6 Recreation, Tourism and the Arts

6.1 Recreation

The Kilkenny Open Space, Sports and Recreation Study was commissioned by Kilkenny County Council and Kilkenny Borough Council to provide guidance on the future development of open space, sports and amenity policies in County Kilkenny. In response to this Study, a Variation was adopted in 2003, which amended the policies and objectives of the 2002 Development Plans. These policies have now been augmented and refined in order to further define and support the Study.

The overall aim of the Study was to identify and meet the recreational needs of Kilkenny City and its Environs, provide for the needs of the County as a whole and to meet these needs with an integrated strategy capable of delivering, maintaining and managing the facilities to meet these needs.

Open space performs a wide range of roles in enhancing the livability of cities, towns and rural villages. Protecting open space for its amenity, ecological, educational, social and community benefits are now well established as planning principles among planning authorities and wider interests. The protection of open space is consistent with the principles of sustainable development. Playing fields, parks, gardens and informal open spaces are not only important as a recreational resource but also provide valuable green areas for wildlife corridors and habitats, act as buffers between conflicting land uses, enhance visual amenity especially in developed areas and contribute to the health and quality of life of citizens.

Since the publication of the Study, local sports policy has developed in a number of ways in County Kilkenny. The Borough Council, County Council and the County Development Board have progressed with the formulation of sports and recreation policy, programmes and objectives in a consistent and progressive manner.

The Councils are committed to the protection and sustainable development of the amenities of the county for recreational purposes to benefit the residents of the city and environs and to aid in the promotion of tourism.

POLICY

• Use its powers under the Planning & Development Acts to ensure that adequate recreational open space and facilities are provided for all groups of the population at a convenient distance from their homes and places of work.

6.1.1 Protection of Open Space

The Planning Authority will not normally permit development which would result in the loss of public or private playing fields, parks, children’s play space, amenity open space or land zoned for recreational or open space purposes. An exception may be considered where one or more of the following requirements are demonstrably met:

• There is a clear excess of playing fields or open space provision within the area. This should take into account the long-term needs of the community, the type, recreational, amenity value and accessibility of such provision.
• Alternative compensatory provision is made which is both accessible to and of equal or greater quality and benefit to the community served by the existing open space.
• The continued use, proper maintenance and enhancement of the amenity/facility can best be achieved by the redevelopment of a small part of the site that will not adversely affect its overall sporting, recreational and/or amenity value of the facility.
• The site is indicated for an alternative use in the development plan.

Playing fields, parks, gardens and informal open spaces are not only important as a recreational resource but also provide valuable green areas for wildlife corridors and habitats, act as buffers between conflicting land uses, enhance visual amenity especially in developed areas and contribute to the health and quality of life of citizens. Only where it is clearly established that open space and playing fields are no longer required for their original purposes, and the Councils have considered the need for other forms of recreational and amenity open space in the locality will they permit alternative development proposals. Many existing areas of open space are of considerable value and are therefore worthy of protection in their own right.

6.1.2 Provision of Public Open Space
The Councils will endeavour to make provision for a hierarchy of parks, open spaces and outdoor recreation areas within the county so that the population can participate in a wide range of active and passive recreational pursuits within easy reach of their homes and places of work.

The prerogative to maintain and enhance existing open space, sport and recreational facilities as well as providing new facilities permeates all levels of national planning advice.

POLICY
Kilkenny County and Borough Councils will seek to develop a strategic approach to the development of open space, amenity and recreation provision throughout Kilkenny City and County as outlined in the Kilkenny Open Space, Sports and Recreation Study.

The implementation of the study’s policies and recommendations will be subject to the availability of finances and resources.

The County and Borough Council will seek to ensure that the current and future needs are:

• guided by appropriate policies and recommendations;
• reflect the need to develop a hierarchy of sports and recreational opportunities;
• targeted geographically;
• implemented and promoted by all statutory undertakers in the area; and
• appropriately funded.

The Councils, with the assistance of the County Development Board and the Local Sports Partnership, will seek to:
6. Recreation, Tourism & the Arts

a. Enhance planning of sport and recreation at local level through the Local Area Sports Partnership.

b. Promote Kilkenny City, its environs and the county as a whole as a healthy area.

c. Increase levels of local participation and promote the development of opportunities for all groups to become involved in sports and amenity. This is particularly relevant in the case of disadvantaged groups and specific target groups such as older people, girls and women, people with disabilities, unemployed people and those who live in disadvantaged communities or areas lacking amenity infrastructure.

d. Improve access to all sectors of the population, especially the socially disadvantaged to a range of sport, recreation and leisure facilities.

e. Encourage where appropriate better use of existing facilities and assist in the provision of new facilities.

f. Encourage and provide facilities to enable progression through the sporting pathway of “foundation, participation, performance and excellence.”

