

# APPENDIX 3

## OPEN SPACE AND OUTDOOR RECREATION STRATEGY



OUR KILDARE  
OUR PLAN



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## 1. Introduction

The Covid pandemic highlighted the critical importance of open space and outdoor recreation to the collective wellbeing of society. To have accessible and usable outdoor amenity space close to our homes and in our communities is recognised and appreciated as a fundamental component to healthy placemaking and a healthy lifestyle. With increased populations in urban settings, there is a need to integrate good quality open spaces into the development of towns in order to provide access to natural environments and appropriate amenities that are separated from vehicle movements and do not depend on travel out of towns.

County Kildare has a wealth of open spaces and natural amenities; from the vast plains of the Curragh and the Bog of Allen, to the Royal and Grand canals, the Barrow and Liffey valleys, demesne parklands, forests, sporting grounds, parks, playgrounds, blueways and greenways. These amenities facilitate recreation and play, as well as supporting local tourism and the economy.

As the population of County Kildare continues to grow, the demand for open space and recreational amenity will become more acute. The provision of open space into the future, particularly in our towns and villages, must be carefully considered to ensure there is an adequate variety and types of open space to meet the requirements of our citizens and to ensure that high quality public open space is delivered at the right time and in the right location.

### 1.1 Importance of Open Space

Open space is an essential component of the fabric of our environment which brings social, environmental, economic and health benefits to the communities of County Kildare. It also plays an important role in climate change adaptation and mitigation.

The benefit of preparing an open space strategy is the protection and creation of a network of high-quality open spaces, which will yield further benefits for the people, communities and environment of County Kildare.

For the purposes of this strategy, 'Open Space' is defined as space which is accessible to the public, is open-air and may be in public or private ownership (when accessible to the public), the primary use of which is for outdoor recreation and amenity.



## 1.2 Kildare in Context

Over the last two decades, County Kildare has experienced the second fastest rate of population growth in the country<sup>1</sup>. At the 2016 Census, County Kildare had a population of 222,504 making it the fifth largest local authority in the state.

The 2016 CSO profile of the County tells us:

- 67.6% of the county's population live in towns and 32.4% live in rural areas.
- In terms of age breakdown:
  - 8% of the County's population is of pre-school age (0-4 years old).
  - 13% is of primary school-going age (between 5-12 years old).
  - 7% is of secondary school going age (13-17 years old)
  - 8% is of third-level age (18-24 years old).
  - 54% is between 25 and 64 years old.
  - 10% is 65 years old and over.
- 12.5% of the County's population stated they had a disability.

The demographic trend indicates that the County has grown by more than 71% in the last 20 years and now has the youngest population in the state. In addition, the 65 and over age cohort is also increasing.

This has implications for the nature and type of open space and amenity provision required throughout the County, to cater for differing ages and ability.

## 1.3 Strategy Goals

The key goals of this Strategy are:




- To create a vision for open space and outdoor recreation provision in County Kildare
- To determine the supply and demand for open spaces and recreational amenity
- To assess the play and recreation needs of a growing population across all age groups
- To identify existing deficiencies and future opportunities
- To optimise natural resources and green infrastructure, with a focus on biodiversity and climate action
- To consider a hierarchy of different open spaces at the county and Municipal District level, and
- To guide the future provision of open spaces throughout County Kildare, by informing policies and objectives in the Kildare County Development Plan and Local Area Plans.

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<sup>1</sup> Intercensal population growth shows an increase of 5.5% between 2011 and 2016, and by 16.3% between 2006 and 2011.

## 1.4 Vision, Mission and Values

Through a detailed public consultation process (which is discussed further in Section 3 of this report) the following vision, mission and values have been established to guide the preparation of this strategy.

<p><b>Vision</b></p> 	<p>To advance a network of accessible, inclusive and safe open spaces in order to sustain the recreational, environmental, health and wellbeing needs of the community for current and future generations.</p>
<p><b>Mission</b></p> 	<p>To maintain, upgrade and facilitate the delivery of quality public open spaces in a sustainable manner throughout County Kildare.</p>
<p><b>Values</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration and innovation</li> <li>• Accessibility and connectivity</li> <li>• Conservation and enhancement of biodiversity and heritage assets</li> <li>• Climate action adaptation</li> <li>• Healthy placemaking</li> <li>• Right place, right use</li> </ul>

## 2. Policy Context

In carrying out research for the Open Space and Outdoor Recreation Strategy, a wide range of policy guidance and legislation was researched, at an international, national, regional and local level.

This open space strategy has been prepared to inform local planning policy to be contained in the Kildare County Development Plan and the County's Local Area Plans. Regard is had to the planning policy hierarchy, to other policies of the Government and to local policy documents.

### 2.1 National and Regional Planning Policy Context

#### Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework (NPF) is the Government's high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth of the Country's population by one million people to the year 2040. One of the ten strategic outcomes on which the NPF is based is 'enhanced amenity and heritage'.

The NPF focuses on People, Homes and Communities and the importance of quality of life for the country's citizens. The framework acknowledges that this is influenced by many factors including natural and living environment, health and leisure & social interactions.



#### National Development Plan 2021-2030

The NDP sets out the investment priorities that underpin the implementation of the National Planning Framework. It is a blueprint, setting out a strategic framework for public capital investment over the next ten years with a particular focus, alongside the underpinning of the NPF, on the achievement of meeting Ireland's infrastructure and investment needs. The NDP includes Strategic Investment Priorities in relation to delivering enhanced amenity and heritage, for example, investing in national parks, enhancing sporting facilities and recreation.

#### Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) is a settlement and economic growth strategy that seeks to realise the National Planning Framework at a regional level. The Strategy is based on 3 key principles:

- Healthy Placemaking
- Climate Action
- Economic Opportunity

The RSES has set out a healthy placemaking strategy which seeks to protect and enhance the unique identity and character of places and to facilitate improvements to human wellbeing and the quality of life that comes from the interaction of people and their environment. The strategy advises that a key element in healthy placemaking is to prioritise cycling and walking as alternative modes of transport. It is acknowledged that greenways and cycleways play an important part in creating attractive places and opportunities to being physically active.



## 2.2 Policies of the Government

The open space strategy not only affects planning policy but is affected by many streams of government policy in relation to health and wellbeing, sports, disability inclusion, biodiversity and play, for example. The following strategies and frameworks have been reviewed in the context of preparing this strategy.

- Healthy Ireland: A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing (2013-2025) and accompanying National Physical Activity Plan
- National Sports Policy 2018-2027
- Strategy for the Future Development of National & Regional Greenways 2018
- National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021
- National Outdoor Recreation Plan (2017-2021)
- National Biodiversity Plan 2017-2021
- Ready Steady Play: National Play Policy (2004-2008)
- Teenspace: National Recreation Strategy (2007)

## 2.3 Local Policy

Kildare County Council has in place a number of plans and strategies to shape the development and plan for the future of County Kildare. The policy documents relevant to this strategy are:

- Kildare County Council Corporate Plan 2019-2024
- Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023
- Kildare Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021 (under review)
- Kildare Climate Change Adaptation Plan 2019-2024
- Kildare Play Strategy 2018-2028
- County Kildare Access Strategy 2020-2022
- Kildare Age Friendly County Strategy 2019-2021
- Kildare Open Space Strategy 2011



## 2.4 Open space and recreational standards

The principal documents reviewed in terms of open space standards are:

- a. Department of Environment (1987) 'A Policy for the provision and maintenance of Parks, Open Spaces and Outdoor Recreation Areas by Local Authorities'
- b. Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (2009) 'Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, Guidelines for Planning Authorities'.
- c. Field in Trust (England) (2015) 'Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play Beyond the Six Acre Standard'.

Kildare County Council's current open space policy, as contained in the County Development Plan 2017-2023, is based on the Department of Environment's 1987 standard, i.e. 2 hectares per 1000 people; for populations of 10,000 there should be a neighbourhood park (16 hectares), two local parks (2 hectares each) and open spaces associated with housing developments.

New residential developments are considered in accordance with County Development Plan policy and the Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009), which constitute Section 28 Guidelines.

It is considered that the Field in Trust (2015) document is a good example of a contemporary review and application of open space provision, particularly relating to outdoor sports and play facilities.

## 2.5 Guidelines

In the absence of Irish guidance on the preparation of Open Space strategies, research was carried out regarding other jurisdictions. Guidance from Australia<sup>2</sup> and the UK<sup>3</sup> for example have similar staged approaches and agree that good quality open spaces contribute to the health and wellbeing of communities, benefit the local environment and biodiversity and enhance the local economy.

In preparing this Open Space Strategy, a staged approach was taken which includes reviewing the policy context, consulting with the community, auditing existing facilities and proposing actions to address deficiencies and harness opportunities.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/sport-and-recreation/facility-management/public-open-space/public-open-space-strategy-guide-for-local-governments>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/asset/document/open-space-strategies.pdf>

## 3. Public Consultation

### 3.1 Introduction

An extensive public consultation programme was carried out in 2020 to gain an understanding of the key issues which local communities, public sector agencies, non-governmental agencies and facility providers consider important for County Kildare. The output from this public consultation has informed the formulation of the open space strategy.

