

GRAIGUENAMANAGH



TOWN CENTRE FIRST PLAN



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



An Roinn Forbartha Tuaithe
agus Pobail agus Gaeltachra
Department of Rural and Community
Development and the Gaeltacht



Lár Bailte ar dTús
Town Centre First

Ár dTodhchaí
Tuaithe
Our Rural
Future



Comhairle Chontae Chill Chainnigh
Kilkenny County Council

FOREWORD

As members of the Graiguenamanagh Town Centre First Town Team we are delighted to share this plan - a reflection of pride, energy and collaboration that makes our town special.

Our committee brings together a group of people from a wide range of backgrounds, all united by a shared goal: to strengthen Graiguenamanagh and ensure it continues to thrive for generations to come.

This collective effort has shaped a shared vision that responds to the key challenges and opportunities facing Graiguenamanagh today.

This plan is the result of genuine partnership — between community members, local organisations, Kilkenny County Council, and professional partners — all working together to shape a positive and sustainable future for our town.

On behalf of all involved, thank you sincerely to everyone who has contributed their time, ideas, and enthusiasm to this important initiative. I look forward to continuing our collaboration as we work together to bring this shared vision for Graiguenamanagh to life.

Bronnagh Barron – Chairperson, Town Team

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VISION FOR GRAIGUENAMANAGH – WHAT WINNING LOOKS LIKE:

The Graiguenamanagh Town Centre First Plan has been completed following extensive community engagement. The vision of the Town Centre First Plan has been drafted following workshops and structured conversations with community groups and local businesses who were asked ‘What winning / success looks like’. The vision, i.e. winning / success, in Graiguenamanagh has been identified as follows:

“Low vacancy, high building reuse. A vibrant core with more businesses and employment. Being able to buy a house and live in the community. Being able to have a nice meal at night and walk around the town safely. A great place to live in and visit but not lose its authenticity. Develop greater community spirit to get more stuff done!”

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PART ONE - INTRODUCTION

TOWN CENTRE FIRST POLICY

Town Centre First is a major cross-government policy that aims to regenerate towns across Ireland, creating town centres that are viable, vibrant, and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit. By investing in town centres, Town Centre First enables towns to thrive and to reach their full potential, while functioning as the service, social, cultural, and recreational hub for the local community. The policy emphasises the importance of tailoring a plan around the unique characteristics and qualities of the town.

Town Centre First Policy aims to tackle vacancy, combat dereliction and breathe new life into our town centres. It advocates for a holistic, place-based approach to sustainable rural development. Irish towns are facing significant challenges and opportunities that require a coordinated and comprehensive response.

Further information on the Town Centre First Policy is available at the following:
<https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-rural-and-community-development-and-the-gaeltacht/publications/town-centre-first-policy/>

GRAIGUENAMANAGH TOWN CENTRE FIRST PLAN CONTEXT

In February 2024, Graiguenamanagh was selected for funding from the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht for the creation of a Town Centre First Plan. A Town Team was established in July 2024 comprising an enthusiastic group of people with diverse backgrounds and experiences and who are all active in Graiguenamanagh in a variety of ways such as businesses; sports organisations; community groups and special interest groups. The team was formed following three public meetings at The Hub in Graiguenamanagh.



The Graiguenamanagh Town Centre First Plan has been created in conjunction with the Town Team and the local community, community groups and businesses of Graiguenamanagh, in addition to other key stakeholders.

The Town Centre First Plan is a non-statutory document which will be used to inform decision-making, funding applications and the delivery of projects. All actions that emerge from the plan will be subject to approval processes as necessary, including adherence to planning policy and environmental assessments and other licensing requirements.

The plan has had regard to the ongoing Graiguenamanagh-Tinnahinch Flood Relief Scheme for which a planning application is currently being prepared. Many of the actions contained in this TCF Plan are not considered to impact on the Flood Relief Scheme. However, detailed assessments will be carried out as actions are advanced to ensure feasibility. It is also considered that several actions may not advance until such a time as the Flood Relief Scheme has been completed.

ELEMENTS OF THE GRAIGUENAMANAGH TOWN CENTRE FIRST PLAN

The structure of this Town Centre First Plan aligns with the four key pillars of the Town Centre First policy:

- Collaboration and Communication
- Understanding the Place (Analysis and Appraisal)
- Defining the Place (Objectives and Actions)
- Enabling the Place

GRAIGUENAMANAGH TOWN TEAM

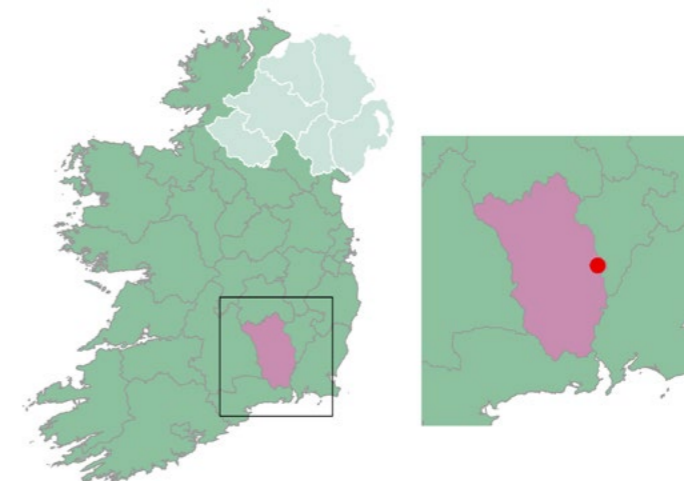
The Graiguenamanagh Town Team was established in July 2024 following three public events. Members of the Graiguenamanagh Town Team derive from various backgrounds including; Business/Retail; Sports; Youth; Education; Biodiversity/Climate Action; Community groups and organisations; Heritage; and Tourism.

The success of the Graiguenamanagh Town Centre First Plan will involve strong local collaboration from the Town Team with the wider community and with support from the Town Regeneration Office of Kilkenny County Council.

Town Team members include Bronnagh Barron (Chairperson) and Matthew Ward (Secretary).

ABOUT GRAIGUENAMANAGH

Graiguenamanagh is located on the shared boundary of County Kilkenny and County Carlow along the River Barrow and nestled in the steep sided valley between Brandon Hill in County Kilkenny and Mount Leinster in County Carlow. The wider settlement of Graiguenamanagh-Tinnahinch includes Tinnahinch within County Carlow. At present, the population of the town as per Census 2022 is 1,506.



Locational Context of Graiguenamanagh



Town Centre First Study Area

PART TWO - COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION

The Town Centre First approach recognises the importance of collaborating with local communities and community groups, state agencies and voluntary groups as a critical success factor in formulating and delivering Town Centre First Plans. Collaboration and Communication with the local community has played an integral role in formulating the Graiguenamanagh Town Centre First Plan, particularly in providing invaluable insight at the ground-level.

