

Kilkenny County Council Cultural Strategy Arts, Heritage and Libraries 2018–2022





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Kilkenny County Council Cultural Strategy 2018–2022 is an integrated strategic plan for the delivery of the Arts, Heritage and Library Services of Kilkenny County Council. It replaces the four former Arts, Biodiversity, Heritage and Library Plans.



Graiguenmanagh Library.
Photo: Dylan Vaughan

Foreword

We are delighted to present to you **Kilkenny County Council Cultural Strategy – Arts, Heritage and Libraries, 2018-2022** which is an Integrated Strategic Plan for the delivery of the Arts, Heritage and Library Services of Kilkenny County Council and the strategic vision and goals for the development of the three services until 2022.

In Kilkenny County Council we have an active cultural services team engaging with groups and individuals and delivering services across the Heritage, Arts, and Library areas and this plan reflects the collective desire of these three services to work together and help deliver on a shared vision.

This continued commitment to working in partnership will ensure the Arts, Heritage and Library services will play their part in the growth of our City and County.

This ambitious strategy has been informed by an extensive consultation process which we have undertaken to allow us to understand the changing needs of our citizens. The high level of feedback from these consultations indicates the interest and dedication to culture that already exists in the County.

It represents the desire for a more joined-up approach to engagement and consultation, with clear linkages to national policies such as Culture 2025 and the Creative Ireland Programme.

Kilkenny has a proud and rich heritage, a unique and diverse arts environment and is a hub of crafts, design, culture and creativity. We recognise the transformative role that culture can play in people's lives, contributing towards inclusive social and economic development, as well as sustainable development.

The challenge for us all is to sustain and improve the cultural life of the City and County by ensuring that the infrastructure and funding is in place to ensure our communities get maximum benefit, and that their high expectations of cultural activity and development are met.

We hope that this strategy will present many exciting creative opportunities for Kilkenny citizens, allowing them to contribute to all aspects of life, and that it will lead to more choices for people of all generations and backgrounds to participate and contribute to our diverse cultural landscape.

Councillor Eamon Aylward

Cathaoirleach

Kilkenny County Council

Colette Byrne

Chief Executive

Kilkenny County Council



Autumn crocus (*Colchicum autumnale*).
This rare and beautiful flower is now only found in Ireland
growing on the banks of the River Nore in Co. Kilkenny. It has
been adopted as the logo of Kilkenny Heritage Forum.
Photo: Dearbhala Ledwidge

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False Hood Series 2018,
Artist: threadstories.
Photo: Hazel Coonagh

Introduction



Our Vision

To create and
sustain great
places and
communities.

Brief

The Kilkenny County Council Cultural Strategy presents an integrated approach to cultural services and cultural management in County Kilkenny. It replaces separate plans for the Arts, Heritage and Libraries services*. A number of factors led to the development of this integrated approach, including the establishment of the Cultural Services Section, the desire for a more joined up approach to public consultation, and the direction of national policy such as Culture 2025 and Creative Ireland.

The Cultural Services Section of Kilkenny County Council engaged M.CO to work with them on the development of the Kilkenny County Council Cultural Strategy, taking an integrated approach to Arts, Heritage and Libraries, and exploring the following key challenges:

- How to harness County Kilkenny’s **authentic and distinctive cultural assets, people and resources** to further stimulate culture.
- How to unlock opportunities for **greater synergy** within the Cultural Services Section in Kilkenny County Council, as well as **future strategic actions** for Heritage, Arts and Libraries.
- How to promote the **intrinsic value of culture**, increasing the understanding and visibility of culture in County Kilkenny.
- How to best support culture within the **context of existing initiatives and strategies**.

*This strategy replaces: the Arts Strategy (2005–2009); the Kilkenny Heritage Plan (2007–2011) and Kilkenny Biodiversity Plan (2009–2014)—both were extended to allow full implementation of key actions (a review of key achievements is available from the Heritage Office or www.kilkennyheritage.ie); and the Kilkenny Library Development Plan (2009–2013) – Wider Horizons.

Yulefest 2016,
Artist: Dan Leo.



Process

The following strategic steps were undertaken in developing the Cultural Strategy. For full details of all the stages in the process and the timeline of the development of the strategy see the Appendices.

Discovery

Build on existing knowledge to understand the context – conduct strategic analysis, key 1:1 stakeholder soundings, and an initial stakeholder workshop.

Public Consultation

Build on initial insights to gather wider user insights and generate ideas for the future – conduct public survey and public pop-up events.

Strategic Framework

Analyse and synthesise findings to date to develop a strategic framework and emerging options for strategic actions.

Prioritise Strategic Actions

Using an evaluation framework, identify a priority list of actions to support the implementation of the strategic framework.

Appropriate Assessment

Screen plans for potential significant effects on Natura 2000 sites (Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas).

Final Report

Prepare a final report presenting the Kilkenny County Council Cultural Strategy and priority actions for the next five years.

Castlecomer Library.
Photo: Dylan Vaughan



Culture

Our Interpretation of Culture

In a broad sense, culture arises from the interaction of people and place over time, shaping communities and customs, creative, intellectual and spiritual pursuits, built and natural landscapes, and ecosystems.

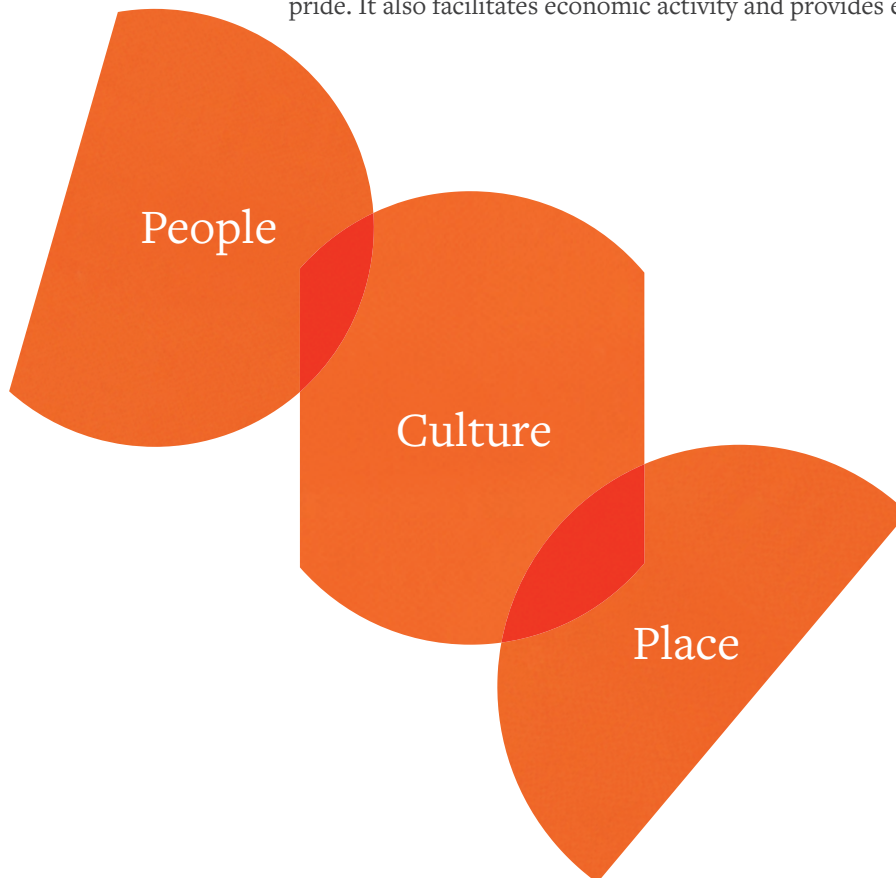
How we define, identify with, and participate in culture varies from community to community and person to person. For the purposes of the Kilkenny County Council Cultural Strategy, the term culture refers to expressions, practitioners and activities within the fields of arts, heritage (built, natural and cultural) and libraries.

This strategy recognises that cultural diversity and biodiversity are connected and reinforce each other. It is committed to strengthening the links between them. Cultural practices often depend on specific elements of biodiversity; biodiversity is, in parallel, often developed, maintained, and managed by cultural groups.¹

Kilkenny's culture is what makes the county unique, what gives it its special character and its sense of place. It is a reflection and expression of our values, knowledge and traditions.

The culture of Kilkenny belongs to the people of Kilkenny. Ownership confers the right for everyone to participate in culture in accordance with their needs and preferences. It also confers the responsibility of conserving and enhancing culture for ourselves and future generations.

Culture contributes to many aspects of our lives and has many tangible and intangible benefits. It contributes to our quality and enjoyment of life, and our sense of place and local pride. It also facilitates economic activity and provides employment.



1. For further detail on the links between cultural diversity and biodiversity please refer to the Joint UNESCO-SCBD Programme on Links between Biological and Cultural Diversity.

“Culture is often confused solely as a high brow curiosity. Culture is how we speak, pray, imbibe, eat, play.”

Survey Respondent

Cultural Services Section

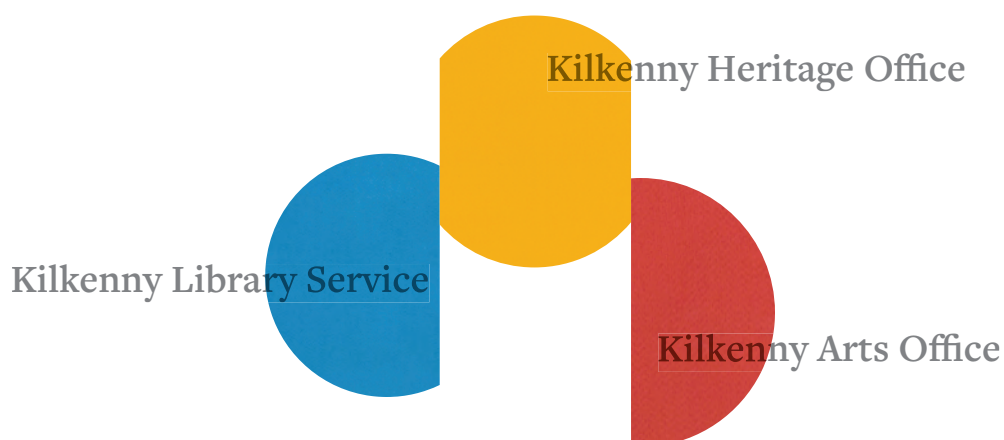
The Cultural Services Section in Kilkenny County Council was formed in October 2015. Its vision is to create and sustain great places and communities, by facilitating a fully integrated and strategic approach to cultural services, comprising the Arts, Heritage, Libraries, Conservation and Architecture services.

The Cultural Services Section aims to play a vital role in the lives of individuals and their communities in County Kilkenny. It serves as a custodian of both national and local culture, and also a catalyst for local culture in County Kilkenny, through supporting high-quality arts, heritage, libraries and architectural design.

The goals of the Cultural Services Section are to ensure: that culture thrives in County Kilkenny; that culture is celebrated and valued; that as many people as possible experience the richness and diversity of culture on offer; and that the Cultural Services Section plays an integral role in Kilkenny County Council.

The Cultural Services Section shares common values, underpinning the development of the Kilkenny County Council Cultural Strategy. These include: culture has important intrinsic value; culture can create economic value for individuals and communities; culture can enhance quality of life, health and wellbeing at a personal and collective level; culture can promote community and civic participation, social inclusion and a better sense of place and identity.

The Kilkenny Arts Office, Kilkenny Heritage Office and Kilkenny Library Service are all part of the Directorate of Housing, Community Culture and Fire Services. These services report to the Strategic Policy Committee for Planning and Development, Heritage, Community, Arts and Culture.



Kilkenny Library Service

The Kilkenny Library Service is the heart of the local community, providing for the informational, cultural, educational, social and learning needs of the county.

Kilkenny Mobile Library Service.
Photo: Dylan Vaughan



Overview of the Library Service

The core purpose of the Kilkenny Library Service is to provide for the informational, cultural, educational, social and learning needs of Kilkenny citizens.

The service aims to provide safe, trusted and democratic spaces at the heart of the local community which are accessible to everyone and enable engagement and participation.

Strategic programming of events and activities, working in partnership with community groups, cultural organisations, statutory organisations and other groups, as well as the provision of user-focused services, ensures we meet the varied and changing needs of our communities.

The Kilkenny Library Service aims to ensure the delivery of high-quality library programming and services which are community focused and cross sectoral. Working together with our Council and community is a key strategy that enables us to deliver our goals and continually improve the way we deliver our services.

Kilkenny Library Service operates through a branch network of eight libraries. It is supported by the administrative functions of library headquarters, which also provides the local studies service. The mobile library provides a vital rural service and serves over 50 rural areas over a three week schedule. The library service is open over 280 hours per week with late-night and Saturday opening. A broad and varied range of digital services are also provided 24 hours a day, seven days a week via the library's website.



Graiguenmanagh Library.
Photo: Dylan Vaughan

Kilkenny Heritage Office

The Kilkenny Heritage Office works to ensure that Kilkenny's heritage is cherished, understood and enjoyed by current and future generations.

St. Peter's
Graveyard Ennisnag,
Co. Kilkenny.
Working with
communities to
record and
conserve our
historic graveyards.
*Photo: Dearbhala
Ledwidge*



Overview of the Heritage Office

The core purpose of the Heritage Office is to ensure that Kilkenny's heritage is cherished, understood and enjoyed by current and future generations.

The Heritage Office provides a professional heritage service throughout the county. This includes providing advice and information on heritage issues, developing policies and priorities for the identification, protection, conservation and enhancement of Kilkenny's heritage, collecting and collating heritage data, and promoting heritage awareness and education throughout the county.

The Heritage Officer works with the Kilkenny Heritage Forum to prepare and implement strategic county plans for heritage, i.e County Heritage Plan and County Biodiversity Plan. The Heritage Office and Heritage Forum have adopted a broad definition of heritage, including monuments, archaeological objects, heritage objects, architectural heritage, flora, fauna, wildlife habitats, landscapes, seascapes, wrecks, heritage gardens and parks, geology and inland waterways, as set out in the Heritage Act (1995).

We have also included additional aspects of heritage relevant to County Kilkenny including sport, local history, folklore, place names, genealogy, traditional skills, industrial heritage, social history and oral heritage.

We recognise the importance of strengthening the links between the County Heritage Plan and the County Biodiversity Plan so that both plans are read as one and that they continue to inform and complement each other. To this end, both plans have been incorporated into this new County Cultural Strategy.



Garden bumblebee (*Bombus hortorum*).
Kilkenny County Council has adopted this precious pollinator
as our emblem in our work to support pollinators.
Photo: Liam Lysaght

Kilkenny Arts Office

The Kilkenny Arts Office works to further strengthen Kilkenny's position as a centre of excellence for the arts and to ensure a successful and thriving arts environment.

POC Show.
Artist: Patrick
O' Connor



Overview of the Arts Office

The Arts Office works to develop, co-ordinate, motivate, inspire and strengthen artistic activity throughout the city and county. We promote the arts as a worthwhile activity for all, coordinate key cultural events, and provide advice and support for groups and individuals.

