

## Quality Assurance – In Depth Check

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### Section A: Introduction

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This introductory section details the headline information on the programme or project in question.

<b>Programme or Project Information</b>	
<b>Name</b>	Kilkenny County Council Active Travel
<b>Detail</b>	Kilkenny County Council's Active Travel Programme provides safe active travel networks. The aim is to encourage and enable people to walk, wheel or cycle to work or school for their everyday journeys when possible.
<b>Responsible Body</b>	Kilkenny County Council
<b>Current Status</b>	Expenditure Being Incurred
<b>Start Date</b>	2021
<b>End Date</b>	Ongoing project
<b>Overall Cost</b>	€36m

## **Project Description**

Kilkenny County Council's Active Travel Programme is underpinned by the aims and objectives set out in the Government's National Sustainable Mobility Policy 2023, Climate Action Plan 2023 (CAP23) and the CycleConnects Irelands Cycle Network. One of the key aims cited is to increase the number of walking and cycling networks so that walking, cycling and public transport will account for 500,000 additional daily active travel and public transport journeys by 2030 and a 10% reduction in the number of kilometres driven by fossil fuelled cars. It will make it easier for people to choose walking, cycling and to use public transport daily.

Active Travel involves travelling with a purpose, using your own energy via sustainable means. It includes walking, wheeling and cycling or the use of self-powered, non-motorised scooters as part of a purposeful journey. For example, walking to school and cycling to work are both considered forms of Active Travel.

Projects are funded by the Department of Transport through the National Transport Authority's (NTA) Active Travel Programme and are managed and delivered by the Local Authorities. The NTA has a dedicated Active Travel Team who work in collaboration with Local Authorities across the country on the delivery of hundreds of Active Travel Projects. This includes the development of segregated cycle lanes, widened footpaths, new walking/cycling bridges and new pedestrian crossings.

The Active Travel Unit was set up in Kilkenny County Council in 2021. The Unit works to deliver enhanced facilities across the County. It provides local communities with safer and more accessible opportunities for walking, cycling and other forms of active travel.

Funding from the NTA includes the provision of dedicated staff. The Active Travel Team continue to progress transformative schemes through design and the appropriate statutory processes. Work is continuing in Kilkenny in 2023 including the Radial Cycle Routes, the Inner Orbital Route, the improvement to safety features for the Ring Road, Lacken Walk and Greens Bridge in the City, countywide new and improved crossings, junction tightening, public lighting and footpath improvements.

Kilkenny County Council has completed numerous projects to date under its' Active Travel Programme. Some of these include the installation of pedestrian crossings in the City at various locations which provide a safer pedestrian environment.

A Safe Routes to School project in Dunnamaggin consisting of pedestrian improvements in the vicinity of the school was completed. It included the installation of two new pedestrian crossings, widening of an existing footpath and construction of new footpath. This linked the school to the existing car parking area at the Parish Church to facilitate a park and stride away from the school to create a safe school zone.

Pedestrian crossings and pedestrian and cycling facilities have been upgraded to provide safe routes for a large number of residents to access the City Centre, a Lidl store, Newpark Shopping Centre and amenities. The installation of a new link ramp between MacDonagh Junction Shopping Centre and the train station allows passengers getting off trains and buses to access the shopping centre via the Goods Shed Square. It removes the need for pedestrians to access the station via the hill on the Dublin Road as they can now take the lift or pedestrian-friendly route via the Dublin Road entrance to MacDonagh Junction.

## Section B - Step 1: Logic Model Mapping

As part of this In-Depth Check, Internal Audit have completed a Programme Logic Model (PLM) for Kilkenny County Council's Active Travel 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 develop high quality walking and cycling facilities. This includes wider segregated cycle tracks or shared surfaces so that people of all ages feel safe cycling.	Department of Transport funding via NTA circa €3 million annual budget.  Active Travel Team – 4 staff members  NTA Guidance documents.  Strategic Cycle Network for Kilkenny City & County	Kilkenny County Council is the Sponsoring Agency.  Appointment of Multi-disciplinary Design Teams and Works Contractors through the NTA Project Management Framework.  Apply for Planning Permission (Part 8 or Section 38) where applicable	Active Travel schemes, particularly Safe Routes to School (SRTS) and Low-Cost Junction Tightening and Pedestrian crossings schemes completed throughout the County.	Improved walking and cycling facilities throughout the City and County.
To ensure value for money is achieved	Prepare Grant Application Forms (GAF) and reports for the NTA for funding approval & submit through the Capital Grant Management System (PRS).	Feasibility Studies including option selection, appraisal and multi criteria analysis are prepared as required and submitted to the NTA for funding	Projects must be executed satisfactorily within budget to the required standard.	Stringent financial management of all projects.
Identify and respond to small scheme improvement opportunities. This allows improvement in walking and cycling infrastructure. It includes better network connectivity and linkages to key destinations.	The schemes align with the current Kilkenny City & County Council Development Plan, the National Planning Framework and National Sustainable Mobility Policy.	Kilkenny County Council undertake design and construction of approved schemes.  Assessment by the Active Travel Team of residential areas where permeability and linkages would serve best to community needs.	Improved network connectivity.	Highly connected streets which allow people to walk and cycle to key destinations in a direct and easy-to-find manner.

