Kildare Konnected

A Digital Strategy for County Kildare to 2025

June 2022

Document Ref:

Comhairle Contae Chill Dara
Kildare County Council

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1 Introduction

Kildare Konnected is the title for the first Digital Strategy for County Kildare. It will coordinate all activities for the development of a collaborative digital society and economy to the end of 2025. This strategy will build on existing resources, knowledge, networks and plans to create an inclusive, progressive, innovative and connected digital society and economy for the benefit of all Kildare citizens and businesses.

Kildare Konnected will concentrate activity under five Strategic Pillars.
Pillar 1: Digital Economy & Enterprise
Pillar 2: Digital Infrastructure & Connectivity
Pillar 3: Digital Skills & Literacy
Pillar 4: Digital Society & Culture
Pillar 5: Digital Public Services

Each Local Authority is required to produce and implement a Digital Strategy as a key part of local policy and planning. Kildare Konnected will act as a supporting resource to other local policies and strategies such as the Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP), County Development Plan (CDP), Local Area Plans, Sector Strategies, Climate Action Plans, Urban & Rural Development Plans, Tourism & Recreation and the Local Authority Corporate Plan.

It will also reflect and embrace what is happening with digital at a national and international level including the rollout of e-Government Strategy and other strategic actions towards Digitalisation. Ultimately the Digital Strategy must ensure that local communities and economies are making the most of digital for their competitiveness, cohesion, and sustainability.

This digital strategy will aim to maximise the opportunities of digital transformation for the benefit of our society and economy, ensuring that Kildare is among the best places to live, work, visit or invest.

Digital infrastructure will be a critical enabler for the realisation of the strategy. The National Broadband Plan (NBP) investment in Kildare will amount to €53m and will include fast fiber and other fast broadband solutions to over 15,000 homes, business premises, farms, schools and community facilities.

The application of digital solutions to community and cultural initiatives offers significant opportunities. The upcoming Brigid 1500 celebrations, the proposed National Peatlands Park, the new Naas Library & Cultural Centre and other strategic projects all point to an opportune and exciting time for digital developments for the benefit of the county.
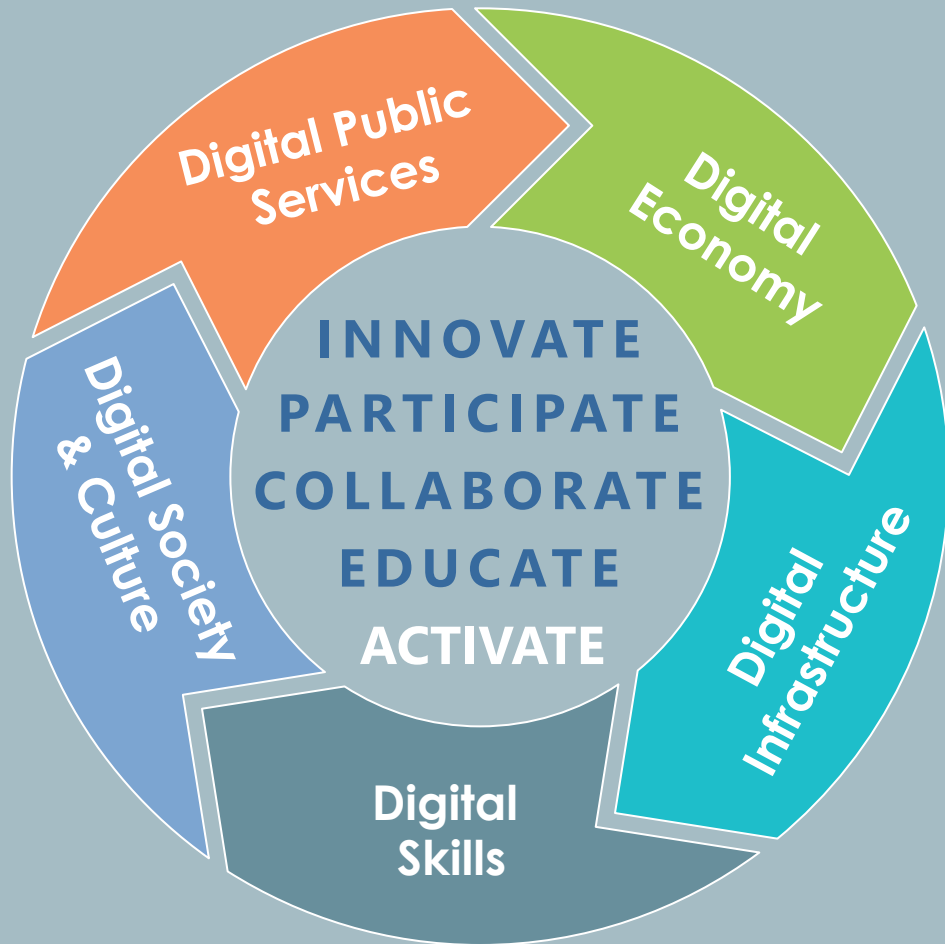
Kildare Konnected will set the foundation for an innovative, inclusive, collaborative and connected county over the coming years and ensure that all citizens get to participate in and enjoy the benefits of a progressive Digital Society.

Our Vision

"Kildare Konnected will enable an era of innovation, inclusivity, collaboration and smart planning for the benefit of all citizens, businesses, community partners and visitors to County Kildare"

Kildare Digital Framework Snapshot

INNOVATE
PARTICIPATE
COLLABORATE
EDUCATE
ACTIVATE

Digital Public Services

Digital Economy

Digital Infrastructure

Digital Skills

Digital Society & Culture

Strategy Pillar	Key Projects & Activities
P1: Digital Economy	• Digitalisation supports for enterprise • K-Hub Network Strategy • Sustainable Kildare digital resources • Innovate Kildare Brand & Organisational Development
P2: Digital Infrastructure & Connectivity	• NBP Rollout & Telecoms Upgrades • BCP Network Support and Stimulation • IoT / Smart Places Plan
P3: Digital Skills & Literacy	• Digital literacy & Skills development • Skills of the Future – Workforce Skills • Hi Digital Programme
P4: Digital Society & Culture	• Digital Agenda in Local Development (LECP) • Barrow Blueway Smart Villages Network • Digital Inclusion for All Ages • Digital Supporting Climate Action • Enhancing Kildare's Culture & Heritage Resources • Digital Library & Arts Services • Town Twinning / Cultural Exchange
P5: Digital Public Services	• e-Gov / digitalisation and e-service delivery • Open source data platforms / portals • Internal IT systems integration and cloud based – training for staff

2 The Digital Context

We are increasingly bound in the digital society, in which every aspect of our lives is profoundly affected by digital applications; the proliferation of data; how we communicate, socialise; work, learn, stay healthy and participate in politics and the economy. A healthy digital society will promote opportunity and access, protect citizens, drive efficiencies and knowledge and support better and more democratic policy making.

A Digital Strategy will take a holistic view of the needs of society and build tools, skills, infrastructure and culture to ensure all citizens, entrepreneurs, community partners and government are getting the maximum benefit from digital and technology applications and investments.

The importance of access to high-speed broadband services in both urban and rural locations has been well documented in recent years. Kildare County Council is committed to facilitating the rollout of the NBP and recognises the vital role broadband will play in economic and social development. As digital infrastructure continues to grow, it empowers communities and citizens through the provision of online information, resources, and services offered by local authorities and state agencies and the charitable/not-for-profit sector.

It is crucial that Kildare plays its part by encouraging and facilitating citizens to do more with digital. The strategy will create awareness and connections to training and supports for businesses and citizens to reduce the skills gap and encourage more young people into digital careers.

Digital technology can help to create places and communities that manage spatial development, population growth, mobility, effects of climate change and transition to greater sustainability. Smart places will optimise urban planning, transport, utilities and community services. Smart Communities will promote safety, liveability, placemaking and connect communities. Making the most of this digital society and economy will require skills and cultural transformation in our citizens, enterprises and institutions. Kildare will embrace all of these objectives and opportunities through the Kildare Konnected strategy.

think digital.

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Digital Workspaces

Modern, efficient, collaborative & connected workspaces & hubs to serve flexible work trends and entrepreneurs.

High Speed Broadband

The NBP will roll out high-speed fibre broadband to every home and business in rural areas and BCP's.

Utilising Digital Technologies

The use of digital technologies, tools, Apps, IoT, etc, to support sector strategies and promote Kildare.

What is a Local Digital Strategy?

Access to Digital Skills

Every citizen, community and business will be able to access digital learning in their locality.

Set Targets for Digital

The Council will set targets for digital development of services e.g. e-planning / housing and internal IT/IS practices e.g. Cloud / Sharepoint.

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The Digital Domain

- Digital Society & Citizen
- Skills & Education
- Entrepreneurship / Digital Nomads
- Remote Working
- Health & Wellbeing
- Economy & Innovation
- E-Government & public services
- Cyber security & data protection
- Data governance and regulation
- Smart Community Planning
- Culture & Entertainment
- Heritage & Storytelling
- Tourism & Recreation
- Environment & Climate Action
- Energy & Green Tech
- Utilities, Services & Waste
- Transport & mobility
- Urban planning & development
- IoT, AI & Big Data
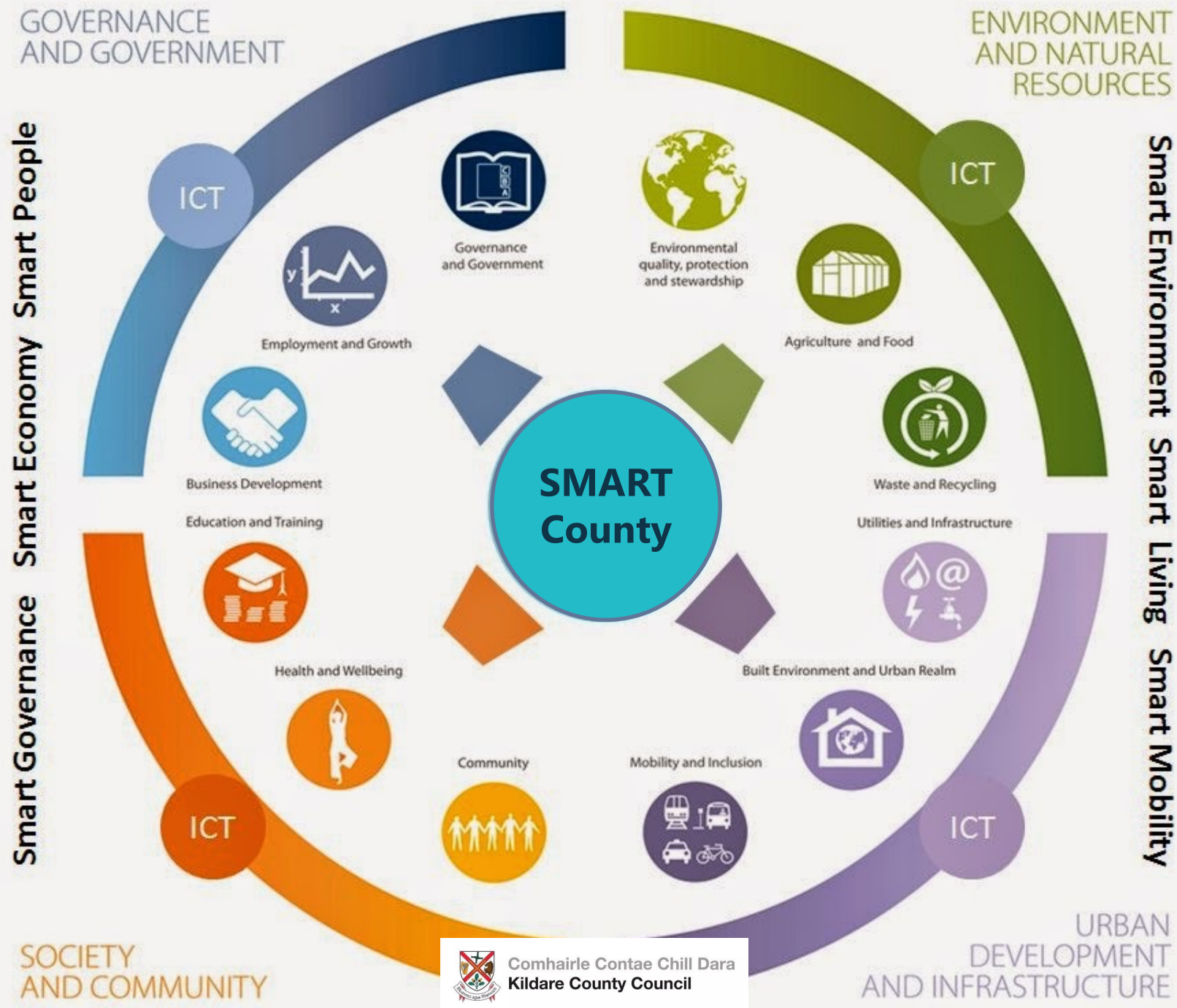
The Digital Context

Kildare

Doing More with Digital

Kildare digital strategy will help transform the way we do business, interact, innovate and become more productive and creative as a society. Doing More With Digital encapsulates the ethos and rationale for our digital strategy. There is also a requirement from Government for all local authorities to develop and implement a local digital strategy to ensure that all citizens, businesses, community stakeholders and partner agencies are engaged and afforded the opportunity to influence how the local digital landscape and strategy shapes up to meeting their needs into the future.

