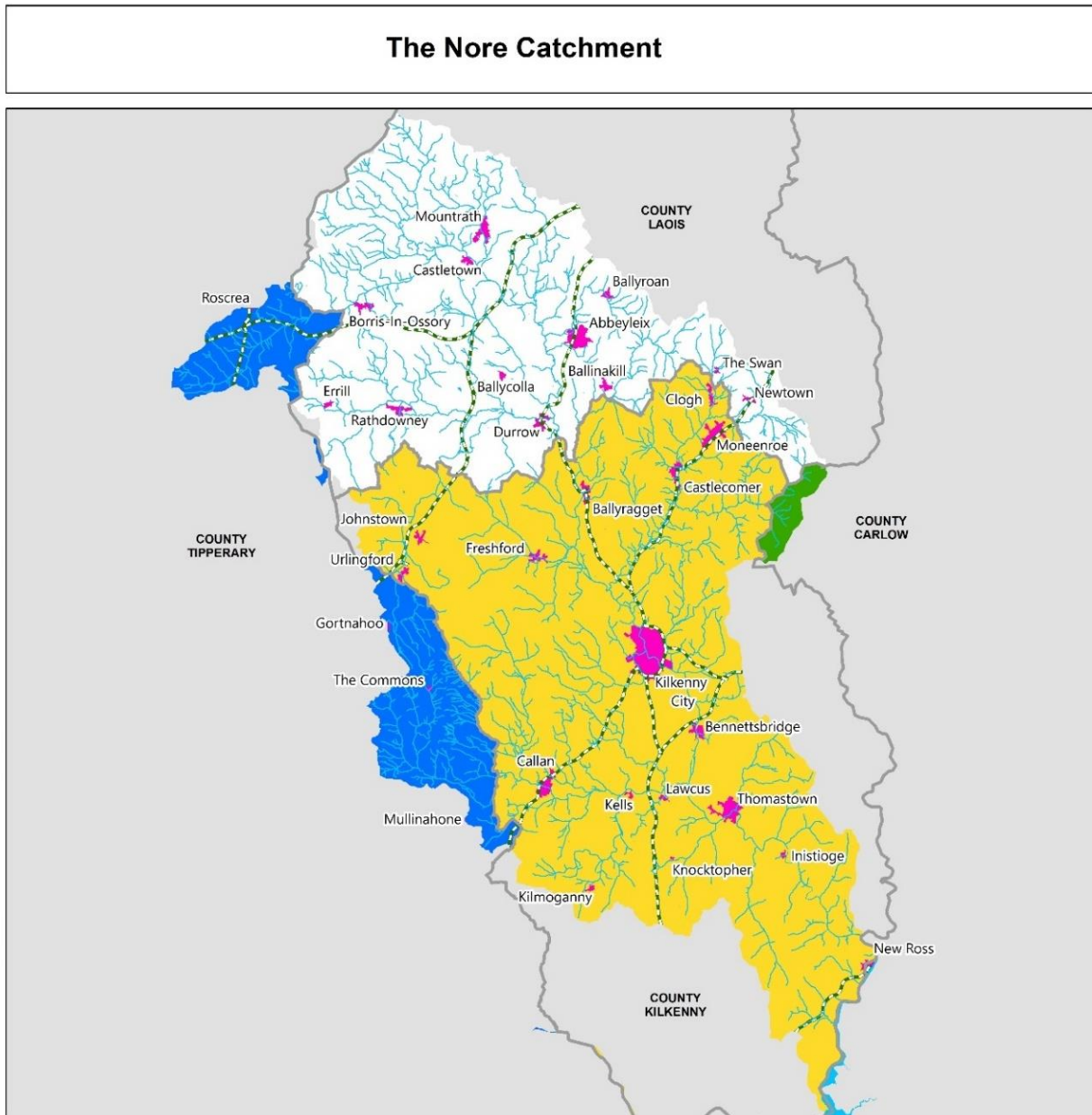
For further information, please contact:

Mr. Declan Rice, KLP CEO at [declan.rice@cklp.ie](mailto:declan.rice@cklp.ie)

Dr. Caroline Crowley and Dr. Harriet Emerson at [TheNoreVision@gmail.com](mailto:TheNoreVision@gmail.com)

FB: *The Nore Vision*

**Appendix 1: The Nore catchment in Kilkenny, Laois, Tipperary and Carlow.**



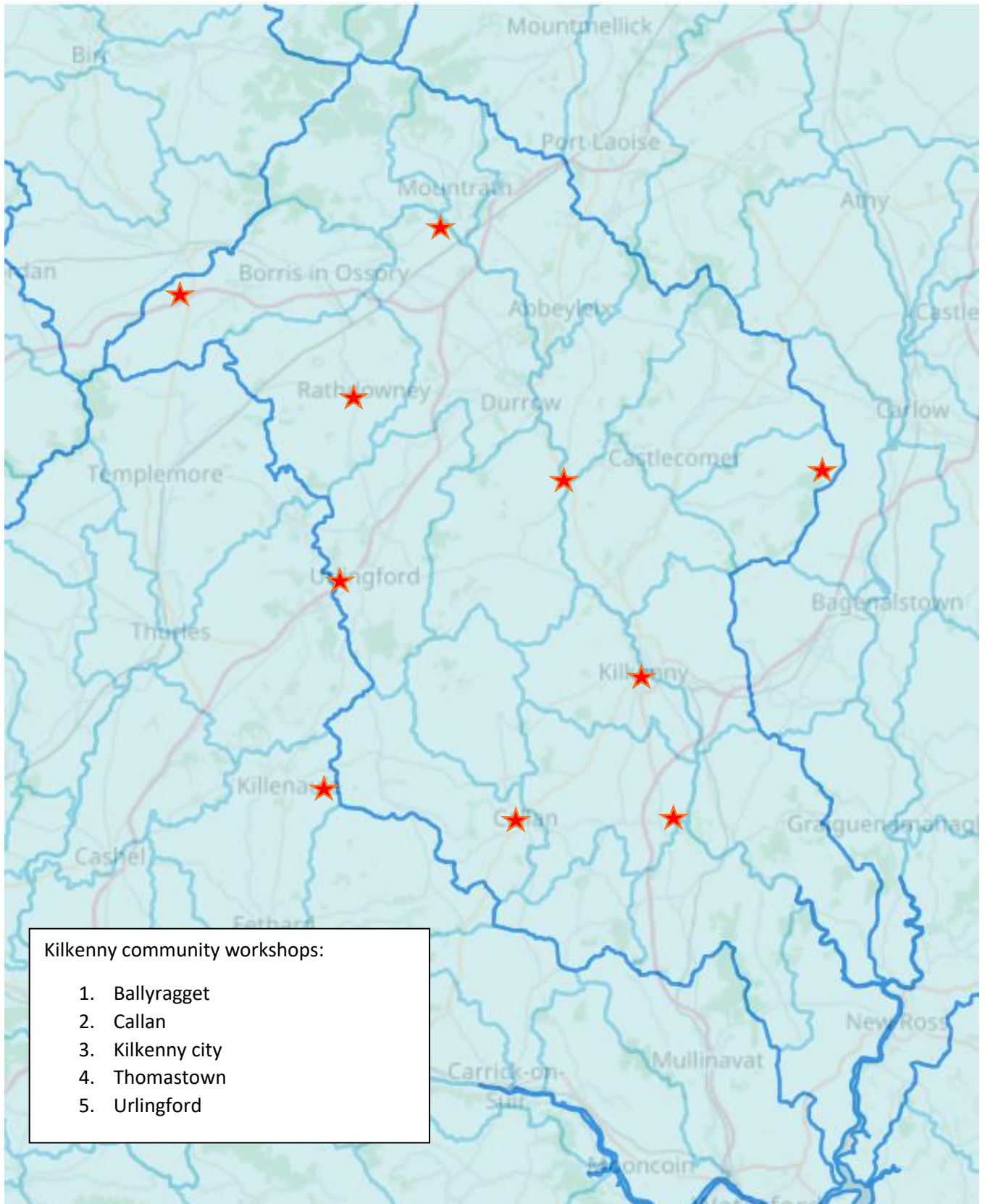
Digital boundaries: Ordnance Survey Ireland and Environmental Protection Agency, Government of Ireland