At the start of the plan-making process, the Town Regeneration Office of Kilkenny County Council completed a Collaborative Town Centre Health Check (Appendix A) of Graiguenamanagh which included engagement with the local community by way of a public survey; business owner survey and youth survey to understand the main concerns of the community. Similar themes arose in the various surveys with the main actions summarised below:



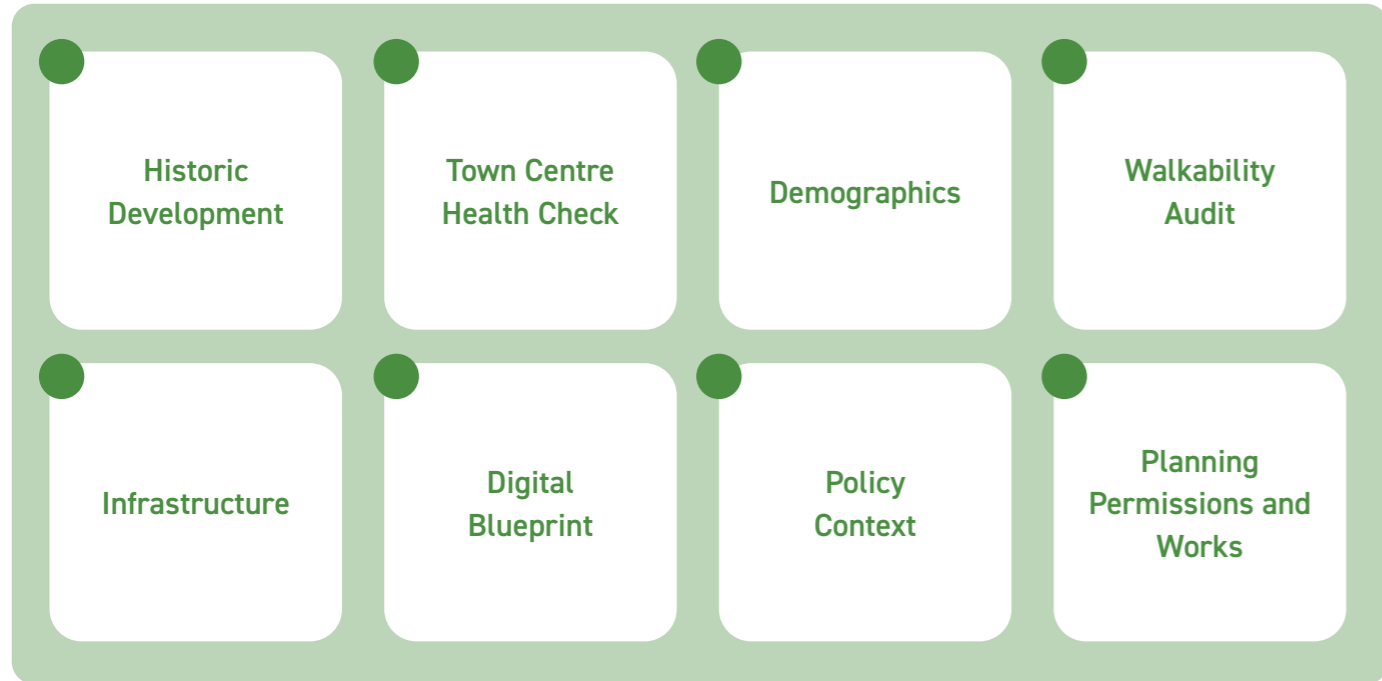
A Walkability Audit (Appendix B) has been completed following an assessment carried out in May 2025 which included members of the local community and other relevant bodies. The purpose of the audit was to understand the extent to which Graiguenamanagh's built environment is friendly to the presence of people walking, living, shopping, visiting, engaging or spending time in an area.

Further engagement was completed by Research + Dig Urban Regeneration & Heritage who were appointed by the Town Regeneration Office including walkabouts of Graiguenamanagh with the local community, meetings with businesses and public sector agencies. A detailed Stakeholder Engagement Report (Appendix C) has been prepared by Research + Dig Urban Regeneration & Heritage which outlines the engagement process and findings.

<https://kilkennycoco.ie/eng/services/planning/town-regeneration/grauguenamanagh-collaborative-town-centre-health-check-report.pdf>

PART THREE - UNDERSTANDING THE PLACE

The Town Centre First Policy outlines the importance of understanding a place in the plan-making process and the role of consulting with a wide range of people and collecting and collating data and information on the characteristics of the town centre and its surrounding context significant analysis and appraisal has been undertaken during the plan-process to guide the overarching vision of the plan.



HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The name Graiguenamanagh (Graig na Manach) means 'Grange (Valley or Village) of the Monks'. The town has a rich heritage which dates back to the founding of Duiske Abbey in 1204. It is believed that the Abbey takes its name from the Duiske or Black Water that cascades from Brandon Hill into the River Barrow. Duiske Abbey is a fully restored Cistercian church, reputedly the longest in Ireland (approx. 70m).

Duiske is the daughter house of Stanley, situated in Wiltshire. As with many other monastic sites in Ireland, the Abbey was dissolved in 1536 by Henry VIII. The Abbey prospered with the establishment of a nearby mill and the export of wool. The trade flourished with the arrival of Flemish weavers in the 1600s.

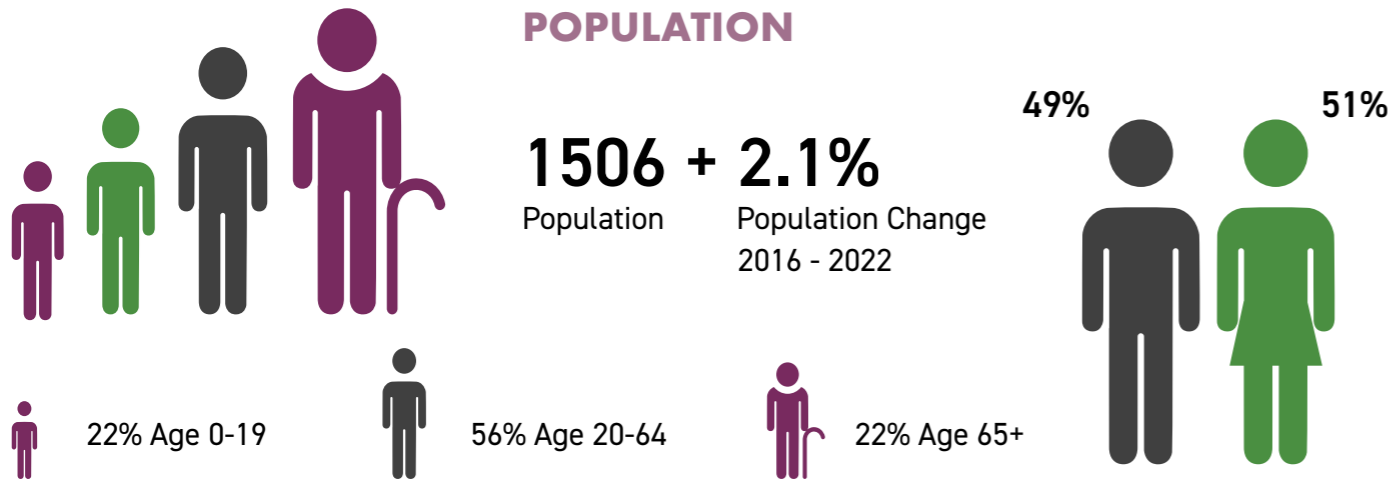
One of their descendants, Mr. Cushen, established the Cushendale Woollen Mills in the 1800s, featuring traditional colourful textiles in natural fibres. Graiguenamanagh expanded beyond the Abbey as a market town, aided by the development of the Grand Canal and the navigation of the River Barrow, which ultimately connected the town with Dublin, New Ross, Waterford and Carlow. The production of wool was historically important to the town's economy and sheep rearing remains a predominant agricultural activity in the hinterland.