Digital Economy at a Glance – a wider perspective

The contribution of digital to the Irish economy is huge and rapidly growing, accounting for close to 15% of GDP in 2020 and employing over 100,000 direct jobs.

€40+ bn GVA

Ireland, and the Greater Dublin region in particular, is home to most global Tech Giants. 9 of the 10 top internet firms have their European HQ in Ireland.

Ireland ranks 5th among the EU 27 for Digital development and maturity across 4 key indicators – Skills / Connectivity / Integration of Technology / Digital Public Services. Ireland has steadily improved its position on the DESI *(Digital Economy & Society Index)* since its introduction in 2014.

Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2021 ranking

■ 1 Human capital ■ 2 Connectivity ■ 3 Integration of digital technology ■ 4 Digital public services

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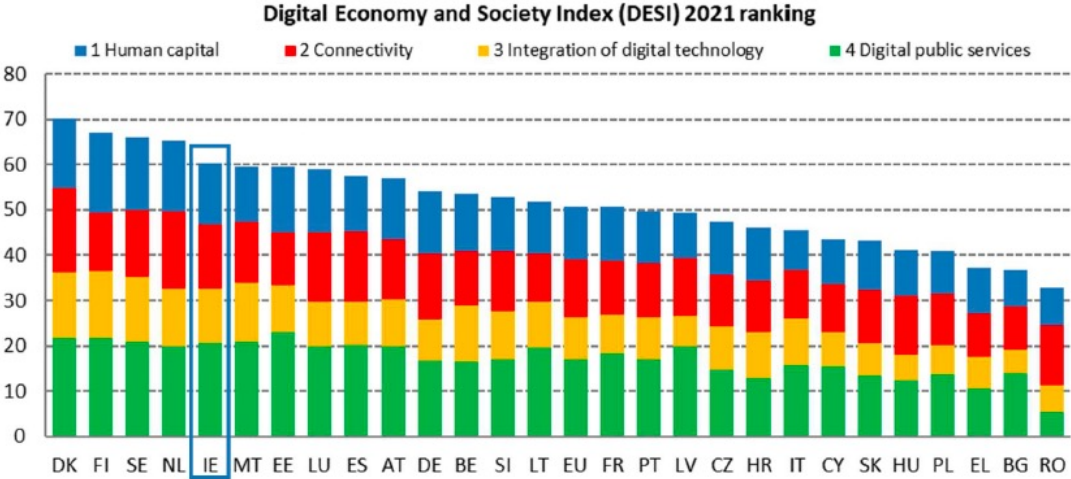
High increase in Regtech Investment

ICT Salaries 50% higher than average pay levels

26% of all Exports are from Digital Sectors

FinTech, Internet Services, Data Analytics increasing at rapid pace – driving growth

3 Digital Policy Landscape

The digital agenda has become a central policy priority at all levels of Government in recent years. Since the publication of the first National Digital Strategy in 2012 there has been a continuous elevation of digital and innovation measures in policy.

The new National Digital Strategy was launched in January 2022 (Harnessing Digital) which will direct and drive digital transition across Ireland's economy and society up to 2030. Harnessing Digital contains four high level priorities for Digital Transition including **Digital Transformation in Business**; **Digital Infrastructure** roll-out; **Digital Skills** investment; and **Digitalisation of Public Services.** Alongside this national framework for digital is the recent Connecting Government 2030 strategy for digital development of public services across all levels of Government.

There is also strong emphasis on digital solutions, infrastructure, skills and practices in the **Our Rural Future** strategy launched in 2021 in which local digital strategies are recognized as a core part of the realisation of the goals. The key objectives are:
Invest significantly in **remote working infrastructure** to ensure people can continue to live in rural communities while following their career ambitions.
Invest in **rural towns and villages** as hubs of economic and social activity.
Transform the opportunity for the diversification of rural economies, including through the delivery of **high-speed broadband** to every part of the country.

The policy will help rural economies and rural communities to recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and to maximise the opportunities afforded by improved digital connectivity, town centre regeneration, the resilience and leadership of local communities, and the transition to a climate neutral society.

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Harnessing Digital
The Digital Ireland Framework

Prepared by the Department of the Taoiseach
gov.ie

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Digital Policy & Strategy Alignment

Kildare Konnected will align and intersect with a broad range of policy frameworks at local, regional, national and European level reflecting the importance of the digital agenda. Some of the key policy documents that *Kildare Konnected* is supporting include:

- Digital Agenda for Europe & Digital Single Market
- Digital Decade to 2030 & Digital Compass
- Green Deal for Europe & Climate Action Plans
- National Digital Strategy to 2030 – Harnessing Digital
- Connecting Government 2030 – ICT Strategy for Public Service
- National Broadband Plan 2019 to 2027
- National Planning Framework – Project Ireland 2040
- National Economic Recovery Plan 2021
- National Remote Working Policy 2021 – Making Remote Work
- Future Jobs Ireland / Enterprise 2025
- National Industry 4.0 & Smart Specialisation Policy
- Digitalisation of SME's in Ireland DETE 2019
- Our Rural Future 2021 to 2025
- Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (EMRA)
- Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan 2021 to 2024
- Emerging regional Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3)
- Kildare LECP
- Kildare 2025 Economic Development Strategy
- Kildare Enterprise Plan to 2024
- Kildare Hubs Strategy 2022 to 2025
- West Kildare Just Transition Plan

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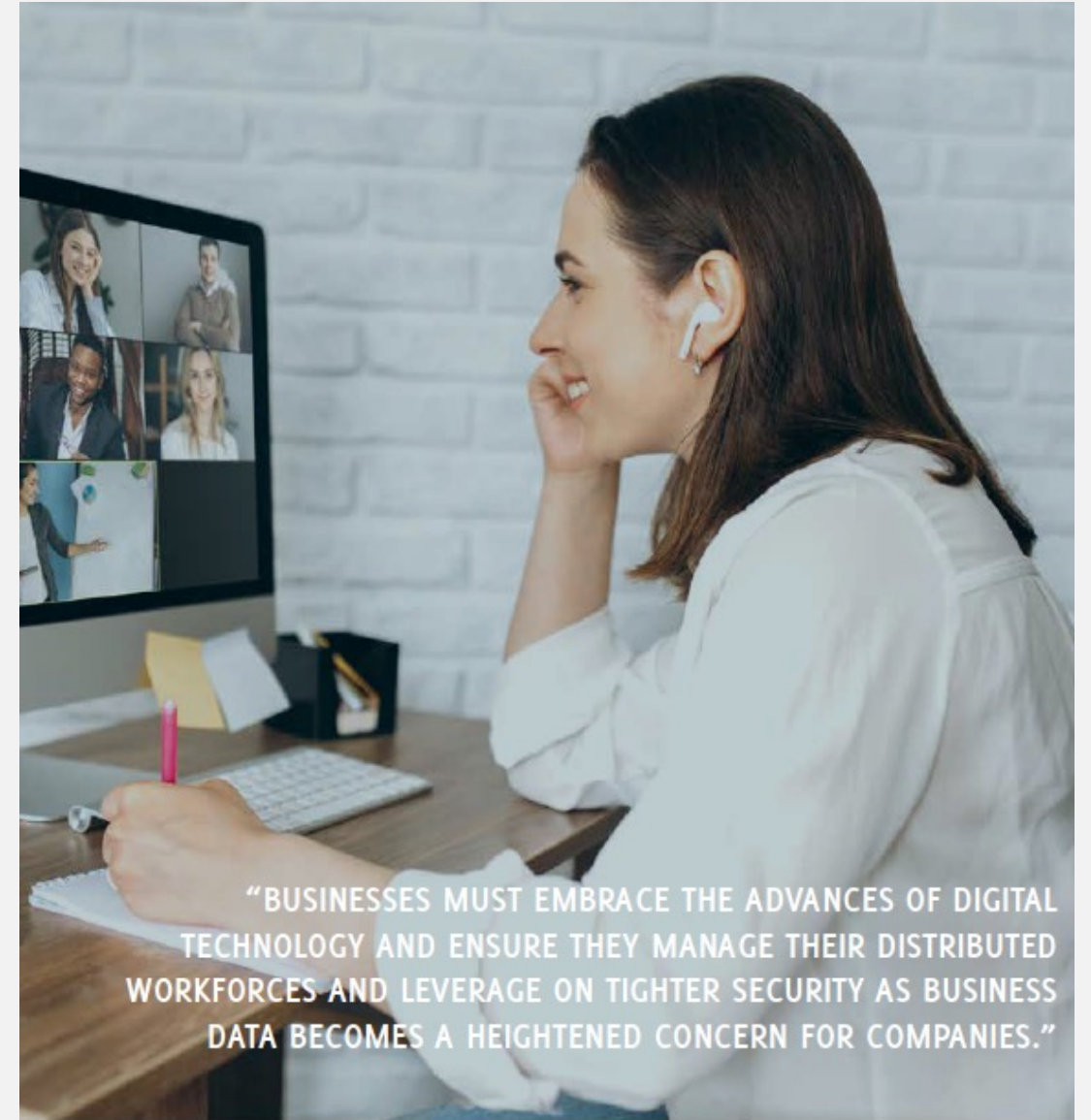**Kildare County Council**

Digital Agenda for Europe & Digital Decade to 2030

The EU's Digital Agenda for Europe (DAE) has been in existence and evolution for almost a decade and is one of seven flagship initiatives under the Europe 2020 strategy. It focuses on technologies and online services that will allow Europe to create jobs and promote economic prosperity. It aims to improve the daily lives of EU citizens and businesses through the realisation of the Digital Single Market. The headline areas of digital progress under the Digital Single Market goals are:

1. Connectivity (Broadband & Telecoms Infrastructure);
2. Human Capital (Digital Skills & Literacy);
3. Use of Internet Services (Digital Participation);
4. Integration of Digital Technology (Enterprise adoption of ICT & Innovation);
5. Digital Public Services (Accessible and Efficient e-Services).

The Digital Decade to 2030 and an EU Digital Compass, both build on the 2020 EU Digital Strategy which seeks to promote 3 key principles:

1. Technology that works for the people;
2. A fair and competitive Digital Economy; and
3. An open, democratic and sustainable society.

"BUSINESSES MUST EMBRACE THE ADVANCES OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND ENSURE THEY MANAGE THEIR DISTRIBUTED WORKFORCES AND LEVERAGE ON TIGHTER SECURITY AS BUSINESS DATA BECOMES A HEIGHTENED CONCERN FOR COMPANIES."

Supporting Local Policies, Strategies & Plans

The Digital Strategy will act as a support resource for core local priorities and objectives as set out in the local policy domain including the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), the draft County Development Plan, the Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy, various Sector Strategies, Kildare Economic Development Strategy (*Kildare 2025),* Local Climate Action Plan, Just Transition Plan for West Kildare, Kildare Library Services Plan to 2022, Kildare Cultural & Creativity Strategy / Creative Ireland, Tourism & Recreation Plans and the Kildare County Council Corporate Plan.

It will also reflect and embrace what is happening with Digital at a national and international level including the roll-out of e-Government Strategy and other strategic ICT initiatives.

Ultimately the Digital Strategy must ensure that local communities and economies are making the most of digital for their competitiveness, cohesion and sustainability through the application of digital technologies and ensuring citizens have access to the tools and skills to fully participate in the digital society.

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Kildare 2025
Economic Development Strategy

| Digital Enterprise | Creativity & Culture | Environment & Amenity | Connected Communities | Economic Development |

4 Analysis & Key Findings

Through each stage of the research and consultation programme a number of key observations and findings have been made relating to Kildare's digital context. This section presents this analysis and information to build a profile of strategic assets and needs for County Kildare in the digital realm over the coming 3 to 5 years. Further evidence and findings from the primary research and public consultation submissions are presented in more detail in Appendix A to this strategy report.

Kildare is a county characterized by an Urban / Rural duality with the opportunities and challenges to match. Digital can be a great leveller for ensuring better public services and participation in the digital economy and society is accessible for all citizens.

