

**Minutes of the Meeting of Strategic Policy Committee (SPC1)**  
**Economic Development, Enterprise Support, Tourism, Planning & Development**  
**Policy**  
**held via MS Teams**  
**Friday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2021**

**Present:** Cllr. Ger Frisby (Chair), Cllr. John Coonan, Cllr. Michael Doyle, Cllr Eugene McGuinness, Paul Brophy, Eileen Moyles, Brian Hamilton, Fiona O Neill, Edwina Grace (KCLR 98FM)

**Apologies:** Martin Prendiville

**In attendance:** Sean McKeown, Fiona Deegan, Denis Malone, Martina Comerford, Catherine Myers.

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

Item	
1.	<p><b>Declaration of Interest</b> There were no Declarations of Interest.</p>
2.	<p><b>Confirmation of Minutes:</b> The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2021 were proposed by Cllr. John Coonan, seconded by Ms. Fiona O Neill and agreed, subject to an amendment RE: Changing Places Facilities.</p>
3.	<p><b>Matters Arising</b></p> <p><b>Decarbonisation Zone (DZ)</b> Mr. Sean McKeown advised that the nominated Decarbonisation Zone (DZ) will be in the South West of the City in the Breaghagh Valley. This area covers approximately 3 sq.km. and has a population of circa. 4,000. Details of the nominated DZ have been sent to the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Govt and Kilkenny County Council are currently awaiting feedback on same. Mr McKeown also advised that the Climate Action Act was approved by the Dail last week and there is a provision in same that the Local Authorities will adopt a Climate Action Plan.</p> <p>Mr. McKeown provided an update on the request for a Changing Places Facility in the Abbey Quarter. Both Ms. O Neill and Cllr. John Coonan emphasised that the provision of the Changing Place Facility in the Abbey Quarter should be a priority as Kilkenny Castle have also plans to install such a facility and it is important to have this facility available at both ends of the City.</p> <p>Mr. Mc Keown advised that a circular is expected from the Department with regards to the review and preparation of the new 6-year Local Economic and Community Plan.</p>
4.	<p><b>Presentation from Rosemary Collier, Office of Public Works</b> The Chair welcomed Ms. Rosemary Collier to the meeting. Ms. Collier outlined that Kilkenny Castle has been with the Office of Public Works (OPW) for 50 years and is a critical asset in attracting visitors to Kilkenny. Ms. Collier said the OPW have always maintained a good working relationship with Kilkenny County Council.</p> <p>Ms. Collier advised that that the OPW have invested circa. €20M in the Castle and Parade Tower to date. The Castle has a large team employed and the operating costs are circa. €2M per year.</p> <p>Ms. Collier went through the current and future plans for Kilkenny Castle which include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning Permission was lodged recently to install a lift in the Tower at the end of the Picture Gallery to allow access for people with disabilities;</li> <li>• Planned provision of outdoor public toilets for visitors to the Parkland;</li> <li>• The area in the Castle which was vacated by the Butler Gallery will now become a Changing Places Facility;</li> </ul>

- Circa. €1.4M will be spent on the refurbishment of the Courtyard which includes an upgrade to the CCTV and lighting, Gate lodge to be left exposed and an upgrade to the landscaping around it;
- Surface treatment and pathway upgrade to be carried out in the Rose Garden;
- 168 windows to be replaced over two years with an approximate cost of €650,000;
- Improve the bio-diversity around the Castle;
- New nature trails, picnic benches and visitor map planned.

Ms. Collier advised that the OPW will continue to invest in the Castle and acknowledged that Covid-19 was a huge challenge as it resulted in a decrease in visitors. However, at the moment, the Castle is at capacity most weekends.

Following questions from Cllr. Coonan, Ms. Fiona O Neill, Mr. Paul Brophy and Mr. Brian Hamilton, Ms Collier addressed the following:

The use of Kilkenny Castle for night-time events – when overseas visitors return, the OPW will look at increasing the opening hours of the Castle. Pre-Covid19, concerts took place in the Castle and the OPW are planning to expand on this, however, this will not include banquets with food being served as the Castle does not have the facility for food preparation and storage.

