Kilkenny
Destination & Experience Development Plan

Comhairle Chontae Chill Chainnigh
Kilkenny County Council

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IRELAND'S ANCIENT EAST®

Fáilte Ireland

SECTION ONE

KILKENNY DESTINATION AND
EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

INTRODUCTION
& CONTEXT

About This Plan

The Kilkenny Destination and Experience Development Plan (Kilkenny DEDP) is a five-year sustainable tourism development plan. It has been created through a programme of research and consultation guided by the V.I.C.E. (Visitor, Industry, Community, Environment) model for sustainable tourism development. It incorporates the views of visitors, the tourism industry, local community stakeholders in addition to a programme of international benchmarking.

The key objectives of Destination and Experience Development Plans are:

- Ensure the visitor experience in Kilkenny is brought to life through a mix of tourism products and experiences that will attract domestic and international visitors and retain them in the destination for longer.

- Unlock the economic potential of tourism by progressing key initiatives that will disperse tourists across the city and county.

- Strengthen the value of tourism to local communities by providing sustainable employment opportunities.

- Develop a sustainable basis for commercial tourism development by enhancing and creating compelling destination experiences that excite consumers and buyers alike.

- Create the conditions to attract leisure visitors on a year-round basis to Kilkenny and immerse themselves in the community while providing the opportunity to interact with local people as part of the Kilkenny experience.

- Develop the role of Kilkenny as a driver of regional tourism development and influence visitor flows across the South East.

The Kilkenny DEDP delivers a destination development approach linking existing and new projects while exploring the potential for new opportunities. The plan is designed to build on the ambition of the Ireland's Ancient East Regional Tourism Development Strategy and the role of Kilkenny in disrupting future visitor flows to retain visitors in the region for longer. The DEDP approach recognises the interconnectivity between many different aspects of the destination experience and developing Kilkenny as a distinctive visitor destination. From delivering a shared vision to aligning all future investment in Kilkenny, the plan ensures a collective approach to provide the experience expected from an international visitor destination.

The development approach in this DEDP follows the Fáilte Ireland Destination Maturity Model. Four destination maturity categories exist. These establish the actions and projects required to develop a distinctive Kilkenny destination based on its specific maturity levels. The factors affecting the maturity classification include current levels of recognition

Distinctive Kilkenny Destination

DESTINATION PROPOSITION	SHARED VISION
STAKEHOLDER ALIGNMENT	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
ACCOMMODATION	VISITOR EXPERIENCES
PRODUCT INVESTMENT	EVENING ECONOMY
SAFETY	BUSINESS TOURISM FACILITIES
SKILLED WORKFORCE	VISITOR INFORMATION AND CUSTOMER SERVICE
FOOD & DRINK	RETAIL
FESTIVALS & EVENTS	MANAGED PUBLIC REALM
SIGNAGE & ORIENTATION	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
VISITOR INFRA-STRUCTURE & FACILITIES	ACCESS FOR ALL
ACCESS & TRANSPORT	SUSTAINED SALES & MARKETING

in the overseas and domestic markets, density and quality of tourism products and the accommodation base. Additional considerations include the depth of services (day and evening time) available for visitors in the primary and secondary hubs and the strength of local tourism industry networks. Kilkenny City is considered a 'Progressing' destination with a focus on developing new best-in-class visitor experiences aligned with a distinctive visitor proposition. The county area is categorised as a 'Pioneering' destination with a focus on product development, improving visitor infrastructure and building effective local tourism networks.

The project focus is centered around three strategic pillars that represent the basis for sustainable destination development. These pillars represent a spatial destination development approach focused on the city, county and the connectivity between the urban and rural experience. The approach is designed to grow the international appeal of Kilkenny City and enhance its role as a hub for the county experience. It will target the dispersion of visitors by developing the experience base in the county and grow the value of tourism for local communities. Ensuring an integrated urban and rural experience will result in an increased focus on improving the interconnectivity between the city and county and encouraging new levels of tourism industry collaboration.

1. Kilkenny City – Attractor and Hub
Develop the role of Kilkenny City as the county's tourism hub and international tourism destination by developing a world class Medieval Mile and maximising the city's natural, creative and built heritage assets to disperse visitors across the city.

2. County Kilkenny – Exploration and Dwell
Grow the range and diversity of county-based visitor experiences to motivate visitors to explore County Kilkenny, stay for longer and grow the value of tourism for local communities.

3. City / County Links & Trails
Strengthen the connectivity between Kilkenny City and County based outdoor experiences and attractions to increase visitor flows throughout the county and stimulate new levels of tourism industry collaboration.

A Sustainable Tourism Approach

Against the backdrop of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Government's commitments under the Climate Action Plan 2021 and the Report of the Sustainable Tourism Working Group, 2021-2023, tourism must integrate sustainability into every aspect of the sectors future development focus and operations. Visitors have heightened expectations around sustainability influencing how they increasingly value local experiences combined with increased levels of environmental awareness. The Kilkenny DEDP will focus on the following to ensure a collective commitment to sustainability and how it will influence future destination development.

- Highlight destination co-responsibility in addressing climate change and other sustainable challenges.

- Work with all stakeholders and industry partners to support the reduction of carbon emissions, increase the use of clean energy and reduce waste.

- Ensure a coherent approach to sustainability and enhance local capabilities to develop new sustainable visitor experiences.

- Support the development of more accessible and inclusive tourism experiences and employment opportunities.

- Connect visitors to destination sustainability at every stage of the visitor journey and provide great visitor experiences highlighting the destination's sustainability values.

- Balance long term sustainability with economic value generation for Kilkenny.

- Ensure sustainable tourism growth contributes to the economic well-being and social fabric of the communities across Kilkenny.

- Engage our urban and rural communities with tourism and build awareness of the benefits tourism brings to the city, county and south east region.

Ireland's Ancient East – Regional Tourism Development Strategy

Regional Tourism Development Plans, 2023- 2027 (RTDS) have been developed for each of Fáilte Ireland's four Regional Experience Brands (Ireland's Ancient East, Wild Atlantic Way, Dublin and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands). These plans provide the strategic framework for other tourism development strategies, most notably, Destination and Experience Development Plans (DEDPs) and County Tourism

Strategies. A new destination development approach is central to the Ireland's Ancient East RTDS. It will ensure that appropriate interventions and supports are put in place to address the differences that exist in destination maturity levels across Ireland's Ancient East. The Kilkenny DEDP has been developed to contribute to the overarching regional objectives for Ireland's Ancient East. The following five strategic objectives provide the basis for the approach reflected within the Kilkenny DEDP.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

Motivate the domestic and international consumer to visit Ireland's Ancient East.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2

Provide the visitor with more reasons to stay, increasing the economic impact of tourism.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

Ensure the region is easy to access, navigate and consume for the visitor.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4

Enable and assist the industry to grow its capacity and capability to ensure it can thrive over the period of this strategy and create sustainable jobs in local communities.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5

Build committed stakeholder and industry partnerships to guide sustainable destination development across the region.

The implementation of the Kilkenny DEDP is based on stakeholder commitment to project delivery and is structured around a multi-annual Action Plan. The stakeholders will take ownership or partner on the delivery of the key tasks required to implement the Kilkenny DEDP. It represents a five-year operational plan providing a commercial destination development focus building on existing project plans and integrating all related activity for a co-ordinated programme of activity. This includes projects that are currently being implemented, projects featured in existing plans and new concepts to grow the destination's capacity for new visitor experience development.

SECTION TWO

KILKENNY DESTINATION AND
EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

VISION & TARGET
OUTCOMES

VISION 2033

Kilkenny is a leading year-round destination by 2033, providing an exceptional experience blending medieval with contemporary and the great outdoors. A revitalised Medieval Mile is at the core of the Kilkenny City visitor experience linking Kilkenny Castle with iconic attractions that captivate audiences through a new experiential approach. A best-in-class city experience links seamlessly with the outdoor experiences across the county brought alive through our river-based activities, woodlands, trails and activity centres. The destination is globally recognised as Ireland's home for design, craft and creative experiences. Visitors are attracted by a year-round programme of culture, festivals and events, reflecting Kilkenny's association as a vibrant and fun city experience.

Target Outcomes

A world class medieval and contemporary city experience linked by an immersive Medieval Mile experience that motivates the visitor to explore more of the city and stay for longer.

Delivering great community experiences where the visitor is motivated to explore our rural communities through the mix of new cultural, heritage and outdoor activity experiences.

Recognised for an iconic Kilkenny Castle experience and the quality of experience within the Kilkenny visitor attractions network across the city and county.

A renowned international festival and cultural events destination where the quality of year-round programming and innovative use of venues attracts international and domestic visitors.
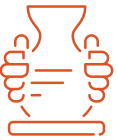
Kilkenny is Ireland's creative and craft destination delivering the mix of visitor experiences that reflect our World Craft Council Craft City and Region designation.

An internationally sales focused destination where a collaborative tourism industry approach has grown its share of the overseas market while protecting its share of the domestic market.

A living city enhanced by public realm investment, new approaches to visitor orientation and the development of the Abbey Quarter.

Recognised for the quality and range of outdoor activities from river activity to woodlands, trails and activity centres.

Kilkenny City is recognised nationally for a year-round vibrancy of its evening time economy and innovative use of urban spaces.

2.2 Kilkenny DEDP Objectives

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

Motivate the domestic and international consumer to visit Ireland's Ancient East.

Strategic Objectives

- Develop the Medieval Mile to become a key attractor for Kilkenny City and the catalyst for visitor attraction and destination experience innovation delivered by a Kilkenny visitor attractions network committed to experience innovation.

- Harness Visit Kilkenny, Fáilte Ireland & Tourism Ireland's marketing campaigns to drive awareness in the international and domestic markets.

