

Quality Assurance – In Depth Check

Section A: Introduction

This introductory section details the headline information on the operation of the Economic, Tourism Development and Promotional Programme in County Kilkenny.

Programme or Project Information	
Name	Economic, Tourism Development and Promotional Programme
Detail	Kilkenny County Council's Economic, Tourism Development and Promotional Programme works to support and promote the expansion and development of the economy and stimulate job creation in Kilkenny
Responsible Body	Kilkenny County Council
Current Status	Revenue expenditure being incurred annually
Start Date	Ongoing Annual Budget
End Date	Ongoing Annual Budget
Overall Cost	€3,485,610 for 2023

Programme Description

The operation of the Economic, Tourism Development and Promotional Programme is managed by the Local Enterprise Office, Economic Development and Tourism Section of Kilkenny County Council. The total expenditure for the service in 2023 was €3,485,610. The office is part of the Directorate of Planning, Environment, Building Control, Parks, LEO/Economic Development, Tourism Marketing & Veterinary Services of Kilkenny County Council.

The core purpose of the Economic, Tourism Development and Promotional Programme is to further strengthen Kilkenny's position to support and promote the expansion and development of the economy of Kilkenny. This is achieved through measures which facilitate long term strategically sustainable investment with significant employment, income and growth potential.

Kilkenny County Council's Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2023-2028 and the Local Enterprise Development Plan (LEDP) 2021-2024 are the key strategic documents overarching the approach to economic development and enterprise delivery supports.

Kilkenny County Council has a Service Level Agreement (SLA) in place with Enterprise Ireland for the delivery of enterprise support services. This SLA provides the framework for the operation of Local Enterprise Offices (LEO's) within the Local Authority. The purpose of the SLA is to detail the relevant policies, operational guidelines, metrics and other service provisions to which all LEO's are subject.

Kilkenny County Council's Tourism Strategy 2023-2028 guides the delivery of tourism supports. Kilkenny County Council plays a significant role in promoting and developing tourism in Kilkenny. The Council is responsible for developing and implementing policies and initiatives that enhance the visitor experience to the County and promote the County as a world class tourism destination.

Following a successful application by Kilkenny County Council in 2023, Kilkenny City was selected as a pilot area for the appointment of a Night Time Economy Advisor from October 2023 to September 2025. The Kilkenny City Night Time Economy Action Plan was adopted by the Council in April 2024. One of the main objectives of the pilot scheme is to establish a diverse and inclusive night time economy catering for various age groups.

In September 2023, a Broadband Officer was appointed within the LEO office. This post is part funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development. The key aspects of the role are to develop a Digital Strategy for County Kilkenny and to work with the broadband connection points and remote working hubs across the County, to provide support and develop an action plan for the next 12 – 18 months.

2023 Expenditure - Operation of Economic Development & Promotional Programme	
Description	€
Economic Development Capital Projects	874,506
Tourism Development Capital Projects	199,579
Payroll	630,927
Measure 1 Enterprise Ireland Grant Payments	462,812
Measure 2 Enterprise Promotion Programme	431,963
Tourism	236,511
Economic Development & Promotion	123,791
Overhead Allocation – Central Management Charge	437,056
Statutory Contribution to other body	88,465
Total	3,485,610

Section B - Step 1: Logic Model Mapping

As part of this In-Depth Check, Kilkenny County Council's Internal Audit Unit have completed a Programme Logic Model (PLM) for the operation of the Economic, Tourism Development & Promotional Programme. A PLM is a standard evaluation tool and further information on their nature is available in the [Public Spending Code](#).