<p>1204 Cistercian Abbey of Duiske is established by William Marshall, Earl of Pembroke. Monks from the Abbey of Stanley in Wiltshire visit in the same year and a cemetery at Duiske is dedicated to the monks.</p>	<p>1207 Monastery is granted over 20,000 acres in the valley of Graiguenamanagh which it managed with a system of granges. A borough was founded.</p>
<p>1280 Town has its own provost.</p>	<p>1305 The justiciar held court in Graiguenamanagh.</p>
<p>14th Century References to the settlement fade out, likely, the town was subject to the economic decay which characterized the fourteenth century.</p>	<p>1536 The monastery is dissolved by King Henry VIII and the abbey is given to the Butlers of Ormond.</p>
<p>1539 The last monk leaves Graiguenamanagh, leaving an established and important Abbey mills for local wool processing. The industry flourishes following the arrival of Flemish weavers around this time.</p>	<p>1615 Construction of Tinnahinch Castle.</p>
<p>1703 Dublin Parliament promotes River Barrow as a trade route, advancing the growth of Graiguenamanagh as a market town with connections to Dublin, New Ross, Waterford and Carlow. The Duiske Abbey is purchased by James Agar.</p>	<p>1764-1767 The George Semple Bridge is built, forming an attractive landmark linking Tinnahinch with Graiguenamanagh.</p>
<p>1800s Cushendale Woollen Mills is established by a descendent of a Flemish weaver, Mr. Sylvester Cushon, featuring traditional colourful textiles in natural fibres.</p>	<p>1809 The abbey and portions of its ruins were granted to the Catholics in the town, in perpetuity.</p>
<p>1873-1983 Further Restorations to the abbey.</p>	<p>1812 The abbey was partially restored to serve as a Catholic parish church.</p>
	<p>1886 The abbey was partially restored to serve as a Catholic parish church.</p>



DEMOGRAPHICS OVERVIEW

To gain an understanding of the socio-economic context of Graiguenamanagh, Census data has been reviewed. The Census 2022 area includes the wider settlement of Graiguenamanagh-Tinnahinch and is a different settlement boundary from Census 2016 due to a new statistical geography introduced by the Central Statistics Office. The following is a snapshot of the community according to Census 2022:



HEALTH

- 72%** Good / Very Good
- 12%** Fair
- 2%** Bad / Very Bad
- 14%** Not Stated



27% of the population stated they had a disability of any extent

EDUCATION



- 16%** No Formal Education / Primary Only
- 21%** Lower Secondary
- 20%** Upper Secondary
- 43%** Tertiary

ECONOMIC STATUS



- 46%** At work
- 6%** Unemployed
- 9%** Student
- 9%** Looking after home / family
- 7%** Unable to work
- 23%** Retired

VOLUNTEERING

174 volunteers



TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

Graiguenamanagh is served by the R703 and the R705 which provide connections to both Kilkenny and Carlow. These regional roads converge on the George Semple Bridge which encourages through-traffic. A stop/go system has been installed in the town to regulate the regional through-traffic. The R705 ring-road allows traffic to bypass Graiguenamanagh reducing the volume of traffic entering the town centre from the west.

Public transport in the town is provided by bus services including the 881 – Graiguenamanagh to Kilkenny Castle service provided by Kilbride Coaches and the 887 – New Ross to Carlow Train Station provided by TFI Local Link which serves Tinnahinch. On-demand Ring-a-Link services are also available. Despite this above, the town does not contain any bus shelters.

In terms of rail, the town is located 16km from Thomastown train station, 20km from Muine Bheag train station and 30km from MacDonagh train station in Kilkenny City all of which serve the Dublin Heuston to Waterford line.

SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Graiguenamanagh benefits from a wide variety of Social and Community Infrastructure including public services such as the Library and Garda Station and three schools. Planning permission is being sought for a new Health Centre. Community facilities are also provided by buildings such as the Abbey Hall; The Barrow Activities Hub and the Scout Hall. Recreation opportunities are abundant with sporting groups including the GAA club, Highview Athletic Football Club and a variety of water sports and activities. The local playground and river are key assets in the town. Notwithstanding, a deficiency in youth facilities has been identified.



INFRASTRUCTURAL CONSTRAINTS

The data gathering process revealed existing constraints in certain physical infrastructure within the town, particularly water supply; electricity grid; and fibre broadband. Certain parts of the town are also subject to flooding with the Graiguenamanagh-Tinnahinch Flood Relief Scheme process ongoing.

POLICY CONTEXT

The Graiguenamanagh Town Centre First Plan is a non-statutory document which has been developed to align with the overriding objectives of key policy and guidelines, including the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by UN Member States in September 2015 and provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries in a global partnership. They recognise that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals are implemented in Ireland through national policies.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



The following are examples of some of the key plans and strategies which informed the plan-making process.

EU & NATIONAL

- UN Sustainable Development Goals
- Project Ireland 2040: A National Planning Framework
- Town Centre First: A Policy Approach for Irish Towns
- Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021-2025
- Climate Action Plan 2025
- Heritage Ireland 2030
- National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030
- Tourism Policy Framework 2025-2030

REGIONAL

- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region
- Ireland's Ancient East Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023-2027

LOCAL

- Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021-2027
- Graiguenamanagh-Tinnahinch Joint Local Area Plan 2021- 2027
- Graiguenamanagh-Tinnahinch Mobility Management Study 2021-2026
- Kilkenny Age Friendly Strategy 2025-2028
- Kilkenny County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029
- Kilkenny Local Economic and Community Plan 2023-2028
- Kilkenny County Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2030
- Tourism Development Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2027

GRAIGUENAMANAGH COLLABORATIVE TOWN CENTRE HEALTH CHECK

As part of the Town Centre First plan-making process, a Collaborative Town Centre Health Check (CTCHC) was completed in 2025. The full CTCHC report is included as an appendix of this plan. The key findings of the report are noted below.

LAND USE WITHIN GRAIGUENAMANAGH-TINNAHINCH SETTLEMENT

Total Buildings Surveyed **796**

Residential Use **87%**

Non-Residential Use **13%**

84.5% Residential	1% Retail Services
2.5% Vacant Residential	0.5% Convenience Retail
3% Vacant Non-Residential	0.5% Other Retail
2% Leisure Services	0.5% Religious Service
2% Public Service	0.5% Storage and Warehousing
1.5% Comparison Retail	
1% Health and Medical Services	
0.5% Financial and Business Services	

