Kilkenny County Council
Comhairle Chontae Chill Chainnigh

# Report on Peer Review for the City of Kilkenny

# The Implementation of the 10 Minute Town Concept

3rd-4th of November 2021

Interreg Europe

European Union | European Regional Development Fund

Interreg Europe

Policy Learning Platform

**Low-carbon economy**

## INTRODUCTION

Ireland has one of the lowest levels of active transport across the entire EU. The national prevalence of active transport has decreased dramatically since the 1980s. In the 2016 census, only 14% of the population walked to work, school or college and under 3% cycled. Over 6 in 10 people, travelled by car or van. Kilkenny, similar to the rest of the country, experienced dramatic shifts in mobility patterns following the outbreak of the global pandemic. Travel restrictions in response to COVID-19 and subsequent reduced traffic volumes and quieter roads led to multi-modality behaviour that had not been evident in preceding years. Although, traffic has returned to pre-COVID levels, different travel experiences and the growing awareness of the need for a cleaner, greener society may give rise to additional public support and appetite for space reallocation in favour of sustainable transport measures.

Kilkenny City has a population of 26,512 (2016)[1]. It is the 4th largest urban area in the Southern Region and the 8th largest employment centre in the state, with a daytime working population of 13,738. The National Planning Framework 2040 envisages a 30% population growth in Kilkenny up to the period of 2040. This projected population growth will result in a significant increase in the demand for travel and intensifies the decarbonisation challenge. This demand needs to be managed through a coordinated approach prioritising pedestrians, cyclists and public transport. Kilkenny is a predominantly flat, compact city with a population density of 1,825 per km2. The city is approximately 3km wide and 4.5km long with many destinations easily accessible by foot or by bike. The City is renowned as an historic medieval city with major tourist attractions and an important regional centre for arts and culture, including high profile annual festivals. It has a strong agri-business and finance industry.



**Image 1Johns Bridge, Kilkenny**

[1] Central Statistics Office, 2017

## Policy Development in Kilkenny

Kilkenny County Council (KCC) has been an early adopter of Smarter Travel policies. The adoption of the Mobility Management Plan in 2009 and the designation of Kilkenny as an "Active Travel Town" in 2012, resulted in investment in key walking and cycling infrastructure links, with the emphasis on shared space and reduced vehicle speeds in the medieval core. Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021 – 2027, prioritises sustainable transport, through the land use strategy of compact growth, strengthened investment in the rail and city bus services and continued development of walking and cycling infrastructure in support of the 10-minute city concept. KCC is currently preparing the Local Transport Plan, a short to medium term plan to support the development of a comprehensive, sustainable transport network for the City. Given the projected population growth of 30% for Kilkenny, a significant increase in the numbers choosing active transport is required to meet the proposed mode share targets[2].

| Table 4.1:  Modal Share targets for Kilkenny City | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Mode Share** | **Walk** | **Cycle** | **Public Transport** | **Car** |
| 2020 Internal Trips | 26.57% | 3.98% | 6.81% | 62.64% |
| 2040 Target | 35% | 10% | 15% | 40% |

Local policies are underpinned by the following national policies; Project Ireland 2040, the National Planning Framework, The National Development Plan 2021 – 2030, Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region, the Climate Action Plan 2021 and the Healthy Ireland Strategic Action Plan 2021 – 2025.



**Image 2 Lacken Board Walk**

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[2] Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021-2027

