



# Kilrush Town Team

## Clare County Development Plan 2022-2028 Review

**To:** Helen Quinn, A/Senior Planner  
**Subject:** Development Plan Review  
**Via email:** forwardplan@clarecoco.ie



**Re:** Pre-draft Submissions in preparation of Draft County Development Plan 2022-2028

**Date:** Monday 16th November 2020

### 1. Introduction:

Kilrush possesses a host of voluntary, community and enterprise development organisations who work tirelessly to support, promote and enhance social, cultural and economic development and services in Kilrush and its surrounding hinterlands. In an effort to create a cohesive and dedicated delivery structure as well as a coordinated approach to funding, Kilrush Town Team was established in 2018. In the preparation of the Clare County Development Plan 2022-2028, Kilrush Town Team submits the following comments and observations under a number of strategic themes outlined below. In addition, please consider the below reference documents:

- a. Kilrush Community Strategy, 2020
- b. Kilrush Tourism Destination Development Strategy, 2020
- c. Frances Street, Kilrush, Preliminary Public Realm Proposals, July 2015
- d. Clare County Development Plan 2017 – 2023: Volume 3d: West Clare Municipal District: Written Statement and Maps
- e. Cappa Enhancement Plan 2020
- f. Kilrush Signage Plan 2019
- g. County Clare Tourism Strategy 2030
- h. Kilrush Nature & Wildlife Plan 2015 – 2018
- i. Kilrush Town Centre Health Check 2012
- j. Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework
- k. Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland - Rejuvenating Ireland's Small Town Centres
- l. Southern Regional Assembly RSES 2020
- m. Clare Age Friendly Strategy 2018 – 2022
- n. Clare Biodiversity Action Plan 2017 – 2023
- o. Clare Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019 – 2024
- p. European Commission – 'A practical guide for fostering the revitalisation and modernisation of the small retail sector'
- q. Feantsa - 'Filling Vacancies – Vacant Real Estate: Seizing the Opportunity to find Affordable Housing Solutions in Europe'

A key strategic outcome of the *Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework (NPF)* is that of creating enhanced amenities and heritage. The NPF states that "This will ensure that our cities, towns and villages are attractive and can offer a good quality of life. It will require investment in well-designed public realm, which includes public spaces, parks and streets, as well as recreational infrastructure.

The *Regional and Spatial Economic Strategy (RSES)* provides that rural towns and villages function as local drivers for their surrounding areas through well-established economic, administrative and social functions. The RSES specifically references an enhanced role for Kilrush as a Service centre and states that "renewal in our towns and villages will be enabled through....investment in town and village renewal initiatives that improve the capacity, services, environment and liveability of small towns to attract population and enterprise growth"

The *Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023* recognises the importance of supporting, protecting and reinforcing the role of Kilrush as a Service Town, through the careful consolidation and expansion of the town centre. Creating a positive 'sense of place' through good place-making and way-finding is an important element of this.

*Clare Rural Development Strategy, Our Life, Our Home 2026* recognises the economic potential that Tourism can deliver to Rural Clare.

*Kilrush Town Team* outlines a vision statement for Kilrush as follows which should be considered: "Kilrush shall be recognised as a vibrant, living and working community. Kilrush will be a place that people want to live in and to visit, it will be seen increasingly as a destination town with heritage and a heart. Live and work where you are happiest."

## **2. Demographics:**

In order to plan for the future generations, and also consider the current needs of the population, demographics must be reviewed. 2016 Census (CSO) data for Kilrush provides the most recent information and can be summarised below. The data, albeit 4 years outdated, is still relevant. As different age groups possess different needs, this information is important for understanding social and economic development issues, and planning for future services.

- a. 2,719 persons, with 1,303 (48%) being male and 1,416 (52%) being female.
- b. 42% dependant -
  - i. 18% - aged 15 years or younger / 555 persons
  - ii. 24% - aged 65 yrs or older / 583 persons
- c. Household Formation
  - i. 34% - One inhabitant
  - ii. 27% - Two inhabitants
  - iii. 16% - Three inhabitants
  - iv. 13% - Four inhabitants
- d. Civil Status
  - i. 21% Households - married couples + children
  - ii. 15% Households - married couples, no children
  - iii. 12% Households - single-parent homes
  - iv. 32% of the population are married
  - v. 14% - widowed, separated, or divorced

## **3. Health and Wellbeing:**

Considering 2016 Census (CSO) data:

- a. 80% of the population describe their health as being good or very good
- b. 3% describe their health as bad or very bad
- c. 23% (or 617 persons) of the population are classified as having a disability of some sort, of which more than half are female.

