

Kilkenny Open Space, Sports And Recreation Study

Executive Summary

Prepared by

Cunnane Stratton Reynolds

Town Planners and Landscape Architects
3 Molesworth Place
Dublin 2

&

Plunkett Chambers
21-23 Oliver Plunkett Street
Cork

With assistance from

Kilkenny County Council
County Hall
Kilkenny

&

Kilkenny Borough Council
Town Hall
Kilkenny



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – Volume One

Sports and Recreation

The Brief

Cunnane Stratton Reynolds was retained by Kilkenny Borough Council and Kilkenny County Council with the expressed aim of preparing a Sports and Recreational Study for the entire County. In preparing this study CSR had regard to a wide range of issues. In summary the Brief for the Study required the following:

- (1) An audit of existing active sports provision and standards in qualitative and quantitative terms.
- (2) To carry out consultation with clubs governing organisations, key agencies and groups on future needs.
- (3) To assess future needs with regard to (a) current and likely future trends in urban recreation provision; (b) future demand having regard to population density, population profile and catchment areas; (c) identify future requirements through sample surveys; and finally (d) identify land / areas / strategically suitable for recreation development and correlate this to areas of need.
- (4) Identify the mechanism for provision through policies and actions for future recreation provision and management set in a Strategic Action Plan covering 10 years, with 3 / 5 years targets highlighting potential joint initiatives. This includes advising on the level of service from Kilkenny Borough Council and Kilkenny County Council
- (5) To consider open space areas and provisions.

The Study Area

The study area for the overall commission was the entire County of Kilkenny along with adjoining areas of Cos. Carlow, Tipperary SR, and Laois. In essence it is one of the most far reaching and comprehensive sports and recreation reports carried out for any Local Authority in Ireland.

As an essential part of the study involved determining the level of sporting provision and need in the key urban area of the County, around Kilkenny City (and for the lands within easy reach of the City) a Facilities Planning Model has been used to assess facility provision. Qualitative Assessments of open space provisions and facilities were also carried out through surveys of established open spaces and facilities to compliment the use of the Facilities Planning Model. A qualitative approach was carried out exclusively in the area of the County around Waterford City due to difficulties in applying the Facilities Planning Model in that area.

Policy Frameworks

There are a range of policy documents that are important to the development of sports and amenity strategies for the plan area. The background policy framework established the key objectives for the plan area. In summary, the key areas considered included:

- o National Sports Strategy, as established by “Targeting Sporting change in Ireland; Sport in Ireland 1997 to 2006 and beyond”.
- o A New Era for Sport which contains the Irish Sports Councils Strategy for the period 2000–2002.
- o Health Policy & the Implications of Amenity Provision for Health, Wellbeing, Sporting & Recreation Activities were also assessed in light of the Report of the Cardiovascular Health Strategy Group.
- o Providing for All Ages - Young to Old in light of the exclusion from sporting activities evidenced in the area for both the less physically able and mentally disabled. Similar issues were also considered in “Public Policy on Children’s Play in Ireland: An

Examination of Central and Local Government Policies on Children's Play in Public Areas"¹.

Planning policies for the areas were also considered including the:

- National Spatial Strategy 2002
- County & Local Sports Policy
- A Policy for the provision and maintenance of Parks, Open Spaces and Outdoor Recreation Areas (1987)
- Kilkenny City Development Plan 2002
- Kilkenny County Development Plan 2002

Consultation

Consultations were also carried out with a wide range of organisations, sporting bodies and special interest groups. These consultations demonstrated that a wide range of issues were relevant to the study including:

- i. The overuse of existing facilities.
- ii. Maintenance Issues.
- iii. A need for more facilities (including training facilities).
- iv. Access to facilities.
- v. Social inclusion.
- vi. Land availability.
- vii. Ancillary facilities (including changing rooms).
- viii. A demand for indoor facilities.
- ix. The distribution of facilities.
- x. Provision for new development areas.
- xi. The overwork of volunteers.
- xii. Poor participation rates.
- xiii. Poor fitness of young people.