## Current Mobility Trends in Kilkenny

Historically, Kilkenny had much greater levels of cycling then the national average and nearby towns. In 1996, 13.7% of the population cycled for commuter journeys. In 2016, this had dropped to 3.1%, still greater than nearby towns and slightly higher than the national average but a sharp decline compared to 10 years previously.
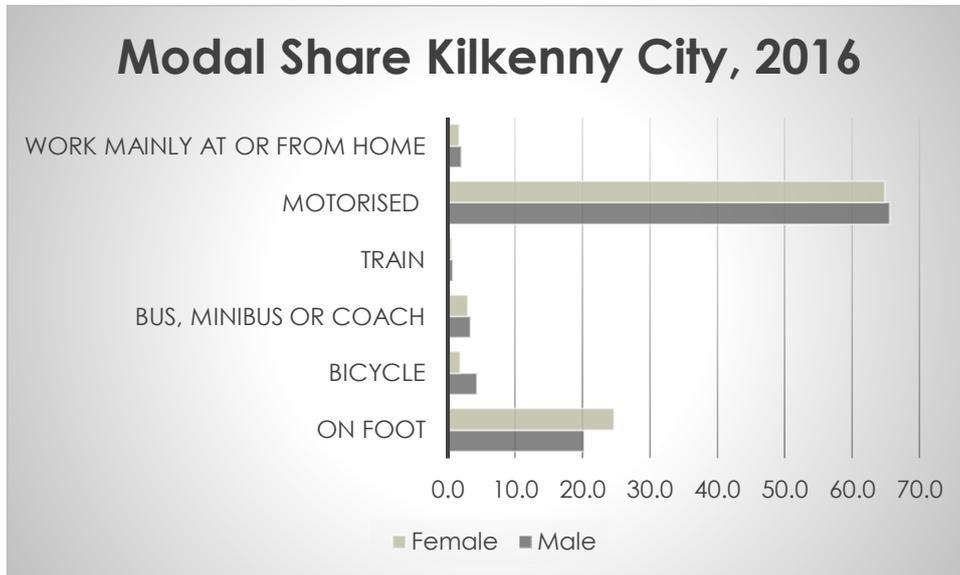


The sharp decline in cycling for commuter journeys is primarily accounted for by school journeys for secondary school students as represented below. This is matched by a rise in car journeys with a journeys by foot relatively stable.
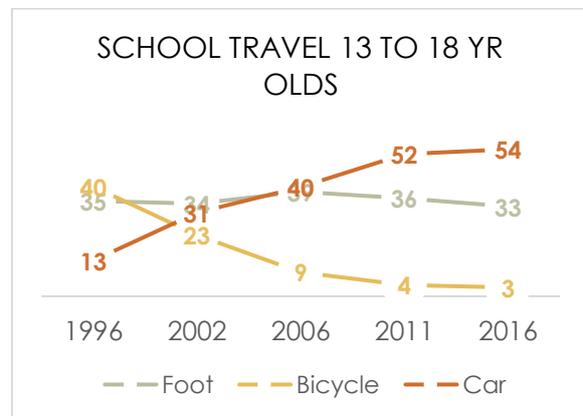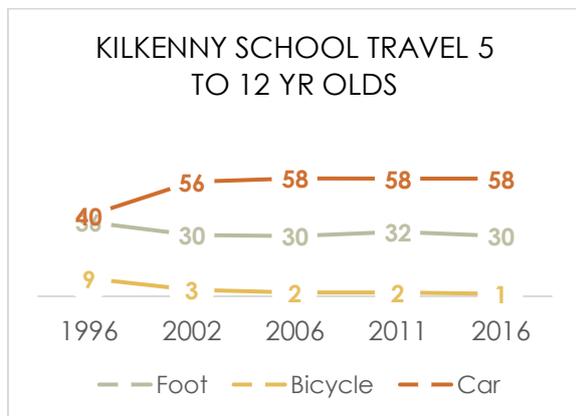


The proportion of employees cycling as a means of travel to work in Kilkenny has increased by 12.5% between 2011 and 2016. However, this only equates to a modal share of 3.61% for cycling. Of those that cycle, the greatest percentage is males, cycling to work, and the greatest decrease is among school students.