### 3.2 Public Consultation Programme

The public consultation programme consisted of the following:

- An Issues Paper was published which noted the population statistics of the county, what the strategy hoped to achieve and posed a number of questions about Kildare's strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. A notice was published in The Leinster Leader on the 15<sup>th</sup> September 2020 notifying the public of the Council's intention to prepare an Open Space and Outdoor Recreation Strategy and inviting submissions over a period of 5 weeks. 57 submissions were received.
- A User Satisfaction Survey was published online. This was used to identify amenities that the public are using and ultimately to determine the following: Usage (frequency), Access (transport/ distance/ time), Facilities (existing and additional), Experiences (safety/security/ accessibility) and participant profile (Area/ Age/ gender). 750 members of the public completed the online survey.
- 9 no. online independently facilitated workshops were held with stakeholders including the Elected Members and staff of Kildare County Council, Comhairle na nÓg/Kildare Youth Services, State and semi-state agencies, and the Kildare PPN. Over 100 people took part in these targeted workshops.
- A targeted questionnaire tailored for (i) Sports and recreational clubs, and (ii) Schools and Universities was circulated to members of the Sports Partnership / Parks Department database. Responses were received from 74 no. Sports Clubs and 26 no. schools

### 3.3 Outcome of Consultation

#### Submissions received to the Issues Paper

57 no. submissions were received from a wide variety of groups across society, including access groups, sports clubs, Tidy Towns groups, resident's associations, Elected Members and citizens across the county.

The issues and common themes raised in the submissions refer to:

- Benefits of open space and recreational facilities
- Biodiversity and the environment
- County strengths
- Needs and opportunities
- Movement and connectivity
- Access for all
- Teens and young people
- Antisocial behaviour
- Economic development and tourism
- Forward planning and new developments.
- Communication
- Funding
- Impacts of Covid



The submissions raised a variety of issues around the provision and quality of open space across the county, and highlighted deficiencies in public open space and recreation provision as well as opportunities for new potential projects and actions.

### Results of User Satisfaction Survey

Between the 10th of September and the 22nd October, an online User Satisfaction Survey was published on the Kildare Consult portal. 735 surveys were completed by members of the public.

In summary, 67% of the submissions were received from the 25-49 age cohort with a low response rate of 7.9% from the 0-24 age groups. Of the 735 surveys received, the majority of the respondents (81%) indicated that they lived in an urban area. Newbridge had the biggest representation, with 18.2% of all responses.

When asked what their favourite local park/ outdoor amenity space was, many people indicated that they had two or more favourite places. Respondents listed over 82 different locations within the county. The five most popular destinations were:

- The Royal and Grand Canals (21%)
- Castletown House and Park (14.3%)
- Liffey Linear Park in Newbridge (10%)
- The Curragh (8.3%)
- Donadea Forest (8%)

Some results of note from the survey include:

- 48% of respondents travel to their favourite open space by walking. 42% travel by car.
- Walking was the most common activity carried out when visiting open space (66%).
- 62% of respondents felt there were inadequate facilities in their local area, in particular for children and young adults.

## Feedback from Workshops

In total, 9 no. facilitated workshops took place in October 2020 as follows:

- Two workshops with the Elected Members of Kildare County Council.
- Two workshops with staff of Kildare County Council.
- Two workshops with stakeholders in open space provision and the community i.e. Waterways Ireland, Coillte, GAA, FAI, IRFU, Tusla, LEADER, An Garda Síochana, NUIM, Dept., of Defence.
- Two workshops with members of the Public Participation Network.
- One workshop with Comhairle na nÓg and Kildare Youth Services.

100 people attended these workshops and their views were recorded. Some of the key findings from these workshops are as follows:

- Accessibility is a significant issue when entering, using and enjoying public open space for people of differing age and physical abilities.
- There is a deficit of facilities for teenagers and young adults across the County. More facilities (with wifi, covered seating) are required.
- More children's playground are required. Celbridge and Newbridge in particular were highlighted.
- Sports clubs are under significant pressure for additional facilities to address increased membership.
- Municipal Sports facilities should be developed in our largest towns and the Council should promote the provision and management of free to use, high-quality, multi-functional, sport and recreational infrastructure across the County. Co-location of facilities should be encouraged for example between schools and sports clubs.
- Biodiversity must be protected and enhanced when designing and implementing public open spaces. Re-wilding open spaces is suggested.
- KCC should have a system in place to avail of funding opportunities, such as Fáilte Ireland, Healthy Ireland, Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, Climate Change Adaptation funding, Just Transition Fund, Development Contributions.
- Existing KCC Parks should be audited and improvements made incrementally in relation to seating, bins, weather shelters, car parking.
- Dog parks are required.
- More partnerships are required to improve access and facilities to non-KCC amenities, e.g. with Department of Education, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Coillte, Carton House, Castletown House, Bord na Mona, farmers/landowners, etc.
- The 'Towards a Liffey Valley Park' Strategy should be implemented.
- Sustainable Urban Drainage (SuDS), attenuation and rain gardens should be incorporated into proposed and existing open spaces.
- The Council should develop an information App in relation to their parks and open spaces.
- Peatlands should be used for recreational purposes (such as Umeras near Monasterevin, Rosebery in Newbridge) and old bog rail lines should be used for passive recreation.
- A municipal forest should be developed.

- Connectivity should be provided between open spaces by promoting walking and cycling routes between open spaces.

### Results of Questionnaires for Clubs and Schools

Questionnaires were submitted from 75 sports clubs and 26 no. schools.

The sports clubs who participated in this questionnaire cover a wide range of activities including soccer, GAA (football, hurling, camogie), rugby, horse riding, pitch and putt, basketball, chess, triathlon, canoe clubs, athletics, etc.

- 65% of responses were from clubs located in an urban area and 35% were from clubs located in rural areas.
- When asked if the club requires additional land/space/facilities, 60% of respondents indicated that they did. The single biggest issue raised by urban clubs was the requirement for additional land, to provide additional playing pitches and facilities for increasing membership.

The schools that participated in the questionnaire were distributed across the County.

- 78% of respondents were Primary Schools.
- 54% of respondents indicated that not all sports are undertaken on the school premises and that they utilised other school sports grounds, hired pitches and public swimming pool.
- 59% of schools indicates that they share their own sports facilities with other groups, such as sports clubs and other schools.

The information gleaned from questionnaires submitted by the sports clubs and schools, as well as the user satisfaction survey, will be utilised by the Kildare Sports Partnership, Parks and Planning Departments in devising future plans and projects.

## 4. Existing Provision

There are many providers / managers of public open space across County Kildare, including Kildare County Council, the Office of Public Works (OPW), Coillte, Waterways Ireland, the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), and private individual landowners.

This Section of the Strategy sets out the exiting open space assets of the County that are accessible to the public, which are illustrated in Map 1.

### 4.1 Parks and Playgrounds

Kildare County Council (KCC) own and manage 25 parks within the county. These vary in size from the Nature Park in Monasterevin (0.1ha) to the Wonderful Barn in Leixlip (20 ha). Many of our parks contain looped and linear walks, playing pitches, playgrounds and outdoor gyms, and cater for passive activities with seating and picnic benches. A full list of KCC Parks is provided below. An audit of these Parks was carried out to inform this strategy and the results are presented in Section 5 of this report.

<b>No</b>	<b>Park Name</b>	<b>Town</b>	<b>Size</b>
1	The People's Park	Athy	2ha / 5 acres
2	Woodstock Castle	Athy	11ha / 27 acres
3	The Fairgreen	Castledermot	1.5ha / 3.5 acres
4	Willowbrook Park	Celbridge	3.25ha / 8 acres
5	Abbeyland Park	Clane	6.4ha / 16 acres
6	Bawnogues	Kilcock	16ha / 40 acres
7	Lourdesville	Kildare	0.5ha/ 1.2acres
8	Moat of Ardscull	Kilmead	1.7ha / 4.2acres
9	Lough na Mona	Leixlip	3.5ha / 8.6 acres
10	Rye River Walk	Leixlip	4.5ha / 10 acres
11	William Roantree Park	Leixlip	0.4ha / 0.8acres
12	The Wonderful Barn	Leixlip	20ha / 50acres
13	St. Catherine's Park	Leixlip	10ha/ 25acres
14	Silleachain Lane	Leixlip	4.3ha / 10.6 acres
15	Leixlip Spa	Leixlip Spa	4.4ha / 11 acres
16	Carton Avenue	Maynooth	3.5ha / 8.5acres
17	Harbour Field	Maynooth	1.7ha / 4acres
18	Pound Park & Little Pound Park	Maynooth	0.5ha / 1.2acres

19	Moone Pocket Park	Moone	0.6ha / 1.5acres
20	Nature Park	Monasterevin	0.1ha / 0.2acre
21	Riverside Park	Monasterevin	0.75ha / 1.8acres
22	The Lakes	Naas	8ha / 20acres
23	Monread Park	Naas	13ha / 32acres
24	Liffey Linear Park	Newbridge	4ha / 10acres
25	Lakeside, Highfield and Dara Park (LHD)	Newbridge	6ha /15acres
		<b>Total</b>	<b>127.6ha/ 315.1acres</b>

There are many other parks, open spaces and recreational facilities in Kildare which are accessible to the public but which are not managed by Kildare County Council. For example, the Office of Public Works manages Castletown House and Parklands in Celbridge, a significant open space amenity to the people of Celbridge and neighbouring communities.

