Draft

Kilkenny Socio-Economic Statement 2023 - 2028

Kilkenny Economic and Community Plan (LECP)

LCDC
Coiste um Fhorbairt Pobail Áitiúil
Chill Chainnigh
Kilkenny Local Community Development
Committee

Kilkenny County Council
Comhairle Chontae Chill Chainnigh

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1. Introduction

1.1 We have begun the process of preparing a new Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP). This will build upon and replace the previous Plan[1], which covered the period 2016 – 2021.

1.2 The new LECP will set out, for the period 2023 – 2028, the objectives and actions we believe are needed to promote and support the economic development and the local and community development of County Kilkenny.

Overview of the process

1.3 We are at the start of what will be a 9-to-12-month process that will conclude with the publication of a new LECP. The 2021 national Guidelines[2] set out in diagrammatic form the process which we are required to follow. This is replicated at Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1:   LECP Development Stages
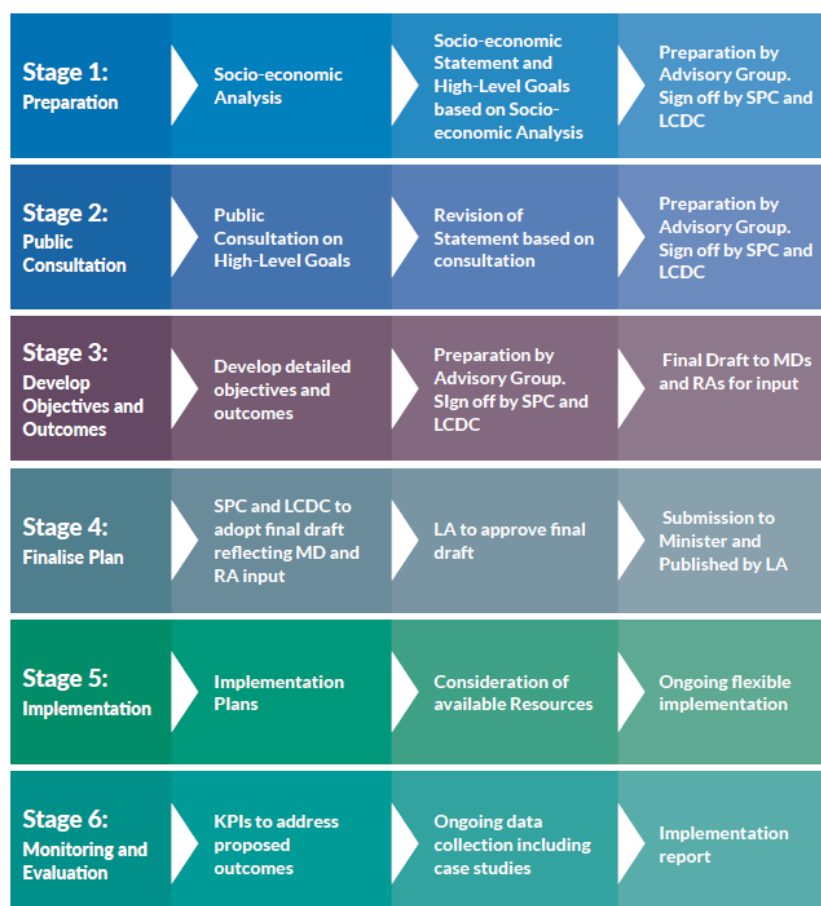
Source: LECP Guidelines, 2021

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[1] https://kilkennycoco.ie/eng/your_council/lcdc/lecp-plan/

[2] Government of Ireland (2021) Local Economic and Community Plans Guidelines 2021

1.4   This document represents our **Socio-Economic Statement**, prepared as **the output of Stage 1** as shown in the preceding diagram. It provides a summary of the latest statistics and analysis we have assembled to inform this and other strategies. This evidence, which takes account of the monitoring and evaluation of our previous LECP[3], provides us with an important insight into the opportunities and ongoing challenges to which its replacement must respond.

1.5   We set out in this document our **initial views on the High-Level Goals** we believe we should look to achieve through this LECP. These Goals recognise the wider social and economic challenges that we have faced over recent years, continue to face and will no doubt face over the lifetime of the new LECP.

1.6   In developing these Goals, we have taken the opportunity to reflect on those which we set out in our previous LECP. Through our evaluation processes, it is apparent that whilst we have made demonstrable progress in working towards the Goals we set ourselves, the aspirations they represent continue to represent a work in progress. We have reflected this by looking to adapt where appropriate previous Goals whilst also ensuring the new LECP looks to the future with regards changes of priority and new opportunities and challenges.

1.7   It is important that **the Goals we set ourselves are focussed, locally relevant, realistic but aspirational**. **We invite your feedback and views on these Goals**. Your insight will be vital in ensuring that they reflect these aims, resulting in a Plan which can have a meaningful impact in allowing representatives from the Council, communities and businesses to work together so that our investments support an improved quality of life for people living and working in the County.

1.8   We set out in Section 6 of this document next steps, which include our careful consideration of the feedback and responses we receive on the consultation of this document. As Figure 1.1 shows, we will account for the responses we receive in the final preparation of a new LECP, integrating our confirmed High-Level Goals and aligned Sustainable Objectives. This will then in turn be followed by the preparation of an **Implementation Plan** which will outline the specific, time-bound and measurable actions to be delivered over the lifetime of the Plan based on evidence-based prioritisation and taking into account the resources that we have and expect to have available to us.