At the core of all of our work is the practitioner. We offer professional and practical development initiatives across all art forms, thus affording practitioners the time, space and skills to develop their practice.

We coordinate key cultural events and manage community and educational activities, building audiences, increasing capacity and civic participation. The Arts Office collaborates and partners with a number of local and national agencies in order to deliver our initiatives as we recognise this as key to maintaining and developing policy and programming.

The Arts Office works to further strengthen Kilkenny's position as a centre of excellence for the arts and ensure a successful and thriving arts environment within the region.



False Hood Series 2018.
Artist: threadstories.
Photo: Hazel Coonagh



Graig Library.
Photo: Dylan Vaughan

Insights

Strategic Context

Understanding the Strategic Context

Understanding and aligning with the strategic context provides the opportunity for the Kilkenny County Council Cultural Strategy to contribute and add value to existing strategy and policy objectives from local to European level, and to benefit from existing momentum, initiatives and potential funding options.

A strategic mapping exercise was completed to identify and assess key local, regional, national and European strategies and frameworks, and extract recurring themes, namely:

Social Value of Culture

In addition to having a vital intrinsic value, culture has an important social value. It plays a role in improving quality of life, health and wellbeing, a sense of local and national identity, and social cohesion.^{1,2,3,6,7,8}

It does this, for example, by providing opportunities to access information and learn, to interact with others and share cultural experiences, to feel more immersed in a community, to enjoy recreation and reflection, and to connect with nature, which is of particular importance for children.^{2,4,5,10}

There is widespread strategic support for developing cultural initiatives aligning with this motivation. However, it is recognised that there is a need to identify and collate evidence-based data on the social contribution of culture to inform planning.⁶

In particular, there is an interest in supporting and celebrating the Irish language, Gaeltacht areas and traditional culture, such as music, dance, sport, folklore and storytelling, recognising their importance to Irish identity.^{1,3,7,8}

Economic Value of Culture

Culture can also be harnessed to add economic value for individuals and communities.^{1,2,3,6,7,8,9}

Culture provides diverse opportunities for individuals to develop into more literate, informed, articulate and confident citizens, which supports local economic initiatives and development, as well as individual wellbeing.¹³

Culture is inextricably linked to creativity, which is increasingly prioritised in local and national strategies as a key catalyst for innovation, learning, entrepreneurship, business differentiation and overall economic prosperity.^{1,3,4,9}

There is a recognition that people involved in culture, either as professionals or volunteers, possess vital creative abilities and skills which should be supported, valued and diffused.^{8,9}

There is also a desire to encourage the public to engage more in cultural initiatives, especially from a young age, to unlock their full creative potential.^{1,2,3,7,8,10}

Culture is also seen as a key driver for the economy in terms of its contribution to creating differentiated, authentic tourism offerings. There is strong support for investing in sustainable cultural tourism initiatives at a local, regional and national level, ranging from the development of cultural quarters to more trails and walks embracing natural heritage.^{1,2,3,5,7,9}

Ireland's heritage assets have a multiplicity of benefits, including economic.¹⁴ Ireland's historic built environment and ecosystem services (the benefits that people obtain from ecosystems) are both significant contributors to Ireland's national economy.^{15,16}

The wide social and economic benefits of culture are considered of particular strategic importance for rural areas, to help support their sustainability.^{3,7}

INTERNATIONAL

United Nations
Convention on
Biological Diversity

European Year
of Culture 2018

European Level
Work Plan for
Culture 2015-2018

Creative Europe

Horizon 2020

NATIONAL

Arts Council Strategy 2016-2025:
Making Great Art Work

Creative Ireland
2017-2022

Heritage Council
Priorities 2016 and Beyond

Culture 2025:
Éire Ildánach

National Strategy on Children and
Young People's Participation in
Decision-Making 2015-2020

Opportunities for all:
National Strategy for
Public Libraries 2013-2017

Better Outcomes
Brighter Futures

All Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015-2020

Framework for Collaboration:
An agreement between the
Arts Council & the County and
City Management Association

National Literacy and
Numeracy Strategy 2011-2020

National Landscape
Strategy 2015-2025

National Biodiversity
Action Plan 2017-2021

REGIONAL

South East Economic
Development Strategy (SEEDS)
2013-2023

Putting People First-
Action Programme for
Effective Local
Government 2012

Action Plan for Rural
Development 2016

People, Place and Policy:
Growing Tourism to 2025

Children and the
Outdoors 2016

LOCAL

Kilkenny County
Council Corporate Plan
2014-2019

Action Plan for
Jobs 2017

Get Ireland
Active

Kilkenny Age
Friendly Strategy
2017-2022

Kilkenny County
Development Plan
2014-2020

County Culture and
Creative Plan 2017

County Kilkenny
Tourism Strategy

County Kilkenny
Tourism Plan

Kilkenny Local Economic
and Community Plan
2016-2021

Professional and Volunteer Practitioners

Culture relies critically on a dedicated and talented pipeline of multi-disciplinary people working in either a professional or volunteer capacity in the cultural sector.⁸

It is a well-established strategic priority to create the right conditions for people working in the cultural sector to have sustainable and rewarding careers. Amongst other supports, it is necessary to evaluate and address access to job creation and skills development.^{1 6 8 11}

It is also widely agreed that there is strategic opportunity in supporting and investing in emerging or established hubs of cultural and creative talent to create centres of excellence that can perform at a national and international level. There is potential to leverage their existing learnings, strengths and momentum. Examples include County Kilkenny's track record in design and crafts, or Ireland's national efforts to concentrate on digital media and film production.^{6 7}



Art classes at
Ferrybank Library.
Photo: Dylan
Vaughan

Access and Public Engagement

The significant benefits of culture can only be fully realised if there is strong public awareness and engagement.

Accordingly, there is strategic demand for initiatives that make culture more prominent, accessible and as close to people as possible, for example by highlighting day-to-day interactions with culture, encouraging free and subsidised access to sites and events, and improving digital access.^{1 2 3 7 8}

There is also a strategic need for initiatives that diversify audiences and target excluded groups, to ensure culture represents and includes all people.^{3 8}

It is recognised that cultural initiatives create high impact when they are community focused and community led. Accordingly, there is general support for a collaborative approach to cultural planning and decentralised ownership of initiatives.^{1 11}

Storytime at
City Library.
Photo: Dylan
Vaughan



Children and Young People

In particular, it is seen as strategically important to focus on immersing children and young people in culture.^{1 2 3 7 8 10}

To support this, cultural organisations should adopt the principle of children’s participation, ensuring children’s views inform their activities.¹²

Culture in all aspects should also be better incorporated into the educational system, such as nurturing creativity, improving arts education and increasing interaction with the outdoors.^{1 9 10}

References

1. Creative Ireland 2017–2022
2. European Year of Culture 2018
3. Culture 2025: Éire Iildánach
4. Opportunities for All: National Strategy for Public Libraries 2013–2017
5. National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017–2021
6. Kilkenny Local Economic and Community Plan 2016–21
7. Action Plan for Rural Development 2016
8. Arts Council Strategy 2016–2025: Making Great Art Work
9. Action Plan for Jobs 2017
10. Children and the Outdoors 2016
11. Heritage Council Priorities 2016 and Beyond
12. National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-Making 2015–2020
13. Literacy and Numeracy for Life: The national strategy to improve literacy and numeracy among children and young people 2011–2020
14. Bullock et al., 2008. The Economic and Social Aspects of Biodiversity. Benefits and Costs of Biodiversity in Ireland.
15. Ecorys & Fitzpatrick Associates, 2012. Economic Value of Ireland’s Historic Environment.
16. Ecorys & Fitzpatrick Associates, 2016. “Valuing Heritage: Scoping Study.” Unpublished report to Kildare, Kilkenny and Meath County and Cork City Councils.

Potential Opportunity

Stakeholder and Public Engagement Process

An extensive stakeholder and public engagement process was carried out in order to gain insights into the cultural context in County Kilkenny and to generate ideas for future action.¹

The engagement process was targeted at both those people involved in delivering culture in County Kilkenny and those people who engage with it, in order to understand their different perspectives and balance their needs.

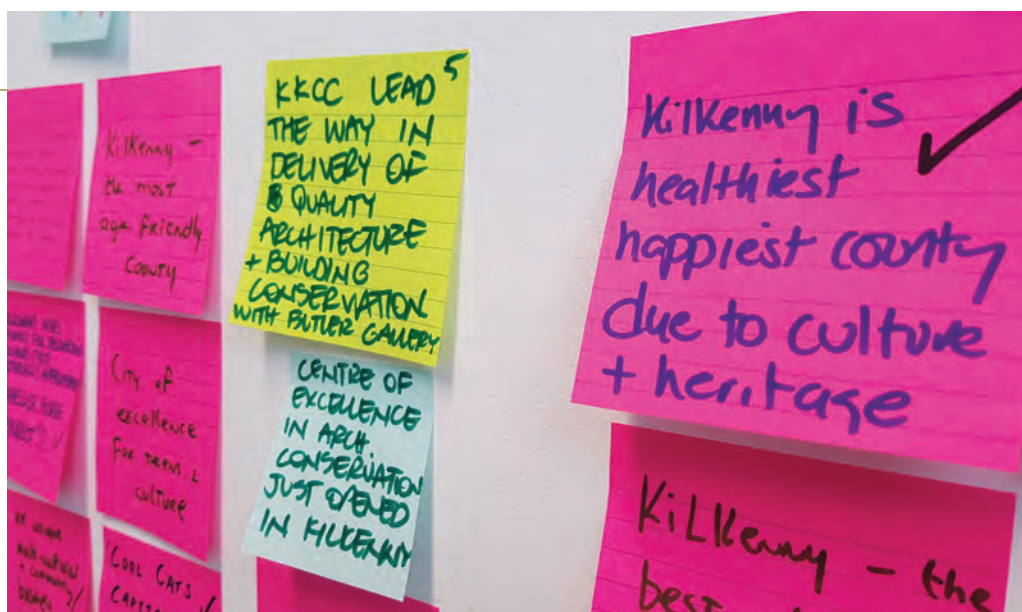
In order to access insights from the professionals and volunteers directly involved in the cultural sector, one-to-one phone calls and a facilitated stakeholder workshop with diverse representation were conducted.

In order to tap into insights from the more general public, a series of three public pop-up events (Kilkenny City, Ferrybank, Castlecomer) and a survey were completed. Both were advertised extensively by the Cultural Services Section through local media, social media and internal databases.

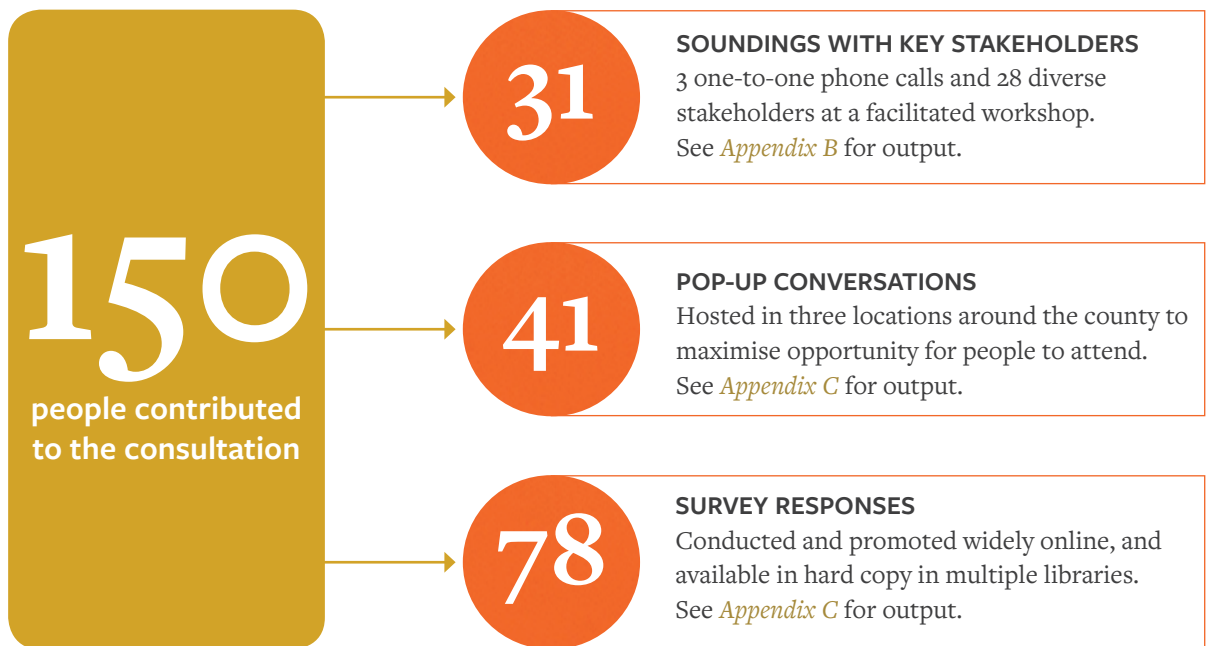
The engagement process sought to understand what the key needs and wants are for the future, what already exists that works well and can be built upon, and what new ideas have potential and could be explored.

There was a high level of stakeholder awareness, interest and engagement. A total of 150 consultees contributed to the process of developing the Kilkenny County Council Cultural Strategy, with many participants responding positively to the prospect of a joined-up and strategic approach to culture.

Stakeholder workshop.
Photo: M.CO



1. For further detail on the stages and timeline of the consultation process and the development of the Kilkenny County Council Cultural Strategy please see the Appendices.



Loughboy Library.
Photo: Dylan
Vaughan





Gate handle, Cappagh, Co. Kilkenny. One of the many beautiful field gates recorded for the Kilkenny Vernacular Field Gates Survey. Photo: Shem Caulfield

Understanding Concerns and Needs

What emerged through the stakeholder and public engagement process was a generally positive feeling towards culture in County Kilkenny – both its current state and its future potential.

While an immense pride in the culture of County Kilkenny was evident, it was acknowledged that there is some room to improve. In particular, concerns were raised around resources, funding and accessibility from the perspective of the cultural sector, and awareness and information from the public perspective.

Leveraging Strengths

From the stakeholder and public engagement process, a number of key strengths were identified which informed the development of the Strategic Framework, namely:

Interest and Pride

The stakeholder and public engagement process highlighted the interest and pride of people in County Kilkenny in their culture as a unique strength, with many existing networks and communities actively participating in culture.

There was a keen awareness of existing cultural assets, with people identifying a wide selection of natural heritage, built heritage, cultural networks, community spaces and cultural venues across Kilkenny City and other regional towns.

There was also a high level of cultural engagement amongst survey participants, with 63% engaging at least weekly in cultural activities. Libraries emerged as vital community spaces, with 77% of respondents using them regularly.

Built and Natural Heritage

Built heritage was highlighted as a signature strength throughout the stakeholder and public engagement process, in particular the preservation of historic buildings and the presence of unique and iconic visitor attractions.