## Community Attitudes Towards Cycling in Kilkenny and Barriers to Modal Shift

A community wide survey was conducted in Kilkenny, over a 6 week period in July and August 2020, 437 participants took part.  This was conducted online due to the COVID-19 restrictions.  Over half of all participants lived in the city centre and almost 95% lived within a 20km radius of the city.  Just under 60% of the respondents were female, 1/10 of all respondents did not have access to a car and almost 88% had access to a bike.  9% cycle most days of the week.  The greatest percentage of respondents were in the 40 – 49 year age bracket.  5% of those surveyed have no interest in cycling.  Almost 80% would like to cycle more or would like to cycle if the conditions were right.  Overall, the majority of people in Kilkenny agree that there are many destinations within a 10 or 15 minute walk of their home and that communities are safe from crime and anti-social behaviour.  However, almost half believe that there are no convenient routes for cycling, 55% feel cycling is unsafe because of the traffic and over 80% of respondents felt that cyclists are not sufficiently separated from traffic.  Lack of bike support infrastructure such as storage options or shower facilities in work are also barriers.  Lifestyle factors that feature strongly include the need to carry things, longer journeys or multipurpose trips.

The three main reasons people cycle or would like to cycle more may have reflected the changing needs of people during COVID-19 restrictions; 1. To keep active, get fit or for health reasons,  to spend time outdoors and for environmental reasons.

The top 5 reasons people have for visiting the town centre were:

- Café /Restaurants
- Food Shopping
- Non-food shopping
- Retails services, hair dressers, beauticians etc
- Walk/cycle or recreation

A series of thematic workshops between September and December 2020 focused on the experience of people who for various reasons– health issues, disability, older age and social and cultural barriers– encounter limitations in how they engage with and move through the cityscape [3].   The city was considered accessible for walking but not seen as accessible by bike, even amongst the cyclists in the groups.  Traffic in the centre, a lack of cycle lanes and narrow paths still provided challenges for those with reduced mobility, wheelchair or cane users and those with buggies.

[3] Healthy Inclusive Communities Project, Kilkenny Local Community Development Committee, 2020

## Preliminary Work: A Multi-Sectoral Approach

In 2010 a cross sector **Smarter Travel Team** was formed with representatives from Kilkenny County Council and other local organisations. A research partnership was established with WIT. Key findings included[4]:

- Car restrictive policies are underused and undervalued in Ireland
- Making the business case for introducing car restrictive policies is essential as retail traders equate car accessibility with retail turnover
- Community advocates for active travel need to be mobilised
- Interventions to increase active travel to school should have a high-intensity mix of infrastructural and behavioural measures, be gender-specific and address car dependency

County Kilkenny LEADER Partnership along with KCC and other local organisations have progressed several European projects. A feasibility study for a Bike Share Scheme for Kilkenny determined that a conventional docked scheme would require substantial initial investment and an annual subvention. Critical enablers for either a docked or dockless scheme include a Cycling Master Plan and infrastructure enhancements. Other projects progressed include:

- Development of a brand for cycling in Kilkenny and communication channels
- Procurement of cycle counters
- Audit of current cycling provision in Kilkenny and proposals for the development of a strategic cycle network. The findings of this report by Roadplan (2021) are incorporated into this document.

## Transport Demand in Kilkenny

Kilkenny City has a daytime working population of 13,738 and employment is concentrated in the industrial estates and business parks off the Ring Road and the city centre itself. St. Luke's Hospital and Aut Even Private Healthcare are both located in the western part of the city. There are 18 primary and secondary schools in Kilkenny which form 10 school zones in the city. 40% of commuter journeys for employment originate in the city and it's environs. 61% (6,485) originate outside of Kilkenny city and environs. The county towns and villages are a significant source of commuter trips. From the National Travel Survey, commuter data only accounts for approximately 35% of all journeys. Other journey purposes include shopping (approximately one fifth of all journeys), companion/escort journeys (15%) and others; visiting, entertainment or personal business[5]. Tourism is a significant trip generator in Kilkenny. In 2017, the county attracted more than 600,000 visitors[6] and 800,000 visited Kilkenny Castle and grounds in 2018[7].