## 4.2 Greenways, Blueways, Peatways and Trails

### Royal Canal Greenway

The Royal Canal Greenway route starts at Maynooth harbour and continues to Kilcock and onwards through counties Meath, Westmeath and Longford. The overall route is 130km long and is a former towpath, the overall length of which features 90 bridges, 33 locks, 17 harbours and four aqueducts. Greenway users can choose to complete the entire 130km flat, off-road trail or explore the shorter designated routes – ranging from 6km to 15km – between the 14 connection access points and towns.

### Grand Canal Greenway

The aspirational Grand Canal Greenway runs through 4 different Local Authorities – Dublin City, South Dublin, Kildare and Offaly. In 2019, a Part 8 Planning Permission was granted in Kildare for a Greenway route along the existing towpath of the Grand Canal from Alymers Bridge to Clonkeen. Design and delivery of Alymers Bridge to Sallins, including a pedestrian bridge at Sallins, is underway through funding received under the 2019–2020 National and Regional Greenway Fund Greenway.

Funding for detailed design for Phase 2 is committed to.

### Barrow Blueway

The Barrow Blueway is being delivered by Kildare County Council in partnership with Waterways Ireland and Laois County Council on the existing towpath, which is a National Waymarked Way, from Lowtown in Kildare, passing through Monasterevin, through Laois and on to Athy. The planned upgrade is to provide a multi-activity 46km off-road, flat accessible, public space and leisure route together with approved paddling trails for on-water access. Work commenced on the Blueway in August 2020, with a proposed completion of late 2022. The provision of the Barrow Blueway will have many positive benefits, including providing a year - round local recreational resource for communities along the route, encouraging them to become more connected, energised and engaged, ultimately providing for healthier communities.

### River Amenity

The Rivers Barrow, Liffey, Rye, Morrell, Lyreen, Figile, Greese and Slate flow through the County and it is acknowledged that there is potential for the development of amenity access and/or a linear park network along their respective riparian corridors, traversing both publicly and privately owned lands while taking due consideration of the potential impact on biodiversity. There is potential for enhancing connectivity and biodiversity values of these linear amenities.

### Peatways

In County Kildare, there is the remnants of the Bog of Allen, some of which is open to public access, such as Lullymore Discovery Park and the Bog of Allen Nature Centre. Across these boglands are former Bord na Mona railway lines and access laneways which local people use to access boglands for walking amenity. There is potential to formalise some of these routes for long distance walking routes or peatways (see Green Infrastructure Strategy in the CDP).

### Trails

Slí na Slainte routes have been developed by the Irish Heart Foundation to encourage and increase the number of people walking by providing an accessible network of walking routes around the country. The Kildare Slí na Slainte routes are shown in Map 1.

## 4.3 The Curragh

The Curragh is the largest area of unenclosed natural grassland commonage in the country and a significant archaeological landscape, encompassing approximately 5,000 acres under the care of the Department of Defence. It provides a hugely valuable amenity area for the surrounding towns of Kildare, Newbridge and Kilcullen as well as its significant rural hinterland. The Curragh Camp and the Curragh Racecourse are located within the plain.





#### 4.4 Woodlands

Coillte manage a number of forest walks and trails across County Kildare at the following locations:

- Mullaghreelan Woods.
- Donadea Woods
- Killinthomas Woods
- Moore Abbey Woods
- Kildoon Woods
- Rahin Wood

Glending Woods, which sits on the border with County Kildare but is located on the edge of Blessington, in County Wicklow is also used by many Kildare people for walking and amenity purposes.

There is potential for enhanced connectivity between woodlands and other open spaces through consultation with the Council, other agencies and landowners.

#### 4.5 Natural and Built Heritage Amenity Sites

The County has many wonderful natural heritage amenity sites which are accessible to the public, some of which are designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA) and/ or Natural Heritage Areas (NHA):

- Pollardstown Fen (SAC, NHA) managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)
- Ballynafagh Lake, (SAC, NHA) managed by NPWS
- Rye Water Valley at Carton, (SAC, NHA)
- River Barrow and Nore (SAC)
- Poulaphouca Reservoir (SPA, NHA)
- The Curragh (NHA)
- Donadea Wood (NHA)
- Grand Canal (NHA)
- Royal Canal (NHA)
- Oakpark (NHA)

There are also a number of privately owned open spaces, historic gardens, recreational facilities and amenities which the public can access. While Kildare has a wealth of large demesne landscapes and “big houses”, many of them and their extensive grounds are privately owned and not accessible to the public. There are some however which have been converted into commercial businesses and some which have been listed as open to the public<sup>4</sup>, such as Kilkea Castle for example.

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<sup>4</sup> Under Section 482 of the taxes Consolidation Act 1997

## 4.6 Racecourses

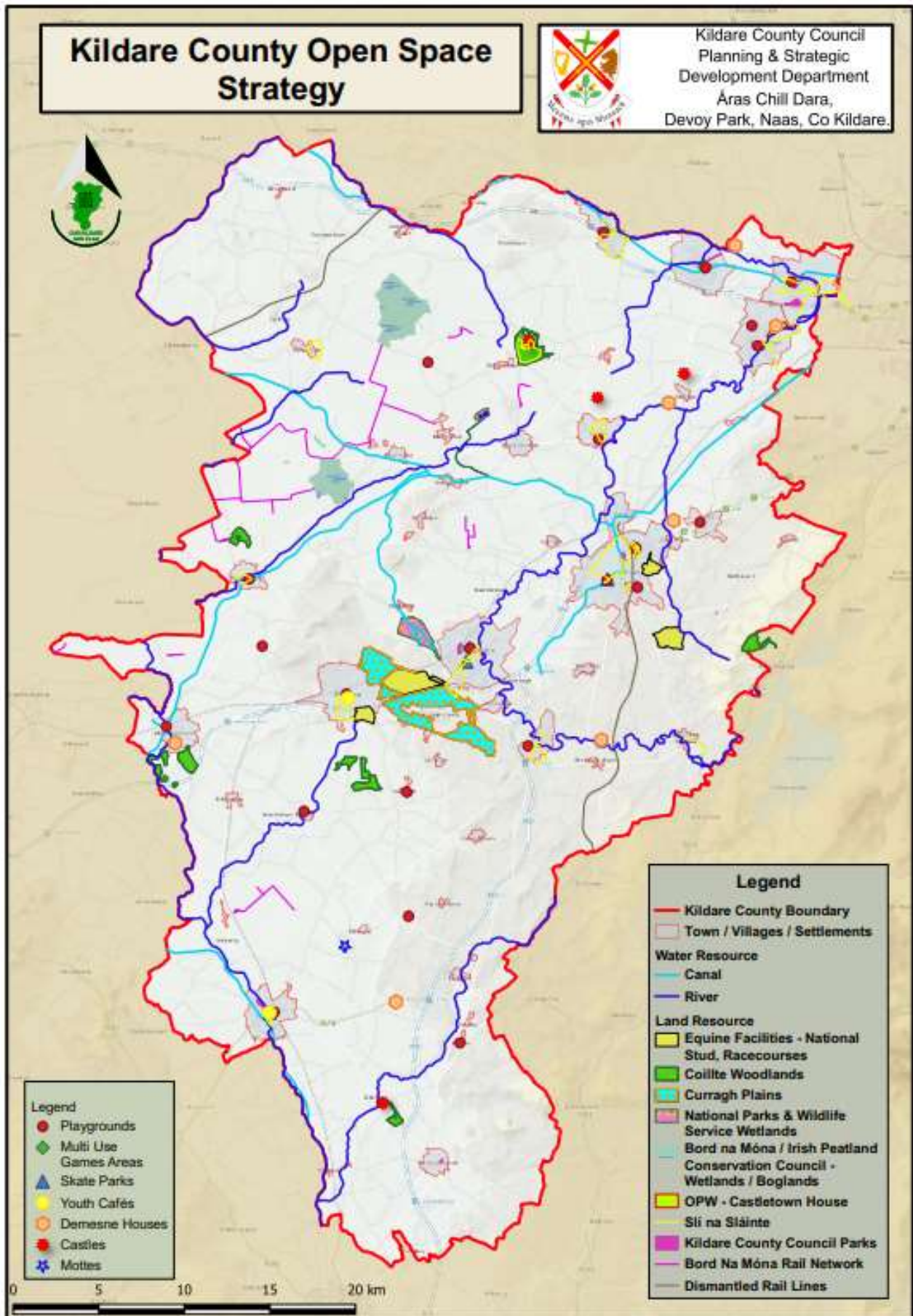
Kildare is long known as the heart of the equine industry in Ireland with many of the national equine associations basing themselves in the county. Three of the country's most famous racecourses are based in Kildare within a short distance of one another:

- The Curragh Racecourse
- Punchestown Racecourse
- Naas Racecourse.

These racecourses are significant amenities not alone at a local level but also nationally and internationally. While significant numbers of visitors (including national and international) enjoy horseracing at these racecourses, locally the racecourses provide open space for walking, running and general amenity.

It is acknowledged that the National Stud at Tully is also a significant amenity and heritage asset of County Kildare.

Map 1: Existing open space provision County Kildare



## 5. Audit of KCC Public Parks

### 5.1 The Green Flag Award Scheme

An internal audit of Kildare County Council parks was conducted for the purposes of informing this strategy. The criteria used to audit the parks were based on the Green Flag Award scheme. This is an international competition which benchmarks public parks and open spaces. Kildare County Council first entered the Green Flag Competition in 2017. The entry to the competition was Newbridge Liffey Linear Park. The park has been awarded the Green Flag each year from 2017 to 2021.