Relatedly, the unique strength most often associated with County Kilkenny's culture was identified as the rich medieval history and the well-preserved medieval buildings, in particular in Kilkenny City.

Despite the emphasis on built heritage as a distinctive feature of County Kilkenny’s cultural offering, natural heritage dominated in terms of actual engagement. It was the most frequently cited cultural touchpoint, with 78% of survey respondents engaging with nature regularly.

Creative Practitioners and Networks

The survey responses highlighted the long-established, talented and collaborative network of practitioners as a distinctive strength of County Kilkenny’s culture. In particular, they noted the long history of creative practitioners living in County Kilkenny, the presence of agencies and engaged societies, and the collaborative nature of the community of practitioners.

Existing Initiatives

The survey analysis identified the main strength of County Kilkenny’s culture as the variety of cultural activities and initiatives on offer, which meet the needs and interests of a diverse range of people.

In particular, respondents noted the importance of County Kilkenny’s wide-ranging festivals and events in contributing to its multi-faceted and year-round cultural offering.

As one survey respondent commented: “What makes County Kilkenny culturally distinctive from the other places in Ireland is that there is something for everyone from young to old, and everyone is welcome to attend.”

Children and Young People

Making children and young people more involved in culture was seen as a crucial part of future success. Stakeholders identified a range of successful initiatives and programmes already tailoring their approach to the needs of children and young people.

They also recognised the important role that schools and libraries play in providing access and encouragement to engage in culture, and strongly emphasised the potential to build on this and do more through these avenues.



Reading in
Castlecomer
Library.
Photo: Dylan
Vaughan

'Born to Knit'
Kilkenny County
Council / Interreg
project.
Photo: Ross
Costigan



Identifying Emerging Opportunities

A selection of potential opportunities were also identified, namely:

Rural Kilkenny

Throughout the stakeholder and public engagement process, it was identified that there is an opportunity to do more to develop and support culture in County Kilkenny's rural areas. It was recognised that they are an important and sometimes underused part of culture.

Customs, Storytelling and Folklore

The process revealed a particular interest in building on County Kilkenny's traditional culture, ranging from customs, storytelling, folklore, local history and Irish language.

Diversifying Participation


While it was felt that people were generally highly engaged in culture, and that the cultural offering in County Kilkenny catered to a wide range of interests and needs, many stakeholders felt there was an opportunity to make culture more accessible and inclusive.

This ranged from improving physical and financial access, increasing representativeness of minority groups, and demystifying culture and making it more open and relevant to disengaged groups.

This was articulated more strongly by those stakeholders involved in the cultural sector as professionals or volunteers. It was felt this could increase the benefits of culture and make sure they were fairly distributed amongst the population.

Filming the
'Whispering Fields'
in Lisdowney,
Co. Kilkenny.





“What makes County
Kilkenny culturally
distinctive from
other places in
Ireland is that there
is something for
everyone from young
to old and everyone is
welcome to attend.”

Survey Respondent



"The Rocks" field, Kilcross, Co. Kilkenny.
One of the many field names recorded for the Kilkenny Field
Name Recording Project.
Photo: Alan Counihan



Strategy Development

Distinctive Cultural Identity

Distinctive Characteristics of Kilkenny

From analysing the stakeholder insights, it emerged that County Kilkenny benefits from unique strengths underpinning its culture. This offered the opportunity to define a distinctive cultural identity for County Kilkenny, describing what makes it special today that will continue to differentiate it in the future.

Developing a distinctive cultural identity provides an authentic, overarching vision for future success. It describes three core distinctive characteristics, each of which must be nurtured and maintained in order to maximise the strength and impact of culture in County Kilkenny.

Strength
of History
& Heritage

“Our medieval heritage and historic connections to everything from marble to brewing and even distilling, gives us plenty to talk about and claim fame to.”

Pride
in our
Culture

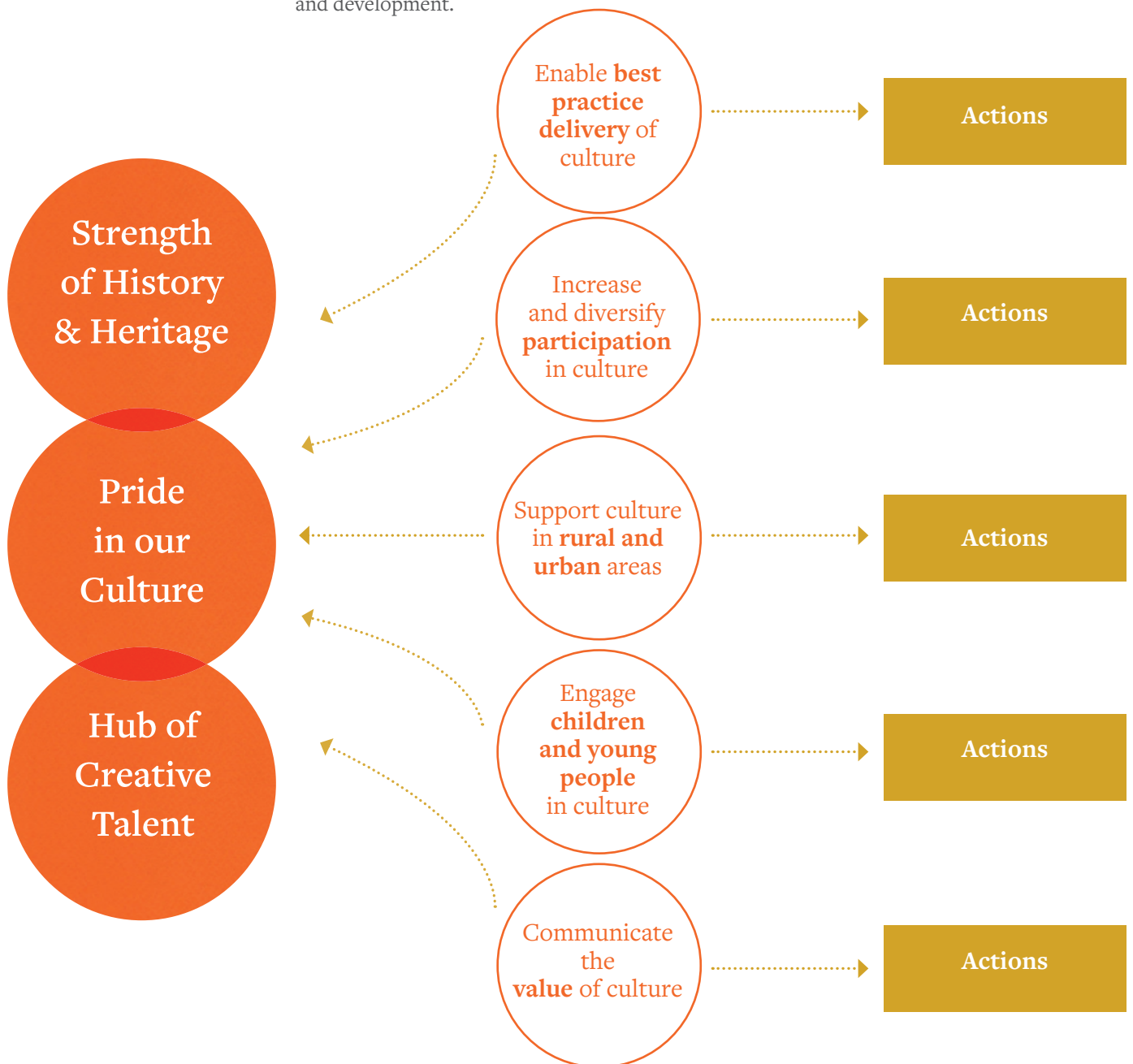
“There is a great sense of pride in Kilkenny’s culture... it is recognised that it contributes to our economy, sense of place and identity.”

Hub of
Creative
Talent

“The grassroots efforts of artists, makers, promoters and curators that allow the county to punch well above its weight.”

Strategic Priorities

Building on our distinctive cultural identity, the strategic priorities arose from stakeholder insights and analysis of existing strategic priorities and initiatives. They were identified as opportunities for County Kilkenny to focus on specific areas which will further enhance and develop its cultural offering into the future. They will provide a targeted focus for the Cultural Services Section over the next five years, defining the areas for special strategic focus and development.



Strategic Priorities

The strategic priorities were identified as opportunities for County Kilkenny to focus on specific areas which will further enhance and develop its cultural offering into the future. They will provide a targeted focus for the Cultural Services Section over the next five years, defining the areas for special strategic focus and development.



Enable **best practice delivery** of culture

It is the practitioners who work in the cultural sector, both professional and volunteers, who provide the foundation for culture to thrive in County Kilkenny.

To continue to develop and attract dedicated and talented individuals, it is important for the Cultural Services Section to sustain County Kilkenny's successful track record and reputation as a cultural and creative centre.

The Cultural Services Section will promote best practice management of culture, and help to create an environment where people working in the cultural sector are valued and have rewarding and sustainable careers.



Increase and diversify **participation**

The impressive quality and variety of cultural activities and amenities on offer throughout County Kilkenny has led to large and engaged audiences.

However, the benefits of culture could be amplified further by increasing participation and spread more equitably by targeting excluded groups.

The Cultural Services Section is committed to enhancing participation by increasing awareness through marketing and information, and by improving physical and financial access.

Kilkenny Wildlife Detectives. Encouraging children to record Kilkenny's natural heritage. Illustration: Alé Mercado





Knockroe passage tomb, Co. Kilkenny.



Support culture in **rural and urban areas**

The substantial rural areas and communities in County Kilkenny are an essential part of its identity.

The wider Kilkenny County Council is committed to making all towns, villages and rural areas across the county sustainable places to live, in terms of economic and social wellbeing.

While this requires a holistic approach, the Cultural Services Section has an important role to play. It is committed to supporting more connected and culturally engaged communities, enabling better access to cultural services, and supporting cultural enterprise and tourism.



Engage **children and young people** in culture

Immersing people in culture from an early age fosters a deeper appreciation and engagement and helps to safeguard culture into the future.

The cultural offering in County Kilkenny will benefit by continuing to take into account the needs of children and young people.

To support this, the Cultural Services Section is committed to encouraging collaborative planning with children and supporting more targeted cultural initiatives



Communicate the **value** of culture

In addition to having a vital intrinsic value, culture can provide great social, health and wellbeing, quality of life, environmental and economic benefit to individuals and communities.

In order to maximise its impact, and ultimately the value generated by culture in County Kilkenny, the real existing and future potential should be understood by all involved.

The Cultural Services Section is committed to championing a strategic and integrated approach, measuring and demonstrating the value of culture in a tangible way, and advocating for its importance.



'Making Space' - Kilkenny County Council
/ Interreg project 2013.
Photo: Ross Costigan



Implementation

Implementation Approach

'Making Space' –
Kilkenny County
Council / Interreg
project 2013.
Photo: Ross
Costigan



The Kilkenny County Council Cultural Strategy provides strategic direction and a targeted five-year work plan. In particular, it will inform the forthcoming Creative Ireland Plan.

Kilkenny County Council is committed, in partnership with others, to the delivery of the actions in the Kilkenny County Council Cultural Strategy over the period 2018–2022. Other key funding partners include the Heritage Council (under the County Heritage Plan process), the Arts Council, the Libraries Development Unit, the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government.

The Kilkenny County Council Cultural Strategy will form the basis for the work of the Arts, Heritage and Libraries services for the period 2018–2022. Each service will, on an annual basis, draft a work programme based on the contents of the Kilkenny County Council Cultural Strategy, the Action Areas contained within, and current priorities. This will then be used to apply for funding from various local and national sources. Once an annual budget is confirmed, the work programme will be determined, providing further detail on the projects proposed, the project partners, timeframes and individuals and organisations responsible for delivery.

To monitor and evaluate implementation of the Kilkenny County Council Cultural Strategy, a report on actions undertaken and progress made will be submitted to Kilkenny County Council and published on the Council's website at the end of each year.

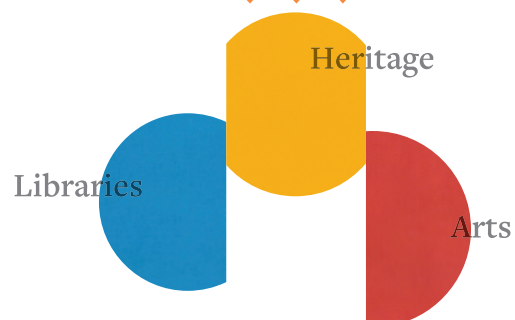
5 Year Strategy (2018–2022)

Strategic Priorities x 5

Objectives x 15

Actions x 40

Annual Implementation Plans x 3



Woodstock Gardens and Arboretum, Co. Kilkenny. Photo: Dylan Vaughan



Strategic Priority 1: Enable best practice delivery of culture

Objectives:

Arts

Maintain high quality and excellence in the delivery of all of our of programmes and opportunities for all.

Libraries

Provide the infrastructure and capacity to create and sustain relationships, strengthen existing partnerships and develop new initiatives to maximise opportunities for the library service.

Heritage

Support the implementation of key national and local legislation, policies, programmes and plans which identify protect and promote Kilkenny's heritage.

Actions:



Conduct ongoing monitoring and evaluation to enable the delivery of evidence-based programmes focusing on real needs and requirements of our communities and practitioners.



Enhance and invest in the professional skills of staff in the Arts, Heritage and Libraries services in line with the changing needs of a progressive cultural service.



Actively participate in nationally coordinated projects, and research and development initiatives.



Provide advice and information on legislation, programmes, policies, plans and funding opportunities to identify, protect and promote Kilkenny's culture.



Continue to provide excellent customer service with a well-resourced, well-trained adequate staffing complement.



Maximise opportunities for continued professional development, training and skills for cultural practitioners, professionals and communities.



Deliver high-quality experiences across all of our programmes by working with highly skilled and appropriately experienced cultural practitioners and professionals.



Develop high-quality, appropriate programmes and opportunities to make the Arts an informed career choice.

Strategic Priority 2:

Increase and diversify participation in culture

Objectives:

Libraries

Develop a forward-thinking, innovative, safe and inclusive service with high levels of use to improve equality of opportunity and to provide for connected and engaged individuals and sustainable communities.

Heritage

Develop and support programmes which encourage active participation in identifying, recording, protecting, communicating and enjoying Kilkenny's heritage.

Arts

Provide easy access to high-quality, innovative, exciting, challenging and engaging programmes for existing and new communities and practitioners, ensuring that the arts are woven into the fabric of daily life.

Actions:



Identify those who are not accessing and participating in culture, or are doing so at a low level, with the aim of addressing their needs and ensuring greater participation.



Develop enhanced digital resources which take a dynamic approach to the changing landscape of knowledge, information access and technology and ensure the virtual experience is as engaging as the physical experience.



Explore opportunities to leverage and cross promote cultural programmes in the county.



Continue to play a key role in collecting, preserving and communicating the local history, heritage and arts of County Kilkenny through the local studies service. Expand and communicate our content to local and worldwide audiences by developing local digital collections to optimise accessibility.