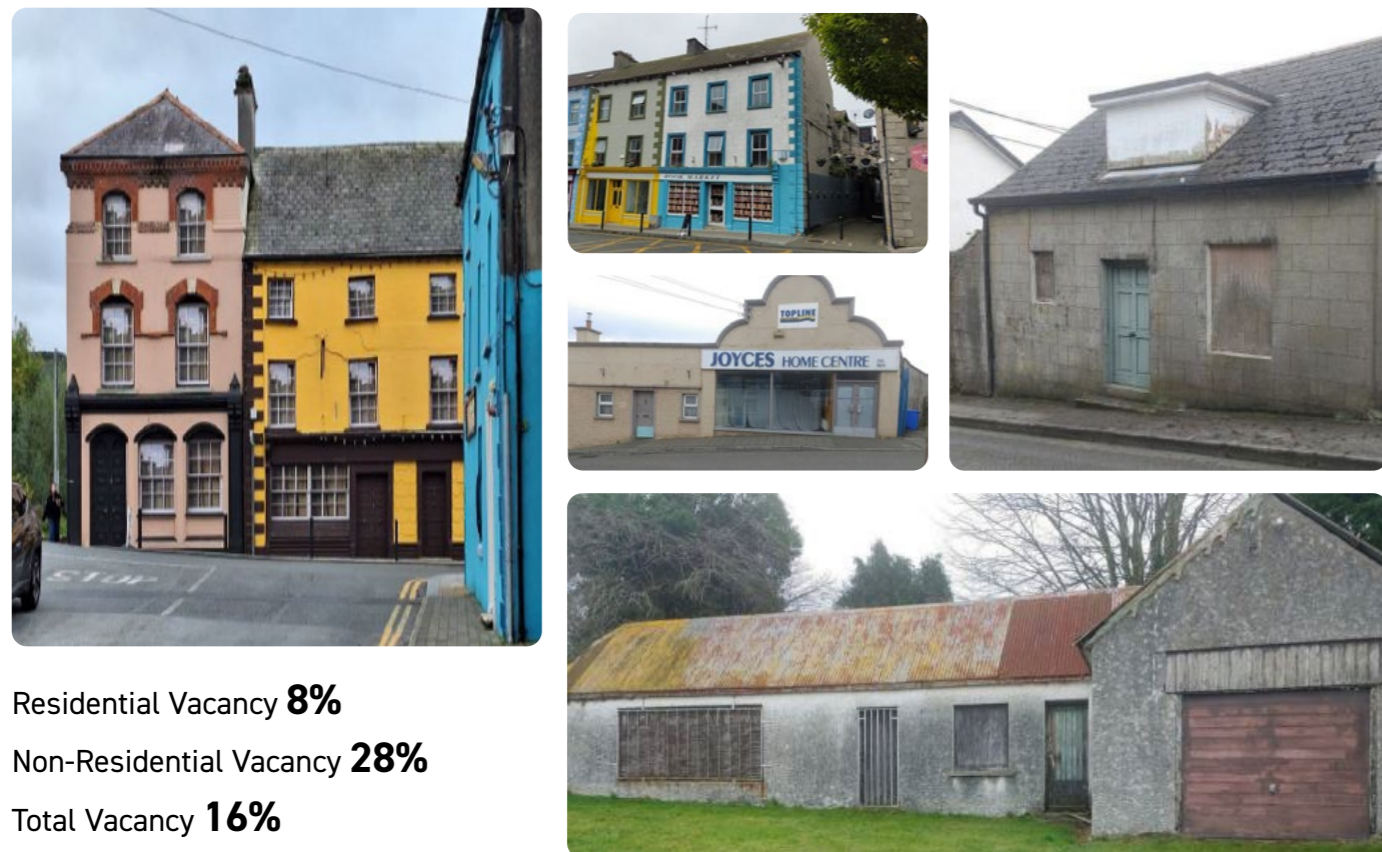
GRAIGUENAMANAGH TOWN CENTRE LAND USES

The town centre contains a variety of land uses, comparable to those of other District Towns as per the Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021- 2027. Residential use is the predominant land use. Leisure services is the most common non-residential land use.



VACANCY AND DERELICTION

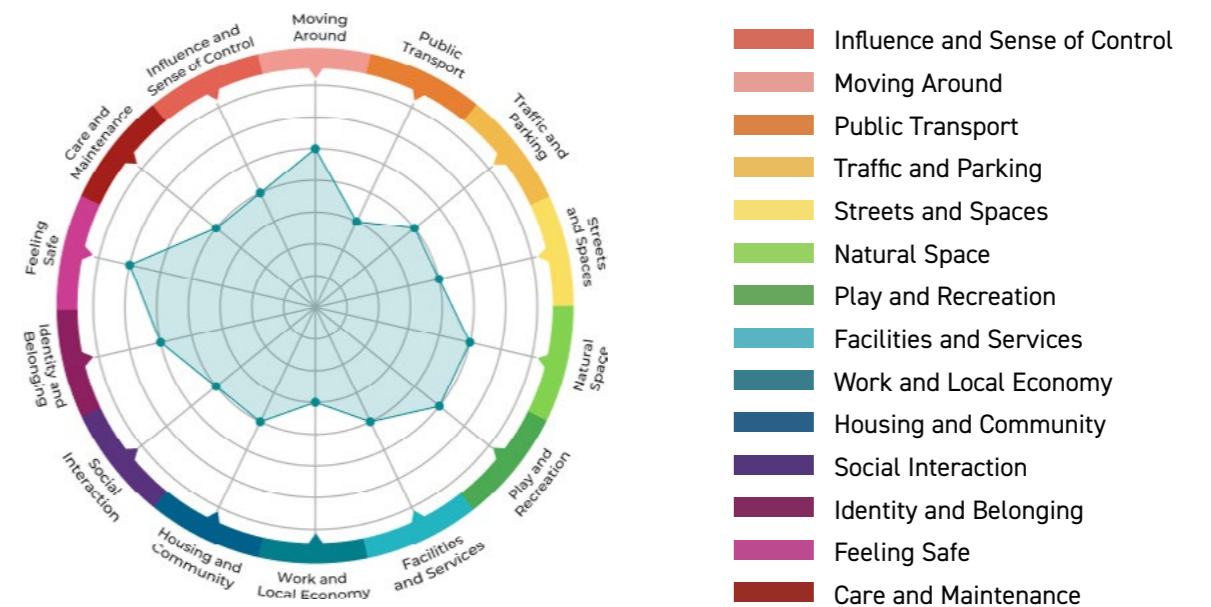
Vacancy and Dereliction was a common issue identified in the Collaborative Town Centre First Health Check Report with high levels of commercial vacancy concentrated along Main Street. Residential properties were also prominent on approach to the town centre. Efforts have been made by the local community including the Tidy Towns group to improve the appearance of a number of structures. Examples of properties include the below:



Residential Vacancy **8%**
 Non-Residential Vacancy **28%**
 Total Vacancy **16%**

PLACE STANDARD TOOL

The topics that the highest were Feeling Safe (5.9); Identity and Belonging (5.4) and Natural Space (5.4). The topics that scored the lowest were Public Transport (3.1), Work and Local Economy (3.2).



TOWN CENTRE FOOTFALL

An initial footfall survey was carried out in March 2025 as detailed in the Health Check Report. A second footfall survey was carried out in August 2025. Counts were carried out for three 15-minute periods. The table below shows the total number of pedestrians counted per street on the Friday of each count.

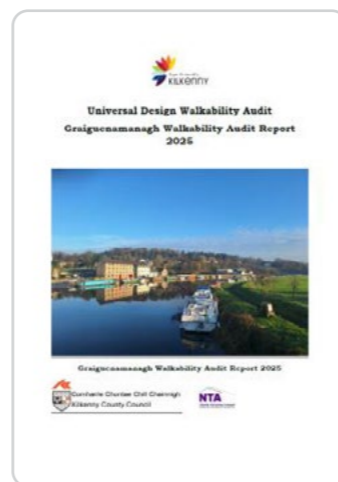
Main Street Lower		The Quay		The Hub		Turf Market		The Bridge	
March	August	March	August	March	August	March	August	March	August
182	195	28	65	16	24	19	35	15	34
Main Street Upper		Chapel Street		Well Lane		High Street			
March	August	March	August	March	August	March	August		
81	174	23	25	8	17	16	22		

CAR PARKING

Car parking spaces in the town were counted and reviewed for occupancy as part of the Town Centre Health Check process. The review looked at formal (i.e. marked) car parking spaces in the town. Over 230 off-street spaces are located in the town with a small number of formal on-street spaces located along Main Street. All parking is free with no pay and display in operation. Unauthorised parking was a common problem, particularly along the Quay. Car parks such as the Fair Green and Turk Market were often observed to being underutilised. Car parking demands increase from seasonal tourism.