## Appendix 2: Consultations for *The Nore Vision*

- (a) Contributors - the following agencies, authorities, organisations and groups with an interest in water quality, environmental resources, land use management, development, heritage and education participated in *The Nore Vision*.

| Statutory Workshops  | Resources & Interests Workshop                    | Community Workshops                               |
|--|---|---|
| <i>Bord na Móna</i>  | <i>An Taisce</i>                                  | <i>Abbeyleix Bog</i>                              |
| <i>Department of Agriculture, Food &amp; Marine - Nitrates</i> | <i>BirdWatch Ireland - Kilkenny</i>               | <i>Ballyragget Tidy Towns</i>                     |
| <i>Environmental Protection Agency – Water</i>                 | <i>Breaghagh Conservation Group</i>               | <i>Bilboa Community Group</i>                     |
| <i>Fáilte Ireland</i>  | <i>Glanbia Co-operative Society Ltd</i>           | <i>BirdWatch Ireland - Kilkenny</i>               |
| <i>Geological Survey of Ireland</i>                            | <i>Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association</i>  | <i>BirdWatch Ireland - Laois</i>                  |
| <i>Inland Fisheries Ireland</i>                                | <i>Irish Farmers Association</i>                  | <i>Bournea Reaching Out (Heritage)</i>            |
| <i>Irish Water</i>   | <i>Irish Mining &amp; Quarrying Society</i>       | <i>Breaghagh Conservation Group</i>               |
| <i>Kilkenny County Council – Environment</i>                   | <i>Irish National Flood Forum</i>                 | <i>Camphill Communities</i>                       |
| <i>Kilkenny County Council – Heritage</i>                      | <i>Kilkenny Aqua Canoe Club</i>                   | <i>Canoeing Ireland</i>                           |
| <i>Kilkenny County Council – Planning</i>                      | <i>National Federation of Group Water Schemes</i> | <i>Grange Development Group</i>                   |
| <i>Kilkenny LEADER Partnership</i>                             | <i>Nore Dragon Paddlers</i>                       | <i>Irish Countrywomen's Association</i>           |
| <i>Laois County Council – Planning</i>                         | <i>Nore River Trust</i>                           | <i>Irish Mining &amp; Quarrying Society</i>       |
| <i>Laois County Council – Environment</i>                      | <i>Streamscapes</i>                               | <i>Irish National Flood Forum</i>                 |
| <i>Laois Partnership</i>                                       | <i>Thomastown Community River Trust</i>           | <i>Irish Wildlife Trust</i>                       |
| <i>Local Authorities Water &amp; Communities Office</i>        | <i>Thomastown Paddlers Canoe Club</i>             | <i>Kilkenny Aqua Canoe Club</i>                   |
| <i>National Biodiversity Data Centre</i>                       | <i>Trail Kilkenny</i>                             | <i>Laois Kayak &amp; Canoe Club</i>               |
| <i>National Parks &amp; Wildlife Service</i>                   |   | <i>Laois Sports Partnership</i>                   |
| <i>North Tipperary LEADER Partnership</i>                      |   | <i>Mountrath Development Association</i>          |
| <i>Office of Public Works</i>                                  |   | <i>National Federation of Group Water Schemes</i> |
| <i>South Tipperary Development Company</i>                     |   | <i>Nore River Trust</i>                           |
| <i>Teagasc - Agricultural Catchments Programme</i>             |   | <i>Slieveardagh Rural Development</i>             |
| <i>Teagasc - Farm Advisory Service</i>                         |   | <i>South Laois River Drainage Committee</i>       |
| <i>The Heritage Council – Education</i>                        |   | <i>Streamwatchers</i>                             |
| <i>Tipperary County Council – Planning</i>                     |   | <i>Thomastown Community Network</i>               |
| <i>Trinity College Dublin - Human Geography</i>                |   | <i>Thomastown Community River Trust</i>           |
| <i>Trinity College Dublin - Physical Geography</i>             |   | <i>Tidy Towns</i>                                 |
|  |   | <i>Trail Kilkenny</i>                             |
|  |   | <i>Trout Anglers Federation of Ireland</i>        |
|  |   | <i>Woodenbridge Paddlers Canoe Club</i>           |