Much of Kildare population lies in the immediate orbit of the Greater Dublin tech ecosystem with many big tech employers operating in the north-east of the county. This connection to the digital economy places Kildare in a unique position to benefit from and shape its economy towards the expansion of this global ecosystem.

Kildare contains major Institutional digital assets through MU and MERITS and has direct access to other key facilities such as SETU (Carlow) and Dublin based HEI's. These knowledge assets will facilitate the rapid transition to a mature digital society.

Kildare has a young, educated, dynamic and rapidly growing population which places it in an enviable position for future development of the workforce and enterprise growth.

Kildare's Culture, Heritage, and Tourism assets are being brought to the fore with new Digital Storytelling and Visitor Experience such as Virtual Reality, new websites and Apps. There is a new era of discovery unfolding that embraces technology and offers major digital opportunities.

Kildare's digital Connectivity and Infrastructure is already quite advanced demonstrated by its relatively low level of intervention under the NBP. While this is a strong digital indicator it also means that those areas that are lagging behind must receive urgent and determined attention to level the connectivity playing field.

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Kildare's Digital Assets

Public Libraries

Athy
Ballitore
Castledermot
Celbridge
Clane
Clocha Rince
Kilcock
Kilcullen
Kildare
Leixlip
Maynooth
Monasterevin
Naas
Newbridge
Rathangan

Key Digital Infrastructure & Services

○ Metropolitan Area Network (MAN)

● Broadband Connection Point (BCP)

📶 Public WiFi Hotspot

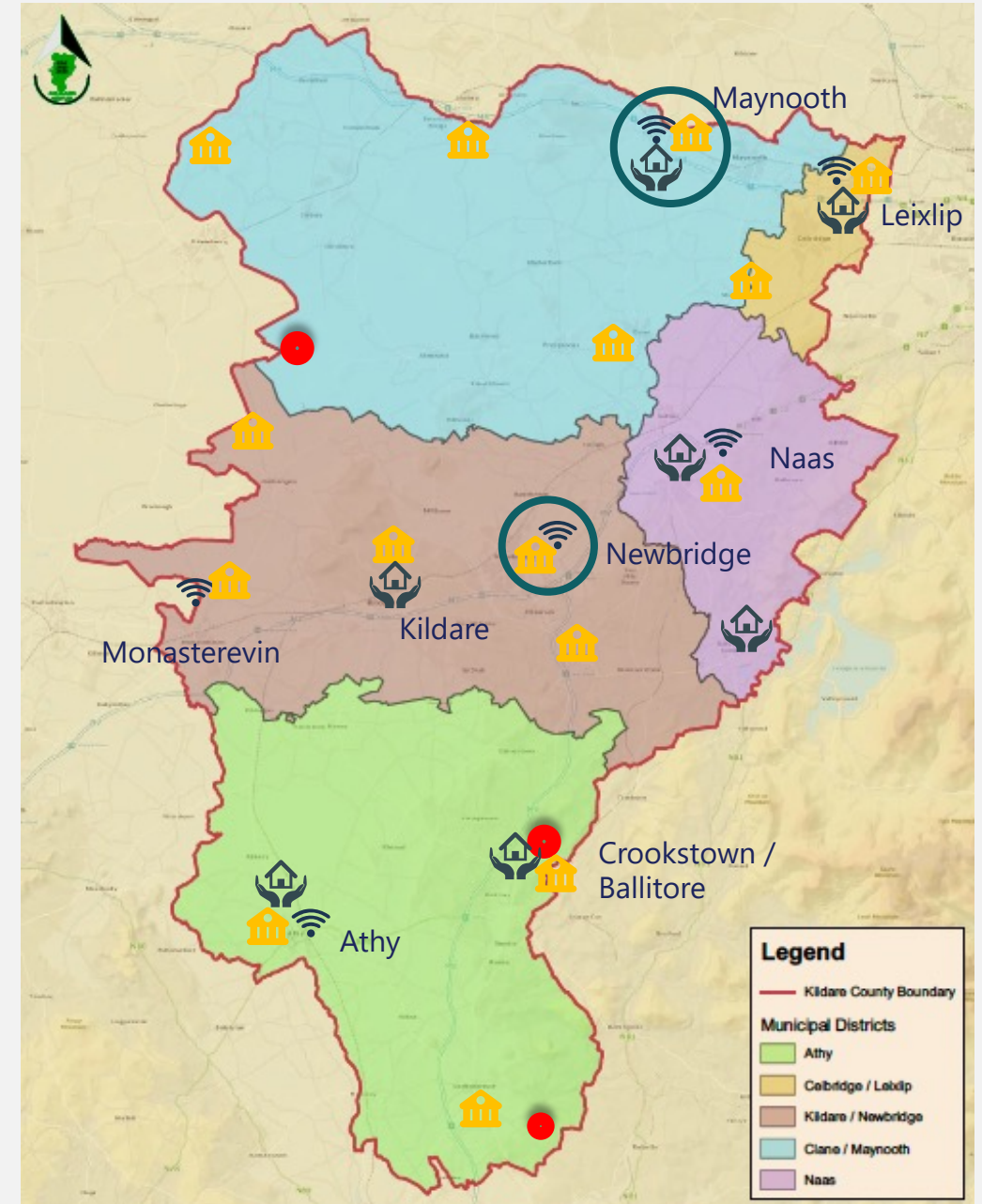🤲 Coworking / Digital Hub

🏛 Public Library

BCP's – *Connected Communities*

Bigstone Community Centre, Castledermot

Crookstown BCP, Crookstown

Lullymore Heritage & Discovery Park, Lullymore

Legend
— Kildare County Boundary
Municipal Districts
Athy
Celbridge / Leixlip
Kildare / Newbridge
Clane / Maynooth
Naas

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Key Findings & Messages from the Research

Digital has played a central and critical role in the lives of Kildare citizens over the past two years, in particular. Digital and virtual technology has provided a lifeline that enabled citizens and communities to continue to operate and engage throughout the pandemic. This legacy will set a strong platform for the digital strategy to get a headstart. This is not unique to Kildare but is highly evident in the county.

Much work and progress has been made to date in Kildare towards the creation of a framework and infrastructure that will support priority and emerging sectors including digital and technology. Leading projects like the MERITS facility in Naas act as a regional Hub for technology start-up's and entrepreneurs. The partners include Enterprise Ireland, Kildare LEO, MaynoothWorks, the Regional Skills Forum and Kildare Chamber.

Maynooth Works and the Innovation Value Institute (IVI) at Maynooth University (MU) are providing leadership and smart solutions in tech incubation, innovation and knowledge transfer, digital transformation and research commercialisation in a range of technology fields including Immunology, Electronics, Robotics and Artificial Intelligence (AI) and sectors including e-health, FinTech, Food Tech, Smart Cities and transport & mobility.

Other emerging sectors such as the Green Economy are being supported through the Just Transition Fund (JTF) at the Allenwood Enterprise Park with facilities for start-up's and investors in the future decarbonised economy. The JTF will also support the promotion of the Barrow Blue Way as a digitally enabled green tourism destination which will mitigate climate change, increase biodiversity, provide more access to local employment, development opportunities and improve the social and economic life of local communities in West Kildare.

A high level of digital adoption right across the community sector is evident whereby digital tools and digital engagement is now well integrated into the work and activities of almost all organisations and groups. Best practice in digital community initiatives already exist in Kildare through initiatives like Kildare Community Stories, the Kildare Libraries Age Friendly Digital Ambassadors project and the new SMART Villages training initiative being developed in the Northwest of the county along the Barrow Blue Way destination corridor.

The Digital Transformation in Kildare County Council has commenced and is well advanced in certain areas such as IT solutions and Cloud platforms adoption and web functions e.g. consult.Kildare portal. The next phase of digital public services is being implemented in line with Government directives and supports and will mean that very ambitious targets for digital adoption and delivery of services will prevail in the lifetime of this strategy.

Digital participation in some social groups and communities remains very low due to digital literacy and digital exclusion challenges. This can include some ethnic minority groups, older people, rural communities, early school leavers and people living in poverty.

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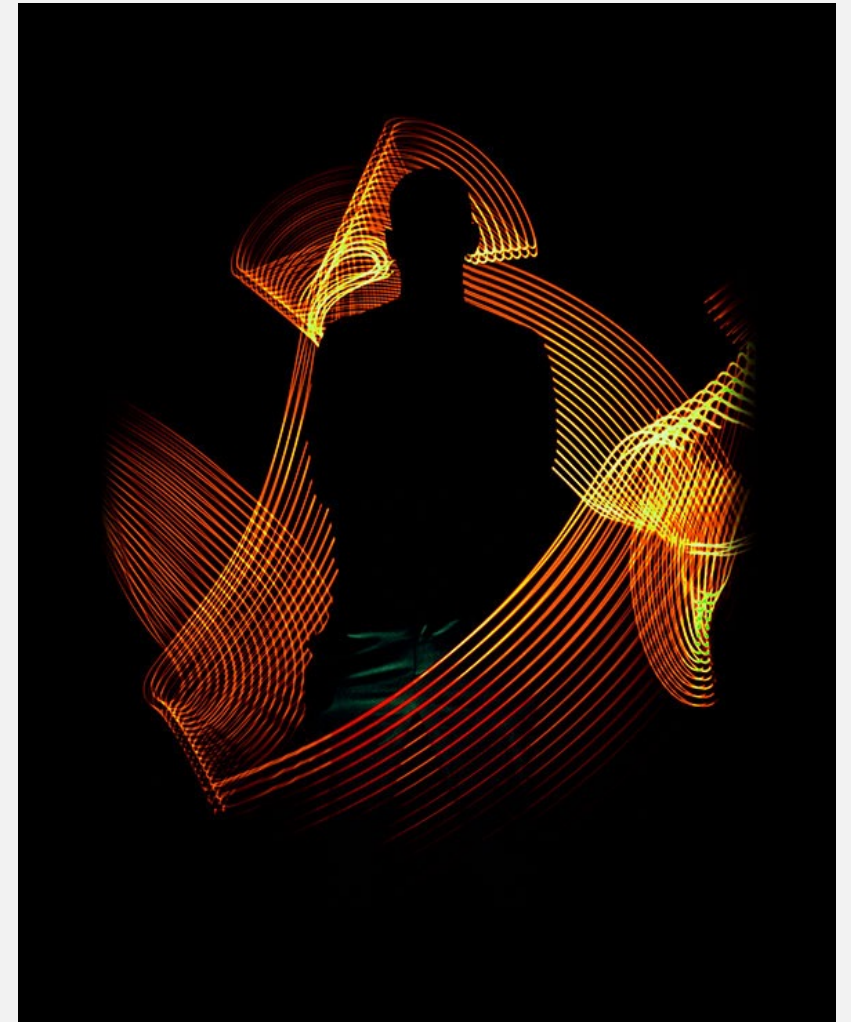
Strengths

- There has been widespread adoption of digital technologies and applications across society in recent years and accelerated by the pandemic to overcome physical restrictions. This has enabled the population and enterprise to function at a higher level and more efficiently.
- Kildare has a young, growing and highly educated population. This factor means that the task of preparing society for full participation in the digital age is more advanced and with greater prospects for harnessing digital opportunities.
- High level of digitilisation of Kildare County Council services e.g. Library & Arts services, Grants programmes, consult.Kildare and rollout of further online services to come with e-Gov 2030 / Public Sector ICT Strategy.
- Strong HEI provision in higher level Skills & R&D / Innovation in or in close proximity to Kildare – MU / SETU Carlow / Dublin HEI's.
- Transport and communications infrastructure in Kildare is highly developed for much of the county including road, rail, telecom & broadband, energy.
- Large and expanding Tech sector located in Kildare including Intel and Kildare Innovation Campus (former HP site, Leixlip) and a vibrant indigenous base of tech firms spread across the county.
- There is extensive Remote Working / Co-working & Start-up facilities across the county – K-Hub Network. This infrastructure and support environment will allow Kildare residents to work close to home and encourage new and innovative enterprises to start-up and locate in Kildare, as opposed to Dublin.
- There is a strong and established culture of partnership and collaboration in Kildare across the statutory, community and private sectors leading to many successful initiatives and projects in a digital sphere. This will allow for smooth and confident implementation of many of the activities under the Kildare Digital Strategy over the coming years.

Weaknesses

- Kildare's rural infrastructure and service provision, including broadband and telecoms, is lagging behind the county's urban core. This is evidence of a growing Digital Divide that must be addressed through the Digital Strategy.
- Development pressures and demand for housing and services are largely concentrated in urban areas along M4 and M7 corridors and lack of demand and lower prices in south and west of county. This is evidence of rural decline that must be addressed through digital services delivery, innovation and promotion.
- The BCP network in Kildare is small in reach and not offering critical service in NBP intervention area. The Connected Communities model is important for all communities to have very localised digital touch points and deliver informal digital supports.
- Evidence of poor connectivity in parts of rural Kildare both in telecoms and broadband. This will lead to a digital divide and unequal opportunity to participate in the digital economy and society.
- The digital skills and human capital to meet the needs of the rapidly growing digital economy is lacking and while this situation is not unique to Kildare there is a need to address these skills gaps through the Digital Strategy.