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[5] National Travel Survey 2017
[6] Fáilte Ireland
[7] OPW 2019

# FOCUS OF PEER REVIEW

## Existing Sustainable Transport Infrastructure

The works proposed by the previous Mobility Management Plan have been largely completed including the provision of two new bridges over the River Nore, development of the linear parks and provision of a network of cycle lanes.  Walking and cycling infrastructure is being provided on all new developments, including the new neighbourhood in the Western Environs of the city (Breagagh Valley) and the Abbey Quarter, a regeneration project in the city centre.  There are plans underway for the creation of two new green areas in the city at St Canice's Campus and to the North East of the city at Dunmore Biodiversity Park.  Both will have pedestrian and cyclist links from the central spine along by the River Nore, a potential off road cycle path through the city centre.  Community consultations have found that in general, citizens consider Kilkenny a walkable city.

## Public Transport

The Kilkenny City Bus Service came into operation in December 2019.  The bus service operates 2 circuitous routes at 30 minute intervals in both directions on each route.  There is significant scope to extend and enhance this service by providing additional routes of a more direct nature.  The Draft Kilkenny LTP also proposes the provision of additional bus parking facilities in the vicinity of the train station thereby effectively creating a public transport hub for the city.
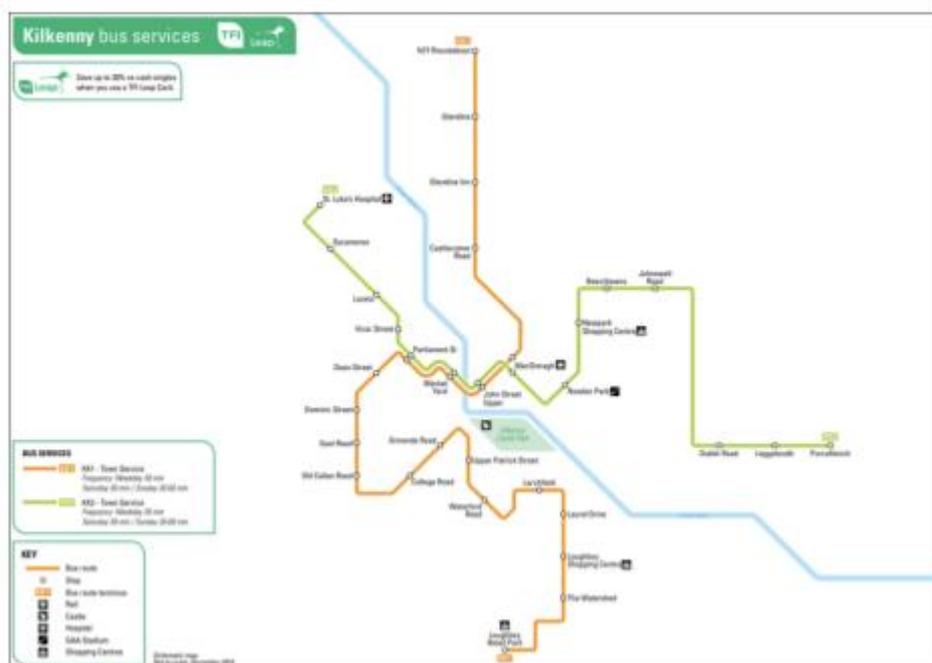


Figure MS5: Existing City Bus Service in Kilkenny City. Source: Transport for Ireland, 2019

# Cycling Infrastructure

There is an existing orbital walking and cycling route along the Ring Road, segregated from traffic. However there are 10 roundabouts along the length of the route with insufficient cyclist provision. There are high traffic volumes on this route and it forms a severance for pedestrians and cyclists between the city centre and key employment and retail centres off the Ring Road.

Cycle lanes are provided on main radial routes into the city from the Ring Road. The older routes are mandatory or advisory cycle lanes with no segregation and a lack of continuity in sections. The widths do not meet current standards. The more recent radial routes are raised paths, sometimes shared with pedestrians.