Consultations were also held with the adjoining Local Authorities in order to determine their issues and to detail the proposed study objectives given the fact that the catchment of the Kilkenny City can reach into areas of Cos. Carlow, Laois and Tipperary (SR).

Facilities Audit

The second element in the study was the identification and assessment of the established sporting provisions within the County.

The identification and evaluation of sporting facilities is intended to:

- a) Allow for an audit of their quality and condition.
- b) Allow for user surveys to be carried out to determine the nature and character of use of the facilities at peak times.

In total, in the order of 250 facilities were identified where sporting clubs carried out activities and games. In general these facilities ranged in quality and scale and the nature of provision and the opportunities for improvement differed through the County. A detailed assessment of the nature of provision is set out in the document but in summary the key findings included:

1. A determination that facilities in the area are relatively evenly distributed throughout the County but with a general tendency to concentrate on urbanised locations such as towns and villages.
2. A finding that the majority of facilities provided in the County are attached to educational establishments, while a large proportion are either provided by a club or

¹The Children's Research Centre, TCD, June 1999

are private facilities. This is particularly important for future provision and the dual use of facilities, such as educational establishments, to provide for public needs and use. A positive step in this regard has been made by the Co. Kilkenny VEC, their recommendation for the development of Local Sports Advisory Boards² and the promotion of the Local Sports Partnership application.

3. The main or dominant use of sports facilities was principally that of the field sports such as soccer and hurling / gaelic football.
4. The outputs demonstrate that areas such as Kilkenny City, in terms of total facility provision, have above average provisions in facilities such as soccer, rugby, basketball and handball for instance but below average provision in gaelic sports. While this is consistent with the fact that most gaelic sports are carried out at club facilities, it also substantiates a frequent issue emerging at public consultation phases that limited pitch availability occurs in GAA team sports in the city area.

Qualitative Assessments of facilities were also carried out which found that the majority of facilities were of a relatively poor quality, with limited changing, playing and spectator facilities.

Facilities Use

An assessment of facilities use was also carried out in the study through the application of the Facilities Planning Model by the University of Edinburgh. This model considers the participation levels in a range of sporting activities, assesses facilities demand and identifies unmet provision / future demands and the areas of need.

The review of facilities concentrated on active sports and amenity facilities providing for activities such as;

- (1) Hurling, Gaelic Football, Camogie
- (2) Handball
- (3) Soccer
- (4) Athletics
- (5) Swimming
- (6) Rugby
- (7) Hockey
- (8) Indoor Sports Activities
- (9) Golf
- (10) Multi-gym
- (11) Boxing
- (12) Tennis

However, this review process was also informed by approximately 900 household surveys carried out throughout the area within which the FPM is applied. The representative data returned from these areas is important as it identifies:

- Certain sports and amenities not catered for on a formal basis within the model area but for which a demands occurs (e.g. bowling alleys).
- Sports and amenities that are used by older, or less physically able, age groups may be catered for at facilities in off – peak periods.

In summary, the FPM has identified that there is a large under provision in the area's sports facilities and that additional sports facilities should be developed and existing facilities retained.

² Local Sports Advisory Boards are a means of promoting the more efficient use of local sports (primarily education facilities) and amenity resources.

Policies

Having regard to the FPM outputs, and also the need to encourage the development of a more strategic approach to sports and amenity provision the overall approach of the study is to ensure that current and future needs are:

- i. Guided by appropriate policies and recommendations.
- ii. Reflect the need to develop a hierarchy of sports and recreations opportunities.
- iii. Targeted geographically.
- iv. Implemented and promoted by all statutory undertakers in the area.
- v. Appropriately funded.