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Opportunities

- The level of digital adoption across local community and society offers strong platform for Digital Society initiatives into the future.
- Smart Communities training underway through County Kildare LEADER Company. This pilot will build the skills and capacity in the community sector to design and lead Smart digital projects tailored to the specific needs of the host communities.
- Homegrown Digital Institutes / Knowledge & Supports e.g. IVI / MERITS / Digital Wealth / Access Earth / Into Kildare will give Kildare profile nationally as a leader in digital development.
- Kildare's digital journey will benefit from key national policies offering Digital Direction & Supports including the new National Digital Framework Harnessing Digital and Connected Government 2030.
- New LECP will afford an opportunity to amplify and support the delivery of Kildare Digital Strategy through a strong collaborative partnership utilising the LCDC structure.
- Expand service provision and supports into rural Kildare using smart digital service tools especially through the Libraries Network and other community service hubs.
- The Just Transition Fund project in Allenwood will demonstrate the application of digital and new technologies in a decarbonised and green agenda together with visitor experience and digital storytelling of the local heritage and culture of the area.
- Open data offers a big opportunity for future planning through the use of visualisation tools and real-time data to inform a wide range of management and development functions.
- Cyber security and personal data protection and Regulatory Tech will open up new opportunities for authorities and society to build better and safer digital experiences.

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Threats

- Kildare will be subject to all National/Global threats such as cyber security attacks, economic downturn, energy security issues and innovation stagnation.
- Digital Inequality and Digital Exclusion is a present risk of ongoing digitilisation of society leaving some groups more marginalised and isolated.
- Local housing challenges and labour supply issues in Kildare can threaten capacity to fully realise the opportunities associated with digital development.

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Reflections from the Research & Consultation

Digital transformation at an enterprise or institutional level has gathered pace in recent years to the point where it now forms a central plank within government policy alongside the Climate Action and decarbonisation agenda. This is reflected in the proliferation of policy and strategy relating to digital that is being accelerated since the start of the pandemic and all with a strong emphasis on efficiency, energy, recovery, resilience and democracy.

Fortunately the policy environment for the Kildare Digital Strategy is rich and timely and supports and funding resources are increasingly being made available to deliver this digital transformation.

Kildare has a very solid network of delivery partners and stakeholders that are driving the digital agenda at an enterprise and societal level and collaboration is a key feature across almost all new initiatives. Alongside Kildare County Councils IT and Digital teams the Library Service and Kildare PPN, Kildare LEO, Kildare Chamber, Maynooth University / IVI and a host of other organisations and agencies are focused on working collaboratively to deliver digital services, solution and supports.

This network knowledge and collaboration will be a key asset in the revision of the LECP later in 2022 and it is anticipated that the Kildare Digital Strategy and its objectives and actions will feature strongly in this key local framework.

The Digital Agenda has become embedded across all sectors of society in recent years to the extent that digital tools have now become a critical driver to the improvements, innovations and solutions to creating more sustainable and inclusive communities. This transformation can be seen in areas such as e-health & telehealth, assistive technologies, digital community networks and the emergence of Smart Communities as a model for developing digitally enabled communities to address issues of rural and social isolation. It is critical that civil society continues to embrace the opportunities that digital transformation will afford all communities over the coming years.

Whilst the societal benefits of digital transformation are increasingly clear and well understood there is also a growing recognition that we must seek to achieve a digital transformation that works for all and avoid further deepening the existing digital divide or creating new inequalities.

There is growing concern amongst civil society organisations at local, national and European level that certain social groups are being left behind by digital transformation; in particular those who are older, have lower levels of education, lower incomes and live in rural areas. A 'digital only' ethos to service provision will only exacerbate the exclusion of these groups and so we must develop a more balanced perspective and approach that is based on choice and non-digital support where required.

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5 Digital Strategy Framework

Kildare will use this Digital Strategy to bring together a number of actions and objectives from the community and civic society, enterprise, education, cultural and environmental fields and apply a digital dimension to all aspects of development.

The Digital Strategy will help pave the way for future priorities and shape how the county allocates its resources and works collaboratively for a more innovative, creative and low carbon future. It will address issues of rural isolation and decline, economic innovation, cultural and tourism promotion and decarbonization, environmental protection and energy efficiency. Many of these challenges will be beyond the scope of the Digital Strategy but will be strengthened and enhanced through digital skills development, adoption of digital technologies, creating collaborative networks of smart communities and investment in digital infrastructure and connectivity.

Kildare County Council, through the Digital Development Team and the IT Department, will lead on the activation and implementation of the digital strategy. However, a range of partners from the statutory, community and private sectors will be fundamental to the partnership for digital development. A Kildare Digital Forum of partners from across civic society, the business community, education and other fields will help bring the digital agenda to their networks and ensure that the projects and resources are relevant and targeted to meet the objectives of the Digital Strategy. These will be delivered under the five thematic pillars and by partners and agencies best placed to lead on and deliver. Appendix B provides an overview of the framework for Kildare Digital Forum.
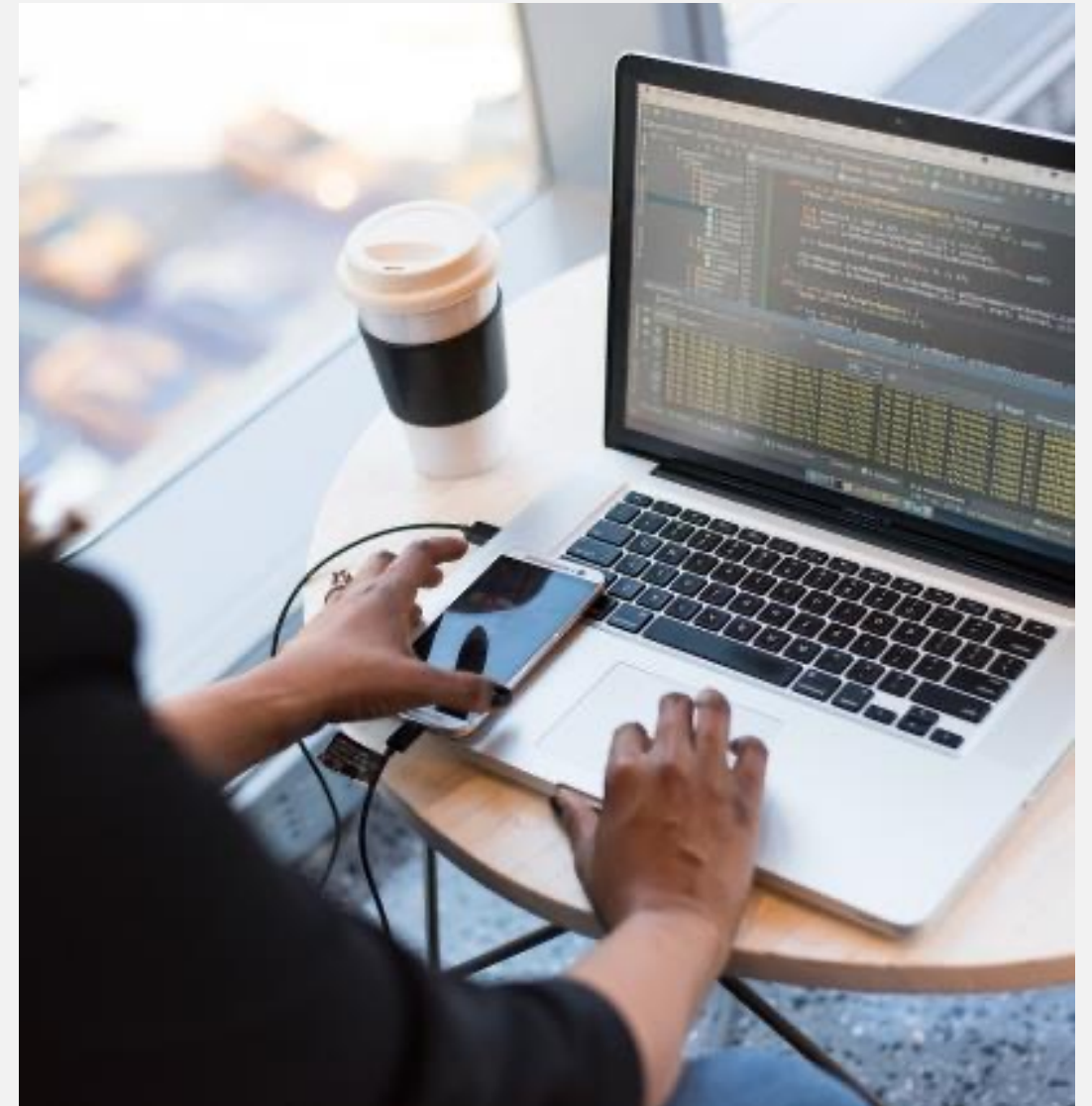
Pillar 5: Digital Public Services

Kildare County Council will develop and build the IT team, Continue a high level of customer service, Move from on premise to Cloud hosted data and applications, Create a secure and compliant IT environment, Develop self service applications for both Citizens and Members, Support a culture of Process Innovation, Support Green initiatives such as remote working and paperless office.

Pillar1: Digital Economy

Kildare 2025 Economic Development Strategy and Kildare Enterprise Plan sets the policy framework for the digital economy including the provision of innovation supports, enterprise hubs, digital skills for SME's and collaboration projects with education and industry partners towards sector development and Smart Specialisation in industry. Institutions and Initiatives such as MU/IVI, SETU, KWETB, MERITS, Sustainable Kildare and Innovate Kildare are leading examples of the development of the digital economy and will be embraced and supported by Kildare Konnected.

Pillar 4: Digital Society & Culture

The Digital Society & Culture Pillar encompasses a diverse set of themes and activities. Digital Society relates to the ways in which digital technology impacts the lives of citizens and how we interact, socialise; learn; participateand communities in civic and cultural life; and design smarter, more sustainable and more inclusive communities. Whilst digital technology is a key enabler for citizens we must also recognise the challenges that digitalisation brings such as online safety issues and the propensity for some groups of society to get left behind and excluded from our increasingly digital lives. Kildare Digital Strategy will engage with these issues through Smart Community, e-Health, Digital Skills and other initiatives that support digital participation. Pillar 4 reflects the rich Cultural, Heritage and Tourism offering in Kildare and the important opportunities that now exist for strategic developments in this sector and the central role for digital technologies in this area.

Central diagram:

05 · 01 · 02 · 03 · 04

INNOVATE PARTICIPATE COLLABORATE EDUCATE ACTIVATE

Pillar 2: Digital Infrastructure & Connectivity

Digital Infrastructure will underpin every aspect of the Digital Strategy. Without fast reliable broadband and quality mobile network coverage citizens, businesses and schools will not be able to realise the benefits of digital and participate fully in the digital society and economy. The rollout of the NBP in County Kildare is a relatively low intervention but will be critical to the areas targeted. This will enable e-learning, remote monitoring of livestock or equipment, e-health initiatives, better energy efficiency in the home, and facilitate increased levels of remote working. Other key infrastructure including telecoms and smart energy grid solutions will also form part of the digital infrastructure and connectivity agenda. At a community level the BCP network must function as key broadband service points until the eventual rollout of the fibre to each premises.

Pillar 3: Digital Skills

Digital skills and Literacy is a key underpinning theme of the strategy. Digital skills will facilitate all of the objectives in the digital economy and society. This will include basic IT skills through to high level technical skills and will be delivered across each pillar of the strategy by providers including MU; SETU & KWETB.