## **Description of Programme Logic Model**

### *Objectives:*

Kilkenny County Council aims to develop high quality walking and cycling facilities to include improved pedestrian facilities, wider segregated cycle tracks or shared surfaces so that people of all ages feel safe walking, wheeling and cycling throughout the City & County. The Council identifies and responds to small scheme improvement opportunities to improve walking and cycling infrastructure, network connectivity and linkages to key destinations.

### *Inputs:*

The primary input to the programme is the capital funding of €36 million to 2040 which is provided by The Department of Transport via the NTA. This expenditure equates to €3m per annum. The expenditure to the end of 2023 is €6,539,114. The Active Travel Unit is set up in Kilkenny County Council and comprises of 4 staff members.

### *Activities:*

There are a number of key activities carried out throughout the programme. These include the identification of Active Travel Schemes and the appointment of Multi-disciplinary Design Teams and Works Contractors to deliver and progress these schemes through the stages of the NTA Framework. Preparation of Planning Applications (Part 8 or Section 38) where applicable. Preparation of Grant Application Forms and Project Continuance Forms/Reports for funding approval by the NTA via their Capital Grant Management System. Kilkenny County Council as required undertake Feasibility Reports to examine option selection, appraisal and include Multi Criteria Analysis to the NTA as part their funding application process. Tenders are prepared and submitted via eTenders as necessary for projects.

### *Outputs:*

Kilkenny County Council has implemented a number of Active Travel schemes throughout the City and County including Pedestrian & Cycle Crossings, Safe Routes to Schools, Ancillary Cycling Facilities, Low Cost Junction Tightening, Cycle Routes, Footpath Improvements, Surfacing, Public Lightening and Installation of Link Ramps.

### *Outcomes:*

The Active Travel Programme has provided improved walking and cycling facilities throughout the City and County. The programme encourages independent journeys for all, particularly for children and young people and those with mobility issues. It provides alternatives to car travel within the City and will help Kilkenny achieve the carbon emission reduction targets set out in the Climate Action Plan. Projects progress at different stages, with some completed, some at feasibility stage and others under construction.

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

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The following section tracks the Active Travel Programme from inception in terms of major project milestones.

- 2021 Scouts Den Car Park Regeneration, Thomastown
- 2021 Completion of Footpath Improvements on the Rockshire Road, Ferrybank
- 2021 Completion of Bennettsbridge River Cycle Route
- 2021 Completion of surfaced areas for Project KK/21/0026
  - Access between Circular Road and Old Callan Area
  - Access lane linking Gaol Road and St. Rioch's Street
- 2021 Completion of installation of light segregation to protect cycling corridors
- 2021 Appointment of Contractors Tom Delahunty Construction & Plant Hire for works at New Orchard Road and Old Golf Links Road (Low Cost Junction Tightening and Pedestrian Crossings)
- 2021 Completion of an upgrade to pedestrian/cyclist crossings on the New Orchard Road and Old Golf Links Road. These routes cater for a large number of residential pedestrians and cyclists using these routes to access the City Centre, a Lidl store, Newpark Shopping Centre and amenities
- 2021 Provision of bicycle parking facilities and bike service stations in Kilkenny City
- 2021 Installation of ducting and public lighting at Poccocke Park, Loughboy Park, Ballyfoyle Road & Waterford Road
- 2022 Completion of project to upgrade pedestrian/cyclist crossings on the New Orchard Road and Old Golf Links Road
- 2022 Appointment of Consultancy Services (Technical) for the North Western Environs Cycle Routes Improvement Scheme
- 2022 Completion of the installation of a new link ramp between MacDonagh Junction Shopping Centre and the Train Station has enhanced Kilkenny as an attractive and accessible City
- 2022 Appointment of Consultancy Services (Technical) for the North Eastern Environs Cycle Routes Improvement Scheme
- 2022 Appointment of Consultancy Services (Technical) for the Southern Environs Cycle Routes Improvement Scheme