The Local Authorities for the area have previously developed a comprehensive set of policies and recommendations to guide development decisions in the City and County. In light of the consultations carried out, the facilities audit and patterns of facility use emerging from the surveys and consultations it is recommended that the established policies of the County and City Development Plan are amended to reflect the emerging trends in provision and demand. Importantly, the need to recognise the potential of new development to provide necessary amenity provision must be recognised. A hierarchy of development has been identified by which new development will have to provide facilities depending on the size of development. These amenity Development Thresholds are set out below.

Amenity Development Thresholds

Site Capacity	Minimum quantity and type of leisure facilities required
No. of Dwellings	
<25	Development Contribution in lieu of Open Space or 2.4 hectares per 1,000 people (a minimum of 0.25 hectares must be provided)
25 or over	Active Amenity Open space 2.4 hectares (6 Acres) per 1,000 people (a minimum of 0.25 hectares must be provided)
100 – 199	Public open space to include a Neighbourhood Play Area.
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 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. One community leisure building including full size badminton / basketball court with community association /club movement within.

Similarly, a hierarchy of facility development, and a protocol for facility development are also recommended for the future development of sports and amenity facilities. The protocol and hierarchy are as follows:

Protocol

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.
- f. **Provide a new stand alone facility.** This should be considered as a last option once options (a) to (e) have been explored.

Hierarchy Components

Guide to Hierarchies

LEVEL	REGIONAL	CITY/SUB COUNTY CO.	DISTRICT	NEIGHBOURHOOD
OPTIMUM LOCATION	On national road. Located in environs of Kilkenny City if possible.	Convenient national roads. Located on convergence of bus routes.	On bus routes	Accessible to pedestrians and non-car users.
CATCHMENT IN KMS	50-75km	10-20km	3-10 km	1-2km
ACCESS	University students, and national teams, national and regional elite teams and athletes.	Public, clubs and local elite	Public and clubs	Public and community based
SPORTING FACILITIES – POOL	50m x 20m	25m x 6m	None / Leisure	None
HALL	12 min state of the art facility designated for specific purposes.	6 plus suite of smaller halls	4 plus	2
PITCHES	High quality training	Suite of pitches for training/local leagues	1/2 pitches training/local leagues	1 no pitch training
MULTIPURPOSE/ SYNTHETIC	No. full size 2 ATPs (Astro Type Pitch)	1 No. full size multifunctional Astroturf and 1 No. full size ATP	1 No. full size multifunctional Astroturf.	1 No. training all weather pitch.
LIGHTS	Television/ competition quality	Astroturf and ATP at competitive level	Astroturf at competitive level/training level	Lights to training standard. Where appropriate no lighting should be considered in areas where passive observation cannot be encouraged at after dark times. (e.g. sports pitches / play areas not adjacent to

				housing areas, schools or clubs or in park areas that cannot be directly observed).
LEVEL OF SPORTING PERFORMANCE	Excellence/ Performance Competition specialist (specialist equipment)	Performance	Competition/ Recreation	Recreation
ACTIVITIES – DAYTIME	Exclusively sport	Sport mainly but health and community	Sport, recreation, health and community	Recreation, health and community
NIGHTTIME	Exclusively sport	Sport	Sport, recreation and community	Recreation and community
PLAY AREAS	None	None	District play area as per open span study recommendations	Neighbourhood play area as per open space study recommendations
CHILD CARE FACILITIES	Yes	Yes	Optional	Optional / Not Necessary
AMENITIES	Substantial parking; 100 spaces; restaurant; accommodation	Parking up to 100 spaces; restaurant	Up to 50 parking spaces; cycle racks; refreshment area	Up to 15 car parking spaces; cycle racks; good pedestrian and disabled access

Delivery

The overall aim of the Study is 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.

To provide for this integrated approach three key issues must be considered in the development of an effective response. These include:

- i. Funding
- ii. Management / Human Resources
- iii. Implementation and Integration

A range of different funding sources were identified including, The National Development Plan, Section 48 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, Public Private Partnership, The Department of Arts, Sports and Tourism. However, more innovative approaches to the funding and development of facilities should be pursued, including obtaining facilities as a 'planning gain' to housing developments, promoting the development of Local Sports Advisory Boards and developing joint public / private access to existing facilities.