Kilkenny County Council are generating plans for enhancement of cycling infrastructure throughout the city. This will primarily focus on radial routes and the outer and inner orbital route, as well as the introduction of cycling facilities along by the Nore. However, the provision of cycling infrastructure is challenging in the city centre.
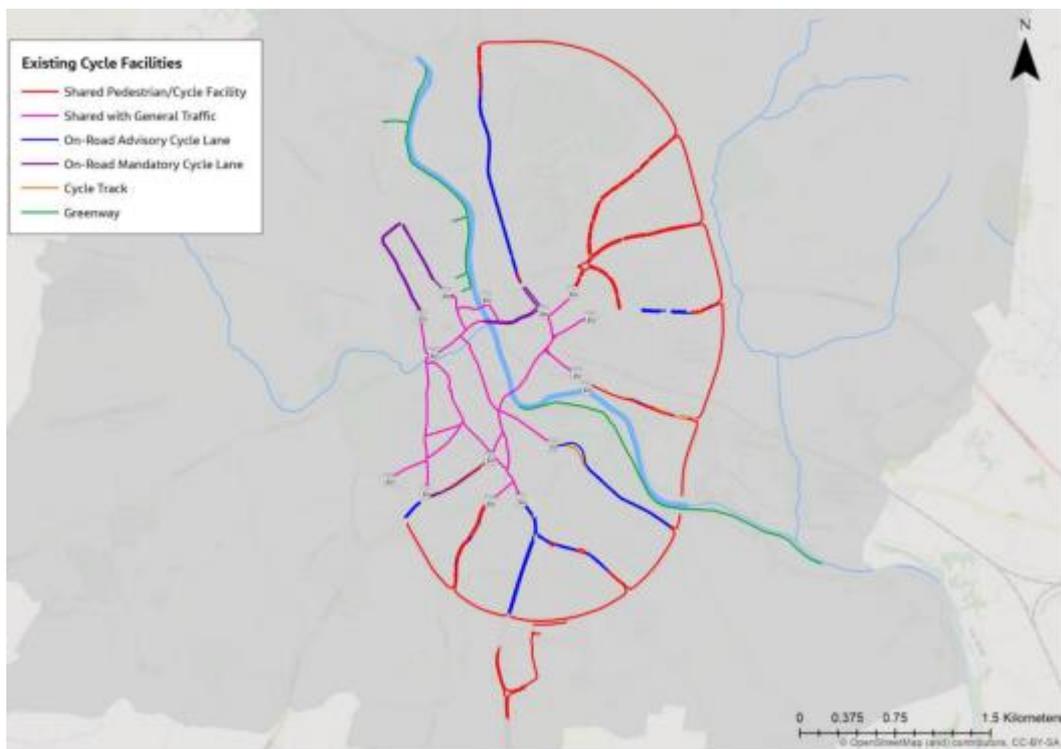


**Figure 1 Existing Cycling Infrastructure**

## Key Challenge 1: Space Reallocation, City Centre Traffic Management, Identifying Next Steps and Prioritising Actions

There is a newly introduced one way system and pedestrianisation in the city centre as shown below.   This has reduced traffic volumes and allowed for widening of footpaths as part of measures to facilitate social distancing.  Up until this point, there has been strong resistance to the introduction of one way measures in the city centre, in particular from traders and elected officials,  and previous attempts have proved unsuccessful.  With traffic returning to pre-COVID levels, there are increasing calls from traders for the reversal of the existing temporary system to two way .



Legend
Newly introduced one way system
Two way traffic
Pedestrianised streets
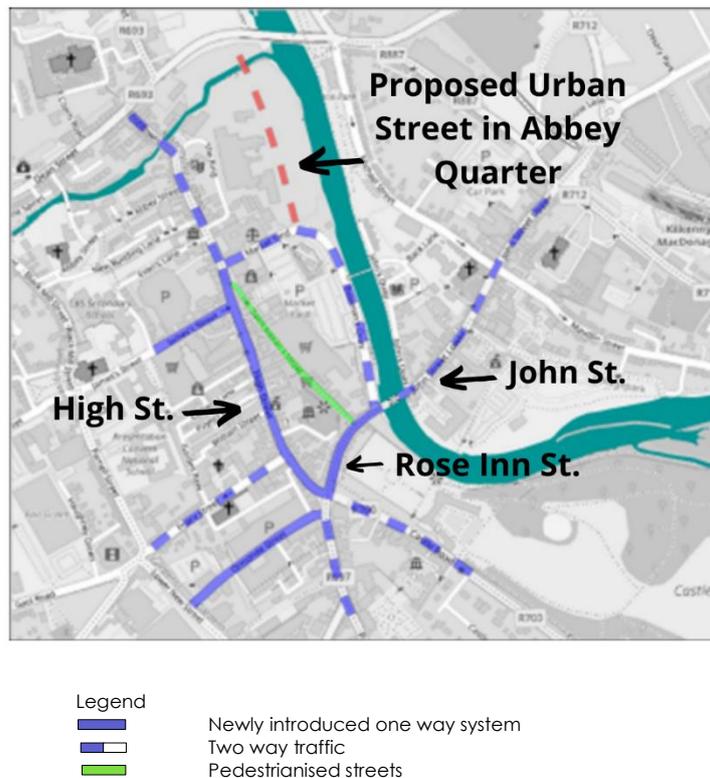
**Image 3 Traffic Management Plan in response to COVID Restrictions**