- Maximise the international appeal of Kilkenny Castle and its potential to orientate visitors to other attractions and city-wide locations.

- Realise the tourism potential of the Abbey Quarter and how it is integrated into the Kilkenny cultural and creative experience.

- Develop County Kilkenny into a river activity centre of excellence using the Three Sister Rivers to introduce visitors to a mix of urban and rural outdoor activity experiences linked to local communities across the city and county.

- Develop Kilkenny into a world class design, craft and creative destination building on its designation as a World Craft Council Craft City and Region.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2

Provide the visitor with more reasons to stay, increasing the economic impact of tourism.

Strategic Objectives

- Maximise the investment in the Museum of Medieval Kilkenny to become a signature experience within Kilkenny City and enhance their role in developing a new experiential Medieval Mile approach.

- Enhance the visitor experience within the network of county wide heritage experiences working with OPW to encourage visitor dispersal to county sites.

- Develop the visitor experience and site capacity at Woodstock House and Gardens to become a signature attraction within the county.

- Maximise investment in the Kilkenny riverside activity facilities to become a catalyst for river tourism and linkages to river activity hubs across the county.

- Expand the range of things to do for families through new product development or enhancing existing experiences linked to existing or potential new activity hubs.

- Maximise the heritage of craft and artisan producers by creating year-round opportunities to meet the makers and build on the investment in crafts hubs in the county. Examine the opportunity to reinvigorate the Castle Yard into a vibrant craft and creative centre.

- Augment the creative experience base through the development of a new city-based international attraction focused on animation.

- Grow the number and range of rural food experiences to grow the reach of Taste Kilkenny between the city and county. Build on the unique brewing and distilling heritage of Kilkenny City to create a unique portfolio of experiences contributing to the overall food and drink heritage of the area.

- Support the city of Kilkennys night-time economy initiatives including the use of visitor attractions and public spaces as venues for innovative events and installations.

- Develop a new strategy for festivals and cultural events in Kilkenny to enhance and grow the existing calendar of events and the creation of one major creative / cultural event of scale.

- Grow the accommodation base across the city and county.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

Ensure the region is easy to access, navigate and consume for the visitor.

Strategic Objectives

- Develop the trails linkages between rural communities and Kilkenny city to create the infrastructure that will encourage the visitor to explore the county through slow tourism activity e.g. Kilkenny to Inistioge and links to the South East Greenway.

- Optimise new technologies to disperse visitors across the destination reflecting Kilkenny's creative and innovative profile.

- Examine the opportunity to link Kilkenny with the Dublin to Cork / Waterford Greenway to become part of the wider regional and national trail network.

- Examine the requirements to enhance the Kilkenny cycling infrastructure and the development of a network of safe and accessible cycling trails across the county.

- Enhance the capacity of existing trails such as the Kilkenny Trails, Butler Trail, Lingaun Valley Trail and opportunities such as the William Marshall story to orientate the visitor around the destination.

- Develop the transport links between the city and county, building on existing pilot programmes linked to the rural Kilkenny experience.

- Examine new opportunities for innovative visitor orientation and way finding that builds on the destination's creative and craft heritage adopting a destination theme to link the city to the county e.g. placemaking and signage innovation.

- Develop a series of regional connection projects with neighbouring county destinations through product linkages e.g. Castles, Food, Gardens, Adventure, Craft and Culture.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4

Enable and assist the industry to grow its capacity and capability to ensure it can thrive over the period of this strategy and create sustainable jobs in local communities.

Strategic Objectives

- Provide the tourism industry training to grow their capacity and capabilities to increase their international sales linked to existing and emerging destination development opportunities.

- Grow the digital capacity of the tourism industry in Kilkenny.

- Develop an experience development training and capacity programme to enable the crafts and creative industry realise economic opportunities through tourism.

- Support the development of community experiences and create new level of capacity to ensure rural communities can realise the benefits of tourism.

- Encourage participation in key strategic programmes across state agencies to ensure tourism grows as an attractive employment option.

- Support Kilkenny tourism businesses to build expertise and knowledge to allow them to monitor and reduce the environmental impact of their business.

- Develop the capacity and capabilities of the tourism industry to deliver an enhanced range of family experiences contributing to the development of Kilkenny as a family destination.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5

Build committed stakeholder and industry partnerships to guide sustainable destination development across the region.

Strategic Objectives

- Adopt sustainability as a core destination message and promote an enhanced sustainability focus through our environment, heritage, culture and community experiences.

- Achieve low carbon and sustainable growth in the development of urban and rural visitor experiences to become a leading sustainable tourism destination.

- Collectively work towards reducing the carbon footprint of tourism.

- Ensure tourism is integrated into future urban and rural regeneration activity in developing the city and county as a great place to live, work and visit.

- Create awareness of the importance of the Kilkenny Tourism structure to support a cohesive promotion and development approach in Kilkenny.

- Develop the capacity of the Kilkenny Tourism Network to deliver on the tourism vision for the destination through collaboration and new ways of working together, cross promotion and collaboration in the delivery of new visitor experiences.

- Develop a series of tourism clusters aligned with the experience development focus within the Kilkenny DEDP.

- Work in partnership with the OPW to enhance the visitor experience across key visitor sites.

- Work with the Kilkenny Visitor Attractions network and experience providers to deliver accessible tourism experiences.

- Examine local community experience development opportunities through sport tourism events and the local culture of sport and Gaelic games.

IRELAND'S ANCIENT EAST ®

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SECTION THREE

KILKENNY DESTINATION AND
EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

FRAMEWORK
& APPROACH

Destination Vision

Kilkenny is a leading year-round destination by 2033, providing an exceptional experience blending medieval with contemporary and the great outdoors. A revitalised Medieval Mile is at the core of the Kilkenny City visitor experience linking Kilkenny Castle with iconic attractions that captivate audiences through a new experiential approach. A best-in-class city experience links seamlessly with the outdoor experiences across the county brought alive through our river-based activities, woodlands, trails and activity centres. The destination is globally recognised as Ireland's home for design, craft and creative experiences. Visitors are attracted by a year-round programme of culture, festivals and events, reflecting Kilkenny's association as a vibrant and fun city experience.

Destination Development Focus

| KILKENNY CITY – ATTRACTOR AND HUB | COUNTY KILKENNY – EXPLORATION AND DWELL | CITY / COUNTY LINKS & TRAILS |

Destination Catalyst Projects

RE-IMAGINED MEDIEVAL MILE | CREATIVE CITY EXPERIENCE | RIVER TOURISM CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

KILKENNY ATTRACTIONS EXPERIENCE | TRAILS AND OUTDOORS

Destination Enabling Projects

TOURISM INDUSTRY CAPABILITIES | REGIONAL CONNECTORS | FOOD & DRINK HERITAGE

SUSTAINABILITY / CLIMATE ACTION | RURAL COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT | FESTIVALS AND EVENTS | ACCOMMODATION GROWTH

Destination Target Outcomes

VIBRANT EVENING TIME ECONOMY | KILKENNY CASTLE EXPERIENCE | YEAR-ROUND FESTIVALS & EVENTS | ENHANCED MEDIEVAL MILE EXPERIENCE | IRELAND'S CRAFT & CREATIVE DESTINATION

ENHANCED VISITOR ORIENTATION | INTERNATIONAL DESTINATION APPEAL | ENHANCED OUTDOOR EXPERIENCES | AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES

3.1 Kilkenny DEDP Framework

The Kilkenny DEDP is framed around the vision to become Ireland's leading year-round destination by 2033, providing an exceptional experience that blends medieval with contemporary and the great outdoors. The DEDP is activated through a mix of destination catalyst projects and enablers aligned with this vision and working towards a series of target outcomes. The catalyst projects are initiatives that have the potential to be transformational in how the destination will grow its appeal to international and domestic visitors. Enabling projects play a key role in supporting destination development through a mix of initiatives and supports. These include addressing existing gaps in visitor infrastructure, building the skills and capabilities of the tourism industry and working with communities to grow the value of tourism across the county. The Kilkenny DEDP will focus on five catalyst and seven enabling projects that each include a number of sub-elements that contribute to the overarching objectives of developing the Kilkenny City urban tourism experience, growing the appeal of the wider county and maximising the outdoors as part of the destination experience.

Fáilte Ireland

3.2 Destination Catalyst Projects Overview

Re-imagined Medieval Mile

KEY OBJECTIVE: Develop the Medieval Mile opportunity to motivate visitors to explore more of the city and maximise investments in attractions such as the Museum of Medieval Kilkenny and other attractions.


Re-imagining the Medieval Mile as a central Kilkenny City experience will play a central role in connecting the wider urban area linking existing attractions and new experiences such as the Museum of Medieval Kilkenny. It will focus strongly on new experience development across the Medieval Mile and how visitors will be motivated to explore more of the city. A range of other projects will contribute to enhancing the appeal of Kilkenny City. A renewed focus on Kilkenny's association with craft and creatives will capitalise on the World Crafts Council Craft City and Region designation and ensure visitors can engage with the local craft community. Planned investment in the public realm will ensure tourism and community needs are central to future plans. This will include maximising opportunities such as the Abbey Quarter, public realm enhancements and their future role in visitor orientation and adding new outdoor capacity for city-based events.
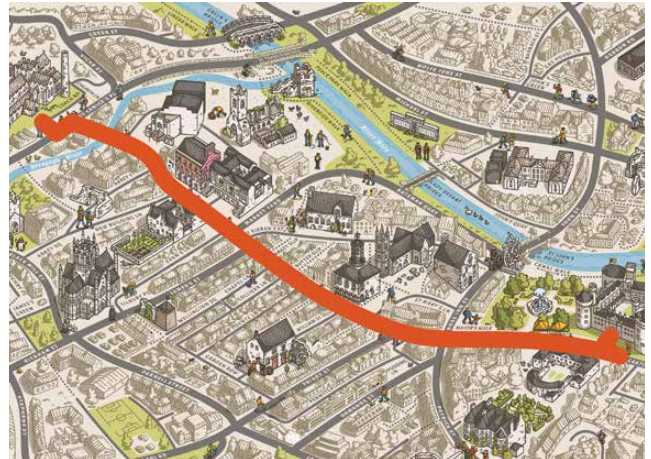
Creative City Experience

KEY OBJECTIVE: Examine the feasibility of a world class animation experience in Kilkenny City and the further development of a creative tourism theme in Kilkenny City and County linking our creative experiences.