Introducing Kilkenny

1.9   County Kilkenny is a medium-sized inland county located in south Leinster, covering just under 2,100 square kilometres. County Kilkenny is part of the newly configured Southern Region and is strategically located within the southern half of the state. The county has direct access to the Irish Sea, through Belview Port on the River Suir and through New Ross on the River Barrow.

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[3] The evaluation of the 2016-2021 LECP is contained within two reports prepared by the SPC and LCDC, these being the *'LECP Economic Implementation Plan 2016 – 2021: End of Programme Update'* (SPC1 – 25.03.22) and the *'4th Reporting Period – Community Plan'* (LCDC, March 2022)

1.10   Kilkenny City is the largest settlement in the county and dominates the local economy. It is close to Dublin (115km) and other major urban centres including Cork (145km), Limerick (110km) and Waterford (48km). Kilkenny is also close to Shannon International Airport (155km) and Rosslare Europort (105km).

1.11   The River Nore runs through Kilkenny City and bisects the county on a north-south axis. The Rivers Barrow and Suir are natural boundaries to the east and to the south of the county, respectively.

Figure 1.2:   Kilkenny Location Context
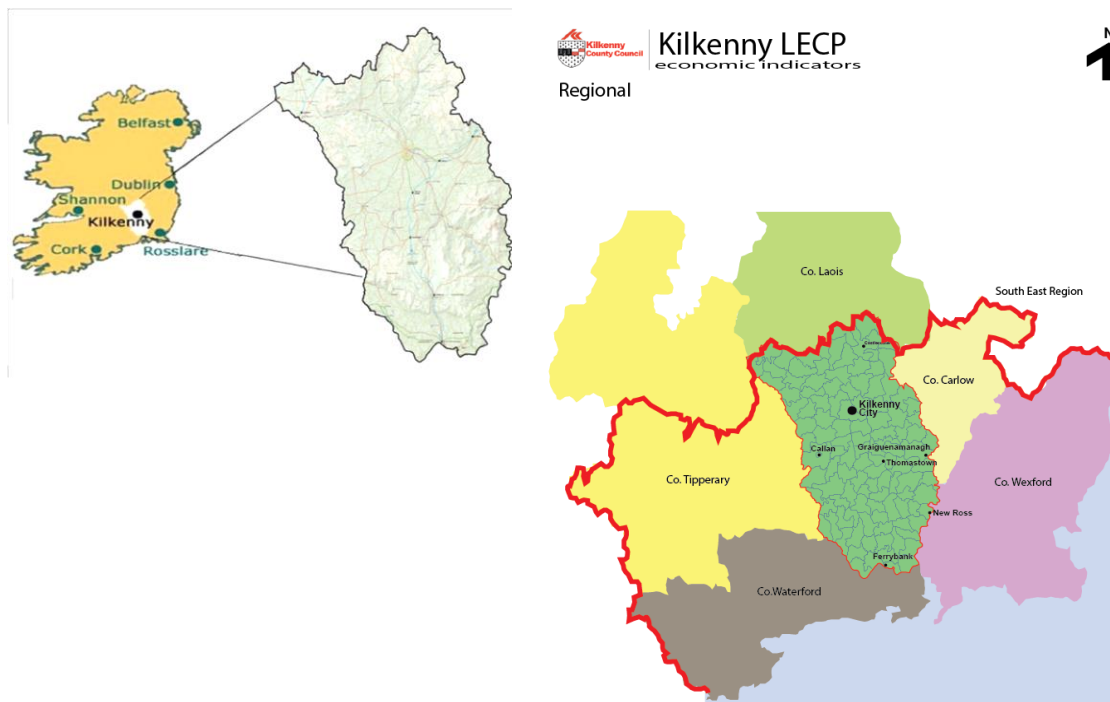
1.12   As part of the local government reforms, County Kilkenny has been divided into 4 electoral areas and 4 Municipal Districts, namely Callan/Thomastown Municipal District, Castlecomer Municipal District, Kilkenny City Municipal District and Piltown Municipal District (Figure 1.3).