The delivery of the commission is not simply tied to funding and finance availability, management procedures to deliver the commission must also be considered. The development of additional amenity facilities and improved management of existing facilities is recommended. The improved management of existing open space facilities and the development of new facilities either solely by the Council or in conjunction with other local groups will require the development of a specific responsibility within the Council for Parks and Open Space provision and maintenance. Similarly, in order to coordinate and develop sports and recreation provisions within the County the appointment of a **Sports and Recreation Officer**³, preferably jointly between the Borough Council and County Council should be considered.

³ This could be a joint role with the Local Sports Co-ordinator appointed by the County Development Board / through any Local Sports Partnership

Targets

One of the objectives of the study was to identify a Strategic Action Plan covering 10 years, with 3 / 5 years targets highlighting potential joint initiatives. This includes advising on the level of service available from Kilkenny Borough Council and Kilkenny County Council. While the level of service available from the Council will depend on the availability of funding and the implementation of staffing recommendations, a range of key objectives and targets are set out below for the coming years

Strategic Targets; Years 2002 – 2005

While not a definitive time table the following are key sets of recommendations and an indicative sequencing for their commencement. It is recommended that given the changing nature of sports participation, population change and facility provision that a plan, monitor and review process is adopted to allow sports facility provision to be monitored and assessed. In light of this a review period for implementation and planning has been identified for the period 2006 – 2009 (this should integrate with the County Development review process).

Yr 2003	Adopt Sports and Amenity Strategy
Yr 2003	Consider Amending Development Plans to incorporate revised sports and recreation policies
Yr 2004	Identify and agree organisational changes necessary
Yr 2004	Appoint Sports and Recreation Officer
Yr 2004	Issue Calls For Proposals for Improvements
Yr 2004	Identify Capital infrastructure requirements
Yr 2004	Identify facilities in geographic areas of needs
Yr 2004	Identify Joint Initiatives
Yr 2004	Review Local Sports Advisory Board Locations and Progress
Yr 2005	Prepare / Revise Section 48 Development Contribution Scheme (on area basis if necessary)
Yr 2005	Review Local Sports Advisory Board Locations and Progress

Strategic Targets; Years 2006 – 2009

Yr 2006	Review Staffing and Organisational Arrangements for Implementation
Yr 2006	Review implementation of County, District and Neighbourhood facility development.
Yr 2006	Review Local Sports Advisory Board Locations and Progress
Yr 2007	Review Amenity provision as part of housing development.
Yr 2007	Commence review of sports and amenity facility development as part of the County Development Plan Review Process.
Yr 2007	Review Local Sports Advisory Board Locations and Progress
Yr 2008	Review expenditure and infrastructure requirements
Yr 2008	Review Local Sports Partnership
Yr 2008	Review Local Sports Advisory Board Locations and Progress
Yr 2009	Review joint initiatives and management of opens spaces
Yr 2009	Review funding arrangements
Yr 2009	Review Local Sports Advisory Board Locations and Progress

Proposals

A wide range of proposals (based on the hierarchy of facilities identified as an ideal recommendation) have been set out including:

- The development of a City / County level sports / Amenity facility in Kilkenny City and its environs through linkage of existing and proposed developments. This is likely to require an integrated management / development / marketing plan.
- The development of Sub – County level facilities in

Thomastown
Castlecomer
Ferrybank

Specific recommendations are set out for the development of sports and amenity facilities in Ferrybank given the fact that it is so close to Waterford City.

- Given the catchment areas identified the opportunity also exists for the development of additional District Facilities in North and South Kilkenny areas. Appropriate locations include:

Piltown
Graiguenamanagh
Johnstown
Mullinavat
Callan

All of these locations, and their catchments, are geographically separate from surrounding major urban settlements and the provision of a district level facility in these areas would contribute to the development of sports and amenity provision.