The Pobal Deprivation index allows for analysis of relative rates of deprivation and affluence across the entire country. A national average of zero (0) is set, and a range is developed from minus 40 (most disadvantaged) to plus 40 (most affluent). Notably, Kilrush has been in a steady decline in the deprivation scores for the area over the last three census waves. In Census 2006, Kilrush Urban scored -9.9, placing it in the 'marginally below average' category of deprivation. This decreased further to -10.1 in Census 2011, taking it into the 'disadvantaged' category. The most recent Census 2016 results have indicated a further decline, with Kilrush Urban now scoring -13.9. This is a worrying trend that has seen Kilrush fall substantially below the national average. Kilrush Town Team view this as a significant metric to measure success. *Will the Clare County Development 2017 - 2023 have a positive or negative impact on these metrics?* A change of tack is required if further decline is apparent during the 2021 Census.

#### **4. Connecting Communities:**

- a. As one of the main service towns in Clare, Kilrush holds administrative functions and provides services and amenities to its residents and those from surrounding areas. This must be protected in order to reinforce the role Kilrush has as a primary service area for West Clare - enterprise, industry, educational, primary health care and the social needs of the West Clare area must be factored.
- b. Kilrush Town Team recognises the need for structured leadership teams within communities in the form of 'Community Councils' and 'Town Team'. Resources should be allocated to enable the formation and training, but also the long-term sustainability. A forum should be established, similar to the Clare Rural Development Forum, to ensure the needs of the communities are communicated to all Directors of Services and relevant Executives.
- c. Local Communities: The Greenway linking communities in Kilrush, Moyasta and Kilkee must be prioritised in the short term. The opportunity is huge to link these communities, both from an enterprise, tourism and social perspective. The successful implementation of the Greenway also provides accessibility to the Loophead Peninsula, Kilrush, Killimer and the county of Kerry via Shannon Ferries. Further capital investment is required to facilitate safe cycle and walkway infrastructure to compliment the offering.
- d. Maritime Communities: Linking maritime communities on the Shannon Estuary should be facilitated by the provision of marine infrastructure on the Clare shores of the Shannon Estuary, requires consideration, to possibly include slipways that facilitate safe recreational craft launching and pontoons/moorings that can be accessed at most levels of tide. The EU proposal for Motorways of the Sea (MoS) ([https://ec.europa.eu/transport/modes/maritime/motorways\\_sea\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/transport/modes/maritime/motorways_sea_en)) should be explored in conjunction with the Strategic Integrated Framework Plan (SIFP) for the Shannon Estuary. For example, there is little to no safe slipway to launch a 6-metre vessel via trailer outside the commercial activities of Shannon Ferry Group, Killimer and Kilrush Marina. A comprehensive integrated approach must be considered to promote and drive recreational and commercial maritime activities while harnessing the natural assets, such as Scatterry Island and deep-waters of the Shannon Estuary.
- e. Further examination and effort is required to progress the proposed Kilrush Primary Health Care Centre, including site selection.

#### **5. Enterprise:**

- a. A focus should be put on supporting the renewable energy sector within the Shannon Estuary, and wider west coast. The Shannon Estuary has the potential to produce over 100Gw from its tidal flows, supported by vast wind energy generating potential west of Loop Head. Kilrush, Moneypoint Power Station and the lower Shannon Estuary may act as a best-in-class service centre for this industry.
- b. Further consideration is required to promote Kilrush as a Manufacturing Hub. Many businesses have invested significantly in infrastructure and facilities near and on Kilrush Business Park, which has been critical due to reduction in output/employment at Moneypoint Power Station. Various land banks to the North of Kilrush, on the Cooraclare Road may be considered for further development with the support of EI/IDA. A 'Kilrush Town Investment Prospectus' could be devised.
- c. Develop an evening trade / entertainment plan for the town with the aim of achieving Purple Flag status. This will require collaboration between retailers, hospitality providers, and Clare County Council.
- d. Support the promotion of local produce through the creation of a dedicated space for local arts / crafts to be displayed and marketed locally through pop-up shop initiatives or co-op craft stores.
- e. Support the efforts to address vacant retail space, possibly in the form of adapted rate reduction or other incentives. Significant attention must be drawn to structural vacancy, whereby properties are vacant, but not on the market.

- f. Further participation is required with bodies such as the Western Development Commission and Grow Remote to leverage and expand Clare's Digital Hub offering. A specific, Clare Hub Business Development Manager role should be considered to explore revenue growth opportunities as well as access relevant EU funding.
- g. As a result of the increased trend in remote working and the impact of COVID-19, there is an opportunity to attract families to relocate to Kilrush. A commitment is required to the expansion of Kilrush Digital Hub's offering as well as provision for upgraded broadband, especially in the Kilrush Rural ED.