Figure 1.3:   Map of Kilkenny showing electoral areas and divisions

Kilkenny Local Elections 2019
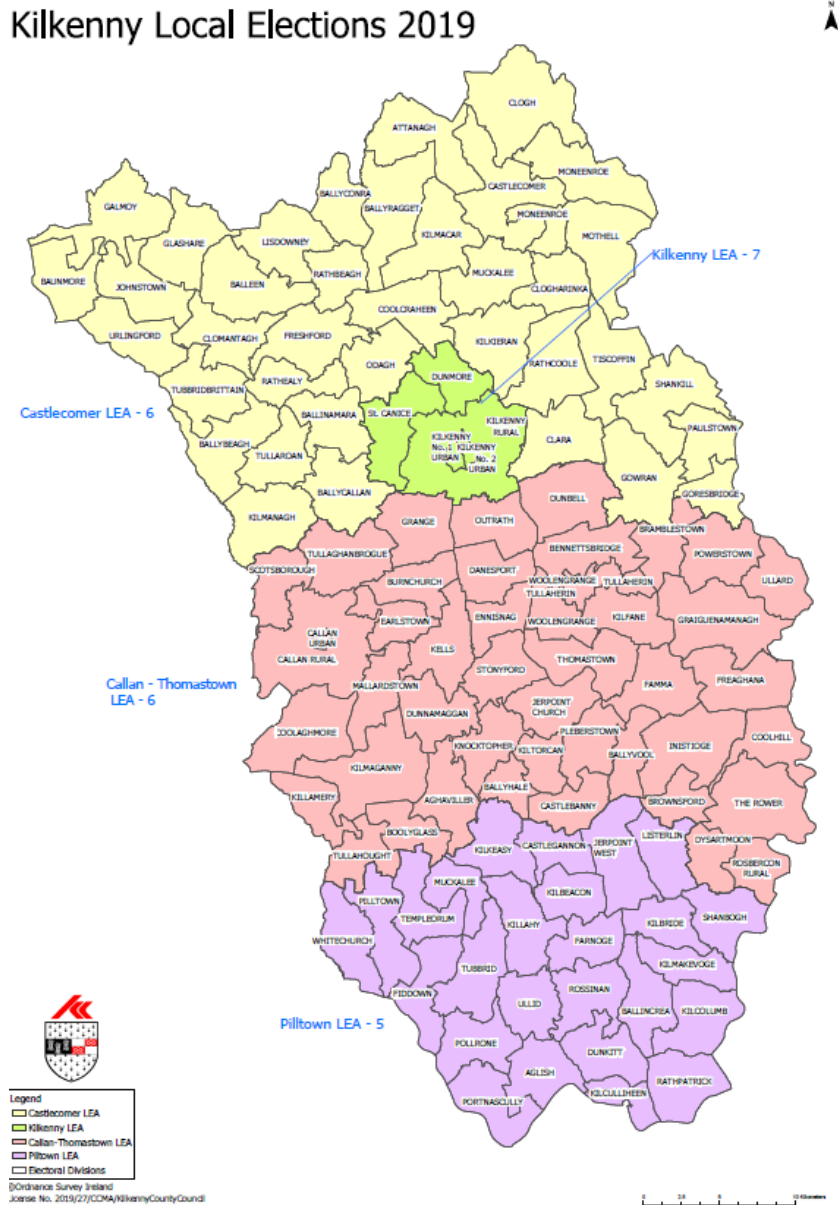
1.13   Kilkenny County is located within the Southern Region within the National Planning Framework (NPF) which provides a strategy to shape growth and development in Ireland to 2040. The Southern Region contains a further three city-regions, with Kilkenny County located within the South-East along with Counties Carlow, Waterford and Wexford. Waterford is identified as the focal city. The NPF observes that whilst the sub-region has a strong urban structure, much of the area is rural in character and includes some of Ireland's most productive agricultural land.

1.14   It identifies important regional opportunities around leveraging growth associated with strong national and international connectivity, especially via ports proximate to continental Europe; strengthening Higher Education Institutes (HEIs); and further balancing employment and housing development in key settlements and County towns, with this understood to include Kilkenny City. It observes that such growth must

be based on infrastructure and quality of life, rather than long distance commuting to Dublin.

National, Regional and Local Context

1.15   The purpose of LECPs, as provided for in the Local Government Reform Act 2014, is to set out, for a six-year period, the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic development and the local and community development of the relevant local authority area, both by the local authority directly and in partnership with other economic and community development stakeholders.

1.16   The LECP must form part of the overall process for national transformation set out in Project Ireland 2040 and which includes the NPF, introduced above, and the National Development Plan (NDP), as well as Housing for All: A New Housing Plan for Ireland. It must also provide a key framework through which the national process to develop a statutory basis for climate change intervention including the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill 2021 and the ongoing implementation of Climate Action Plans at a local level.

1.17   Acknowledging the economic challenges faced in recent years, the LECP must also recognise the actions and priorities developed nationally to set Ireland on a path towards creating a more resilient national economy, recognising the importance of the rural economy in this journey. It must therefore help to bring forward relevant actions arising from the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, National Economic Recovery Plan and the Our Rural Future – Rural Development Policy 2021-2025.

1.18   Furthermore, as specified in article 66B of the above noted 2014 Reform Act, it must be developed within the context of the principles of sustainable development, including the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out in the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This recognises that the Irish Government has made commitments in both the Programme for Government – Our Shared Future 2020 and the Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan 2018 to ensure that the SDGs are fully considered in all Government policies and planning processes.

1.19   As the framework for the economic and community development of the local authority area, the LECP is the primary mechanism at the local level to bring forward the relevant actions arising from national strategy but also importantly regional strategies and policies that have a local remit. This includes, for example the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region. This strategy identifies Kilkenny as a key town recognising its role as a self-sustaining regional driver and a major centre for the delivery of public services as well as its economic and business role and higher order retail function. Policy RPO 11 of the RSES supports the local authority to target growth of more than 30% for Kilkenny City, subject to capacity analysis and sustainability.

1.20   Regional co-operation and collaboration with the South East local authorities on key infrastructural and regional enhancement projects is of vital importance to Kilkenny. A number of regional priorities have been identified by the First Citizens forum including a focus on the enhancement of the IDA Office; Investment in the South East ports

(Belview and Rosslare); the upgrade project on N24/N25 and the South East Technological University (SETU).

1.21   From a local perspective, this LECP will need to be consistent with the core strategy and objectives of the Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the existing Corporate Plan 2019 – 2024 and will, in its implementation, assist in delivering identified existing and emerging actions within these documents. The LECP will also need to have a relationship with several of our other more topic-based local strategies, a number of which will be refreshed and revisited over the lifetime of the LECP. The Implementation Plan, which will accompany the final LECP, will make clear through its identified actions the linkages between these strategic local documents.

Structure of this Statement

1.22   This statement is intended to assist in starting an ongoing conversation to ensure that everyone who wishes to has had the opportunity to help shape the final LECP. It forms the basis for a consultation process which will commence in summer 2022.