Activate the cultural community, stakeholders and local communities to provide diverse opportunities for engagement.



Develop programmes, in collaboration with highly skilled and experienced cultural practitioners and professionals, that deepen and enrich experiences and encourage active participation and peer-to-peer communication and endorsement of culture.



Identify and resource existing and potential new cultural infrastructure in the county.



Undertake a programme of infrastructural renewal to provide safe, dynamic and flexible library spaces.



Provide a full complement of relevant resources including a current and diverse collection of books, digital content, games and technology to advance and nurture learning at all ages. Aim to achieve the national recommended per capita stock fund target of €3.77.



Work with communities, agencies and other key partners to encourage participation and to identify, record and protect Kilkenny's rich built, natural and cultural heritage.

Strategic Priority 3:

Support culture in rural and urban areas

Objectives:

Arts

Ensure access to high-quality arts experiences across the county for practitioners and communities alike.

Libraries

Provide opportunities for connection, inclusion and community engagement by ensuring our library branches and mobile library service support the communities where they are located.

Heritage

Provide opportunities for engagement with and delivery of heritage programmes and services across the county.

Actions:



Undertake cultural mapping of County Kilkenny to understand what cultural resources exist and can be better utilised, and to identify gaps that need to be addressed.



Explore storytelling as a way of unlocking local culture and preserving it for future generations by taking a creative and diverse approach to telling stories.



Support and encourage culturally led regeneration in communities across the county.



Utilise the library branch network as a means of engaging with communities and as a platform for arts and heritage in rural and urban areas.



Support and collaborate with active individuals and community groups to extend our reach in rural and urban areas.



Design and offer programmes and services, and develop partnerships and collaboration to enhance cultural engagement and understanding.



Maximise public access to library services in rural areas by providing services that focus on local community goals and reach out and engage with communities.

Strategic Priority 4:

Engage children and young people in culture

Objectives:

Libraries

Create engaging and welcoming spaces and services to support learning and discovery among children and young people, contributing to the economic and social wellbeing of our communities.

Heritage

Support, develop and promote programmes which engage young people in Kilkenny's heritage, to develop life-long interest.

Arts

Provide access to high-quality, innovative, exciting, engaging and challenging programmes for children and young people, to encourage early engagement in the arts and to cultivate a deeper appreciation.

Actions:



Provide opportunities for formal and informal learning in a variety of ways from early childhood to young people in cooperation with local stakeholders, agencies and community organisations.



Research, plan, support and deliver a broad range of creative cultural programming to enrich the lives of children and young people.



Create opportunities to engage young people to co-create cultural content using technology to facilitate their distinct information and communication needs.



Facilitate appropriate engagement of young people in the future direction of programmes to promote ownership.



Work with key partners in the education sector to develop programmes and local cultural resources for teachers, students and early school practitioners.



Capitalise on opportunities to engage children and young people in reading development, literacy and numeracy by providing support to parents, carers, the school network and the pre-school network that supplements academic needs and fosters personal growth.

Strategic Priority 5: **Communicate the value of culture**

Objectives:

Arts

Ensure that the intrinsic, social, educational and economic value of arts is well understood and appreciated by existing and potential stakeholders and communities.

Heritage

Ensure that the economic, social, cultural and environmental value of Kilkenny's heritage to the county and its communities is recognised and communicated.

Libraries

Ensure the library is recognised as a key player in sustaining the educational, social, economic, cultural and civic health of the community in ways that are often unseen or unrecognised.

Actions:



Communicate and raise awareness about Kilkenny's rich cultural resources, maximising all appropriate channels.



Work with key partners to promote and measure the output, impact and value (intrinsic, social, economic, environmental, health and wellbeing) of Kilkenny's culture. Develop appropriate methodologies where required.



Forge alliances and build strategic partnerships at local, regional and national level to develop advocates for culture in the county.



Mainstream culture within the Local Authority; ensure appropriate funding and capacity to allow for the delivery of sustainable services and programmes, as well as availing of opportunities to access alternative funding mechanisms and staff resources.



Act as the point of reference for all cultural matters involving Kilkenny County Council and communicate its work in cultural service delivery.



Improve and strengthen linkages between the Cultural Services section and other sections in Kilkenny County Council.



Continue to collect, review and assess current national library performance indicators.



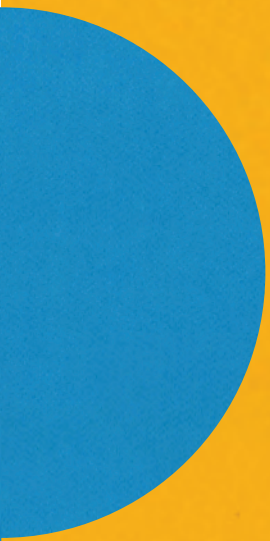
Research new ways to measure library outcomes and impacts, which focus on people and quality of life, to better demonstrate the value of libraries to communities.



Grow the strong brand of libraries and drive more comprehensive awareness of our unique stature as trusted community spaces across current, potential and non users with effective marketing and engagement strategies.

“There is a great sense of pride in Kilkenny’s culture... it is recognised that it contributes to our economy, sense of place and identity.”

Survey Respondent



Heritage Office

Dearbhala Ledwidge, *Heritage Officer*

Kilkenny County Council

Johns Green House, Johns Green, Kilkenny

Phone: 056 779 4925

Email: dearbhala.ledwidge@kilkennycoco.ie / heritage@kilkennycoco.ie

www.kilkennyheritage.ie

Library Service

Josephine Coyne, *County Librarian*

Kilkenny County Council Library Service

Johns Green House, Johns Green, Kilkenny

Phone: 056 779 4161

Email: josephine.coyne@kilkennylibrary.ie

www.kilkennylibrary.ie

Arts Office

Mary Butler, *Arts Officer*

Kilkenny County Council

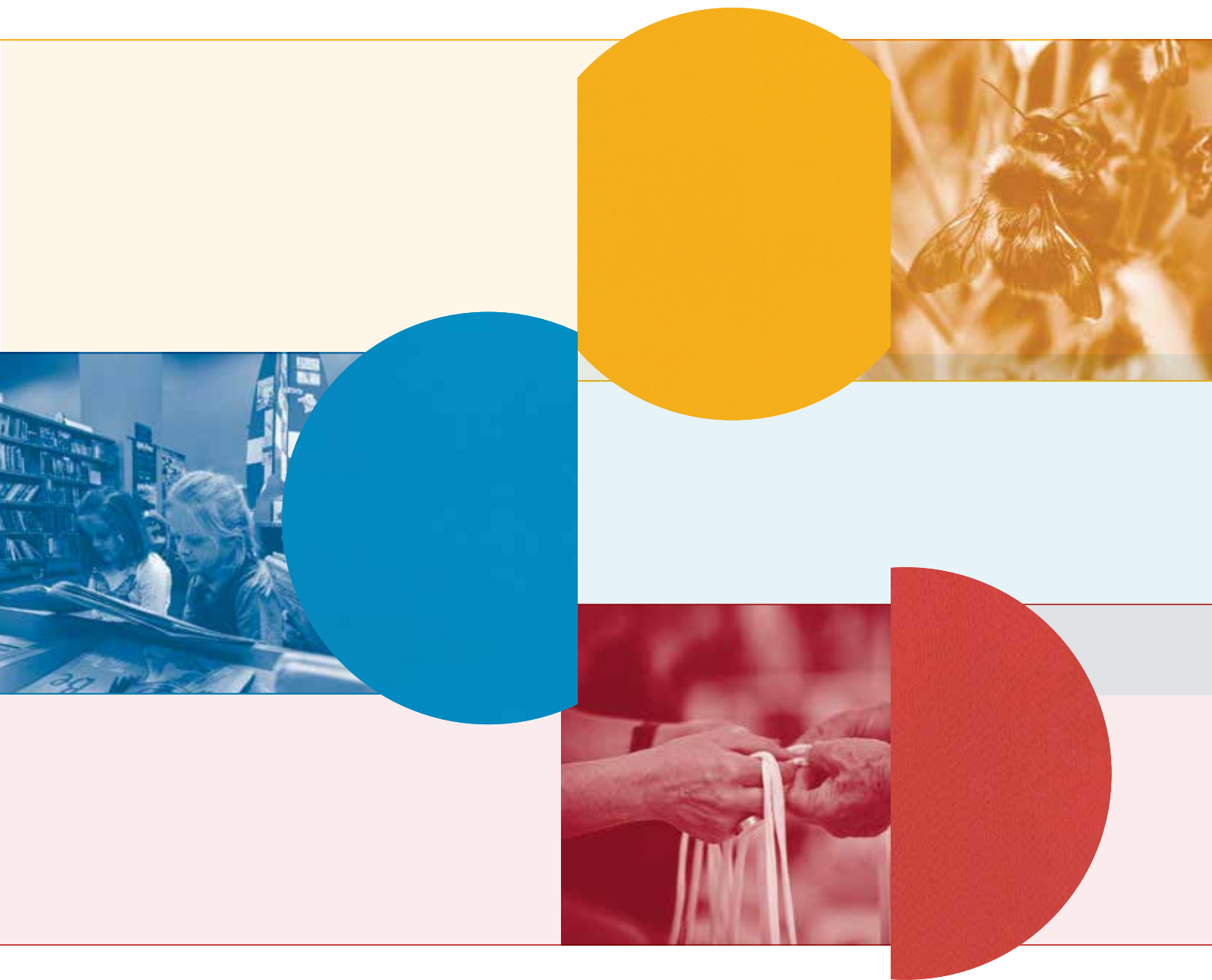
5 Dean Street, Kilkenny

Phone: 056 779 4138

Email: mary.butler@kilkennycoco.ie

www.kilkennycoco.ie/eng/Services/Arts/

Kilkenny County Council Cultural Strategy Arts, Heritage and Libraries 2018–2022



Appendices



Appendices

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Timeline for Preparation of
Kilkenny County Council Cultural Strategy 02

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Appendix A

Timeline for Preparation of Kilkenny County Council Cultural Strategy

Timeline for Preparation of Kilkenny County Council Cultural Strategy

This timeline shows the key drivers and steps in the preparation of the Kilkenny County Council Cultural Strategy 2018-2022 by the Cultural Services Section of Kilkenny County Council.

October 2015	Establishment of Cultural Services Section by Director of Services (Planning & Development, Heritage, Community, Arts & Culture)
27th January 2016	Presentation to Strategic Policy Committee 3 (Planning & Development, Heritage, Community, Arts & Culture) regarding establishment of the Cultural Services Section
July 2016	Publication of Culture 2025 / Éire Ildánach (A Framework Policy to 2025) by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs requesting a collaborative approach to cultural services delivery
20th January 2017	Correspondence from Minister of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs requesting establishment of Local Authority cultural teams and adoption of Creative Ireland programme
24th February 2017	Invitation from Cultural Services Section from suitably qualified consultants for quotes to help with the preparation of 5 Year County Kilkenny Cultural Strategy
March 2017	Creative Ireland requests Local Authorities to prepare a 5 year County Kilkenny Culture and Creativity Strategy
12th April 2017	Presentation to Strategic Policy Committee 3 (Planning & Development, Heritage, Community, Arts & Culture) on the process for preparation of County Kilkenny Cultural Strategy
20th April 2017	Appointment of M.CO to work with the Cultural Services Section to facilitate the preparation of the County Kilkenny Cultural Strategy
27th April 2017	Public consultation meeting on Kilkenny's Creative Ireland Programme
2nd May 2017	Kilkenny County Council Cultural Strategy Stakeholder meeting, Kilkenny
26th May 2017	Kilkenny County Council Cultural Strategy Stakeholder consultation workshop (including Kilkenny Heritage Forum)
5th-26th June 2017	Online public consultation survey on County Kilkenny Cultural Strategy
14th June 2017	Kilkenny County Council Cultural Strategy Public consultation meeting, Ferrybank Library
21st June 2017	Kilkenny County Council Cultural Strategy Public consultation meeting, Kilkenny City
21st June 2017	Kilkenny County Council Cultural Strategy Public consultation meeting, Castlecomer Library
9th October 2017	Meeting of the Kilkenny Heritage Forum regarding the County Kilkenny Cultural Strategy
11th April 2018	Presentation to Strategic Policy Committee 3 (Planning & Development, Heritage, Community, Arts & Culture)
21st May 2018	Kilkenny County Council Cultural Strategy (Arts, Heritage, Libraries) 2018 -2022 adopted by Kilkenny County Council
July 2017	Appropriate Assessment of Kilkenny County Council Cultural Strategy (Arts, Heritage, Libraries) 2018—2022 completed

Appendix B

Stakeholder Workshop Output

Kilkenny Cultural Strategy

Facilitator's Summary of Workshop Outputs

June 2017



INTRODUCTION

The Cultural Services Section of Kilkenny County Council convened a stakeholder workshop on 26th May 2017 to gather insights for the development of an Integrated Cultural Strategy for County Kilkenny, setting out a vision for the next 5 years and identifying strategic actions for Heritage, Arts and Libraries Services.

The workshop was attended by 28 participants – bringing together diverse expertise from people involved directly or indirectly in shaping the intrinsic culture and the cultural services on offer across County Kilkenny.

The workshop was facilitated by MCO and this document is the facilitator’s summary of conversations and synthesis of worksheets completed by the participants, who worked in teams on the day. The purpose of this document is to share the insights and ideas captured on the day for feedback.

WORKSHOP PURPOSE



- To co-create a shared vision for the future of cultural services in County Kilkenny.
- To gather input from stakeholders to better understand our users, our current strengths and our potential opportunities.
- To understand what is needed to enable success.



WORKSHOP FLOW



- Identify strategic themes
- Prioritise key strategic themes
- **Future Vision: Big Ideas**



- Understand the end users
- Identify cultural touchpoints
- Identify opportunities and gaps
- **Discovering Personas: User Insight**

PART 1



FUTURE VISION

Looking ahead 5 years, what headlines would you like to read about culture in County Kilkenny?