Kilkenny has a long heritage as home to creatives and artisans. The development of a world class creative animation visitor experience has the potential to further establish Kilkenny on the global map for creative talent. The project will examine the viability of a world class animation experience and explore how it can contribute to the concept of a 'Creative Theme' for the city. The proposed 'Creative Theme' will link the creative "zones" in the city to further influence visitor flows and will communicate the depth of accessible creative and craft experiences.
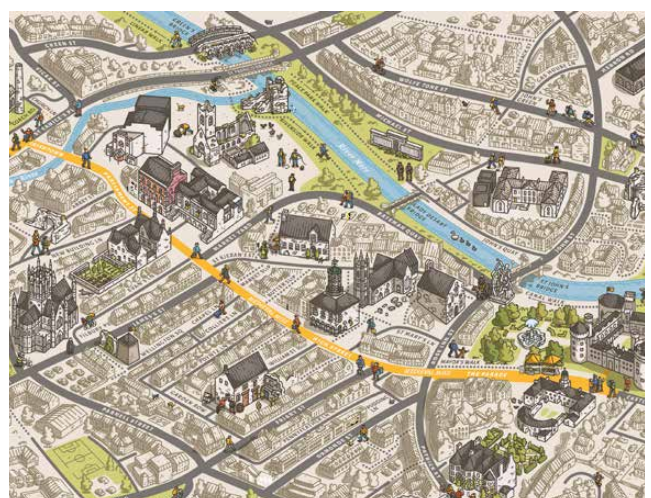
River Tourism Centre of Excellence

KEY OBJECTIVE: Establish Kilkenny as a destination recognised for best-in-class river tourism experiences as part of strengthening the destinations association with outdoor activities.


The destination's outdoor activity development focus will examine how Kilkenny can establish itself as a river tourism centre of excellence. Kilkenny will strive to create a unique outdoor positioning in how it engages with the Three Sisters Rivers and build a profile for best-in-class outdoor activities. It will build on established city-based river experiences and county locations such as Graiguenamanagh and river navigation opportunities linking the city with Thomastown. A sustainable tourism development approach will ensure the investment in the Platforms for Growth Activity Hub will become a stimulus for increased levels of river-based activities.

Kilkenny Attractions Experience

KEY OBJECTIVE: Enhance the quality and range of visitor experiences delivered across the network of Kilkenny Visitor Attractions.

The Medieval Mile offers visitors access to a cluster of attractions designed to retain visitors for longer and disperse them across the city. Kilkenny Castle is the signature attraction for the city and county and a major attractor for domestic and international visitors. A new focus on enhancing the visitor experience in Kilkenny Castle and other Kilkenny attractions will be key to enhancing the appeal of the Medieval Mile and linking to county-based attractions. The approach will include a programme of capability building to grow the range and quality of experiences delivered within the network of Kilkenny attractions across the city and county.
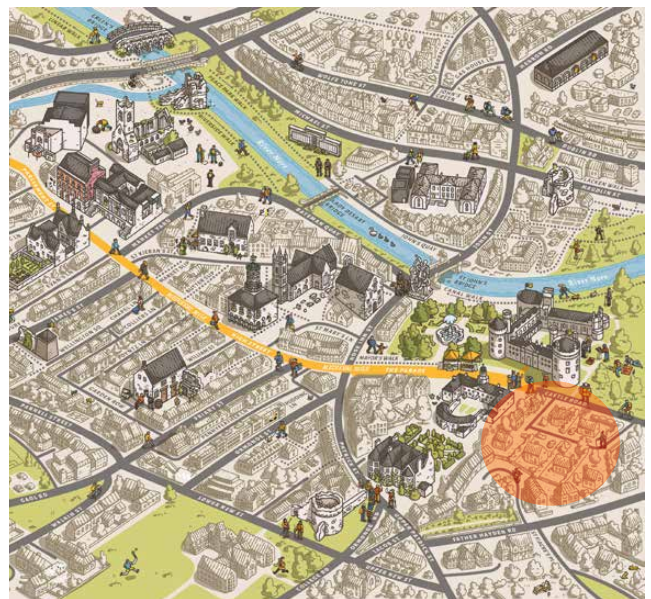
Trails and Outdoors

> **KEY OBJECTIVE:** Develop the trails linkages between rural communities and Kilkenny city to create the infrastructure that will encourage visitors to explore the county through slow tourism activity.

Developing the slow adventure product base will build on the success of the Kilkenny Trails, recognising its contribution to the county's current outdoor positioning. The trails and adventure project focus will also include projects such as completing the trail infrastructure and linking the city to rural communities. Existing outdoor centres such as Castlecomer Discovery Park and emerging opportunities such as the investment in the greenway and increasing the attractiveness of the destination to the family market. It will also include an increased focus on commercial capability building for existing outdoor centres and examining the roll out of existing masterplan projects to add to the county's outdoor product base.

3.3 Destination Enablers

A range of enabling projects will be delivered to contribute to the destination development objectives. They include training to build stakeholder capabilities in order to realise the opportunities presented by many of the catalyst projects with the DEDP. The capability building activity will include developing new saleable experiences and growing the tourism industry's demand generation and digital skillsets.

The opportunity to integrate the city experience with rural community experiences will be key to visitor dispersion. How Kilkenny works with neighbouring counties to ensure a strengthened regional proposition will be explored. Creating a new level of regional experiences and regional connectivity will be key in disrupting existing visitor flows while also addressing the challenges of being associated as a transient destination.

The destination enabler projects will include a focus on elevating many of Kilkenny's destination strengths. This includes maximising the county's food and drink heritage and adopting a strategic approach to events and festivals. Building the craft experience base will require capability building within the sector to understand the opportunity that tourism presents. Equally, developing the range of community and rural experiences will reflect the range and diversity of things to do within the county.

A partnership approach to developing and delivering quality and creative experiences in visitor attractions will feature among the enabling activity. Growing the value of tourism in the city and county will require further growth in accommodation stock. This will include exploring possible accommodation options for the city and county ranging from hotels to alternative solutions such as glamping and campervan amenities.

SECTION FOUR

KILKENNY DESTINATION AND
EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

WHAT WE ARE ADRESSSING

4.1 Developing a Distinctive Kilkenny Destination - Opportunities & Challenges

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

EVENING ECONOMY

FOOD & DRINK

MANAGED PUBLIC REALM

VISITOR INFRASTRUCTURE & FACILITIES

SKILLED WORKFORCE

PRODUCT INVESTMENT

DESTINATION PROPOSITION

VISITOR INFORMATION AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

SIGNAGE & ORIENTATION

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

DISTINCTIVE KILKENNY DESTINATION

BUSINESS TOURISM FACILITIES

VISITOR EXPERIENCES

ACCOMMODATION

ACCESS & TRANSPORT

RETAIL

ACCESS FOR ALL

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

SHARED VISION

STAKEHOLDER ALIGNMENT

SAFETY

SUSTAINED SALES & MARKETING

Striving for Destination Leadership

Elevating Our Focus

Addressing Gaps

Delivered Through Collaboration

The strategic development pillars within the Kilkenny DEDP focus on developing the city experience, growing the appeal of the county and developing the experiences that provide the interconnectivity between both. Developing a Distinctive Kilkenny Destination requires the delivery of a wide range of interconnected projects, services and infrastructure. Some areas of focus will represent opportunities for becoming a best -in-class destination with a focus on areas such as the evening economy, food and drink experiences and festivals and events. Equally, it must address a range of challenges from developing the experience base in the county, public transport access and visitor orientation within the city. The opportunities to consider and the challenges to address reflect the distinctive destination matrix informing the areas of future focus within the Kilkenny DEDP.

Opportunities To Consider

Strengthening the Outdoors Experience

- Development of the destination's association with outdoor activities providing opportunities to link the city and county and future connectivity with the South East Greenway.
- Eco-tourism opportunities and destination leadership for river-based activities.

Developing Local and Regional Linkages

- Linking the urban tourism experience and rural communities through walking and cycling infrastructure.
- Growth of regional linkages and working with neighbouring counties to disrupt visitor flows.
- Ease of access from main international access points e.g. Dublin.

Leveraging our Strengths

- Leveraging Kilkenny's international craft designation as a destination differentiator and linking city and county-based craft experiences.
- Building on the international association with the creative and animation sector.
- Maximise Kilkenny's heritage for food and drink as the basis for urban and rural tourism experiences.
- Innovation around the evening time economy in Kilkenny City.

Visitor Dispersion Across the City

- Development of a linked city-wide experience as Ireland's Medieval Capital and realising the Medieval Mile opportunity.
- Maximise urban regeneration and private sector investment to disperse visitors around the city.

Broadening the Experience Base

- Strengthen the visitor experience in the network of visitor attractions and encourage greater marketing collaboration.
- Development of family focused experiences and strengthening the appeal of Kilkenny in the family market.
- Development of further premium experiences across the destination.
- Strategic approach to festivals and events to consider the opportunity for year-round programming including niche events and destination profiling festival activity.
- Community tourism development and delivering authentic community-based experiences.