1.23   To assist in the process of obtaining insight and feedback, this statement is structured to include in:

- **Section 2** a summary of the key socio-economic highlights. These are intended to give a flavour of the key issues and opportunities facing our businesses and communities, providing an understanding of how key indicators have changed over time.

- **Section 3** our distillation of this information into strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). These are not intended to be all encompassing and we welcome any additions or reflections on those which are identified.

- **Section 4** our emerging thoughts on the High-Level Goals we will set ourselves to deliver against our SWOT.

- **Section 5** further complementary explanation to justify the High-Level Goals, also starting to identify underpinning objectives which will provide the framework for appropriate related outcomes which we consider will be necessary to enable their achievement and monitoring.

- **Section 6** the next steps in the process of developing the LECP, importantly outlining how stakeholder, community feedback and engagement will be used to develop the LECP and the accompanying Implementation Plan.

2. Socio-Economic Highlights

Demographics and Housing

2.1 **Some 103,685 people currently live in County Kilkenny**, according to the preliminary findings of the 2022 Census[4]. While the population has grown since the last Census in 2016, the rate of growth (4.5%) was the second lowest of the state's 26 counties, marginally ahead of only County Donegal. The population of the state, in contrast, grew by some 7.6% over this period.

2.2 Circa 61% of the population growth recorded in County Kilkenny between Census years related to natural increase, as births outnumbered deaths. The rest was accounted for by net in-migration, albeit it is of note – and shown at Figure 2.1, where Kilkenny is labelled as "KK" – that **the *rate* of net inward migration was relatively low when compared to other counties**, based on a standardised rate per 1,000 residents.

Figure 2.1: **Average Annual Natural Increase and Estimated Net Migration per 1,000 Residents (2016-22)**
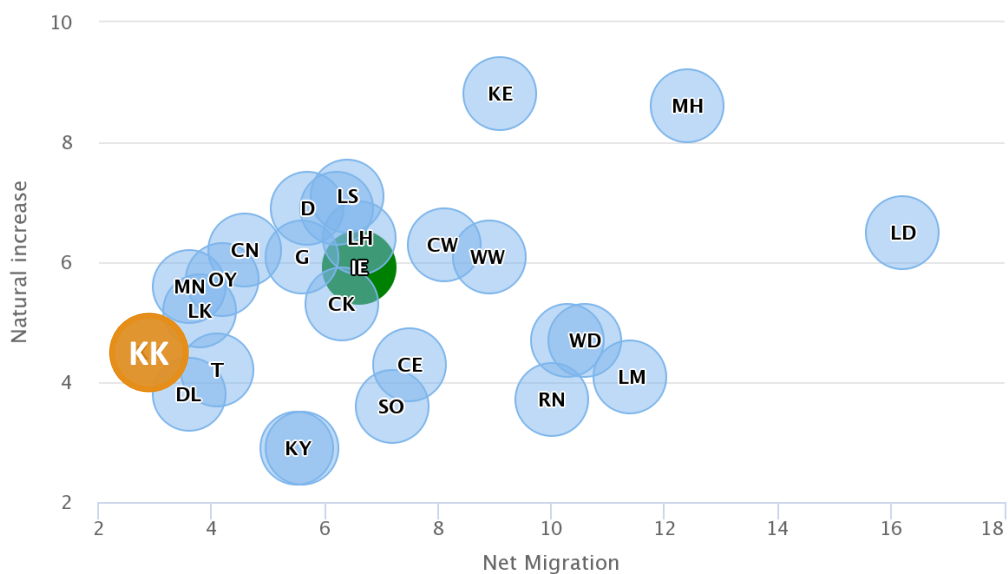
Source: CSO

2.3 The RSES introduces official projections, developed by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), which are based to 2016 but suggest that County Kilkenny could have as many as 110,000 residents by 2026. The Council has extrapolated this projection to estimate that there could subsequently be circa 111,077 residents in 2027, and it follows that **there could be around 112,154 residents in 2028** – the final

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[4] CSO (2022) Census of Population 2022 - Preliminary Results

year to be covered by the new LECP – based on the same logic[5]. This would make the population some 8.2% larger than it is in 2022.

2.4   Residents lived in one of the **41,279 dwellings that existed throughout the County in 2022**, with the housing stock having grown by circa 5.2% since 2016[6]. This represents growth at a rate that exceeded all but ten of the state's 26 counties, approaching the state average of 6.0%.

Figure 2.2:   Benchmarking Growth in Housing Stock (2016-22)
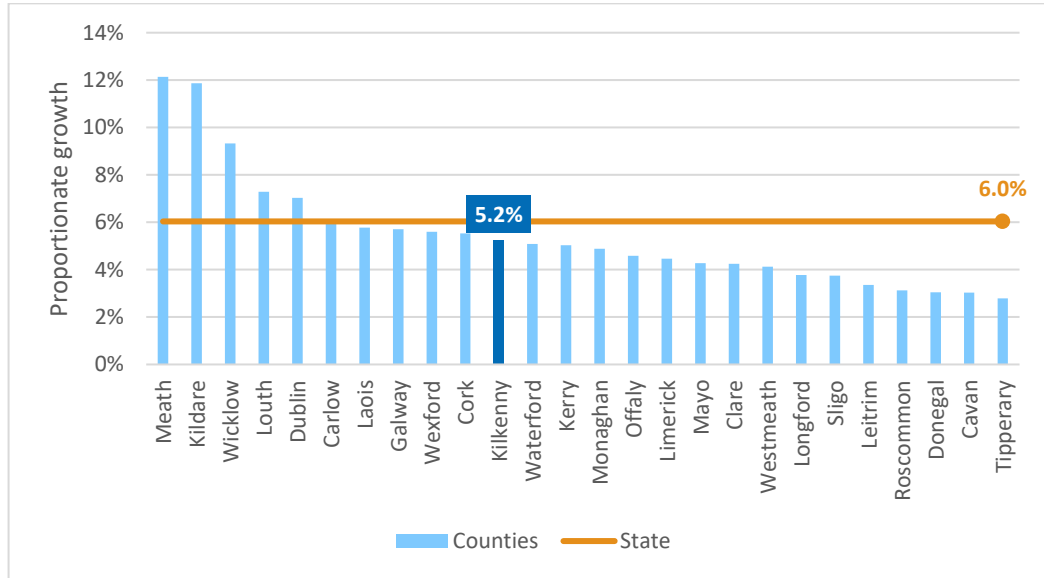
Source: CSO