Your ideas were captured and the following **common themes** were emerging:

- Resources and facilities
- Community engagement
- Inclusivity
- Children and youth
- Rural development
- Libraries
- Built environment
- Film, drama and animation
- Cultural hub and global leader
- Jobs and economy
- Galleries
- Music



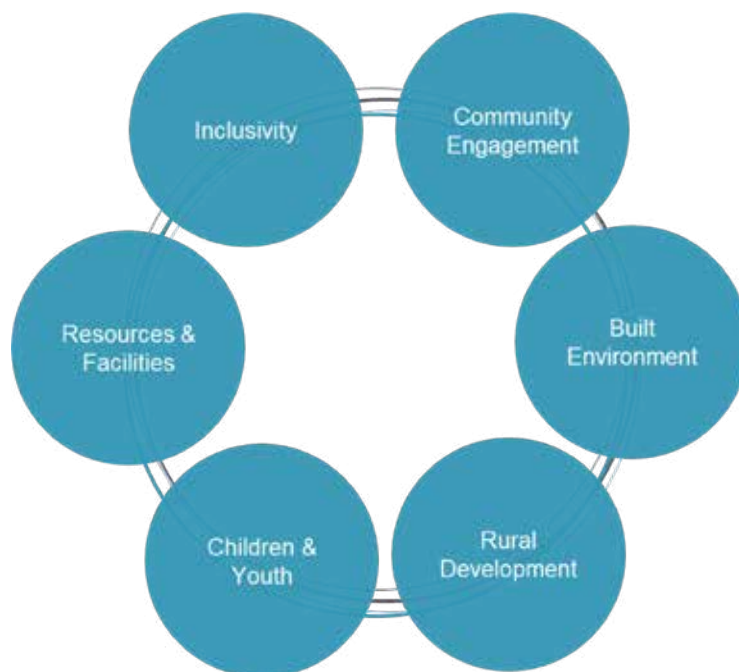
FUTURE VISION

Snapshot of what you told us matters to you



EXTRACTING THE BIG IDEAS

Reflecting on the common themes emerging, participants collectively prioritised six **big ideas** to shape the development of the Integrated Cultural Strategy for County Kilkenny.



EXPLORING POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES

	Resources & Facilities	Community Engagement	Inclusivity	Children & Youth	Rural Development	Built Environment
	Support the use of existing community spaces as a resource for cultural activities.	<p>"Then and now" visual Kilkenny archive.</p> <p>Linking more with festivals.</p> <p>Tapping into existing interests, e.g. Abbey Quarter open day.</p> <p>Information sharing with elected representatives.</p>	<p>Increase inclusion of minority groups.</p> <p>Create stronger links with tourism industry.</p>	<p>Children's "passport" for experiencing natural and built culture.</p> <p>Expand cultural element of Kilkenny Kids.</p>	<p>National Rural Development Strategy opportunity & funding.</p> <p>Create stronger links with tourism industry.</p>	<p>Re-use / re-discovery project for existing buildings owned by Kilkenny County Council.</p> <p>Opening brownfield sites.</p> <p>Include training elements in redevelopments (conservation).</p> <p>Linking with third-level colleges.</p> <p>Further development of merchant housing.</p>
Shared Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Creating knowledge and awareness of what already exists, e.g. through an integrated database and interactive map of cultural services and networks. ➤ Connecting and supporting networks between individuals, groups and organisations involved in culture, e.g. through platform, Creative Ireland planning, etc. ➤ Enabling partnerships between cultural services, to strengthen connections between practitioners and to create joined-up offerings for users. ➤ Tapping into the interest and resources of the diaspora. 					

HARNESSING OUR STRENGTHS

Resources & Facilities	Community Engagement	Inclusivity	Children & Youth	Rural Development	Built Environment
Community spaces with potential to use more for cultural purposes.	Change in national policy to work with local authorities.	Community engagement is a part of public policy – need to build on this.	Existing programmes – libraries initiatives, artist in residence programme for primary schools, teacher courses with artists, outdoors and forest programme, etc.	LEADER programme & local development strategy linked.	Living City Initiative.
Strong infrastructure and knowledge for music, theatre and festivals.	Community engagement is a part of public policy – need to build on this.		Existing groups / institutions – Barnstorm, Butler Gallery education programmes, DCCol child-friendly exhibitions, County Childhood Committee, KAF youth, children and family pillar, Education Centre, young filmmakers, etc.	Geographically spread network of libraries.	
Data research.	Council – support of elected representatives.		Kilkenny Kids publication.		

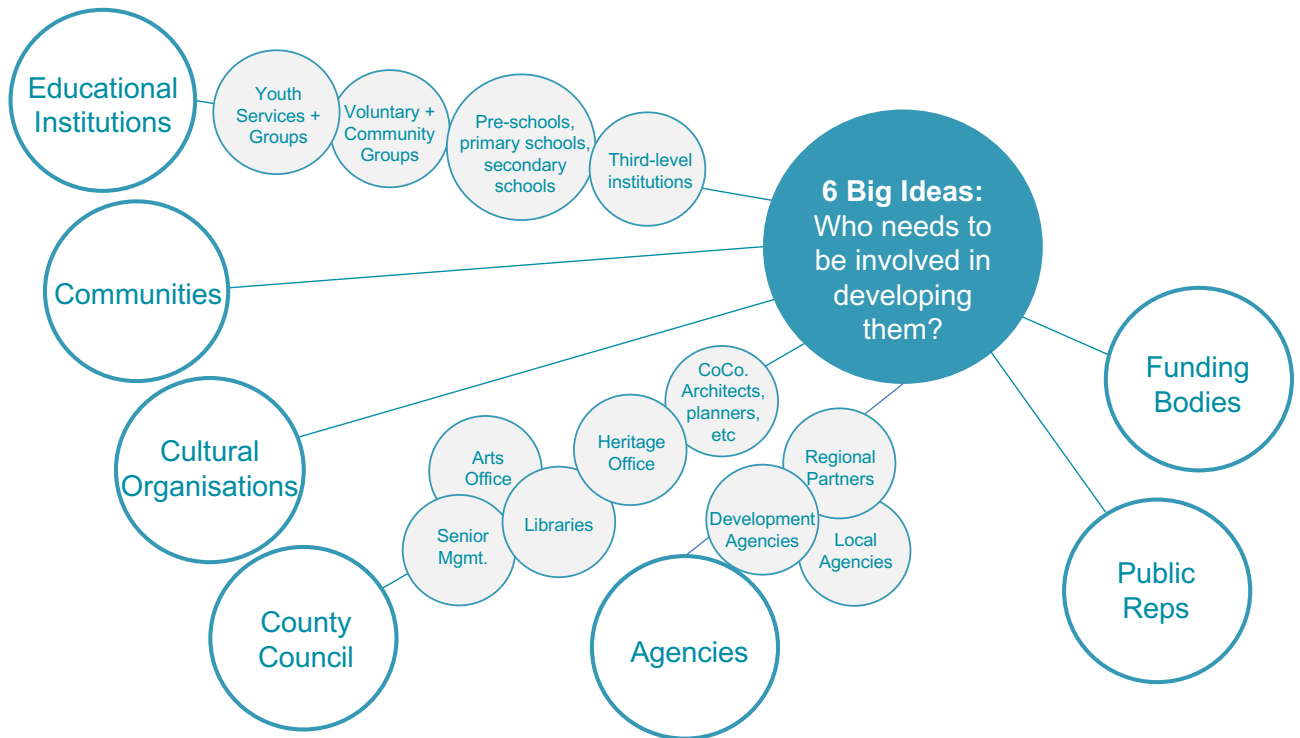
- Shared Strengths**
- Deep cultural appetite, pride and awareness, including appreciation of the intrinsic value of culture.
 - Strong and diverse natural environment and built heritage.
 - Committed and collaborative ecosystem of individuals, groups and networks.
 - "Brand Kilkenny" – well-established reputation as destination for culture, in particular craft.
 - Integrated approach to planning Heritage, Arts and Libraries services – joined up thinking and doing.
 - Momentum of the Creative Ireland five-year initiative.
 - Track record of success and learnings (including Kilkenny Design Workshops, led by Irish Export Board in 1960s).

UNDERSTANDING OUR CHALLENGES

Resources & Facilities	Community Engagement	Inclusivity	Children & Youth	Rural Development	Built Environment
Knowledge regarding planning, conservation and grants.	Elected representative agenda.	Diversity and age range of population across County Kilkenny.	Maintaining engagement with young people through their various life stages.	Need to improve rural transport options to support access to cultural activities.	Balancing contemporary design with best practice – no pastiche.
Converting existing assets into actual offerings that engage users.				Challenge of cross-border working.	Ensuring an appropriate balance of focus in development of urban and rural environments.
				Keeping the heart of the villages across County Kilkenny.	

- Shared Challenges**
- Challenges associated with funding, capacity and skills required.
 - Large rural population and wide geographic spread, causing difficulties with accessibility of cultural services and a fair distribution of resources and facilities.
 - Lack of transport options connecting cultural services and destinations, resulting in limited accessibility.
 - Silos of information on what cultural services and networks exist and how to access them. Limited communication with the public.
 - Challenges associated with dealing with multiple agencies and stakeholders.
 - Need to measure and evaluate culture (e.g. in economic terms, in health and well being terms, etc.).

IDENTIFYING WHO'S INVOLVED



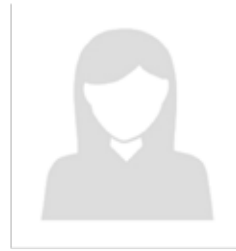
PART 2

Uncover insights into **key end users** – identify existing cultural touchpoints and opportunities to do more.



DISCOVERING PERSONAS

We considered six **key user personas**, mapping out how they currently engage with culture and potential opportunities for them to engage further. We considered diverse age groups, rural and urban settings, and different interests.



DISCOVERING PERSONAS

Exploring how our users **currently** interact with cultural services

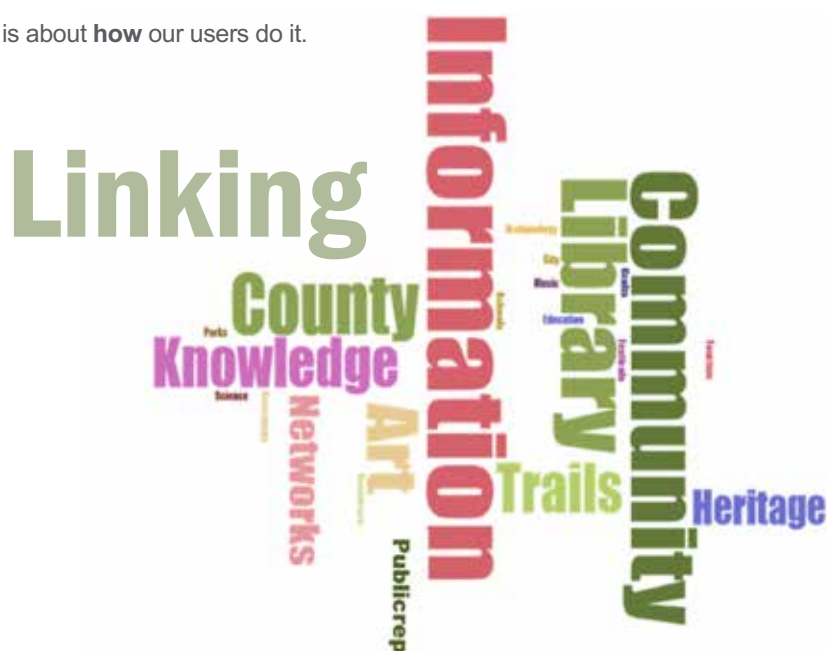
The present is about **what** our users do.



DISCOVERING PERSONAS

Exploring **opportunities** to improve cultural services for our users

The future is about **how** our users do it.



DISCOVERING PERSONAS

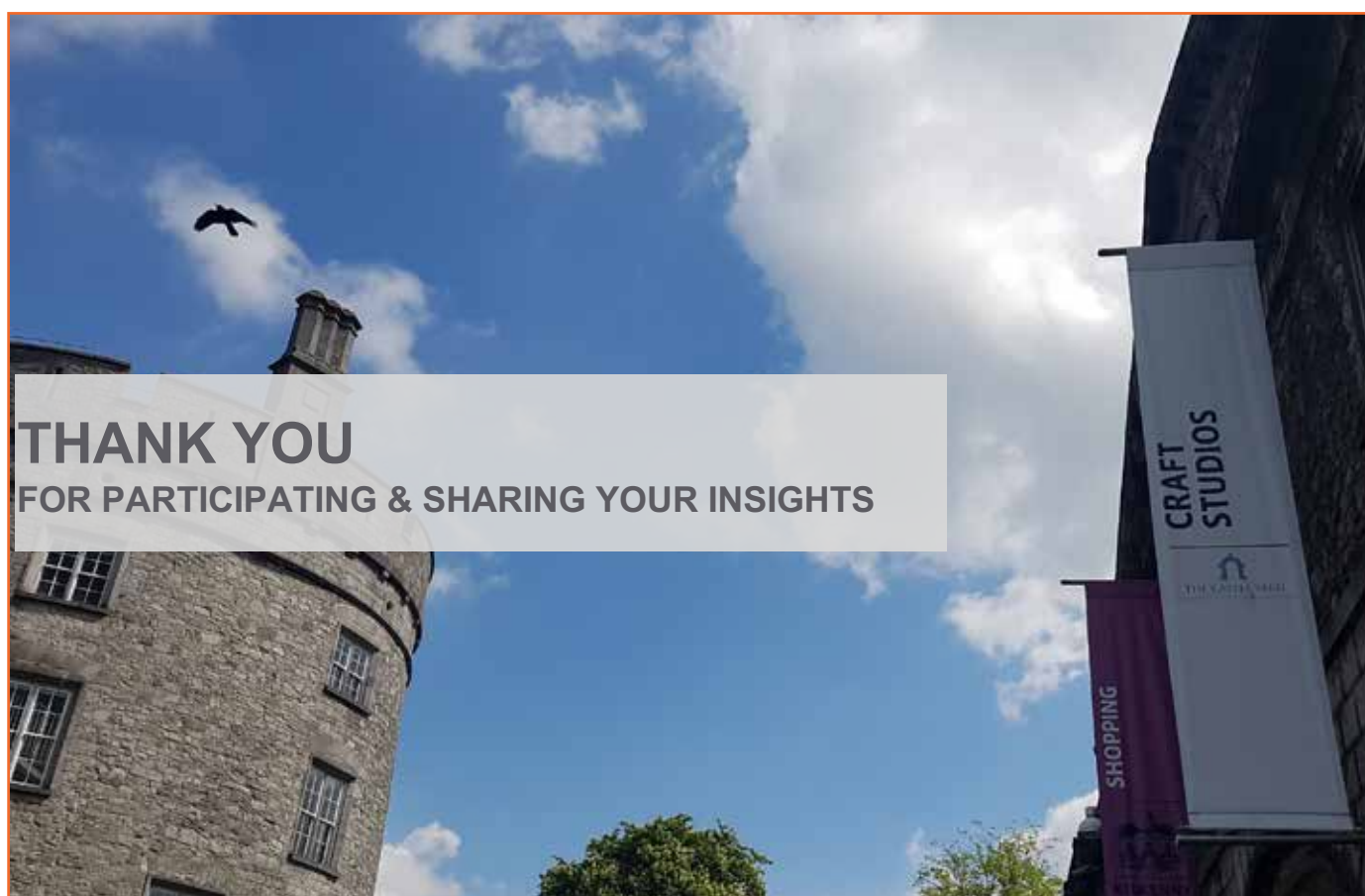
Exploring **opportunities** to improve cultural services for our users

Information & Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Improve availability and accessibility of information on cultural services.- Website mapping cultural destinations.- “What’s happening” page online.- Link with local businesses / organisations to distribute information.
Structured Participation Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Structured arts and crafts programmes for children.- Structured science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEAM) events and facilities.
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Tap into networks of teachers and principals.- Promote a list of targeted speakers in schools.- Explore learning from / rolling out school-led initiatives / programmes (e.g. CBS TY archaeology course).- Explore the opportunity to increase linkages with the education sector and to create links with the curriculum.
Community Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Tap into active community groups (e.g. retirement communities).
Libraries	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Mobilising parents to access libraries more frequently.- Cultural activities that support mental health / mindfulness in libraries.- Storytime in libraries for children to increase stay time.
Knowledge & Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Tap into the cultural knowledge and skills base of older people.