Challenges To Address

- Dominance of Kilkenny Castle as the core visitor experience with limited impact on the wider urban area.
- Linking the city and county experience to grow the length of stay in Kilkenny and ensuring sustained collaboration between city and county tourism networks.
- Completing and connecting trails to creating stronger product linkages.
- Transient destination association between Dublin and the South of the country.
- Limited public transport connectivity between the city and county.
- Current accommodation stock levels in the city and county.
- Attracting staff into the industry and developing the next generation of tourism entrepreneurs.
- Collectively develop the destination's online presence and digital capabilities.
- Encouraging non-core tourism sectors (i.e. crafts) to consider the tourism opportunity and become part of the Kilkenny visitor experience.
- Balance urban regeneration activity and placemaking with local community sentiment e.g. pedestrianisation.

4.2 Aligning Destination Development with the V.I.C.E. Model for Sustainable Tourism

The V.I.C.E. model (Visitor, Industry, Community and Environment) for sustainable tourism development has formed the basis for the Kilkenny DEDP and what the plan must address in the coming five-years. The project focus within the DEDP reflect the views of the visitors to Kilkenny, our tourism industry partners, local community and ensuring we protect the environment, our most important asset.

Visitor

- As a visitor destination, Kilkenny is mainly associated with culture, Kilkenny Castle and its medieval heritage.
- Visitors identify Kilkenny's destination advantages as ease of access, variety of city-based experiences and facilities, food reputation and general city atmosphere.
- Quality of pre-visit information, choice of accommodation options and the quality of indoor attractions were highlighted by visitors as areas to improve.
- Public transport is an area for future attention and how visitors to the city can engage with the county.
- Visitors highlighted the appeal of the walkable and compact nature of the city and the ease of accessing the local experiences.
- Visitors recommend a future focus on improving visitor orientation and wayfinding around the city.
- Visitors did not associate rural tourism and outdoor activity experiences with Kilkenny as a destination.

Industry

Tourism industry feedback identified the following as priority areas of focus;

- Improve the Medieval Mile as a visitor experience and develop Kilkenny as Ireland's Medieval Capital.
- Develop the opportunity presented by the World Craft Council Craft City and Region designation.
- Capitalise on the county's proximity to Dublin and domestic market growth opportunity.
- Increase the dwell time of international visitors with increased levels of international sales focus and grow awareness of Kilkenny in overseas markets.
- Build on the city's profile for hosting quality events and festivals.
- Maximise Kilkenny's unique heritage of brewing and distilling to appeal to the international market.
- Broaden the appeal of Kilkenny to the family market and identify how the county experience contributes to this.
- Grow the county's profile for outdoor activity and slow adventure and developing our rivers as unique Kilkenny experiences.
- Strengthen links between the city and county tourism networks and build more awareness of county-based attractions and experiences.

Community

- Ensure investment in urban placemaking and rural regeneration continues to have a positive impact on Kilkenny as a place to live and visit.
- Develop slow tourism opportunities across the county that will benefit both the community and visitors e.g. walking and cycling facilities.
- Retain the authenticity and attractiveness of Kilkenny's rural villages as part of the Kilkenny visitor experience.
- Ensure greater connectivity between the city and rural communities to ensure a sustainable tourism impact within the county.
- Increase the level of public transport access into and around the county.
- Work with the creative and craft community to develop their understanding of the opportunity presented by tourism.

Environment

- Examine how Kilkenny can become a flagship sustainable destination.
- Develop the range of slow tourism experiences to enable visitors to engage responsibly with our natural heritage.
- Ensure a committed tourism industry-wide approach to sustainability and climate action.
- Examine how sustainable transport and personal mobility investment (Active Travel) can contribute to achieving our climate action goals.
- Ensure future river-based activities are respectful of the river environment and how visitors engage with our river bio-diversity.

SECTION FIVE

KILKENNY DESTINATION AND
EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

DELIVERY
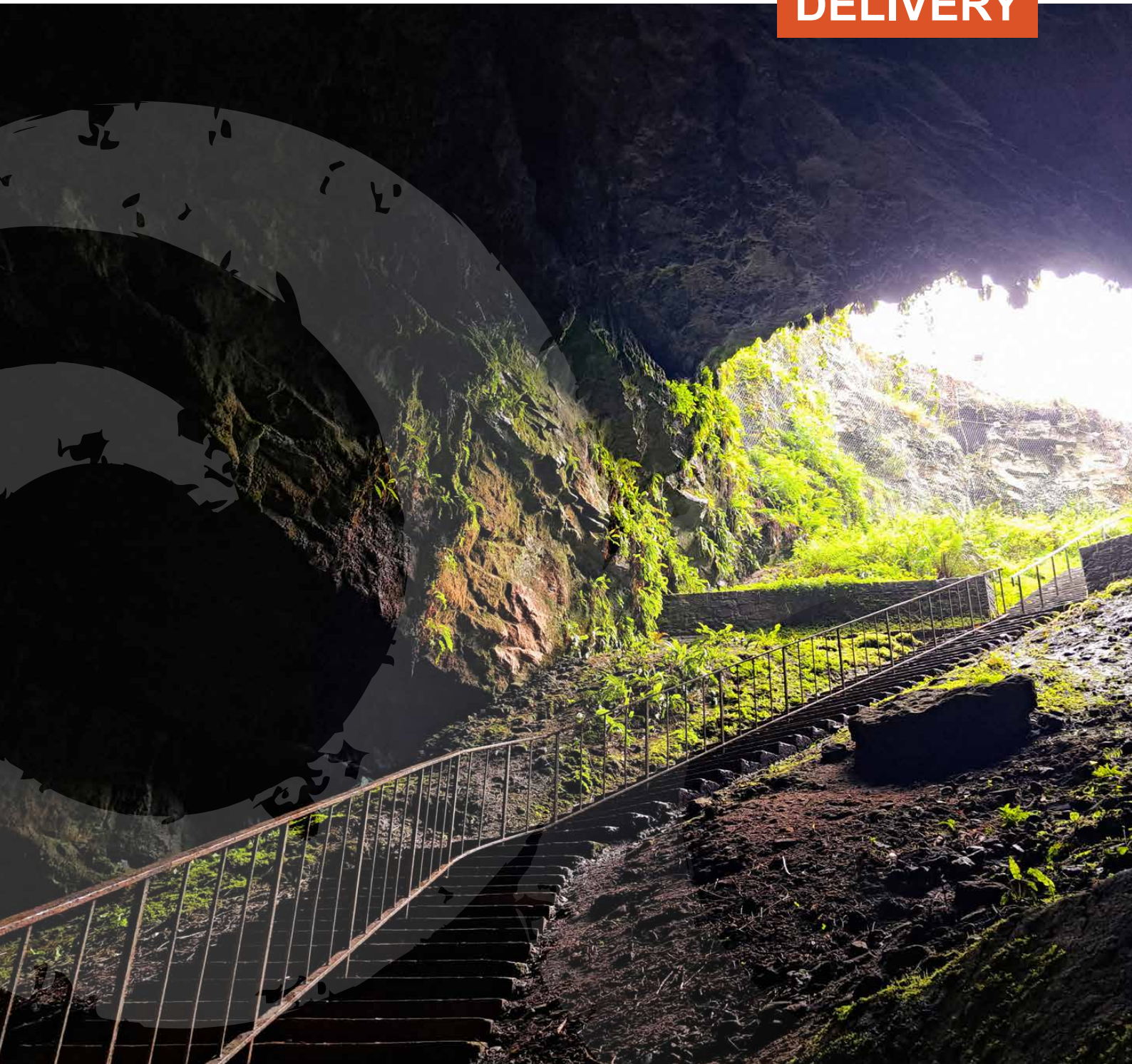
5.1 Kilkenny DEDP Implementation

The implementation of the Kilkenny DEDP is based on stakeholder commitment to project delivery. It represents a five-year operational Plan based on an agreed destination development focus for Kilkenny city and county. It builds on existing project plans and integrates all related activity for a coordinated series of outputs. These include projects currently being implemented, projects featured in existing plans and new concepts to build the destination's capacity to create new visitor experiences.

A list of actions relating to all proposed projects has been devised. All stakeholders will be consulted with in relation to the delivery of the identified actions. Each of the stakeholders listed below will be tasked with delivering on actions which will help to shape the plan and ultimately ensure the success of the plan delivery over the next five-years.

The implementation of the DEDP will be overseen by the creation of an implementation group that will operate until 2028. The DEDP Implementation group is tasked with supporting the following objectives:

- Support the delivery of the Kilkenny DEDP.
- Drive growth as per the agreed KPIs in the action plan.
- Lead and manage the action plan ensuring alignment around the prioritisation and delivery of key projects.
- Creation of a representative area wide body which ensures there is a mechanism in place that allows two-way communication between the implementation group and any subgroups which may be formed.
- Ensure that the catalyst and enabling projects support the delivery of experiences identified in the plan and are delivered within the five-year timeframe.
- Provide a space where stakeholders can share new ideas with partners.
- Creation of a common tourism voice and a powerful tourism network that promotes each other's interests.
- The Kilkenny DEDP Implementation Group will represent key stakeholders and representatives from the area. It will be chaired by an independent chairperson with the ability to focus the group on the delivery of the actions required to implement the Kilkenny DEDP.

AQ	Abbey Quarter
BG	Butler Gallery
CC	Chamber of Commerce
CDP	Castlecomer Discovery Park
CS	Cartoon Saloon
Coillte	Coillte
DCCI	Design Craft Council of Ireland
ETB	Education and Training Board
FI	Fáilte Ireland
IHF	Irish Hotel Federation – Kilkenny
KAN	Kilkenny Attractions Network
KCC	Kilkenny County Council
KCT	Kilkenny Civic Trust
KD	Kilkenny Design
KLC	Kilkenny Leader Company
LCG	Local Community Groups
LEO	Local Enterprise Office
LL	Local Link Kilkenny
OPW	Office of Public Works
PS	Private Sector
RH	Rothe House
SED	Smithwicks Experience Diageo
TII	Transport Infrastructure Ireland
TK	Taste Kilkenny
WI	Waterways Ireland

TIMING OF ACTIONS WITHIN THE DEDP

Years 1-2	Years 3-4	Years 5+
2023/2024	**2025/2027**	**2028+**

Guiding Principles

To ensure the successful implementation of the Kilkenny DEDP experiences and the creation of a sense of place, the following guiding principles have been established to guide certain recommendations and projects listed in this section.