2.5   **Circa 1,619 households were recorded on the County Kilkenny Housing List** in 2021, having been approved for social housing support. This was the fewest since 2010, with the number of households on the list continuing to fall year-on-year over the last five years[7]. Despite this positive trend nearly 300 households were reportedly homeless as of April 2022.

2.6   In terms of ethnicity, **the majority of the County's residents (88%) were classified as "White Irish"** as of the 2016 Census, with equivalent data from 2022 yet to be published[8]. A further 8% had another "White" background, with this including a small number of Irish travellers (0.6%). Most of the remainder had Black or Asian ethnicity, excluding the small number that did not respond to this question (1.5%).

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[5] The Council calculated the average annual population growth between 2016 and 2026 (1,077) and added this to the latter to arrive at an estimate for 2027, so the same has been done here to produce an estimate for 2028

[6] CSO (2022) Census of Population 2022 - Preliminary Results

[7] Table 13 of Kilkenny Housing Strategy (2021-27) includes numbers on the housing list for the period 2010 – 2019. Data for the last three years confirms numbers have continued to reduce: 2019 – 1,988 households, 2020 – 1,899 households, 2021 – 1,619 households

[8] The CSO have indicated that the first 'official' results from Census 2022 will be published between April 2023 and December 2023. These timeframes are outside of the programme for the preparation of this LECP.

The Local Economy and Labour Force

2.7   **County Kilkenny had circa 4,691 enterprises in its private business economy in 2020**, according to the Business Demography Survey. This was the most recorded in any year since at least 2008, having grown by some 15% from the low recorded in 2014. Kilkenny City is the 8th largest employer in the state and has an ambition to be the most liveable city in Ireland.

Figure 2.3:   Change in Number of Enterprises in County Kilkenny
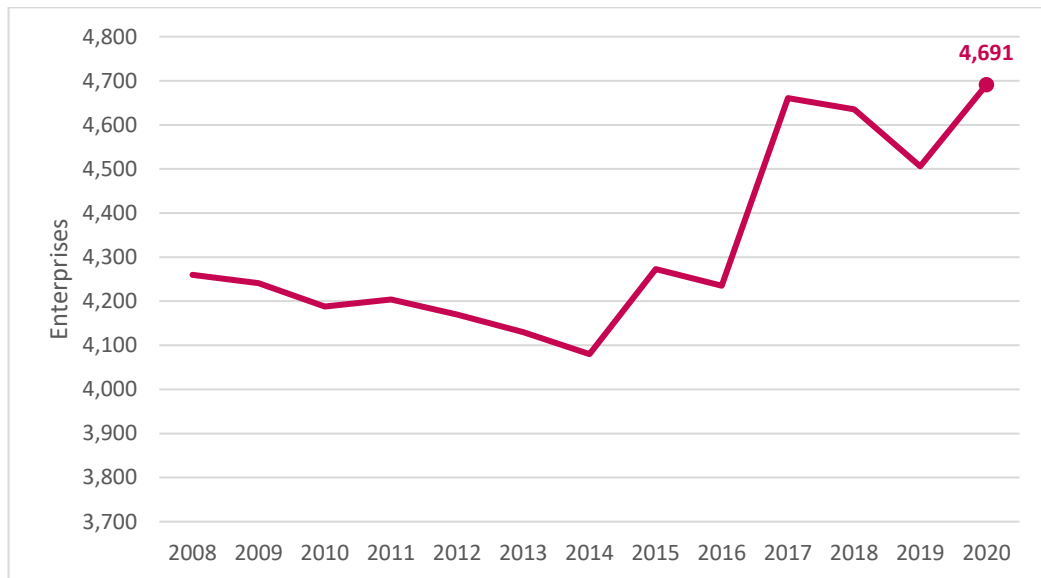
Source: Business Demography Survey

2.8   **Some 93% of the County's businesses employed fewer than ten people**, slightly exceeding the state average of 92%. Only six businesses employed more than 250 people, such businesses being almost half as prevalent as seen nationally[9]. This includes an under-representation of FDI businesses, with a key priority for Kilkenny being the strategic development of investment initiatives such as the Abbey Quarter and Belview Port so that the infrastructure is in place for FDI investment.

2.9   **Businesses employing more than 50 people were also less prevalent** in the County than across the state, but have notably increased in number since 2014 by almost half (47%).