DISCOVERING PERSONAS

Exploring **opportunities** to improve cultural services for our users

Connected Offerings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enable local cultural networks between practitioners, SMEs, etc. – e.g. facilitate networking, provide online platform. - Enable local / speciality trails to connect practitioners / SMEs and promote collective visibility.
Links to Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Connect cultural practitioners / SMEs with LEO for enterprise supports. - Connect cultural practitioners / SMEs to Work Matters and other library resources for enterprise supports. - Connect cultural practitioners / SMEs with Kilkenny Tourism.
Natural & Outdoors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase cultural signage / information in public outdoor areas. - Use signage / information to maximise common walking routes, commuting routes, public gathering areas and cultural interest points. - Create a trail around the Kilkenny City walls (e.g. CBS). - Create a trail exploring Kilkenny City laneways. - Create a trail for the River Nore and promote exploration. - Introduce more linear parks to promote natural heritage.
Authentic Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote Kilkenny as a brand. - Explore genealogy as an authentic tourism experience.



Appendix C

Public Consultation Output

Kilkenny Cultural Strategy

Public Consultation
Emerging Findings

July 2017

MCO | Connected Thought.
Creative Action.



Introduction

Formed in Oct 2015 the **Cultural Services Section** of Kilkenny County Council brings together Arts, Heritage and Libraries to facilitate a strategic cultural service.

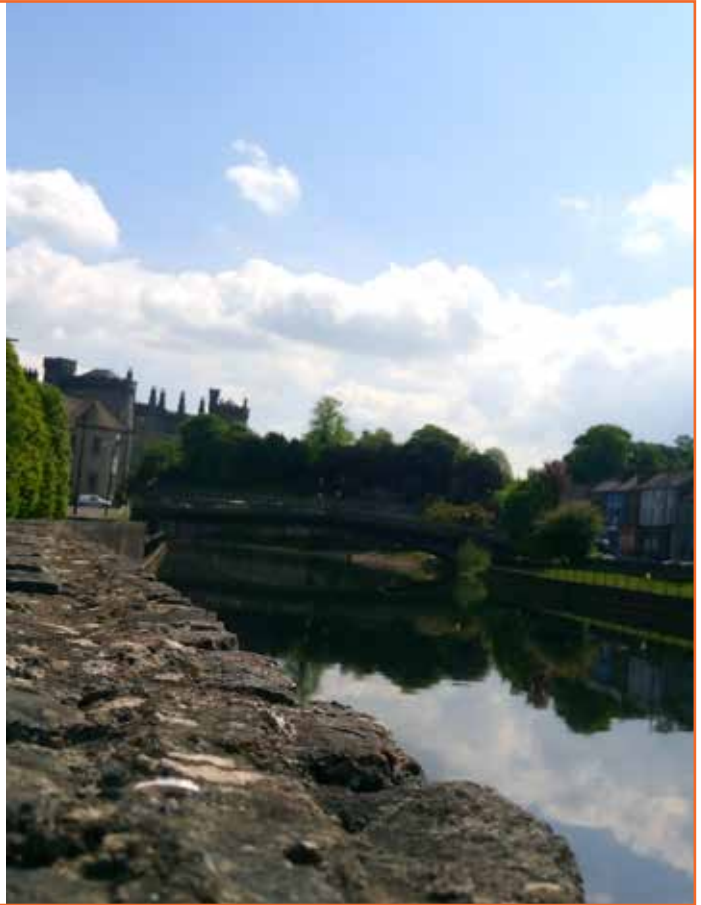
The Cultural Services Section commissioned MCO for the development of an **Integrated Cultural Strategy** for County Kilkenny in April 2017. The Cultural Strategy will set out a shared vision for Arts, Heritage and Libraries for the next five years and identify both shared and distinct priority actions.

As part of the development of the Cultural Strategy, a **stakeholder workshop** was convened in May 2017. This generated initial insights from a diverse group of people involved directly or indirectly in shaping the intrinsic culture and the cultural services on offer across County Kilkenny.

Building on this, a wider **public consultation process** was conducted during June 2017 to gather user insights and generate ideas for the future of Arts, Heritage and Libraries in County Kilkenny. This consisted of a series of pop-up events and a public survey. The public consultation was publicised widely by Arts, Heritage and Libraries through local media, social media and existing internal databases.

119 people participated in the public consultation process, marking considerable public interest in the development of an Integrated Cultural Strategy and its potential impact.

The **purpose** of this document is to provide a synthesise of the insights generated from this process.



POP UP EVENTS EMERGING INSIGHTS & CONSIDERATIONS

Pop Up Overview

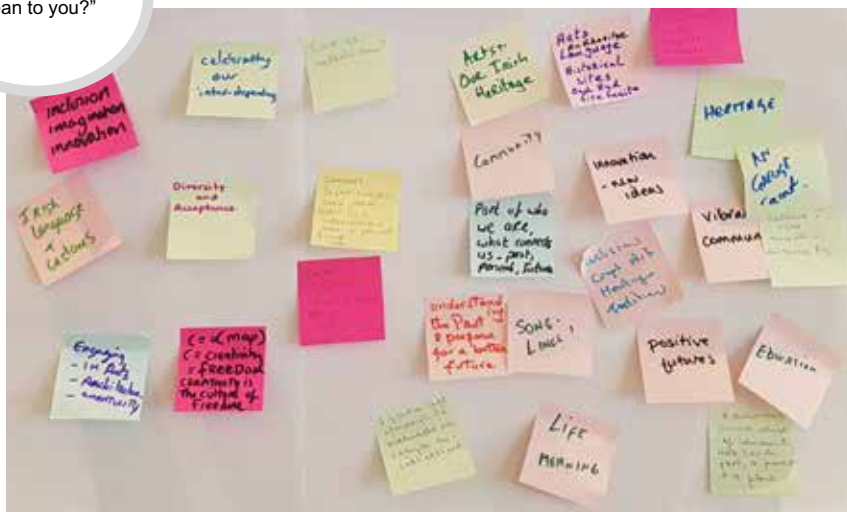
As part of the development of an Integrated Cultural Strategy for County Kilkenny, a series of **pop-up events** was conducted. The pop-up events provided an opportunity for interested members of the public to contribute ideas to the development of the Cultural Strategy. These two hour events took place in three representative locations – Ferrybank (14th June), Castlecomer (21st June) and Kilkenny City (21st June) – and attracted 41 participants.



Pop Up Analysis

As part of the pop-up events, participants were asked to share their views on **what culture means** to them. The responses revealed varied and personal interpretations.

"What does culture mean to you?"



"Culture is often confused solely as a high brow curiosity. Culture is how we speak, pray, imbibe, eat, play..."

Survey Respondent

Pop Up Overview

During the pop-up events, participants were invited to add their thoughts to a range of **interactive posters**. These looked at their general assessment of culture in County Kilkenny, their knowledge of cultural assets in County Kilkenny, and their ideas for the future in relation to six initial strategic themes identified during the previous stakeholder workshop, held in May 2017.

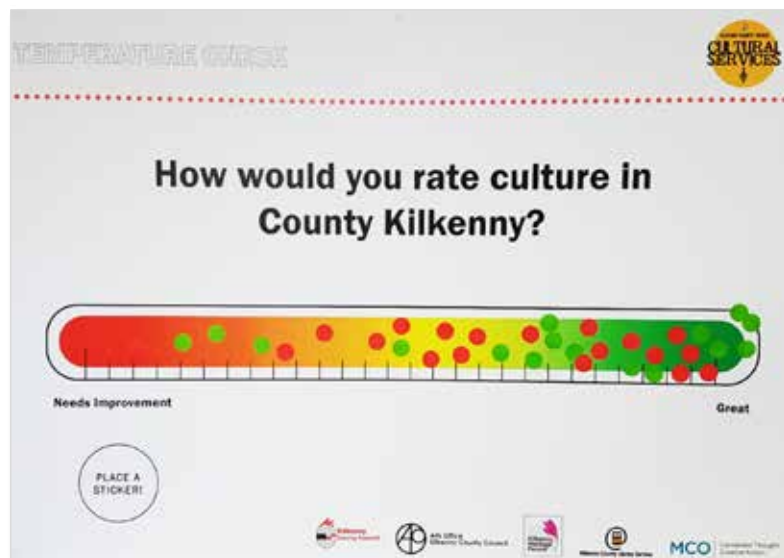
“What is your general impression of culture in County Kilkenny?”

“Where do you think are the key cultural assets in County Kilkenny?”

“Looking at these strategic themes, what are your ideas for the future of culture in County Kilkenny?”

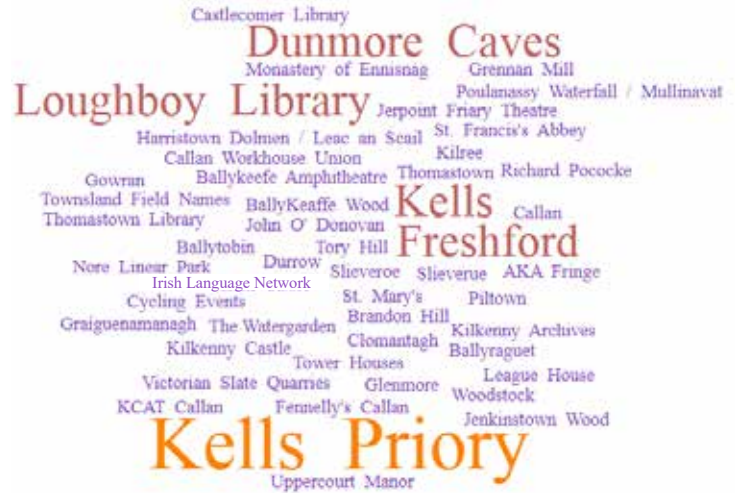
Pop Up Analysis

As part of the pop-up events, participants were invited to share their **impressions of culture** in County Kilkenny. This exercise revealed a generally positive attitude towards culture in County Kilkenny, with some acknowledgement that there is room for improvement.



Pop Up Analysis

As part of the pop-up events, participants were invited to map the **cultural assets** in County Kilkenny. This exercise uncovered a balance of cultural assets across Kilkenny City and other regional towns. It also identified a balance in the types of cultural assets available, with Cultural Venues emerging as the most frequently identified by a narrow margin.



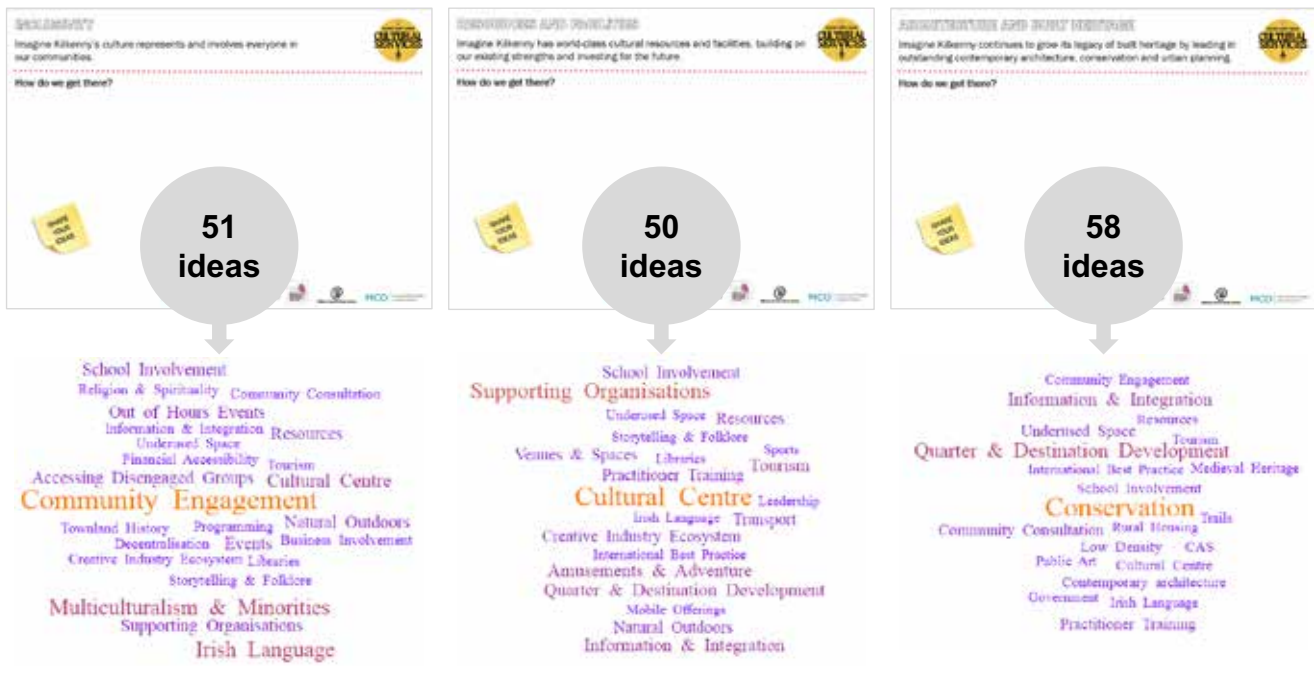
Pop Up Analysis

The pop-up events generated **324 ideas** for actions supporting six initial strategic themes identified in the earlier stakeholder workshop in May 2017 – Children and Youth, Rural Development, Community Engagement, Inclusivity, Resources and Facilities, Architecture and Built Heritage.



Pop Up Analysis

The pop-up events generated **324 ideas** for actions supporting six initial strategic themes identified in the earlier stakeholder workshop in May 2017 – Children and Youth, Rural Development, Community Engagement, Inclusivity, Resources and Facilities, Architecture and Built Heritage.



Emerging Thoughts

The pop-up events informed the following initial observations.

- The public is generally positive about culture in County Kilkenny – its current state and its future potential.
- There is a good knowledge of a breadth of cultural assets across County Kilkenny. The public identified a range of cultural assets across urban and rural settings with which they engage.
- The public generated a large number of ideas for action, which will feed into the priority actions in the Integrated Cultural Strategy. There was a good spread of ideas across the six initial strategic themes presented to them, reinforcing the relevance of these themes to the future direction of culture in County Kilkenny.





PUBLIC SURVEY

EMERGING INSIGHTS & CONSIDERATIONS

Public Survey Overview

As part of the public consultation process a **survey** was available online from 5th to 30th June 2017. 78 responses were collected and analysed. The sample of survey respondents was as follows.