Objectives	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
To support and promote the expansion and development of the economy of Kilkenny through measures to facilitate long term strategically sustainable investment with significant employment, income and growth potential.	Budget of €3.2m in 2023.	Training Courses.	Number of people attending training courses, mentoring, events to support pre-start up, start up and growing business.	53 net new jobs, supported by LEO were created in 2023.
	Enterprise Ireland Service Level Agreement (SLA) & funding of €1,179,007.	One to one mentoring.	Number of businesses assisted directly through financial assistance to eligible business.	20 businesses received direct financial assistance of €541,124.
To support tourism development throughout Kilkenny, working with key stakeholders to adopt and implement Kilkenny's Tourism Development Strategy and Action Plan 2023 – 2028 alongside delivering on Failte Irelands Destination Experience Development Plan for Kilkenny 2023-2028.	Failte Ireland grant income €8k.	Delivery of LEAN/Green and Digital Supports.	Number of new Jobs.	11 Micro Exporter Grants awarded.
	12 Staff members.	Events to encourage business exporting.	Delivery of a programme to support student entrepreneurship and the creation of an entrepreneurial culture.	5 businesses availed of Digital Start Programmes.
To support tourism development throughout Kilkenny, working with key stakeholders to adopt and implement Kilkenny's Tourism Development Strategy and Action Plan 2023 – 2028 alongside delivering on Failte Irelands Destination Experience Development Plan for Kilkenny 2023-2028.	Local Enterprise Office Kilkenny Development Plan 2021-2024.	Student Enterprise Programme.	Delivery of collateral and events to promote Kilkenny as a great place to live, work and locate a business in.	12 businesses commenced LEAN one to one consultancy.
	Kilkenny County Council's Local Economic and Community Plan 2023-2028.	Collaboration within the enterprise support eco system in Kilkenny to support important sectors such as craft and women in business.	Collaboration with the tourism sector in Kilkenny in the delivery of key tourism events.	43 Online Trading Vouchers approved to the value of €86k.
To support tourism development throughout Kilkenny, working with key stakeholders to adopt and implement Kilkenny's Tourism Development Strategy and Action Plan 2023 – 2028 alongside delivering on Failte Irelands Destination Experience Development Plan for Kilkenny 2023-2028.	Government of Ireland Regional Enterprise Plan 2024 – South East.			554 businesses availed of specialised business mentoring.
	Enterprise Ireland Leading in a Changing World Strategy 2022-2024.			1026, people took part in small business training.

To support the development of the Night Time Economy in Kilkenny City.	Kilkenny County Council Night Time Economy Action Plan 2024-2025.	Marketing and events to promote Kilkenny as a business location.	Provides funding to tourism festivals. Co-ordinate key tourism marketing events.	10 applicants supported to make loan applications to Micro Finance Ireland.
To maximise the potential of having quality broadband connectivity and to enable the people of County Kilkenny to benefit from digital technologies and infrastructure.	Kilkenny County Council Tourism Development Strategy & Action Plan 2023-2028. Collaboration with Kilkenny Tourism CLG.	Tourism marketing to keep Kilkenny to the forefront of the domestic visitors' mind for Kilkenny to be top of the visitors 'must see' destinations for year-round experiences and world class events. Funding applications. Support delivery of capital projects with economic impact.	Funding applications developed. URDF Funding claims supported.	19 tourism festival events in Kilkenny in 2023. Festival grants issued to a value of €88k. Community Events supported to a value of €22k. Kilkenny Tourism Marketing Campaigns. Business breakfast briefings and economic promotion events including DesignKilkenny delivered. www.belongkilkenny.ie developed.

Description of Programme Logic Model

Objectives:

Kilkenny County Council's Economic, Tourism Development and Promotional Programme has twin objectives:

- To support and promote the expansion and development of the economy of Kilkenny through measures to facilitate long term strategically sustainable investment with significant employment, income and growth potential.
- The Council plays a significant role in promoting and developing tourism in Kilkenny. It is responsible for developing and implementing policies and initiatives that enhance the visitor experience to the County and promote Kilkenny as a world class tourism destination.

Inputs:

The Programme has a budget of €3,485,610 including Enterprise Ireland funding of €1,179,007. The LECP and LEDP are integrated Strategic Plans for the delivery of the economic and promotional programme alongside the Tourism Development Strategy and Action Plan for the delivery of tourism activity. Kilkenny County Council has an SLA in place with Enterprise Ireland. The purpose of this SLA is to provide an operational framework for LEO within Kilkenny County Council.

Activities:

The Economic, Tourism Development & Promotional Programme delivers an extensive range of supports direct to business. It also delivers events, marketing collateral and collaborates with stakeholders to support the enterprise and tourism culture in Kilkenny. Activities can directly enable employment within businesses or support the employee or management capacity within the business. Kilkenny County Council supports and promotes a range of festivals and events throughout the year. The Council works closely with Kilkenny Tourism CLG, local tourism businesses, community groups and tourism organisations to develop and implement initiatives that enhance the visitor experience.

Outputs:

The LEO Business Unit in Kilkenny provides a first point of contact service to the business community. It provides business advice, direction, signposting, business counselling and mentoring. It offers direct financial supports, training courses, information and networking events. The role of LEO also includes creating and raising local enterprise awareness and developing an enterprise culture and locally based enterprise activity. Kilkenny County Council's Tourism Development plan provides a strategic, collaborative framework to facilitate the consolidation and sustainable growth of the Tourism Sector throughout Kilkenny City and County.