2.10   **Over a quarter of the County's businesses (26%) operated in the construction sector**, which is proportionately larger than the state average (22%) and has grown its business base by some 20% since 2014. **Nearly a fifth of businesses (19%) are in the wholesale and retail sector**, which is likewise larger than it is nationally (17%) but has grown at a much slower rate of 5%. **Roughly one sixth of the County's businesses (16%) involve professional, scientific or technical activities**, falling slightly short of the state average (17%) but notably growing by more than a quarter (26%) since 2014. No other one sector accounts for more than 8% of the County's private businesses.

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[9] Circa 0.24% of businesses in the state employed more than 250 people in 2020, compared to 0.13% in County Kilkenny

2.11 **Nearly 3,500 people were employed in the County's agriculture, forestry and fishing sector** as of the 2016 Census, rising by around 3% since 2011. Recent decades have seen growth in the number of large farms, spanning more than 50 hectares, and a reduction in the number of small farms. Forests account for around 11% of the County's useable land and the majority of this (82%) relates to commercial forestry, coming into maturity over the next twenty years.

2.12 **The County attracted 727,000 tourists in 2019**, the last complete year unaffected by Covid-19. This was relatively evenly split between domestic and international tourists, albeit with the former slightly more prevalent accounting for 53% of this total. Kilkenny was Ireland's second most popular domestic short-break destination and the City supported a significant number of festivals and events. There is a strong pipeline of planning permissions for additional hotel rooms within the City, which if delivered will continue to grow the capacity of Kilkenny to accommodate increased numbers of tourists on overnight breaks.

2.13 **At least two thirds (65%) of the County's residents had a broadband internet connection** as of the 2016 Census, falling slightly below the state average[10] (71%). While there is no more recent data available for the County, the latter is believed to have risen to the point where 85% of households throughout Ireland had fixed broadband as of 2021. This notably compared to the figure reported for the South-East Region alone, of which County Kilkenny is part[11] (84%).

2.14 The 2016 Census showed that County Kilkenny, like the wider state, has seen **declining levels of lower education attainment and increasing levels of third level educational attainment**. The County nonetheless continued to lag behind the state average for third level education (36/40%) albeit it is hoped that the establishment of the South East Technological University (SETU) in May 2022 – creating the region's first such university – will have a positive impact in encouraging greater numbers of residents to continue studying.

2.15 **County Kilkenny saw its younger working age population, aged 20 to 34, reduce over the five years to the 2016 Census.** This also occurred across the state but at a slightly less pronounced rate (11/13%). Equivalent data from the 2022 Census is not yet available.

Health and Wellbeing

2.16 **Some 89% of the County's residents reported that they were in good or very good health** at the 2016 Census, surpassing the state average of 87%. Less than 2% reported themselves to be in bad or very bad health. This was generally consistent with the findings of the preceding Census.

2.17 **Circa 13% of residents reported that they had at least one disability as of 2016**, falling slightly below the state average (14%). Over a third of these residents (37%) were aged 65 or above, while 66% were aged 45 or over.

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[10] These are minimum figures given that this was "not stated" in some responses

[11] CSO (2021) Internet Coverage and Usage in Ireland 2021

2.18   **Nearly half (46%) of those reporting disabilities had difficulty with pain, breathing or another chronic illness**, with slightly fewer (43%) having difficulties with basic physical activities. One quarter had a learning difficulty.

2.19   **People with disabilities were less than half as likely to work as the general population** (22/53%) and less than half as likely to have access to a car or van (8/20%). Circa 15% lived in social housing compared to 9% of the general population.

Deprivation, Poverty and Social Exclusion

2.20   **County Kilkenny saw a dramatic increase in deprivation** over the five years to 2011, following the economic collapse of 2008. A partial recovery occurred over the subsequent period to 2016, albeit deprivation levels continued to exceed the state average. County Kilkenny's relative deprivation score[12] of -0.3 classified the County's measure of affluence as 'marginally below average' in 2016 as compared to the baseline state average of 0.9 ('marginally above average')

2.21   Across the County, scores across all 113 Electoral Divisions range from categorisations of 'Disadvantaged' to 'Affluent'. At higher geographical levels, however, pockets of relative deprivation can be masked. In total there are **2,763 people living within Small Areas which fall within the category of 'Very Deprived'**.

2.22   With lone parents generally at greater risk of poverty and social exclusion, it is of note that there were **around 4,260 households in County Kilkenny led by lone parents** as of the 2016 Census. This equated to circa 18% of all households and fell below the state average of 20%.

2.23   There has been **a gradual reduction in the number of crimes recorded** in the Kilkenny/Carlow Garda Division. Circa 5,140 crimes were recorded in 2019 compared to 8,590 in 2010, and this fell further to 4,370 in 2020 albeit this may have been influenced by reduced mobility during the pandemic.

Climate Change and Energy

2.24   The Council's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy describes how **climate change is already having a significant impact on the County**, with these effects likely to increase in their frequency and intensity[13].

2.25   Over the decade to 2019, the County recorded **increases in both the number of days with heavy rainfall and the number of flooding events**. It also experienced extreme temperatures over the same period, with 2018 for instance seeing red warnings for snow in February followed by one of the hottest summers on record.

2.26   According to the Strategy, the most accurate information on total emissions throughout County Kilkenny was based on data from the 2006 Census, with calculations suggesting that **some 565,730 tonnes of CO_2 were emitted in that year**.

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[12] The deprivation index scores are rescaled allowing assignment to an 8 point scale of descriptive labels ranging from -30 (extremely disadvantaged) to above 30 (extremely affluent)

[13] Kilkenny County Council (2019) Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024

The residential and transport sectors were responsible for most of these emissions (40/35%) followed by the commercial sector (17%).