- All projects are self-sustainable, meaning they have access to capital and are not relying solely on grant aid to be developed or maintained.
- All projects are on-message with the Kilkenny DEDP experiences and are aligned to the broader mission of Ireland's Ancient East proposition and regional brand.
- All projects focus on setting the area apart from its competitors, contributing actively to creating a strong sense of place with a unique feel and

ensuring visitor needs are catered for across the day and evening time.

- All projects add value to the area and provide a direct and demonstrable link to either extending visitor length of stay, extending the length of the tourist season or developing a new market.

- Principles of responsible tourism development are embedded in each action, creating better places to live in and to visit.

- All stakeholders will demonstrate a strong and sustained willingness to working as a collaborative network.

5.2 KILKENNY DEDP FIVE YEAR ACTION PLAN

Catalyst Project 1					
	PROJECT	**ACTION**	**Time**	**Lead**	**Partners**
1	**RE-IMAGINED MEDIEVAL MILE**				
1.1	**Medieval Mile Master Plan**	Develop a visitor experience master plan for the Medieval Mile to develop a best-in-class urban tourism experience linking all elements of the Kilkenny medieval experience from visitor orientation, way finding, wider industry engagement and a new experiential approach across all visitor touchpoints.	2023-2025	FI	KCC, PS, KAN, CC, LEO
1.2	**Medieval Mile Master Plan**	Undertake an attractions experience audit among Kilkenny City attractions to influence a new experience led approach across all Kilkenny attractions as part of the ambition to deliver a world class Medieval Mile visitor experience.	2023-2024	FI	KAN
1.3	**Medieval Mile Master Plan**	Grow the number of ultra lux experiences linked to emerging opportunities around craft, design, river activities and a new vision for the Medieval Mile experience.	2025	FI	KCC, PS, KAN, DCCI
1.4	**Medieval Mile Master Plan**	Develop the opportunity to link the Museum of Medieval Kilkenny with sacred sites in Co. Kilkenny such as the Lingaun Valley and local community experiences.	2023-2024	FI	KCC, PS, KAN, KLC
1.5	**Kilkenny Urban Gardens Experience Trail**	Examine the opportunity for a Kilkenny Urban Gardens Experience Trail linking existing gardens and new experiences to include Kilkenny Castle, Butler House, Butler Gallery, Rothe House and future Abbey Quarter developments.	2025-2026	FI	KCT, BG, KCC, AQ, OPW, RH
1.6	**Kilkenny City Interpretation**	Examine the opportunity to develop new standards of interpretation of key historical/heritage buildings across Kilkenny City through an innovative approach to information delivery that enhance walking and cycling tours of the city.	2025-2026	KCC	KCT, FI
1.7	**Kilkenny Living History Project**	Examine the feasibility of developing a Kilkenny "Living History" project focused on the evening time animation of the city's urban experience.	2025-2026	KCT	KCC, KAN, LCG
1.8	**Kilkenny Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan**	Undertake an assessment of the future orientation and way finding requirements based on the Kilkenny Living City model and potential mobility projects around the city core and future investment in the public realm to include a focus on the visitor experience.	2023-2026	KCC	
1.9	**Kilkenny Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan**	Develop a roadmap and vision for the Kilkenny Outdoor Spaces and their future incorporation into how the urban open spaces contribute to the tourism economy, visitor experience and link with existing attractions and community amenities.	2025-2026	KCC	
1.10	**Abbey Quarter Masterplan**	Deliver on the vision for the Abbey Quarter masterplan detailing the elements that will contribute to the city's visitor experience and the opportunity to influence visitor flow across the city via incorporated infrastructures such as coach parking. This will include the development of the area as a key city event space (i.e. pre-planned infrastructure for outdoor events, provision for a Spiegel tent).	2025-2026	AQ	FI, KCC
1.11	**Abbey Quarter Masterplan**	Undertake an opportunity assessment on buildings in or adjacent to the Abbey Quarter that have the potential to contribute to the international vision for craft, design and cultural provision in the city.	2025-2028	KCC	
1.12	**Abbey Quarter Masterplan**	Examine the opportunity to develop a creative/design and arts centre in the Abbey Quarter to grow the scale of creative and design experiences in Kilkenny.	2025-2026	KCC, AQ	DCCI
1.13	**Abbey Quarter Masterplan**	Explore the expansion of the Smithwick's Experience into the Abbey Quarter as part of the area's future integration of tourism within the area.	2023-2024	SED	KCC, AQ

Catalyst Project 2					
	PROJECT	**ACTION**	**Time**	**Lead**	**Partners**
2	**CREATIVE CITY EXPERIENCE**				
2.1	**World Class Creative and Animation Visitor Experience**	Develop a world class creative and animation space delivering visitor experiences that motivate domestic and international visitors to visit Kilkenny.	2025-2028	CS	FI, KCC
2.2	**Creative Visitor Orientation**	Develop a creative destination approach to way finding, orientation and place making that builds on the previous success of the 'Kilkenny Catwalk' installations across the city.	2023-2028	KCC	
2.3	**Kilkenny Creative Theme**	Undertake an assessment of the requirements to develop a visitor focused 'Kilkenny Creative Theme' linking existing and emerging cultural, creative and design experiences to reflect a world class creatives and design destination.	2023-2026	FI	KCC, PS, DCCI
2.4	**World Crafts Council Craft City and Region Vision & Action Plan**	Develop a World Crafts Council Craft City and Region Vision and Growth Action Plan to create international visibility for Kilkenny supported by the associated experiences to realise the global opportunity. This will also examine the requirements to dedicated resources to grow the craft and design opportunity for Kilkenny as evident in comparable international destinations.	2023-2025	KCC, FI	PS, DCCI
2.5	**Castle Courtyard Development Plan**	Undertake a concept development plan for the Castle Courtyard to maximise its potential as a focal point for Kilkenny craft and design and its role in orientating visitors across the city and county to explore associated craft experiences.	2024 - 2025	KD	KCT, FI, KCC, DCCI
2.6	**Jewellery/ Goldsmith and Ceramics Centres of Excellence**	Complete the development of the Crafts Centres of Excellence in jewellery/goldsmith and ceramics and pottery in Thomastown supported by an experience development programme that links the city with the Thomastown craft experience.	2025-2028	KCC	FI, PS, DCCI
2.7	**Experience Development Programme**	Develop the experience development capacity of the design and craft sector through a dedicated experience development programme.	2025-2026	FI	ETB, LEO, PS, KLC, DCCI

Catalyst Project 3					
	PROJECT	**ACTION**	**Time**	**Lead**	**Partners**
3	**RIVER TOURISM CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE**				
3.1	**River Barrow Masterplan**	Develop and implement a tourism masterplan for the River Barrow.	2025-2028	FI, WI	KCC
3.2	**River Tourism Experiences**	Grow the number of river experiences in Kilkenny linked to water activities, local heritage and community tourism.	2023-2026	KCC	LCG, PS, FI
3.3	**Platforms for Growth Activity Centre**	Develop the Platforms for Growth activity centre in Kilkenny City supported by a programme of training for the activity industry to maximise the river amenity opportunity and the enhancement of Three Sisters River Experience.	2025-2026	KCC, FI	PS
3.4	**Kilkenny City / Thomastown River Navigation Project**	Examine the feasibility of a river navigation project linking Kilkenny City with Thomastown.	2027-2028	KCC	
3.5	**Waterways College**	Develop the Waterways College in Graiguenamanagh to become a catalyst for river enterprise and activity development in the county. Develop the "learn to" tourism opportunity through the Waterways College focused on river activities.	2023-2026	LCG	

Catalyst Project 4					
	PROJECT	ACTION	Time	Lead	Partners
4	**KILKENNY ATTRACTIONS EXPERIENCE**				
4.1	**Kilkenny Castle Visitor Experience**	Develop a visitor experience plan for Kilkenny Castle to continuously operate as an international best-in-class experience This will include a visitor experience audit and also account for projects being delivered under the Castle's masterplan and potential new experiences in the Castle and Gardens. This will also include an examination of signage and wayfinding, foreign language capabilities and use of technology etc.	2025-2027	OPW, FI	
4.2	**Kilkenny Castle Visitor Experience**	Examine future visitor experience opportunities for the ultra-luxe market and Kilkenny Castle.	2025-2026	OPW, FI	
4.3	**Kilkenny Castle Visitor Experience**	Deliver the elements of Kilkenny Castle accessibility project and the enhancement of the castle and grounds as leading accessible tourism experience.	2025-2026	OPW	
4.4	**Kilkenny Castle Visitor Experience**	Examine the opportunity for Kilkenny Castle to promote other sites and encourage visits to city centre attractions and county wide attractions e.g. Castle to St. Canice's Cathedral. Examine the interpretation opportunity on the Blue Corridor of Kilkenny Castle to introduce visitors to other sites on the Medieval Mile and regional attractions such as Ormond Castle. Examine the visitor orientation opportunities linking Kilkenny Castle to Medieval Mile and the ability to influence visitor flow from the site to the city.	2025-2026	OPW, FI	KCC, KCT
4.5	**Kilkenny Castle Visitor Experience**	Review the development of saleable Kilkenny Castle Gardens experiences across the four seasons and the associated opportunities provided by a seasonal approach.	2025-2026	OPW, FI	
4.6	**Kilkenny Tourism - Attractions Network**	Establish a dedicated capacity building approach for the Kilkenny attractions through Kilkenny Tourism to work collectively to develop the destinations visitor attraction experience scale and grow the collective marketing capacity of attractions.	2024-2025	FI, KCC	KAN
4.7	**Kilkenny Famine Experience**	Enhance the visitor experience at the Kilkenny Famine experience with the implementation of a multilingual and enhanced audio-visual approach.	2025	PS	
4.8	**Museum of Medieval Kilkenny**	Deliver Museum of Medieval Kilkenny, a new world class experience. Undertake an experience review and commercial performance assessment after one year following the opening of the Museum of Medieval Kilkenny to examine learnings and adjustments to commercial planning if required.	2026-2027	FI, KCC, KCT	
4.9	**City Gaol Development**	Undertake feasibility analysis into the development of the City Gaol (underneath the Courthouse that currently houses ten gaol cells with an isolation unit with an opportunity to create a new visitor experience linked to the Medieval Mile cluster).	2027-2028	KCC	OPW, FI
4.10	**OPW Attractions**	Explore Visitor experience opportunities at Jerpoint Abbey, Kells Priory, Dunmore Cave to maximise the sites potential as county based attractions.	2025-2028	FI, OPW	

