



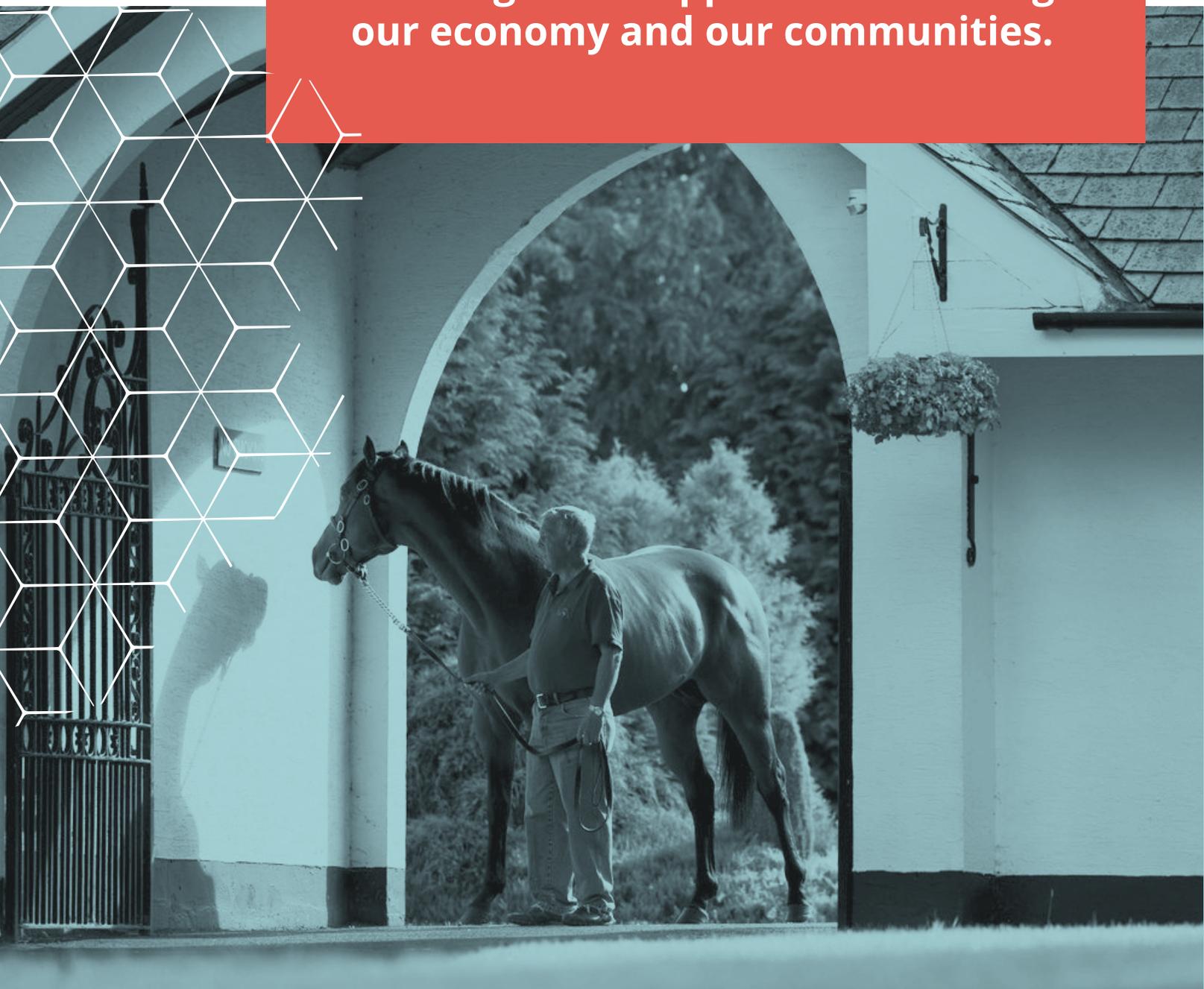
Comhairle Contae Chill Dara
Kildare County Council



Kildare 2025

Economic
Development Strategy

The publication of this **Economic Strategy for County Kildare** is the culmination of a lengthy consultation process with key stakeholders that **reflects the current and future challenges and opportunities facing our economy and our communities.**



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Foreword

The publication of this Economic Strategy for County Kildare is the culmination of a lengthy consultation process with key stakeholders that reflects the current and future challenges and opportunities facing our economy and our communities.

By adopting **“Kildare 2025”**, **Kildare County Council** provides a roadmap for attracting new investment, sustaining existing industry and enterprises, and ensuring long-term and sustainable growth.

This strategic plan encompasses objectives and actions that will facilitate growth and economic activity and provide a high quality of life for our citizens. This practical and pragmatic action plan also illustrates a comprehensive understanding of the social, economic, and environmental factors in our own county whilst ensuring we are aligned with key economic drivers at regional and national level.

Kildare 2025 sets out a five-year vision that will accommodate future growth and strengthen economic development in a sustainable and responsible way. This strategy will feed into the review of the County Development Plan and the Local Economic and Community Plan and act as a reference document for participation in the future economic recovery and strategic plans that are being prepared by the Government and associated agencies.



Peter Carey
Chief Executive

Peter Carey



Cllr. Mark Stafford
Cathoirleach

Mark Stafford

KEY AREAS

This plan has identified **eight key areas that are critical to the future economic success of our county**. By working together with a common vision (and with support from Local and Central government) the **ambitions set out in this strategy can be realised**.

The key focus areas are

- 01 Indigenous Industry / SMEs
- 02 Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)
- 03 Knowledge economy
- 04 Equine Industry
- 05 Agri food Sector
- 06 Sustainable Tourism, Hospitality & Leisure
- 07 Retail
- 08 Climate Action & Green Economy

The Council has every confidence that the implementation of this strategy **will create an energy and commitment that will propel County Kildare** to the fore of economic innovation and **make it an even greater place to live, work and do business**

Each of these high-level objectives are underpinned by **three enabling actions**;

01
INVESTMENT IN PLACE

02
INVESTMENT IN PEOPLE

03
STRENGTHEN OUR BIDDING CAPACITY FOR FUNDS

By implementing this framework additional economic opportunities can be created for the county to supplement its successes in an agricultural, equine, industrial and tourism-based economy. In conclusion, Kildare County Council would like to acknowledge the input and experience of a range of people including County Kildare's Economic Forum (under the stewardship of Mr. Padraig McManus) who worked in unison with the Economic Development team in Kildare County Council to produce this ambitious plan. Sincere thanks also to Cllr. Ivan Keatley and the members of the Economic Development, Enterprise and Planning Strategic Policy Committee who supported the development and production of this strategy. The elected members of Kildare County Council have always supported a pro-business approach and their adoption of this 5-year plan is an important milestone.

Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION, VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In accordance with the Local Government Reform Act 2014, Kildare's Local Economic and Community Plan 2016- 2021 (LECP) is consistent with the core strategy of the Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023 which provides the spatial framework for the growth of Kildare. It is also consistent with the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES).

The high-level goal in the LECP for Economic and Employment is to

Actively promote, support and enable **economic activity, business development and employment** in Kildare building on its' core strength while responding to identified economic development challenges.

The Kildare 2025 Economic Development Strategy has been prepared to frame a longer-term vision for County Kildare. It will inform and provide a strategic policy framework for the Kildare's Local Economic and Community Plan (LCEP) economic actions. The LECP is due to be reviewed in 2021, hence the 2025 Strategy will inform its development.

In crafting the Kildare 2025 Economic Development Strategy, it is our intention to produce five-year strategic plans to guide economic development and investment up to 2040 commencing with this period up to 2025. This aligns with the National Planning Framework (NPF) Project Ireland 2040. Kildare 2025 also reflects with the Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) has been carefully aligns across several key areas, including Smart Specialisation Principles, Clustering Opportunities, Placemaking and Sectoral Opportunities.

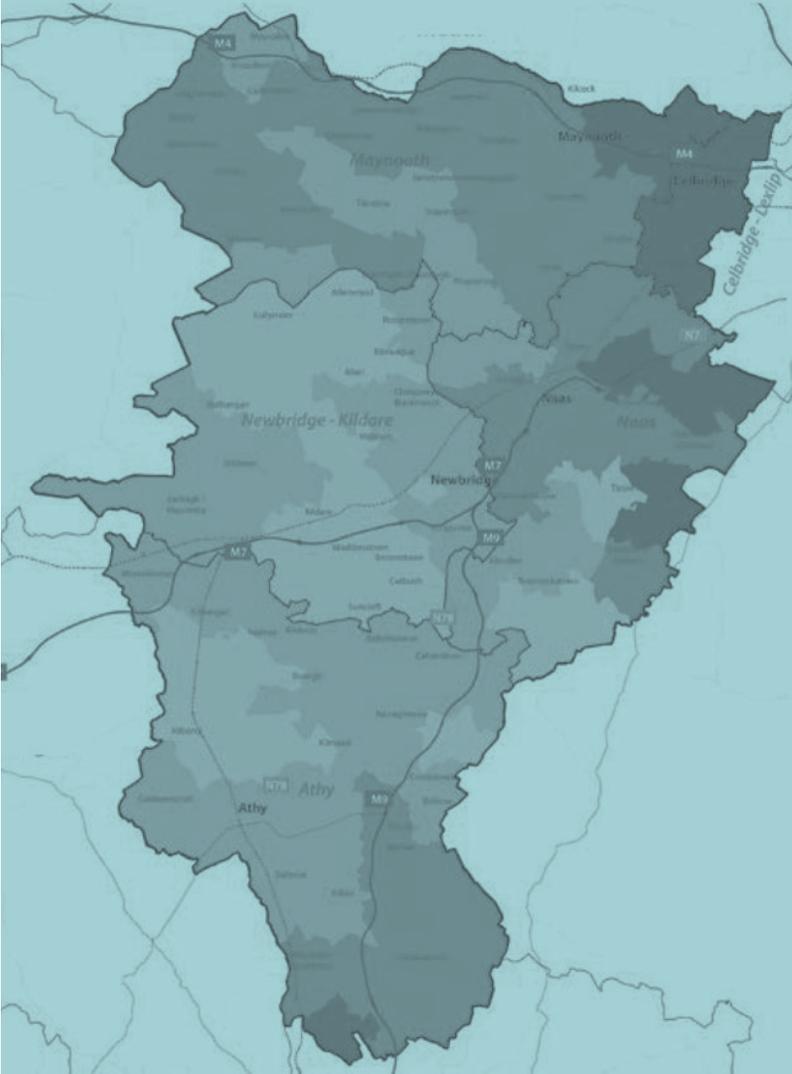
Kildare 2025 is crafted in the context of major challenges – the Covid-19 pandemic and recession, Brexit and climate change. It has never been more important to plan and set out a roadmap for a resilient, sustainable economy. Our Kildare 2025 focus is on a smart recovery based on entrepreneurship and investment, climate action and exploiting new opportunities. Kildare 2025 will build strength in our key sectors, play to our strengths and, as a county, unify our development focus.

Kildare 2025 is reflective of all national and regional policies. It has carefully considered the Report of the SME Taskforce:

National SME and Entrepreneurship Growth Plan, an ambitious long-term strategic blueprint for Irish SMEs and entrepreneurs, which sets out four areas of concentration, namely **Entrepreneurship, Productivity, Digitalisation and Competitiveness, Internationalisation and Clustering and Networks.**

We also take influence from the forthcoming **National Economic Plan**, a roadmap for a **resilient, sustainable economy** with three key themes: -

- 01** • Building Resilience across Enterprise and Sectors
- 02** • An Inclusive and Balanced Recovery
- 03** • Future-Proofing our Economy and Society



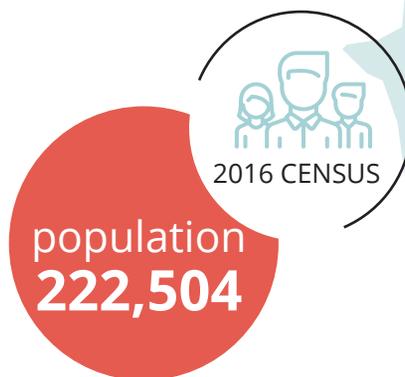
FOCUS AREAS & ENABLING ACTIONS

Kildare 2025 sets out high-level objectives under **EIGHT KEY FOCUS AREAS** underpinned by **THREE ENABLING ACTIONS** which will orchestrate and facilitate economic development and investment in the County over the next five years.

Our **FOCUS AREA** approach plays to our strengths. It adopts the principles of Smart Specialisation which is supported at EU level and advocated in the RSES

“ *bring together a geographical area’s key stakeholders in order to undertake an entrepreneurial discovery process; allowing them to identify their own competitive advantages with the view of utilising these strengths in developing economic opportunities. Such a process aims to bring together collective knowledge from local, regional and national bodies to ensure that the economic impact of public funds can be fully maximised* ”

KILDARE
is the
FIFTH-HIGHEST
populated
County in Ireland



With continuing rapid growth, Kildare is the fifth-highest populated County in Ireland (current population of 222,504 according to the 2016 census). Our strategic location in the Mid-East Region is a significant advantage. The County’s proximity to Dublin presents opportunities from an economic, social and environmental perspective but equally, many challenges.

Foreign Direct Investment:

Kildare has the second-highest rate of FDI nationally. It's estimated that 20% of all private-sector employment in the State is directly or indirectly attributable to FDI. Kildare's ability to attract and retain FDI is central to our economic stability and success. The key FDI sectors already represented in the County include technology, financial services and pharmaceuticals with Intel, Hewlett Packard Enterprise, Pfizer, P&G and IFS State Street choosing to invest in Kildare.