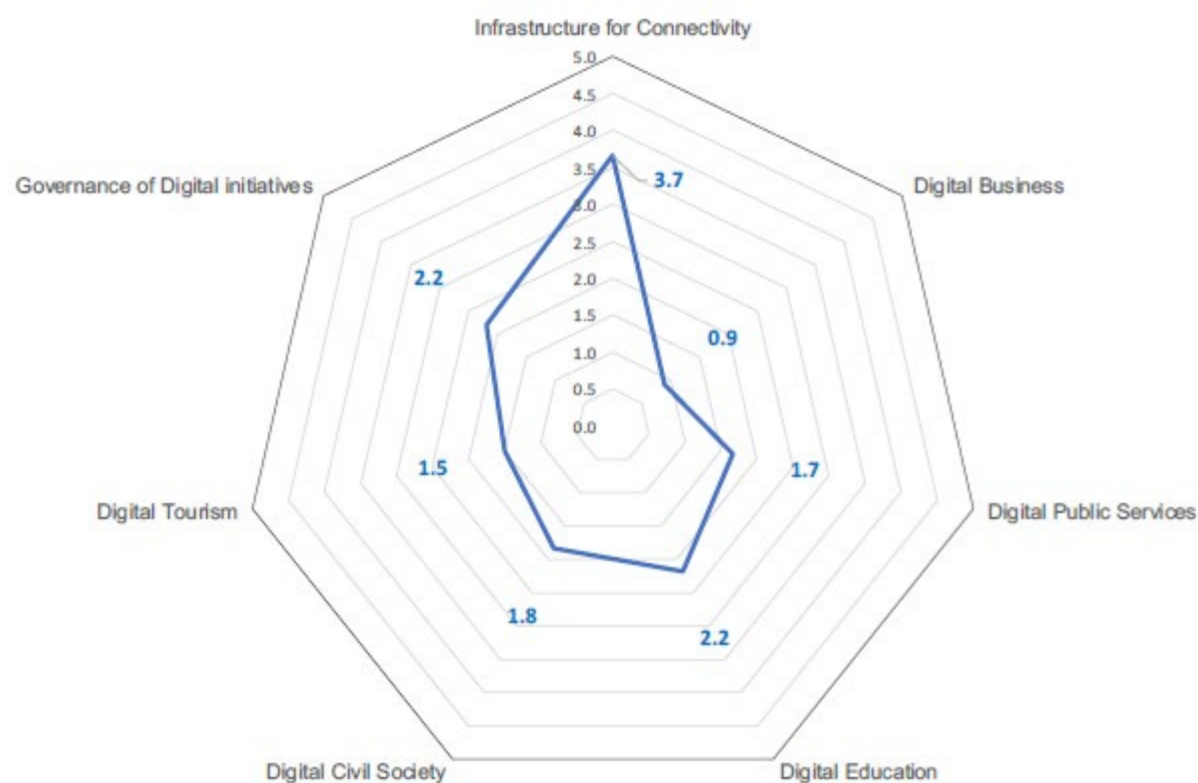
WALKABILITY AUDIT

A Walkability Audit was conducted by the Kilkenny County Council Age Friendly Programme team supported by the Town Regeneration Office in May 2025 utilising the Universal Design Walkability Audit approach published by the National Transport Authority. Participants of the Walkability Audit assessed Graigueenamanagh under headings including: footpaths; facilities; crossing the road; road-user behaviour; safety; look and feel; and outside the school gates.



DIGITAL BLUEPRINT

The Town Centre First Policy recognises the role of digital technology in improving the quality and function of our towns as places to live, work and visit. A Digital Town Blueprint (DTB) was completed by DCU as part of the Town Centre First Plan process with the purpose of understanding Graigueenamanagh's current digital town-readiness; to compare the town against Irish and international benchmarks; and to stimulate shareholder engagement on digitisation. Results of the assessment are shown in the following chart:



The town performed best in Infrastructure for Connectivity, receiving a score of 3.7 making it Defined / Competitive. However, further engagement with the local community indicated that fibre infrastructure is not available in the town centre. Connectivity issues are prevalent in certain retailers on Main Street which causes difficulty for customers accessing mobile wallets and loyalty programmes at point of sale. The town scored poorly in the remaining sections with Digital Business receiving a score of 0.9 (non-existent). The report highlights the scope for improving online presence of local businesses.

RECENT PLANNING PERMISSIONS / WORKS

The following section outlines some of the recent major developments within Graigueenamanagh and Tinnahinch.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

A review of the planning registers of Carlow County Council and Kilkenny County Council revealed the following planning applications of interest. For clarity, planning applications of a minor domestic scale, such as extensions to dwellings, have not been included.

Kilkenny County Council			
Ref. No.	Location	Summary Description	Status
PL25/60412	Brandondale	Primary healthcare building for HSE health and social care services, dental, and GP.	Further Information
PL25/60357	Barrow Valley Activities Hub	Erection of solar panels on pergola structures and permission for short term camping.	New App.
PL24/60414	New Ross Road	One new dwelling and two serviced sites.	Granted
PL24/72	Lower Main Street	Works to vacant property including change of use of a portion of the ground floor from retail to café/restaurant use.	Granted
PL24/60375	The Quay	Accessible floating pontoon & disabled kayak launch.	Granted
PL24/60122	Turf Market	Change of use of existing store to short term letting.	Granted
PL22/477	Barrow Valley Activities Hub	Public amenity facilities	Granted
PL22/179	F.M. Murray Premises, Main Street	New signage; and internal alterations	Granted
PL22/130	Barrow Valley Activities Hub	Mobile food and coffee kiosk with seating area.	Granted
PL22/59	Main Street	A 2-bedroom apartment on the first floor.	Granted
PL21/82	Harristown	Extension to existing GAA Clubhouse.	Granted
PL19/594	Cois na Bearu	Construction of 35 no. houses.	Granted

Carlow County Council			
Ref. No.	Location	Summary Description	Status
PL24/60413	The Quay	Change of use from commercial workshop to sauna with plunge pool.	Further Information
PL24/60053	Corner of The Quay / Main Street	Change of use from restaurant to short term holiday accommodation.	Granted
PL24/60026	Along the Barrow Navigation	Essential maintenance and repair works to the Barrow Navigation.	Under Appeal

LOCAL AUTHORITY WORKS

Recent works completed by the local authorities include the Safe Routes to School scheme which has improved connectivity to the schools in the town.



SCOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

- Proximity to major employment and education centres
- Built heritage
- Community groups
- Friendly Community
- River Barrow and associated water activities. Internationally significant.
- Good (but small) business community
- Good tourist offering but local sector weak due to lack of accommodation
- Good recreational amenities for outdoors and summer (poor evening time)
- Community buildings
- Programme of events
- Cleanliness
- Low crime rate
- Key crossing point on the Barrow
- Cushendale Woollen Mills (international quality craft)

OPPORTUNITIES

- Building reuse
- Use of greenfield and brownfield sites
- Heritage sites as community and economic assets
- Traffic management to create a safer town
- Geographically small town, albeit hilly, focus on walking
- Public funding for regeneration projects
- Enhanced quality life
- High quality of life attractive to high earning individuals
- Using the Barrow navigation and quays to bring people to town via boat

CONSTRAINTS

- High rate of vacancy and buildings at risk of dereliction
- Limited year-round tourism sector incl. accommodation and dining options
- Priority of cars and heavy vehicles
- Little cycle infrastructure
- Flood risk
- Dependence on larger settlements for services and retail
- Limited evening and winter recreation
- Poor economic infrastructure
- Inability to build houses
- Unattractive for industrial development
- Heavy vehicles going through the town
- Post-industrial town with intergenerational poverty
- Siloed community efforts to improving the town
- Infighting and undermining within community
- Inability / unwillingness of property owners to address vacancy
- Reality/fear of heritage legislations
- Council personnel constraints
- Beauty of the town needs to be protected

THREATS

- Increase in crime and anti-social behaviour
- Impact of growing population on existing services.
- Perception of impact to accessibility
- Dependency on tourism sector
- Increased dereliction within the town centre
- Climate change and flooding
- Community undermining itself
- End or reduction in funding schemes
- Pollution of river undermining quality of life and brand image
- Success leads to increased house prices
- Services in town core moving to edge