It will be Councils’ policy to maximise the use of resources. The appropriate standards are detailed in Chapter 10 of the Plan.

6.1.2.1 Recreational Facilities

It will be the policy of the Councils to co-operate with local development organisations, community groups, the County Kilkenny Vocational Educational Committee, and others in the development of recreational facilities throughout the county and to enter into joint venture arrangements where appropriate for the provision of such facilities.

A wide range of proposals (based on the hierarchy of facilities identified as an ideal recommendation) have been set out. The purpose of the hierarchy is to ensure that investment decisions are focused so as to enable efficient planning and investment decisions.

**Regional Facility**

There is potential for the development of a Regional facility in the City & Environs given:

- The designation of the City as a ‘Hub’ in the National Spatial Strategy.
- The ability of such a centre to serve a wider area and the surrounding towns of Clonmel, Carlow and Portlaoise (and their hinterlands).

**City/County Scale Facilities**

While ideally, the development of a City/County level facility should be located on one individual campus, Kilkenny City and its environs contain the potential to develop a number of established and proposed sporting facilities cumulatively, as a City/County or possible as a Sub-Regional facility.

**Sub-County Scale Facilities**

Sub-County scale facilities should be developed in Thomastown, Castlecomer and the Environs of Waterford City in County Kilkenny.
**District-Scale Facilities**
District-scale facilities should be provided in Callan, Graiguenamanagh, Johnstown and Piltown.

**Neighbourhood Facilities**
Neighbourhood facilities should be developed on the basis of the criteria set out in Table 6.1 and the Facility Development Protocol set out in Section 6.3.2.2. No specific locations have been identified for the development of neighbourhood facilities but areas within the City and towns or villages within the county subject to Local Area Plans would be prioritised.

6.1.2.2 Protocol for the Development of Facilities
The provision of new facilities within the hierarchy may not always be preferred as it may be more appropriate to upgrade, refurbish and improve existing facilities, particularly in established settlements. A protocol for the development of facilities will be utilised to ensure that development occurs in an orderly, sustainable manner.

The following protocol should be considered as a sequential approach to developing or improving (where existing) facilities.

a. **Bring into use a redundant or infrequently used facility.** This could be a redundant sports hall or a community hall that is not used for recreational or sports facilities.

b. **Make better / more frequent use of existing sports facilities.** For example, bring an existing school into dual use so that it can be used outside school hours and at weekends.

c. **Improve management procedures within existing facilities.** This would be considered as a final opportunity to improve facilities before embarking on physical works.

d. **Refurbish facilities within the existing footprint.** This will usually not require planning permission and is an option before physically extending existing facilities. This may involve moving existing walls / pitches catering for other uses.

e. **Extend existing facilities.** This may entail physically extending facilities and the physical footprint of the existing sports facility. It may entail providing for other sports (i.e.) providing new rather than shared pitches as indicated in (d) above.
Table 6.1: Guide to Hierarchies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL</th>
<th>REGIONAL</th>
<th>CITY/SUB COUNTY</th>
<th>DISTRICT</th>
<th>NEIGHBOURHOOD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OPTIMUM LOCATION</td>
<td>On national road. Located in environs of Kilkenny City if possible.</td>
<td>Convenient to national roads. Located on convergence of bus routes.</td>
<td>On bus routes.</td>
<td>Accessible to pedestrians and non-car users.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATCHMENT IN KMS</td>
<td>50-75km</td>
<td>10-20km</td>
<td>3-10 km</td>
<td>1-2km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCESS</td>
<td>University students, and national teams, national and regional elite teams and athletes.</td>
<td>Public, clubs and local elite</td>
<td>Public and clubs</td>
<td>Public and community based</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPORTING FACILITIES</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pool</td>
<td>50m x 20m</td>
<td>25m x 6m</td>
<td>None / Leisure</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hall</td>
<td>12 min state of the art facility designated for specific purposes.</td>
<td>6 plus suite of smaller halls.</td>
<td>4 plus</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitches</td>
<td>High quality training</td>
<td>Suite of pitches for training/local leagues</td>
<td>½ pitches training/local leagues</td>
<td>1 no. pitch training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multipurpose/Synthetic</td>
<td>2 full size ATPs</td>
<td>1 full size multifunctional Astroturf and 1 full size ATP</td>
<td>1 full size multifunctional Astroturf</td>
<td>1 training all weather pitch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lights</td>
<td>Television/competition quality</td>
<td>Astroturf and ATP at competitive level</td>
<td>Astroturf at competitive level/training level</td>
<td>Lights to training standard. Where appropriate no lighting should be considered in areas where passive observation cannot be encouraged at after dark times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of sporting performance</td>
<td>Excellence/Performance competition specialist (specialist equipment)</td>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>Competition/Recreation</td>
<td>Recreation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITIES</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daytime</td>
<td>Exclusively Sport</td>
<td>Sport mainly but health and community</td>
<td>Sport, recreation, health and community</td>
<td>Recreation, health and community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night time</td>
<td>Exclusively Sport</td>
<td>Sport</td>
<td>Sport, recreation and community</td>
<td>Recreation and community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play Areas</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>District play areas as per open space study recommendations</td>
<td>Neighbourhood play area as per open space study recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Care Facilities</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Optional</td>
<td>Optional/Not necessary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
f. Provide a new stand-alone facility. This should be considered as a last option once options (a) to (e) have been explored.