The Green Flag Award assessment criteria is based on eight categories:

- 1) A Welcoming Place
- 2) Healthy, Safe and Secure
- 3) Well Maintained and Clean
- 4) Environmental Management
- 5) Biodiversity, Landscape and Heritage
- 6) Community Involvement
- 7) Marketing and Communication
- 8) Management<sup>5</sup>

Under the Green Flag marking criteria, a minimum mark of 42 must be achieved under the eight criteria to achieve a Green Flag. Only seven categories are being used for the purposes of this audit as outlined above, and therefore the minimum mark across the seven categories and 26 no. criteria to achieve a Green Flag award is 36 marks.

### 5.2 Assessment

The audited parks varied in size from less than 1 acre to 50 acres. The spaces varied in function from open space for passive use, to linear areas of open space along water courses, and also larger park areas which catered for both passive and active use.

Many of the parks selected are established parks and areas of recreation in the towns they are located, including The People's Park-Athy, Fairgreen- Castledermot, Bawnogues- Kilcock, Lourdesville- Kildare Town, Moat of Ardsull – Kilmead, The Wonderful Barn – Leixlip, St. Catherines Park – Leixlip, Carton Avenue – Maynooth, Harbour Field – Maynooth, Moone Pocket Park, Riverside Park & Nature Park – Monasterevin, The Lakes – Naas, Monread Park – Naas.

Some like the Peoples Park, Fairgreen, Harbour Field & Carton Avenue are historic spaces which have served an amenity purpose for over 100 years. This contrasts with parks and spaces like Lourdesville, Moat of Ardsull, The Wonderful Barn, William Roantree Park, St Catherines Park and the two parks in Monasterevin which were developed as open spaces in the last 20-25 years.

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<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of this audit, category 8 'Management' has been excluded.

Other spaces like Rye River Walk and Silleachain Lane are linear walkways which connect various other areas of open space and natural areas along their length. They would not fulfill the criteria of traditional parks but are important because of the connectivity they provide and their scale as providers of amenity space within Leixlip.

Open spaces like Woodstock Castle, Willowbrook Park, Abbeyland Park, Lough na Mona and Lakeside Park are significant areas of open space provided in conjunction with housing developments and which provide an amenity space for these developments primarily. Due to their size and location some like Willowbrook Park, Abbeyland Park, Woodstock Castle, Lough na Mona and Lakeside Park also fulfil an amenity role outside of these housing developments. This wider amenity usage and their size warrants them being included in the audit.

### 5.3 Results

All the parks were audited between July and September 2020 by staff from the Parks and Planning Departments. The audit found that 14 no. parks reached Green Flag status. A further 4 no. parks scored points in the 30s (highlighted in amber in the table below) so were within 6 marks of achieving Green Flag status and 7no. parks scored in the low to mid 20 point range (highlighted in red below).

No	Park Name	Town	Score
1	The People's Park	Athy	42
2	Woodstock Castle	Athy	26.3
3	The Fairgreen	Castledermot	39
4	Willowbrook Park	Celbridge	27
5	Abbeyland Park	Clane	32
6	Bawnogues	Kilcock	30
7	Lourdesville	Kildare	39
8	Moat of Ardscull	Kilmead	36
9	Lough na Mona	Leixlip	22
10	Rye River Walk	Leixlip	37
11	William Roantree Park	Leixlip	41
12	The Wonderful Barn	Leixlip	29
13	St. Catherine's Park	Leixlip	39
14	Silleachain Lane	Leixlip	34
15	Leixlip Spa	Leixlip Spa	27
16	Carton Avenue	Maynooth	38
17	Harbour Field	Maynooth	32

No	Park Name	Town	Score
18	Pound Park & Little Pound Park	Maynooth	24
19	Moone Pocket Park	Moone	41
20	Nature Park	Monasterevin	36
21	Riverside Park	Monasterevin	38
22	The Lakes	Naas	36
23	Monread Park	Naas	36
24	Liffey Linear Park	Newbridge	45
25	Lakeside, Highfield and Dara Park (LHD)	Newbridge	27

Analysis of the results show that half the parks audited are close to achieving green flag status. These are The People's Park - Athy, Fairgreen - Castledermot, Lourdesville - Kildare Town, Moat of Ardsull - Kilmead, Moone Pocket Park, Rye River Walk - Leixlip, William Roantree Park - Leixlip, St Catherines Park - Leixlip, Carton Avenue - Maynooth, Riverside Park & Nature Park - Monasterevin, The Lakes - Naas and Monread Park - Naas. Management plans will need to be prepared for these to enter the competition and work programmes put in place for each to improve on the scores in various criteria.

The main difference between the parks which achieved a high mark and those that didn't is that they are established parks having been developed and improved in recent years. The majority of parks are spaces which did not achieve the minimum standard haven't been fully developed as parks or areas of amenity. A main objective as a result would be to develop a masterplan for these areas so that they can be developed as amenity areas and fulfil the categories for the green flag as well as the broader benefits these improvements can bring.

#### 5.4 Recommendations

It is promising to see that fourteen parks have met the Green Flag status while a further four parks were close to achieving the same status. It is acknowledged that all scores can be improved via the development of management plans and associated works programmes. It is recommended that these works would be identified during the lifetime of the strategy and phased over a number of years.

It is further recommended that the development of a masterplan, management plans and associated works programmes for these parks be developed and that those parks achieving high marks following the establishment of these plans and programmes be put forward for a Green Flag Award.

Based on the 7 categories and 26 criteria the following is of note in relation to each:

### Welcoming place

- 12 no. parks scored 5 (Fair) or lower for this while the remaining 3no. scored good or higher. This indicates the need to improve the entrances to parks around the county and the signage within them.
- 15 no. parks scored 5 (Fair) or less for signage. Entrance, information, interpretative and directional signage would enable all parks and open spaces to improve the scoring on this criterion
- With regard to equal access, 10 no. parks scored 5 (Fair) or less which indicates the need to improve this aspect in parks and open spaces. There is a level of equal access within most parks, but improvement is required.

### Healthy, Safe and Secure

- Safe Place - half of the parks and open spaces scored 7 (good) or higher, and half 5 (Fair) or lower, which indicates the need to improve this aspect in those which scored 5 (Fair) or lower.
- Healthy Safe & Secure - Over half of the parks and spaces audited under the criteria of appropriate levels of quality facilities, activities & safe facilities scored 6 (good) or higher. This indicates that most parks adequately cater for users' needs but there is still scope to improve this aspect in all the parks and spaces. This may involve identifying gaps in existing facilities or identifying trends in new or innovative facilities that maybe required.
- Similarly, only 6 parks scored 5 (Fair) on personal security indicating that most of the parks are safe to use.
- Control of dog fouling was 6 (Good) or higher in 19 of the 25 parks audited, indicating the good condition and appearance of the parks and open spaces.

### Well Maintained & Clean

- Thirteen of the 25 parks scored 5 or less under one of the 5 criteria in this category but were scoring 6 or higher in at least 4 of the criteria. This indicates that maintenance in all parks is to a high level but there are individual aspects in the various locations that require addressing and improvement.
- The more developed sites scored higher in this category and in the criteria associated with it. This highlights the need for sites which are scoring lower to have design and management plans prepared for them so they can achieve higher marks.

### Environmental Management

- Environmental Impact- 13 of the 25 parks scored 6 (good) or better under this category. However, further measures need to be identified in the use of materials in parks, use of green procurement criteria and energy efficiency. Other areas to improve are water and air quality if possible, beyond what already may be taking place in the park. The criteria for Environmental Impact, Waste Minimisation and Climate adaption are important in the context of climate change and sustainability. Scores here are similar to other categories and criteria but vary depending on the development stage of the park and open space. However, given the importance of this category it is an area that requires further attention

to improve, to see if innovations can be identified and to achieve a consistent approach across the category with improvement measures being implemented. This could include use of materials to maintain parks, procurement methods, maintenance procedures, use of renewable energy and other innovations.

- Waste minimisation - A Similar split in scoring across the various parks shows those that are more established and developed score higher under this criteria. Some sites like Lough na Mona score low because of issues with illegal dumping. However, these issues have been improved through clean ups and greater community involvement since the survey was completed. Littering and illegal dumping in parks is a major issue. Awareness campaigns or highlighting how much waste is generated by the public and ways it can be reduced may require examination. The use of composting within parks maybe another method reducing waste.
- Chemical Use- Only 3 parks scored 5 or less in this category. The use of herbicides started to be phased out in 2020 and this will be further expanded in 2021 therefore will result in all parks improving their core under this criteria. Pesticides and fungicides are not used in parks and opens spaces in Kildare.
- Peat Use- The high marks achieved across the criteria are as a result of the low or non-use of seasonal bedding which would use peat. Any planting carried out in parks and open spaces uses organic compost.
- Climate Change Adaption Strategies- Many of the parks feature tree planting which contribute to climate change adaption and any drainage required within the park is retained and not connected to a drainage network. Some parks like Lakeside Park, Newbridge and The Bawnogues Kilcock have more specific water attenuation features which make a significant contribution to Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDs) and therefore water quality. The introduction of reduced mowing and wildflower areas are also contributing to biodiversity and climate change. Further work is needed across all parks to explore how they can contribute more to climate change.