(b) Location of community workshops for *The Nore Vision* – community consultations in Kilkenny were held in locations across the spectrum of the County Settlement Hierarchy i.e. hub (Kilkenny city), district towns (Callan and Thomastown), smaller town (Urlingford) and village (Ballyragget). All except Urlingford are Architectural Conservation Areas, where Kilkenny’s built heritage is protected. This ensured that *The Nore Vision* heard from communities in different parts of the county, with different needs and expectations e.g. in terms of river-based leisure and recreational amenities, and with regard to built heritage.



Source of map: [catchments.ie](http://catchments.ie)

(c) Some of the stakeholders around the catchment in Kilkenny who gave their Vision for the Nore and the steps to achieve it.

Urlingford Family Resource Centre



Ballyragget Community Hall



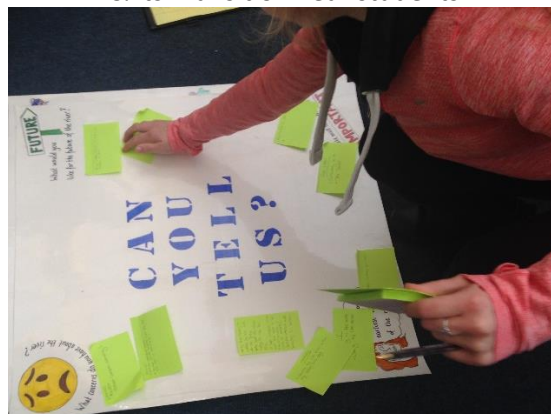
The Heritage Council offices, Kilkenny city



Springfield Court Hotel, Kilkenny city



& its Transition Year students



Grennan College, Thomastown





### Appendix 3: Voluntary Steering Group of *The Nore Vision*

The Steering Group is comprised of members who have been participating in and helping to guide *The Nore Vision* from the outset and those who have joined as the process has evolved and expanded from Kilkenny to other counties. Representation at steering group meetings varies, with colleagues attending in lieu of listed members as schedules demand or as people move to new positions or agencies, therefore this is not an exhaustive list of the people who have overseen the initiative since 2017.