In all other areas neighbourhood facilities should be developed on the basis of the criteria set out above and the Facility Development Protocol set out in above. No specific locations have been identified for the development of neighbourhood facilities although there are a wide range of locations that are suitable for the development of neighbourhood amenity facilities. These facilities should in general be prioritised for development in DED's with an increasing population.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – Volume Two

Open Space Assessment

The Brief

The aim of this study is to review the existing open space resource in terms of function and quality, with the objective of establishing what is the existing capacity and potential to meet the city's and county's needs in terms of amenity and recreation and / or alternative uses of dysfunctional spaces as appropriate.

The existing provision is assessed against recognised standards and highlights the shortfall.

The Study Area

The study area covers Kilkenny City and Kilkenny County. As part of the analysis the following have been carried out:-

- (a) On ground analysis,(each site visited)
- (b) desk top studies
- (c) public consultation.

Assessment of Open Space Provision

Extensive surveys were carried out for all individual open spaces including waterfront corridors.

The findings of the assessment and analysis are as follows:

Kilkenny City

1. The open space as defined by the zoning objectives map for Kilkenny City shows a quantity of open space greater than that required by the present standard in the Development Plan.
2. The amenity value, the quality and the functionality of the existing spaces is poor.
3. There is no quality play provision within most open spaces surveyed.
4. There is no dedicated department to develop and manage open space within the city and county.
5. Open space resource at a local level requires redesign and redevelopment to maximise its potential and quality.
6. There is a unique water resource both ecological / green and urban / hard associated with the Nore river corridor, with the potential to embellish the image and civic attractions of Kilkenny city.
7. There is a need for a hierarchy of open space provision to ensure a clear function / purpose for each open space provided. This will inform day to day decision making re individual facilities and avoid duplication and / or under-provision.
8. Open space in Kilkenny should provide visual enhancement to the fabric of the city, whether as a recreational amenity or not.

Kilkenny County

9. County towns are generally well provided for with an attractive surrounding countryside context – walks, natural areas, woodlands etc, and individual sports clubs often have their own facilities, however, in general, each town / village requires consolidation or enhancement of at least one existing green / space or creation of new greens or town parks as a focal point for social and community events and informal provision for miscellaneous recreational activities
10. Kilkenny City and County have no dedicated department to develop and manage open space within the city / county.
11. The issue of public liability should not be a deterrent to providing equipped play areas as long as recently adopted and recognised EU standards are followed.
12. There is a need for a strategic vision of open space in the city and county and its role in
 - The promotion of Kilkenny as a city with a high quality of life.
 - The potential to create networks of open spaces.
 - The development of Kilkenny City, County and the Nore / Barrow region and its niche in the leisure and tourism market, building on it's established heritage attractions.

Recommendations

Provision of Open Space

1. Adopt an open space strategy for the city and its environs.
2. All policies should be guided by the need to provide a balanced range and hierarchy of open spaces and locations throughout the Study Area and by providing access to all.
3. Communities in the City and County should be involved in an informed way in local redevelopment plans involving improved open space, footpath creation and particularly infill development.
4. Due to the strategic nature of the proposals in Kilkenny City impacting on recreation, housing, community development, urban and economic development, tourism and city image it may be appropriate to set up an interdepartmental task force to direct and manage the recreation strategy.
5. Put in place appropriate cross-departmental structures to manage and develop the open space strategy, and provide sufficient resources to implement it.
6. In consultation with local communities, provide one publicly managed town park or village green in the each county town and village addressed in the Study Area.

Design, Quality and Management of Open Space

7. An immediate priority within the strategy should be to upgrade and facilitate the improved design, maintenance and management of existing open spaces both in the City and County.