### Biodiversity Landscape & Heritage

- Most of the sites score well in this category and criteria. The development of individual management plans for each site would assist in improving further the various criteria.
- Management of Natural Features, Wild Flora & Fauna - Many of the parks and spaces contribute to the management of natural features such as hedgerows and ditches. They protect trees including mature trees and hedgerows and contribute to the protection and enhancement of biodiversity. Resulting from this only 5 (Fair) of the 25 parks scored 5 or less under this criteria. However, there is still scope to improve and enhance this aspect across all the parks audited by identifying further works actions and innovations that could be implemented.
- Conservation of Landscape Features- Half of the parks under this category scored 5 (Fair) or less. Some parks like Willowbrook Park in Celbridge do not have landscape features that can be conserved therefore it is difficult for some parks to score high marks if this is the case. Across all of the parks audited this criteria could be improved.



- Conservation of Building and Structures- Similar to the last criteria 5 sites do not have buildings and structures over 30 years old but 20 parks have. Within the parks that do, there is scope to improve the buildings and structures within them.

### Community Involvement

- Sixteen of the parks scored 6 (Good) or higher under both community involvement in the development and planning of the park and in appropriate provision of facilities for the public. Only 4-5 parks score 8 (Very Good) or higher which highlights the scope to improve this element of park management across the county.
- The parks which require further design and development works score lowest in this category. Development of these parks should ensure that it reflects the community needs and consequently community involvement.
- There are specific criteria across all the parks audited that score fair or lower. These are signage for the entrances to parks which could be improved to present the park better and which is not present in many of the parks. Marketing and communications also scores low across all parks. Similar to having signage at the entrance to the parks there is also a need to develop this further by providing appropriate interpretation and educational signs within parks. There is also a need to examine ways for the parks to be promoted.

### Marketing and Communications

- Only 2 parks scored 6 (Good) or higher under the three criteria in this category. Improving this aspect in relation to parks management is required across the county. The use of social media to promote works being carried out on parks and open spaces does take place during the year through Kildare Community Stories and information on the locations of parks has been promoted in the Council's website. Local press frequently pick up on works being carried out in parks and open spaces around the county.
- Further work is needed to provide more detail on the parks in the county through the Council's website and also at the park entrances. Additionally, interpretative information needs to be developed for parks where appropriate, for areas such as the history of the park and wildlife and biodiversity within it. A consistency to how this is presented is also needed across all the parks.

## 6. Strategy Recommendations

### 6.1 Hierarchy of Public Open Space

It is recommended that the following hierarchy of public open space is contained in the County Development Plan:

Typology	Function	Examples in County Kildare	Future Proposals
<b>County Level: Strategic Open Spaces</b>			
National Importance	Large facility of high scenic quality accessible to the public to which users may travel some distance to enjoy amenity.	The Curragh, Bog of Allen, Irish National Stud and Gardens (Tully), Castletown House & Woodlands and Punchestown Racecourse.	National Peatlands Park The Curragh Plains Strategy
Green Corridors	Linear green spaces such as canal and river corridors which are accessible to the public.	Grand Canal Greenway Royal Canal Greenway Barrow Blueway Liffey Valley	Peatways (as per Green Infrastructure Strategy) Grand Canal Greenway from Naas to Corbally Harbour. Tullow Railway Line Greenway Rye River Valley Barrow River Valley Greese River Walk River Slate Walkway

Typology	Function	Examples in County Kildare	Future Proposals
Natural/semi natural green spaces	Areas of land with habitats such as grassland, woodland or wetland areas which are accessible to the public.	The Curragh Pollardstown Fen Ballynafagh Lake Donadea Woods Narraghmore Bog Nature Reserve Mullaghreelan Woods Moore Abbey Woods	Umeras Peatlands Park Kildoon Woods Feasibility assessment of providing access to the County's designated sites (pNHAs, NHAs, SACs & SPA) where it can be assured no likely significant negative effects (on <i>inter alia</i> wildlife) arise.
<b>Regional Level: Inter-settlement Open Spaces</b>			
Regional Parks	Large areas, corridors or networks of open space, the majority of which will be publicly accessible and will provide a range of facilities and features offering recreational, ecological, landscape, cultural or green infrastructure benefits. Regional parks are generally in excess of 50 hectares in area.	St. Catherine's Park, Leixlip/Lucan (KCC, SDCC, FCC).	River Liffey Valley Park Ballymore Eustace Greenway.

Typology	Function	Examples in County Kildare	Future Proposals
<b>Local Level: Within Settlements</b>			
Urban Neighbourhood Park	Large Parks range in size between 16 and 50 hectares and are located within settlements for local use to contain facilities for active recreation and a wide variety of facilities and uses, to be accessible by pedestrians and cyclists and provides linkages between settlements; biodiversity areas can also be retained, enhanced and accommodated.	Bawnogues, Kilcock. Monread Park, Naas <sup>6</sup> ,	Kerdiffstown Park, Naas Wonderful Barn, Leixlip Cherry Avenue Park, Kildare Donaghcumper/River Liffey Park Celbridge Sallins Amenity Park Oldtown Demense, Naas River Liffey Park, Clane Lyreen River Park, St. Patrick's College Maynooth. Jigginstown Park, Naas
Local Park	Local Parks range in size between 2 and 16 hectares and are located within settlements for local use for passive recreation, playing fields, organised sports, biodiversity, play facilities.	The People's Park, Athy. Willowbrook Park, Celbridge Abbeyland Park Clane. Rye River Walk, Leixlip Carton Avenue, Maynooth Liffey Linear Park, Newbridge	Refer to Local Area Plans e.g. Ardrew Amenity Lands, Athy Woodstock Amenity Lands, Athy  Rural Example: Moat of Ardsull
Local Linear Park	Linear parks follow a defined corridor such as the riparian corridor of a river, canal and/or disused railway line.	Naas Canal Walk/Greenway	Refer to Local Area Plans

<sup>6</sup> While the area of Monread Park is slightly less than 16 hectares, it functions as a Neighbourhood Park.

Typology	Function	Examples in County Kildare	Future Proposals
Small Parks	<p>Small parks range in size between 0.2 ha and 2 hectares and can accommodate play facilities, kick-about areas and passive recreation.</p> <p>Small parks should be generally within 400m walking and cycling distance of homes and centrally located within new developments.</p>	<p>Moone Pocket Park, Moone Harbour Field, Maynooth Riverside Park, Monasterevin Tannery Park, Rathangan</p>	<p>Refer to Local Area Plans</p>
Pocket Parks	<p>Pocket parks are less than 0.2 hectares in size and provide facilities for smaller children and have an important visual and social function. Pocket parks must not be to the side or back of houses and must be adequately overlooked. They should contain natural play elements.</p> <p>Each home should be within 500m walking distance (5 minute walk) to a pocket park and centrally located within all new developments.</p>	<p>Pocket parks are required in new housing developments.</p>	<p>To be determined at pre-planning meetings and/or as part of the Development Management process/planning application stage.</p>

## 6.2 County Development Plan Standards for Open Space Provision

Key to the provision of open space across the County, and particularly in new developments, are the three key principles of **quantity, quality and accessibility**.

### **Quantity**

It is recommended that the open space standards in the County Development Plan be increased from 2 hectares per 1,000 people (as per the 1987 Department of Environment standard) to 2.5 hectares per 1,000 people as follows:

Standards	Public Open Space Standards (minimum)
Overall Standard	2.5 Ha per 1,000 Population to comprise of formal and informal public open space areas as follows: <u>Formal</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active Open Space (outdoor sports, pitches, courts etc.)</li> <li>• Neighbourhood/local park</li> <li>• Play areas</li> </ul> <u>Informal</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parks and Gardens</li> <li>• Amenity Green Space</li> <li>• Natural and Semi-natural</li> </ul> The breakdown of formal and informal provision will be considered on a place by place basis.

All developments with a residential component will be required to deliver on the overall standard of 2.5 hectares per 1000 population (this is not a maximum figure and local factors will need to be considered in determining the quantity). In order to provide existing and future communities with adequate recreational and leisure opportunities, the Council will employ a flexible approach to the delivery of public open space (i.e., appropriate off-site recreational/leisure space such as playing fields) and more intensive recreational/amenity facilities, i.e. indoor recreational facilities, or outdoor MUGAs (Multi-Use Games Areas).

The quantity of open space to be implemented when considering planning applications for new residential developments should be as follows:

Land Use	Public Open Space Standards (minimum)
New Residential Development on Lands zoned New Residential	Minimum 15% of site area
New Residential Development on lands identified for regeneration, brownfield sites, or mixed uses.	Minimum 10% of site area
Institutional Lands – ‘Windfall Sites’ <sup>7</sup>	Minimum 20% of site area

<sup>7</sup> Section 4.20 of the Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas Guidelines (2009).

## **Quality**

While qualitative requirements for open space provision are set out in the Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009), it is also considered in addition that the following high-level interrelated principles should be taken into consideration when planning the layout and design of public open space within new developments:

1. **Adopting a Strategic Approach to Providing Public Open Space:** to ensure that an optimal range of public open space typologies and facilities (as provided for in the Hierarchy of Public Open Space) are distributed as equitably as possible within an area.
2. **Recognising Public Open Space as a Multifunctional Asset:** the provision of high-quality public open space is critical not only for passive and active recreation, but also for the following:
  - Retaining and enhancing natural heritage and contributing to green infrastructure networks in a time of biodiversity crisis and climate emergency.
  - Contributing to climate resilience where such spaces can help to offset the effects of extreme weather events by integrating nature based solutions to reduce flood risk, and
  - Integrating routes which link neighbourhoods; increasing the overall accessibility and connectivity of public open space and assisting in the creation of a network of sustainable movement routes within a settlement and promoting active travel.
3. **Using Public Open Space as Placemaking Tool** – The design and layout of open space can be used as a tool for '*healthy placemaking*' to increase the attractiveness, visual appearance and accessibility of outdoor recreation opportunities.