Commuter:

40% of Kildare's workforce commute to work outside the County. One of the key challenges of this Strategy will be to work towards reversing this percentage as the future of work changes. We are living in an era of a fundamental transformation in the way we work. Exploiting new opportunities for the future work blend of HUB- HOME- HQ will be a key focus of this Strategy.

Transport:

Kildare's improving transport infrastructure in both rail and road transportation has created a wealth of intermodal logistics opportunities linking into Dublin International Airport and Dublin Port. Artery development is a factor. Industrial and economic development has spread radially from Dublin city along the three primary motorway corridors, i.e., M4, M7 and M9 for both passenger movement to enable HUB-HOME- HQ Strategy and ease of moving goods around Ireland.

SME and Micro-Enterprise sector:

The SME and the micro-Enterprise sector represents approximately 92% of all active business in Kildare. Evidence from the 2008-2009 recession highlights that small business creation was the key driver in the recovery of the economy: creating the majority of new jobs. As revenues have fallen for a large proportion of small and medium-sized Enterprises in Europe since the onset of the Covid-19 crisis, exploiting new opportunities & global reach (notably in the green, equine, food and knowledge economies) will be a key focus of Kildare's 2025 actions.

The Report of the SME Taskforce: National SME and Entrepreneurship Growth Plan highlights the importance of entrepreneurship to Irish society, not only in economic and employment terms but also in creating a resilient, innovative community that serves the Irish consumer, EU and international markets. It stresses that in the context of a fast-moving external environment, entrepreneurship is very likely to increase in importance as local champions become more important contributors to developing a resilient society.

Kildare 2025 will benefit from the strengthened role of the Local Enterprise Office as part of the National Local Enterprise Plan. Under the SME theme, social enterprise is also a focus as an important sector with immense potential. The social economy has played an important role in addressing and mitigating the short and long-term impacts of the Covid-19 crisis on the economy and society. Social economy actors are providing innovative solutions to complement public service action.

In the long term, social economy organisations can help reshape the post-crisis economy by promoting inclusive and sustainable economic models.

Kildare 2025 In Context

Broadband:

While many urban areas in Kildare enjoy excellent high-speed broadband coverage, the National Broadband Plan estimates that of the 92,235 premises in Kildare, state intervention is needed to provide broadband to almost 29,000 properties. The improvement of Broadband Infrastructure is imperative to the sustainable development of Co. Kildare.

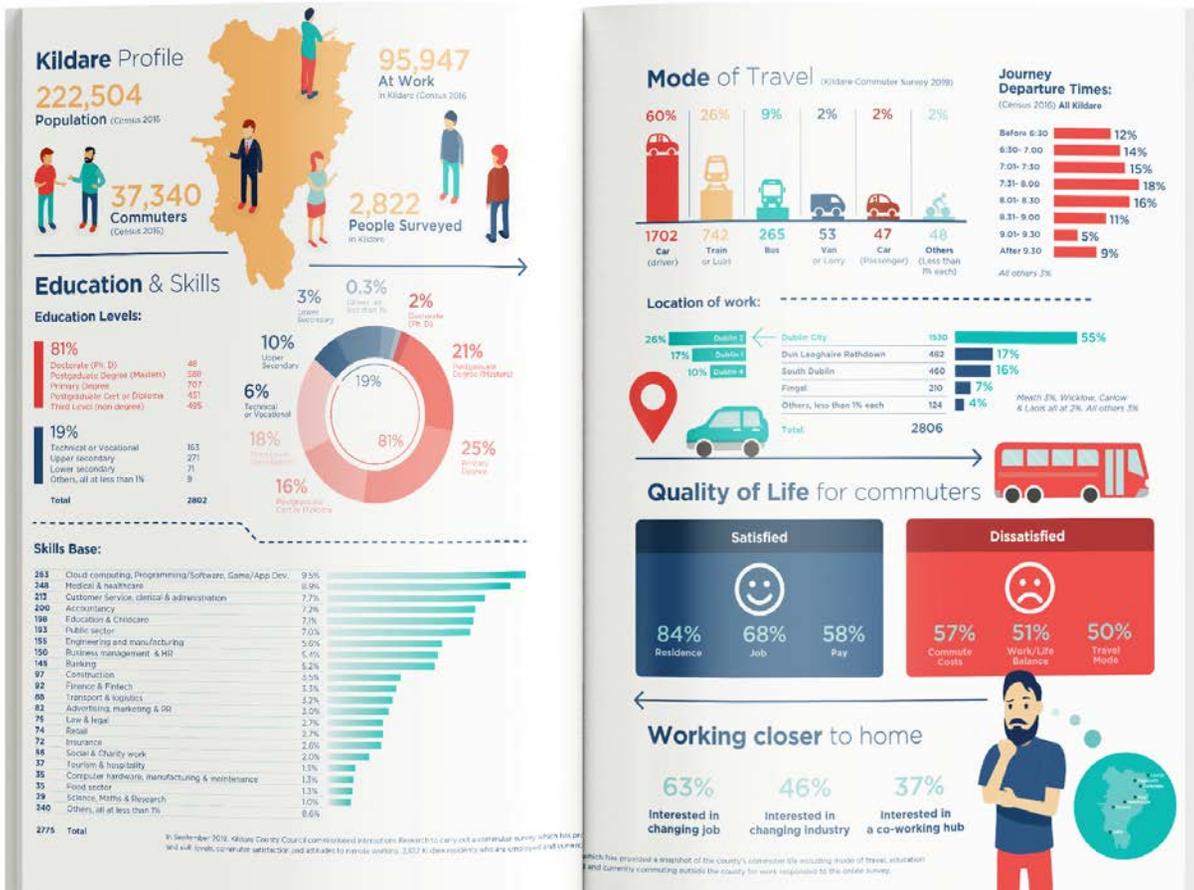
Skills:

The Mid-East Regional Skills Forum provides a cohesive structure for our further and higher education system to work collaboratively with employers to respond to the region's skills needs. Maynooth University and Carlow IT are distinctive and important components of the Irish higher education system.

Maynooth University is a key partner of Kildare County Council and this Economic Strategy must foster a growing engagement to deliver innovative impacts for Enterprise and the local economy in emerging sectors like advanced manufacturing, artificial intelligence and renewable energies. Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board is also at the heart of recovery; re-skilling and nurturing skills for the workplace of the future.

Tourism:

While County Kildare has a rich and diverse heritage and much to offer as a destination, the County has, in the past, underperformed in this sector. Accordingly, Kildare 2025 emphasises supporting the work of Kildare Fáilte (County Kildare's Tourism Board), the tourism and hospitality sector and relevant agencies.



Reference Kildare Commuter Survey, September 2019

The Challenges We Face

■ PANDEMIC/RECESSION

The global Coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19) has significantly impacted Kildare, our business ecosystem, and the people at the heart of our communities. It has highlighted vulnerabilities in our SMEs regarding lack of resources, limited technical capacity and capability and supply chain vulnerabilities. It has also highlighted that **SMEs are famously agile and quick to adapt**.

It is accepted that recession usually brings about an acceleration in business model change. On the other hand, pandemics enable entirely new categories of businesses and disruption, especially science and technology. Both pandemics and recessions are accelerants to innovation and across our priority sectors, Kildare 2025 will nurture and facilitate recovery and innovative growth.

Likewise, our communities have faced profound and unique challenges throughout the Covid-19 restrictions. Still, they have shown remarkable resilience, and, for many, Covid-19 has ushered in a permanent digital transformation in the way we communicate. Working from home has the potential to make a permanent impact on regenerating communities. For countless businesses, remote working practices will be part of their new norm, and smart co-working hubs need to be positioned throughout Kildare to provide structured, well connected, professional working environments.

The timely publication of **“Making Remote Work, the National Remote Work Strategy”**¹ will guide Kildare 2025. The objective of this national strategy is to ensure that **remote working is a permanent feature in the Irish workplace** in a way that maximises economic, social and environmental benefits. Of specific relevance to our work, three of the main actions arising are:-

- 01 — Doing what we can to **accelerate the provision of high-speed broadband** to all parts of Ireland.
- 02 — Mapping and investing in a network of **remote working hubs** across Ireland.
- 03 — Mandating that home and remote work should be the norm for **20 percent of public sector employment** – thereby increasing opportunities for home – hub working.

¹ Making-Remote-Work.pdf (enterprise.gov.ie)

BREXIT

Brexit is a once in a generation challenge for SMEs with the widespread concurrence that Irish SMEs need to make significant productivity gains to survive the fallout from Brexit. While there is a cautious welcome to the December 2020 free-trade agreement, Irish exporters and importers are steadying themselves for change, bearing the costs of customs, as well as higher transport overheads. Irish companies' choices are stark: try to absorb the cost increases through reduced margins or find new customers. The former may not be possible for Irish commodity producers and low margin businesses. Companies forced out of the UK market could look for new outlets for their products here on the home market but finding new markets either in the EU or further afield is the better option for all concerned. This, of course, is easier said than done.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time. Kildare is the second most affected County in terms of job loss impact as a result of the imminent ending of peat harvesting for power generation in the Midlands region. It is also disadvantaged by a shortage of suitable sites to establish new green Enterprises that could replace the labour-intensive work of peat extraction. Kildare County Council and Kildare Local Enterprise Office have confirmed that start-ups and small firms' ability to find suitable premises are potentially a key constraint on the development of the green technologies sector. The shortage has implications for economic growth locally and regionally (as many occupiers are as likely to consider other national options). Availability of sites for new start-ups and small businesses in the region is low.

Transport is the single biggest sectoral contributor to energy-related CO2 emissions. Without serious investment in mitigations such as remote working facilities, meeting targets will be extremely challenging. Kildare 2025 will deliver clear actions to reduce the 40% of Kildare's workforce, who before Covid-19, commuted to work outside the County. One of the key challenges of this Strategy will be to work towards reversing this percentage in the future of work changes.



The Opportunities We Can Embrace

With every challenge comes opportunity. Kildare 2025 has carefully considered:-

PANDEMIC/RECESSION

Covid-19 has presented new customer segments and new needs. Kildare 2025 is focused on seizing the unexpected opportunities created by the pandemic for SMEs.



DIGITISATION

Covid-19 pandemic has altered the purchasing habits of many customers. Businesses have had to accelerate the digitisation of their businesses or lose out. Through key actions we will enable SMEs to undertake transformative digitalisation of their entire Enterprise to increase value to customers and to develop in-house digital proficiency to continually adopt digitalisation.



FOCUS ON LOCAL

People are shopping more consciously, buying local and are embracing digital commerce.



HEALTH AND WELLBEING A PRIORITY

From a food and tourism sector perspective, our sharpened focus on health and wellbeing sets the scene for new sectoral opportunities.



LOGISTICS AND SUPPLY CHAIN

Not only impacted as a result of Covid-19 but also Brexit, Kildare can build on our strength as a location of choice for logistics and supply chain businesses.

CLUSTER OPPORTUNITIES

Clustering is a key economic principle underpinning Kildare 2025. As highlighted in the Report of the SME Taskforce: National SME and Entrepreneurship Growth Plan, networks and clusters have a **positive role to play in helping Irish SMEs** realise the benefits of collaboration and contribute towards increased **productivity, internationalisation and spurring entrepreneurship**. Networks and clusters can allow SMEs to tackle projects that they might not otherwise undertake, due to a lack of knowledge or resources, a limited number of industry contacts or relationships, organisational agility, or economies of scale.

Within the Kildare County Development Plan, Kildare County Council is currently creating five superclusters under its "Innovation Superclusters Initiative". This initiative will form the centrepiece of Kildare's Innovation and Skills Plan, a multi-year strategy to prepare Kildare for the innovative jobs of today and tomorrow and will form part of the Mid-East Region Enterprise Plan Network. The Innovation Superclusters Initiative is underpinned by the research and development of MU and KCC works directly with students and lecturers in the University to foster entrepreneurship through a number of initiatives.

Through Kildare 2025, further concentration on the clusters' scale will allow for greater understanding of their potential and more focused actions towards realising that potential. By encouraging collaboration and increasing linkages between different economic participants within the key clusters, Kildare County Council and collaborating partners will develop greater economic resilience in their Enterprise base, while allowing for knowledge diffusion and productivity gains.

This is fully reflective of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and the Kildare County Development Plan where policy alignment is evident across a host of specific actions. For example, RSES Action 1.8 seeks to promote the development of traditional industrial clusters in consultation with companies and relevant agencies, with a specific focus directed at the Equine, Knowledge, Food, Tourism, and Supply Chain sectors while Action 4.3 seeks to introduce Ireland's first Equine Technology Accelerator which aims to increase the number of Equine Tech Businesses based in the County.

FUTURE OF WORK

We will continue to see an **increase in Kildare's virtual workforce** as more people work from home and enjoy doing so. For corporates to fully embrace blended work and become distributed organisations; co-working hubs need to be in place.

The flagship Mid East Regional Innovation Think Space (MERITS) building which will open in 2021 will be pivotal to the provision of international standard workspaces. A key to success, as cited by the IDA, is the bundling of space and mapping the regions talent. Kildare 2025 reinforces that our emerging co-working hubs and Enterprise centres need to relate to skills and talent.

BREXIT AND INTERNATIONALISATION

Given that **Kildare is a proven investment location with the second highest FDI rate nationally**, it is ideally placed to **appeal to international organisations** seeking an English-speaking EU base. Relocations from the UK and Northern Ireland are a compelling opportunity.