	Catalyst Project 5			
	PROJECT	**ACTION**	**Time**	**Lead**	**Partners**
5	**TRAILS AND OUTDOORS**				
5.1	**Castlecomer Discovery Park Master Plan**	Implement the Castlecomer Discovery Park master plan and grow its capacity to support the county's ability to attract the family market, grow the outdoor product base and add to the accommodation stock in rural communities. Explore the opportunity with Coillte to expand the experience at the Castlecomer Discovery Park.	2024-2028	CDP	COILLTE, KCC
5.2	**Castlecomer Discovery Park Needs Analysis**	Develop a needs analysis for Castlecomer Discovery Park that provides a road map aligned with existing site activities and future opportunities identified in the master plan. This will examine Castlecomer Discovery Park as a key site project that will motivate city visitors to explore the county.	2024-2025	FI	CDP
5.3	**Kilkenny Trails Enhancement Programme**	Undertake an assessment of the Kilkenny trails to identify immediate and longer term enhancements to continuously add to progress the user experience and identify potential new trails and enhancement of the Kilkenny outdoor activity.	2023-2026	KLC	KCC
5.4	**South Kilkenny Development**	Assess the opportunity for South Kilkenny communities to develop local experiences, accommodation and supporting services linking to the Waterford to New Ross Greenway.	2025-2028	KLC	
5.5	**South Leinster Way Trail Opportunities**	Examine the opportunity to grow the community experience base associated with the South Leinster Way. Assess the South Leinster Way to establish trail opportunities linking Kilkenny with adjoining counties.	2025-2026	KLC	LCG, KCC, FI
5.6	**Kilkenny to Inistioge Walking and Cycling Trails**	Develop a planned approach to link Kilkenny City to Inistioge through the development of the required walking and cycling trail infrastructure.	2025-2026	KCC	
5.7	**Inistioge to Waterford/ New Ross Greenway**	Undertake a feasibility analysis of connecting Inistioge to the Waterford to New Ross Greenway and potential recreational linkages with Woodstock Estate and Gardens.	2027-2028	KCC	TII
5.8	**Glenmore / Slieverue to Waterford / New Ross Greenway**	Examine the feasibility of a future connection to the Waterford to New Ross Greenway linking with Glenmore and Slieverue.	2027-2028	KCC	TII
5.9	**Barrow Way Pedestrian Cycle Bridge**	Examine the infrastructural requirements to unlock the tourism and activity potential on the Barrow Way and Tinnahinch Castle with the addition of a pedestrian/cycle bridge.	2027-2028	KCC	LCG
5.10	**Woodstock House and Gardens Master Plan**	Develop a visitor experience master plan for Woodstock House and Gardens to become a key catalyst for sustainable tourism and outdoor product excellence in Kilkenny. This will include an analysis to identify the requirements to develop.	2025-2026	KCC	FI, COILLTE
5.11	**Kilkenny Forest Experiences**	Develop a five-year roadmap with Coillte to examine the requirements at agreed Kilkenny Forests with capacity for visitor experience development and the creation of a collective destination forest experience to include sites such as Woodstock House and Gardens, Jenkinstown and Millenium Woods.	2025-2026	COILLTE	

		Destination Enabler 1			
	PROJECT	**ACTION**	**Time**	**Lead**	**Partners**
6	**TOURISM INDUSTRY CAPABILITIES**				
6.1	**International Sales Project**	Develop and implement a new international sales project for Kilkenny supported by the appropriate capacity and capability training required across the tourism industry to successfully target international visitors.	2023-2024	FI, KCC	PS
6.2	**Family Market Development**	Develop an industry wide focus on growing the share of the family market in Kilkenny linking day and evening time experiences with the accommodation sector.	2024-2025	FI	PS, IHF, KAN
6.3	**Night-Time Economy Innovation**	Develop Kilkenny City as a regional night-time economy hub growing the range and diversity of things to do and see in the evening. Implement the night-time economy pilot and identify a number of key night-time opportunities for development aligned with Kilkenny DEDP.	2023-2026	KCC, FI	PS, CC
6.4	**Key City Visitor Attractions**	Examine the visitor experience development requirements for key city visitor attractions to motivate visitors to explore the city with a focus on priority sites including St. Canice's, Rothe House and the Medieval Mile Museum.	2025-2026	FI	KAN
6.5	**Cultural Experiences Development**	Grow the range of new Kilkenny cultural experiences across the city merging different experience categories to create a unique blend of experiences e.g. the Clay Rooms and Cake Face.	2023-2028	PS	FI
6.6	**"Learn to" Experiences**	Expand the range of signature "learn to" experiences with the potential to extend into the night-time economy e.g. the development of Cake Face Cookery School and expansion into the evening "learn to" experiences.	2023-2028	PS	
6.7	**Kilkenny Tourism Digital Capacity Audit**	Undertake a digital capacity audit of the Kilkenny tourism industry to identify key gaps in how the industry markets and sells its experience and informs future training needs.	2023-2026	FI	

		Destination Enabler 2			
	PROJECT	**ACTION**	**Time**	**Lead**	**Partners**
7	**REGIONAL CONNECTORS**				
7.1	**Regional Conference Centre**	Examine the feasibility of developing an opportunity site in Kilkenny City to deliver a regional conference centre.	2027-2028	KCC	

		Destination Enabler 3			
	PROJECT	**ACTION**	**Time**	**Lead**	**Partners**
8	**FOOD AND DRINK HERITAGE**				
8.1	**Kilkenny Whiskey Trail**	Develop an international Kilkenny whiskey trail experience built on the origins of Irish Whiskey and its reference in the Red Book of Ossory. Support the development of the whiskey trail with the required industry training and development of premium saleable experiences around the whiskey story in Kilkenny.	2023-2025	PS	FI
8.2	**Red Book of Ossory Experience**	Examine the feasibility of permanently housing the Red Book of Ossory in Kilkenny to create an international experience based on the heritage and origins of Irish Whiskey.	2024-2026	PS	
8.3	**Brewing and Distilling Heritage**	Develop a series of drinks experiences linked to the heritage of brewing and distilling in Kilkenny. Support the development of new experiences in local breweries through the examination of a dedicated "Brew Kilkenny Experience Trail" to complement the Whiskey Trail.	2024-2025	FI	PS, TK
8.4	**County Wide Food Trail**	Grow the Taste Kilkenny Food Trail through annual growth in the number of food and drink experiences through Kilkenny and enhancing the commercial capacity of food producer to consider new tourism opportunities.	2023-2025	TK	FI, PS, KCC

Destination Enabler 4

	PROJECT	ACTION	Time	Lead	Partners
9	**SUSTAINABILITY / CLIMATE ACTION**				
9.1	**Empowering Climate Action Change**	Drive change at individual business level, through recruitment of all stakeholders into a long-term programme of Fáilte Ireland supports.	2023-2028	FI	PS
9.2	**County Wide Sustainable Tourism Initiative**	Develop a county wide sustainable tourism initiative to develop the profile of Kilkenny as a sustainable visitor destination.	2023-2028	KCC, FI	IHF, PS, KAN, KLC, ETB, LEO
9.3	**Kilkenny Sustainable Transport Model**	Develop a sustainable transport model linking Kilkenny City and county and providing visitors with the opportunity to visit key attractions, activities and communities.	2023-2024	LL	KLC