## **Type and Variety**

When planning for open space in residential areas it is important that it is not simply about leaving an area undeveloped and grassed. It is important to think of the function of that open space, its purpose, the variety of uses that the space could be used for and how it can contribute to the needs of the current and/or future residents and community.

Open space can provide for a great many functions – it can provide for:

- **Formal Parks**, with landscaping, walkways, seating and elements such as a children's playground and dog-park.
- **Improving the aesthetics and visual appearance** of the area/estate through formal and/or informal planting – providing structure, form, colour, visual amenity and horticultural interest.
- **Sport – either informal or formal.** Open grassed areas or parklands can be used for informal sport/games. Large areas of open space in older housing estates have been used by local soccer clubs to train and/or erect goal posts for

playing in youth leagues, for example.

- **Basketball/Tennis Courts** (including half-court basketball courts).
- **Multi Use Games Area** – though less common in suburban style housing, MUGAs have been very successful in higher density areas where space is of a premium; Most sports can be played on a MUGA sports pitch: including football, rugby, cricket, netball, tennis, badminton, basketball and athletics. They can vary in size. Another major benefit of a MUGA surface is that they are low maintenance because of the artificial surface.
- **Environmental Quality** – such as Biodiversity and Stormwater Attenuation/SUDs.
  - **Biodiversity** – with an emphasis on native flora species in the form of wildlife meadows, hedgerow planting/enhancement, copses and urban woodlands. While the provision of open space.
  - While **Stormwater Attenuation facilities** should not encroach on the minimum standard area for open space, these facilities can be integrated into parks and can provide attractive features, providing ponds and water courses into parkland settings – regulating stormwater run-off, improving water quality while also provide new habitat for wildlife. Concerns over children’s safety can be addressed by gently grading slopes and the planting of reedbeds and/or other landscaping interventions.
- **Functional areas of open space** such as allotments, community orchards and/or community gardens.
- **Amenity Walks** – as in the form of paths, trails and linear parks.

### Accessibility

The following table outlines guidance and standards which seek to achieve the high-level principles, in order to maximise the potential for amenity provision within new development sites and maximise accessibility to the open space resource.

<p><b>Adopting a Strategic Approach to Open Space Provision</b></p>	<p>The key aim of this approach should be to achieve a high level of equity in accessibility amongst the resident population to the hierarchy of open space within a settlement. Accordingly, the following measures should be applied to the provision of open space within new developments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development proposals should be informed by the Planning Authority’s Social Infrastructure Audit (SIA) to address specific shortfalls of identified public open space infrastructure within the locality. In the absence of a SIA, proposals will be required to demonstrate how their provision for public open space applies the Hierarchy of Open Space to the development site, taking into consideration the provision of open space infrastructure in the area.</li> <li>• The larger the scale of the development the greater the requirement there will be for the provision of a greater range of public open space amenities to serve the resident</li> </ul>
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	<p>population.</p> <p>Notwithstanding the above, the following minimum standards in public open space provision should be provided for within development sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pocket parks (500m<sup>2</sup> - 0.2 ha) should be provided for all residential developments of 5 units and above.</li><li>• Ensure every home within a new residential scheme of 5 units and above is located within 500 metres walking distance (5 minute walk) of a pocket park, small park, local park, urban neighbourhood park or regional park.</li><li>• Developments shall provide 'scale appropriate' children's play in semi-private or public open spaces through provision of a scale appropriate Natural Play Area.<sup>8</sup> It is the Planning Authority's preference that an imaginative approach is adopted by developers to delivering play spaces. All play areas shall be natural play spaces with landscaping and natural features e.g. logs, mounding, boulders, and sensory planting, equipment with no moving parts. Play features should be centrally located so that they are accessible and supervised, without causing nuisance to nearby residents.</li><li>• In all developments, regardless of size, the majority of public open space provision must be able to function as an area for active amenities. Such space should therefore be flat in nature and capable of allowing for informal kick-about games, noting that natural play areas would require grading for play purposes.</li><li>• All developments regardless of size should as far as practicable, integrate permeable and well-delineated pedestrian/cycle connections to access public open space amenities in neighbouring sites.</li><li>• Flexible arrangements to public open space facilities should be encouraged in higher density developments. In this regard, the option for creating shared community spaces/gardens should be explored.</li></ul>
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<sup>8</sup> Student accommodation, housing for older persons and one bedroom units should be excluded from the requirements in relation to children's play.

<p><b>Recognising Public Open Space as a Multifunctional Asset</b></p>	<p>Measures which would allow public open space to successfully fulfil multiple roles within a settlement, including the safeguarding and enhancing of biodiversity and integrating essential climate mitigation and adaptation features (as required by the County Council’s Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024) should be incorporated into all new developments, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrate climate considerations into the design, planning of public open space by providing for the maintenance and enhancement of the green infrastructure network of the locality while also providing incorporating adaptative measures such as providing shade to alleviate heat stress, supporting urban bio-diversity, water retention and flood alleviation.<sup>9</sup></li> <li>• Incorporate green corridors and pedestrian/cycle routes into the scheme to link with neighbouring open space and habitats.</li> <li>• In higher density developments, the provision of pocket parks should be viewed as key ‘stepping stone’ habitats and should be dispersed throughout settlements.</li> <li>• The incorporation of nature based solutions to flood risk such as sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS) where considered appropriate should be strongly encouraged.</li> <li>• SuDS areas should not be considered to form part of the public open space provision, except where they contribute in a significant way to the design and quality of open space as defined by the Planning Authority. In such cases, a maximum of 10% of the total public open space provision shall be taken up by SuDS. SuDS must be imaginatively designed by a multi-disciplinary team comprising of, for example, engineering, landscape architecture and ecological professionals.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Using Public Open Space as a Placemaking Tool</b></p>	<p>The following urban design principles shall be incorporated in all new developments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A high-level of specification in the design and layout of all public open space will be required addressing quantity and quality.</li> <li>• Ensure that public open space constitutes a central feature of the development and is always overlooked and not to the sides or rear of dwellings in order to maximise levels of passive surveillance, accessibility and eliminate the</li> </ul>

<sup>9</sup> In this regard, it is noted that trees and water features can help provide for heat reduction within settlements (p. 71, Climate Resilient Kildare – Kildare County Council Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024).

	<p>potential for anti-social behaviour.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Require the bulk of open space to be usable. While narrow strips of land (&lt;10 metres wide) can function as important green connections and improve levels of passive amenity within a development, they should not be included in the overall public open space calculation of a site.</li> <li>• Ensure that the layout of public open space makes the most of the opportunities presented by the site through the incorporation of existing features such as topography and green infrastructure, whilst also exploiting the potential for views and prospects into and out of the site.</li> <li>• Require a clear definition between public, semi-private and private open space.</li> <li>• Ensure that car parking be fully incorporated into the landscaping scheme of a new development so that its layout, location and quantum does overly dominate or detract from the aesthetics and useability of public open space.</li> </ul>
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In addition, the following are recommended:

***Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS):***

- Ensure as far as practical that the design of SuDS enhances the quality of open spaces. SuDS do not form part of the public open space provision, except where it contributes in a significant and positive way to the design and quality of open space. In instances where the Council determines that SuDS make a significant and positive contribution to open space, a maximum 10% of open space provision shall be taken up by SuDS. The Council will give consideration to the provision of SuDS on existing space where appropriate. SuDS must be imaginatively designed by a multi-disciplinary team comprising of for example engineering, landscape architecture and ecological professionals.
- Underground tanks and storage systems will not be accepted under public open space, as part of a SuDS solution, save in exceptional demonstrable circumstances with the written agreement of the Council.

***Play areas:***

That children’s play should be provided for within prospective residential developments in the form of ‘scale appropriate’ natural play spaces. Types of facilities to be provided will be dependent upon factors such as the size of a given development proposal and the availability of facilities (if any) in the area. Play provision for the following groups shall be considered:

- local areas for play aimed at very young children.
- local equipped areas of play aimed at children who can go out to play independently.
- Neighbourhood equipped areas for play aimed at older children and teenagers

<b>Action</b>	To prepare a Development Management and Control advice document to be formulated between the Planning, Parks, Water Services, Heritage and Roads Departments of Kildare County Council on standards and quality of open space in new residential development and for the purposes of taking in charge.
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### 6.3 Resources

It is acknowledged that there are significant resource issues for Kildare County Council regarding open space and recreation provision in terms of staffing and funding, particularly when compared to other Local Authorities in the Greater Dublin Area.

As noted in Section 2 of this report, the demographic trend indicates that the population of the County has grown by more than 71% in the last 20 years and now has the youngest population in the state. This has demand implications for open space and play facilities for young children and teenagers in particular.

Having regard to the high level of development experienced in County Kildare over the past 20 years, and to the projected population growth proposed over the coming Development Plan period, it is recommended that resourcing will require significant attention over the strategy period, particularly if the policies, objectives and actions of this strategy are to be implemented.