Changing Places Facility location – to be located in the basement.

Promotion of other visitor attractions in Kilkenny City - Ms. Collier advised that the OPW has a great working relationship with Kilkenny Civic Trust and when visitors purchase tickets to the Castle, they receive a discount for the Medieval Mile Museum. The OPW also promotes visitor attractions on their social media platforms.

The accommodation of motor homes at heritage sites – Ms. Collier advised that she will bring this up and keep it on the radar.

Picture Boards for Children with Autism – Ms. Collier is going to explore, with her colleagues, the possibility of introducing these picture boards into the Castle Playground.

Ms. O Neill noted that the only OPW site to have a Changing Place Facility in Ireland is Aras an Uachtarain.

The Chair thanked Ms. Collier for her presentation and extended an invitation to Ms. Collier to do a presentation next year.

## 5. **Progress Report by the Director of Services**

The Chair noted that the Progress Report was circulated to all committee members along with the agenda and is taking it as read.

Mr. McKeown advised that the Rates Waiver Scheme has been extended to the end of September. Phase two of the Small Business Assistance Scheme for Covid-19 (SBASC) has been expanded to include businesses that are working from non-rateable premises that were previously deemed ineligible. A grant of up to €4,000 can be applied for (subject to other eligibility criteria).

Mr. McKeown advised that Waterford City and County Council (WCCC) has recently terminated the contract with Falcon Real Estate Development for the redevelopment of the North Quays SDZ. WCCC are still committed to the regeneration of the North Quays project and intend to go out to the marketplace to secure another development partner. The approved funding from Govt sources including the URDF is still secure.

Mr. McKeown advised that a representative from the Precision Agriculture Centre of Excellence (PACE) will present at the September meeting and a representative from the Centre for Design (C4D) will be asked to present at the December meeting to provide an update to the SPC on its operations.

Mr. McKeown advised that the construction of the 24km Greenway has been awarded in Lots. The New Ross Urbans Section (Lot 1) has commenced and the Ferrybank Urban Section (Lot 2) will commence in a few weeks. Lot 3 (New Ross to Glenmore) will be awarded in a few weeks. Business Development Executive, Mr Alan Fitzhenry has commenced working on the project and is actively engaging with local communities and businesses.

### Local Enterprise Office (LEO) Update

Ms. Fiona Deegan advised that the Outdoor Seating and Accessories for Tourism and Hospitality Businesses Scheme has generated a lot of interest. This scheme is a partnership with Failte Ireland

and the Local Authorities and is being administered by the Local Authorities. Hospitality and Tourism Businesses can apply for a grant of up to €4,000 towards the cost of equipment to provide for outdoor seating and dining – tables, chairs, electric heaters, screens/windbreakers, wooden platforms, plant stands and umbrellas. To date, Kilkenny County Council has approved 34 applications totalling €114,394.

Ms Deegan stated LEO Kilkenny has approved €224,471 in direct financial assistance to 11 businesses in the County so far this year. These businesses have the potential to create an additional 50 jobs over the next 3 years.

Over 500 business owners and employees attended 42 training programmes which have been successfully delivered online. 538 Students from 15 Secondary Schools across Kilkenny competed in the Student Enterprise Programme with 3 schools receiving National awards. Over 400 entrepreneurs received one-to-one business mentoring from an expert panel and 183 entrepreneurs attended virtual Business Advisory Sessions with LEO Staff.

Ms. Deegan also advised that Kilkenny County Council in conjunction with Carlow County Council are conducting a series of Outside Broadcasts with KCLR96FM in various locations in both counties to promote the #shopkilkenny initiative by encouraging shoppers to shop local. This Roadshow gives local businesses the opportunity to promote themselves for free on the Radio.

Ms. Deegan advised that #tastekilkenny had been successful in receiving funding from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine under the Food Tourism initiative which supports local Food Producers, Hotels, Restaurants, Gastro Pubs and cafes. A county-wide road trip with Jackie Tyrell and Jacqui Hurley took place recently and the footage from same will be used to nationally promote Kilkenny as a Food Tourism Destination.

