



Kildare Public Participation Network

Kildare PPN Submission

Kildare County Development Plan

2023 - 2029

Kildare Public Participation Network
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INTRODUCTION

Kildare Public Participation Network (Kildare PPN) was established on foot of the Report of the Working Group on Citizen Engagement with Local Government published in 2014, which recommended greater input by communities into decision making at local Government level. The Local Government Reform Act 2014 provided for the formal establishment of PPNs and they are now operational in all Local Authority areas.

Kildare PPN has 623 diverse member groups in the community and voluntary, social inclusion and environmental pillars in Kildare. The primary purpose of Kildare PPN is to enable PPN member groups to input into and have their voices heard within the formal decision-making structures of Kildare County Council. The PPN is now the main way that Local Authorities connect with groups active in their area. Kildare PPN currently have representatives on the Local Community Development Committee, the Joint Policing Committee, and the Strategic Policy Committees with Kildare County Council. Kildare PPN therefore provide a mechanism to facilitate the two-way flow of information between the Local Authority and their groups to influence policy development and the delivery of services to the wider community.

Kildare PPN welcomes the opportunity to make this Submission to the Kildare County Development Plan 2023 -2029

CONSULTATION

Kildare PPN held an online consultation with our member groups on the 18th of February to gather our network's suggestions and recommendations for the County Development Plan to form our Submission. The consultation included a brief presentation by Acting Senior Executive Planner, Jane O'Reilly, along with a questions and answers session, followed by an open discussion amongst our members. Submissions were also accepted via email.

The following PPN groups contributed to the Submission:

- Allenwood Tidy Towns
- Calverstown Action Network
- Celbridge Community Council
- Clane Sustainable Energy Community
- County Kildare Access Network
- County Kildare LEADER Partnership
- Kilcock 4 Climate Action
- Kilcullen Communities 4 Climate Action
- Kildare Communities 4 Climate Action
- Kildare PPN Climate Action Linkage Group
- Kildare PPN Environmental Pillar
- Kildare PPN Secretariat
- Kill History Group
- Maynooth Community Council
- Maynooth Tidy Towns
- Monasterevin Sustainable Energy Community CLG
- Moyglare Hall Residents Association
- Naas Access Group
- Newbridge Community Development
- Newtown Hall Residents' Association
- The Irish Draught Breeders Association
- Umeras Community Development

VISION FOR KILDARE

"Lead the way with community conversations and engage citizens in a meaningful way"

"A Healthy Kildare"

"Lead the way with Climate Action"

"An inclusive, accessible and community driven Kildare using a Universal Design approach"



**Kildare
Public
Participation
Network**

"A Low Carbon Sustainable County with Community at the heart of the transition"

"The future has to be local"

"We need to take a long term approach and plan until at least the end of the century"

"Build a Sustainable Kildare"

HEALTHY PLACEMAKING: PEOPLE AND PLACES

Encouraging Sustainable Communities

The Covid 19 Pandemic and subsequent national lockdowns have really highlighted the importance of local towns and villages to communities in County Kildare and emphasized the importance of the services and amenities that they offer, especially in times of crises.

Currently many towns in Kildare, especially in the North East of the County act as ‘feeder towns’ where residents are leaving their town centres to work, shop and socialise elsewhere. The County Development Plan needs to look at reversing this to encourage people to utilize their own Town Centres.

To further strengthen these towns, resources need to be provided to ensure that there is an aspect of self-sufficiency throughout Kildare to strengthen community resilience.

For example: Identifying space for community allotments in towns and villages, offering supports for the development of local Farmers Markets, and developing safe active travel infrastructure into these towns and villages to encourage sustainable travel options for people in outlying rural areas.

These further improvements to towns in Kildare would help to encourage people to rely less on the global economy and look toward more localised options, while in turn supporting the local economy.

Encourage Active Travel

It is proposed that pedestrian and cyclist access is encouraged over car access to all areas in the county ensuring increased number of pedestrian crossings are provided in towns and villages.

The concept of ‘car free days’ is something that was felt should be explored further and potentially trialled in different routes/town centers throughout the County. The purpose would

be to encourage people into the town centres to support local businesses and for recreational purposes.

To further promote cycling as a preferred mode of travel into town centres, it is recommended that ample bicycle parking spaces are provided outside cafes, restaurants and shops.