Destination Enabler 5

	PROJECT	ACTION	Time	Lead	Partners
10	**RURAL COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT**				
10.1	**Lingaun Valley Master Plan**	Undertake a Lingaun Valley tourism development plan to create a road map of the opportunities that exist to develop the destination, cluster development focus and community tourism opportunities.	2023-2024	KLC	LCG, FI, KCC
10.2	**Lingaun River Valley Slate Quarry Outdoor Recreation and Activity Hub**	Undertake a feasibility/opportunity assessment on the potential for Lingaun River Valley Slate Quarry to develop into an outdoor recreation and activity hub.	2027-2028	KLC	
10.3	**Community Tourism Access Hub**	Develop Wind Gap as a community tourism access hub to the Lingaun Valley. Examine local opportunities to expand the accommodation base and grow the area's capacity to retain visitors in the Lingaun Valley.	2025-2026	LCG	PS
10.4	**Lingaun Valley App**	Examine the feasibility of developing a Lingaun Valley augmented reality mobile app to deliver an augmented reality heritage experience based on the sacred sites in the Lingaun Valley and key points of interest on the Lingaun Valley trail.	2023-2024	LCG	KLC
10.5	**Callan Friary Complex Master Plan**	Examine the tourism elements of the Friary complex master plan in Callan to develop associated tourism opportunities for the area and cultural, heritage and creative experiences.	2025-2026	KCC	
10.6	**Graiguenamanagh Cycle Bridge**	Explore the feasibility of the development of a cycle bridge in Graiguenamanagh to expand the town's ability to link with an additional network of trails.	2027-2028	KCC	LCG
10.7	**Graiguenamanagh Hotel Concept**	Support the development of the dispersed hotel concept in Graiguenamanagh linking a range of repurposed rooms across the town.	2027-2028	LCG	
10.8	**County Creative & Design Focal Points**	Develop a series of county creative focal points and visitor experiences in Callan, Graiguenamanagh and Thomastown to develop community, arts and creative experiences linked to the Kilkenny creative, craft and design story.	2025-2026	KCC	DCCI
10.9	**Kilkenny GAA Community Experiences**	Grow the GAA cultural visitor experience linking city and county through a series of Kilkenny GAA community experiences. Undertake a pilot with interested GAA clubs and interested private sector operators to assess the feasibility of growing the summer-time GAA experiences focused on the heritage of hurling and introducing visitors to hurling matches.	2023-2028	LCG	

Destination Enabler 6					
	PROJECT	**ACTION**	**Time**	**Lead**	**Partners**
11	**FESTIVALS AND EVENTS**				
11.1	**International Events and Festivals Strategy**	Develop a five-year international events and festivals strategy for Kilkenny City and County to grow key events across the year and examine new event opportunities. This will include a re-appraisal previously successful niche events hosted in Kilkenny e.g. Roots Festival, Food and Drink festivals.	2024-2026	KCC, FI	
11.2	**Heritage Site Event Venues**	Develop a pilot programme to explore the extended use of heritage sites as potential event venues and deliver niche Kilkenny experiences e.g. St. Canice's as a concert/gala dining venue.	2025-2026	KCC	KAN

Destination Enabler 7					
	PROJECT	**ACTION**	**Time**	**Lead**	**Partners**
12	**ACCOMMODATION GROWTH**				
12.1	**Accommodation – Opportunity Sites**	Grow the accommodation base in opportunity sites across Kilkenny City and county focused on developing a mix of new hotel bedroom stock combined with a mix of sustainable accommodation options suitable for rural locations.	2023-2028	KCC	FI
12.2	**Accommodation Audit**	Undertake an accommodation audit and destination accommodation strategy for Kilkenny identifying short to long term development opportunities.	2023-2024	FI	
12.3	**RV / Camper Van Accommodation**	Undertake a review of possible county wide sites to expand the recreational vehicle (RV/camper van) options in the county aligned with the growth of the outdoor product base. Undertake a county wide accommodation audit to establish accommodation growth requirements and the opportunities that exist to support rural communities and the outdoors e.g. campsites, RV/glamping and niche accommodation.	2025-2026	KCC	KLC

5.3 KILKENNY DEDP - KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Kilkenny DEDP provides a destination development focus aligning all stakeholders with an agreed vision through the adoption of a five-year pathway. Specific KPIs will be baselined and monitored throughout the lifecycle of the plan. The impact of the Kilkenny DEDP will be measured through the monitoring of key metrics that examine the commercial development of tourism across the area. The measurement of success will include analysis of the following areas of performance over the course of the Kilkenny DEDP.

1. **Demand side conditions**
2. **Supply side conditions**
3. **Destination development**
4. **Environmental conditions**

Demand Side - Visitor

1. Increase bed nights in Kilkenny YoY ahead of regional average from year 3 of implementation of the Kilkenny DEDP.

2. Increase in visitor numbers in off peak season.

3. Increase the value of visitors to Kilkenny over volume.

4. Increased visitor satisfaction ratings.

Supply Side - Industry

5. Increase Saleable Products (five new or improved saleable experiences per annum) and a tailor-made distribution plan for the destination.

6. Season Extension: Progress towards extending annual opening hours across the destination.

Destination Development

7. Maximise the tourism impact for local communities through the rural tourism opportunity and how urban centres play their role as gateways to the wider county visitor experience.

8. Create a network of authentic community experiences linking the rural and urban communities of Kilkenny.

9. Increase the volume of saleable experiences through product clusters aligned with the spatial approach and strengthening the capacity of destination axis towns / hubs to attract and retain visitors in the destination for longer.

10. Build the capacity of the tourism industry and the local community to maximise the opportunity provided by the Kilkenny DEDP and grow the appeal for the international visitor.

11. Develop recognition as a sustainable tourism destination differentiated by the opportunities for the visitor to immersive themselves in responsible tourism activity.

Environmental

12. Develop effective management of the environment, including natural, cultural and heritage assets through the progression of a DEDP Monitoring Programme.

APPENDIX ONE

KILKENNY DESTINATION AND
EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

ENVIRONMENTAL

This Plan provides an opportunity to ensure that all existing and future tourism projects and initiatives within the Kilkenny Destination and Experience Development Plan area are planned, developed and managed in a sustainable and integrated manner. The VICE (Visitor, Industry, Community and Environment) Model for Sustainable Tourism is the approach the Kilkenny DEDP is developed from and strives to implement.

Fáilte Ireland recognises the need to integrate environmental considerations into this "Plan" in a way that responds to the sensitivities and requirements of the wider natural environment. Environmental considerations including climate change, traffic, biodiversity, built and cultural heritage, landscape, critical infrastructure and communities, all play a vital part in our tourism sector.

The protection, enhancement and promotion of our most important tourism asset – the natural environment has been an integral part of the formation of this Plan as is evidenced in the following:

- Environmental assessments and resulting measuring and monitoring
- A firm commitment to ensuring sustainable and responsible tourism principles are practiced
- Compliance with statutory decision making and consent granting at Plan implementation stage
- Integrating requirements for environmental protection and management

Environmental Assessment

Consideration has been given to the requirement to undertake environmental assessment of this Plan in order to ensure full legal compliance and to further integrate protection, enhancement and promotion of the environment in developing and implementing the Plan.

The following sets out the two types of environmental assessments that were considered.

1. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

The Plan was examined for the need to undertake Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). On initial examination of the Plan it was determined that full SEA would be required. The assessment process was completed having full regard to SEA Directive 2001/42/EU and to Statutory Instrument No. 435/2004

as amended. The outcome of this process can be referenced in the relevant environmental documents that accompany this Plan.

2. Appropriate Assessment (AA)

The Plan was examined for the need to undertake Appropriate Assessment (AA). On initial examination of the Plan and in completing screening for AA, it was determined that Stage 2 AA would be required. The assessment process was undertaken having full regard to the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC and to Statutory Instrument No. 477/2011. The output and outcome of this process can be referenced in the relevant environmental documents that accompany this Plan.

Key findings of the SEA and AA Process for the Plan

Having completed full SEA and AA on the Kilkenny Destination and Experience Development Plan it is evident that these processes have had a positive influence on the evolution of the Plan and will also continue to have a positive environmental influence as the plan enters its implementation phase. The outcome of completing the above environmental assessments has resulted in the following:

- Identification and mapping of the key environmental sensitivities of relevance to the Plan as detailed in the SEA Environmental Report and in the AA Natura Impact Statement.
- Identifying and mitigating where relevant potential environmental impacts resulting from the Plan.
- Identifying relevant positive environmental impacts arising from the Plan and ensuring the implementation of actions that result in environmental protection, enhancement and promotion e.g. visitor management actions, environmental and sustainable education.
- Developing a suite of mitigatory actions to ensure that any negative environmental impacts are reduced or eliminated at plan implementation stage. This suite of mitigatory actions includes:
- The requirement to establish the status of the plan and its interrelationship with statutory decision making and consent granting frameworks.
- Integrating the requirements for environmental compliance into the Plan. Particular emphasis is placed on the following:

- Requirements for lower-tier environmental assessment.
- The Kilkenny City & County Development Plan 2021-2027.
- The Climate Action Plan 2019.
- Visitor management.
- Consideration for infrastructural capacity and green infrastructure.
- Eco system services.
- Development and execution of an Environmental Monitoring Programme for the Plan during implementation and operation.
- The SEA Directive requires that the significant environmental effects of the implementation of plans and programmes are monitored. Section A5a details the measures that have been selected in order to monitor the likely significant effects of implementing this Plan.
- Monitoring can demonstrate the positive effects facilitated by the Plan and can enable, at an early stage, the identification of unforeseen adverse effects and the undertaking of appropriate remedial action.
- The occurrence of persistent significant adverse

environmental effects which are directly attributable to tourism would necessitate consideration of the effects in the context of the Plan and a possible review of part(s) of the Plan.

- Environmental monitoring will be based around indicators that allow quantitative measures of trends and progress over time relating to the Strategic Environmental Objectives.
- A variety of sources of information will be used to run the programme.
- Environmental monitoring will be executed by Fáilte Ireland and will run concurrent with the implementation phase of the Plan itself. It will be reported on to the Plan's implementation group on an annual basis where relevant information sources allow, and the findings of the monitoring will influence the actions of the Plan as it progresses. The monitoring will be linked directly to the Plan KPI's, including monitoring of visitor numbers where relevant.

Environmental monitoring for the Destination and Experience Development Plan and other existing/ future Fáilte Ireland plans, programmes, etc. may be undertaken and reported on at the same time.

This sets out the indicators that will be used in the operation of this environmental monitoring programme.