According to the Chartered Institute of Procurement & Supply UK, nearly one in seven EU companies with UK suppliers has moved part of Britain's operations. As the opportunities and challenges of Brexit begin to crystallise, Ireland has become the location of choice for companies looking to relocate their European hubs from the UK. Ireland's close ties to, and shared language with, the UK, as well as its comparable legal system and culture, give us a significant edge when it comes to attracting UK based multinationals. Across the UK companies are carefully considering how to restructure their operations to cope with Brexit disruption. Sectors for which common regulation across the EU is vital are now looking to Ireland as their new base in the EU. Kildare needs to be ready to capitalise on this opportunity.

The need to scale up current SME internationalisation initiatives to increase SME direct exporting and to expand the range of markets addressed is reflected in the Report of the SME Taskforce: National SME and Entrepreneurship Growth Plan which sets out the ambition to expand the current exporter base and accelerate the market diversification of existing exporters. It seeks to enable SME and Micro Enterprises to become "export capable", and drive micro and start-up companies to take the first steps on the export journey and capitalise on export opportunities. Further, the Government's Global Ireland: Ireland's Global Footprint to 2025 initiative aims to accelerate diversification of export markets by Enterprise Ireland clients.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Covid-19 has shown how unprepared we are for some of the biggest risks we face. Lessons can be learned from the response to Covid-19 to mitigate and adapt to the threat of climate change. Key to new opportunities is investing in green economy opportunities and initiatives as a source of competitive advantage.

Through key FOCUS AREA 8 Climate Action & Renewable Energy, Kildare 2025 will pursue opportunities in;

- **GREEN ENTERPRISE INFRASTRUCTURE** – the development of a Green Enterprise Zone at one of the most prominent sites associated with the peat era will stimulate innovation by providing the physical and skills environment to choreograph opportunities for green/circular entrepreneurs and the interaction of staff. Activities will facilitate relationships and create critical mass between businesses to generate, sharpen and accelerate the advancement of ideas.
- **SKILLS PROGRAMMES** – Kildare will act as an inclusive skill and re-skill champion that epitomises the Just Transition fund's principles, driving structural, space and community growth through the promotion and clustering green and circulate economy businesses. Kildare Wicklow Education and Training Board is playing a leadership role in this regard.

Key to new opportunities is **investing in green economy opportunities and initiatives** as a source of competitive advantage.



PLAY TO OUR KEY STRENGTHS - Unique economic development opportunities:

- Kildare is synonymous with the equine industry and is often referred to as the “Thoroughbred County”. A recent report by Deloitte Consultants indicated that the industry is worth €1.8 billion nationally. At the heart of the equine industry, there are many opportunities for Kildare to develop and exploit. The Curragh Racecourse and Training Grounds which covers 1,500 acres is the epicentre of the horseracing industry in Ireland supports and 1,176 jobs with a direct and indirect economic impact valued at almost €100m (€99.6m) according to an economic impact assessment of horseracing, racing tourism and thoroughbred training of the area.
- **STRENGTHENING THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY** - with world-class educators and emerging projects in MERITS and the Equine Tech Hub, there will be a focus on building comparative advantage through activities that contribute to a rapid pace of technical and scientific advancement innovation.
- **AGRI-FOOD** - with the publication of the Kildare Food and Beverage Strategy 2021-2023, the intent is to harness the many strengths of the food landscape in the County and assist the industry in Kildare to position itself in such a way that will allow it to capitalise on the growth of the food and drink sector over the next number of years.
- **TOURISM** - Some key opportunities
 - The development of the Barrow Blueway with the realisation of 46 km of walking, cycling and paddling trails along the Barrow Line is a game-changing opportunity for the County. It acts as the base for developing a Blueway Economic Plan (LEADER and Steering Group) and Enterprise Development and Capacity Building (Local Enterprise Office).
 - Food tourism – building on the work instigated in 2015 under the ‘Foodscape’ initiative, supported by County Kildare Fáilte and Kildare County Council. As a collective initiative, it aims to showcase the variety of high-quality restaurants and artisan food producers in County Kildare. ‘Foodscape’ has hosted some very successful food exhibitions at racing events and festivals in the County.
 - Equine tourism - plans for a new €3.2 million racehorse simulation attraction at the National Stud and Gardens will realise a new visitors attraction. The first of its kind in Ireland, it sees the National Stud and Fáilte Ireland working together increase visitor numbers to the Thoroughbred County. Furthermore, Kildare County Council and Fáilte Ireland are working with key stakeholders to develop a new “Thoroughbred Country” brand and a Destination Development Plan.

CREATE A KILDARE BRAND

A key opportunity of focus that Kildare 2025 will weave across all FOCUS AREAS is placemaking and **developing an overarching Kildare brand and family of sub-brands**. Place branding will facilitate us to communicate a clear and standout vision and purpose for Kildare that helps give it a distinguishable market position and then a recognisable brand identity. Placemaking (developing places with an emphasis on high quality urban design principles) is at the heart of Kildare 2025 and the Kildare County Development Plan. It is essential that there is a focus on the quality of life, as it has been proven to attract high skilled workers and companies. These components are key in ensuring high value and sustainable economic growth. Reflecting RSES and the National Planning Framework, the focus on placemaking aims to ensure that County Kildare is a healthy and attractive to live, learn and work, with the view of attracting human capital, investment and employment.

Vision

Kildare will become a major economic force in the Irish and European economy,
 a leading centre for commercial investment
 – both foreign direct investment and indigenous business growth, capitalising on the strength of its higher education institutions and further education champions, the skills and wellbeing of its workforce and its environmental and heritage attributes.

The achievement of the objectives in the Kildare 2025 will be met through the delivery of specific and defined actions.



8 KEY FOCUS AREAS

01 Indigenous Industry / SMEs x 13 actions	02 Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) x 14 actions
03 Knowledge economy x 7 actions	04 Equine Industry x 8 actions
05 Agri food Sector x 9 actions	06 Sustainable Tourism, Hospitality & Leisure x 7 actions
07 Retail x 8 actions	08 Climate Action & Green Economy x 9 actions

UNDERPINNED BY 3 ENABLING ACTIONS

01
INVESTMENT IN PLACE
 Placemaking, Quality of Life, Enabling Infrastructure, Digitally Supported Communities

02
INVESTMENT IN PEOPLE
 Education, Training & Skills

03
BIDDING CAPACITY FOR FUNDS
 strengthen our bidding capacity in utilising competitive based funding resources at national and EU level

01

Indigenous Industry / SMEs

The continued growth of our economy is highly dependent on entrepreneurs and the SMEs that they create, develop, and grow. Kildare Economic Forum's vision for indigenous industry is that **by 2025, Kildare and its hinterland will be among the leading entrepreneurial regions in Europe**; characterised by a highly conducive environment for entrepreneurship and innovative start-ups. Kildare has a diverse SME sector which has very significant growth potential but faces unprecedented challenges.

A 2019 Global Business Monitor surveyed SMEs from 13 countries and found Irish SMEs were struggling with rising costs and cashflow difficulties². When Covid 19 struck in March 2020, its impact was immediate and stark. The pandemic has had a pervasive, penetrating, devastating and immediate effect on national economies.

The ESRI contend

“ The Covid-19 pandemic has been an unprecedented economic shock for Irish SMEs as one in every two small firms suffered a loss during the lockdown phase. ”



² <https://www.gemconsortium.org/economy-profiles/ireland-2>



What learning can we apply from this crisis to assist businesses to emerge in a stronger position?

At the same time, Irish SMEs remain most exposed to Brexit's twists and turns. Brexit will make it more difficult for start-ups to start exporting to what has always been our training ground and testbed for new ventures. As highlighted, Irish SMEs face unique challenges to their operating environment posed by Covid-19. A dramatic and sudden loss of demand and revenue has affected their ability to function and caused severe liquidity shortages. Measures to contain the disease have also disrupted the availability of staff and supply chains. These various impacts are affecting both larger and smaller firms. However, the effect on SMEs is especially severe; mainly because of higher levels of vulnerability and lower resilience related to their size. While Kildare 2025 places a strong focus on supporting existing SMEs with their resilience and growth plans, it will also strive to create an environment that promotes new and indigenous entrepreneurial SMEs.

The Report of the SME Taskforce: National SME and Entrepreneurship Growth Plan, published in 2021, sets out the national ambition for entrepreneurship:-

“Overall, the objective for entrepreneurship is that Ireland will be characterised by a strong entrepreneurial culture, recognised for the innovative quality of its entrepreneurs, and acknowledged by entrepreneurs as a world-class environment in which to start and grow a business. The challenge is to harness to the full the entrepreneurial potential of all those living in Ireland, whether they are establishing a social or commercial Enterprise”.

In the context of Covid-19 recovery, Kildare 2025 has adopted measures to support SMEs to move their focus from protecting their businesses to recovery and growth. The important role of the Local Enterprise Office and Enterprise Ireland is reflected in this strategy.

The Covid-19 pandemic may have the unintended effect of pushing us forward with the future of work. Remote working has the potential to open up an array of economic and environmental opportunities in our regions. More than one in four private-sector workers in Ireland can work remotely, and the development of co-working hubs with high-speed broadband has the potential to open up an array of economic and environmental opportunities and stimulate inclusive recovery in Kildare. Influence has been taken from the “Regional Co-Working Analysis”³ published by the three Regional Assemblies of Ireland and also the publication of “Making Remote Work – National Remote Work Strategy” which seeks to facilitate increased remote work adoption in a way that reaps the many benefits and mitigates negative side-effects of remote working through removing barriers, developing infrastructure, providing guidance, raising awareness and leading by example.

Strategic emphasis has also been placed on supporting and growing Kildare’s social Enterprise sector. Ireland is highly reliant on social Enterprise yet can create many more services and jobs in the sector. Forfás has estimated that Ireland’s social Enterprise sector supports over 25,000 jobs but has the potential to create at least a further 65,000. In 2019, the Minister for Rural and Community Development in Ireland published Ireland’s first-ever National Social Enterprise Policy 2019 - 2022. The Policy aims to create an enabling environment for social enterprise to grow and contribute to Ireland’s social and economic progress.



³ Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly More than 1 in 4 private sector workers are capable of operating remotely, analysis from the 3 Regional Assemblies of Ireland shows - Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly (emra.ie)

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1:

By 2025, embed innovation among indigenous industry companies in Kildare by



Piloting new approaches to promoting local entrepreneurship and new models for engaging new promoters in start-ups.



Increasing the level of innovation, technology adoption and digitisation within Kildare SME's.



Driving greater interaction between SME's/ Kildare County Council and the Local Enterprise Office clients, larger firms and third level to transfer knowledge and skills and to create local synergies.



Improve the competitiveness and productivity of small and micro enterprises.



Develop the confidence and drive the ambition of local firms to scale and compete internationally.



Development plan and implement of four-year Kildare Local Enterprise Plan.



Encouraging the provision of 'live-work' communities, in which employment, residency and sustainable transport facilities are in close proximity to each other, to reduce long-distance commuter trends and congestion.



Supporting the use of town centre locations for new service focused enterprises.



Identify suitable locations and support the provision of co-working facilities, digital hubs/eHubs and eWorking centres throughout the County that function as outreach hubs for city-based employers and promote flexible working arrangements.



Build awareness of Social Enterprise and introduce supports to grow and to strengthen social Enterprise.

Kildare Delivers on Indigenous Industry

Ref.	Action	Target / Output	Stakeholders	Timeframe
1.1	ENTERPRISE START-UP PROGRAMMES Pilot new approaches to promoting local entrepreneurship and new models for engaging new promoters in start-ups.	Increase the number of added-value start-ups by 50% from the 2018 base.	Enterprise Ireland, Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office	Ongoing commitment
1.2	SME STABILISATION mentor panel.	Expert advisory panel to support stabilisation in the SME sector.	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, Enterprise Ireland	Ongoing commitment
1.3	FOCUSED MEASURES TO ACCELERATE SME INNOVATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote and assist access to the agile and Innovation funds across all industry sectors with a key focus on digitisation and sustainability. Increase one-to-one client engagement to identify innovation and technology challenges within Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office client firms. Develop and deliver innovation management programmes suitable for micro Enterprises. Through the development of new engagement models, drive greater interaction between local FDI, larger firms, the third level and Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office clients to transfer knowledge and skills and to create local synergies. Maximise European funded programmes to identify new models of innovation support. 	Increase innovation levels in our SME's.	Enterprise Ireland, Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, Carlow IT, MUI	Ongoing commitment
1.4	INNOVATION 2 Host an annual Innovation Conference for the SME community to increase innovation awareness and pathways.	Increase innovation in our SME's	Enterprise Ireland, Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, Carlow IT, MUI,	Ongoing commitment
1.5	INTERNATIONALISATION 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop the confidence and drive the ambition of local firms to scale and compete internationally. Global Ambition Programme - Identify and encourage businesses which have the potential to develop and grow employment and export. Develop inward buyer visits to identify new sales and export opportunities and maximise the Enterprise Europe Network in this regard 	Increase the numbers of Kildare companies scaling and competing internationally	Enterprise Ireland, Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, Carlow IT, MUI, Enterprise Europe Network	Ongoing commitment