Accessibility Audits

According to the most recent Census in 2016, there were 27,768 people residing in Kildare with a disability, and of those, 17.1% had a disability where they had 'substantial physical limitation' (CSO 2016). A full accessibility audit should be conducted throughout the County which would need to include dishing and ramps to roads, footpaths, pedestrian, and pelican/zebra crossings along with access to graveyards, heritage sites, public parks, and buildings. This audit would help inform Kildare County Council of works that need to be done to ensure Kildare is a County accessible to all.

County Kildare Access Strategy

It is recommended that the objectives of the County Kildare Access Strategy (2020) are implemented as part of the County Development Plan to ensure a vision for a society in which disabled people can work and live a full life as part of their community in Kildare.

Installation of Air Quality Monitors

It is the view of the PPN that air quality monitors are installed at schools and playgrounds in the larger towns in the county to monitor pollution from traffic.

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY: INNOVATION, ENTERPRISE AND EMPLOYMENT

Establishment of a County Museum for Kildare

As County Kildare is steeped in history and heritage, it is proposed that Kildare County Council investigate the viability of establishing a County Museum for Kildare. A County Museum would be a valuable historical and heritage resource to the people of Kildare, while also acting as a popular sightseeing attraction, encouraging more tourism to the County.

Support Sustainable Enterprise through the Local Enterprise Office

It is proposed that Kildare Local Enterprise Office should support enterprises as much as possible throughout the County with clinics and advice on how to make their operations more sustainable and environmentally friendly.

Retention Shop Front Improvement, Accessibility and Age Friendly Grant Scheme

It is proposed that the Shop Front Improvement, Accessibility and Age Friendly Grant Scheme should be retained and further promoted as it is a great incentive for businesses to improve their premises, enhancing our town centres and shopping experience.

Support for pop-up retail

It is proposed that current showcasing of products by the Local Enterprise Office in Áras Chill Dara should be expanded, within the new Mertis building and that businesses could be supported through an indoor pop-up market style setting.

Local Labour Clause

It is proposed that Kildare County Council include a local labour clause as part of the social responsibility required of Developers in future Planning Applications. This approach has been shown to work well in disadvantaged urban areas with training and employment opportunities for long term unemployed and the young unemployed.

CLIMATE ACTION: ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND ADAPTATION

Encouraging a Circular Economy

The EU Circular Economy Action Plan (2020) and A Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy: Ireland's National Waste Policy 2020-2025 highlight the importance and urgency of mainstreaming the circular economy to help combat Climate Change and meet our climate targets as a nation. As Kildare County Council strive to be leaders within the community on Climate Action, the circular economy should be adapted and encouraged throughout the County.

It is recommend that Kildare County Council looks into establishing a 'Library of Things', based on the current Library service model in Kildare County Council.

The 'Library of Things' would give people the opportunity to borrow items needed only on an occasional basis instead of having to buy these products, for example specialist cooking equipment, tools, gardening items. By borrowing these items, it reduces the need for material production and consumption, potentially saving massive amounts of waste going to landfill.

It is also recommended that Kildare County Council investigate the possibility of establishing a Center similar to the model of the Rediscovery Centre, the National Centre for the Circular Economy. This Centre would host a number of different social enterprises focusing on sustainability that offer practical solutions to adopting a more environmentally friendly lifestyle for example 'repair sheds' and 'upcycling hubs', where items can get repaired or upcycled for a new lease of life, diverting waste from landfill.

Biodiversity

It is the view of the PPN that the County Development Plan recognises the central importance of and opportunity for restoring natural places and recovering lost biodiversity. The County Development Plan should plan to achieve the essential rebalancing of the economy and nature for the people of Kildare through the following actions;

- To identify and designate large scale biodiversity space in Kildare for nature,

- To create new green corridors connecting existing protected areas with new areas for biodiversity,
- To allow nature to recover in our peatlands (see restoration of peatlands below).
- To ensure that our rivers and waterways are free from pollution from point sources, effluent discharge and nutrient run-off.
- To require the *planting of native species* in all new developments, the preservation of existing hedgerows and the promotion and adoption of the National Pollinator Plan across the county.
- To *manage and restore to good status* our areas designated as Natural Heritage Areas (NHA and proposed NHAs) and Special Areas of Conservation.