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Strategy Pillar	**P1: Digital Economy**	**P2: Digital Infrastructure & Connectivity**	**P3: Digital Skills**	**P4: Digital Society & Culture**	**P5: Digital Services**
Key Digital Projects & Activities	• Digitalisation across SME base • ReThink / ReDesign - IVI (SME digital resource & supports) • MERITS satellite Office MU • K-Hub Network development KCC / LEO • Sustainable Kildare – Kildare Chamber • Digital Skills of the Future – Future Workforce Skills • Innovate Kildare branding and service delivery Initiative	• NBP rollout to rural & underserved communities • BCP demand stimulation - resolve BCP shortcomings and ensure fully functional • Telecoms Infrastructure development Plan • IoT technologies in SMART town planning in future T&VR scheme implementation	• Digital Literacy – basic digital literacy supports and classes for citizens delivered through wide range of agencies and groups • Digital Skills for the Future collaboration across RSF, KWETB, KCC, CKC, MU, SETU, CKCN • Workforce survey periodic reviews and reporting	• Kildare Community Stories – popular digital platform showcasing community activity • Smart Villages – new community capacity building programme in North West Kildare • Kildare Library Digital Ambassadors – digital inclusion of older people in libraries • Legends of Kildare VR – state-of-the-art VR experience of Kildare's medieval history • Kildare Culture – digital platform for live music performances	• Enhance Kildare Library Services using a broad suite of online services, virtual tours and digital tools • Ongoing digitalisation of citizen, client and Member Services to improve provision • Continued rollout of national e-Gov platforms – e-planning • Take a Cloud First approach for future implementation of business Applications • Improved information delivery for citizens and Members through web, portal & GIS Platforms • Implement good data governance processes to support data protection and publishing of open data

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Kildare County Council

Pillar 1: Digital Economy

There has been extensive engagement with the business community and enterprise stakeholders in recent years towards innovation, digitalisation, future skills and smart economy supports. Kildare LEO is a progressive partner in the delivery of the Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan including projects such as MERITS in Naas. Maynooth University is leading on future skills and technology and knowledge commercialisation. Kildare Chamber is providing leadership and knowledge around sustainable and green solutions enterprise Workspace provision and Remote Working supports are a key part of this as well as investment readiness and talent and skills development. Collaboratively these enterprise partners under the County Kildare Community Network are building a new brand and platform **'Innovate Kildare'** to promote Kildare as a place to live, work, study or invest in. Building digital clusters and sector networks will form much of the efforts over the coming years to help embed a culture of innovation and collaboration in the enterprise base in a true digital ecosystem in Kildare.

Digital Skills | Digital Innovation
Digital Workspaces | Digital Networks

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Strategic Goals

- *Maximise **knowledge & technology** and continuous digital learning across enterprise*
- *Promote **innovation** diffusion and adoption, particularly among SME's*
- *Support **new industries** and competitiveness and resilience in mature sectors*
- *Increase **digitalization** rates in non tech / traditional sectors of economy*
- *Ensure **digital infrastructure and connectivity** is serving all citizens and businesses*
- *Develop **e-services** such as e-Health, e-Government, and online learning*
- *leverage knowledge and technology to enable **sustainable urban change***

Pillar 1
Digital Economy

Analysis

Kildare Strengths

Strong collaborative network across the enterprise support landscape, - Kildare LEO; Kildare Chamber; Maynooth University; Enterprise Ireland; East & Midlands Regional Assembly; Mid East Regional Skills Forum; towards skills, innovation and digitalisation across the SME base.

MERITS facility and sector innovation hubs (Equine, Food Tech, Green Energy) will ensure Smart Specialisation is capturing start-up and indigenous SME's as well as large enterprises.

Innovation Value Institute knowledge centre at Maynooth University is leading on a number of sector intelligence areas where digital application will drive growth, resilience, competitiveness and efficiency.

Innovate Kildare and K-Hub Network are emerging as models of best practice in provision of key enterprise and innovation supports and facilities.

Kildare has a vibrant Tech sector from global tech giants to large indigenous enterprises creating a dynamic and growing tech ecosystem.

Opportunities & Observations

Make Kildare a model of best practice in digital economy and decarbonisation through transitioning from 'Commuter' to virtual and flexible workforce and attract investment and entrepreneurship into county in this platform.

Application of digital skills and innovation and knowledge transfer Networks in key emerging sectors including Tourism; Creative Sector; FoodTech; Equine and other priority sectors.

Collaboration with Innovation Value Institute on a Kildare Smart Towns / Smart County pilot initiative. This will be embryonic but apply the knowledge and technology currently being applied to the Smart Cities Initiatives nationally and internationally. Kildare can provide leadership for other counties by harnessing the strength and knowledge assets of homegrown partners.

Ensure that key Digital Economy themes and actions from the Kildare Digital Strategy are incorporated into emerging LECP.

Best Practice

MERITS Innovation Hub, Nass

Mid East Regional Innovation Think Space (MERITS) is a dynamic new enterprise facility for the nurturing and support of technology entrepreneurs from across the region. Led by Kildare LEO, Kildare County Council and Maynooth University the purpose designed 1,200 sq.m, Digital Hub provides an active ecosystem for digital companies and entrepreneurs.

Creative Ability Hub – Fingal County Council

Employment support for people with disabilities. DIP funding will go towards the kit-out of creative digital workstations comprised of high-spec graphic PCs, laptops, creative suite software and assistive programmes.

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Pillar 1 Actions

Project ref & Title	Description of activity	Key Outputs	Partners & Timeframe
Digital Enterprise Supports	Progression of digital supports for enterprise from the Trading Online Voucher Scheme to more wide ranging Digitalisation Vouchers to progress the rate and depth of digitalisation among SME's and Micro enterprises; Higher level innovation supports for SME's / Micro Enterprises towards investment in innovation or new technology to assist business processes improvement. This will include Enterprise Ireland supported Innovation Vouchers and Innovation Partnerships. An example of this activity is the ReThink / ReDesign Business Improvement Programme from Innovation Value Institute (IVI); Identification of, and support fo,r local start-up's in digital / technology sectors that are suitable for High Potential Start Up (HPSU) programme's or Competitive Start Fund (CSF) applicant candidates; Explore potential and create awareness for larger innovation collaborations among high tech / advanced manufacturing firms in Kildare with appropriate HEI partners or other research institutes towards Disruptive Technology Innovation Fund (DTIF) projects.	Companies and sole traders undergoing phased digital transformation Priming Grants for new start's for essential IT and digital investment requirements New Innovation Vouchers issued to Kildare Co's and Innovation Partnerships entered CSF applicants and successful awards DTIF applications and awards	Kildare LEO, Kildare Chamber, Enterprise Ireland, MERITS, Maynooth University, Innovation Value Institute, SETU Carlow
K-Hub Network Development Strategy	Implementation of a series of projects and actions under the K-Hub Network Strategy over the period to 2025. This will include digital focused activity and investment P2.3 Smart Sustainable Hubs; P2.4 Hubs Back Office IT Suite; P3.3 Remote / Blended Work Supports; and P4 Hub Promotion in particular. Other activity to strengthen the network and build collaborative networks and venture across hub clients in the tech ecosystem will also be a key area of focus that supports the Kildare Digital Strategy over the same period.	New digital platform to support K-Hub Network providers and clients Innovate Kildare Brand development plan for all innovation supports in the county	K-Hub Network Members, Kildare LEO, Kildare County Council
Sustainable Kildare	A partnership between Kildare Chamber and Intel, Sustainable Kildare will help businesses take the climate action and decarbonisation challenge by targeting emissions reduction and other environmental sustainability impacts. The initiative is supported by the Ducky App to track employees personal carbon emissions and manage targeted reductions across a number of indicators and business processes. Training and knowledge sessions for participating companies is being delivered to help with sustainability strategy and Environmental and Social Governance within the organisation. Much of the programme is being delivered in online webinars and virtual meetings and workshops.	Climate Action Challenge events Online learning and skills development programme leading to greater awareness and skills in sustainability management	Kildare Chamber, Intel
Innovate Kildare	A new Brand Development initiative for all enterprise facing innovation in County Kildare, Innovate Kildare will seek to accelerate innovation in Kildare by providing a supportive environment that will facilitate and encourage higher levels of innovation across the various stakeholders and sectors reflected in the priority sectors in Kildare 2025 Economic Strategy and the Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan. The initiative will develop a brand and website for Innovate Kildare that will resonate with and encourage people or industry and investors to choose Kildare as a place to live, work, study or invest in. Innovate Kildare will have a strong digital focus and delivery mechanisms.	New Brand identity for Kildare to promote the county as an innovative and dynamic location Website and digital services for users and clients of K-Hub Network and other enterprise stakeholders	County Kildare Community Network members, Kildare County Council, Kildare LEO

Case Study: Innovation Hubs & Remote Working

The Kildare Digital Strategy, together with the Kildare Hubs Network **(K-Hub Net)** will act as a key driver for the rapid development and accommodation of Remote Working, Co-Working and Hub Working. The post pandemic economy and the drive towards a carbon neutral society is enabling a more flexible and digitally enabled workforce. This will shift Kildare from a commuter county to an innovation county. It will be critical to ensure that entrepreneurs and co-workers can operate and work in Kildare and build strong and progressive enterprises and networks locally. A key element of this will be the provision of flexible, progressive and connected workspaces. A number of start-up and remote working Hubs and Tech Enterprise Networks are already established in Kildare and more are at the planning stage. The K-Hub Network is collaborative project based on shared resources, knowledge, contacts and experience to facilitate the hubs to serve their local communities in the enterprise and community development sphere and create a new model for work and livability across Kildare. The Kildare Hubs Network Strategy was produced in 2021 to facilitate the expansion of co-working and start-up ecosystems across the county.
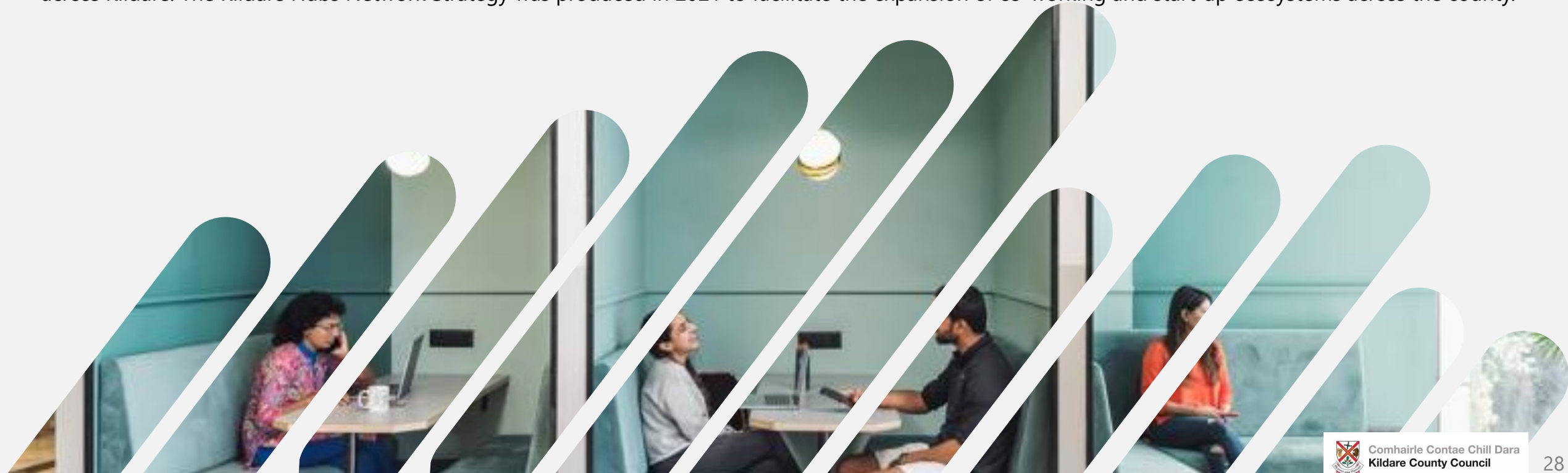
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Pillar 2: Digital Infrastructure & Connectivity

Digital Infrastructure will underpin every aspect of the Digital Strategy. Without fast reliable broadband and quality mobile network coverage citizens, businesses and schools will not be able to realise the benefits of digital and participate fully in the digital society and economy. The National Broadband Plan (NBP) investment in Kildare will amount to €53m and will include fast fibre and other fast broadband solutions to over 15,000 homes, business premises, farms, schools and community facilities.

While Kildare is in a relatively strong position with digital connectivity through the provision of commercial fast fibre broadband it is not equal across the county. Some rural areas in North-West Kildare and South Kildare are experiencing significant shortfalls in infrastructure which is reflected in the BCP network at Lullymore, Crookstown and Castledermot / Bigstone. There are other communities reporting blackspots in telecoms and wireless broadband services. Many of these communities are not scheduled for the NBP fibre rollout until 2024 or later. The strategy must prioritise these areas for localised solutions in conjunction with all infrastructure providers. A full audit of the digital infrastructure gaps is a key early action in the strategy.

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Strategic Goals

- Build on existing intelligence about broadband and telecoms connectivity gaps and weaknesses across the county and support communities experiencing digital exclusion.

- Ensure strong representation and participation on all national and regional policy and programmatic forums concerned with NBP rollout and other digital infrastructure provision and upgrades and provide routine information on progress and news relating to digital infrastructure on quarterly basis.

- Link all sustainable transport measures to Kildare Konnected including travel data, service information, mobility hubs and public transport routes.