- A similar proportion of respondents lived in Kilkenny City (45%) and Kilkenny County (43%), with the remainder living elsewhere.
- A majority of respondents worked in Kilkenny City (49%). Roughly one quarter of respondents worked either in Kilkenny County (26%) or elsewhere (26%).
- 54% of respondents were directly involved in cultural activities:
 - Some respondents were associated with organisations including: An Taisce, Alternative Kilkenny Arts (AKA) Fringe Festival, Barnstorm Theatre Company, Design and Crafts Council of Ireland, Devious Theatre, Irish Lebanese Cultural Foundation, Kilkenny Archaeology Society, Kilkenny Arts Festival, Kilkenny Collective for Arts Talent, Open Circle Arts, Rothe House, Tidy Towns, Watergate Theatre and Young Irish Film Makers.
 - Other respondents were also involved as practitioners, coordinators or participants in: community projects, creative workshops, cultural programming, drama and theatre, film and TV, fine art, heritage groups, historical societies, Irish language circles, knitting groups, libraries, music and singing, play and music education, print studios, tourism and venue management.
- 41% of respondents were not involved in cultural activities as a job or in a volunteer capacity. 5% did not provide a response to this question.

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT... CULTURE IN KILKENNY COUNTY

7. Which of the following cultural activities do you regularly engage in? (Please tick all that apply)

Activity	Yes	No
Reading		
Watching		
Heritage sites		
Libraries		
Museums		
Workshops		
Local Festivals		
Sports grounds		
Theatre		
Music		
Art activities/ projects		
Heritage activities/ projects		
Cultural Groups		
Societies		
Other		

AM I ASKED YOU

Age	Gender	County	Residence
18-24	Male	County	Other
25-34	Female	County	Other
35-44	Male	County	Other
45-54	Female	County	Other
55-64	Male	County	Other
65+	Female	County	Other

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT... CULTURE IN KILKENNY COUNTY

1. What is the best thing about culture in County Kilkenny?

2. What makes County Kilkenny culturally distinctive from other places in Ireland?

3. What would you recommend a visitor to do for a cultural day out in County Kilkenny?

4. What do you feel are the most important issues in relation to Culture in County Kilkenny?

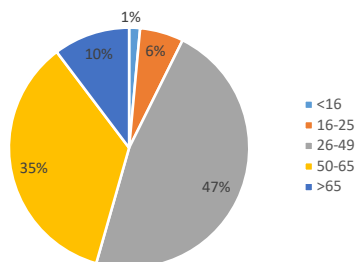
5. How often do you engage in cultural activities?

6. Are there any elements of County Kilkenny's culture you think are under-represented?

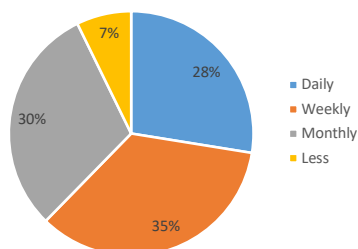
Public Survey Overview

- The sample of respondents over-represented the age categories 26-49 and 50-65 years and under-represented the age categories of <16, 16-25 and >65 years, relative to Kilkenny's population age profile (CSO, 2016).
- Generally, respondents engaged with culture regularly, with 63% participating in cultural activities at least weekly (63%).
- Over two-thirds of participants (67%) engaged with culture most often in Kilkenny, with the remainder more often travelling outside of the county for culture.

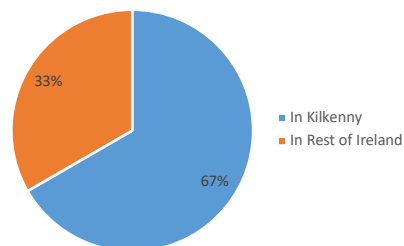
Q.1 What is your age group?



Q.5 How frequently do you engage in cultural activities?



Q.6 Where do you most often engage in cultural activities?



Survey Analysis

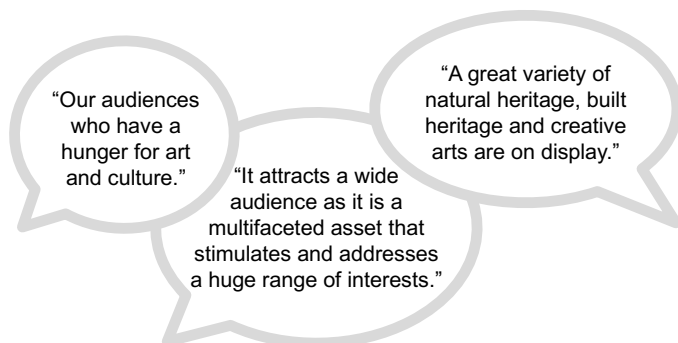
Identifying County Kilkenny's Cultural Strengths

The survey analysis identified the main strength of County Kilkenny's culture as the **variety** of cultural activities and initiatives on offer, which meet the needs and interests of a diverse range of people. In particular, respondents noted the importance of County Kilkenny's wide-ranging **festivals** and **events** in contributing to its multi-faceted and year-round cultural offering.

Another strength highlighted by respondents was County Kilkenny's **built heritage**, in particular the preservation of historic buildings and the presence of unique and iconic visitor attractions.

Ease of access was identified as a strength by respondents. However, this focused on the small scale of Kilkenny City and the density of cultural attractions within easy walking distance.

Q.1 What is the best thing about culture in Kilkenny?



Survey Analysis

Understanding what makes County Kilkenny's Culture Unique

The unique strength most often associated with County Kilkenny's culture was identified as the rich **Medieval history** and the well-preserved Medieval buildings, in particular in Kilkenny City.

County Kilkenny's well-established **festivals** and its impressive variety of cultural initiatives, activities and amenities were also identified as distinctive strengths of its culture.

Respondents highlighted the long-established, talented and collaborative network of **practitioners** as a distinctive strength of County Kilkenny's culture. In particular, they noted the long history of creative practitioners living in County Kilkenny, the presence of agencies and engaged societies, and the collaborative nature of the community of practitioners.

Respondents also highlighted County Kilkenny's **communities** and people as a unique strength of its culture, due to the recognition of the inherent value of culture, the willingness to be involved and the appreciation of cultural amenities and activities available.

Q.2 What makes culture in Kilkenny distinctive?



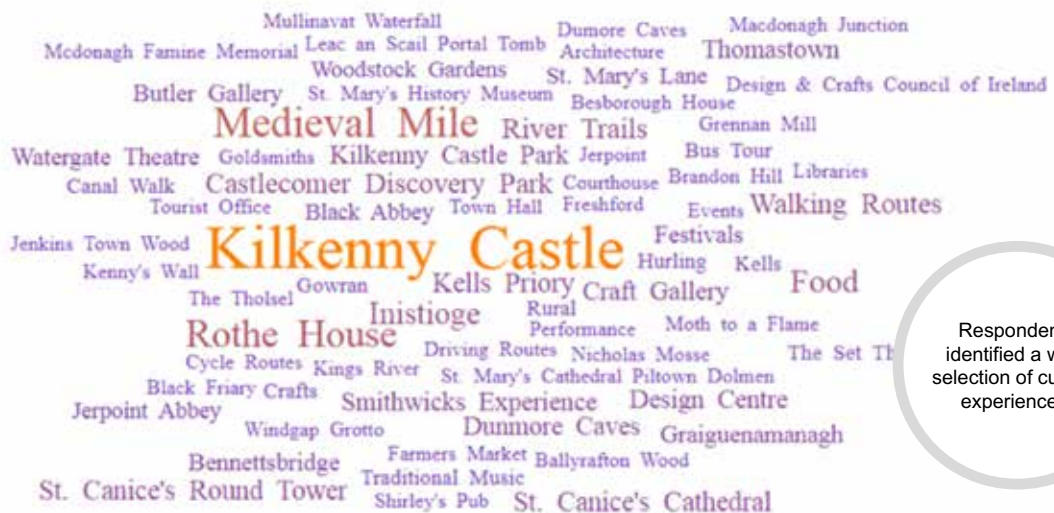
"Medieval heritage and contemporary living brought together."

"The grassroots efforts of artists, makers, promoters and curators that allows the county to punch well above its weight."

Survey Analysis

Mapping Kilkenny's Cultural Offering

Q.3 What would you recommend a visitor to do for a cultural day out in County Kilkenny?



Respondents identified a wide selection of cultural experiences.

Survey Analysis

Mapping Kilkenny's Cultural Offering

Analysing responses in more detail, a number of categories of cultural experiences emerged.

- Built Heritage (96 responses)
- Towns & Villages (29 responses)
- Recreation (29 responses)
- Tours & Trails (21 responses)
- Natural Heritage (21 responses)
- Creative Arts (20 responses)
- Performance & Events (12 responses)



Survey Analysis

Understanding Concerns

Respondents raised concerns about supporting culture in Kilkenny's **rural** areas. In particular, respondents noted that Kilkenny's rural areas should benefit equally from investment and economic development relating to culture, that their communities should be equally engaged, and that there is better awareness of their cultural richness.

Q.4 What do you feel are the most important issues in relation to culture in County Kilkenny?



Survey Analysis

Understanding Concerns

There were distinct differences in concerns identified by people depending on whether or not they identified as being involved in culture as their job or in a volunteer capacity.

Those formally involved in culture were primarily concerned with accessibility and inclusivity, and funding and infrastructure. Regarding **accessibility and inclusion**, respondents were particularly concerned with dispelling misconceptions that culture is elitist, embracing multiculturalism and meeting the needs of children and older people. Regarding **funding and infrastructure**, the main focus was on more funding for creative practitioners, consistent funding for initiatives and investment in more creative studios and spaces.

Those not involved in culture as their job or as a volunteer were primarily concerned with better **promoting** Kilkenny's culture and marketing its cultural attractions in an **integrated** way. Respondents also called for better **information** on what already exists, to support people in accessing culture and to better leverage Kilkenny's breadth of cultural amenities.

Respondents involved in culture as job / volunteer



Respondents not involved in culture as job / volunteer



Survey Analysis

Identifying Potential Opportunities

Respondents identified several important elements of Kilkenny's culture that they perceived to be under represented, which will be further explored as potential opportunities. The most prominent ideas focused on Kilkenny's **rural areas**, discovering Kilkenny's **customs, storytelling and folklore**, building on Kilkenny's success in **theatre** and supporting Kilkenny's **Irish language** customs.

Q.7 Are there any elements of County Kilkenny's culture you think are under represented?



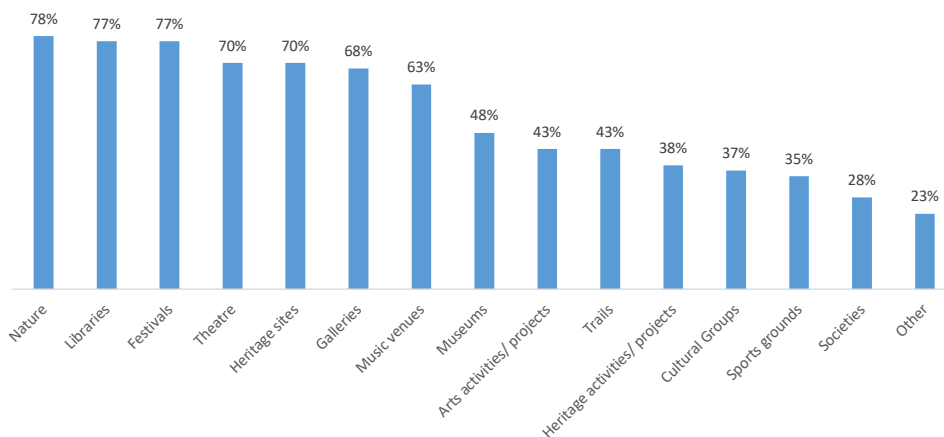
Survey Analysis

Understanding Cultural Touchpoints

Respondents were asked to identify the different types of cultural activities that they engage in regularly. This identified **nature** and **libraries** as key cultural touchpoints. Both are characterised by free and open access, and as appealing to a broad spectrum of interests. In addition, participation in **festivals** was high, reinforcing it as a strength of culture in County Kilkenny.

The results displayed a **contrast** between what respondents said and what they do – respondents focused their analysis of cultural strengths, weaknesses and opportunities mainly on built heritage, whereas they actually engaged in nature, libraries and arts activities on a regular basis.

Q.8 Which of the following (if any) cultural activities do you regularly engage in?



Emerging Thoughts

The public survey informed the following initial observations.

- There is a great appreciation of the range and diversity of Kilkenny's culture, complementing the findings of the pop-up events.
- The questions around County Kilkenny's distinctive cultural identity and recommendations for a visitor on a cultural day out were both dominated by responses relating to built heritage.
- The concerns raised by respondents mainly focused on two things – resources, funding and accessibility from the perspective of the cultural sector, and marketing and information from the public perspective.
- The potential opportunities for County Kilkenny's culture looked to build on core traditions, such as customs, storytelling, folklore, local history and Irish language.
- There was a contrast between what respondents said and what they do – respondents focused their analysis of cultural strengths, weaknesses and opportunities mainly on built heritage, whereas they actually engaged in nature, libraries and arts activities on a regular basis.

"What makes County Kilkenny culturally distinctive from other places in Ireland is that there is something for everyone from young to old and everyone is welcome to attend."

"There is a great sense of pride in Kilkenny's culture... it is recognised that it contributes to our economy, sense of place and identity."



APPENDIX

Survey Results

Survey Results

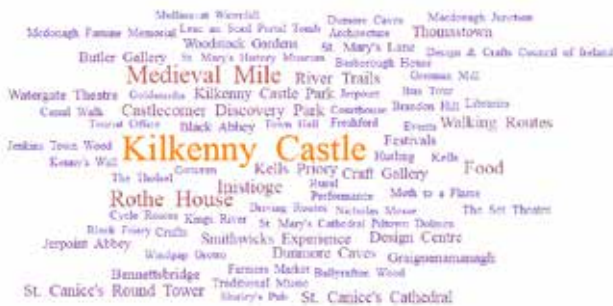
Q.1 What is the best thing about culture in Kilkenny?



Q.2 What makes culture in Kilkenny distinctive?



Q.3 What would you recommend for a cultural day out?

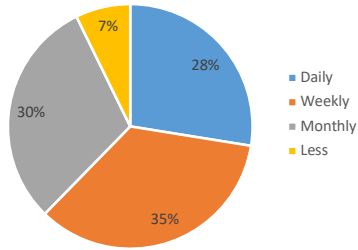


Q.4 What do you think are the most important issues?

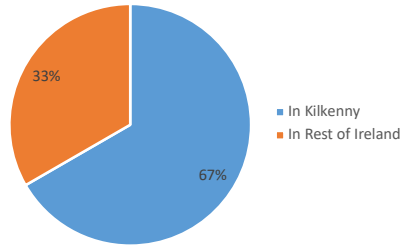


Survey Results

Q.5 How often do you engage in cultural activities?