**ACTION**
- Complete the development of the new swimming pool which incorporates other sports and leisure facilities at Scanlon Park.

6.1.2.3 Kilkenny Recreation and Sports Partnership

The Kilkenny Recreation and Sports Partnership was set up in 2004, with the support of the Irish Sports Council, with the aim of increasing participation in sport and ensuring that local resources were used to best effect. Kilkenny Local Authorities is one of twelve organisations represented on the Board of Directors. A *Strategic Plan 2006-2009* has been produced with to promote participation in recreational and sporting activity in the county. This Strategic Plan contains a number of objectives under five strategic areas to increase participation in sport in the county.

**POLICY**

It is the policy of the Councils to support the goals and objectives of the Kilkenny Sports Partnership.

6.1.2.4 Hierarchy of Open Space

Recreation, leisure and sport are important components of a good quality of life and have major land use implications. Adequate and accessible provision of open space, sport and recreational facilities is an important consideration in assessing the quality of life in a town or area. It is likely to become more important as the focus within new developments will be on building sustainable communities.

**POLICY**
- Ensure that all residents have reasonable access to a range of different types of open space.
- Implement as a priority the hierarchy of open space identified in the Kilkenny Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study for the City and County.

6.1.2.5 Regional and/or City Parks and Corridors

The setting of Kilkenny in the Nore river valley with associated tributaries provides an opportunity for establishing open spaces and networks of open spaces of strategic value and importance to the city's self image as well as recreational needs.

Following the completion of the Recreational Needs Strategy, a park building strategy was commenced throughout the county. To date a number of parks have been completed or are at various stages of planning or construction, including facilities at Garringreen, Loughboy Park and the Nore Linear Park.
**River Nore Linear Park**
The River Nore corridor holds huge potential for open space in the core of Kilkenny. Essentially the river bank and floodplains are largely undeveloped, with the exception of a stretch within the city centre, between Green’s Bridge and John’s Bridge. The central location of these riverside areas means the area is accessible to the greatest number of people. There is potential to create countywide links along the river corridors.

Construction work on the initial stages of the River Nore Linear Park began in 2006 and Phase 1A was completed in early 2007. The Nore Linear Park is an ambitious project to provide a network of footpaths and cycleways along the River Nore in Kilkenny City and Environs combined with a sequence of high quality public spaces.

Within the City, a walk between Talbotsinch and Ossory Bridge is proposed. Much of this walk is already in existence, but it needs to be upgraded. It is intended that it will be accessible to all users, including cyclists, people with disabilities, people using buggies, etc.. The remedial works will involve surfacing, public lighting, and seating. It is also proposed to develop the walk as a loop which will require the reinstatement of a pedestrian bridge at Talbotsinch, and possibly also at Ossory Bridge. Other features will be examined such as the reinstatement of the Bandstand at Dukesmeadows and the second Tea House near Smithwick’s Brewery. Due to the size of the project, it will be completed in phases.

Due to the level of expense involved in development of the routes, the project will take a number of years. However, it is envisaged that it will be complete within the lifetime of this Plan.

**ACTION**
- Complete the River Nore Linear Park within the lifetime of the Plan.
- Create access points to the River Nore Linear Park as opportunities arise (in particular at RA1 on the zoning objectives map but also other locations).

**The Pococke & Breagagh River Corridors**
The use of the river corridors for providing open space for the City & Environs is a strategic aim of this Plan. The Breagagh River corridor, from the Water Barrack (westwards and southwards) is designated open space for most of its course and has the potential to be developed as a regional open space providing links from the western environs to the City.

Sections of the Pococke River to the east of the city centre are designated open space. The course of the river follows alongside sections of the ring road extension currently under construction. This open space designation has been extended further in this development plan having regard to the encroachment of development pressures on the river. There is potential to link the Pococke open space areas back to the existing residential developments and the River Nore walking route/River Nore Linear Park. A playground facility has been developed at Garringreen.
POLICY
To seek the establishment of public parks along the Pococke and Breagagh Rivers.