Provision of Play Facilities

8. In consultation with communities, plans for the improvement, maintenance and management of local facilities should be developed with an emphasis on the early provision of quality children's play areas.
9. For the provision of Play Areas the City and County Councils should:

- Adopt EU standard EN 1176 for the design and management of play area equipment.
- Be directly responsible for the control and management of the play areas unless by agreement with another agency.
- Should undertake weekly checks on play areas and equipment, carried out by suitably qualified employees.
- Remove all defective / dangerous equipment immediately and not reinstate until satisfactorily repaired.
- Maintain records of inspections including dates, personnel and qualifications of inspectors, and necessary actions taken.

Resources

10. The City and County Councils should seek to implement Sections 48 & 49 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, for the purpose of raising funds to, not only provide for, but to also fund the management and maintenance of these amenities. Funding may also be possible from other sources such as SEHB.
11. The Councils should consider whether to impose a flat rate development levy per house to go towards the provision of open space.
12. Where it is possible under these Sections, developers should provide a satisfactory level of open space on site in accordance with best practice including:
 - The amalgamation of open space into useable units.
 - Arrangements of housing to provide maximum surveillance.
 - The enclosure of open space where it abuts a main road.
 - The provision of equipped children's play areas.
 - The protection of existing landscape features of merit.
 - The provision of hard and soft landscape features, furniture and lighting as appropriate.
13. The clustering of open space in City and County areas with other leisure and sports opportunities to maximise usage, efficient use of capital and human resources and management e.g. the location of open space with sports centres.
14. The recognition of the social and cultural benefits of providing open space to capture available funds from non-traditional agencies e.g. Urban Woodland Schemes, Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation.
15. The Councils should develop management, maintenance and access agreements with what is classified as private space with open access - schools, community run facilities, hospital or college / institutional grounds – to develop and realise the potential of these often quality and mature environments as informal passive recreational areas.

Redesign and Redevelopment

16. In the City and County consider the use of infill built development to reconfigure / structure open space in accordance with best practice for open spaces and urban design.
17. Such redevelopment coupled with public/private partnerships and further public investment should create additional resources to address the upgrade of open space within the City and County.

Strategic Vision

18. The existing River network has potentially established the basis for a network and links County with City, tourism features and existing recreation facilities.
19. Link the development of a green city and leisure facilities with tourism programmes and opportunities e.g. the Nore Waterway Corridor and city centre initiatives such as the Batemans Quay. (Kilkenny, The Medieval City, in sitting in a beautiful, cared for, wooded, riverside environment).

20. Consider jetties and boating facilities in the city centre to bring the river to life.
21. Identify walking and cycling routes linked to open spaces and facilities to develop “greenways” and Sli na Slainte routes e.g. the city centre and interconnecting riverside walks out to the countryside.
22. To upgrade existing and provide new riverside walks.
23. To preserve existing rights of ways in City and County especially those along the river.

Hierarchy

24. Proposals should be prepared for the development of existing open spaces in the City as high quality district, city and regional parks.
25. Provide facilities to enable a greater range of activities be provided i.e. skateboarding, rollerblading and such activities that may become popular and which could be accommodated within the proposed park network. This will ensure maximum potential is realised in the parks and open space system.
26. It is important to integrate city based leisure and tourism proposals with those in the county and region. This will maximise the value derived from recreation investment by enhancing the city and county not just for residents but for visitors also.

Open space provides a green lung for the urban area and green networks are important for future economic and social well-being. However the benefits of open space are severely compromised if the spaces are neglected or undeveloped. Open spaces will only bring benefit if they are of a high quality, managed and maintained.

The fundamental importance of open space, over and above sport and recreation must be recognised in order to bring better quality of life and encourage an urban renaissance. Open spaces significantly enhance the liveability of urban environments. Allowing successful establishment of an open space network will serve the city and it's population in a multitude of ways: including health, education and tourism, whilst also bringing socio economic benefits. The role of open space in providing a facility for informal recreation must be recognised, as this is more broadly relevant to the population. A minority of park visitors use parks for formal sport and demographically the ageing population means there will be fewer participants in active recreation.

Open space is not an 'add on' to recreation, it is where recreation, sport and social activities take place.