- Evolve the BCP model of 'Connected Communities' to all areas where connectivity is an issue through Free Public WiFi hotspots in community settings. While this is a temporary measure until the NBP fibre and 5G networks reach all communities it will be important to address current gaps in provision.

Pillar 2
Digital Infrastructure & Connectivity

Analysis

Kildare Strengths

Kildare has a strong foundation in digital infrastructure in relative and absolute terms. This is best evidenced by the low level of intervention required under the National Broadband Plan and BCP network. Like other physical infrastructure such as road, rail and energy, communications is a key enabler of economic growth and development.

However, this provision and service is not even across Kildare and those communities suffering from lesser or limited digital infrastructure and service must be prioritised through this strategy.

Opportunities & Observations

Engage with DRCD / NBI and key sub-contractors to address gaps in the existing BCP or public WiFi provision and ensure that customer-based connections are delivered without blockages or delays in those underserved communities in the NBP intervention area. This will be relevant for much of rural South Kildare and pockets of the west and north of the county.

The use of Smart technologies in infrastructure provision is a key opportunity for planning and design of public spaces and the built environment and other civil works. Kildare has recently undertaken a large number of Town & Village Renewal masterplanning exercises. The inclusion of IoT (internet enabled devices) that can generate valuable data and monitoring and signalling of how our spaces function and work for citizens and businesses. Examples of solutions include sensor based public amenities / Digital Info Point / Kiosk in town centres; Multi-purpose charge points e-car & bike charging / charging sockets; Outdoor Cinema digital projection in busy tourism season.

Best Practice

Ireland's Road to 5G: Accelerating Deployment – Dublin City Council - Project brings together industry and academic experts, local authority staff and public asset-owners to coordinate the deployment of 5G and create a practical resource for local authorities across Ireland.

Edenderry IoT
Offaly County Council
Ambitious project translating opportunities of IoT for rural town management into tangible and practical case studies, costs savings and opportunities for service improvements using a range of embedded IoT sensor sets.

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Kildare County Council

Pillar 2 Actions

Project ref & Title	Description of activity	Key Outputs	Partners & Timeframe
NBP Rollout & Telecoms Upgrades	Representation and participation on all national and regional 'Digital Infrastructure & Connectivity' forums and groups to advance the scheduled delivery of the National Broadband Plan in Kildare and identification of opportunities to harness new or non scheduled investments in broadband or telecoms. Quarterly reports on NBP rollout across the county and broadband new using PPN /and direct to stakeholder networks.	NBP fibre roll-out reporting; Digital Assets Mapping & Register Telecom Infrastructure Upgrades	Kildare BBO; NBI; Vodafone and other contractors
BCP Network Support and Stimulation	An important action is to provide a project development plan to help manage and communicate what is involved in the BCP network and how it will benefit the communities they serve. Stimulate demand for BCP's through additional equipment and upgrade of the BCP resource within the community. Local community stakeholders and user groups will be engaged with to discover the desired uses for digital learning and activity that can be assisted through the BCP's on a case by case basis. This will be done in conjunction with the PPN, LCDC, Local Community Councils and other community touch points as appropriate. Awareness and information campaign around the BCP network and how it will benefit the communities they serve through Community Newsletter and other appropriate channels. DRCD has identified thematic areas for development of the BCP Network for the benefit of communities in the BCP Intervention areas including Remote Working, e-Health, Digital Skills and Arts & Culture. This will involve Digital Champions and other community leaders working with the Broadband Officer and other providers (e.g. Vodafone; PPN; Age Action; Foroige; GAA) to develop central supports to all BCP communities and to help schedule the rollout of information events and training courses etc	Training and support to BCP community partners Information and awareness campaigns to citizens in BCP locations Review of capacity and resource issues for BCP's and address with appropriate partners	Kildare BBO; Kildare PPN, BCP owners,
IoT / Smart Places Plan	Develop a plan for integrating IoT devices and equipment into wider infrastructure and especially in town and village centres in conjunction with Town & Village Renewal Plans. Identify best opportunities for IoT to assist in community planning through the use of real time data applications. Ensure civic spaces and public realm amenities are digitally enabled with quality AV & IT infrastructure to support the hosting of outdoor events.	IoT Plan and menu of relevant equipment	Kildare BBO; Kildare County Council Planning Team, NBI; Vodafone and other contractors

Pillar 3:
Digital Skills

Despite the widespread increase in digital skills and literacy across society there is a growing awareness that levels of digital adoption and impact are not the same for all groups and communities. Digital participation in some social groups and communities remains very low due to digital literacy and digital participation challenges. This can include some ethnic minority groups, older people, rural communities, early school leavers and people living in poverty.

Digital skills and Literacy much like digital infrastructure is a key underpinning theme of the strategy. Digital skills and know how will facilitate all of the objectives in the digital economy and society. This will include basic IT skills through to high level technical skills and will be delivered across each pillar of the strategy

Our strategy will seek to address and mitigate these challenges and barriers to participation by providing targeted digital skills programmes and other support resources in partnership with the relevant agencies and groups.

Strategic Goals

- Seek to identify those groups and communities experiencing digital exclusion and digital literacy issues and design appropriate responses to address and mitigate the impacts of these barriers to participation.
- Develop an intelligence monitor for workforce skills through annual surveys to ensure the right skills programmes are being targeted in the right settings.
- Design and implement specific sector based digital skills development programmes through learning networks in collaboration with enterprise and education partners.
- Set strategic targets for Local Authority staff in ITC and digital skills development in line with Pillar 4 Digital Services actions.

Comhairle Contae Chill Dara
Kildare County Council

Pillar 3
Digital Skills

Analysis

Kildare Strengths

Digital Literacy – there is a wide range of public service providers and community organisations that continue to provide access to computers and smart devices and basic or informal digital literacy training to local community groups.

Strong secondary and tertiary education system in Kildare and access to further and higher education and learning for all parts of the county.

A young and highly educated population and workforce relative to national or regional benchmarks.

Strong community level provision through extensive Library Services and vibrant community sector.

Digital Skills of the Future – Future Workforce Skills Initiative

Opportunities & Observations

Digital Skills for Citizens – Digital Skills for Citizens and other digital literacy schemes will continue to provide targeted resources for citizen-focused digital capacity building initiatives.

Application of digital skills and innovation and knowledge transfer Networks in key emerging sectors including Tourism; Creative Sector; FoodTech; Equine and other priority sectors.

Digital Skills for the Future collaboration across RSF, KWETB, KCC, CKC, MU, SETU, CKCN

Workforce survey periodic reviews and reporting will provide delivery partners with quality up to date information to assist with training and development provision.

In collaboration with community partners, identify groups in society at risk of digital exclusion and literacy to target for informal supports and training.

Best Practice

DigiClare – Connecting Communities Project Project focused on digital familiarisation and basic skills for older people delivered through community-based classes and workshops in digital hubs and other venues.

Pillar 3 Actions

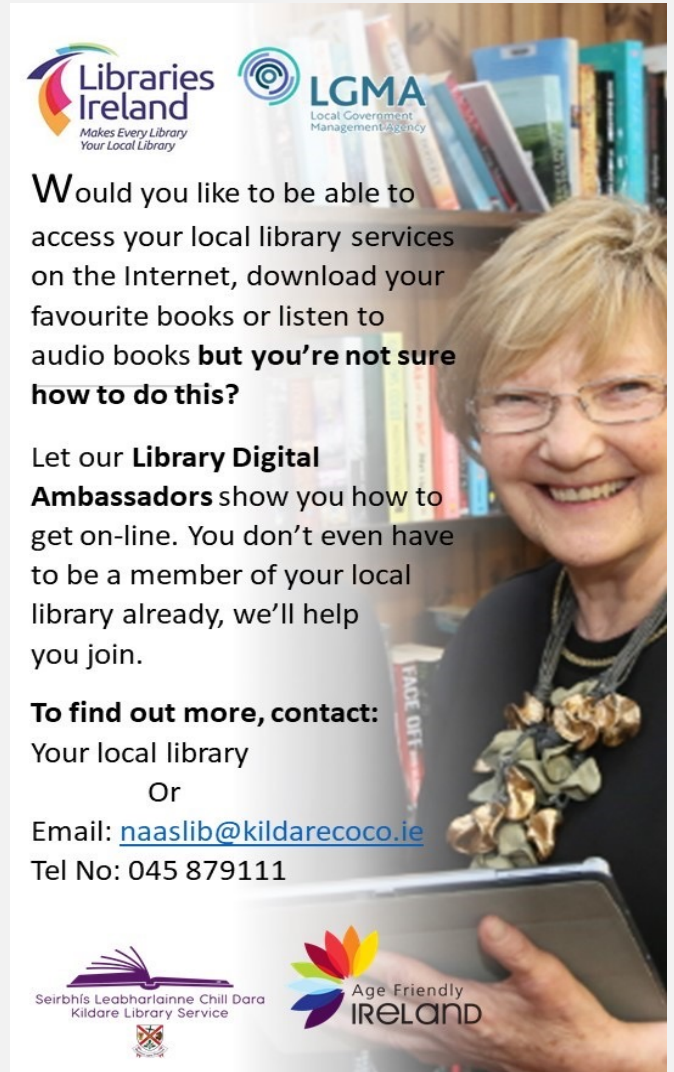| Project ref & Title	Description of activity	Key Outputs	Partners & Timeframe
Digital literacy & Skills development	Promoting digital literacy through formal and informal learning at a community level is critical to ensuring a healthy and functioning Digital Society. This will mean that citizens at risk of being left behind by digital technology will overcome the access and skills barriers through group based informal learning e.g. ('Getting Started' Basic IT Skills for over 55's where the teaching is done by TY Students from the local Secondary Schools.) The Digital Skills for Citizens for programme is also a proven skills development initiative that can be delivered through Kildare Libraries and other venues in the communities. Sample areas of interest or content could include: Social media for beginners; Email and internet browsing; Online shopping and public services; Genealogy & Family research; Apps for Health & Wellbeing	Numbers of citizens engaged in training and digital literacy programmes	Kildare Libraries Service / Kildare Age Friendly / KWLETB / DS4C
Skills of the Future – Workforce Skills	Future Skills and Digital Skills for enterprise will encompass a wide range of technical and digital skills development. Some of the more general areas of content that should form future Workforce Skills will include: Online selling tools and e-commerce website maintenance; Data analytics; Social Media management; Multi platform design for UX (user experience); ERP system specific training; Network & Data Security. More advanced digital and technology skills development areas might include AI and Machine Learning; Virtual Reality applications for remote training or marketing; programming for industry automation systems etc In conjunction with the Skills of the Future programme it is recommended that periodic workforce surveys are conducted to track the changing needs of the local workforce and the demand for certain programmes.	Numbers of employees and graduates participating on group based programmes	Kildare LEO / Kildare Chamber / KWETB / Regional Skills Forum/ Maynooth University / SETU Carlow
Hi Digital Programme	Free digital training courses for older people in Kildare. Hi Digital, designed by Vodafone in collaboration with Active Retirement Ireland, specifically for older people is a comprehensive and accessible guide to how the internet can help enhance their every-day lives: It includes: Smartphone basics, How to connect with others, Entertainment & Shopping online and Hobbies & Travel	Number of classes and courses delivered under Hi Digital Programme and number of people participating in the classes.	Kildare County Council / Vodafone / Active Retirement Ireland / BCP's

Case Study: Kildare Libraries Age Friendly Digital Ambassadors

Kildare Libraries Digital Ambassadors is part of a national programme involving Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) Libraries Development Unit and Age Friendly Ireland. This programme aims to support older people access online library resources, primarily BorrowBox, which is an app used to download books and audio books to phone, tablet, or laptop,

Fourteen staff from Kildare's main libraries (Naas, Newbridge, Kildare Town, Athy, Celbridge, Athy and Maynooth) have received training which to provide online or phone training to older people in Kildare. The training sessions guide trainees through the process of getting on the internet and downloading library apps which offer a whole new digital world of online activities, workshops, and classes.

In the challenging times we now live in, this service and support provides an important lifeline for many older people to connect with others and improve digital literacy skills.

It is never too late to join the library online, access library resources, download your favourite books or listen to audio books. The Age Friendly Digital Ambassadors are there to support and work with library users every step of the way.

W ould you like to be able to access your local library services on the Internet, download your favourite books or listen to audio books **but you're not sure how to do this?**

Let our **Library Digital Ambassadors** show you how to get on-line. You don't even have to be a member of your local library already, we'll help you join.