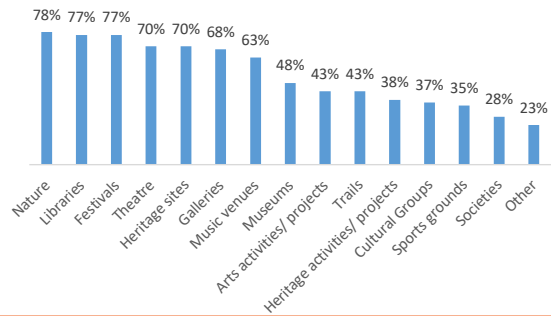
Q.6 Where do you most often engage in cultural activities?



Q.7 Are there under represented elements of Kilkenny's culture?

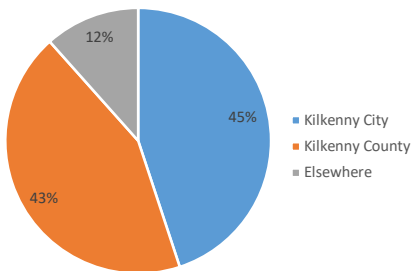


Q.8 Which of these cultural activities do you engage in often?

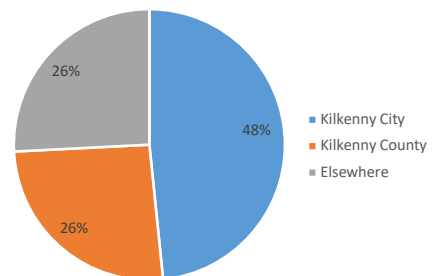


Survey Results

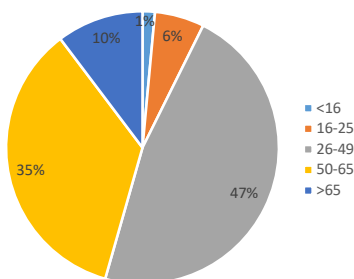
Q.9 Where do you live?



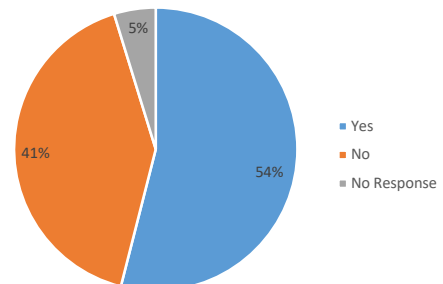
Q.10 Where do you work?



Q.11 What is your age group?



Q.12 Are you involved in culture in a job / volunteer role?



Appendix D

List of Consultees

List of Consultees

The following is a list of consultees who participated in the stakeholder workshop and public pop-up events. Please note that this list is not exhaustive, as stakeholder information was not collected in all instances. In particular, stakeholder names were not collected in the public survey.

Stakeholder Workshop Newpark Hotel, Kilkenny City 26th May 2017

- Aisling Hayes, Kilkenny County Council / Kilkenny Tourism
- Anna O'Sullivan, Butler Gallery
- Bernadette Roberts, Heritage & Arts, Kilkenny County Council
- Brian Tyrrel, Kilkenny County Council
- Brid Hynes, Kilkenny County Council Business Support Unit
- Caitriona Kenneally, Kilkenny County Library
- Catherine Madders, Kilkenny Library Service
- Christopher O'Keefe, M.CO
- Damien Brett, Kilkenny County Library
- Dearbhala Legwidge, Heritage Office, Kilkenny County Council
- Declan MacAuley, Kilkenny Library Service
- Dorothy O'Reilly, Kilkenny County Library
- Evelyn Graham, Kilkenny County Council
- Francis Coady, Kilkenny County Council
- Gretta Murphy, Kilkenny County Childcare Committee
- James Eogan, Transport Infrastructure Ireland
- Joseph Coyne, Kilkenny Library Service
- Josephine Coyne, Library Service, Kilkenny County Council
- Kathe Carroll, Foróige Drum / Comhairle na nÓg
- Lindsey Buttery, Kilkenny County Council Community & Culture
- Majella Byrne, Kilkenny County Library

- Margaret Maxwell, Kilkenny Education Centre
- Margo McGrath, Kilkenny Library Service
- Mary Butler, Arts Office, Kilkenny County Council
- Mary Egan, Tullahought Community Development
- Sadhbh O'Brien, M.CO
- Simon Gregory, M.CO
- Simon Walton, Kilkenny County Council
- Stephen O'Connor, Kilkenny County Council
- Tony Patterson, Kilkenny Education Centre
- Trish Nolan, Kilkenny Library Service
- Vincent Dempsey, Barnstorm Theatre
- Vincent McGrath, M.CO

Pop Up Events Rivercourt Hotel, Kilkenny City Ferrybank Library, Ferrybank Castlecomer Library, Castlecomer 14th & 21st June 2017

- Alice Bennett, KCAT Arts Centre
- Ann Tierney
- Anna Galligan, Barnstorm Theatre
- Breda Lynch, Office of Public Works
- Carmel Cummins, Ciorcail Comhrá
- Catherine Barron
- Christine Coman, Irish Lebanese Cultural Foundation
- Christine Scarry, Red Alchemy Theatre
- Ciara Ni Mháirtín
- Cllr. Fidelis Doherty, Kilkenny County Council
- Cllr. Pat Dunphy, Kilkenny County Council
- Declan Murphy, An Taisce
- Errol Delaney, Castlecomer Discovery Park
- Fiona Maher
- Frances O'Donohoe, Charity Knitters / Ciorcail Comhrá
- Garry McHugh, Young Irish Film Makers

- Guy Jones, Irish Lebanese Cultural Foundation
- Helen Curtin, Young Irish Film Makers
- Hollie Kearns, Irish Walled Towns Network / Heritage Council
- Kathy Purcell, Castlecomer Discovery Park
- Lucia Ruane
- Malcolm Noonan, Kilkenny Heritage Council / Kilkenny County Council
- Mary Clarke, Kilkenny Education Centre
- Mary Morrissey, Castlecomer Library
- Mary Whelan, DCCol
- Maurice Shortall, Kilkenny County Council
- Michael Somers, Teagasc
- Micheál Ó Mháirtín, Ciorcail Comhrá
- Nora Ni Eacha, An Taisce
- Peter Bluett, Keep Kilkenny Beautiful
- Philip Hardy, Barnstorm Theatre
- Sinéad Lucey, Artist
- Sophie Jones, Irish Lebanese Cultural Foundation
- Susan Holland, DCCol
- Tom Brett, Tom Brett Photography
- Trish Duffe, Rothe House

List of Consultees

Heritage Forum

The Heritage Forum is a non-statutory advisory group established by Kilkenny County Council to provide advice to the Council on the preparation and implementation of a County Heritage Plan and County Biodiversity Plan.

The membership of the County Kilkenny Heritage Forum is drawn from communities, elected representatives, agencies and groups involved in aspects of built, natural and cultural heritage in County Kilkenny. Current membership is shown in below. A review of membership will be undertaken during the lifetime of the Heritage Plan.

Kilkenny Heritage Forum Members

- Councillor Malcolm Noonan
- Jimi Conroy, National Parks & Wildlife Service
- David McInerney, Inland Fisheries Ireland
- Tomás Turley, Teagasc
- Michael Power, Coillte
- Pat Durcan, Birdwatch Ireland
- Roger Goodwillie, BSBI Recorder
- Colm Murray, Heritage Council
- Mark Keegan, National Monuments Service
- James Eogan, Transport Infrastructure Ireland
- Dr. Declan Murphy, An Taisce
- Erroll Delaney, Castlecómer Discovery Park
- Mary Egan, Tullahought Community Development
- Patrick Lydon, Butler Gallery
- Jim Walsh, Éigse Sliabh Rua
- Tony Patterson, Kilkenny Education Centre
- Martin Rafter, County Kilkenny Leader Partnership
- Maura Hickey, Kilkenny Tourism/Kilkenny County Council

- Francis Coady, Conservation Officer, Kilkenny County Council
- Evelyn Graham, Project Architect, Kilkenny County Council
- Denis Malone, Senior Planner, Kilkenny County Council
- Frank Stafford, Senior Executive Engineer, Kilkenny County Council
- Claire Goodwin, Landscape Architect, Kilkenny County Council
- Brian Tyrrell, Senior Executive Officer, Kilkenny County Council
- Declan MacAuley, Executive Librarian, Kilkenny County Council
- Mary Butler, Arts Officer, Kilkenny County Council

Appendix E

Acknowledgement of Legislative Requirements

Acknowledgement of Legislative Requirements

The County Kilkenny Cultural Strategy delivers upon the following legislative requirements:

Arts

The Local Authority is required by the Arts Act 2003 to prepare and implement an arts plan:

6.(1) A local authority shall, for the purposes of section 67 of the Act of 2001, prepare and implement plans for the development of the arts within its functional area and shall, in so doing, take account of policies of the Government in relation to the arts.

For the full text, please refer to:

<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2003/act/24/section/6/enacted/en/html#sec6>

Heritage

The Kilkenny County Development Plan 2014-2020 includes an objective "To prepare and implement, in partnership with the Kilkenny Heritage Forum and all relevant stakeholders, a County Heritage Plan and County Biodiversity Plan" (ref: Objective 8.1).

The National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021 requires Local Authorities to review and update their Biodiversity and Heritage Action Plans (ref: Action no. 1.1.5).

For a complete list of relevant legislation for heritage (built, natural and cultural) and biodiversity, please refer to: <http://kilkennyheritage.ie/legislation/>

Libraries

A library development programme is a legislative requirement under section 78 of the Local Government Act, 2001. This plan is also informed by the national library strategy – Opportunities for All – the public library as a catalyst for economic, social and cultural development.

Appendix F

Library Performance



Over **12,000** people in Kilkenny are members of a library



Over **285,000** visits were recorded across the 8 branch network and mobile library service in 2017



Over **338,000** items were borrowed in 2017



31,151 people used the library ICT facilities in 2017



27,576 people used online library services in Kilkenny in 2017

Appendix G

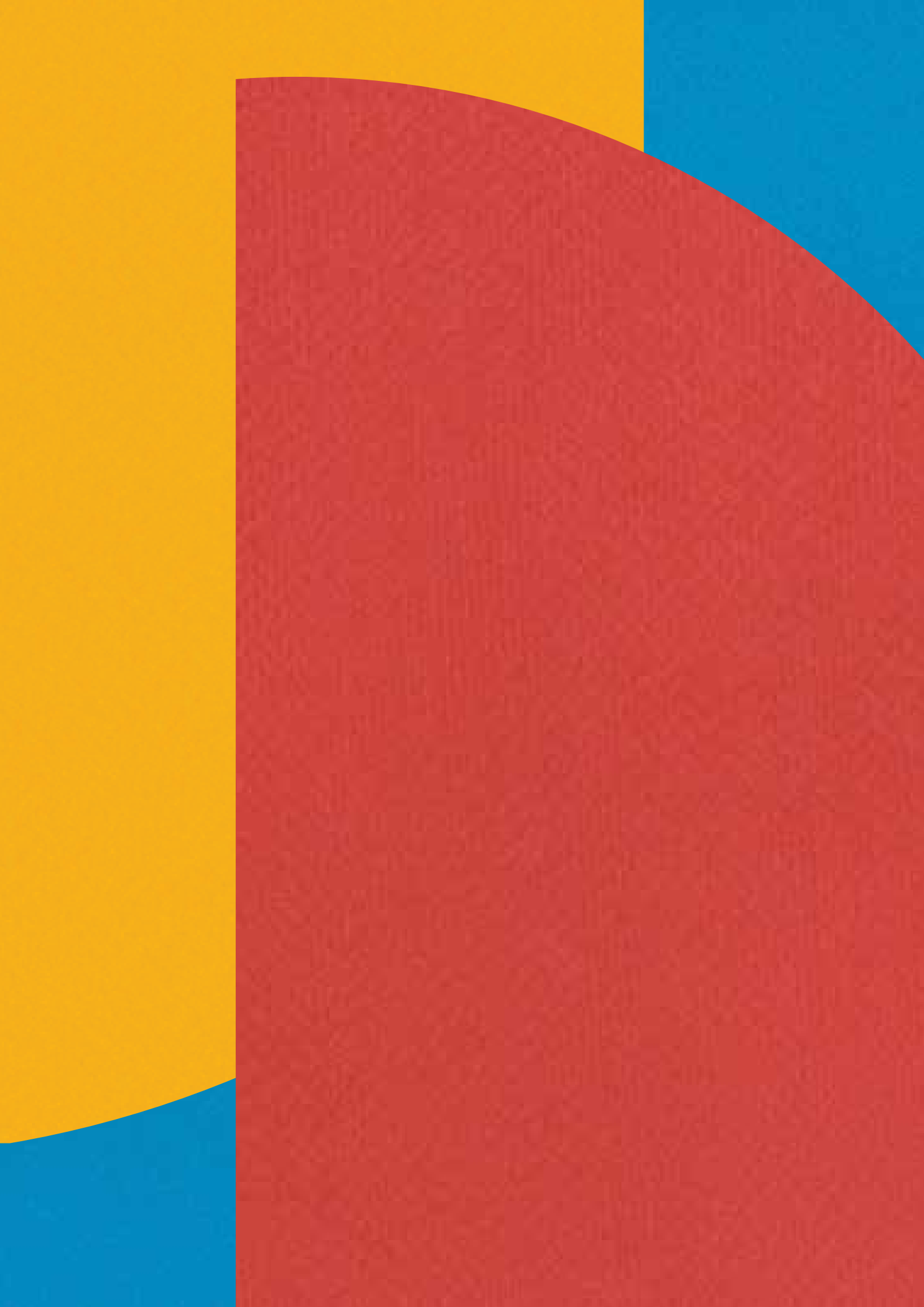
Appropriate Assessment

Appropriate Assessment

The Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) as transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 requires that all plans and projects must be screened for potential impact on Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or Special Protection Areas (SPAs).

Screening aims to establish whether a full Appropriate Assessment (AA) under Article 6 of the Directive is required. Scott Cawley (Consulting Ecologists) were appointed by Kilkenny County Council to analyse the Kilkenny County Council Cultural Strategy (Arts, Heritage, Library) 2018-2022 to see if it required an AA and prepare an AA Screening Report.

It was concluded that the strategy would have no significant adverse impact on Natura 2000 sites and that there is no requirement to carry out further stages of Appropriate Assessment on the Strategy.





Heritage Office

Dearbhala Ledwidge, *Heritage Officer*

Kilkenny County Council

Johns Green House, Johns Green, Kilkenny

Phone: 056 779 4925

Email: dearbhala.ledwidge@kilkennycoco.ie / heritage@kilkennycoco.ie

www.kilkennyheritage.ie

Library Service

Josephine Coyne, *County Librarian*

Kilkenny County Council Library Service

Johns Green House, Johns Green, Kilkenny

Phone: 056 779 4161

Email: josephine.coyne@kilkennylibrary.ie

www.kilkennylibrary.ie

Arts Office

Mary Butler, *Arts Officer*

Kilkenny County Council

5 Dean Street, Kilkenny

Phone: 056 779 4138

Email: mary.butler@kilkennycoco.ie

www.kilkennycoco.ie/eng/Services/Arts/