3. Economic and Community SWOT Analysis

Strengths and Opportunities	Weaknesses and Threats
Central location within the South East Strategic Planning Area with good road and rail links to Dublin and elsewhere	**Slowing population growth** with relatively little in-migration
A popular tourist destination, hosting numerous festivals and events with the potential to increase the length of visitor stays and their contribution to our local economy	**A diminishing number of young adult residents** with this having an impact on labour availability as well as the demographic profile of many of our communities outside of Kilkenny City
A track record of partnership work, based on integrated delivery mechanisms	**A continued need for social and affordable housing** and evidence of homelessness
Established **community networks** and voluntary sector	**Overreliance on construction and retail sectors**, with room for greater diversity
A growing number of private businesses	Under-representation of **larger employers, including FDI businesses**
An increasingly skilled population, set to benefit from the newly established South East Technological University	**Third level education attainment** continues to lag behind the state average
A healthy pipeline of homes with planning permission suggesting that the County will be well placed to **sustain the comparatively positive recent growth of its housing stock**	**Persistent deprivation** at a level that exceeds the state average, with evidence of clear concentrations of more acute deprivation
An established **natural heritage and built environment**	A lack of certainty around **how tourism will recover from Covid-19**
A rural economy that is established and growing in an outstanding natural setting	**Climate change** is already having a significant impact in the County

4. Statement of High-Level Goals and Ambition

4.1 The last few years have presented unprecedented challenges to our economy and our communities, including most recently the consequences of the conflict in Ukraine.

4.2 It is inevitable that over the lifetime of the new LECP we will face a range of new challenges and opportunities. Whilst many of these have yet to present themselves, we do know that we have a responsibility to ensure that the new LECP helps us to take every opportunity to build resilience within our communities, businesses and our workers.

4.3 It is also apparent, in the context of national and international agreements and commitments, that this LECP must play its part in addressing the inter-generational challenges associated with climate change.

4.4 These responsibilities are reflected within our Corporate Plan (2019-2024) and the Mission Statement we have set ourselves:

"Kilkenny County Council is committed to working with the people of Kilkenny to develop sustainable, connected, economically thriving and proud communities with the consideration of climate change embedded into all of our policies and services"

4.5 This LECP provides us with the opportunity to build from this statement and to reflect our **ambition** to ensure that every resident, community, visitor, employee and employer in Kilkenny is helped by this LECP to realise their potential and to make their best contribution to enable a positive future for our County over its lifetime and beyond.

4.6 We welcome your views on this ambition and how this LECP can build from the Mission Statement the Council has set itself corporately. We will reflect on the outcomes of the consultation on this statement to develop a Vision which captures our ambition and will ensure our LECP reflects our distinct local priorities.

4.7 In delivering against both our ambition and the vision we will set ourselves, we need to refresh our **High-Level Goals**.

4.8 To start this process, we have set out **ten High-Level Goals** overleaf which we consider will, if delivered against successfully, enable us to ensure that this LECP will be an instrument of positive change. We consider these goals to be stretching but also achievable and realistic. We are committed to achieving them through the **delivery of the objectives and related outcomes** we set out in the following section of this statement.

Goal 1: To ensure our actions and interventions contribute positively to the overarching objective of addressing the current climate crisis and supporting Ireland to achieve its climate goals and obligations

Goal 2: To build a resilient business base and support businesses to grow, be enterprising and take advantage of new opportunities

Goal 3: To realise the economic and social value of Kilkenny's heritage, tourism and cultural reputation and offer

Goal 4: To ensure our rural economy and communities are supported to grow sustainably

Goal 5: To increase the number of economically active people in the County by ensuring that every working age resident who wants to work can enhance their educational qualifications and achieve the skills required

Goal 6: To grow the number of graduates working in County Kilkenny

Goal 7: To reduce inequalities and promote the importance of health and wellbeing

Goal 8: To reduce the number of people living in deprivation and promote community development, diversity and social inclusion

Goal 9: To develop increased local capacity, by improving targeting of social investment through increased engagement and participation with local community groups to improve community facilities, supports and services

Goal 10: To improve our housing offer to ensure that our residents are accommodated in housing that meets their individual housing needs and that we have a housing offer capable of responding to changing levels of demand

5. Sustainable Community and Economic Objectives and Desired Outcomes

5.1   Within this section we take each of the proposed High-Level Goals and identify one or more objectives. These objectives, where appropriate, start to introduce the potential intended by integrating potential related outcomes against which progress will be monitored and measured. It is the intention to make these outcomes more specific and targeted as the LECP progresses in its development, directly aligning them to attributed actions within the Implementation Plan.

5.2   The High-Level Goals are categorised, where relevant, to enable a distinction between economic and sustainable community objectives. It is important to recognise, however, that economic development and local and community development, while distinct functions, are mutually supportive in building sustainable communities with strong local economies. Whilst a distinction is made, it is the case that many of the objectives will have areas of common interest and action.