Restoration of Peatlands

As the restoration of peatlands is crucial to our efforts in combatting Climate Change, enhancing biodiversity, and achieving our climate targets (LIFE Peat Restore 2016). It is the PPN's view that Kildare County Council invest more resources to increase the percentage of bog rehabilitation and remediation projects throughout the County and that the peatlands of Kildare are evaluated in terms of their value and future potential climate resilience encompassing biodiversity, carbon storage and the alleviation of flooding.

Collaboration with Communities on Climate Action

There is a great passion for Climate Action within Kildare amongst community groups, with many groups taking on Climate Action projects and promotion of Climate Action to the wider community. These groups could be further supported by Kildare County Council to discuss possible collaborations on projects from different funding streams and avail of advice from the Council when they come up against barriers in their work.

SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY: MOVEMENT AND TRANSPORT

Solar Panels for EV Charging Points

As part of the Climate Action Plan (2019), the Government set a target to have 936,000 EVs on Irish roads by 2030. Kildare County Council will need to support this with adequate infrastructure, ensuring that more public charging points are installed throughout County Kildare along with strategies to provide sustainable electricity sources to power those vehicles. With this, it is proposed that Kildare County Council explore the possibility of integrating solar power with EV charging in public car parks throughout the County. The space on the roof tops of public buildings and bus shelters could also be utilised for this solar energy.

Park and Ride Facilities

In Towns like Maynooth where there is a high percentage of people commuting into the town for the University and for employment, a 'Park and Ride's' facilities should be implemented on the outskirts of the Town to encourage people to use public transport to relieve the traffic pressure and thereby reducing emissions. It is also recommend that Kildare County Council investigate the viability of a 'Park and Ride' facility on the ring road in Naas.

Accessible Public Transport

As people are being encouraged to use active travel or take public transport where possible to help with Climate Action, Kildare County Council need to work closely with the Transport Authority of Ireland and ensure that the option of public transport is accessible to all and can facilitate people with limited mobility.

Naas Rail line

With the growth of housing developments in Naas along with the lack of parking infrastructure at Sallins Train Station, it is proposed that Kildare County Council investigate the viability of creating a light railway line connecting Naas to Sallins Railway Station to encourage the use of public transport.

CREATIVE PLACES: SOCIAL, COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Protection of Public Spaces

The Covid-19 restrictions that have limited travel to 2km and 5km within County boundaries travel has greatly highlighted the importance of our open spaces in County Kildare and how important they are for our physical and mental health. With this in mind, Kildare County Council should have a strict policy in protecting and maintaining public space in their ownership.

There should also be a more proactive approach by Kildare County Council in acquiring land for public spaces to ensure a balance between commercial development and adequate space for amenities and community use.

Audit of Services and Infrastructure for young people

Given the significant number of young people aged 0 - 25 years in County Kildare, it is recommended that adequate provision is made for education and childcare services and that forward planning takes account of the age profile of young people in each Municipal District. It is recommended that a full needs assessment is undertaken on a multiagency basis led by Kildare County Council to ensure that there is adequate supply of school and childcare places to meet demand and inform the overall County Development Plan.

Housing options for older people and disabled people

A comprehensive needs analysis should be completed for housing for older and disabled people in the County. This assessment should inform recommendations for the County Development Plan.

Community Department Residents' Association Grant

Currently, the Kildare County Council Community Residents' Association Grants are limited for the maintenance of open spaces within the estates only. It is suggested that this is widened to allow for the Residents' Association Grant to be used toward community engagement within the estates to help build resilience and help people feel they belong to their community.

Mapping of Accessible Sites within County Kildare

In line with the County Kildare Access Strategy 2020-2022, it is recommended that a Directory and or interactive map is developed mapping details of the accessibility of amenities, buildings and recreational facilities throughout Kildare.

This Map/Directory would also be a helpful tool in promoting tourism in the County by highlighting its accessibility for tourists that require ease of access to amenities/tourist attractions.

ENHANCED AMENITY AND HERITAGE: LANDSCAPE AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Tree Felling

In relation to the felling of trees by Kildare County Council, it is suggested that a process should be put in place whereby the local public will be made aware of any future tree felling planned by Kildare County Council and that an opportunity is provided for objections to be made to the felling of trees (where a safety reason is not an issue). It is suggested that where tree felling is necessary, Kildare County Council plant the same or a greater number of trees.