ACTION
To develop a regional park facility along the Breagagh River valley in partnership with the voluntary and community groups and the private sector.

Links to Surrounding Countryside
The countryside of Kilkenny holds vast potential to develop outdoor recreation activities to benefit both tourism and local residents. There are many river courses throughout the county and there is scope to form an interconnecting network of routes along these courses and as part of a greater trail for walking. Routes along the River Nore could be extended out of the City, both North and south linking into other towns including Thomastown and Woodstock Estate at Inistioge to the south.

District/Neighbourhood Parks
The Regional and City wide parks in a city the size of Kilkenny will provide the major concentrations of amenity within the city, however, the day to day recreational provision to local communities in other parts of the county will be provided by a series of district or neighbourhood parks.

Local parks
There is a series of open spaces throughout the built-up areas of Kilkenny city, which can provide a range of informal, passive and active recreational spaces.

6.1.2.6 Soccer Pitches
There are four playing pitches currently under the control of the Councils in the City at Bishop Birch Place, Garringreen, Millennium Court and Newpark Marsh. The Councils will continue to maintain these facilities to the highest possible standards. These facilities are available for licensing on an annual basis to interested clubs.

ACTION
- Develop a playing pitch and other recreational/community facility at the Johnswell Road Amenity Area
- Support other local communities in the provision of similar facilities.

6.1.2.7 Children’s Play Facilities
It is the policy of the Councils to provide, maintain and manage a children’s play area in areas where it is appropriate as finance and resources permit. The Councils recently developed and will continue to maintain and extend the playground at Garringreen.

The Council will also require provision for children’s play or developer contributions towards providing children’s play facilities in association with new residential developments in the city and environs. Within new residential developments where there is a significant family residential component the whole environment should be designed so as to permit children to play in safety.
6.1.2.8 Play Policy
The Kilkenny Interagency Play Forum *Play Plan 2006 to 2012* was developed through Strategic Policy Committee 5 (SPC 5) and the Kilkenny County Development Board. The development of the play policy was based on the National Play Policy "Ready, Steady, Play". The policy advocates a child-centered approach to the development of play facilities.

**POLICY**
- Create a child-friendly and safe environment where the importance of play is recognised for a child's development.
- Improve the quality and safety of playgrounds and play areas.

**ACTION**
- Develop a playground at Newpark Close.
- Advance the planning for the provision of playground facilities at the Scouts Den and Loughboy Park.
- To undertake a mapping exercise that identifies existing play services, facilities and amenities as well as highlights gaps in these areas across the county.

6.1.2.9 Intensive Sports Facilities
The Councils will normally permit development proposals for intensive sports facilities where all of the following criteria are met.

- The proposal is compatible with development plan zonings.
- There will be no detrimental impact on residential amenity.
- It is located so as to be accessible to its catchment population and gives priority to walking, cycling and public transport and does not generate unacceptable levels of traffic.
- It is designed so as to minimise the impact of noise and light pollution.
- There is no significant detrimental impact on the natural environment or features of the archaeological or built heritage.
- The proposal is of high quality design and respects and contributes to the character of its location and townscape.
- Public access is provided.
- Ancillary facilities are provided such as childcare facilities.

Intensive sports facilities include stadia, leisure centres, sports halls, swimming pools and other indoor and outdoor sports facilities that provide a wide range of activities as well as facilities attracting significant numbers of spectators and use outside normal sporting periods. The location of intensive sports facilities can often be contentious. They can attract large numbers of people, particularly in the evenings and at weekends. They often also generate high levels of noise, operate long and late hours, attract a large number of vehicle movements and can require large parking areas. Specific concerns may also arise where floodlighting is proposed. On occasion the Councils may need to be satisfied that a management plan is in place to ensure that there is no detrimental impact on surrounding residential amenity. Planning conditions may be imposed to this effect.
6.1.2.10 Major Sports Facilities and Stadia
Proposals for, and extensions to, major sports stadia will be supported by the Councils where they will be accessible by a range of forms of transport other than the car, and will not cause unacceptable impact to the amenity of nearby residents by way of noise and disturbance.

The Councils require major stadia to be in appropriate locations and to follow the principles of sustainability. For major schemes an Environmental Impact Assessment may be required. Where the Councils are concerned at possible effects on traffic a Transport Impact Assessment may be required. Where it is demonstrated that proposals would generate significant impact on the transport network a Travel Plan may be required.

6.1.2.11 Noise Generating Sports
The Council will not normally permit development proposals for sport or recreational uses generating high levels of noise unless the following criteria are met.