- 2022 Appointment of Consultancy Services (Technical) for the Inner Orbital Cycling Routes, Greensbridge Upgrade
- 2022 Appointment of Multi-Disciplinary Consultancy Services (Technical) for the Laneways & Street Network to West of City Centre
- 2022 Completion of Safe School Programme at Dunnamaggin
- 2022 Appointment of Contactors for Bridge Street Callan Project
- 2022 Provision of surfacing and public lighting to link Willow Close to the Bennettsbridge Road creating a short cut to encourage walking and cycling to local facilities instead of car use
- 2022 Provision and completion of Ancillary Cycling Facilities. Installation of bike parking facilities to facilitate the introduction of E-Bike Scheme and provision of 2 Bunkers to primary schools. Provision of bike parking, establishment of a bike hub, roll out of loan scheme and the support of upcycling for the Ukrainian Community in Kilkenny
- 2023 Appointment of Contractors for Rapid Deployment – Granges Road Freshford Road
- 2023 Completion of Flaggy Lane Phase 1 - Change in direction of one-way system with the introduction of a cycleway and footpath linking the bypass and schools to the town centre. The change in direction was included in the Part 8 prepared for Callan's Bridge Street project which was ratified by the Council in Q3 2022
- 2023 Appointment of Contractors Cumnor Construction Ltd for Cootes Lane to Ring Road
- 2023 Completion of Dean Street Footpaths – Improved Pedestrian Facilities on Dean Street including continuous footpaths across vehicular access points and improved crossings
- 2023 Completion of Drakelands Footpath - Construction of shared facility along regional road
- 2023 Completion of a Safe Route to School zone at Graiguenamanagh Boy's National School to incorporate a link from The Quay Car Park to Wood Road and a pedestrian crossing on Wood Road to the front of school
- 2023 Completion of Phase 1 Cycle Lane in Pocke
- 2023 Appointment of Contractors Suir Plant Ltd for Callan Active Travel Scheme – Flaggy Lane and Green Street Junctions

## Section B - Step 3: Analysis of Key Documents

The following section reviews the key documentation relating to appraisal, analysis and evaluation for the Active Travel Programme.

<b>Project/Programme Key Documents</b>	
<b>Title</b>	<b>Details</b>
Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework (NPF)	NPF is the Government’s overarching policy and planning framework for the social, economic and cultural development of our country.
Project Ireland 2040: National Development Plan (NDP) 2021 – 2030	As part of Project Ireland 2040 the NDP sets out the Government’s over-arching investment strategy and budget for the period 2021-2030.
National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI)	NIFTI is the Department of Transport’s high-level strategic framework to support the consideration and prioritisation of future investment in land transport.
Ireland’s Government Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030	Ireland’s fifth Government Road Safety Strategy outlines our road safety priorities for the next decade.
National Sustainable Mobility Policy	National Sustainable Mobility Policy sets out a strategic framework to 2030 for active travel (walking and cycling) and public transport journeys to help Ireland meet its climate obligations.
Climate Action Plan 2023	The plan implements the carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings and sets out a roadmap for taking decisive action to halve our emissions by 2030 and reach net zero no later than 2050.
Healthy Ireland Strategic Action Plan 2021 – 2025	The Healthy Ireland Strategic Action Plan 2021-2025 provides a clear roadmap of how we can continue to work together to bring about good health, access to services, healthy environments and the promotion of resilience to ensure that everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential.
Town Centre First Policy	The Town Centre First policy aims to create town center’s that function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the service, social, cultural and recreational hub

	for the local community.
National Roads 2040 (April 2023)	This document is Transport Infrastructure Ireland's Strategy to enable Project Ireland 2040, responding to evolving national policy and aligning to the Department of Transport's National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI).
CycleConnects Irelands Cycle Network	AECOM, as part of the NTA Cycle Design Office, have been requested by the NTA to develop comprehensive cycle plans for counties outside the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), including Kilkenny County Council. CycleConnects is intended to form a comprehensive cycle network for all cycle user types across each county in Ireland and to develop on from the cycle network proposed for the counties in the GDA.
Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) – Southern Regional Assembly	The RSES provides a long-term, strategic development framework for the future physical, economic and social development of the Southern Region.
Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021 - 2027	The City & County Development Plan details the overall strategy of the Council for the proper planning and sustainable development of the County over a 6-year period.
NTA Project Approval Guidelines	Guidelines issued by NTA for use by all Local Authorities when applying for Active Travel funding and progressing projects.
Kilkenny County Council Funding Application to NTA	Funding applications to NTA for Active Travel Projects.
NTA Capital Grant Allocations Letter	Official confirmation from NTA for Capital Grant Allocations for Active Travel.
Chief Executive's Orders appointing Multi-Disciplinary Design Teams & Works Contractors	Ordering the appointment of Consultants and Contractors for various Active Travel Projects.