Ref.	Action	Target / Output	Stakeholders	Timeframe
1.6	<p>INTERNATIONALISATION 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration of KCC, EI, MUI and Carlow IT to help foster the environment for new start-ups in areas with potential for internationalisation. • Work to increase engagement by Kildare SME's with Enterprise Ireland overseas offices. 	Increase exports levels of Kildare Companies	Enterprise Ireland, Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, Carlow IT, MUI,	Ongoing
1.7	<p>INTERNATIONALISATION 3</p> <p>Work with colleagues in Mid-East Region to develop and fund a First Time Exporters Programme.</p>	Increase the number of first-time exporte companies	Enterprise Ireland, Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, Carlow IT, MUI, Meath & Wicklow LEO Intertrade Ireland	Ongoing
1.8	<p>SME CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>Promote the development of 5 traditional industry clusters in consultation with the companies, agencies and Higher Education Institutes and advance the establishment of five superclusters under the "Innovation Superclusters Initiative".</p>	<p>Creation and strengthening of 5 clusters in Kildare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equine • Knowledge • Food • Tourism • Supply chain 	Enterprise Ireland, Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, Carlow IT, MUI, Bord Bia, HRI, Failte Ireland	2019 -2023
1.9	<p>THE FUTURE OF WORK</p> <p>Create a network of connected Innovation and Digital Hubs in the County. The development of hubs will take into account the NACE sub-sectors of the economy that have been identified as being remote workable. This could improve their chances of accommodating remote workers in these hubs. See listing in Appendices 3.</p> <p>Where possible, aim to ensure that new hubs are provided in suitable locations within towns where they can attract workers and footfall to town centres, which will support local economies.</p>	Establish and connect 10 hubs across the Kildare that are reflective of remote workable NACE sub-sectors	Enterprise Ireland, Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, LEADER, DETE, Department of Rural	2021 - 2023
1.10	<p>UPSKILLING</p> <p>Work with industry to tailor-make courses where possible to meet the requirements/market needs of any companies considering locating their business in Kildare and its hinterland.</p>	Talent pipeline and skills development	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, MUI, ETB, Kildare Chamber Skillnets, Regional Skills Forum	2019 - 2025

Ref.	Action	Target / Output	Stakeholders	Timeframe
1.11	<p>ESTABLISH A BUSINESS SUPPORT UNIT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and enhance the First Stop Shop referral and advisory services of the Local Enterprise Offices by work with all strategic Enterprise partners at local and national level to deliver a seamless local support and referral system, Develop an integrated local Enterprise support ecosystem at local and national levels Development and implement a three year Kildare Local Enterprise Plan 	Interface with and facilitate new and existing businesses in Kildare	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, Enterprise Ireland, LEADER.	Ongoing
1.12	<p>SOCIAL ENTERPRISE</p> <p>Social (or For Impact) Enterprises and organisations operate in all the economic sectors and represent an important part of the economic and corporate landscape (more than 10% of all EU business). We will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support social Enterprise initiation and start-ups through targeted programmes and initiatives. Provide tailored training for existing social Enterprises 	Provide training and support in business planning, mentoring, leadership, governance, capacity building, financial planning and digital innovation to help improve their business potential.	Kildare Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, LEADER Partnership, Social Entrepreneurs Ireland	2021-2025
1.13	<p>PLACEMAKING</p> <p>Develop a KILDARE brand with a sub-brand "strapline" to position the strengths of Kildare for indigenous business</p>	Single brand with clear identifying SME USP's of Kildare	County Kildare Economic Forum	Q4 2021



02

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

Kildare 2025 seeks to build on our **proven track record as an outstanding area to establish and develop a multinational business**. The new gains will come from expansions of the existing base of foreign companies and new arrivals. Kildare is already an established base location for global brands that include a relatively more attractive place for businesses seeking guaranteed and unfettered access to the EU single market, the largest market globally with 500 million.

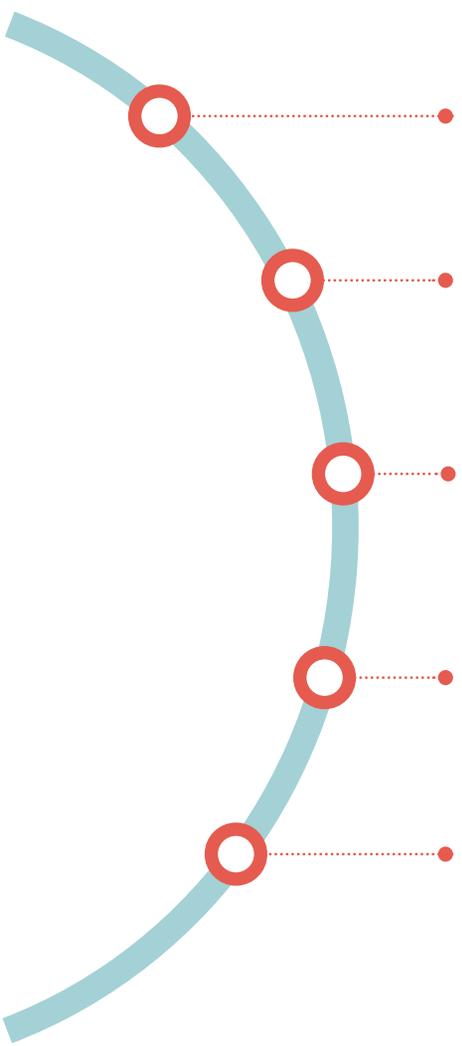
Kildare 2025 is committed to facilitating the County to be more attractive to inward investors (FDI and indigenous) by working to ensure needs-based services and infrastructure around the County (addressing broadband availability will be key to this Action) and a new focus on our skilled talent pool.

Kildare 2025 acknowledges the importance of supporting the delivery of the compact growth targets of Kildare's designated key towns. The degree to which these geographical areas can grow will have a notable bearing on the County's ability to attract additional multinational companies. The development of urban centres of scale is key to developing agglomeration benefits, which is considered an important factor in creating an appropriate economic environment for multinational companies. The IDA Ireland's new strategy, *'Driving Recovery and Sustainable Growth 2021-2024'* commits to marketing Kildare and the Mid-East region drawing on existing assets, including property solutions and placemaking.



The FDI performance in the region has been consistent over the past five years with employment among IDA clients increasing by 6%. Counties in the Mid-East also benefit hugely from the direct and indirect employment generated by IDA client companies located in Dublin. Of note for Kildare 2025, during the period of their last strategy, IDA acquired additional development land in Newbridge. The IDA will target 40 investments for the Mid-East region in the period 2021 to 2024 through a focus on investment opportunities arising in services, high value manufacturing, and RD&I.

As evident from the RSES, one of the key economic benefits of developing urban centres of scale within the region, is to ensure that we can accrue agglomeration benefits. Agglomeration allows for a variety of external benefits such as labour and knowledge spill overs, supplier concentration, and specialisation, which in turn contributes to increased productivity and regional economic growth. For this reason – and other factors – the IDA notes that clear trends are evident in the demands of multinational companies in selecting locations; with one of the main reasons being “*regions of scale with appropriate urban centres*”⁴. Therefore, ensuring investment priorities align with the growth ambitions of Kildare’s designated key towns – namely Naas and Maynooth – is imperative.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

Create an average of 300 gross new jobs a year over the five years 2019 to 2025 inclusive.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2

Support existing FDI large industrial companies in sustaining and expanding their business at appropriate locations.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

Continue to strengthen relations with large economies such as the USA, China and the EU to promote Kildare as a location for new international investment.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4

Identify and leverage the County Kildare Diaspora to encourage mobile investments into the County.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5

Create a Kildare Brand with specific tagline for FDI appeal.

⁴ https://www.idaireland.com/docs/publications/ida_strategy_final

Kildare Delivers on Foreign Direct Investment

Ref.	Action	Target / Output	Stakeholders	Timeframe
2.1	FDI INVESTMENT VALUE PROPOSITION STRATEGY Develop an overarching investment value proposition strategy and heightened public-private-community intent and collaboration to attract FDI	Kildare FDI Strategic Plan	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, Kildare Chamber, IDA, MUI	Q3 2021
2.2	SUPPORT KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN DELIVERING THE COMPACT GROWTH TARGETS OF NAAS AND MAYNOOTH Ensure that Kildare 2025 is further aligned with economic and spatial priorities at a national and regional level.	Kildare FDI Strategic Plan	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, Kildare Chamber, IDA, MUI, EMRA	Ongoing
2.3	PROPERTY DATABASE Compile, update and publish information on the supply of marketable commercial buildings and zoned sites for potential development in County Kildare	Relevant Data Base of office and zoned land available	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office	Q3 2021
2.4	MARKETING TOOLKIT Promote and develop key land banks and business parks in conjunction with IDA and Enterprise Ireland targeting key priority business sector	Produce a marketing toolkit including web portal	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office	Q1 2022
2.5	TALENT MAPPING Talent mapping -to combine workspace and talent available in a marketing package to potential tenants and FDI leads	Understand the skills base in Kildare	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, Regional Skills Forum Maynooth University	Q3 2021
2.6	WELCOME and ORIENTATION PANEL Create a key panel of experts ready to meet and respond to potential investors enquiries/requirements	List of agreeable owner Mangers of FDI companies in Kildare	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office	Q3 2021
2.7	CASE STUDY SERIES Compile a series of case studies from existing FDI companies outlining why Kildare <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overarching narrative/story • Physical/infrastructure assets • Workforce attributes • Clustering/supply chains • Connectivity • Knowledge and R&D base • Business support • Potential benefits to incoming investors 	Stock of FDI case studies for website	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office	Q4 2021

Ref.	Action	Target / Output	Stakeholders	Timeframe
2.8	DEDICATED LIASION Create a dedicated liaison person for each existing company	All FDI companies met	CS & Economic	Q4 2021
2.9	INVESTMENT ENQUIRY PROTOCOL Develop a preplanning protocol for all investment enquires	Excellence in Customer Service provided to enquires	KCC Planning and HOE	Q4 2021
2.10	BUSINESS BAROMETER SURVEY Conduct Business barometer survey amongst existing FDI	Business Barometer report produced	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office	Q2 2022
2.11	BUILDING CONNECTIONS Host Annual Industry round table forum	Gathering of FDI companies with CE & Eco Dept	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office	Ongoing
2.12	KILDARE DIASPORA STRATEGY AND OUTREACH ACTIONS Develop a Kildare Diaspora Strategy and Outreach Actions. Inaugural annual trade visit to Boston Enhance economic focus of existing St Patrick's Day visits	Kildare Diaspora Strategy Doc Connection with 20 US-based Kildare business Reps Create a plan to identify economic for St. Patrick's visits	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, Kildare Chamber County Kildare Economic Forum, Dept of Foreign Affairs	Q1 2022
2.13	DIGITAL MARKETING FOR GLOBAL REACH Create bespoke digital marketing material to build awareness	Suite of Marketing Materials to promote Kildare	County Kildare Economic Forum	Q2 2022
2.14	PLACEMAKING – develop a KILDARE brand with a sub-brand “strapline” to position the strengths of Kildare for FDI	Single brand with clear identifying FDI USP's of Kildare	County Kildare Economic Forum	Q2 2022



03

Knowledge Economy

The knowledge economy is a system based around **intellectual capital or brainpower**. With the Mid-East Regional Innovation Think Space (MERITS) opening in 2021, Kildare will benefit from a cluster of Irish and international new-technology companies. MERITS will give much-needed infrastructure, mentorship and support to attract high technology investment and industries.

Likewise, the development of the new Irish Equine Health and Welfare Campus with world-leading facilities and expertise for research and diagnostics and Equine Tech Innovation Ireland's development as Ireland's first equine technology accelerator are transformational investments in Kildare's knowledge economy. MaynoothWorks (MW)'s success is the inspiration to add critical mass to the nascent technology start-up culture started by MaynoothWorks in the wider County and region.

Kildare 2025 seeks to further intensify our growth in knowledge-intensive service sectors. There is growth in demand for both qualifications and tacit knowledge, with scope for rewarding and high-paid work – quite possibly in self-employment. Contrary to popular belief, digital transformation is less about technology and more about people. Our ability to adapt to an ever more digital future depends on developing the next generation of skills, closing the gap between talent supply and demand, and future-proofing your own and others' potential. Hence a key focus on Kildare 2025 is to strengthen relationships and transfer of knowledge between employers, education and training providers, to ensure our workforce's quality – a county of people armed with relevant knowledge, entrepreneurial agility and analytical skills.





STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

Further enhance and develop key linkages and partnerships with Maynooth University including the branding of the area as a centre of excellence in the knowledge-based economy.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2

Work with Kildare County Council to further develop the area as an attractor for Life Sciences, High Tech, BioTech, ICT, Research & Development employment.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

Ensure best possible county-wide broadband capacity and purpose telecom infrastructure (Cross-cutting Actions 8).



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4

Ensure the emergence of a smart economy impacts town and village levels, benefitting all in the community.