For cyclists, the introduction of the one way system has also led to one way cycling and carriage ways continue to be shared with traffic.  The City Centre 'Gateways' provide a traffic calmed environment with 30kph speed restriction and traffic calming such as raised pedestrian crossings, road narrowing and 'special' surfacing – shared vehicle and cycle space with dedicated pedestrian footways.  However, traffic volumes in the city are challenging for cyclists, with approximately 10,000 AADT on some city streets.  There are many pinch points,  and on street parking and loading bays provide obstacles for cyclists.  KCC are seeking input from peers on successful reallocation of space,  introduction of car restrictive policies and other solutions that facilitate a shift to sustainable transport in the city.

## Key Challenge 2: Gaining broad based support for modal shift and sustainable transport in the City Centre

Kilkenny County Council are currently facing resistance from traders on the introduction of car restrictive measures, as retail traders equate car accessibility with retail turnover. Similar, some residents, shoppers and disability groups have expressed fears over accessibility of the city centre if car restrictive measures are maintained or introduced. There are also concerns over any reductions in both on street and off street car parking and the impact this would have on accessibility of the city centre.

Kilkenny County Council are seeking advice from peers on how to gain broad based support for modal shift and sustainable transport in the city centre from retailers, businesses, residents and concerned citizens.

## PARTICIPANTS IN THE PEER REVIEW

The following peers examined the challenges in Kilkenny and provided recommendations based on their experience and expertise:

| Peer | Organisation | Area of Expertise |
|------|--------------|-------------------|
| **Brian Caulfield** | Trinity College Dublin Associate Professor in the Department of Civil Engineering | Transportation research, pathways to decreasing transport emissions |
| **William Pratt** | Devon County Council Transport Planning team Leader | Emergency Active Travel Schemes and City Centre Road Space Reallocation Schemes |
| **Brian Masson** | Multi Modal Transport Solutions | Implementation of Integrated Public Transport Systems Rural Transport Policy Adviser in EU Smarta2 Project Change Management through Co-Creation |
| **Gordana Kolesaric** | Maribor | Development of Mobility Management Actions Plans and Measures Last Mile Delivery Solutions |
| **Ioannis Polis** | Aristotle University of Thessaloniki | Urban Mobility Transportation Planning SUMP's Development |

Other participants included elected representatives and officials from Planning and Roads in Kilkenny County Council, coordinators from Interreg Europe, Policy Learning Platform and other stakeholders. This included a broad representation of interested parties, from the Southern Regional Assembly, the Sustainable Transport Group, Kilkenny, local transport representatives, Secondary School students, access groups and community and employer representatives.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

## Key Challenge 1 Space Reallocation

| General Remarks |
| --- |
| **Business as usual scenario leads to congested, polluted, noisy and unattractive city centres** |
| **Bold measures take political leadership** |
| **Planning first, building after: invest sufficient resources in planning and consultation** |
| **Individual measures can be counter-productive** |
| **Mobility transition needs a holistic approach, provide a solution for mobility as alternative to car** |

Package of measures to:

- Increase urban space efficiency
- Increase attractiveness of public transport
- Increase public space for citizens
- Increase road safety & accessibility

Public Space Reallocation options include:

- Pedestrianisation
- One Way streets
- Reallocating parking space
- Shared use
- Time Filters
- Modal Filters

## Key Challenge 2 Gaining broad Based Support

| General Remarks |
| --- |
| **Don't make the transformation about transport, make it about well being and vibrant urban centres** |
| **Change comes with uncertainty, businesses don't link uncertainty, clear and unambiguous communication** |
| **Distinguish needs from wants and communicate proactively and upfront** |

| Identified Challenge | Recommended Solutions | 2022 | 2023/24 | 2025 - 2027 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Pedestrian Solutions** | Attractive footpaths and pedestrianised areas | √ | √ | √ |
| | Reallocated space for larger footpaths | √ | √ | √ |
| | Trial pedestrianisation | √ | √ | √ |
| | Weakest Links – crossing times, safety concerns | √ | √ | √ |
| | Needs & Experiences – toilets, seating, shade, play | √ | √ | √ |
| **Mobility Concerns** | Offer alternatives for those with reduced mobility; buses, taxis and micro-mobility solutions | | √ | √ |
| | Facilitate schemes for those with reduced mobility to hire mobility aids, scooters, trikes, adapted bikes, Cycling without Age etc | | √ | √ |
| **Infrastructure Design** | Innovative methods for speed reduction, Use of sensory, tactile, contrast pavements, walkability audits | √ | √ | √ |
| **Cycling Solutions** | Cycle Network Design Principles; Safety, Comfort, Coherence, Connectivity, Directness, Attractiveness | √ | √ | √ |
| | Shared space as a transitory solutions | √ | | |
| | Upgrade orbital and radial routes and central spine | | | √ |
| | Safe and secure bike parking, lighting, CCTV, Air Stations, Counters | √ | √ | |
| | Facilitate Public Bike Share Scheme and Micro-mobility Schemes | | | √ |
| | Facilitate social enterprise for special needs and second hand bikes | | √ | √ |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Schools** | Safe School Zones and School Streets | √ | √ | √ |
| | Awareness, education and challenges | √ | √ | √ |
| **Logistics** | Reassure inner city traders that transportation needs will be met | √ | | |
| | Business / Social enterprise case for cargo bike deliveries | | | √ |
| | Designated space for trans-shipment hub and shared use of e-vans, e-bikes and cargo bikes for deliveries | | | √ |
| **Parking** | Reduce reliance on large car parks in city centres | | | √ |
| | Increase efficiency of on- street parking to facilitate active travel | | √ | |
| | Use parking charges to steer demand, coordinated approach | √ | | |
| | Designate land for large (free or low cost) car parks at collector roads into the city with mini e-bus, bike share, bike lockers and cycling lanes to city centre | | | √ |
| | Facilitate Park and Stride locations | √ | √ | |
| **Commuters/Employees** | Employers can promote active travel if and when infrastructure exists | | | |
| | Company mobility schemes | √ | √ | √ |
| | Company challenges and competitions | √ | √ | √ |
| **Data and Modelling** | Count modal split at regular intervals, sensors and counters | √ | √ | √ |
| | Model the impact of different policy options against each other | √ | √ | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Establish key performance indicators | | √ | √ |
| **Public Support** | Use the guide for citizen involvement of the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) process | √ | | |
| | Simplify process and keep it transparent | √ | | |
| | Assign roles and responsibilities to all involved and support all parties to execute roles efficiently | √ | | |
| | Build a consent environment and educate all parties on tackling challenges and choices | √ | | |
| | Realistic time plan in place, set milestones and timeframes | √ | | |
| | Engagement Plan, Stakeholder Segmentation; Supervision Team, Taskforce Team, Multi Stakeholder Group and Greater Stakeholder Group and Citizens | √ | | |
| | Develop communication strategies and plan dissemination activities | √ | √ | √ |
| | Kilkenny as a sustainable mobility champion – the biking tourist hub, pedestrian friendly city | | | √ |
| | Appeal to local pride, stir competitive vibe and use ambassadors | | √ | |
| | Kilkenny as a test bed for innovative sustainability mobility measures | | | √ |
| | Surveys, poll people, general questions, resistance comes with specific questions | | √ | |
| | Proactively inform local members | √ | √ | √ |
| | Find new allies in other disciplines, turn the mobility challenge around | √ | √ | |