**Key Document 1: Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework (NPF)**

The NPF aims to enable more effective traffic management within and around cities and re-allocation of inner-city road-space in favour of bus-based public transport services and walking/cycling facilities.

**Key Document 2: Project Ireland 2040: National Development Plan (NDP) 2021 – 2030**

The NDP emphasises the need to provide safe alternative active travel options such as segregated cycling and walking facilities. These can also help alleviate congestion and meet climate action objectives by providing viable alternatives and connectivity with existing public transport infrastructure.



### **Key Document 3: National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI)**

Section 2.4 of the NIFTI Framework states that one of its main purposes is to “*Deliver Clean, Low-Carbon and Environmentally Sustainable Mobility*”. Furthermore, the reduction in Greenhouse gas emissions is a foremost priority. It is a national objective to achieve a low-carbon, economically competitive and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050. NIFTI will support investment in public transport, walking and cycling within cities and large towns to encourage modal shift away from the private car.

### **Key Document 4: Ireland’s Government Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030**

This Strategy outlines our road safety priorities for the next decade.

### **Key Document 5: National Sustainable Mobility Policy**

It contains actions to improve and expand sustainable mobility options across the country by providing safe, green, accessible and efficient alternatives to car journeys.

### **Key Document 6: Climate Action Plan 2023**

The Plan details how Ireland’s transport system needs to make accessible, sustainable transport modes more attractive and shift away from car dependency through consideration of the proximity between people and places in land use and housing policy.

### **Key Document 7: Healthy Ireland Strategic Action Plan 2021 – 2025**

The Plan promotes the implementation of the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (2013) which incorporates good planning and design practice to support and encourage active travel (walking and cycling) in urban areas.

### **Key Document 8: Town Centre First Policy**

There is a strong national policy framework in place to support a Town Centre First approach, from the overarching aspect of Project Ireland 2040, through to specific policies on climate action, housing and rural development.

### **Key Document 9: National Roads 2040 (April 2023)**

Section 5.1.3: Active Travel, TII is committed to delivering improved active travel provision in all its projects, such as improving the safety of the National Roads network for active travel users and reducing the severance caused by some National Roads in urban areas. TII will collaborate with stakeholders to progress the National Cycle Network plan to cater for more active trips and expand the Greenway network nationwide, on behalf of the Department of Transport. Provision of safe, high quality active travel infrastructure will encourage modal shift and may result in reduction in carbon emissions.

### **Key Document 10: CycleConnects Ireland’s Cycle Network**

The Draft Plan includes existing cycle networks such as urban cycle routes, greenways and interurban routes. This will be supplemented by proposed cycle routes/links outlined in latest development and transport plans and other networks required to maximise the connection of the network to communities. It should be noted that this network does not specify any infrastructure types on any route and is focused on highlighting the key links required to form a comprehensive cycle network connecting all major communities and destinations.

**Key Document 11: Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) – Southern Regional Assembly**

The RSES seeks to achieve balanced regional development and full implementation of Project Ireland 2040 – The National Planning Framework. It will be implemented in partnership with local authorities and state agencies to deliver on this vision and build a cohesive and sustainable region.

**Key Document 12: Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021 - 2027**

In line with Kilkenny County Council’s Climate Change Strategic Objectives, the Plan Promotes cycling and walking as efficient, fast and relatively inexpensive forms of transport. The Council has set objectives to improve walking and cycling in the City and County.

**Key Document 13: NTA Project Approval Guidelines**

Guidelines issued by NTA for use by all Local Authorities for Active Travel Projects. The Guidelines include the Project Lifecycle Phases and Project Bands.

**Key Document 14: Kilkenny County Council Funding Application to NTA**

Kilkenny County Council Funding Application to NTA for Active Travel projects.

**Key Document 15: NTA Capital Grant Allocations Letter**

NTA Capital Grant Allocation Letter detailing funding to Kilkenny County Council for Active Travel Projects. The letter sets out the Project Approval Guidelines and the criteria for the draw-down of funding. It also contains a Grant Allocation Confirmation Form to be returned to the NTA by Kilkenny County Council accepting the terms set out in the funding letter.

**Key Document 16: Chief Executive’s Orders appointing Multi-Disciplinary Design Teams & Works Contractors**

Chief Executive’s Orders appointing various Multi-Disciplinary Design Teams & Works Contractors for a variety of Active Travel Projects.