> **Goal 1: To ensure our actions and interventions contribute positively to the overarching objective of addressing the current climate crisis and supporting Ireland to achieve its climate goals and obligations, *we will…***
>
> **Objective 1a:** implement the Council's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (2019 – 2024) and a future Climate Action Plan due for publication in 2023, which will set out how the local authority intend to reduce the carbon emissions associated with the services we deliver by at least 7% per annum and by 51% by 2030
>
> **Objective 1b:** support the commitment underpinning the ISO5001 certification to deliver a 50% improvement in the energy efficiency target over the ten years from 2021 and elevate take-up of grants available to improve energy efficiency or the installation of renewable energy technologies
>
> **Objective 1c:** proactively support measures associated with the Circular Economy to the benefit of businesses and residents in the County

Economic Objectives

Goal 2: To build a resilient business base and support businesses to grow, be enterprising and take advantage of new opportunities, *we will…*

Objective 2a: support the growth of existing and emerging higher-value sectors within our economy, including engineering, health, design, ICT, Green Tech and fintech companies to create increased economies of scale and realise the benefits associated with agglomeration

Objective 2b: facilitate entrepreneurship and innovation by providing support and infrastructure to our businesses with strong ambitions for expansion and growth and enabling them to increase their scale and resilience

Objective 2c: ensure it contributes proportionately to the growth of the region and maximises its international reach by improving the attractiveness of Kilkenny as a place to do business

Goal 3: To realise the economic and social value of Kilkenny's heritage, growing tourism and cultural reputation and offer, *we will…*

Objective 3a: elevate Kilkenny into a 'must visit' experience and balance the visitor experience through an expanded offer, which encourages our visitors to stay longer and explore more of our County and heritage

Objective 3b: support sustainable growth in businesses in the tourist and creative and design sectors, ensuring representation of the latter more broadly across the County

Objective 3c: ensure communities get the maximum benefit from improvements to the cultural life of the City and County

Goal 4: To ensure our rural economy and communities are supported to grow sustainably, *we will…*

Objective 4a: sustain quality of life and services within our rural towns and villages to realise their potential

Goal 5: To increase the number of economically active people in the County by ensuring that every working age resident who wants to work can enhance their educational qualifications and achieve the skills required, *we will…*

Objective 5a: work with our businesses to ensure they have a labour-force which has the flexibility to respond to changing skill-based requirements, including those arising from new emerging sectors

Objective 5b: continue to support improvements in educational attainment, with a particular focus on third level educational attainment

Goal 6: To grow the number of graduates working in County Kilkenny, *we will…*

Objective 6a: capitalise on existing and planned investment which has delivered Ireland's newest Technological University (SETU) by making links between our business community, the university and graduates

Objective 6b: ensure a greater share of all graduates can obtain their first job in the County

Sustainable Community Objectives

Goal 7: To reduce inequalities and promote the importance of health and wellbeing, *we will…*

Objective 7a: focus on addressing the wider social determinants of health – the circumstances in which people are born, grow, live, work and age – to create economic, social, culture, recreation and sport opportunities and the physical environment that will foster improved healthy living

Objective 7b: support improvements to mental health, including a pro-active approach to recognising the importance of wellbeing, environmental context and encouraging creativity

Goal 8: To reduce the number of people living in deprivation and promote community development, diversity and social inclusion, *we will…*

Objective 8a: dedicate targeted resources and integrated approaches to those areas where issues of deprivation and poverty are concentrated

Objective 8b: promote and support intercultural awareness and diversity, equality of opportunity, people living with a disability, integration and minority groups through meaningful engagement, community development principles and approaches

Goal 9: To develop increased local capacity, by improving targeting of social investment through increased engagement and participation with local community groups to improve community facilities, supports and services, *we will…*

Objective 9a: respond positively to the implications of a changing age profile and an increasing associated risk of individuals becoming socially excluded

Objective 9b: learn from successes in broadening participation through the circumstances faced during 2020 /21 but also acknowledge and address examples where specific groups remain discouraged or lack confidence to engage within their communities

Objective 9c: identify, define, and report on community needs and capacity

Goal 10: To improve our housing offer to ensure that our residents are accommodated in housing that meets their individual housing needs and that we have a housing offer capable of responding to changing levels of demand, *we will…*

Objective 10a: work to address the consequences of supply falling short of demand including helping those in most acute need and ensuring that people can live near where they work and benefit from sustainable mobility options

Objective 10b: be proactive in the face of fluctuating and emerging demand pressures presenting themselves in Ireland and needing accommodation

6. Next Steps

6.1   As is clear from Figure 1.1 of this report we are at the start of a journey to develop our new LECP. In undertaking this journey, we value the role that stakeholders and our communities have played in driving forward the actions set out in our previous LECP.

6.2   In order to build on the successes to date and ensure that our new LECP provides a valuable resource across our business and resident communities, we are seeking feedback and opinion on the High-Level Goals and objectives we have set out within this statement.

6.3   A comprehensive process of engagement will commence in summer 2022 to maximise the breadth and number of people engaged in the process. This will include:

•   Virtual and in-person workshops;

•   A county wide online survey; and

•   Wider engagement with stakeholders

6.4   We will then take time to collate and review the feedback we have received. This will be used to identify an overarching vision to frame our refined High-Level Goals and Sustainability Objectives within a draft version of our LECP.

6.5   This draft LECP will be presented to both the Municipal districts and the Regional Assemblies to ensure consistency with their Plans and Strategies. A final version will be prepared responding to comments through this process and presented to the Local Authority for approval.

6.6   On approval we will develop an Implementation Plan that will set out actions to deliver against the agreed Goals, objectives and outcomes. This in turn will be subjected to a process of internal audit and review before being agreed.

6.7   It is currently anticipated that the LECP framework will be launched publicly in April 2023, with this timetable designed to allow for and maximise the process of engagement.

6.8   The LECP will be kept under review through detailed monitoring. This will ensure that it stays alive to changing economic and societal changes as well as wider national agendas and insight provided through the constant release of new data and information.

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