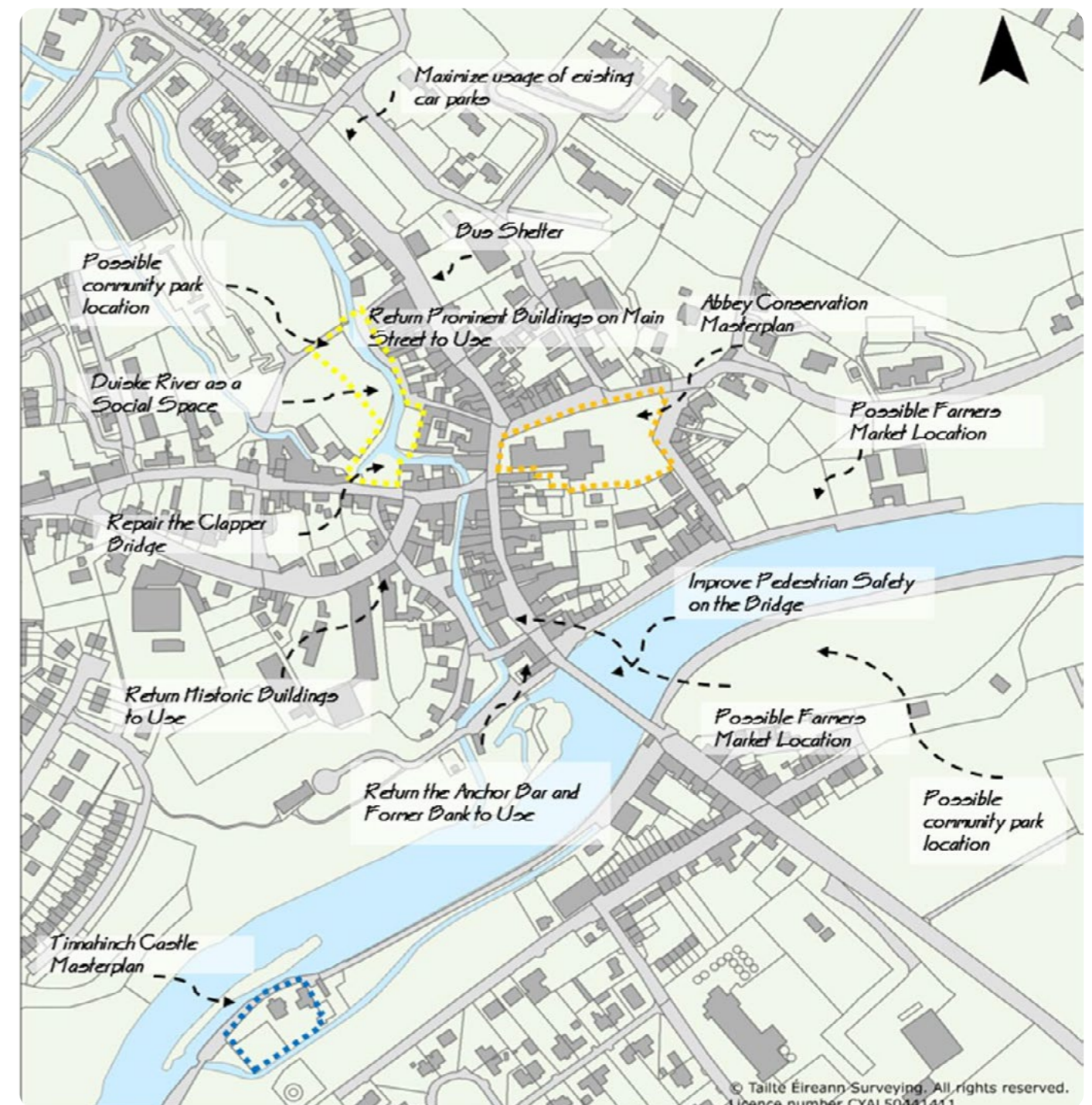
PART THREE - DEFINING THE PLACE

PROJECTS OVERVIEW

Theme	I.D	Project Name	Priority
Vacancy and Dereliction	1.1	Reusing the Anchor Bar and Former Bank and other prominent structures	● ● ●
	1.2	Addressing Vacancy and Dereliction	● ● ●
Economic Infrastructure	2.1	Fibre Broadband	● ● ●
	2.2	Improving Local Water Supply	● ● ○
	2.3	Bus Connectivity	● ● ●
	2.4	Car Connectivity	● ○ ○
Social Infrastructure and Amenities	3.1	Awareness of Social and Community Services	● ● ●
	3.2	A Cleaner River for Swimming and Other Activities	● ● ●
	3.3	Swimming Pool	● ○ ○
	3.4	Community Park with Teenspace	● ● ●
	3.5	Reinvigorating the Duiske River as a social space and restoring the Clapper Bridge	● ● ○
	3.6	River Barrow Tow Path	● ● ○
	3.7	Accessible Toilets	● ○ ○
Food	4.1	Evening Food truck	● ● ○
	4.2	Farmers Market	● ● ○
Public Realm	5.1	Increasing Pedestrian Safety and Comfort on the Bridge and Streets	● ● ●
	5.2	Car Parking and Connectivity within the Town	● ● ●
Tourism Development	6.1	Publicising the Town	● ● ○
	6.2	Abbey Conservation and Masterplan	● ● ○
	6.3	Tinnahinch Castle	● ● ○
	6.4	Interpretation and Wayfinding	● ● ○
	6.5	Glamping/Camping Site	● ○ ○
	6.6	Canal Boat Facilities	● ● ○

PROJECT DETAILS

Following the analysis and appraisal of Graiguenamanagh as part of the Collaborative Town Centre Health Check process; compilation of information for the 'Understanding the Place' section of this report; and engagement carried out by Research + Dig Urban Regeneration & Heritage, 23 projects, falling within 6 themes have been identified:



1.1 Reusing the Anchor Bar and Former Bank and Other Prominent Structures

- Work with building owners to support the reuse of the Anchor Bar and Former Bank premises.
- It may become necessary to purchase these buildings.
- Investigate their reuse as a social enterprise with multiple uses. Final use proposals will be subject to a feasibility study.
- Due to the lack of tourism accommodation, one highly desirable use is for at least some of the Anchor Bar and Former Bank to be used as a hostel.
- Other possible uses are as a co-working hub, arts space, community rooms, and tourism information hub.
- Finally, the location could offer evening meals.
- Elsewhere in the town, work with property owners of other prominent structures to instigate their reuse for housing, commercial and/or community purposes.

Benefits

Use of prominent buildings. Additional services. More accommodation. Greater economic vitality. Direct support to entrepreneurs and remote workers. Greater social vitality.



1.2 Addressing Vacancy and Dereliction

- Develop a programme of clinics for advice on building regulation, building repair, available grants (e.g. Croí Conaithe, Built Heritage Investment Scheme, SEAI), and financing.
- A complementary leaflet of use across the entire county could be created.
- Pilot a low-cost building survey which provides property owners with a detailed report and prioritises repairs, conducted by an engineer or surveyor.
- All vacant commercial premises should only be able to be entitled to avail of a vacancy strike off up to a maximum of 50% of the total Rates due (less arrears for previous years).
- Explore enhancing the existing rates incentive scheme where businesses not already present in the town can avail of rates rebates of decreasing levels over 5 years.
- Apply a flexible approach to building regulations in addressing vacancy above shop units.
- The Repair and Leasing scheme has been proven to be a useful tool in addressing this issue.

Benefits

Less vacancy and dereliction. More accommodation. More economic activity. A more vibrant town centre. Vacancy and Dereliction

2.1 Fibre Broadband

Provision of internet fibre in the town is not uniform with certain areas having no access to high-speed broadband. In the event of commercial operators not providing a satisfactory service:

- Investigate the Piltown and Fiddown scheme as a possible model to address this deficiency.
- Investigate alternative providers such as Starlink

Benefits

Economic viability of enterprises increases. Greater opportunities to engage in education. Greater social connectivity.

2.2 Improving Local Water Supply

It is essential for Graiguenamanagh's future that an adequate freshwater supply be delivered to permit new housing to be constructed.

- Kilkenny County Council should continue to provide all necessary assistance to Uisce Éireann on this matter. Sewage treatment also needs to match future demand.
- The community could consider lobbying politicians until this issue is addressed to enable the future economic and social development of the town.

Benefits

Housing for local population. Economic development. Higher footfall in town core. Ability to house high income households in Graiguenamanagh.

2.3 Bus Connectivity

- Work with relevant stakeholders to ensure that Graiguenamanagh is well connected by bus with Kilkenny City, Carlow Town, Waterford City, Bagenalstown Train Station, SETU Carlow, and SETU Waterford. The times should be conducive to those working and studying in Kilkenny, Carlow and Waterford.
- Create a bus shelter in the town centre with timetable information clearly available.
- Work with the providers to ensure that all buses are accessible for those with additional needs.

