



## **KILKENNY AIRPORT SUBMISSION**

### **Proposed Kilkenny County Development Plan 2020-2026**

15<sup>th</sup> June 2018

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This submission is made to Kilkenny County Council on behalf of Kilkenny Airport, Skydive Ireland Limited and Irish Skydiving Club Limited, their respective agents, servants, officers and shareholders where applicable, in respect of the Kilkenny County Development Plan 2020-2026.

Kilkenny Airport, as a privately owned public use facility, is an asset to Kilkenny City & County. This submission will outline, inter alia, the reasons for why Kilkenny Airport is such an asset and reasons why its continued development should be expressly supported by the inclusion of appropriate policies and objectives in the Kilkenny Development Plan 2020-2026.

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## Airport History & Location

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Kilkenny Airport was established around 1963. The Airport has been consistently licenced by the State's Aviation Authority from 1965 to 2018. It is the only licenced airport which is or has ever been located in Kilkenny County. It is the largest and one of the longest operating privately licenced airports in the State.

Kilkenny Airport is located 2.5 km west of the Kilkenny City Centre and approximately 4.5km by road. Access to the Airport is serviced by the Tullaroan and Holdensrath roads respectively.

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The fact that an active airport exists in such close proximity to Kilkenny City is a significant asset and continues to present a tremendous opportunity for Kilkenny City now and into the future. This has been recognised by the fact that the continued development of Kilkenny Airport has been supported as an express Development Plan policy and objective since 1994 and up to 2020. It is proper and appropriate for the continued development of Kilkenny Airport to continue to be expressly supported by policies and objectives in the proposed Development Plan 2020-2026 in order to deliver an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and Kilkenny.

## Airport Infrastructure & Planning

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Kilkenny Airport benefits from planning permission and planning exemptions. The Airport is a wholly authorised development in accordance with the Planning & Development Act 2000 as amended.

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The Airport comprises 63 acres making it the largest privately licenced airport in the State. At 930 meters in length, Kilkenny Airport has the longest privately licenced runway in the State.

The runway is classified as an International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) Code 2. At present, the runway is an all grass surface. There is nothing preventing or limiting the upgrading of the runway to a hard surface.

The Airport has several authorised airport buildings and aviation fuel storage. There is substantial space available to expand the existing airport buildings or introduce new buildings.



## Kilkenny Council Support: 1976 to 2007

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Kilkenny County Council has long supported the continued development of Kilkenny Airport. Since around 1976, the Council provided extensive financial and other supports to the Kilkenny Airport.

The Council invested substantial sums of tax-payer money for the Airports continued development and operation up until 2007. The Council are obliged to continue to realise this investment.

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Between 1980 and 2007 elected members of the Council were appointed as Directors of Kilkenny Airport Limited in order to secure the Councils investment in the Airport.

## Air-Access & Emergency Services

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Kilkenny Airport has always been an asset to Kilkenny City and County. The Airport provides the only means of air-access in the County for fixed-wing and helicopter aircraft. This includes vital air-access for the Coast Guard & Air Corp rescue/medivac helicopters and also for the An Garda Síochána Air Support Unit. The Airport is also used frequently for training exercises by the foregoing emergency response air-crews.

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The Airport facilitates air-access for the Kilkenny business community. This includes the use of the Airport by domestic and over-seas business visitors to access Goresbridge bloodstock sales, which is Europe's Largest Flat Breezeup Sale & International sport horses. It also included the overseas contractors who are involved in the redevelopment of the Smithwicks Brewery Site.

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With the advancements being made in drone technology it is probable that such utilisation will see a significant increase over the next decade and beyond. Kilkenny Airport has the potential for a drone research and development facility, training, storage and transport access.



## Aviation Sports Activities

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The Airport has a rich history for the promotion and facilitation of sport aviation. It is the only aviation sports centre in Kilkenny County.

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In its 55-year history, the Airport has hosted several national air-rally's, national competitions for Ballooning, Gliding and Parachuting.

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## Tourism & Air-Festival

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Kilkenny Airport provides the only General Aviation air-access to Kilkenny. The Airport enjoys frequent overseas and domestic visitors. The Airports close proximity to Kilkenny City makes it an attractive and convenient destination for aviation tourism.

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The aviation sport activities at the Airport attracts domestic tourism to Kilkenny City. People from all over Ireland come to Kilkenny to partake in these sporting activities and events or to spectate.

Several significant air-displays have been held at the Airport. In 2015, thousands of spectators attended Kilkenny's largest ever air-festival to mark the 50th Anniversary of the Airport first becoming licensed in 1965. This air-display was privately funded by the Airport owner and all spectators were admitted free of charge.

Several domestic air-festivals are noted annually on the calendar of major domestic events, including the Bray Air-Show. These events tend to attract thousands of spectators. There is significant demand for such air-festivals and the potential exists to host a major air-festival annually at Kilkenny Airport which would attract significant tourism to Kilkenny.

## Aviation Education & Training

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The Airport has a rich history for private pilot training and related education. There is the potential to enhance the facilities in order to make it feasible to conduct commercial pilot training at the Airport.

There is the potential to introduce an education centre at the Airport for aviation maintenance for general and commercial air transport. The demand for such training and education is at an all-time high in the aviation industry.

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There is scope to attract education institutes, such as the nearby Carlow Institute of Technology to introduce such education & training element at the Airport. Carlow Institute of Technology is located just 42 km from the Airport.

