**KILKENNY AGE FRIENDLY OLDER PEOPLE’S COUNCIL**

February 2021

Planning Department

Kilkenny County Council,

County Hall,

John Street,

Kilkenny.

**Re: Draft City & County Development Plan 2021 -2027**

 **Submission on behalf of Kilkenny Older Person’s Council**

 **TOILET FACILITIES & COACH PARKING IN KILKENNY CITY**

A Chara,

Kilkenny Older People’s Council represents the voice of older people in Kilkenny City and County. As the older population continues to increase in numbers there is an on-going need for service providers to create an environment to support active and positive ageing. In my submission I will address two topics

(1) The provision of public toilets at both the Castle and new Amenity area of the city would in our opinion be seen as an essential additional ingredient to the Development Plan.

(2 )Secure long term Coach Parking

**TOILETS**

I understand that Kilkenny County Council regard toilets located in Kilkenny Castle and Kilkenny Courthouse as public toilets, however there is no indication to suggest this to locals or visitors that that is the case! Where are the signs indicating this? Taking into account the limited number of hours these buildings are open to the public would indicate that their availability does not go anywhere near meeting the needs of our citizens or visiting tourists.

I have regularly witnessed parents of young children using the shrubbery in the Castle Park as a toilet; this practice which is not to be recommended, but currently is a necessity, will have several negative side effects for parents, children and the general public.

Visual research during the months May to October would indicate that in the region of 25 coaches visit our City each day and in the main the occupants are older retired persons, plus additional visitors travelling by car, train and public bus, it is estimated that in the region of 10,000 people visit Kilkenny each week, 40,000 per month or 240,000 during peak holiday season, add to that the Kilkenny citizens requiring the use of such facilities, at a guess approximately 15,000 per year, would indicate that the numbers requiring the use of public toilets would be in the region of 255,000, which effectively proves the point that toilet facilities available in our City are totally inadequate.

Couch Tours arriving in our City carry an average of 40 passengers per coach, all having travelled a long journey; their first need is to use a toilet before viewing the sights, where can the coach driver direct them to? Currently the only option is to queue at the 4 toilets on the Parade, totally inadequate! Or spend money and time buying tea/coffee in order to use a toilet in a restaurant.

**Coach parking**

In my research for this I spoke to an executive member of The Irish Coach Tourist & Transport Council, who informed me that coach drivers are vital to our tourism, they influence greatly where, when and the duration of their visit to our City or if indeed it will be on the itinerary! The following are some suggestions from him as to what would make Kilkenny an attractive place in order to attract additional coaches to visit:

1. Convenient long term parking close to all facilities. Drop off/ pick-up points unsuitable as stopping and moving times are counted curtailing for the driver the limited legal number of driving and rest hours allowed per day
2. Conveniently located Toilet facilities, most essential for passengers when they arrive at a location and before departing to continue their journey
3. Parking should be as convenient as possible to all amenities including coffee/tea facilities
4. Safe secure overnight parking with CCTV cameras and an App where drivers can view their vehicle. Sadly it has become a reality that bus drivers arrive in the morning to find their buses have been drained of diesel, CCTV would discourage this.
5. **Become a Coach Friendly City joining with towns such as Ennis, Sligo and Dungarvan, Co Waterford.**

In conclusion I would be most grateful if The Planning Department in their preparation of the County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 could give **c**areful consideration to the provision of two new toilet blocks, one at each end of the City to facilitate the needs of our growing population taking into consideration all members of our community and our valuable tourists who will be using the amazing new outdoor plazas as we and others enjoy our beautiful city.

 Provide extra coach parking facilities in convenient locations for passengers, close to all amenities and catering to the huge volumes of coaches that arrive on our doorstep daily during the tourist season who contribute hugely to our economy.

Of course tourists have to get here travelling by Coach, Car, Train etc., it is incumbent on us when they get here to take the opportunity to make it a welcoming and unique experience as we show off our beautiful Kilkenny and its people, the warmth of our welcome and how we value and look after our tourists making their visit here user friendly, putting their needs at the top of our agenda and ensuring this will not be their last visit to Kilkenny**.**

Mise le meas,

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Eileen Ryan

Kilkenny Older People’s Council