Benefits

Better connectivity. Easier for workers and students to get to their destination. More visitors to Graiguenamanagh.

2.4 Car Connectivity

- Much of the road to Kilkenny is now classified as 60kph. In consultation with An Garda Síochána, assess the possibility of redesignating where possible the road via Goresbridge to 80kph.
- Given the strong rise in EV sales (now exceeding diesel cars), ensure that the town has adequate public Fast or Superfast EV charging facilities. Economic Infrastructure

Benefits

Less illegality. Stronger connectivity with Kilkenny City. Greater adoption of zero emissions EVs.

SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND AMENITIES

3.1 Awareness of Social and Community Services

- Run quarterly awareness clinics for locals about available social services, community initiatives and training opportunities.
- Investigate creating the part-time role of Social Prescriber. Work with local GPs on social prescribing.

Benefits

Improved mental and physical health. Improved community cohesion and spirit.

3.2 A Cleaner River for Swimming and Other Activities

The community and Council should do what it is within their control to ensure that pollution into the river is minimised (e.g. septic tank inspections, farm inspections). Water quality could be monitored by regular measurements as the Barrow enters and leaves the parish.

- Promote the generous grants available to address problems with domestic septic tanks.
- Collaborate with stakeholders and communities upriver to ensure that pollution is minimised. This may involve the creation of a Barrow River Trust.
- Work with Waterways Ireland to repair the boat wastewater pump at Graiguenamanagh. Support the creation of by-laws to ensure that boats on the quays have an effluent tank.
- Develop river swimming facilities to enhance usability, safety and overall enjoyment by both residents and visitors. Examine the possibility of installing diving boards or appropriate scale.

Benefits

Cleaner river. Reduced risk of no-swim warnings. More economic opportunities. Increased swimming. Improved mental and physical health. Increased economic activity. Stronger connection between people and nature. Stronger advocacy for water quality.

3.3 Swimming Pool

- Create a year round swimming pool close to the river.

Benefits

Year round swimming. Increased safety.

3.4 Community Park with Teenspace

Although the tow path functions as a linear park and there is an excellent playground, there is no large place where the community can congregate, relax, run and play. In addition, there is little outdoor space in the town designed for teens.

- Provision of a new Community Park.
- A Teenspace should be part of the design.
- Depending on its location, the park may be a point of entry to the river for swimmers and other recreational users of the river.
- Any design should include the possibility of holding cultural and music events.
- It may also be a suitable location for outdoor gym equipment.
- The park could contain allotments, subject to an appraisal on likely demand.
- The park should be designed and managed to encourage biodiversity.

Benefits

Improved physical and mental health. An additional space for festivals and events. More economic activity.



3.5 Reinvigorating the Duiske River as a social space and restoring the Clapper Bridge

The Duiske River is a corridor of biodiversity through the middle of Graiguenamanagh.

- Further enhancing the surrounding public realm along its route through the town would better connect locals with nature.
- It may also unlock possible economic opportunities such as the existing outdoor seating along the river outside Mick Doyle's Pub.
- The Clapper Bridge is in a ruinous state. Reconstructing it would make a strong statement about community rejuvenation beyond its apparently modest scale. It would also enhance connectivity within the town.

Any works to the Clapper Bridge should be done in keeping with the *Managing visitor safety in the historic built environment*. The reconstruction of the bridge should also be mindful of the possible impact of anti-social behaviour with appropriate management controls put in place.

The Clapper Bridge is likely to be the only clapper bridge in an urban environment in Ireland.

Benefits

Greater connection between residents and nature. More economic opportunities. An improved active travel network.



3.6 River Barrow Tow Path

For much of the year, due to adverse weather, the tow path is unusable. Regardless of the month, it is difficult to use for people in wheelchairs and others with additional needs. The economic and social benefits of an improved surface as evidenced by other more accessible tow paths are well proven (e.g. Waterford greenway). The current surface ensures that Graiguenamanagh and the other settlements along the Barrow do not benefit to the same degree. Although the previous surfacing proposal proved controversial, due to the likely social and economic benefits, the appropriate surface treatment of the tow path is worth reconsidering.

- As a first step, an in-depth stakeholder engagement programme should take place before any designs are proposed to create a balanced approach, acceptable to the vast majority of residents along the tow path.

Benefits

Year round use. Useable by more people with additional needs. Improved physical and mental health. Facilitates long-distance cycling. More economic activity.

3.7 Accessible Toilets

Encourage and assist consumer facing businesses in the town to utilise grants to make their toilets more accessible for those with additional needs.

Benefits

More economic and social activity in the town. Improved mental and physical health of those with additional needs.

FOOD

4.1 Evening Food truck

- For the summer months create a programme where 3 licences are provided to food trucks to operate in the town centre from 5pm-9pm (e.g. Market Square, The Quay/Scout Hall carpark) at least four nights a week. Benches and a tarpaulin/marque should be provided (e.g. Freshford).
- The food trucks should not provide food already available in existing takeaway restaurants.

Benefits

Greater economic and social activity. Better use of public realm. Possibility of food trucks establishing permanent restaurants in the town.

4.2 Farmers Market

- Work with stallholders to develop a weekly market. Look to the successful market in Borris as a model. A possible location is in the Market Square.

Benefits

Greater economic activity. Higher footfall. Supports creation of a stronger food culture.



5.1 Increasing Pedestrian Safety and Comfort on the Bridge and Streets

The public domain in the town centre is generally not welcoming to vulnerable users (e.g. older people, children). A programme of traffic calming, possibly involving pedestrian crossings, shared space, a 30kph zone in the town, and improved footpaths is needed.

Works to the public realm should be done along universal access principles with strong local engagement at an early stage. There is a need to be mindful of those with diverse needs, including those who require the car to access services.

The crossing over the main bridge needs to be made safer for vulnerable users. Viable options include shared space and pedestrian bridge(s). The view of the bridge from the Scouts Hall/Rowing Club towards the bridge is of particular importance to the community. Plants with woody roots should be removed from the bridge by a competent contractor with experience of working on protected masonry structures.

There is an insufficient number of benches available in the town for people to sit. Accordingly, a series of seats should be installed along the quays and other locations in the town centre. Benches should be located along the routes from housing estates to the town core to provide places of rest for older residents and others with additional needs as they go to and from the town centre. Several benches should have the capacity to charge phones (i.e. smart bench). This would be particularly useful for teenagers and visitors to the town.

Benefits

Enhances safety and the perception of safety. Increased footfall in town centre. Increased social and economic activity. Walking encouraged which will lead to improved mental and physical health. Degradation of the bridge by vegetation with woody roots halted.

5.2 Car Parking and Connectivity within the Town

- Encourage parking by visitors to existing car parks at Aldi and Fair Green (current use levels are low).
- If deemed necessary, develop a new car park for visitors to the town. Any new car park should be well designed to fit discreetly within the townscape and have good walking conditions to the river.
- There is a need for dedicated parking spaces for disabled, older people, adults with young children, and parents with autistic children. Routes to key services and associated parking needs to be maintained.
- Strong public consultation with residents and businesses will be needed.
- Following improved parking signage and creation of dedicated parking spots for disabled, older people, adults with young children, and parents with autistic children, work with An Garda Síochána to ensure compliance.

Benefits

Improved public realm and safety. Greater economic and social activity.