Outcomes:

The programme supports businesses to sustain employment in Kilkenny and creates a platform for new job creation. The programme strengthens Kilkenny as a place to live, do business and to visit. Kilkenny is a sustainable year-round international destination recognised for a creative city experience blending medieval with contemporary.

Section B - Step 2: Summary Timeline of Project/Programme

The following section tracks the operation of Kilkenny County Council's Economic, Tourism Development & Promotional Programme.

- 2023 The Programme is an ongoing service provided by Kilkenny County Council. Funding for providing the service is included in the Annual Budget in the amount of €3,485,610. The programme delivers an extensive range of supports direct to businesses. It also delivers events, marketing collateral and collaborations to support the enterprise, economic and tourism culture in Kilkenny.

Section B - Step 3: Analysis of Key Documents

The following section reviews the key documentation relating to appraisal, analysis and operation of Kilkenny County Council’s Economic, Tourism Development & Promotional Programme.

Programme Key Documents	
Title	Details
Kilkenny County Council Annual Budget 2023	The budget allocation for the operation of the Economic, Tourism Development & Promotional Programme
Enterprise Ireland & Kilkenny County Council SLA	This SLA provides the framework for the operation of the LEO Business Unit within the County Council
Enterprise Ireland Letter of Offer for Funding 2023	Provides details on funding from Enterprise Ireland to LEO for 2023
Kilkenny Local Economic and Community Plan 2023-2028 & Implementation Plan 2023-2024	Details the strategic priorities for economic development in Kilkenny and associated implementation plan
The Local Enterprise Development Plan 2022 to 2024	Sets out Strategic Priorities of LEO Kilkenny for the period 2021-2024
Kilkenny County Council Tourism Development Strategy & Action Plan 2023-2028	Outlines Kilkenny County Council’s vision and objectives for Tourism growth and Development in Kilkenny
Night Time Economy Action Plan	Outlines Kilkenny County Council’s vision and associated actions to support the Night Time Economy in Kilkenny
Kilkenny County Council Service Delivery Plan 2023	Identifies the services that Kilkenny County Council are proposing to deliver in 2023
Agresso Financial Management System	Financial details on the expenditure and income for the operation of the Economic, Tourism Development & Promotional Programme
NOAC Key Performance Indicators for LEO	Metrics on relevant KPI’s for LEO
SLA between Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport & Media and Kilkenny County Council for the establishment of Night Time Advisor	This SLA outlines the purpose and objectives of the Night Time Advisor

Key Document 1: Kilkenny County Council Adopted Budget 2023

Kilkenny County Council's Adopted Budget 2023 details the expenditure and expected income for all service areas including the operation of the Economic, Tourism Development and Promotional Programme for 2023.

Key Document 2: Enterprise Ireland & Kilkenny County Council SLA

This SLA provides the framework for the operation of the Local Enterprise Office business unit within the County Council.

Key Document 3: Enterprise Ireland Letter of Offer of Funding 2023

Outlines Enterprise Ireland funding to Kilkenny County Council for 2023.

Key Document 4: The LECP Framework 2023-2028 and the LECP Implementation Plan 2023-2024

Details the strategic priorities for economic development in Kilkenny and associated implementation plan.

Key Document 5: The Local Enterprise Development Plan 2021-2024

Sets out strategic priorities of LEO Kilkenny for the period 2021-2024

Key Document 6: Kilkenny County Council's Tourism Development Strategy & Action Plan 2023-2028.

Outlines Kilkenny County Council's vision and objectives for Tourism growth and development in Kilkenny.

Key Document 7: Night Time Economy Action Plan 2024-2025

Outlines Kilkenny County Council's vision and associated actions to support the Night Time Economy in Kilkenny.

Key Document 8: Kilkenny County Council Service Delivery Plan 2023

This plan identifies the services that Kilkenny County Council are proposing to deliver in 2023.

Key Document 9: Agresso - Financial Management System

Reports can be generated from Agresso detailing the level of expenditure across the Economic, Tourism Development and Promotional Programme. It includes payroll costs, miscellaneous costs, contributions to other bodies and overhead allocations. This allows management to monitor budget adherence during the year.

Key Document 10: NOAC Key Performance Indicators for LEO

Outlines KPI's for LEO. These include the number of net-jobs created with assistance from LEO, the number of online trading vouchers approved and drawn down in 2023 and the number of participants who received mentoring during 2023.

Key Document 11: Night Time Economy SLA

This SLA clarifies the roles between the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media and Kilkenny County Council. It sets out the objective of the pilot scheme which will be supported at local level by a Night Time Economy Advisor.