- There will be no unacceptable disturbance to local residents.
- There will be no unacceptable disturbance to farm livestock and wildlife.
- There will be no conflict with the enjoyment of areas used for informal recreation.
- The ambient noise level in the area is already high and the noise likely to be produced by the new activity will not be dominant.

The impact of noise is an important issue in assessing proposals for activities such as motor sports. Appropriate sites for the regular use of these sports are not easy to identify and will depend on the type of activity, the tone, level and duration of any noise generated, local topography and the amount of existing proposed screening. Proposals for noisy sports will only be acceptable where the likely impact can be contained and minimised by landform or woodland. Other suitable sites may include degraded land, former mineral workings or land adjacent to an existing source of noise. In certain cases the Borough and County Councils may only consider it appropriate to grant a temporary permission to allow the impact of noise levels and any potential disturbance or nuisance to be more fully assessed.

6.1.2.12 Floodlighting of Recreational Facilities
The Councils will normally only permit proposals for the floodlighting of recreational facilities where the amenities of adjacent residents will not be significantly impaired and the visual amenity and character of the locality will not be adversely affected.

6.1.3 Open Space in New Residential Development
Developers will be required to make provision for sports and recreational infrastructure commensurate with the needs generated by that development and the capacity of existing facilities in the area to cater for existing and future needs. Residential planning applications in excess of 200 units will require a recreational needs assessment. This assessment should have regard to the Kilkenny Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study for the City and County and any future developer contribution scheme. Recreation provision should form an integral element of development proposals. Where provision is not provided on-site it may be directly provided off-site.
The Council will apply the following as guidelines:

### Table 6.2 Amenity Development Thresholds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Capacity No. of Dwellings</th>
<th>Minimum quantity and type of leisure facilities required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;25</td>
<td>Development Contribution in lieu of Open Space or 2.4 hectares per 1,000 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 or over</td>
<td>Open space 2.4 hectares per 1,000 people (a minimum of 0.25 hectares must be provided)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 – 199</td>
<td>Public open space to include a Neighbourhood Play Area</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 200 – 499                     | Equipped public open space to include:  
                                       - One full size grass sports pitch;  
                                       - One local Play area; and  
                                       - One court multi-use games area with Community association/club movement. |
| 500 – 599                     | Public space to include:  
                                       - One full size grass sports pitch;  
                                       - One district play area or one local play area and additional neighbourhood play areas;  
                                       - One court multi-use games area; and  
                                       - Two tennis courts / basketball courts etc. |
| 600 +                         | Equipped public open space to include:  
                                       - Two full size grass sports pitches;  
                                       - One district play area or one local play area and additional neighbourhood play areas;  
                                       - One court multi-use games area, and two tennis courts / basketball courts etc. |
| 1,000+                        | One community / leisure Building including full size badminton / basketball court with community association / club movement within.  
                                       Equipped public open space to include:  
                                       - Two full size grass sports pitches;  
                                       - One district play area or one local play area and additional neighbourhood play areas;  
                                       - One court multi-use games area; and two tennis courts / basketball courts etc. |

The above standards will be applied as a minimum requirement for on-site provision as part of residential development or for off-site provision. In the interests of meeting strategic needs the Councils may pool together the requirements of individual and relatively smaller developments to provide facilities and amenities of a strategic nature at the higher end of the hierarchy. Developer contributions may also be sought and may be applied to improve existing facilities nearby.

In areas where new development is proposed and the cumulative impact of the development of new houses will, or is expected to exceed the volume of housing development identified above as thresholds, developers will be required to provide financial contributions or lands towards the development of sports and recreation facilities.
facilities that will be developed to meet the needs of their development in conjunction with the expected needs of other nearby developments. In instances where this includes, or is expected to include, the acquisition of lands this requirement will be specified. This is particularly important in the case of the Western Environs of Kilkenny City.

6.1.3.1 Development Contributions
Where on-site provision is not appropriate the Councils will levy a sum of money from each housing unit in lieu of the provision of public open space/recreation facilities. The Councils will impose a levy for provision of open space/recreational facilities in accordance with Section 48 of the Planning and Development Act. Development contributions will be used to assist in the provision of open space and recreational facilities while security will be required for the satisfactory completion of open spaces in private developments until taken in charge as per the provisions of section 34(4)(g) and (j) of the Planning and Development Act 2000.

POLICY
- Require the provision of appropriately located and designed open space, recreational and amenity areas in considering applications for new development.
- Ensure that new open space has good pedestrian, cyclist and disabled access.
- Make existing areas of open space as user-friendly as possible.