| <i>Name</i>                  | <i>Representing</i>                 | <i>Interests / Position</i>                           |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| <i>Ms Anne Goodwin</i>       | Laois Partnership                   | CEO   |
| <i>Mr Alan Cullagh</i>       | Inland Fisheries Ireland            | Development Inspector                                 |
| <i>Dr Amanda Greer</i>       | Community                           | Conservation, invasive species removal expert         |
| <i>Ms Ann Phelan</i>         | Waters & Communities Office (LAWCO) | Community Water Officer, Southern Region              |
| <i>Mr Basil Mannion</i>      | LAWCO                               | Community Water Officer, Mid Region                   |
| <i>Mr David McInerney</i>    | IFI                                 | Southeastern River Basin District Director            |
| <i>Ms Dearbhala Ledwidge</i> | Kilkenny County Council             | Heritage Officer                                      |
| <i>Mr Declan Rice</i>        | Kilkenny LEADER Partnership         | CEO   |
| <i>Dr. Fran Igoe</i>         | LAWCO                               | Southern Region Coordinator                           |
| <i>Ms Gabrielle Carroll</i>  | CKLP                                | Enterprise & Project Officer                          |
| <i>Mr Ger Lyster</i>         | Community                           | F-T farmer along river, Trail Kilkenny participant    |
| <i>Mr Gerry Gallagher</i>    | Office of Public Works              | Project Engineer                                      |
| <i>Ms Helene O’Keeffe</i>    | The Heritage Council                | Head of Education                                     |
| <i>Ms Isabel Cambie</i>      | South Tipperary Development Company | CEO   |
| <i>Mr Jimi Conroy</i>        | National Parks & Wildlife Service   | Conservation Ranger                                   |
| <i>Mr Leslie Byrne</i>       | Community                           | Land/business owner along river                       |
| <i>Ms Mairead Rohan</i>      | CKLP                                | Community Development Officer                         |
| <i>Mr Mark Clancy</i>        | Laois Partnership                   | Project Officer                                       |
| <i>Mr Mark Rylands</i>       | STDC                                | Project Officer                                       |
| <i>Mr Michael Murray</i>     | North Tipperary LEADER Partnership  | CEO   |
| <i>Mr Paddy Phelan</i>       | Three Counties Energy Agency        | Manager   |
| <i>Mr Pat Boyd</i>           | Community                           | Recreation, Breaghagh Conservation Group (Tidy Towns) |
| <i>Mr Seamus Foley</i>       | Kilkenny County Council             | Engineer – Environment                                |
| <i>Mr Michael Nugent</i>     | Kilkenny County Council             | Environmental Enforcement Officer                     |
| <i>Mr Stan Cullen</i>        | Laois County Council                | Engineer - Environment                                |
| <i>Ms Trisha Purcell</i>     | NLTP                                | Development Officer                                   |

Steering group field trip to the Dinin Riparian Rehabilitation Project on the land of member Leslie Byrne at Lisnafunchin, Castlecomer.