To find out more, contact:
Your local library
            Or
Email: naaslib@kildarecoco.ie
Tel No: 045 879111

Pillar 4: Digital Society & Culture

Digital technology continues to play an increasingly central role in civic and cultural life. Nowhere was this more clearly demonstrated than during the COVID-19 pandemic when digital tools provided the lifeline that enabled the sector to continue to operate and for individuals and communities to stay connected to each other. In Kildare this saw tablet computers being made available in nursing homes and direct provision centres; regular county-wide virtual meetings keeping voluntary groups informed and connected; and an array of artistic and cultural activity being shared with local and global online audiences.

This level of widespread digital adoption was already well underway in Kildare prior to the pandemic and best practice in digital society initiatives can already be seen in projects like the popular online platform *Kildare Community Stories*, the state-of-the-art *Legends of Kildare Virtual Reality Experience* and the growing momentum around *Smart Communities* and their capacity to deliver on key local development policy objectives such as climate action, health and wellbeing, social inclusion and rural regeneration.

Kildare Konnected will build on these strengths and opportunities for local communities whilst maintaining our commitment to ensuring that no groups are being left behind and that the necessary supports are in place for those who need additional support to navigate an increasingly digital world.

Digital Storytelling
A new, exciting and innovative 12 week course devised for Creative Practitioners in Co. Kildare.
October 2020 to January 2021
Delivered by artist/folklorist Michael Fortune from folklore.ie

Strategic Goals

- Ensure digital agenda is fully integrated into the local development framework through the new *Kildare LECP* and *Kildare County Development Plan*
- Support the development of new *Smart Community* programmes throughout the county
- Maximise the potential for digital technologies to enhance Kildare's unique cultural and heritage offering through the *Brigid 1500* programme, the new *National Peatlands Park*, the *Barrow Blueway* and other strategic culture and heritage projects
- Support the convergence of the digital agenda with the *climate action and sustainable development agendas* through demonstration projects with local communities
- Address *digital exclusion* and *digital participation* barriers being experienced by certain communities

Pillar 4
Digital Society & Culture

Analysis

Kildare Strengths

Kildare Community Stories – active and popular digital community platform providing important public information notices and showcasing local community initiatives and events.

Smart Villages – new Smart Communities capacity building initiative being developed by CKLP with community groups in Northwest Kildare.

Kildare Library Digital Ambassadors Age Friendly and Kildare Library Service collaboration that supports the digital inclusion of older people in libraries through a team of Digital Ambassadors.

Young People– InSync and Comhairle na nÓg have utilised digital platforms to support their activities and develop effective campaigns around key social issues such as climate action, gender-based violence and LGBTI awareness.

Access Earth – accessibility mapping app and database that enables accessibility experts and citizens to identify and map barriers in the built environment for people with disabilities.

Opportunities & Observations

Digital Adoption in Community Sector – widespread adoption of digital technologies across the local community sector facilitating engagement, participation and learning. All pointing to a strong platform for continued digital growth and innovation in local community sector.

Smart Communities – Smart Community training/planning underway in Northwest Kildare and can align with local Just Transition objectives. Also scope for Smart Communities model to be rolled out to other parts of Kildare.

Future Trends – young people will continue to be one of the most digitally literate age groups in society and will drive future trends and demand for digital services. Their input and collaboration will also play a critical role in addressing key challenges such as internet safety, cyberbullying and climate action solutions through digital means.

Digital Exclusion – recognition and concern that alongside the benefits that digital can bring for the majority it can also deepen exclusion and isolation for some e.g. some older people, educationally disadvantaged and those living in poverty.

Best Practice

Longford Text Alert – smartphone app that unifies and coordinates a number of different community alert systems.

Town of Things – a pathfinder project between Wexford County Council and the Irish Institute of Digital Business trialling new technologies and how they interact with and monitor daily community life in Gorey town.

Wexford Telehealth Pilot Project – e-health initiative that has just completed successful trialling of remote health monitoring with patient group.

Digital Youth Work – digital platform providing international best practice examples, training resources and practical guidelines in the application of digital technologies in youth work.

Comhairle Contae Chill Dara
Kildare County Council

Pillar 4
Digital Society & Culture

Analysis

Kildare Strengths

Legends of Kildare VR Experience – state-of-the-art virtual reality experience available at Kildare Town Heritage Centre. The immersive experience transports visitors back in time to explore and experience Kildare's ancient heritage and mythology.

Into Kildare – modern, accessible and active tourism and recreation website and social media channels promoting Kildare's diverse and distinctive tourism and recreation offering.

Irish Racehorse Experience – state-of-the-art interactive visitor experience at The Irish National Stud & Gardens. The experience uses gaming technology and mixed media to provide visitors with insights and immersive experiences in all aspects of horse breeding and racing.

Kildare Culture – dedicated digital platform developed in response to COVID restrictions to livestream musical performances from various cultural venues in Kildare.

Opportunities & Observations

Brigid 1500 Celebrations – the Brigid 1500 Strategy presents significant opportunities for digital technology to play a critical role in telling Kildare's unique heritage story and raising Kildare's profile with tourists and audiences. This national event offers the opportunity to deliver a digital enabled spectacle event which could represent a legend of St Brigid e.g. drone display across the Curragh

National Peatlands Park and other new Visitor Attractions – as set out in the new Local Just Transition Plan for West Kildare the development of a new National Peatlands Park and other amenities such as the Barrow Blueway represent important opportunities for Kildare to develop its tourism, heritage and cultural offering where digital technologies can play a central role in the development and promotion of these new amenities.

Naas Library & Cultural Centre – the new Naas Library & Cultural Centre will provide an exciting new space and resource to showcase creative technologies and the key role that digital can play in contemporary library and arts services.

Digital Capacity Building for Artists – digital capacity building for local artists has become an increasingly important area of support in recent years and will continue to feature as strategic focus area.

Best Practice

King of the Vikings – King of the Vikings is an immersive Virtual Reality experience set inside an authentic recreated Viking house in the ruins of a 13th century Franciscan Friary in the heart of Waterford's city's historical quarter.

Wild Atlantic Way Digital Discovery Points – project developing hardware and digital content at each Wild Atlantic Way 'Discovery Point' sign. Each Discovery Point will contain a QR code or iTag to allow fast access to interactive mapping on the visitor devices

Erris History and Folklore Digitisation Project - project supporting the digitalisation of extensive Irish language oral history and folklore archive from the Erris area in Co. Mayo

Pillar 4 Actions

Project ref & Title	Description of activity	Key Outputs	Partners & Timeframe
Digital Agenda in Local Development	The new Kildare LECP offers an important opportunity to embed the digital agenda across the local development sector in Kildare. This strategic action will seek to ensure that supporting the digital agenda is designated as a High Level Goal in the new LECP. and that the actions of Kildare Digital Strategy are further supported in the LECP.	Digital Agenda adopted as a High Level Goal in the new Kildare LECP. Key strategic goals and actions in Kildare Digital Strategy are committed to in the new Kildare LECP.	Kildare County Council Kildare LCDC
Smart Communities	Support the development of the emerging Smart Villages network in Northwest Kildare. Support the roll out of Smart Community capacity building programmes for communities across the county.	Increase in the number of community groups undertaking new digital initiatives across the county.	Kildare County Council County Kildare LEADER Partnership Maynooth University
Digital Inclusion for All Ages	Engage with the Age Friendly Programme National Office around the implementation of the Age Friendly Homes programme and telehealth initiatives that utilise digital technologies to support older people to continue to live independently. Develop a new 'youth section' on KCC's website – using digital to improve engagement and collaboration with young people around local authority services and local development processes.	Development of new assistive technology and telehealth initiatives with older people in Kildare New youth-focused digital resource integrated into KCC website	Kildare County Council Kildare Age Friendly Programme In Sync Youth Services
Digital Supporting Climate Action	Develop a 'Sustainable Development Goals Interactive Map' for Kildare. Mapping the work, projects and initiatives undertaken by local communities who are delivering on SDG's. Use the annual Climate Action Week programme as a platform to showcase best practice projects where digital technologies are delivering on climate action objectives and targets.	New digital resource mapping the broad range of sustainable development initiatives across Kildare Increased focus on digital solutions within Climate Action Week programme	Kildare County Council Kildare PPN
Enhancing Kildare's Culture and Heritage Resources	The Brigid 1500 Strategy presents significant opportunities for digital technology to play a critical role in creating new visitor experiences, telling Kildare's unique heritage story and raising Kildare's profile with national and global tourists and audiences. Support the development of a new National Peatlands Park with Lullymore Heritage Centre as a central hub and visitor centre demonstrating the centrality of digital technologies providing new visitor experiences, educational facilities and even decarbonisation projects within the new park. Develop new promotional campaign for the Legends of Kildare VR Experience.	Increase in the number of local culture and heritage amenities, attractions and events enhancing their offering through the use of new technologies.	Kildare County Council Just Transition Partnership Lullymore Heritge & Discovery Park Kildare Heritage Centre

Pillar 4 Actions

Project ref & Title	Description of activity	Key Outputs	Partners & Timeframe
Digital Library Services	The new Naas Library & Cultural Centre due to open in 2022 will provide an exciting new space and resource to showcase creative technologies and the key role that digital can play in contemporary library and arts services. Continue to promote EDUROAM across the Library network Develop digitisation of Local History and Archive Collection and continue to develop and promote the County Kildare eHistory services and new Library Website Continue to deliver tailored digital literacy IT training programmes in response to user needs, e.g. Age-Friendly Digital Ambassador, Digital Skills for Citizens etc.	New library space demonstrating best practice in digital library services. Increased access to high quality Wifi for Kildare students through library network. Transformation of Local History and Archive Collection into new digital resource Free, accessible digital literacy courses delivered to library users across the county	Kildare County Council Library & Arts Service HEAnet
Digital Arts Services	Develop new Kildare Arts Service website Continue to deliver digital capacity building programmes for local artists with a focus on utilising digital tools and growing digital audiences Support Music Generation Kildare to deliver a broad ranging music programme that encompasses digital technologies, online learning and blended learning	New user friendly website for Kildare Arts Service Increased digital capacity building supports for local artists Increased digital capacity building supports for young musicians and producers	Kildare County Council Library & Arts Service Music Generation Kildare
Town Twinning / Cultural Exchange	Explore the scope for digital technology to enhance and add value to Kildare's existing network of twin towns. This can encompass digital business partnerships, community connections and exchanges and virtual twinning events.	New digital initiatives and enhanced cultural connections within Kildare's international twinning network	Kildare County Council
Blended Working Digital Supports	Enable blended and remote working policy and supports including digital services and tools for public sector staff in their roles	Numbers of public sector employees engaged in remote or blended working	Kildare County Council

Case Study: Kildare Community Stories

Kildare Community Stories is a digital community engagement initiative by the Community & Cultural Section of Kildare County Council.

Operated primarily on the Facebook platform Kildare Community Stories acts as an online showcase for the breadth and diversity of community work that Kildare County Council undertakes and supports in partnership with community and voluntary groups. Topics and areas covered include community development, community grants, sports, amenities, age-friendly outreach, Kildare Public Participation Network, integration, town twinning and joint policing.

The platform focuses on grassroots community action and provides daily, jargon-free content about local communities without the use of sponsored posts or stock images.

Kildare Community Stories has proven to be a very popular and engaged digital community platform. Launched in November 2018 its Facebook page now has 8,700 followers and an individual post reach of up to 97,500. Its total reach in 2021 was 1.9 million with 60,000 video views also achieved.

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Kildare County Council

Case Study: Legends of Kildare VR Experience

'Legends of Kildare' is a state-of-the-art virtual reality experience available at Kildare Town Tourist Office & Heritage Centre. This immersive 3D experience transports visitors back in time to discover and learn about the rich heritage, mythology, folklore and history of ancient Kildare.

Visitors are greeted by their very own Medieval guide who sets the scene and leads them to the dedicated space where the adventure begins. Once the VR headsets are on visitors enter a virtual reality world where they move through Kildare's ancient landscape and settlements whilst being immersed in stories of the Fianna, Brigid the Goddess, Saint Brigid and the arrival of the Normans in one of Ireland's oldest towns.

Visitors also learn about the history of Kildare's medieval sites including St. Brigid's Cathedral and Round Tower and the ancient Fire Temple.

The VR experience is available in several languages including English, Irish, French, German and Chinese and was developed with investment from Fáilte Ireland and Kildare County Council.

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LEGENDS OF KILDARE
A MAGICAL VIRTUAL REALITY ADVENTURE

IRELAND'S ANCIENT EAST

Pillar 5: Digital Public Services

Kildare County Council has a separate Digital and ICT development plan that will form the core of Pillar 5 in the Kildare Digital Strategy. Some of the key principles that this plan rest on include:

- Cloud first for Applications and Data
- A high level of IT Cyber Security
- Online Service rollout to Citizens and Members
- Improving WEB Accessibility
- Council Chamber revamp with AV / IT fitout to enable remote / hybrid meetings and live streaming
- Process Innovation & operational excellence (RPA)
- IT Governance – Data Governance (GDPR, Open Data)
- Further application of GIS

Training in new applications and systems will be a critical element of the organizational culture transition to digital.