Our actions align with several economic oriented **“Regional Policy Objectives” (RPOs)** in the RSES to enhance components that are instrumental in growing the knowledge-based economy of the County and would include:

- RPO 6.25 and 6.27 which seeks support for education and training providers to address skills shortages and lifelong learning issues
- RPO 6.26 which seeks to support and foster collaboration of industry and research
- RPO 6.31, which seeks to support Enterprise development agencies and Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office in their efforts to increase business innovation capacity, create a network of co-working hubs and to promote linkages between multinational companies and Irish owned Enterprises



Kildare Delivers on the Knowledge Economy

Ref.	Action	Target / Output	Stakeholders	Timeframe
3.1	MODEL OF START-UP SUPPORT Provide a model of start-up support to existing and potential knowledge economy entrepreneurs in Kildare, supporting new start-ups and the acceleration / scaling of existing high-tech firms in the region	Provide attractive package of supports to be a base of choice for start-ups and scale ups.	MERITS, MU Commercialisation Office, Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, Enterprise Ireland	Q2 2021
3.2	SME'S ENGAGED IN INNOVATION & RESEARCH Promote linkage between the knowledge economy, research sectors, and other relevant sectors and Enterprises, to achieve synergy between these groups.	Opportunity to increase ability of companies of all sizes to engage in innovation and research	MERITS, MU, Kildare County Chamber, KWETB, Enterprise Ireland, Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office	Q2 2021
3.3	UNLOCK RESOURCES Maximising the potential to combine funding opportunities, promoting public and private partnership across business and education.	Provide access to New Frontiers / BICs / NDRC / other tech accelerator programmes	Enterprise Ireland, Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, MERITS, MU, Kildare County Chamber, KWETB	Q2 2021
3.4	BUILDING INNOVATION CAPACITY Innovation Workshops, deliver a series of innovation-centred events to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design Thinking • Business Model Innovation • Customer experience mapping 	Provide annual programme of innovation building skills events and programmes.	MERITS, MU, Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, Enterprise Ireland, KWETB	Q1 2021
3.5	HUB AND SPOKE INNOVATION NETWORK Support MERITS team to provide hub and spoke innovation supports to the network of up to 10 connected Innovation and Digital Hubs across the Kildare (developed under Action 1.10).	Networking & connectivity amongst knowledge and tech companies across the region.	MERITS and County Kildare Economic Forum	Q1 2021
3.6	KNOWLEDGE ADOPTION BY NON-TECH BUSINESSES Provide opportunities for non-tech businesses to collaborate with experts in adoption of new technologies driving efficiencies and capabilities across multiple sectors.	Unlock the wider effective use of technology to support talent and skills provision, to grow Enterprise	MERITS, MU, Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, Enterprise Ireland, KWETB	Q1 2021
3.7	PLACEMAKING – develop a KILDARE brand with a sub-brand “strapline” to position the strengths of Kildare for a smart/knowledge economy	Single brand with clear identifying Single brand with clear identifying FDI USP's of Kildare	County Kildare Economic Forum	Q2 2022



04

Equine Industry

The Kildare Equine Industry has a world-class reputation. It is also hugely important to the County's economy, directly employing approximately 5,500⁵ people with a further 10,000 people in associated industries and services. The bloodstock industry is a significant land user in the County. Kildare has a large concentration of high-quality stud farms. Home to the Irish National Stud, and many prominent and world-class stud farms, the County combines talented trainers and world-class training facilities, particularly around the Curragh area. Several other associated Enterprises, dependent on the bloodstock industry, have been established in the County, and which provide employment and wealth creation.

Kildare is the host county for the regulatory bodies in both the Sport Horse and Racing industries (Horse Sport Ireland and Horse Racing Ireland) as well as having three racetracks out of the twenty-six in the country (Punchestown, Naas and the Curragh), all of which have undergone major redevelopment in recent years. The Curragh's redevelopment is worth €65 million. Importantly, Kildare has the talent required to support the emergence of a dedicated equine innovation incubator, including many professional teams of veterinarians, blacksmiths, trainers & riders available to provide vital testbed services.

Kildare is at the heart of the Irish bloodstock and horse-racing industry; with most of the key industry bodies having their headquarters here including Horse Racing Ireland, Horse Sport Ireland, Tote Ireland, Irish Thoroughbred Marketing, Irish Horseracing Regulatory Body, Racing Academy and Centre of Education, Irish Equine Centre, Weatherby's Ireland (Stud Book), Irish Racehorse Trainers Association, Irish Thoroughbred Breeders Association. Kildare is also home to Goff's Bloodstock Sales, the principal public sales company in Ireland. In 2018, 81 Trainers, training 1,840 horses, were based in Kildare.

⁵ Figures from Kildare County Development Plan 2005-2011 (to be updated)



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

Promote Kildare as “The Thoroughbred County” associating the County with excellence in everything that happens in Co. Kildare.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2

Facilitate and support the development and expansion of equine pharmaceuticals / equine food businesses and other related industries in the County.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

Secure EU funding for Transfer of Innovation for our equine tech Enterprise acceleration.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4

Attract new overseas owners to locate, breed and race their horses in Kildare.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5

Pursuing commercial rates policies which do not impact equine centres as sporting and training venues.



Kildare Delivers on the Equine Industry

Ref.	Action	Target / Output	Stakeholders	Timeframe
4.1	SUPPORTING OUR RACECOURSES Continue to support & the ongoing development of the 3 racecourses in the County	3 viable racecourses	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, HRI, Kildare Failte, Kildare Chamber	Ongoing
4.2	INNOVATION AND DIGITISATION Support and champion the redevelopment of the Irish Equine Centre in Johnstown as a new Irish Equine Health and Welfare Campus, ensuring world leading facilities and expertise are available in this critical research and diagnostic facility.	The establishment of a world-class centre of excellence within the County	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office	Q4 2022
4.3	ACCELERATION Introduce Ireland's First Equine Technology Accelerator. Equine Tech Innovation Ireland could develop and champion Ireland's first equine technology accelerator.	Increase and cluster Equine Tech Businesses	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, Equine Tech Innovation/Irish National Stud	Q3 2021
4.4	SECTOR SUSTAINABILITY 1 Establish Stakeholder forum	A strong Equine Industry Network	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, Kildare Chamber HRI/ Horse Sport Ireland	Q3 2021
4.5	SECTOR SUSTAINABILITY 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pursue planning policies which protect the environmental qualities which have led to the development of Kildare as the centre of the equine industry in Ireland Give special mention to the sector in all future development plans with a commitment to protecting and nurturing the environment which allows the industry to flourish in Co. Kildare 	Environmental future-proofing	KCC planning dept	Ongoing
4.6	SECTOR SUSTAINABILITY 3 Assist with sectoral strengthening grant applications to central government where local authority support is required.	Sectoral future-proofing	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office	Ongoing
4.7	EU TRANSFER OF INNOVATION Ensure benefit is derived from pan European equine connections	Develop linkages with EU centres of equine excellence and secure EU funding for a collaborative	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, HRI/ITM (Irish Thorough-bred Marketing)	Q1 2022
4.8	PLACEMAKING Create a Kildare Brand – create a “strapline” to position the strengths of Kildare as a world-class equine hub	Single clear identifying Equine USPs of Kildare	County Kildare Economic Forum	Q2 2022



05

Agri-Food Sector

The importance of the food and beverage sector in Kildare is evident. With a strong agri-food base, the Kildare Food and Beverage Strategy 2021-2023 sets out the ambition **to harness the strengths of the food landscape in the County** and the actions needed to facilitate the growth of the sector in the throes of a Brexit and pandemic environment. The Kildare food landscape is diverse, typified by several very large food manufacturers, a modest number of small to medium producers and a strong cohort of farmers/growers.

The 'Foodscape' initiative was launched in Kildare in 2015, supported by County Kildare Fáilte and Kildare County Council. As a collective initiative, it aimed to showcase a variety of high-quality restaurants and artisan food producers. It hosted some very successful food exhibitions at racing events and festivals in the County. However, it is recognised that the County is at an earlier stage of evolving its food landscape and has a limited number of small to medium producers and is at an early stage of collaboration between the food stakeholder groups. Many food activities are yet to be "joined-up" under one banner, resulting in County Kildare not yet naturally seen as a destination food county.

Kildare 2025 sets our clear intent to change this position and capitalise on compelling opportunities to enhance the County's food and beverage landscape. Pre Covid-19, our tourism and hospitality sectors were experiencing an upsurge, due in part to county Kildare's growing reputation as a hospitality and food destination. The emergence of the Athy Food, Drink & Skills Innovation Hub will be a transformational catalyst for sectoral regeneration. It will revitalise an underutilised building into a powerhouse of food sector learning, innovation and production and will create a legacy impact.

By collaborating with best in class industry, academic and training partners in the country, Athy Food, Drink & Skills Innovation Hub will be a strategic economic driver for job creation and innovation. Its timing is so important – the decimation of the hospitality industry, the acceleration of innovation by food companies to meet increased food demands, and the early indicators suggesting that the Covid-19 pandemic will result in more food start-ups, with an increasing number of skilled foodservice professionals losing their jobs and seeking new ways to earn a living

The opportunity for AgTech in Kildare was accelerated in January 2020 as NOVA UCD were awarded €3 million for a collaborative project to develop an AgTech Connector Innovation Hub at the UCD Lyons Farm in Co. Kildare. The goal of the AgTech Connector Innovation Hub is to bring together the AgTech ecosystem in Ireland to accelerate the launch and scaling of AgTech companies by providing them with access to on-farm research collaboration opportunities, a location to test and trial their products and services in a real-world environment; along with access to dedicated acceleration programmes and incubation facilities.



Kildare Delivers on the Agri Food Sector

Ref.	Action	Target / Output	Stakeholders	Timeframe
5.1	<p>STRATEGY TO GUIDE US Review the current sector and devise a strategy for the maximum benefit of all food stakeholders to create a two-year fast track strategy which would focus on building a strong base, which could be subsequently leveraged to develop a robust long-term strategy.</p>	Production of County Wide Food Strategy	Local Enterprise Office supported by County Kildare Economic Forum	Q2 2021
5.2	<p>STARTUP FOOD PROGRAMME Start-ups businesses are the economy's lifeblood and a powerful job creation engine and economic growth. A dedicated training and mentoring Start, your own Food Business programme, will equip a new generation of food entrepreneurs to emerge.</p>	Train 10 emerging food entrepreneurs per annum.	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office	Annually
5.3	<p>FOOD EXPORT SUPPORT PROGRAMME Investigate demand and seek resources for an export programme which will be mindful of the impact of Brexit. While engaging with Enterprise Ireland and Bord Bia, this programme would benefit from a regional approach</p>	Assist 6 Kildare food and drink businesses to work on a programme of activity which will assist them enter new export markets	Kildare Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, Enterprise Ireland, Bord Bia	Annually
5.4	<p>DEVELOP A REGIONAL FOOD INNOVATION AND SKILLS HUB</p>	Opening of Athy Food, Drink & Skills Innovation Hub	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office,CKCN, Kildare/Wicklow ETB, Coca Cola, Kildare Chamber of Commerce Department of Rural/Enterprise Ireland	Q1 2023
5.5	<p>EMBED SKILL PATHWAYS Provide a programme of transformation educational attainments, skills, and opportunities for everyone</p>	Active upskilling programme in Athy Food, Drink & Skills Innovation Hub	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, KWETB Skillsnet, NOVA UCD, Maynooth University, Kildare LEADER	Q1 2023
5.6	<p>DEVELOP A KILDARE FOOD & BEVERAGE NETWORK to promote inter-food company networking and communications.Support the network with the creation of bespoke digital marketing material to build awareness. Develop and promote an annual calendar of events</p>	<p>Launch of Food Network</p> <p>A suite of Marketing Materials</p>	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office	Q1 2021

Ref.	Action	Target / Output	Stakeholders	Timeframe
5.7	INCREASE THE NUMBER OF AGRI TECH COMPANIES IN THE COUNTY	6 new businesses annually	Nova UCD, in collaboration with Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, Teagasc, AIB and Wageningen, Netherlands.	Ongoing
5.8	FOOD TOURISM As a cross-cutting action (see Section 6), enable artisan food producers to benefit from food tourism opportunities and a Kildare food trail	See Action 6.4	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, Fáilte Ireland, Kildare Fáilte, food industry stakeholders	Q1 2022
5.9	PLACEMAKING Create a Kildare Brand – create a “strapline” to position the strengths of Kildare as a leader in Food, Drink & Skills Innovation	Single clear identifying food and beverage USPs of Kildare	County Kildare Economic Forum	Q2 2022



06

Sustainable Tourism, Hospitality & Leisure

Before Covid-19, tourism supported 270,000 livelihoods, one in 10 of all Irish jobs. The sector is a leading source of employment and job creation, providing a high volume of jobs for low-skilled workers and higher-skilled jobs.

The sector also employs many seasonal, part-time and temporary workers. With the impact of the crisis continuing and reduced capacity for many industry branches, many of these jobs will continue to be directly affected.

into Kildare

Given its proximity to Dublin and key motorway arteries, Kildare is a key tourist destination within Ireland's Ancient East with potential to grow.