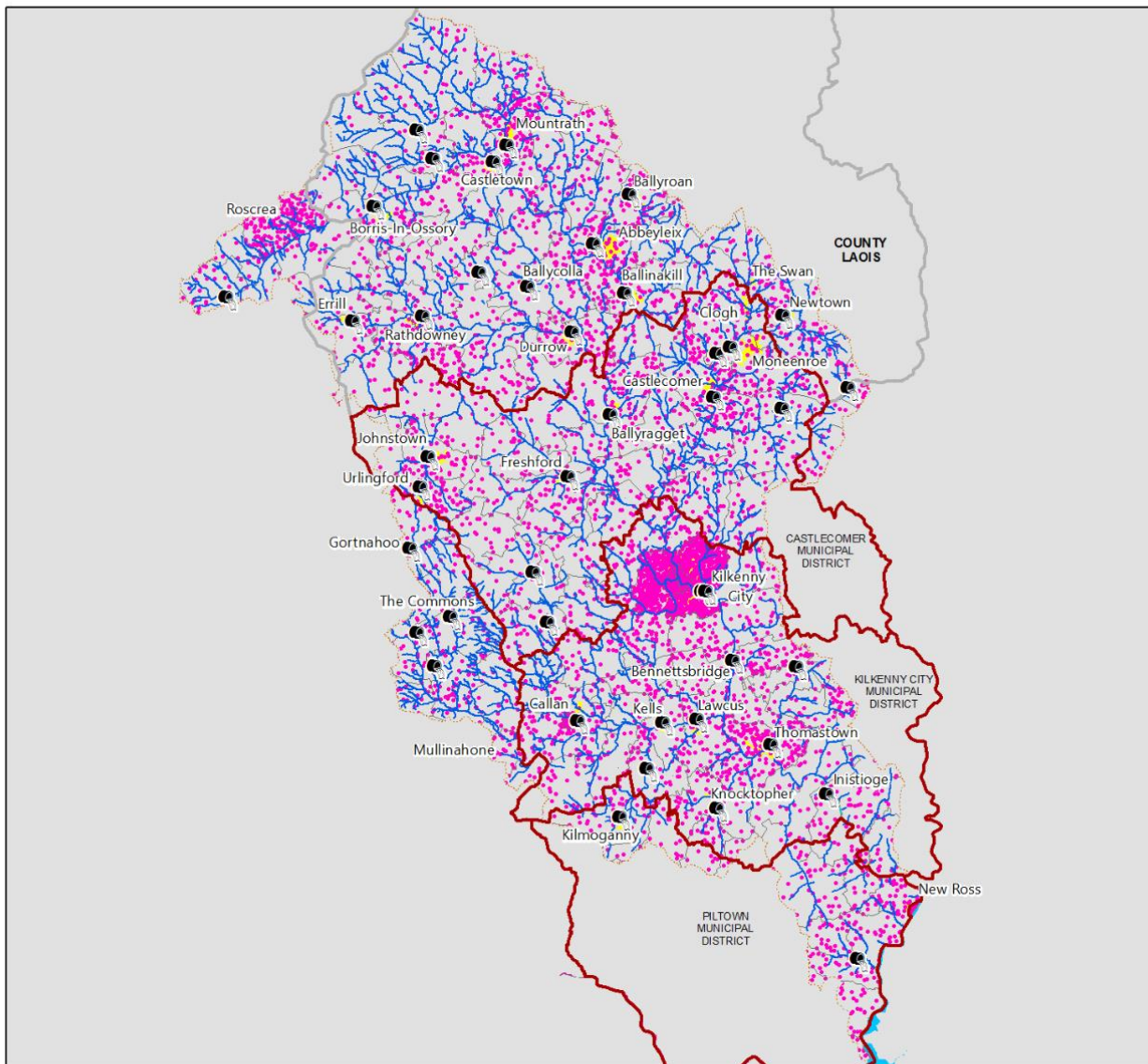


Steering group visit to Bennettsbridge with *The Flow Partnership*, a UK NGO involved in multi-stakeholder flood resilience projects.



Appendix 4:

Where people live in the Nore Catchment, 2016.