It is also suggested that suitable unused land owned by Kildare County Council is donated for community tree planting projects.

Establishment of Boardwalks on Peatlands

Peatlands are an important part of our heritage and have great potential to be utilised as walking amenities. It is recommended that Kildare County Council supports the creation of boardwalks through the peatlands in north West Kildare using the disused Bord na Mona railway lines to create walking trails. Such facilities would significantly add to the overall recreational offer of the area, along with improving the health and well-being of the local communities.

In line with the RSES 2019-2031 and the National Planning Framework (2019), these walking routes could then potentially be linked up to existing blueways to create a substantial network of walking routes. Apart from serving communities within Kildare, these amenities would also offer a unique alternative means for tourists and visitors to access and enjoy rural Ireland.

Accessibility of recreational amenities

Kildare County Council need to work with Irish Waterways on the removal of Kissing Gates as these are in-accessible for wheelchair users. Parking barriers/ poles in car parks and other amenity areas can stop the access of wheelchair users and their vehicles gain access. Everybody should have the right to gain access to enjoy our natural heritage.

MAKING IT HAPPEN: INFRASTRUCTURE, ENERGY AND COMMUNICATIONS

Energy

It is recommended that the County Development Plan should compel Grid Networks Ireland to ring-fence some grid connection capacity for community energy projects in their County. There is a very short window for the development of solar generation and finite capacity on the Grid. Developers are currently planning some very large renewable energy projects and unless space on the grid is held for communities, the opportunity for Kildare communities to own their own energy will be lost.

It is also recommended that the County Development Plan 2023-2029 ensure that Bord Na Mona lease a small percentage of their wind turbine sites to Kildare Communities for community energy projects as Bord na Mona lands are listed as public lands.

Sustainable Energy Communities

Kildare currently has 21 Sustainable Energy Communities located throughout the County (SEAI 2021). Within the County Development Plan, it is recommended that Kildare County Council continue to promote and support the Sustainable Energy Communities and provide project management expertise to manage and guide Kildare Sustainable Energy Communities through early projects.

Water

It is recommended that the aquatic buffer zone is increased, i.e. the strip of land along a river, stream, canal or large drain where use of chemicals including weedkillers, slurries and fertilizers are not permitted, also making it a condition of planning that all new buildings should incorporate water harvesting infrastructure. This infrastructure could be communal in estates.

Development in County Kildare

As Kildare's population is projected to increase to up to 266,500 by 2031 (RSES 2019-2031), a massive 12.4% increase on the 2016 population figures, the County Development Plan needs to set out a strategy to ensure that housing development is supported by the necessary infrastructure to support the population, along with combatting over development in some areas

and under development in other areas. A clear strategy needs to be implemented to disperse housing and development within the County.

There needs to be a clear balance on the need for development with the preservation of historical town centres. To aid with this, we recommend the possibility of contracting/hiring an Archaeologist to balance the developer led infrastructure.

It is also suggested that there is a policy implemented that would ensure that there is minimal development on green field sites where possible, until brown sites are utilised.

Compliance with Environmental Planning

In the context of Development Charges, it is proposed that Kildare County Council consider the introduction of an additional withholding tax, levy or bond, to be refunded to developers on completion of inspections to certify compliance with environmental planning conditions in the context of illegal hedge and tree removal and ensure provision of compensatory habitat arising from the development.

Kildare County Council and the Community

It is recommended that Kildare County Council consider what can be built into the Development Plan that would lead to a stronger and more productive relationship with the community to deliver a co-creative vision for the County.

The importance of strengthening the relationship between Kildare County Council and the community through Kildare PPN should be highlighted along with the importance of facilitating meaningful communication and consultation with the community.

It is suggested that Kildare County Council increase in the number of paid personnel dedicated to liaising and working with community groups. These personnel should be adept at sourcing and applying for finance for community projects and be on hand to offer advice to community groups.

It is also suggested that Kildare County Council in collaboration with local stakeholders devise a Welcome Pack, for people moving to the area.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

To ensure accountability and enforcement of the County Development Plan, targets need to be set within the Plan. It is recommended that a monitoring and evaluation system should be put in place to track the progress of the County Development Plan. This system should be capable of providing a Report which should be made available to view by the public at least once a year.

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