6.1 Publicising the Town

- Develop a strategy to publicise Graiguenamanagh as a place to visit, live in, and open a business.
- The strategy could include an improved online presence, working with Fáilte Ireland to encourage familiarisation trips from buyers and the media, and encouraging greater coordination of social media efforts by local businesses.
- Collaborate far more with Visit Kilkenny to ensure that the town's online presence grows significantly as a tourism destination. As part of this, reinvigorate the Graiguenamanagh webpage on visitkilkenny.ie.
- Conduct and share research on the character and motivations of visitors to the town.
- To promote the town as a place to live and invest in, a simple but elegant website is likely to be important. An events page would be an important part of the page. This will need to be updated regularly.
- The town website and Visit Kilkenny Graiguenamanagh webpage could be publicised in the town as large sticker displays on vacant shop fronts with QR codes linking to the sites.

Benefits

Greater awareness about the town. More visitors. More economic activity. More high earners living in the town.

6.2 Abbey Conservation and Masterplan

- Create a masterplan investigating the conservation needs of the whole abbey site and how it can be best utilised for the community. The study should include the church, graveyard, abbey ruins, and high crosses. Any plans will have to carefully consider the impact on the sacred nature of the site.
- In Kilkenny City, the Black Abbey is often used for concerts, including during the Arts Festival and is one of the city's top visitor attractions. After closure during Covid, St Mary's Collegiate Church in Gowran is now open on a limited timetable for visitors. Holycross Abbey in County Tipperary offers school tours, group tours, and Sunday tours for general visitors.

Benefits

Conservation of archaeological material. Improved sense of pride. Greater social and economic use of the site.



6.3 Tinnahinch Castle

Create a masterplan investigating the conservation needs of the castle and how it can be best utilised for the community. The plan could consider its conservation as a ruin with a surrounding parklet and heritage interpretation. This would permit safe exploration of the monument, deepen the tourism attractiveness of the town, and provide an additional social space for locals.

Benefits

Conservation of an archaeological monument. Improved sense of pride. Additional tourist attraction.

6.4 Interpretation and Wayfinding

- A suite of interpretation and wayfinding signage is needed to deepen visitors' knowledge of the town and their enjoyment.
- Although considerable work has been done to highlight the town's built and cultural heritage (e.g. plaques and heritage trail map), there is little interpretation of the town's natural heritage.
- The interpretation that exists about the cultural heritage could also be significantly added to.
- There is little physical wayfinding to aid the navigation of visitors through the town.
Wayfinding will be necessary if visitors are directed towards car parks at the edge of the town core.

Benefits

Improved visitor experience. More economic activity. Improved pride of place by locals.

6.5 Glamping/Camping Site

Additional accommodation is essential for the town to gain the economic rewards from tourism:

- Creating a glamping and camping site will partially address this.
- Any new glamping/camping site would have to be carefully situated and designed to ensure possible anti-social behaviour is minimised.

Benefits

More economic activity. Increased economic viability of current and future hospitality businesses.

6.6 Canal Boat Facilities

- Develop the facilities at the quayside to increase navigation users, including improving access/egress, additional supplies of potable water and recommissioning of effluent extraction facilities.
- Monitor quaysides and vessels for Bye Law compliance to ensure efficient use of the quayside amenity resource.
- Improved facilities and usage will increase the attraction of the town for visiting boats and on-water activities.
- Once facilities have improved, investigate the possibility of encouraging boat rental and water sport providers. Investigate the possibility of creating shower facilities.

Benefits

Greater economic and social use of the quays. Additional accommodation provided. Economic benefits to wider area

PART FOUR - ENABLING THE PLACE

STATUS OF THE TOWN CENTRE FIRST PLAN

The Graiguenamanagh Town Centre First Plan is a non-statutory, community-led plan which has been aligned with the national Town Centre First Policy. The plan includes Town Centre regeneration projects as identified by members of the community.

All the identified projects will require further detailed studies such as Appropriate Assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment as well as adhering to statutory consent and licensing processes, as required.

PROJECT DELIVERY

The Graiguenamanagh Town Centre First Plan establishes a pathway to carrying out regeneration actions identified throughout the process. The Town Team will play an integral part in implementation of the plan and delivery of the actions included in this plan. Certain projects may be led by the Town Team and others may be led by the Town Regeneration Office or other stakeholders in collaboration with the Town Team.

MONITORING

Regular reviews of the Graiguenamanagh Town Centre First Plan will allow progression of the actions to be measured. Monitoring will allow for TCF projects to be evaluated in light of changing circumstances, funding availability or other relevant matters. The metrics for monitoring will be defined by the Town Team and Town Regeneration Office and will include both qualitative and quantitative data, including satisfaction of the local community, Place Standard Tool; delivery of projects, increased town centre activity, level of vacancy.

The monitoring of TCF Plan progress should be undertaken by the Town Team with support and assistance from the Town Regeneration Office.

TOWN TEAM CAPACITY BUILDING

The Town Team will play a fundamental role in completing the aforementioned actions, liaising with the Town Regeneration Office of Kilkenny County Council and engaging with other stakeholders as may be required. To ensure the Graiguenamanagh Town Team is fully equipped for this responsibility, capacity building is advised. Ongoing training is recommended. It is also recommended that members of the Town Team attend or visit other successful regeneration projects by other Town Teams. Opportunities may arise to expand the Town Team via the introduction of new members.

FUNDING

The project interventions as set out within the Town Centre First Plan will require the necessary public and private funding in order to deliver their objectives. Key funding options that can deliver impactful change include the following:

Funding Stream	Description of Fund	Funding Body
Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF)	The Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) is a key capital investment scheme which directly supports the objectives of Our Rural Future and the Town Centre First policy.	Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht
Town and Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS)	The Town and Village Renewal Scheme is targeted at towns and villages with a population of 10,000 or less. The scheme provides funding for projects that make our towns and villages more attractive and sustainable.	Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht
Croí Cónaithe - Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant	The Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant supports the refurbishment of vacant properties.	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
ORIS	The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) provides funding for the development of new outdoor recreational infrastructure. It also provides support for the necessary repair, maintenance, enhancement or promotion of existing outdoor recreational infrastructure in rural areas across Ireland.	Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht
LEADER	LEADER is a community-led approach to local development that supports private enterprises and community groups who improve quality of life and economic activity in rural areas.	Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht
Community Monuments Fund	The Community Monuments Fund was first established in 2020 to provide investment in Ireland's archaeological heritage. Funding is prioritised for the care, conservation, maintenance, protection and promotion of archaeological monuments.	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

ADDITIONAL FUNDING STREAMS INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

- Local Authority own funding e.g. Local Enterprise Office
- Kilkenny County Council's Community & Cultural Facilities Capital Scheme
- National Transport Authority and Active Travel Programme
- Community Services Programme
- Climate Action and Retrofitting Initiatives
- Fáilte Ireland funding schemes e.g. EU Just Transition Fund; Strategic Tourism Festival Investment Scheme
- Heritage Council funding schemes e.g. Historic Towns Initiative; Community Heritage Grant Scheme
- HSE's Sláintecare Healthy Communities initiative
- Repair and Leasing Scheme
- Buy and Renew Scheme
- Community Enhancement Programme
- Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme
- Community Centres Investment Fund
- Department of Culture, Communications and Sport initiatives e.g. Community Sport Facilities Fund
- Arts Council and Creative Ireland Programme initiatives
- Built Heritage Investment Scheme
- Historic Structures Fund
- Local Biodiversity Action Fund
- Sustainable Mobility Investment Programme
- The Capital Grant Scheme for Play and Recreation
- Social Enterprise Capital Grants Scheme
- Uisce Éireann
- Department of Transport initiatives
- Workplace Adaption Grant
- Private investment
- Community investment

The Town Regeneration Office will monitor for funding opportunities and work closely with the Town Team to assist with funding applications. Further information on grants is available from the below Grants Booklet prepared by the Community Section of Kilkenny County Council.

https://kilkennycoco.ie/eng/services/community_culture/grants/one-stop-shop-for-grants.html



APPENDICES

1. Graiguenamanagh Collaborative Town Centre Health Check 2025
2. Engagement Report
3. Walkability Audit
4. Digital Blueprint