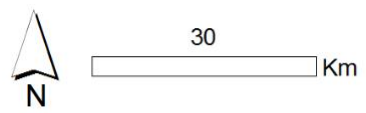


**Legend**

- River
- Urban Wastewater Treatment Plants

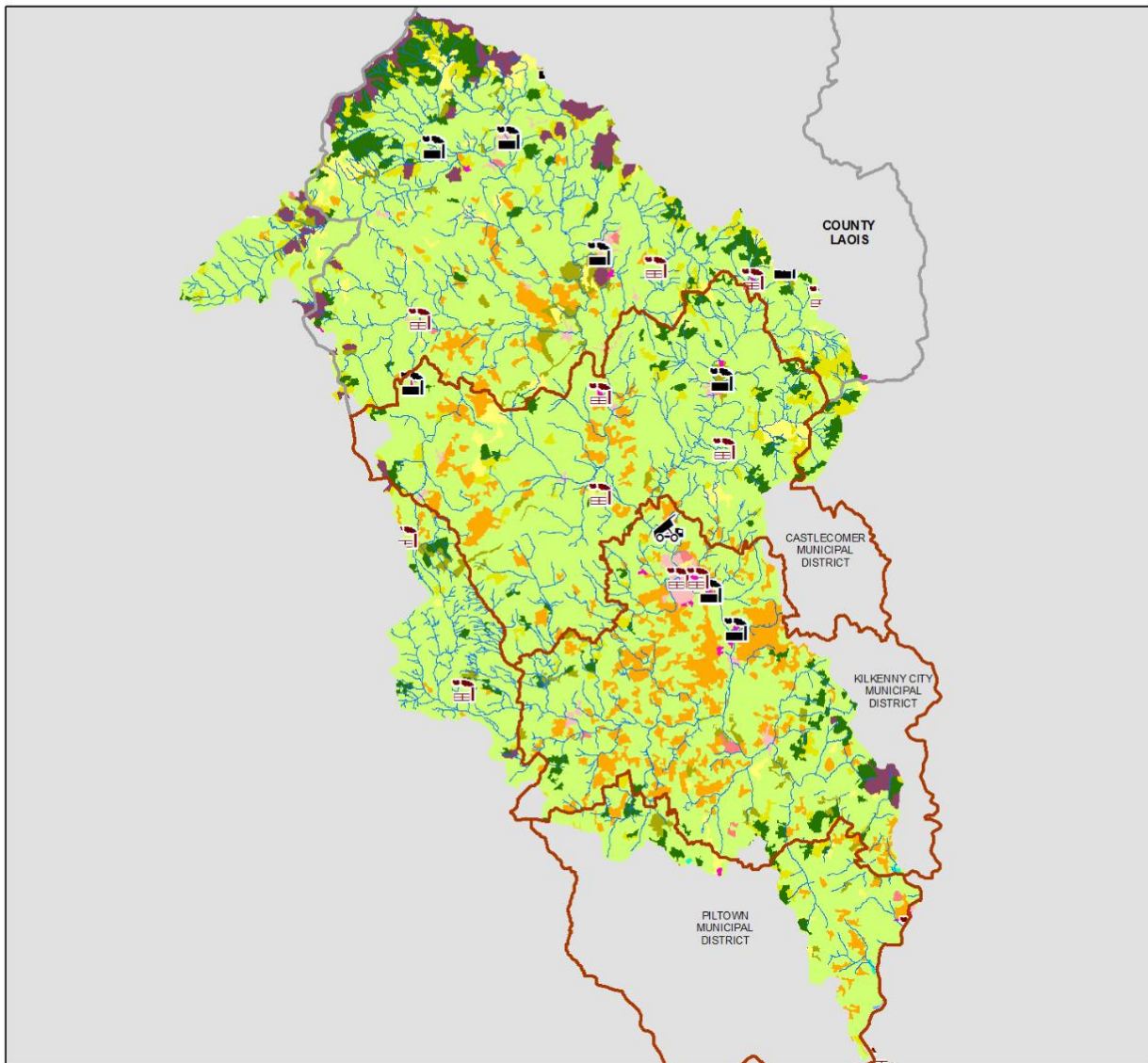
**Population density 2016**

- 1 Dot = 15 people
- Nore Catchment
- Settlement
- Kilkenny Municipal District
- Laois



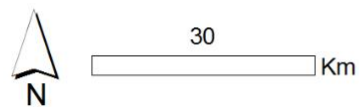
Data: Census of Population, 2016  
 Digital boundaries: Ordnance Survey Ireland and Environmental Protection Agency, Government of Ireland