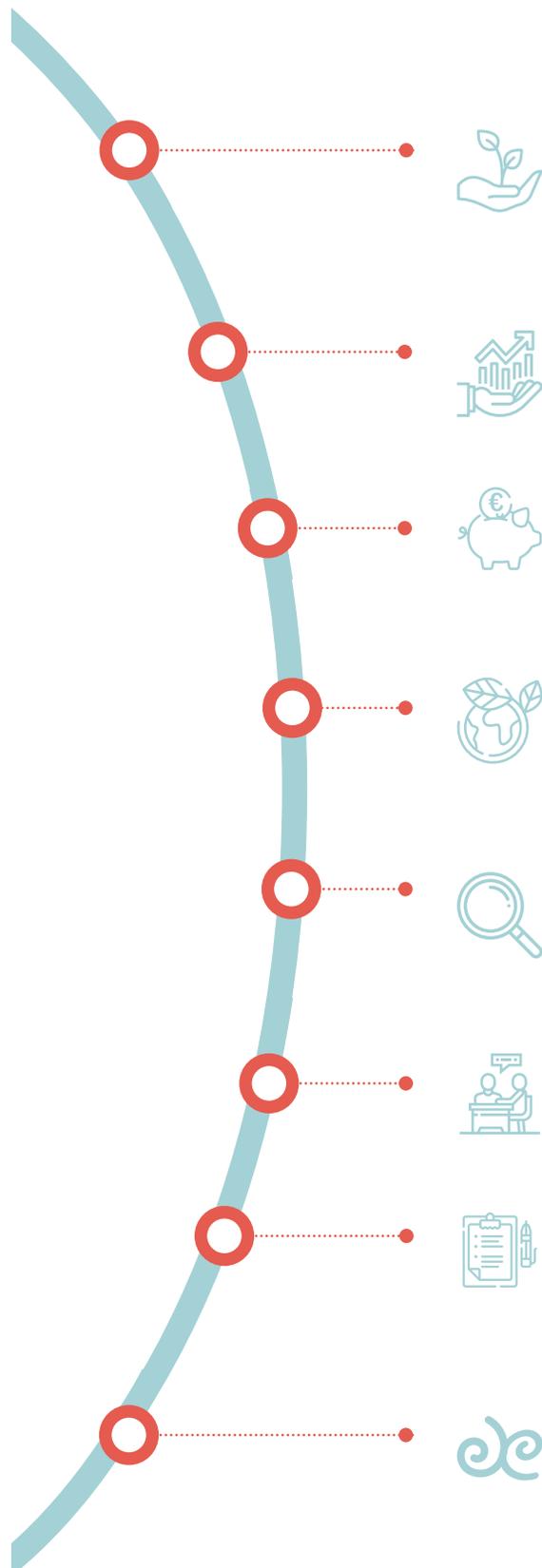


While County Kildare has a rich and diverse heritage and much to offer as a destination, there is consensus that the County has underperformed in tourism. Accordingly, Kildare 2025 builds on the work instigated in 2018 under the 2020 Vision for Kildare Tourism. It places a strong emphasis on supporting the work of Kildare Fáilte, the trade and relevant agencies in building on key opportunities that are at our grasp. Our key opportunities include:

- **The development of the Blueway/Peatway/Greenway** with the realisation of 46 km of walking, cycling and paddling trails along the Barrow Line is a game-changing opportunity for the County. It acts as the base for developing a Blueway Economic Plan (LEADER and Steering Group) and Enterprise Development and Capacity Building (Local Enterprise Office). The Grand Canal Greenway, of which 40 km of this Greenway lie within Co. Kildare, The Royal Canal Greenway runs along the Royal Canal route through counties Longford, Westmeath, Meath, Kildare and Dublin. Works have already commenced along the Kildare sections and The Barrow Blueway Project". Kildare sought funding of over €5 million and Laois County Councils and Waterways Ireland to progress a 46 km stretch of Blueway along the Grand Canal Barrow line and works have commenced.
- **Food tourism** – *"Fáilte Ireland recognises that to secure strong advocacy for food in Ireland and to improve revenue, we need to create compelling food and drink experiences that appeal not just to culinary tourists, but most visitors."*⁶ Building on the work instigated in 2015 under the 'Foodscape' initiative, supported by County Kildare Fáilte and Kildare County Council. As a collective initiative, it aims to showcase the variety of high-quality restaurants and artisan food producers in County Kildare. 'Foodscape' has hosted some very successful food exhibitions at racing events and festivals in the County.
- **Equine tourism** - plans for a new €3.2 million racehorse simulation attraction at the National Stud and Gardens will see a new visitors attraction as the first of its kind in Ireland and is set to increase visitor numbers Thoroughbred County. With funding of almost €2 million from Fáilte Ireland, the new development of the project has already begun with both the National Stud and Fáilte Ireland working closely together.
- Local attractions such as **Newbridge Silverware and Kildare Village** are all key to building Kildare as a destination.

The tourism and hospitality sectors are amongst the hardest hit by the Covid-19 pandemic. Depending on the crisis's duration, revised scenarios indicate that the potential shock could range between a 60-80% decline in the international tourism economy in 2020. Rebuilding tourism is an opportunity for transformation focused on building more resilient communities and businesses through innovation, circularity, digitalisation, sustainability, and partnerships. It is important to build from the core domestic tourism, which accounts for around 75% of the tourism economy in OECD countries and is expected to recover more quickly.

⁶ Fáilte Ireland, Food and Drink Strategy 2018-2023



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

Strengthen our tourism, hospitality, and leisure sector's resilience to develop tourism recovery plans, rebuild destinations, encourage innovation and investment, and rethink the tourism sector.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2

Increase the number of visitors to the region by working in partnership with key stakeholders to develop a world-class sustainable tourism experience.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

Increase the number of bed nights and 'dwelling time' to generate further tourism revenue, create associated tourism employment and enhance local economies.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4

Leveraging Kildare's "Green" county reputation; its quality environment credentials, its recreational, sporting and other amenities.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5

Develop and promote tourism, arts, culture and heritage by capitalising on Co. Kildare's unique location on Dublin's doorsteps.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 6

Continue to strengthen existing twinning relationships between Kildare and our Twinning partners.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 7

Develop and promote tourism, arts, culture and heritage Support the work of Kildare Fáilte and facilitate the implementation of the Tourism Strategy for Co. Kildare.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 8

Develop Tourism Flagship projects in conjunction with Fáilte Ireland under Ireland's Ancient East theme.

Kildare Delivers on Tourism, Hospitality & Leisure

Ref.	Action	Target / Output	Stakeholders	Timeframe
6.1	<p>KILDARE TOURISM RECOVERY AND INNOVATION PROGRAMME Focused advisory programme to support the reopening of the Kildare tourism economy and get businesses up and running through digitisation, supporting the low carbon transition, and promoting the capital transformation needed.</p>	Build a more robust, more sustainable and resilient tourism economy.	County Kildare Economic Forum,	Ongoing
6.2	<p>STRENGTHEN KILDARE'S TOURISM OFFERING OF BLUEWAYS/PEATWAYS/GREENWAYS</p>	Implement projects under the National Greenways/Blueways integrated strategy	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, Kildare Fáilte, Waterways Ireland Fáilte Ireland, Department of Tourism, Sport Ireland (Trails)	2021
6.3	<p>DEVELOP AND MARKET AN EQUINE TOURISM TRAIL (THOROUGHBRED COUNTY EXPERIENCE) featuring Museums at the Curragh and Irish National Stud, the Curragh Plains, Curragh Gallops and Racecourse; Irish National Stud; Stud Farms</p>	Create new income generation opportunities for equine businesses and increase the number of equine tourists	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, Fáilte Ireland, Kildare Fáilte, equine industry stakeholders	Q1 2022
6.4	<p>DEVELOP AND MARKET A FOOD TOURISM EXPERIENTIAL TRAIL Create a food trail to profile and market Kildare's food sector</p>	Create new income generation opportunities for artisan food and hospitality businesses & Increase the number of food tourists	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, Fáilte Ireland, Kildare Fáilte, food industry stakeholders	Q1 2022
6.5	<p>TOURISM PROJECT PIPELINE Identify, prioritise and seek funding for a key development project which offer the optimum opportunities for growth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green projects, building on quality environment credentials, • Recreational, sporting and other amenities • Arts and culture 	Ensure sectoral priority projects are identified, and development pathways are put in place	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, Fáilte Ireland, Waterways Ireland, Kildare Fáilte and industry stakeholders	Ongoing
6.6	<p>INTERNATIONALISATION Continue to strengthen existing twinning relationships between Kildare and our Twinning partners</p>	Maximise our international connections for tourism sector advancement	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, Kildare Fáilte, Fáilte Ireland	Ongoing
6.7	<p>PLACEMAKING Create a Kildare Brand – create a “strapline” to position the strengths of Kildare as a compelling tourism destination</p>	Single clear identifying tourism, hospitality and leisure USPs of Kildare	County Kildare Economic Forum	Q2 2022

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Comhairle Contae Chill Dara
Kildare County Council

07

Retail

Kildare has many nationally recognised retail destinations such as Kildare Village and Whitewater Shopping Centre. Like many counties, smaller towns and villages face persistent challenges of decreased footfall through the doors of the independents. As a County, Kildare must continue to sustain and improve its retail profile and competitiveness within the Greater Dublin Area's retail economy and beyond, through harnessing the assets and potential of centres at all levels of the County Retail Hierarchy. Kildare also hosts a cluster of large distribution centres for the national retail sector due to accessibility and proximity to Dublin.

Pre Covid-19, Kildare's retail sector was employment-intensive. Covid-19 may serve to accelerate structural changes in the sector, including the move to digital and online. Despite some retail activities (e.g. grocery) remaining open in the lockdown and experiencing an increase in demand, the sector as a whole has been badly affected, with over 60% of the retail workforce, ca.180,000 people availing of income support at the peak of the restrictions. The drop in footfall will threaten the viability of some Enterprises in the sector. Future-proofing, our town centre retail sector is vital. According to the Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland, each lifeless, underutilised place is a missed opportunity. They say "vacant premises that lie unoccupied for a sustained period can create a negative perception of a place. This, in turn, can be off-putting for both consumers and any potential investors or retailers, who will see vacant premises as an indication of poor health, creating a vicious circle of decline".

While many firms were able to adopt new modes of operation (online, contactless etc.), others cannot, and an irreparable loss of activity is likely. The sector also saw an overall increase in online retail. When combined with a likely prolonged restriction on cafes, pubs, restaurants and hotels, and the curtailment of private and public events will disproportionately affect city and town centres, with the risk of accelerated urban dereliction and vacancy. It is fair to say that the retail sector was facing challenges with upward cost pressures and the increasing impact of technology. Retailers are increasingly required to transform their business to deliver an omnichannel experience (bricks and clicks) that shoppers increasingly demand profitably and sustainably.

Retail business models are also changing in response to sustainability challenges moving towards circular business models, prolonging products and components' lives. Global movements to reduce packaging waste and single-use plastics present a challenge to the sector.



Kildare Delivers on Retail

Ref.	Action	Target / Output	Stakeholders	Timeframe
7.1	TOWN AND VILLAGE RETAIL HEALTHCHECK Conduct a series of health checks across Towns and villages	Retailers are supported by sustainable communities	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, KCC planning Dept public realm team Kildare Chamber	Ongoing
7.2	ONLINE RETAIL ACCELERATION Increase the adoption of retailing online amongst our bricks and mortar retailers	Increased take-up of 30 online trading vouchers Annually	KCC Econ Dev & Enterprise Dept, Kildare Chamber	Ongoing
7.3	RETAIL INCUBATION PROGRAMME Support those wishing to establish a business in retail premises and existing businesses struggling to diversify.	This will see an intense programme of supports for 10 participants per annum over two years	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, Kildare Chamber	2021- 2025
7.4	INCREASED ADOPTION OF SHOP FRONT GRANT SCHEME Placemaking is about confidence building. Attractive shopfronts can help transform Kildare's streets and trading potential, with renewed kerb appeal improving local livelihoods and the sustainability of the retail sector This particular measure will incentivise business owners to enhance and reinvigorate Kildare's shops, visitor attractions, streets and physically transform the town-centre offer's visual appearance.	Enhanced streetscape and	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, Kildare Chamber	Annually
7.5	HOST PRIDE OF PLACE SHOP FRONT COMPETITION	Profile and reward best practice	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, Kildare Chamber	Annually
7.6	AGE FRIENDLY RETAIL 1 Launch Age-Friendly Business Recognition Scheme	Enhanced access for all	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office. Age Friendly Ireland, Kildare Chamber	Q3 2021
7.7	AGE FRIENDLY RETAIL 2 Develop and promote the initiative to make Kildare an attractive age-friendly retail destination.	Increase the attractiveness of the retail offering in Kildare for seniors	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office. Age Friendly Ireland, Kildare Chamber	Ongoing
7.8	CIRCULAR ECONOMY RETAIL PROGRAMME Support a programme focused on emerging sustainable retail practices within the circular economy, tracing the new ways retailers from fashion to food can design sustainability into their business model	Increase retail circular economy prevalence in the County	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, Kildare Chamber	Q4 2021
7.9	PLACEMAKING Create a Kildare Brand – create a “strapline” to position the strengths of Kildare as a compelling retail destination	Single clear identifying retail USPs of Kildare	County Kildare Economic Forum / Retail Forum	Q2 2022



08

Climate Action and Green Economy

Climate change is one of the most significant challenges of our times. While Kildare is the second most affected County in terms of job loss impact as a result of the imminent ending of peat harvesting for power generation in the Midlands region, it is also disadvantaged by a shortage of suitable sites for the establishment of new green Enterprises which could replace the labour-intensive work of peat extraction.

Considering the likely age and skills profile of many of the Kildare workers affected by the Just Transition, the Kildare Wicklow ETB work in mitigating against the economic impact of the Just Transition is vital. Covid-19 has shown how unprepared we are for some of the most significant risks we face. We can learn lessons from the response to Covid-19 to mitigate and adapt to the threat of climate change. Key to new opportunities is investing in green economy opportunities and initiatives as a source of competitive advantage.

As confirmed by Kildare County Council and Local Enterprise Office, the ability of start-ups and small firms to find suitable premises is potentially a key constraint on the development of the green technologies sector, with implications for economic growth locally and regionally (as many occupiers are as likely to consider other national options). Availability of sites for new start-ups and small businesses in the region is low.

Transport is the single most significant sectoral contributor to energy-related CO2 emissions. Without serious investment in mitigations such as remote working facilities, meeting targets will be extremely difficult. Kildare 2025 will deliver clear actions to reduce the 40% of Kildare's workforce who before Covid-19 commuted for work purposes outside the County. One of the critical challenges of this Strategy will be to reverse this percentage in the future of work changes.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

Position Kildare as a best practice model leading to a sustainable energy future.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2

Help sustain, support, and create jobs by developing Kildare as a leader in delivering the Green economy.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

Support stakeholders in developing sustainable initiatives.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4

Develop leadership and competency in smart energy technologies and companies.