## CONCLUSION

In consideration of the recommendations of the peer review, Kilkenny County Council plan to progress with a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP). The Local Transport Plan will set out and make recommendations for the balanced use of road space and public transport integration in the city. The SUMP process will set up the working structures and stakeholder engagement platforms necessary for the implementation of the plan.

The membership of the existing Sustainable Transport Group will be reviewed and segmented as recommended. The SUMP process will be overseen by the supervision team and resourced by Kilkenny County Council.

Many of the recommendations of the review are currently being progressed by Kilkenny County Council. By following the SUMP guidelines, there will be greater clarity for the stakeholders and citizens in Kilkenny, which will reduce concerns regarding change.

Supervision Team

Sustainable Transport Team

Main Stakeholder Group

Greater Stakeholder Group and Citizens
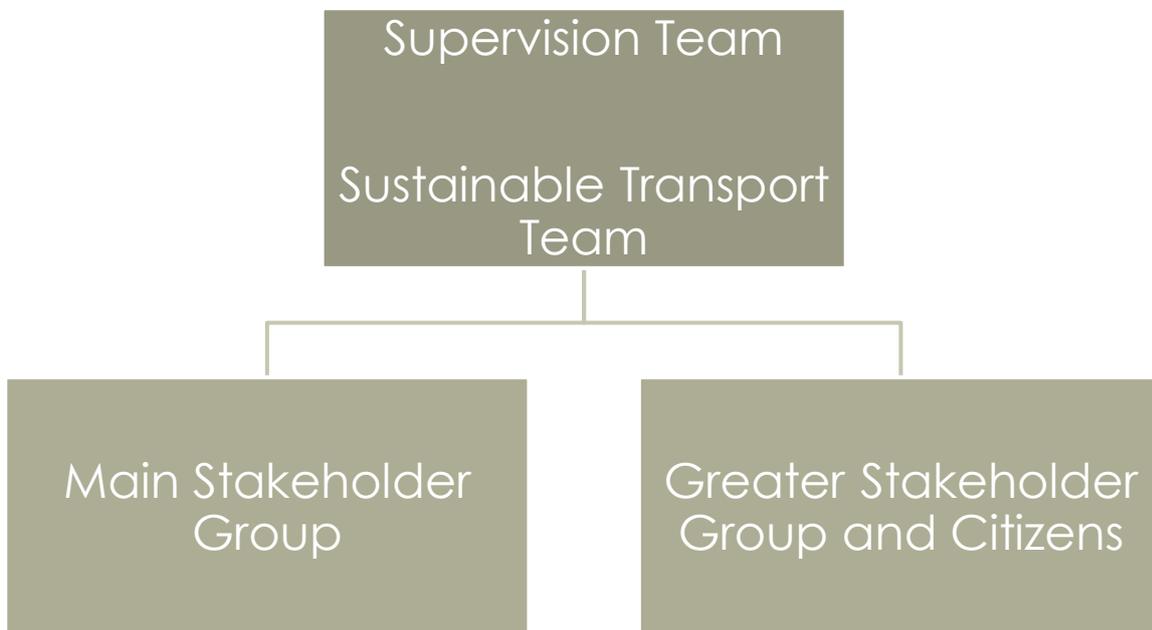
The peers also recommended several solutions that will now be considered as part of the SUMP, including logistic solutions and mobility hubs. The draft Gannt chart will be finalised as part of the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan. To inform decision making, the need for further data collection has been identified. Kilkenny County Council will work towards annual modal counts in the city, including pedestrian, cyclist and motor vehicle movement to monitor modal share. This will form part of the ongoing monitoring and evaluation. Kilkenny County Council welcome the input of the peers as part of the SUMP process.