<b>Action</b>	To identify and allocate appropriate additional resources to the Parks Section of Kildare County Council.
<b>Action</b>	To ensure the review of the Kildare County Council's Development Contribution Scheme takes into account the provisions of the Open Space Strategy and that the financial implications of designing, procuring, delivering and managing public open spaces are considered in devising the scheme.
<b>Action</b>	To establish a mechanism within Kildare County Council for identifying appropriate funding streams at European, national and local levels which are available towards the provision of public open space and recreation facilities.

### 6.4 Sporting Facilities

To address the acknowledged deficit in playing pitches experienced by many sports clubs throughout the County, in particular in urban areas, it is recommended that the Council actively seek to establish new Municipal Sporting Facilities, initially in the Key Towns of Naas and Maynooth.

It is also recommended that sports, community facilities and active open space amenities are clustered or co-located in multi-functional recreation hubs at appropriate locations throughout the county. An example of this is the Bawnogues, Kilcock and the planned facilities at Ardrew in Athy and Moore Abbey in Monasterevin.

Promote the provision and management of high-quality, multi-functional, sport and recreational infrastructure across the County to meet existing and future needs, to include sports hubs and multi-sport astro-pitches, and to facilitate minority sports, in accordance with the National Sports Policy (2018-2027) and the aims of the Kildare Sports Partnership Strategic Plan (2017-2021).

To prepare a Sports Plan for the County to provide for the sustainable development of sports facilities in accordance with the National Sports Policy (2018-2027).

Seek improvement in the range, quality and capacity of sporting and recreational facilities through initiatives in partnership with community groups and sporting organisations and national sporting organisations, and to cater for all age-groups and abilities.

Consider the future needs of sporting facilities i.e., capacity, access and community facilities, in the provision of new or in the expansion of existing sporting facilities.

Promote town and village centre sites for sports and recreational facilities and to facilitate out of town/village sites, where appropriate, (following a sequential test), in servicing large hinterland communities, where the site includes comprehensive off-road parking, conforms to all safety guidelines and is in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

<b>Action</b>	To proactively seek suitable sites within the Key Towns of Naas and Maynooth for the provision of Municipal Sporting Facilities where shared amenities are provided for sports clubs and the general public.
<b>Action</b>	To continue to assess provision of sporting facilities as part of the Social Infrastructure Audit carried out in advance of preparing Local Area Plans and to identify possible locations and mechanisms to address any deficits in sporting facility provision and to provide for future growth.
<b>Action</b>	To establish partnerships with national sporting organisations, local sports clubs, open space providers, developers, state agencies and the community to deliver improved shared open space, amenity and sport facilities.
<b>Action</b>	To work with key stakeholders to progress the development of new shared sports and recreation hubs at Ardrew in Athy and Moore's Abbey in Monasterevin.

## 6.5 Accessibility For All

It is recommended that the following policies be included in the County Development Plan:

- To ensure that accessibility-for-all is a key consideration in site selection and project design processes for Kildare County Council open space and recreational facilities.
- To require new developments to deliver open spaces and amenity facilities that are accessible for all.

<b>Action</b>	To undertake a comprehensive Accessibility Audit of all Kildare County Council parks throughout the county with the assistance of Access Groups, commencing with playground audits.
<b>Action</b>	To continue to upgrade existing County Council park facilities having regard to the results of the Accessibility Audit, as resources allow, over the short, medium and long term.
<b>Action</b>	To continue to pursue funding for the upgrading of existing park facilities to improve access for all.

## 6.6 Existing Kildare County Council Parks: Improvements and New Projects

It is recommended that the following policies be included in the County Development Plan:

- To preserve, manage and maintain to a high standard the existing public parks and open spaces in the county.
- To improve access to and promotion of key assets through key enhancement projects, to promote active travel measures i.e. facilitating walking and cycling to and from public open spaces, and to design permeability measures into public open space projects.
- Increase the number of Kildare County Council parks being brought to Green Flag status by 2031.
- To ensure good quality design of public open spaces to prevent anti-social behaviour through smart design principles.

<b>Action</b>	To deliver a public park in Oldtown Demesne (DeBurgh Lands) in Naas during the lifetime of this Strategy, with a conservation plan to be commenced in the short term.
<b>Action</b>	To design the Sallins Neighbourhood Park having regard to pre-draft public consultation and to secure planning permission for the project in 2022.
<b>Action</b>	To complete the construction of a public park, sports and amenity facilities at Kerdiffstown in the short term.
<b>Action</b>	To complete detailed design for Phase 1 of Cherry Avenue Park, Kildare Town.
<b>Action</b>	To promote The Wonderful Barn as an integrated tourism and amenity destination with complementary commercial uses to be informed by a detailed conservation and management plan.
<b>Action</b>	To prepare a detailed design and conservation plan for Carton Avenue, Maynooth having regard to the significant natural, cultural and built heritage of the area.
<b>Action</b>	To deliver a dog park in a chosen public park as a pilot project and to assess other appropriate locations.
<b>Action</b>	To continue to promote allotments and community gardens where appropriate through the local area plan process and to support their development.

<b>Action</b>	To ensure the protection and enhancement of Kildare County Council lands at Castletown Woods and Donaghcumper to preserve the historic landscape and improve biodiversity and amenity within the site in conjunction with the OPW.
<b>Action</b>	To secure planning permission for the proposed upgrade of public facilities and amenities at Harbourfield, Maynooth and to deliver these improvements in the short term.
<b>Action</b>	To continue to develop the Bawnogues, Kilcock as a municipal shared sports and amenity facility.
<b>Action</b>	To prepare Management Plans for all Kildare County Council Parks, with a view to implementing associated works programmes to be phased over the lifetime of the strategy. Those parks achieving high marks following the establishment of these plans and programmes shall be put forward for a Green Flag Award.

## 6.7 Teen Space

To promote and deliver additional non-mainstream facilities for children and teenagers through the provision of suitable recreation and amenity facilities in all major towns and villages.

<b>Action</b>	To implement an innovative pilot consultation project with young people in Celbridge to inform and develop appropriate outdoor facility/facilities in the community.
<b>Action</b>	To continue to manage the existing skateparks in Athy, Newbridge and Naas and to identify appropriate locations in other towns for similar facilities.
<b>Action</b>	To require 'teen' space to be considered as part of the public open space provision in large new residential developments.

## 6.8 Children's Play

The Kildare Kildare Play Strategy 2018-2028 already includes a number of policies and objectives regarding the provision of children's play facilities. It is not the intention of this strategy to repeat these policies here, but to supplement that strategy and identify local deficits that were highlighted during the public consultation.

<b>Action</b>	To deliver the approved Allenwood Playground and Ballymore Eustace Playground in the short term
<b>Action</b>	To provide playgrounds in small towns and villages as identified in the Play Strategy.
<b>Action</b>	To upgrade existing play facilities at Leixlip Playground and Monread Park.
<b>Action</b>	To deliver additional children's play facilities in Celbridge.
<b>Action</b>	To provide a second playground in Newbridge in the short term.
<b>Action</b>	To encourage, promote and require the delivery of natural and accessible scale-appropriate play facilities for children in all new residential developments.

## 6.9 Biodiversity, Green Infrastructure and Open Space

The Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy is outlined in the County Development Plan. The GI Strategy incorporates a wide variety of undeveloped areas including different natural, semi-natural landscapes and habitats, rivers, canals, waterways, forests/woodlands, heritage areas and other areas that are intended to be kept largely free from development and where ecosystem services can be offered. Over the lifetime of the plan, it will be a policy of Kildare County Council to explore – in cooperation with state/semi-state and private landowners, the potential and feasibility of providing public access to these areas for sport, recreation and/or amenity purposes.



Other key policy objectives include:

Protect and enhance the environmental capacity and ecological function of all open spaces within the hierarchy.

Facilitate and promote the development of green infrastructure which allows for the development of active and passive recreation and the protection and enhancement of heritage and landscape features.

Make provision for habitat creation/ maintenance and facilitate biodiversity by encouraging the development of linear parks, nature trails, wildlife corridors and urban woodlands.

Connect parks and areas of open space with ecological and recreational corridors to aid the movement of biodiversity and people and to strengthen the overall Green Infrastructure network.

Enhance and diversify the outdoor recreational potential of public open spaces and parks, subject to the protection of the natural environment.

Promote the planting of woodlands, forestry, community gardens, allotments and parkland meadows within the county's open spaces and parks to promote the development of multifunctional amenity areas with enhanced biodiversity value.

To support the delivery of the Umeras Peatlands Park in conjunction with stakeholders.

<b>Action</b>	To carry out a Tree Strategy for County Kildare which will assist with tree management for the County.
<b>Action</b>	To continue to identify appropriate trees for protection under Tree Preservation Orders.
<b>Action</b>	To continue to promote and implement biodiversity actions in open spaces under Kildare County Council's management, e.g. 'Slow to mow'.
<b>Action</b>	To implement the findings of the Biodiversity Audits carried out for KCC Parks and to progress further audits.

## 6.10 Liffey Valley Regional Park

It is recommended that the following policies be included in the County Development Plan:

- To facilitate and support the development of a Liffey Valley Regional Park in collaboration with Fingal County Council, South Dublin County Council, relevant government departments, existing landowners, and other relevant stakeholders.
- To investigate the feasibility of creating a pedestrian link between the Liffey Valley, the Wicklow Mountains and the Wicklow Way, in consultation with Wicklow County Council, as recommended in the report '*Towards a Liffey Valley Park Strategy*'.