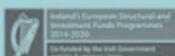


STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5

Facilitate and assist local businesses to become more competitive through the provision of energy efficiency training and supports.

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Kildare Delivers on Climate Action & the Green Economy

Ref.	Action	Target / Output	Stakeholders	Timeframe
8.1	<p>GREEN ENTERPRISE ZONE INFRASTRUCTURE</p> <p>Support the development of Green Enterprise Zone at one of the most prominent sites associated with the peat era will fuel innovation in Kildare, by providing the physical and skills environment to choreograph opportunities for green/circular entrepreneurs and their staff to interact with each other.</p>	<p>Provide green Enterprise zone development sites and workspace. Facilitate relationships and create critical mass between businesses to generate, sharpen and accelerate the advancement of ideas.</p>	<p>Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
8.2	<p>MICRO ENTERPRISE LEAN PROGRAMMES</p> <p>MicroEnterprise LEAN programmes assist businesses to become more effective and efficient. LEAN strives to stamp out waste, to improve continually and to add value for the customer.</p>	<p>Further, roll out of Lean Programmes to develop the management skills of SMEs</p>	<p>Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
8.3	<p>CLIMATE ACTION SME CHARTER</p> <p>Using a whole county approach, Kildare is committing to upskill and become a leader in sustainable and responsible business. This programme will be a high-profile catalyst for sustainability and climate action changes to business practices. It will serve as a voluntary agreement to act on climate change.</p>	<p>A high-profile catalyst for sustainability and climate action changes to business practices.</p>	<p>Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, Kildare Climate Action Office, Kildare Chamber</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
8.4	<p>CLIMATE ACTION REGIONAL OFFICE</p> <p>Host the CARO (Climate Action Regional Office) for 17 Local Authorities</p>	<p>Regional impetus to reduce carbon</p>	<p>Kildare County Council</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
8.5	<p>SME CARBON REDUCTION INITIATIVE</p> <p>Implement a special energy-saving initiative for 60 Kildare companies.</p>	<p>Reduce Kildare's carbon footprint and industry costs</p>	<p>KCC Econ Dev & Enterprise Dept, SEAI, Kildare Chamber, Kildare Climate Action Office,</p>	<p>Q2 2021</p>
8.6	<p>PUBLIC LIGHTING RETROFIT</p> <p>Retrofit all public lighting in the County to reduce energy consumption and</p>	<p>Assist in the effort to meet National Energy Efficiency targets</p>	<p>Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, Roads/Environment Dept, Kildare Climate Action Office</p>	<p>Q1 2022</p>

Ref.	Action	Target / Output	Stakeholders	Timeframe
8.7	<p>CLUSTER OF SMART ENERGY TECHNOLOGY SMES</p> <p>Fully endorse and support the development of the national cluster of Smart Energy technologies incorporating the relevant Kildare companies</p>	Smart cluster to encourage inter-company innovation	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, Kildare Climate Action Office	Q2 2021
8.8	<p>CENTRE IN SMART GRID TECHNOLOGIES</p> <p>Promote the development of a centre in smart Grid technologies</p>	Smart grid provides unprecedented opportunity to move the energy industry into a new era of reliability, availability, and efficiency to contribute to our economic and environmental health.	Kildare Climate Action Office,	Q1 2023
8.9	<p>SUPPORT THE WORK OF THE KILDARE WICKLOW ETB IN MITIGATING AGAINST THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE JUST TRANSITION</p>	Support development of skills programmes in tackling the economic impact of the Just Transition	Kildare County Council & the Local Enterprise Office, KWETB, Midlands Regional Transition Team	Ongoing



Three Enabling Actions

The delivery of Kildare 2025 across our **8 FOCUS AREAS** and **72 ACTIONS** will only be possible if three key enabling actions underpin them:



01

ENABLING INFRASTRUCTURE



02

PLACEMAKING AND QUALITY OF LIFE

which comprises two elements

- a. Invest in place - Place-making, Quality of Life, Enabling Infrastructure, Digitally Supported Communities
- b. Invest in people - Education, Training & Skills



03

BIDDING CAPACITY FOR FUNDS



01 ENABLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Enabling infrastructure, accessibility and the capacity to grow are key factors for economic development and enterprise. Likewise, public transport accessibility, particularly cycling, walking and bus routes, that support the overarching need to develop compact growth are important as integral parts of Kildare's infrastructure priorities. Kildare County Council is committed to addressing climate actions. Hence Kildare 2025 emphasises the transport impact as one of the highest GHG emitters in Ireland.

Key investment projects to be realised under the delivery of Kildare 2025 which subject to resources include a commitment to the following: -

- Continue to support and develop facilities and infrastructure to promote the use of public transport, e.g. Park & Ride facilities, connectivity to Train Stations, facilitation of bus transport.
- Overarching commitment to supporting projects that enhance public transport accessibility will be of particular importance, considering our SWOT analysis notes that there is "poor public transport in rural areas" and a "lack of public transport options to service areas within the county". Our public realm teams will work to realise the potential of our expanding population by adopting a modal transport shift to decongest town centres (enhancing their economic strength) and decoupling economic activity from private vehicular movement.
- Overarching commitment to accessibility for cycling and walking as key components of "placemaking". Secure funding for walking and cycling projects in towns and villages across Kildare provides convenient and direct routes for active travel modes, including, and where necessary, to reallocate space from motor traffic and car parking. Projects will be accessible, age-friendly and maximise comfort to people of all ages and abilities.
- Work in partnership with the NTA to improve pedestrian and cycling facilities in all towns across the County.
- Continue to support the improvement of access from the Monasterevin Road to Southgreen over the rail line in Kildare Town.
- Facilitate and support Irish Rail to achieve the objective of the electrification of the existing railway lines to provide a DART service to Maynooth and ultimately Kilcock.
- Facilitate and support Irish Rail to extend the electrification of the Kildare South West Rail Line from Hazelhatch to Sallins, Newbridge and Kildare Town.
- Place a greater emphasis on supporting the delivery of more public recharging facilities for EVs and ensuring priority parking for EVs in central locations in Kildare and in all future developments seeking planning permission. This action is in line with the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly's RSES (RPO 7.42).



Ensure County Kildare optimise connectivity and access across the County in accordance with the emerging 'Smarter Travel'⁷ policy. Kildare 2025 is committed to aligning population growth with sustainable transport serviced areas.

- Complete the addition of a third lane to the Naas Newbridge By-pass Section of the M7
- Complete Sallins By-pass including Osbertstown Interchange
- Commence construction of the Athy Distributor Route
- Progress the completion of the Gallops Avenue (Naas Inner Relief Road)
- Progress the Maynooth Eastern Relief Road and Bridge (Straffan Road to Leixlip Road link)
- Support the completion of the Moyglare Road to Dunboyne Road Maynooth Inner Relief Street
- Complete the Maynooth North-South Corridor – Straffan Road to Moyglare Road via Leinster Street
- Facilitate the Maynooth Northern Outer Relief Road (Moyglare Road to Dunboyne Road Maynooth)
- Seek to advance the upgrade of the M4 (Maynooth to Leixlip Section)
- Progress the development of a second Liffey Crossing in Celbridge
- Support and facilitate the delivery of the Newbridge Outer Relief Road
- Seek to advance the development of a second Liffey Crossing in Newbridge
- Encourage and support the completion of the Clane Ring Road

Facilitate and support the work of Irish Water in the delivery of significant capital investment projects

- Newbridge/Naas/ Sallins/Clane/Kill – Contracts 2A &2B
- Upgrade of Osbertstown Wastewater Treatment Plant
- Extension of Barrow Water Supply
- North East Kildare – 4 major capital projects to deal with wastewater in Leixlip, Celbridge & Maynooth\
- Celbridge to Hazelhatch Link Road

Continue to support the rollout of broadband and telecommunications infrastructure throughout the County

- Recruit a Broadband Officer
- Create a Digital Strategy

⁷ smartertravel.ie - A Sustainable Transport Future

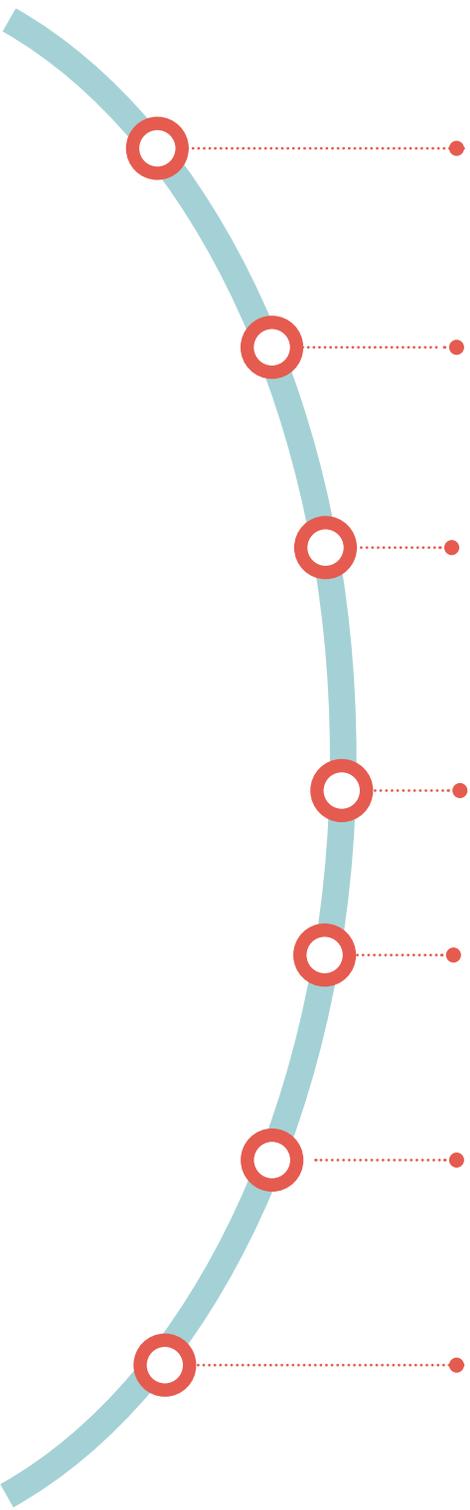
02 PLACEMAKING AND QUALITY OF LIFE

Placemaking and Quality of Life are essential elements needed to underpin the Kildare 2025 economic development strategy. This approach focuses on the unique features of particular places, building on existing assets, and using them to attract new investment and strengthen existing businesses. As an economic development strategy, placemaking and quality of life are particularly relevant in our need to renew and rebuild post-Covid-19. Creating vibrant, attractive places to live can enable essential economic conditions such as attracting and retaining talent.

Well-designed places, with investment in high-quality urban design, have been proven to enhance properties' value and enhance economic opportunities. Economic development is critical to improving local quality of life as well as the quality of the environment. Jobs tied to this form of economic growth are tied directly to specific places and cannot be outsourced.

Although there is no single definition of a smart city, town or village, at its simplest, the concept envisages a smart area as one that has digital technology embedded across all of its public functions. It involves a systematic integration of ICT in the planning, design, operations, and management of our cities, towns, and villages to benefit all citizens. Smart cities, towns and villages enhance the location's attractiveness for people and business, especially those who want to innovate. Our Placemaking and Quality of Life Enabling Action will seek to adopt a Smart Cities, Towns and Village approach to leverage the potential to the quality of life offering of Kildare and enhance the attractiveness of the County as a location for investment.





STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

Promote the local heritage and public amenities of towns and villages that support and underpin economic opportunities.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2

Act as advocates and work in partnership to promote the importance of education and training for a healthy local economy.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

Support each of the Kildare's EF's action plans by identifying industry trends and encouraging education providers to devise new programmes, when necessary, to provide the knowledge, skills and competencies required by employers.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4

Ensure that a suite of apprenticeships and skillsets relevant to employers' needs is accessible at the local level.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5

Support creativity, innovation, and Enterprise in Co Kildare through effective local entrepreneurship stimuli to leverage the County's innovative capacity and retain talented people.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 6

Through cross-cutting actions across our eight key themes, develop the indigenous Enterprise, logistics, manufacturing and retail base in County Kildare.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 7

Benefit from the work of the 'All Ireland Smart Cities Forum', supported by Maynooth University and investigate potential linkages that could be developed to progress this concept in Kildare.



There are two aspects to this enabling action: -

Invest in place - Place-making, Quality of Life, Enabling Infrastructure, Digitally Supported Communities

- A complete programme of Town & Village Enhancement projects
- Support the work of Tidy Towns groups around the County
- Work towards and achieve Purple flag accreditation
- Expand the network of good quality education centres and schools
- Increase the development of mixed tenure housing develops to encourage social integration
- Encourage the development of a range of housing options to suit different households with varying incomes
- Facilitate and support the provision of adequate zoned lands to allows for sufficient housing developments
- Develop additional recreation and sporting facilities
- Complete a Parks and Open Space Strategy
- Continue playground provision and Expansion programme
- Expand the network of community centres
- Facilitate and support the network of Family Resource centres
- Work with HSE to expand the network of Primary Care Centres in Co. Kildare.

Invest in people - Education, Training & Skills

An educated and up-skilled workforce is essential for developing and progressing the local economy in County Kildare. We aim to ensure that training and education services maximise talent and facilitate education, training and lifelong learning opportunities in County Kildare, which will enhance social and economic development.