6.1.4 The River Nore
It is the policy of the Councils to promote the natural amenity potential of the River Nore in order to facilitate the development of amenity, recreational, ecological and tourism benefits for the city and region generally. The River Nore has considerable potential both waterside and landside to be used as recreational asset for the city, the county and the region as a whole.
POLICY

- Protect and improve the natural amenity potential and accessibility of the River Nore.
- Protect and improve access to the River Nore without compromising the quality and setting of the river.

6.1.4.1 Riverside Development

The Councils will seek to ensure that proposals along the Rivers Nore will achieve an appropriate balance of uses commensurate with the sensitivity of the natural environment. Factors that will be taken into account when considering proposals affecting the river include:

1) Any landscape or nature designation for the area,
2) Any proposals to increase the extent of public access,
3) The extent of any environmental improvements to the water environment and its surroundings,
4) The nature of any recreation use proposed; and
5) Any conflict or compliance with proposals for walking or cycling routes.

6.1.4.2 Development associated with Water Sports

The Councils will normally only permit proposals for development associated with water sports adjacent to waterways and inland lakes where all the following criteria are met.

- The proposed facilities are compatible with any existing use of the water, including non-recreational uses;
- It will not result in damage to sites of nature conservation importance or features of the archaeological and built heritage;
- The development can be satisfactorily integrated into its landscape or townscape surroundings;
- The development will not have an unacceptable impact on visual amenity especially in areas of high amenity or other locally important scenic areas; and
- The development will not result in over intensification of use leading to pollution, excessive noise and nuisance.

Water sports cover a wide range of activities from tranquil uses such as angling, sailing, canoeing, rowing and sail boarding to powered activities such as water-skiing and powerboat uses. The Councils may require management plans for particular water areas to address the compatibility of such varying demands.

Most development associated with water sports such as slipways, boathouses, toilet and changing facilities, parking areas and access will require planning permission. In considering such development proposals the Councils will assess the impact of the visual amenity and character of the area. Where permission is granted the Councils will require high levels of design both in terms of layout, buildings and other structures and in the treatment of boundaries either adjacent to the road or the actual waterway. The
Councils will normally require details of landscaping and surface treatments to accompany all planning applications.

6.1.5 Walking Routes and Trails

It is the intention of the County Council in conjunction with the Borough Council to identify, promote and maintain a series of walking routes within the city and to link these to a strategic network of trails into the county linking into other towns including Thomastown and Woodstock Estate at Inistioge to the south.

The Councils will encourage the development of facilities that are accessible to those who walk and cycle. The Councils will also work with other local authorities, agencies and organisations to provide a network of walking routes.

The setting of Kilkenny in the Nore river valley with associated tributaries provides an opportunity for establishing open spaces and networks of open spaces of strategic value and importance to the city’s self image as well as recreational needs.

6.1.5.1 Proposed River Nore Walking Route - Kilkenny to Inistioge

A rural walk is proposed between Kilkenny and Inistioge, to be designed for walkers only (i.e. no cycles, buggies, animals etc.) and will have minimum impact on the environment. Kissing gates, stiles, fencing, signage, marker posts, small footbridges and minimal surfacing will be provided where necessary.

The walk is divided into three sections: Kilkenny to Bennettsbridge, Bennettsbridge to Thomastown, and Thomastown to Inistioge. It is intended that the walk will be part of the National Waymarked Way Network, and insured under that scheme. Kilkenny County Council and BNS LEADER are heavily involved in forging this gateway between county and city.

POLICY

- Researching and mapping the existing network of traditional paths used for leisure purposes with the intention of determining the legal basis and status of their use.
- Working with development agencies, landowners, other legal occupiers and potential users, to develop a sustainable policy on the use of walking routes throughout Kilkenny.
- Require that development along rivers set aside land for pedestrian routes which will be strategically linked in a series of walks.
- Impose a development levy to provide walking amenities and facilities
- Seek to improve the provision of local parks and play spaces and extend those spaces and pathways that can usefully form green links, footways and cycle ways to connect residential areas with parks and open spaces and with each other.
ACTION
• Continue to assist and co-operate with BNS Leader in the development of the River Nore Walking Route between the City and Inistioge/Thomastown.

6.1.5.2 Public Rights of Way
The Council will use its powers under the Planning Acts to preserve and maintain existing rights of way, to create new ones where appropriate, and to promote their greater use in amenity areas. In addition the Council may seek to incorporate the provision of pedestrian ways as a condition of planning permission to link amenities, facilities and points of interest.

Kilkenny County and Borough Councils are aware that providing such routes can cause concern as these may give rise to anti-social behaviour particularly along unsupervised and secluded laneways. Every effort shall be made to avoid such a situation, through public lighting, appropriate layout and landscaping.