Cllr. E. McGuinness asked Ms. Deegan about the level of social media engagement/analysis following the St Patrick's Day celebrations. Ms. Deegan stated that she would request this information and forward same.

Mr. Brophy and Mr. Brian Hamilton asked if there had been consultation about accessibility for people with disabilities RE: Outdoor Seating Grant Scheme. Ms Deegan stated that all businesses intending to use public spaces for outdoor dining are required to apply for a Section 254 license from the Council. This is overseen by the Area Engineer and accessibility issues are considered as part of this process and licences are granted on an annual basis.

Cllr. Coonan added that the Market Yard open dining space created a very good and welcome atmosphere.

#### Tourism Update

Ms Martina Comerford provided an update as follows:

- Capital Investment received from Failte Ireland and the Department of Tourism, Arts, Culture, Media, Sports and the Gaeltacht for the creation and development of outdoor spaces for people to meet and to dine etc.
- Kilkenny County Council has applied for funding to develop an outdoor space for live performances adjacent to the Watergate Theatre and also to provide a weatherproofed outdoor dining space at the Market Yard.
- Kilkenny County Council has applied for funding towards a Water Sports Hub, which will be located in the grounds of County Hall and will provide visitors with access to the river for water based activities, toilets and changing facilities.
- Kilkenny County Council has also applied for funding for an Urban Animation project.
- The new Visitor Brochure for Kilkenny City which was funded by Failte Ireland, has been distributed to Hotels, Restaurants and Cafes.
- The Kilkenny Welcome Team will be back from next week meeting and greeting visitors to Kilkenny and providing them with assistance and information.
- Kilkenny County Council and Kilkenny Tourism's "More to Explore Campaign" focuses heavily on the domestic market and continues to keep Kilkenny to the forefront of visitor's minds. Influencers are now in place and Edward Hayden is one of the Local Ambassadors.

	Mr. Paul Brophy stated that he had heard that there may be a reconsideration to the closure of the Smithwicks Visitor Centre, to which Mr. McKeown said that no update on this had been received from Diageo.
<b>6.</b>	<p><b>Consideration of Policy Issues</b></p> <p><u>City and County Development Plan</u></p> <p>Mr. Denis Malone gave a brief overview on the Draft City and County Development Plan, noting that that there is one Plan with two volumes (City and County). There are three stages to the process and it is now in stage two (Material amendments to the Draft Plan).</p> <p>Through the various public consultation (public display, online meetings, focus group meetings, dedicated consult website, social media), 463 submissions have been received and the Chief Executives report and recommendations based on the submissions and observations received have been forwarded to the Elected Members for consideration.</p> <p>The submissions by topics included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wind Energy</li> <li>• Zoning Requests</li> <li>• Rural Housing</li> <li>• Amenity and Recreation</li> </ul> <p>Some of the main provisions in the draft plan include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate Mitigation and Adaption</li> <li>• Population Growth</li> <li>• Compact Growth</li> <li>• Public Transport</li> <li>• Rural Housing</li> </ul> <p>Mr. Malone outlined the next stage of the process (Stage 3). The amendments will go on public display and submissions will be invited. The Chief Executive’s report and recommendations based on the submissions and observations received will be sent to the Elected Members for consideration. The plan is forecasted to be approved and adopted on the 8<sup>th</sup> September 2021.</p> <p>Mr. Malone updated on the Masterplans currently being progressed by the Council, and he advised a lot of work had been done (prior to Covid-19) with the HSE on the repurposing of the St. Canice’s Campus. The public consultation could not go ahead due to the Pandemic. However, this has now resumed and there will be a public online consultation on the 14<sup>th</sup> July at 7.00pm.</p>
<b>7.</b>	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <p>Ms. Deegan reminded the SPC members to complete the survey which they would have received from UCD in relation to a research project on Local State Society Relations.</p>
<b>8.</b>	<p><b>Date of Next Meeting</b></p> <p>The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance at the meeting.</p> <p>The next meeting of SPC1 will take place on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> September 3.30pm.</p> <p>The meeting concluded at 5.00pm.</p>

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

GER FRISBY

Chairman