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**Section B - Step 4: Data Audit**


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The following section details the data audit that was carried out for the Active Travel Programme. It evaluates whether appropriate data is available for the future evaluation of the project/programme.

<b>Data Required</b>	<b>Use</b>	<b>Availability</b>
Kilkenny County Council Funding Application to NTA	Details of funding applied for Active Travel Projects	Yes
NTA Capital Grant Allocations Letter	Details of NTA offer for Capital Grant Allocations for Active Travel Projects	Yes
Grant Allocation Confirmation Form	Acceptance by Kilkenny County Council of NTA Capital Grant Allocations for Active Travel	Yes

Chief Executive's Orders appointing Multi-Disciplinary Design Teams & Works Contractors	Ordering the appointment of Multi-Disciplinary Design Teams & Works Contractors	Yes
Feasibility, Option Selection and Appraisal Reports including Multi Criteria Analysis	A feasibility study is a preliminary exploration of a proposed project or undertaking to determine its merits and viability.	Yes
Signed Contracts for Multi-Disciplinary Design Teams & Works Contractors	Legal Agreements between Kilkenny County Council and Consultants/Contractors	Yes
Planning Permissions	Planning Permissions undertaken by County Council	Yes
NTA Gateway Approvals	Ensures compliance with NTA Project Approval Guidelines	Yes
Details on Project Expenditure	Financial monitoring of projects and compliance with budgets	Yes
Monthly & Annual Reports to NTA	Requirement of NTA Project Approval Guidelines	Yes
Progress Reports to the Municipal District meetings	Ensure the Elected Council Members are kept up to date with progress on Active Travel Projects	Yes

### **Data Availability and Proposed Next Steps**

The necessary data is available on file to evaluate the Active Travel Programme. The Active Travel Programme has provided improved walking and cycling facilities throughout the City and County. The documents and reports that were undertaken for each project are available on file. The financial management information is available from Agresso (Financial Management System). There is a robust reporting framework in place with the NTA on all projects undertaken by Kilkenny County Council. Adherence by Kilkenny County Council to the Project Approval Guidelines issued by the NTA is evident at all Project Lifecycle Phases.

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### **Section B - Step 5: Key Evaluation Questions**

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The following section looks at the key evaluation questions for Kilkenny County Council's Active Travel 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 delivery of the Active Travel Programme complies with the broad principles of the Public Spending Code. The NTA Project Approval Guidelines clearly define the required Project

Lifecycle Phases which are being adhered to by Kilkenny County Council.

**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 and information is available on file should there be a requirement for a full evaluation of the programme in the future.

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

Kilkenny County Council works in collaboration with the NTA to progress Active Travel Projects for County Kilkenny. Release of funding from the NTA is dependent on projects adhering to the requirements set out in the NTA Project Approval Guidelines and the NTA Cost Management Guidelines. These procedures are intended to assist both the Council and the NTA to secure effective delivery of quality projects to an agreed scope, timeline and budget. It is important that the NTA can ensure that Kilkenny County Council can demonstrate that projects are well managed and deliver value for money. Kilkenny County Council must continue to ensure that the relevant staff in the Active Travel Unit are aware of the need to apply the guidelines fully in order to ensure reimbursement of relevant costs.

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**Section: In-Depth Check Summary**

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The following section presents a summary of the findings of this In-Depth Check on Kilkenny County Council's Active Travel Programme.

**Summary of In-Depth Check**

Overall, I find that the Active Travel Programme in Kilkenny County Council complies with the broad principles of the Public Spending Code. Kilkenny County Council is developing high quality walking and cycling facilities to include improved pedestrian facilities in the City and County. The Council has projects at different lifecycle stages, from feasibility to construction. It has completed a number of Active Travel schemes throughout the City and County, including Pedestrian & Cycle Crossings, Safe Routes to Schools, Ancillary Cycling Facilities, Low Cost Junction Tightening, Cycle Routes, Footpath Improvements, Surfacing, Public Lightening and Installation of Link Ramps.

Kilkenny County Council adheres to the requirements of the NTA Project Approval Guidelines and it follows clear processes in relation to cost estimation, forecasting, reporting and cost management as set out in the NTA Cost Management Guidelines for Active Travel Projects. The Council submit monthly reports to the NTA on funded Active Travel Projects. These reports cover progress, expenditure, timelines and identifies any significant issues. This is the primary communication reference between Kilkenny County Council and the NTA. Regular meetings take place between the NTA and Kilkenny County Council. The required data is available in the files in an orderly manner which will allow for evaluation at a late date if required.