Section B - Step 4: Data Audit

The following section details the data audit that was carried out for the operation of Economic, Tourism Development & Promotional Programme in Kilkenny County Council. It evaluates whether appropriate data is available for the future evaluation of the Programme.

Data Required	Use	Availability
Financial Reports	To ensure adherence with budget	Yes
Procurement data for purchasing	To ensure compliance with procurement procedures	Yes
LEO Metrics collated on: Number of net-jobs created with assistance from LEO Number of online trading vouchers approved and drawn down in 2023 Number of participants who received mentoring during 2023	The metrics reflect engagement with service users and allows for Management to monitor, evaluate and adjust the operation of the service if needed	Yes

Data Availability and Proposed Next Steps

The necessary data is available to evaluate the operation of Kilkenny County Council's Economic, Tourism Development & Promotional Programme. The availability of detailed statistics allows Management to ensure optimal operation of the Programme.

Agresso (Financial Management System) gives Management up to date financial information to allow for ongoing budget monitoring and to ensure adherence to the Annual Budget.

Kilkenny's Economic, Tourism Development & Promotional Programme is part of the Directorate of Planning, Environment, Building Control, Parks, LEO/Economic Development, Tourism Marketing & Veterinary Services in Kilkenny County Council. The Programme reports to the Strategic Policy Committee 1 (SPC) - Economic Development, Enterprise Support, Tourism, Planning & Development Services. Monthly reports on the operation of the Programme are also presented in the Chief Executive's report to the Plenary Council and the SPC. A financial reporting framework is part of the Council's SLA with Enterprise Ireland. These reports are provided to the Enterprise Ireland's Centre of Excellence on a quarterly basis. Reporting of annual output metrics such as grants approved, productivity supports and training and mentoring numbers is on an ongoing basis via a live shared online platform with Enterprise Ireland called the GMIS.

Section B - Step 5: Key Evaluation Questions

The following section looks at the key evaluation questions for the operation of Kilkenny County Council's Economic, Tourism Development and Promotional Programme based on the findings from the previous sections of this report.

Does the delivery of the project/programme comply with the standards set out in the Public Spending Code? (Appraisal Stage, Implementation Stage and Post-Implementation Stage)

The operation of the Economic, Tourism Development and Promotional Programme broadly complies with the standards set out in The Public Spending Code. The Local Economic and Community Plan & the Local Economic Development Plan are integrated strategic plans for the delivery of the Economic and Promotional Programme alongside the Tourism Development Strategy and Action Plan the for delivery of tourism activity in the County.

The Programme drafts a Work Programme/Service Delivery Plan on an annual basis, based on the contents of these Strategies. Once the Annual Budget is confirmed, the Work Programme/Service Delivery Plan is determined providing further details on projects proposed, the project partners, timeframes, individuals and organisations responsible for delivery. This Service Delivery Plan is adopted by the Elected Members each year. Rigorous monitoring and reporting are evident across the Programme.

Is the necessary data and information available such that the project/programme can be subjected to a full evaluation at a later date?

The necessary data is available to allow for a full evaluation if required.

What improvements are recommended such that future processes and management are enhanced?

Kilkenny County Council's Economic, Tourism Development & Promotional Programme works to build a resilient, sustainable business base and support new and existing businesses to grow, be enterprising and take advantage of new opportunities. Kilkenny County Council has worked in partnership with Failte Ireland to agree the vision for Kilkenny in consultation with all stakeholders engaged in the tourism industry in the County. It is essential that Kilkenny County Council continue to provide adequate funding and the required level of staffing to enable the Economic, Tourism Development & Promotional Programme to deliver on strategic priorities for the Council going forward.

Section: In-Depth Check Summary

The following section presents a summary of the findings of this In-Depth Check on the operation of the Economic, Tourism Development & Promotional Programme in County Kilkenny.

Summary of In-Depth Check

Overall, I find the operation of the Economic, Tourism Development & Promotional Programme in County Kilkenny complies with the broad principles of the Public Spending Code.

Kilkenny County Council operate an Economic, Tourism Development & Promotional Programme that is committed to strengthening Kilkenny's position to support and promote the expansion and development of the economy of Kilkenny. This is achieved through measures which facilitate long term strategically sustainable investment with significant employment, income and growth potential.

Kilkenny is a sustainable year-round international destination recognised for a creative city experience blending medieval with contemporary. Kilkenny County Council plays a significant role in promoting and developing tourism in Kilkenny City and County.