Some of the external facing elements of the public services will be delivered by the Library Services team and management at strategic sites across the library network.

Strategic Goals & Actions

- Continue to research and utilise technological advancements to enhance digital library services across the library network
- Ensure that the new Naas Library & Cultural Centre and other new libraries become sites for creative digital technologies such as 3D printing, VR & AR tools and other educational and creative digital technology.
- Develop and build the Digital (Broadband Team) and IT team in Kildare County Council.
- Continue high level of customer service improvement and innovation programme using preferred CRM.
- Move from on premise to Cloud hosted data and applications to external / public cloud,
- Create a secure and compliant IT environment,
- Develop self service applications for both Citizens and Members,
- Digital Revamp of Kildare Council chamber to accommodate hybrid meetings and live streaming
- Support a culture of Process Innovation across the authority,
- Support Green initiatives e.g., paperless office, remote working and conferencing and online service access.

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Pillar 5
Digital Services

Analysis

Kildare Strengths

The development and expansion of digital supports and learning opportunities through the Library Services has been very impressive in recent years and especially at an informal level at the citizen facing resources. This can be expanded and replicated through the Kildare Digital Strategy as Kildare County Council identifies new opportunities for bringing better and more accessible services and information to the public and in doing so supporting efficiency in service provision, decarbonization and community cohesion.

Apart from internal IT and Digital Transformation and evolution of digital public services Kildare County Council is developing information, supports, networks and facilities to encourage and assist the Remote & Flexible Working within the organization and across the local enterprise base.

Opportunities & Observations

Kildare County Council as the lead partner in the local digital strategy is the coordinating body between government and citizens and must lead and support in the transition to digital. Therefore, a programme of Digital Transformation in public services and internal systems and processes is being coordinated and implemented under Pillar 5 to bring forward digital services and resources.

This evolution of better public services and more reliable and safer cloud-based information and communication systems for internal organisation development is informed by the new Connected Government 2030 strategy and the Public Services ICT Strategy before it.

Best Practice

Submit.com - Kildare County Council

Kildare County Council Community Grants & LEO grants were delivered to citizens and businesses in 2020 using a new on-line forms platform 'submit.com'. This system is being expanded in its use and delivery of applications across the authority to cover many more areas of client services.

Online Portal - Kildare County Council

Kildare County Council housing services were assisted in 2020 to launch an on-line service for rent payments which had 95% take-up among clients.

Digital Workplace at Kildare County Council
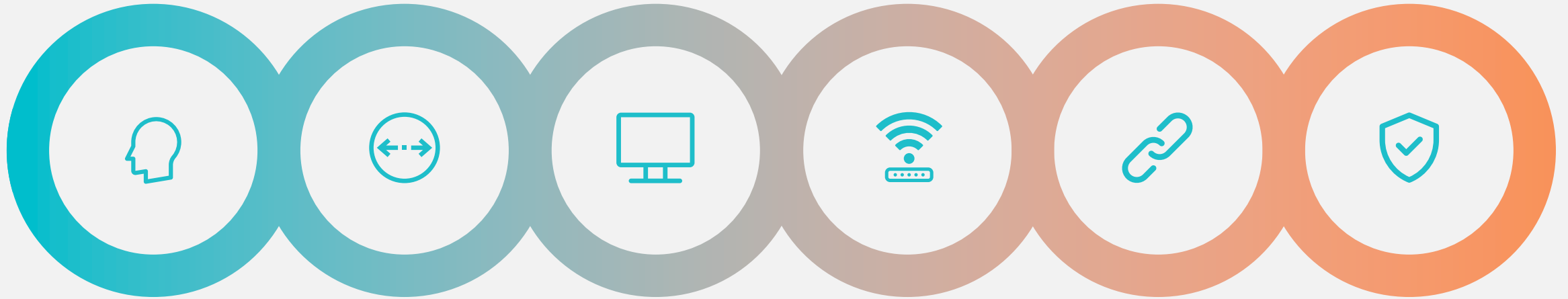
Culture and awareness

Collaboration

Virtual work environment

Seamless Networking

Distributed Continuity & Process Improvement

Adaptive Security

Pillar 5 Actions

Project ref & Title	Description of activity	Key Outputs	Partners & Timeframe
Continued rollout of eGovernment platforms – ePlanning	The provision of more digital public services to citizens on-line to include new, and or, upgraded digital services for key areas of Local Authority business towards citizen and client services. This will include the launch of a new Members portal, rollout of ePlanning initial services and development of a new citizen authenticated portal	Creation of a citizen portal which would host all citizen on-line services	Kildare County Council, LGMA and key IT partners • Launch of a new Members portal in Q3 2022. • Launch of ePlanning (the ability to submit application electronically on-line) • Development of a new citizen authenticated portal 2023
Ongoing digitalisation of citizen and Member services to improve service provision	Provide more on-line facilities for citizens and members to access council services. Continued development of digital services for citizens using LGMA, SUBMIT.COM, MyCOCO and Build to Share (BTS) local authority initiatives	Development of citizen and Member portals for easy access to all on-line services	As above
Take a Cloud first approach for future implementations of Business Applications	Cloud first approach to hosting new IT services to ensure more secure and flexible deployments and move more on-premise hosted IT infrastructure to the Cloud. Continued migration of other backoffice services to the Cloud as part of upgrading of service	Evolution and upgrades of IT systems and services	Procure new Planning Administration system in Q4 2022
Improved information delivery for citizens and Members through both web, portal & GIS platforms	Digital democracy and engagement with citizens via greater access to records and decision making in the local government framework. This will include revamp of Audio Visual capabilities in the council chamber to enable hybrid council meetings with the capability to stream & webcast full council meetings.	Development of a council chamber and other council meetings room to facilitate both hybrid and streaming of meetings	Kildare County Council Tender for new new equipment, software and service in Q3 2022
Implement good Data Governance processes to support data protection and publishing of open data	Insure all data managed by the council adheres to the requirements of all data protection (GDPR) and open data legislation. This should be managed by good data governance procedures within the organisation. Kildare County Council engaged a vendor through the national framework to help with the data audit and creation of the data catalogue and the new portal	Creation of a Data governance committee and full data audit with aim of creating data catalogue with a process to publish open datasets and database to both council and national portals	Kildare County Council • Data Governance created in 2021; • Data audit started June 2022 with plan for data portal and audit to be available by the end of Q3 2022

6 Conclusions & Recommendations

As Kildare's first Digital Strategy, **Kildare Konnected** is not only identifying digital development initiatives and opportunities but also setting the tone and ambition for what type of digital society and economy it wants to create for its citizens and enterprises.

It will be critical now to promote the strategy across all stakeholders and among civic society networks and build a wide and diverse partnership for its implementation over the coming 3 to 5 years. This will happen at both formal and informal levels using a **Kildare Digital Forum** for its governance and management. This implementation and monitoring function will need to have deep roots into the communities and stakeholders that it is targeting or facilitating. A Digital Champion should be appointed for each of the five Pillars to act as head for all policy and activity under that specific theme. The forum will also need representation from elected members and ensure that each Municipal District is represented on the Kildare Digital Forum. A suggested organisational profile and structure for the Kildare Digital Forum is presented in Appendix B.

Allied to the Kildare Digital Forum an expansion and elevation of the Digital function in Kildare County Council is recommended. This will allow for a more seamless and responsive Digital First principle to be applied in all council business but also for a strong and connected team to deliver the digital strategy and build capacity for more ambitious citizen and enterprise facing initiatives into the future.

In this regard we prescribe a **Kildare Digital Office** where the functions of Broadband Office and Broadband Liaison are brought together with IT & IS and are bolstered by the addition of a data, mapping and GIS resource. Other supporting functions and roles will be identified and prioritised once the office is established.

Thematically *Kildare Konnected* is grouped into distinct, yet interrelated, functional pillars. It is important that all team members and the wider stakeholdership through the proposed Kildare Digital Forum recognise and promote this interconnectedness across all activity. For example, pillar 2 Digital Infrastructure & Connectivity is critical to enabling all other elements of the strategy and therefore Connectivity, in every part of the county, is key to the integrity of the strategy itself. Similarly pillar 2 Digital Skills is essential for a democratic digital society to evolve in Kildare and to ensure all citizens can participate in the digital economy. In the same vein pillar 5 Digital Public Services will encompass a broad range of activity from Library based initiatives and supports to digital transformation across the suite of client services provided by the Local Authority and their IT systems to drive that transformation.

It is important that the strategy, while future facing and innovative, is also reflective of the different needs in society. In the research and consultation Kildare's duality in an urban and rural context is acknowledged and the implied and evidential unevenness of infrastructure and service across this duality. A key focus of the strategy must be to prioritise areas that are suffering or lagging in a connectivity or support context. It is acknowledged that the NBP is mostly outside the direct control of the local partners in Kildare but there is a need to bring focus and solutions to areas that are suffering from connectivity issues including the BCP network and possible replication and expansion of this model using local and national resources.

Comhairle Contae Chill Dara
Kildare County Council

APPENDICES

Glossary of Terms

Appendix A: Survey Results
A1: Kildare Citizen Digital Survey
A2: Kildare Youth Digital Survey

Appendix B: Kildare Digital Forum – Structure & Membership

Glossary of Terms

Acronyms used in this document	Acronyms used in this document	Digital Terms used in this document
AI – Artificial Intelligence AR – Augmented Reality BCP – Broadband Connection Point CDP – County Development Plan CKLP – County Kildare LEADER Partnership CKCN – County Kildare Community Network DAE – Digital Agenda for Europe DESI – Digital Economy & Society Index DETE – Department of Enterprise Trade & Employment DMI/DRI – Digital Maturity / Readiness Index DRCD – Department for Rural & Community Development DSM – Digital Single Market EI – Enterprise Ireland EMRA – Eastern & Midlands Regional Assembly ERP – Enterprise Resource Planning FDI – Foreign Direct Investment FTTP – Fibre to the Premises Gbps – Gigabits per second GDP – Gross Domestic Product GDPR – General Data Protection Regulation GIS – Geographic Information Service GVA – Gross Value Added HEI – Higher Education Institute HSBB – High Speed Broadband IDA – Industrial Development Authority ICT – Information & Communications Technology	IoT – Internet of Things IS – Information Systems IT – Information Technology IVI – Innovation Value Institute JTF – Just Transition Fund KCC – Kildare County Council KWETB – Kildare & Wicklow Education Training Board LCDC – Local Community Development Committee LECP – Local Economic & Community Plan LEO – Local Enterprise Office MAN – Metropolitan Area Network Mbps – Megabits per second MERITS – Mid East Regional Innovation Think Space MNC – Multi National Corporation MU – Maynooth University NBP – National Broadband Plan NBI – National Broadband Ireland PPN – Public Participation Network R&D – Research & Development RPA – Robotic Process Automation RSF – Regional Skills Forum SME – Small & Medium Enterprises SETU – South East Technology University VR – Virtual Reality Wi-Fi – Wireless Fidelity	**Big Data** – Extremely large datasets that can be analysed automatically. **Decarbonisation** – Reducing greenhouse gas emissions produced as a result of transport. **Digital Economy** – Online business activities and digital service enterprise. **Digital Ecosystem** – A group of interconnected information technology resources. **Digital Media** – Media that is enabled and transferrable by digital technologies. **Digital Society** – A society that adopts and integrates ICT into everyday life. **Digital Transformation** – Cloud computing and integrated ICT across the organisation. **Machine Learning** – Computer algorithms that improve automatically through experience. **Online Trading Vouchers** – Scheme run by Local Enterprise Offices for businesses to go online. **Remote Working** – The activity of employees working remotely from their host employer premises. Other terms include telework, e-working, co-working, virtual office etc. **Smart Communities / Cities** – Communities or Locations active in the integration of technology into planning and delivery of services and supports. **WiFi4EU** – An EU funded programme to deliver public wifi networks in towns and villages. **3D Printing** – The process of making a physical object from a three-dimensional digital model, typically by laying down many thin layers of a material in succession.

Appendix A: Survey Results

A1: Kildare Citizen Digital Survey
A2: Kildare Youth Digital Survey

(refer to separate reports)

Appendix B: Kildare Digital Forum (Structure & Membership)

Community Champions -
1 Member from each
Municipal District

Kildare County
Council –
Digital Team

Institutional
Champions -
Kildare Libraries
MU - IVI

Business Industry
Champions –
Kildare LEO
Kildare Chamber
Tech Ecosystem