**Land Uses across the Nore Catchment.**



**Legend**

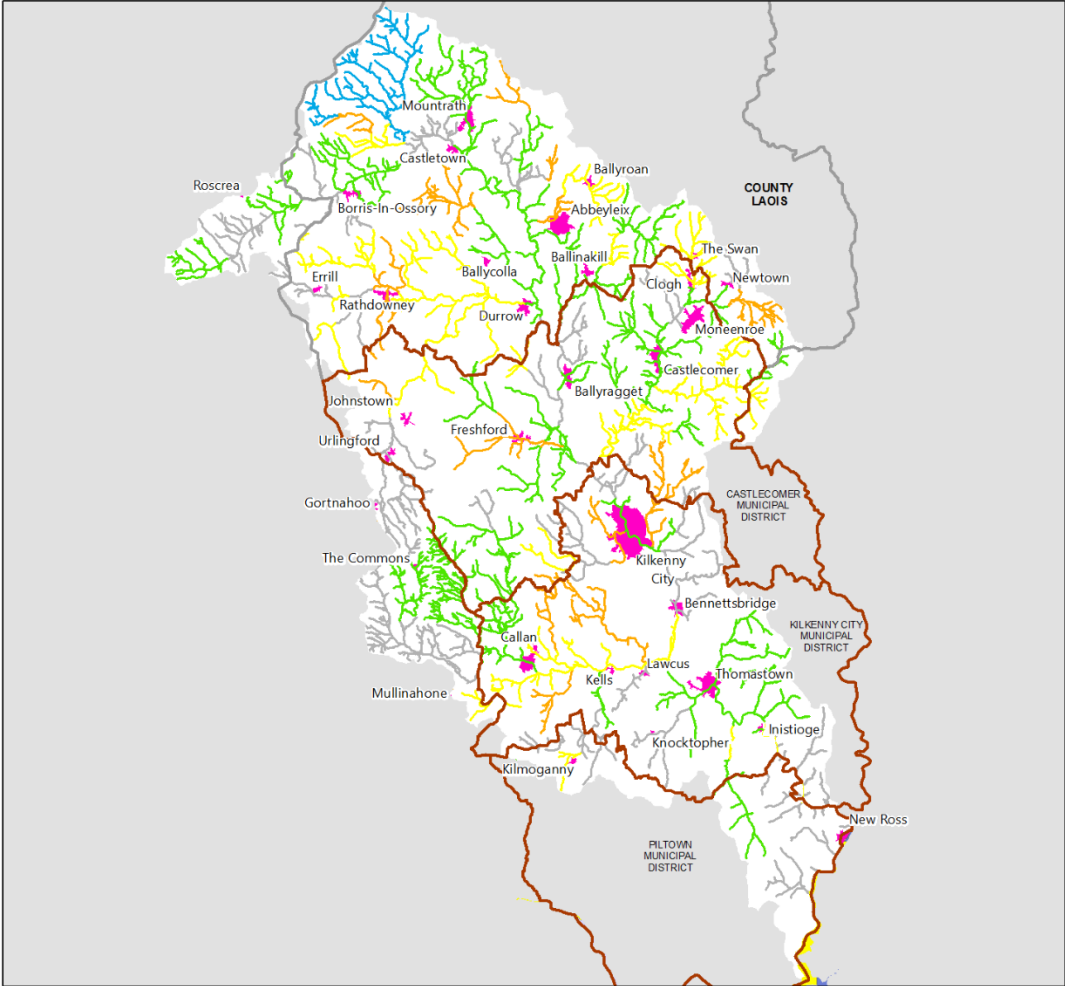
|                                |                     |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| River                          | Urban fabric        |
| Kilkeny Municipal District     | Industry & mines    |
| Laois                          | Sport & leisure     |
| EPA Licensed Waste Facility    | Cultivated land     |
| EPA Licensed IPC Facility      | Pasture             |
| EPA Licensed Industry Facility | Natural farmland    |
|                                | Broad-leaved forest |
|                                | Coniferous forest   |
|                                | Bogs & heath        |
|                                | Scrublands          |
|                                | Wetlands            |



Data: CORINE 2012 and EPA 2015 to 2017.  
 Digital boundaries: Ordnance Survey Ireland  
 and Environmental Protection Agency,  
 Government of Ireland

**Appendix 6:** This map shows that the waters with the highest ecological status (blue and green) tend to occur in upland areas (nature’s ‘water towers’) or in headwaters upstream of more populated areas. However, this is not always the case. River water of moderate and poor ecological status is also found in less populated areas in Kilkenny. Thus, water quality is impacted by all kinds of human activity and this highlights, once again, that water quality is everyone’s responsibility.

**Environmental Quality along the River Nore and its Tributaries  
(ecological status of surface waters), 2010 to 2015.**

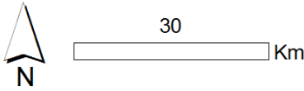


**Legend**

- Kilkenny Municipal District
- Laois
- Settlement

**Ecological status**

- High
- Good
- Moderate
- Poor
- Bad
- Unassigned



Digital boundaries: Ordnance Survey Ireland and Environmental Protection Agency, Government of Ireland