- Work with KWETB, Maynooth University, Regional Skills Forum, and other third-level institutions to ensure that Kildare's workforce has a wide range of skills set.
- Develop and implement a pro-active communications strategy to influence and inform industry, Enterprise and other communities of interest about the training and skills development opportunities available at the local level.
- Conduct a Commuter Study to understand the Profile of Skills leaving the County daily - complete profile of skill sets available to future employers.
- Develop skills Centre in Athy Food, Drink & Skills Innovation Hub to provide re-skilling opportunities for the food, tourism and hospitality industry, ensuring a pipeline of sufficient trained talent for the industry. MOU is in place with KWETB & funding applications are pending for the capital build.
- Host Regional Conference on Innovation to increase adoption of Innovation in our SME's



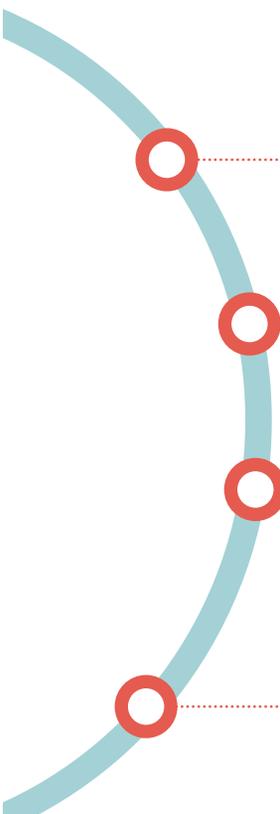
03 BIDDING CAPACITY FOR FUNDS

The Eastern and Midland RSES verifies that there is a need to ensure that local authorities and local stakeholders have sufficient bidding capacity in utilising competitive based funding resources; mainly due to the competitive nature of EU based funds – such as the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF). This is also applicable to the Project Ireland 2040 funds, focusing on a pathway for bids under the four named funds.

As an enabling action across all themes and activities, Kildare will continue to ambitiously pursue national funding opportunities presented under Project Ireland 2040 ambitiously. As a critical enabling action, each year from 2021 – 2025, we will scope, prioritise and pursue emerging funding opportunities, particularly concerning the Urban Regeneration Development Fund and the Rural Regeneration Development Fund. We will examine ways to strengthen our bidding capacity for National and EU funds and work closely with the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly in this regard.

The publication of Kildare 2025 is opportune as European’s new funding period 2021- 2027 is launched. We have been careful to reflect the key themes and priorities of the 2021-2027 long-term EU budget & Next Generation EU which is focused on rebuilding a post-Covid-19 Europe, which will be greener, more digital, more resilient and better fit for the current and forthcoming challenges. As with our national funding programmes, Kildare County Council will emphasise developing our bidding capacity of leveraging funding resources from EU funds. Of note, improving our chances of ascertaining appropriate EU funds is in line with RPO 6.35 within the RSES.

Considering the stated policy priorities under the ERDF, successful applications to this funding resource could open an array of possibilities in developing the County’s Enterprise base, potentially funding projects that enhance the competitiveness of the County’s SMEs, support the research and development capabilities of the County while supporting initiatives concerning renewable energy or energy efficiency. To allow for a “Smart Recovery” based on skills and talent, EU funds, particularly the ESF, offer a lot of potential in funding projects that would enhance the skills and education profile of Kildare.

- 
- 01 SWOT ANALYSIS
 - 02 INDEX OF STRATEGIES
 - 03 KILDARE ECONOMIC FORUM MEMBERSHIP
 - 04 IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING & DELIVERY



Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Strong, established Foreign Direct Investment base for employment. ✓ Varied industrial and economic Enterprise base. ✓ Solid corporate base, e.g. Kerry Foods, Intel, Hewlett Packard, Pfizer, Green Isle. ✓ Growing Retail sector - Whitewater and Kildare Village. ✓ Overall education base. ✓ Good base of micro and SMEs. ✓ Established agricultural, horticultural and equestrian/bloodstock sectors nationally. ✓ Maynooth University - the fastest-growing University in Ireland /well-educated population. ✓ Location of Kildare within the Greater Dublin Area, with close proximity to Dublin. ✓ Major transportation corridors. Motorway and rail infrastructure of national importance in place. ✓ Youngest County in Ireland. ✓ Rapidly growing population. ✓ High labour force participation rate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Infrastructure unable to respond to rapidly increasing population/demand. ✗ Substantial gaps in services. ✗ High proportion of workers commuting outside of the County for work, education and training. ✗ Skills shortages relative to employment opportunities. ✗ Increase in unemployment amongst more disadvantaged groups. ✗ Limited training opportunities and facilities. ✗ Restructuring challenges in agriculture. ✗ Relatively high regional dependence on construction-based employment. ✗ Lack of public transport options to service areas within the County. Poor transport linkages/cross connections. ✗ Poor public transport in rural areas. ✗ Under performing tourism sector. ✗ Lack of business cluster networks/activities. ✗ No food incubation units. ✗ Capacity to meet the IAE brand promise.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Young, educated population base of the County. ✓ Economic recovery. ✓ Employment options growing – Kerry Foods and multiplier effect. ✓ Expanding educational opportunities, Maynooth University and Kildare Wicklow ETB. ✓ A strong agri-food industry. ✓ Rapidly growing population - potential for project promoters and innovative projects. ✓ Potential for diverse tourism offerings. ✓ Good potential for rural tourism, local food, local services, ICT, and renewable energy sectors. ✓ Potential of the natural environment and leisure amenities - The Blueway Canals Project, the Royal Canal and the Greenway Project. ✓ Fáilte Ireland's Ancient East marketing initiative. ✓ Kildare towns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Capacity to serve the needs of the significant and growing young population. ✗ Economic and social imbalances within the County. ✗ Growth has not been matched by essential services. ✗ Infrastructure constraints and increasing pressure on existing infrastructure. ✗ Lack of Next Generation Access fibre broadband across all areas of the County. ✗ Inability to match employer skill requirements with the skills available in the County. ✗ The decline of rural towns and villages in Kildare. ✗ The development of large scale 'out-of-town' retail developments. ✗ The country's major motorways which pass through the county/facilitate non-stop over traffic.

Local Government Reform Act 2014

Kildare Local Economic and Community Plan 2016- 2021 (LECP)

Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023

National Planning Framework (NPF)

Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES)

Report of the SME Taskforce: National SME and Entrepreneurship Growth Plan

National Local Enterprise Plan

National Broadband Plan

Making Remote Work, the National Remote Work Strategy

Mid-East Region Enterprise Plan

Global Ireland: Ireland's Global Footprint to 2025

Regional Economic Impact Study, Horse Racing Ireland and Deloitte

Kildare Food, Beverage and Hospitality Strategy 2021-2023

2019 Global Business Monitor Report for the Mid-East

Regional Co-Working Analysis

National Social Enterprise Policy 2019 – 2022

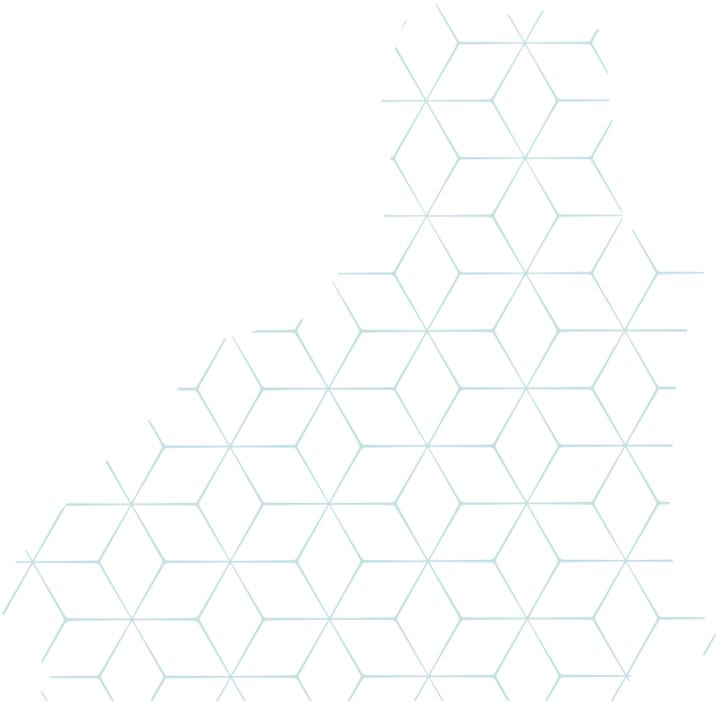
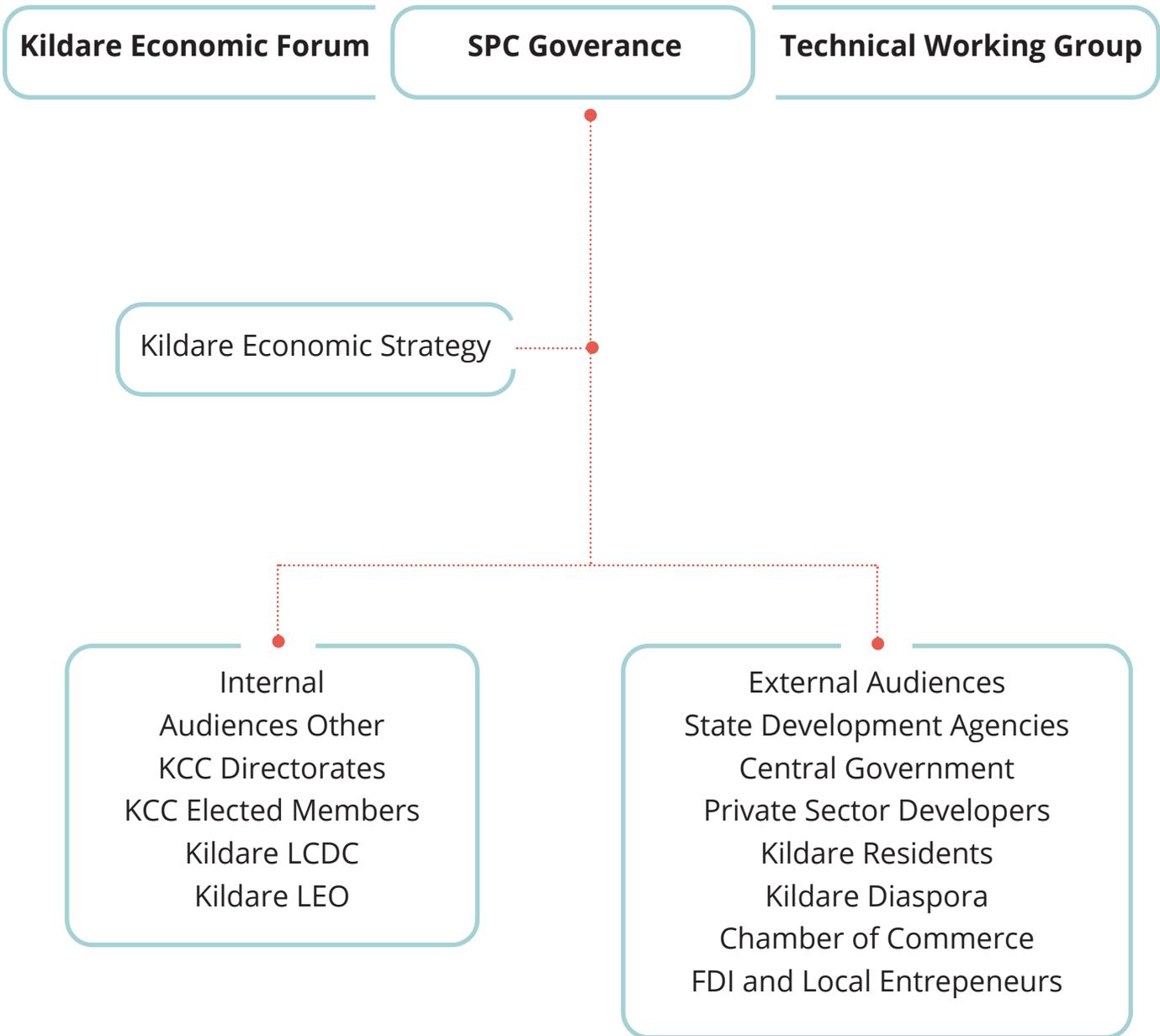
IDA Driving Recovery and Sustainable Growth 2021-2024

Fáilte Ireland, Food and Drink Strategy 2018-2023

Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future



NAME	TITLE	ORGANISATION
Padraig McManus	Chair of Economic Forum	
Peter Carey	Chief Executive	Kildare County Council
Maureen Bergin	Community & Business Relations Director	Kildare Village
Allan Shine	Chief Executive	County Kildare Chamber
Dan Flinter	Former CEO	Enterprise Ireland
Michael Brougham	Regional Director	Enterprise Ireland
Brian Kavanagh	Chief Executive	Horse Racing Ireland
Philip Nolan	President	Maynooth University
Brian Donnellan	Vice President Engagement & Innovation	Maynooth University
Deirdre Coghlan Murray	Managing Director	Clark Recruitment
Eimear Mulhern	Chairman	Goffs
Bill O'Brien	Chairman	O'Brien Fine Foods
Conor Simpson	Regional Manager	IDA
Paddy Kelly	Managing Director	Etex Ireland
Tommy Murray	Business Mentor	Mentors.ie
Michael Davern	Director	Kildare Failte
Sonya Kavanagh	Director of Services	Kildare County Council
Jacqui McNabb	Head of Enterprise & Economic Development	LEO



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Comhairle Contae Chill Dara
Kildare County Council



Oifig Fiontair Áitiúil
Local Enterprise Office Kildare