■ Assess the feasibility of developing and implementing visitor management plans where relevant.	■ Monitor the quality of visitor experiences and local social/cultural impact at key sites.
■ Encourage the adoption of a responsible tourism approach with ongoing monitoring of environmental impacts.	■ Ensure visitor experiences are accessible to all where possible.
■ Increase awareness and appreciation of Kilkenny's environment.	■ Support voluntary and community led environmental protection projects, which in turn benefit tourism.
■ Increase environmental performance among tourism businesses.	■ Advocate for the protection of key environmental and tourism assets.
■ Encourage sustainable modes of transport and ensure they are accessible to tourists.	■ Improve tourist management, particularly in mature and established tourist areas.
■ Introduce and implement minimum sustainable standards for tour guides.	■ Encourage tourism related businesses to engage in the Leave No Trace Programme.
■ Increase and promote environmental protection and enhancement when progressing actions derived from this Plan.	■ Ensure crucial infrastructure including water and wastewater services are in place and adequate.
■ Ensure the EPA's Environmental Sensitivity Mapping Webtool is consulted when implementing projects resulting from this Plan.	■ Harness the importance of ecosystem services and protected sites to encourage sustainable levels of ecotourism growth and awareness.
	■ Ensure invasive species management is in place through the promotion of effective biosecurity measures.

Implementation and Consent

This Plan is situated alongside a hierarchy of statutory documents setting out public policy for land use development, tourism, infrastructure, sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management. These include the National Planning Framework (NPF), Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSESs) and lower tier Development Plans and Local Area Plans.

Implementing the DEDP will involve Fáilte Ireland helping to facilitate, promote, support and coordinate stakeholders (including local authorities, other government agencies, tourism operators, communities and visitors) in their activities in a way that is consistent with existing and emerging plans that have been subject to environmental assessment. The DEDP does not provide consent, establish a framework for granting consent or contribute towards a framework for granting consent.

In order to be realised, projects included in this Plan will have to comply, as relevant, with the various provisions of legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and other licencing requirements as appropriate) that form the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework, of which this Plan is not part and does not contribute towards.

Integrating Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management into the Plan

The SEA and AA team worked with the Plan-preparation team at Fáilte Ireland in order to integrate requirements for environmental protection and management into the Plan.

Fáilte Ireland provides funding for sustainable tourism projects that emerge as part of specific, competitive, themed and time-bound grant schemes or as part of wider strategic partnerships. These include projects relating to land use, infrastructural development and land use activities and attractions. Reference made to such projects included in the Plan does not guarantee funding. While funding is provided to certain projects, Fáilte Ireland is not the developer.

In order to be realised, projects included in the DEDP (in a similar way to other projects from any other sector) will have to comply, as relevant, with various legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and other licensing requirements as appropriate) that form the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework, of which the DEDP is not part and does not contribute towards such legislation, policies, plans and programmes include:

- Requirements for lower-tier environmental assessment, including EIA and AA.

- Statutory land use plans that form part of the statutory decision making and consent-granting framework (e g Development Plans, such as the Kilkenny City & County Development Plan and Local Area Plans) and that have undergone environmental assessment, as appropriate, including various provisions relating to sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management.

- The Climate Action Plan 2019 and the National Climate Change Adaptation Framework (2018 and any subsequent versions).

Infrastructure Capacity

With respect to infrastructural capacity (including drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) the potential impact on existing infrastructure as well as the potential environmental effects of a likely increase in tourism-related traffic volumes along any routes resulting from the relevant initiative shall be considered and mitigated as appropriate, where relevant. The promotion of developing visitor friendly infrastructure where it is required will also be encouraged.

Visitor Management

Those receiving funding shall seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers and/or any change in visitor behaviour in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new projects are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities.

Extensive research by Fáilte Ireland has shown improved environmental outcomes (including improved attainment of conservation objectives) in areas with visitor management strategies. Visitor management strategies will be required for proposed plans, programmes and projects that are to receive funding as relevant and appropriate.

Green Infrastructure and Ecosystem Services

Those receiving funding shall contribute towards the maintenance of existing green infrastructure and its ecosystem services, taking into account the output of the Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystem Services project being undertaken by the NPWS. Proposals for the development of any green infrastructure should demonstrate the synergies that can be achieved with regard to the: provision of open space amenities; sustainable management of water; protection and management of biodiversity; protection of cultural heritage; and protection of protected landscape sensitivities.

APPENDIX TWO

KILKENNY DESTINATION AND
EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

SUPPORTING CURRENT POLICY AND PLANNING

In order to support the ambition around sustainable destination growth, the Kilkenny DEDP is designed to guide the destination and its stakeholders through a five-year development focus through continuous improvement and experience innovation. The Kilkenny DEDP is aligned with a number of existing strategies, policy and industry reports. They include;

- Fáilte Ireland Corporate Plan
- Ireland's Ancient East Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023-2027
- 'People, Place and Policy: Growing Tourism to 2025' Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
- Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021 – 2025
- Tourism Action Plan 2019 – 2021
- Actions to Promote Sustainable Tourism Practices 2021 - 2023
- Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways
- National Physical Activity Plan 2013 – 2025
- Kilkenny City & County Development Plan 2021 – 2027

FÁILTE IRELAND CORPORATE PLAN AND REGIONAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES (2023-2027)

Fáilte Ireland's Corporate Plan is the basis for national tourism development supported by Regional Tourism Development Strategies (2023-2027) for each of the four regional brands.

PEOPLE, PLACE AND POLICY: GROWING TOURISM TO 2025

Growing Tourism to 2025' includes a focus on growing visitor numbers, overseas revenue and employment. In achieving these, the Plan also addresses the challenges of seasonality, regional dispersion of visitors and sustainability. This policy statement is centered on Ireland achieving its full potential as a destination for overseas tourism. However, it is recognised that the domestic tourism market underpins the range of visitor accommodation and services that provide competitive advantage to Ireland in the international market and many of the measures contained in this statement will similarly benefit the domestic tourism sector.

OUR RURAL FUTURE: RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY 2021-2025

The policy provides a framework for the development of rural Ireland over a five-year period. The role of tourism in local and regional economies is recognised as being of an importance that 'cannot be understated'. The aim of growing the tourism offering and developing outdoor activity tourism are highlighted in the policy. Particular relevant policy measures include:

- Maximising resources and strengths in the Green Economy to support employment opportunities for rural communities across a range of areas including sustainable tourism (Policy Measure 26)

- Further development of the Fáilte Ireland Experience Brands including the Ireland's Ancient East by strengthening Ireland's image as an outdoor activity holiday destination for both domestic and international markets (32)

- Investment in greenways, blueways, walking trails and other outdoor recreation infrastructure to support the growth in outdoor recreation tourism (36)

- Expansion of the Walks Scheme to achieve a target of at least 80 trails (38)

- Explore the potential for the development of further tourist trails, including cross-border trails and initiatives (39)

TOURISM ACTION PLAN 2019 – 2021

The Action Plan developed by the Irish government's Sustainable Tourism Working Group sets out the ambition that 'Ireland will seek to be amongst the world-leaders in sustainable tourism practices', setting out eight guiding principles for sustainable tourism development in Ireland.

1. All of government will work together with industry towards achieving a sustainable tourism sector.

2. Sustainable tourism growth will be achieved in a manner that focuses on overall economic benefit ahead of the number of tourists.

3. Tourism will support economic growth in communities throughout the country and with a greater spread of demand across the year.

4. In delivering high quality tourism experiences that exceed our visitors' expectations, we will do so in a manner that minimises any negative environmental or community impacts.

5. As custodians of our natural landscape and of our historic and cultural assets, we will protect them for the next generation.

6. Responsible behaviour by our visitors will be encouraged to maximise the mutual benefit of tourism to Ireland's people and place.

7. The tourism sector will support and promote efforts to move to more sustainable forms of transport to, and around Ireland.

8. The tourism sector must play its part to help deliver Ireland's commitments under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

ACTIONS TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PRACTICES 2021 – 2023

The objectives of this Plan are to identify actions which promote sustainable tourism practices, establish new research methods and form a clear narrative for communication about the sustainability agenda. Actions are grouped under the seven themes of policy, evidence base, environmental impact, awareness and education, business planning, destination management, and sales and marketing. As per Action 23 of the Plan, the guiding principles for sustainable development are embedded in this DEDP. It is also a further action of this DEDP that local stakeholders are aware of opportunities to maximise the potential of nature-based solutions identified by Action 27 of the Plan.

STRATEGY FOR THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF GREENWAYS

The objective of the Greenway strategy is to assist in the strategic development of nationally and regionally significant Greenways in appropriate locations constructed to an appropriate standard in order to deliver a quality experience for all Greenway users. It also aims to increase the number and geographical spread of Greenways of scale and quality around the

country over a ten-year period with a consequent significant increase in the number of people using Greenways as a visitor experience and as a recreational amenity.

NATIONAL PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PLAN (2013-2025)

The NPAP (Get Ireland Active) aims to increase physical activity levels across the population thereby improving the health and wellbeing of people living in the country. The Plan sets targets for annual increases in the level of daily physical activity across a range of ages and abilities to achieve the National Guidelines on Physical Activity for the country supported by eight action areas developed to encourage greater participation in physical activity. Key relevant actions in the Plan include:

- **Action 32:** Develop and promote walking and cycling strategies in each Local Authority area.
- **Action 36:** Prioritise the planning and development of walking and cycling and general recreational/ physical activity infrastructure.

- **Action 37:** Explore opportunities to maximise physical activity and recreation amenities in the natural environment.

KILKENNY CITY & COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN (2021 – 2027)

The Kilkenny City & County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 sets out how the county will grow and develop over the next six-year period.

The tourism objectives of the Plan are to continue the development of major flagship tourism projects within the county to enhance the tourism product and develop Kilkenny City and County as a leading tourism destination through continued sustainable expansion of the tourism sector, with a focus on creating high-quality visitor services and the continued development and enhancement of visitor attractions and activities, capitalising on their natural and cultural heritage assets, whilst safeguarding these resources for future generations.