The Councils will examine existing rights of way, paths, access points to the Rivers Nore, Breagagh and Pococke and other amenity areas to determine where public rights exist and where public rights of way should be created, for the provision of walking routes along the rivers and amenity areas of the City & Environs.

POLICY
• Preserve and protect existing rights of way and create new rights of way in the interest of amenity as the opportunity or need arises.
• Encourage the provision of access routes to amenity areas in co-operation with landowners and protect amenity areas from infringement by inappropriate development.
• Seek to improve the provision of local parks and play spaces and extend those spaces and pathways that can usefully form green links, footways and cycle ways to connect residential areas with parks and open spaces and with each other.
• Make existing areas of open space as user-friendly as possible. As well as seeking to ensure that new open space is well integrated to proposed development it is essential that open space has good pedestrian, cyclist and disabled access.

ACTION
• Undertake a survey of existing public rights of way in the City & Environs and establish a register within two years of the adoption of the Plan.

6.1.6 Cycle Routes
The Council will require developments to provide routes, facilities and amenities for those cycling. The Council will seek to improve cycle facilities throughout the county.
6.1.7 **Local Area Regeneration**

The development of quality open space and recreation amenities will be made a priority in local regeneration and redevelopment initiatives. Quality open spaces reinforce an area’s character and identity and are an important aspect of the regeneration of disadvantaged areas.

6.2 **Tourism**

The *National Development Plan 2007-2013* recognises that tourism is a major instrument of regional — and rural — development. The tourism industry contributes to the vitality and sustainability of a wide variety of local enterprises, particularly in rural areas, and tourism promotes an enhanced awareness of and positive appreciation of local traditions and ways of life.

It is essential however that the development of the tourism industry takes place in a sustainable manner in harmony with the physical and human environment.

6.2.1 **South East Region Tourism**

Kilkenny is part of the South East Region and tourism for the region is promoted and marketed by Failte Ireland South East.

Failte Ireland South East intends producing a 3-year strategic plan for tourism in the region¹ shortly, which will address some critical issues for the industry. These include the decline in the numbers of British holidaymakers bringing their cars to Ireland’s South East; the predominance of the Irish tourism market and the vulnerability to any domestic economic downturn; and also, the deficit in aviation access directly into the South East.

Between 2002 and 2005 the number of overseas tourists visiting the South East increased by 4%, see Table 6.3. This was well below the national growth rate in overseas tourist arrivals during the same period. However, despite the smaller rate of growth in numbers, regional tourism revenue grew by the same amount as nationally.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>South East Region</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>% Change 02-05</th>
<th>% Change Nationally 2002-05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Tourists</td>
<td>1,942,000</td>
<td>2,051,000</td>
<td>+6%</td>
<td>+13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas Tourists</td>
<td>910,000</td>
<td>943,000</td>
<td>+4%</td>
<td>+14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Tourism Revenue</td>
<td>387,600,000</td>
<td>435,700,000</td>
<td>+12%</td>
<td>+12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Failte Ireland *Tourism Facts, 2005*

¹ Press Release *Failte Ireland South East holds inaugural Board meeting* Friday 27th October 2006
6.2.2 Kilkenny Tourism

Kilkenny Tourism is the promotional, marketing and development company for tourism in County Kilkenny. It was an objective of the 2002 Development Plan to carry out a Kilkenny Tourism Plan. Kilkenny Tourism in association with Kilkenny County Council produced a report entitled *Kilkenny Tourism and Development Strategy, 2006 – 2011 Linking Old and New, City and County* which is intended to guide the manner in which development, inward investment and marketing for the county will be executed in the tourism sector up to 2011. Some of the recommendations include:

- improvements to signage,
- developing the walking routes,
- expanding the provision of outdoor activities,
- use of protected structures,
- access, and
- use of the rivers

6.2.3 Tourism Attractions

Kilkenny city is characterised by beautifully restored old historical buildings and winding slipways and is small and compact enough to explore on foot. The tourist potential of Kilkenny focuses sharply on its distinctive architectural and historic heritage. The basic tourist resources of Kilkenny can be summarised as follows:

a) The overall character of the City and in particular the heritage townscape of the historic centre;

b) The number and quality of architecturally and historically significant buildings, such as Kilkenny Castle, St Canice’s Cathedral, Rothe House, Shee Alms House, etc;

c) The fine quality of smaller scale elements – shopfronts, houses, slipways, stone walls and general architectural details;

d) Natural beauty of the Nore River Valley;

e) The services provided in the city, including: hotels, guesthouses, restaurants, shops, Design Centre, theatre, galleries, cultural events, etc;

f) The reputation of the city for arts, culture and crafts;

g) The special attractions such as the Arts Festival, Cats Laugh Comedy Festival and Rhythm & Roots festival;

h) Bustling nature of the city centre.