## **6. Tourism:**

- a. Resource and thought should be allocated to promoting Kilrush as a Destination Town and a gateway to the Loophead Peninsula. Visitors should be further captured while travelling the 'Dingle to Doolin' route.
- b. The 'Kilrush Town Investment Prospectus' would highlight the market need for an enhanced and increased visitor accommodation offering.
- c. Tourism should be used as a conduit through which the first steps of the regeneration / reimagining of Kilrush can be established. In recent years, the emergence of Scatterry Island Tours, the West Coast Aqua Park along with other established tourism businesses like the Dolphin Discovery and Vandeleur Gardens have delivered a huge number of visitors to the town and it has generated a positive attitude amongst the local population. Tourism has the ability to deliver quick, positive "wins" which may serve as a catalyst for future regeneration and development.

## **7. Public Realm & Amenity:**

- a. To facilitate the linking of Kilrush Market Square to the Vandeleur Walled Gardens, Kilrush Marina and Cappa via an enhanced public realm offering. This must be carried out in a manner that is sympathetic to the existing historical fabric and contributes to the green infrastructure network, such as the proposed Greenway and Wood River Walk.
- b. Resources are required to address both the public realm (the nature of spaces and routes) and the hard and soft landscape (landform, features and ecologies) on Market Square and Frances Street, Kilrush.
- c. Priorities for the public realm in the overall Kilrush Town settlement are:
  - i. To highlight unique heritage or other features
  - ii. To enhance the sense of place at gateways and key junctions
  - iii. To form transition areas on approach roads, both to calm traffic and enhance the arrival to Kilrush
- d. This is directly related to National Strategic Outcomes in the National Planning Framework - NS07 Enhanced Amenity and Heritage. 'It is intended that future development in Kilrush will include for enhanced public realm development in the town centre, building on the existing network of paths and walks'.
- e. Focus should be put on areas on which the Vacant Site Levy may apply, in particular areas that are noted Opportunity Site (OP) in the Kilrush Settlement Map (Jan 2017). The process must be examined to effectively implement the levy.
- f. Further review of Opportunity Sites (OP) in the Kilrush Settlement Map (Jan 2017) should be considered. 'Mixed use' zoning should be considered for some site which allows for a mix of uses such as residential, hotels, medical facilities, offices, theatres, galleries, retail, bars and leisure/tourism related uses.
- g. Develop the water-based amenities at Cappa and Alyevaroo, to promote accessibility to the beach for recreation, and develop the use of the pier to its full commercial and recreational potential for visiting boats.
- h. Undertake a review of car parking throughout the town, notably the extensive areas of parking on Frances Street and opportunity for the addition of car parking in Cappa to support increased recreational usage.

- i. Seek support for the development of a Youth Café or Youth Innovation Centre. This provides opportunity for cross-community cooperation involving the youth clubs, Men's Shed in the renovating of a café youth meeting space.
- j. Consider a Town Centre Renewal Pilot Programme focusing on town centre mixed use commercial/residential properties. This would showcase best practice views from an architectural, energy conservation/efficiency and planning perspective.
- k. Identify and allocate resources to develop a multi-functional cultural centre to support the growing needs of West Clare.
- l. Expand on the offering provided by the Kilrush Sports Complex Astro-Turf Pitch to create a Kilrush Sports Hub.
- m. Community Park - support the development and site selection of a park within Kilrush Town, featuring a playground, age-friendly amenities, skatepark as well as green open areas for multifunctional use. This will enable low participation groups and disadvantaged populations to partake in sport and physical activity.
- n. The proper management of water and wastewater is a critical issue to the future growth and development of the settlements of Kilrush and Cappa.
- o. Kilrush is well served by national (N67 and N68), regional (R483, R473) and local routes which link the town to the Ennis, Loop Head, the rest of County Clare and the Mid-West region. In addition, the Killimer-Tarbert car ferry, located 10km from Kilrush, provides an efficient and swift link to the road network along the Shannon estuary and onwards to Limerick, Kerry and Cork. A commitment is required to facilitate the upgrade of road infrastructure in order to support West Clare communities.

In addition, Clare County Council should investigate the concept of Future Design (FD) at decision making level - a movement among Japanese researchers and stakeholders, asks the following question: *What types of social systems are necessary if we are to leave future generations sustainable environments and societies?* The concept explores the idea that if there is no one to protect the interests of future generations, then designate people to 'take on the role of future generations' and have them stand in for future generations.

Kilrush is at a turning point and the key strategic decisions over the next six years will likely reap benefit for decades to come. Kilrush Town Team welcomes the opportunity to input on key priority issues for the area and we believe the items outlined above are consistent with national and regional policies, guidelines and objectives.

We look forward to the next stage of the Clare County Development Plan 2022-2028 Review.

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**Charlie Glynn**  
Chairperson, Kilrush Town Team