- To preserve the pedestrian link between the River Liffey and the Grand Canal at the Leinster Aqueduct and to explore making the existing underpass fully accessible as recommended in the report ‘Towards a Liffey Valley Park Strategy.’

<b>Action</b>	To re-commence discussions with Fingal and South Dublin County Council with a view to progressing the Liffey Valley Regional Park.
<b>Action</b>	To ensure that local area plans along the route of the River Liffey acknowledge and reflect the aspirations and policy to create the Liffey Valley Regional Park.

### 6.11 Future Demands Analysis

Social Infrastructure Audits (SIAs) are prepared in advance of a Local Area Plan for the 12 settlements in County Kildare. The following guidance is recommended:

- One of the roles of the SIA is to implement the Open Space Hierarchy at a local level insofar as is possible. Any recommendations of the SIA relating to open space must ensure a high level of equity in accessibility to public open space provision.
- Demand analysis should take into consideration the ‘reasonable needs’ of the local population.
- The SIA must take cognisance of the age and social structure of the local population, together with its distribution and the density of development when determining specific open space needs.
- Develop and improve physical linkages and connections between the network of open spaces and where appropriate, use areas adjacent to waterways as a linear park to link into the wider open space network.

<b>Action</b>	To continue to assess public open space provision as a key element of the Social Infrastructure Audits carried out for Local Area Plans in order to highlight current provision, adequacies and possible deficiencies and to progress proposals to address any deficiencies during the lifetime of the plans.
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### 6.12 New Open Space and Outdoor Recreation Initiatives

1. To establish an Open Space Steering Committee with open space providers and state agencies to monitor the recommendations and implementation of this strategy.
2. To work in conjunction with key stakeholders and landowners, in particular Bord na Mona, to investigate the feasibility of a new public peatlands amenity utilising disused railway lines to provide walking and cycling connectivity between areas of amenity within County Kildare and adjoining counties, subject to environmental assessments.
3. To proactively seek suitable sites within the Key Towns of Naas and Maynooth for the provision of new Municipal Sporting Facilities where shared amenities are provided for sports clubs and the general public.

4. To build on the proposed 'Teen-space' consultation exercise and deliver a bespoke teen-space in Celbridge as a Pilot Project and to roll-out to other appropriate locations in our towns and villages.
5. To promote recreational hubs to allow clubs from different sporting groups to share facilities through Kildare's suite of local area plans.
6. To assess underutilised / old railway lines within the county, in conjunction with relevant landowners, to investigate the feasibility for active travel and connectivity measures, e.g. Tullow Railway line.
7. To work in conjunction with the Department of Defence and other stakeholders to progress and complete a comprehensive plan for the Curragh Plains, through the preparation of a Conservation Management Plan and an Interpretation/branding plan and Orientation, Wayfinding and Interpretation Strategy.
8. To investigate the feasibility of a network of Bridle Ways at appropriate location within the county and explore the feasibility of a Bridle Way from Cromwelstown, Cupidstown, Rathbane, Cuareen, Redbog to Gending and onto Puchestown using off road and on road options.
9. To support the re-use of quarries for outdoor activity centres, where appropriate, incorporating biodiversity, bike trails, walks, trails, playing pitches etc. where practical and feasible, subject to environmental assessments.
10. To support and deliver Waterway Hubs at Ardrew in Athy and at Moore's Quay in Monasterevin.

## 7. Action Plan

The extensive list of actions outlined in section 6 of this report is summarised in the following table.

Some actions are 'On-going' which refers to everyday activities or operational issues for the Parks and/or Planning Departments. Short Term actions are to be carried out in 1-3 years. Medium Term actions are to be carried out in 3-5 years. Long Term actions are to be carried out in 5-10 years.

On-going Actions	
Action No.	Action
1	To continue to assess provision of sporting facilities as part of the Social Infrastructure Audit carried out in advance of preparing Local Area Plans and to identify possible locations and mechanisms to address any deficits in sporting facility provision and to provide for future growth.
2	To continue to promote allotments and community gardens where appropriate through the local area plan process and to support their development.

3	To ensure the protection and enhancement of Kildare County Council lands at Castletown Woods and Donaghcumper to preserve the historic landscape and improve biodiversity and amenity within the site in conjunction with the OPW.
4	To continue to develop the Bawnogues, Kilcock as a municipal shared sports and amenity facility.
5	To provide playgrounds in small towns and villages as identified in the Play Strategy.
6	To encourage, promote and require the delivery of natural and accessible scale-appropriate play facilities for children in all new residential developments.
7	To continue to manage the existing skateparks in Athy, Newbridge and Naas and to identify appropriate locations in other towns for similar facilities.
8	To continue to identify appropriate trees for protection under Tree Preservation Orders.
9	To continue to promote and implement biodiversity actions in open spaces under Kildare County Council's management, e.g. 'Slow to mow'.
10	To ensure that local area plans affected by the River Liffey acknowledge and reflect the Liffey Valley Regional Park.
<b>Short Term Actions</b>	
<b>Action No</b>	<b>Action</b>
11	To prepare a Development Management and Control advice document to be formulated between the Planning, Parks, Water Services, Environment, Heritage and Roads Departments of Kildare County Council on standards and quality of open space in new residential development and for the purposes of taking in charge.
12	To identify and allocate appropriate additional resources to the Parks Section of Kildare County Council.
13	To ensure the review of the Kildare County Council's Development Contribution Scheme takes into account the provisions of the Open Space Strategy and that the financial implications of designing, procuring, delivering and managing public open spaces are considered in devising the scheme.
14	To establish a mechanism within Kildare County Council for identifying appropriate funding streams at European, national and local levels which are available towards the provision of public open space and recreation facilities.
15	To proactively seek suitable sites within the Key Towns of Naas and Maynooth for the provision of Municipal Sporting Facilities where shared amenities are provided for sports clubs and the general public.
16	To establish partnerships with national sporting organisations, local sports clubs, open space providers, state agencies and the community to deliver improved shared open space, amenity and sport facilities.
17	To work with key stakeholders to progress the development of new shared sports and recreation hubs at Ardrew in Athy and Moore's Abbey in Monasterevin.
18	To undertake a comprehensive Accessibility Audit of all Kildare County Council parks throughout the county with the assistance of Access Groups, commencing with playground audits.

19	To continue to upgrade existing County Council park facilities having regard to the results of the Accessibility Audit, as resources allow, over the short, medium and long term.
20	To continue to pursue funding for the upgrading of existing park facilities to improve access for all.
21	To design the Sallins Neighbourhood Park having regard to pre-draft public consultation and to secure planning permission for the project in 2022.
22	To complete the construction of a public park, sports and amenity facilities at Kerdiffstown in the short term.
23	To complete detailed design for Phase 1 of Cherry Avenue Park, Kildare Town.
24	To prepare a detailed design and conservation plan for Carton Avenue, Maynooth having regard to the significant natural, cultural and built heritage of the area.
25	To deliver a dog park in a chosen public park as a pilot project and to assess other appropriate locations across the county.
26	To secure planning permission for the proposed upgrade of public facilities and amenities at Harbourfield, Maynooth and to deliver these improvements in the short term.
27	To prepare Management Plans for all Kildare County Council Parks, with a view to implementing associated works programmes to be phased over the lifetime of the strategy. Those parks achieving high marks following the establishment of these plans and programmes shall be put forward for a Green Flag Award.
28	To implement an innovative pilot consultation project with young people in Celbridge to inform and develop appropriate outdoor facility/facilities in the community and to deliver this pilot project in the short term.
29	To require 'teen' space to be considered as part of the public open space provision in large new residential developments.
30	To deliver the approved Allenwood Playground and Ballymore Eustace Playground in the short term
31	To upgrade existing play facilities at Leixlip Playground and Monread Park.
32	To deliver additional children's play facilities in Celbridge.
33	To provide a second playground in Newbridge in the short term.
34	To carry out a Tree Strategy for County Kildare which will assist with tree management for the County.
35	To implement the findings of the Biodiversity Audits carried out for KCC Parks and to progress further audits.
36	To re-commence discussions with Fingal and South Dublin County Council with a view to progressing the Liffey Valley Regional Park.
<b>Medium Term Actions</b>	
37	To deliver a public park in Oldtown Demesne (DeBurgh Lands) in Naas during the lifetime of this Strategy, with a conservation plan to be commenced in the short term.
38	To deliver the Wonderful Barn as an integrated tourism and amenity destination with complementary commercial uses to be informed by a detailed conservation and management plan.

39	To deliver the Sallins Neighbourhood Park.
40	To deliver Cherry Avenue Park, Kildare Town.
Long Term Actions	
41	To deliver the Liffey Valley Regional Park in conjunction with adjoining local authorities and relevant stakeholders.
42	To deliver Regional Parks at appropriate locations across the County as part of a county open space network.

## 8. Implementation and Monitoring Strategy

The implementation of the many actions set out in this strategy is dependent on sufficient resources being provided to the relevant sections of Kildare County Council, especially the Parks Section.

The above tasks will be assigned to relevant Departments/Section of the Council for progress on implementation.

It is recommended that yearly reviews be prepared outlining progress made on all actions and a report furnished to the Council in this regard.