The 20th century saw Kilkenny’s rise as a creative centre, and the city is home to many craft and design shops, offering everything from knitwear and leather goods to jewellery, candles and pottery. Perhaps best known is the Kilkenny Design Centre and Workshops. Kilkenny’s international reputation as a centre of design and high quality craft production is a proven asset.

**POLICY**

- Support the integrated regional approach taken by Failte Ireland and the South East Region Tourism body and Kilkenny Tourism to raise the profile of the South East as a tourism destination.

- Continue to support the activities of organisations such as Failte Ireland, S.E.R.T., BNS LEADER, Kilkenny Tourism and local development groups in
the promotion and development of Kilkenny City and County as a tourist destination.

- Encourage the clustering of tourism products to increase linkages within and reduce leakage from, the local economy.
- Support the implementation of the Kilkenny Tourism & Development Strategy 2006 – 2011.
- Promote and encourage tourism development which is based on and reflects the characteristics and distinctive elements of the City’s history, culture and environment.
- To minimise the negative impacts that tourism has on the growth of the city;
- To promote and encourage the sustainable and well planned growth of the tourism industry in Kilkenny City.
- To promote and encourage an integrated transport system within the city and to and from the City and Environs to facilitate improved access;
- Encourage the provision of indoor and activities based tourism facilities and events which extend the tourism season.
- Encourage and promote cycling-based tourism in the city and county and to support Failte Ireland’s Strategy for the Development of Irish Cycle Tourism, South East Regional Report.
- Support the marketing of Kilkenny through the initiatives of the Kilkenny Marketing Strategy Group and Kilkenny Tourism.
- To promote Kilkenny City and Environs as a designated conference centre in the Southeast Region and to develop a suitable facility for conferences within the City and Environs.
- To develop a bus park facility.

ACTION

- To develop and implement an integrated and appropriate signage strategy for Kilkenny City & County in consultation with all relevant stakeholders.

6.3 The Arts/Cultural Development

Cultural development should be seen as an integral part of the overall development of the county. The culture of a county, city or town is one of the crucial aspects which distinguishes it from other counties or cities. It includes speech, language, theatre, music painting, dance, literature, photography, architecture and more. Knowledge and awareness of the distinct cultural experience of a place or an area is necessary if cultural development is to take place; such knowledge links the past with the present and the future and helps provide a community with a sense of place of its cultural identity.

The Council Arts Office provides financial assistance within the limits of its resources towards the development of the Arts and considers that a multi-faceted cultural activity has an important contribution to make in the lives of residents in the county as well as in tourism development.

The Kilkenny Arts Strategy 2005 - 2009 aims to provide an appropriate policy framework to support, stimulate and further develop the arts so that provision and access, participation in the arts and employment and economic return is maximised.
Kilkenny Arts Festival, the National Craft Gallery and the Cats Laughs Comedy Festival have fulfilled an important role in the cultural development of the county and have raised its international profile.

6.3.1 Arts Infrastructure

Kilkenny is served by a variety of general venue, performance and exhibition spaces including council-managed exhibition spaces for the visual arts, namely the Watergate ‘Gallery Upstairs’, County Hall and 72 John Street. Independent venues include the internationally-recognised Butler Gallery, Rothe House, the National Craft Gallery (Crafts Council of Ireland), city and county libraries, the city based Kilkenny Art Gallery and the Berkeley Gallery in Thomastown. The Arts Strategy has identified a need for a small, flexible venue in the county to fulfil a multiplicity of roles ranging from space for community groups, dance, band rehearsal, theatre rehearsal and storage facilities, etc.

6.3.1.1 Kilkenny Integrated Cultural Facility

Kilkenny local authorities and Butler Gallery are exploring the feasibility of establishing an Integrated Cultural Facility for Kilkenny, combining Butler Gallery contemporary art gallery and a proposed museum. Kilkenny County Council and Kilkenny Borough Council, the Board of the Butler Gallery, the Heritage Council, The Arts Council, the National Museum and the Crafts Council have been involved in preliminary discussions. It is anticipated that the proposed facility will strengthen the cultural identity of art, heritage and design and will support the heritage and visual arts sectors in Kilkenny.

POLICY

- Promote the development of the Arts in the City and County through the implementation of the Kilkenny Arts Strategy.
- Provide studio/rehearsal/performance space.
- Establish an Integrated Cultural Facility for Kilkenny, in co-operation with the Board of the Butler Gallery, the Heritage Council, The Arts Council, the National Museum and the Crafts Council.