



Kilkenny Countryside Park



Comhairle Chontae Chill Chainnigh
Kilkenny County Council

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Kilkenny County Council are delighted to introduce you to one of our newest parks. Located just 5km north of Kilkenny City, the Kilkenny Countryside Park was a former municipal landfill site that has been given a new lease of life and recently turned into a biodiversity rich accessible public park that offers a wide range of amenities.

This interactive e-magazine incorporates a video that will hopefully give you an overview of the development of the park from its inception to its completion, in what is now a very popular amenity that we are all very proud of in Kilkenny.

Yours sincerely

Lar Power
Chief Executive Officer
Kilkenny County Council.



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Background

The former municipal landfill site commenced operation in 1989 under EPA License and operated until March 2010. Kilkenny County Council continues to discharge its functions with regard to the aftercare of the former landfill site in accordance with the EPA approved Closure, Restoration and Aftercare Management Plan (CRAMP). This includes dust, water and gas monitoring and leachate management.

This project was developed as part of Kilkenny County Councils commitments under numerous national and local policies and strategies, including Our Rural Future Development Policy 2021-2025 and the Kilkenny City and County Development Plan.

Over the past decade the importance of biodiversity and outdoor spaces, that allow people to immerse themselves within nature to promote physical health and mental wellbeing, has really come to the fore. Kilkenny County Council has responded to this need.



Click on the video here



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PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Objectives were clearly defined under three main themes:

Theme 1 - Nature and Biodiversity

The establishment of vegetation communities across the site to produce, through management practices and new planting, a mosaic of native habitats in one location fabricated upon the base of the existing mosaic of habitats on the existing site.

Theme 2 - Passive and Active Recreation

To provide for multi-generational recreation use while adhering to our ecological ethos of protecting and minimising disturbance to fauna/flora.

Theme 3 - Education and Exploration

To incorporate interpretive educational information to promote greater understanding of the importance of biodiversity and the management of waste.





CONSULTATIONS

From project concept stage we worked closely with the local community and extensive consultations also took place with key stakeholders including Kilkenny Tourism (who represent over 160 members involved in the hospitality and leisure sector across the county), the Kilkenny GAA County Board (who have a centre of excellence adjacent to the park) along with Trail Kilkenny, Kilkenny Recreation & Sports Partnership and Kilkenny Cycling tours. All, without exception, were and remain extremely supportive of this project.

Part 8 planning approval for the project was obtained in March 2021 when the proposal was unanimously approved by the Elected Members of Kilkenny County Council.



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Features/Activities

Themed integrated walkway trails have been developed to form the main circulation routes for visitors to the park. The trails incorporate play elements, educational and art opportunities for nature interpretation and enable outdoor recreation activities such as a trim trail, orienteering, running and athletics training.

Three themed trails developed include;

1. **"The Mass Path Trail"** from the Church of the Most Holy Trinity in Dunmore village to the Countryside Park
2. **"The Biodiversity Trail"** which immerse visitors in rich natural surroundings alongside interpretative signage to expand knowledge and understanding.
3. **"The Accessibility Trail"** which is fully accessible for wheelchair use and offers fantastic vistas of the surrounding countryside.

Trail lengths range from 2.3km to 3km.

Kilkenny's first dog-friendly enclosure has proven extremely popular and has become a space for both dogs and dog owners to socialise. The existence of this amenity has also reinforced with the public the importance of retaining dogs on leads or harnesses within the remainder of the park to protect and preserve the wildlife.

INTEGRATED WALKWAYS

Click on the video here



ALL IRELAND COMMUNITY
& COUNCIL AWARDS
IPB INSURANCE AND LAMA



The new park also provides a myriad of other attractions including **two ball walls**, a **bespoke viewing area**, **play and exercise equipment**, **imaginative natural play elements** and **novel relaxation spaces** that include **hammocks** and **loungers**.

Services on the site include an **accessible dry-loo toilet**, **drinking water** within the dog-friendly enclosure, **sixty bike parking stands**, **car parking at three different locations** that incorporate **dedicated disabled and age-friendly parking** along with **age-friendly seating at regular intervals** throughout the park.

Materials and features used in the construction of the park were locally sourced, where appropriate, such as the limestone paving used at the viewing platform, aggregates used for the construction of the pathways. Other materials were specified in keeping with the reuse/repurpose ethos of Kilkenny County Council.

In addition, **interpretative signage** has been provided throughout the park explaining the in-situ infrastructure and history of the landfill site. With the intention here to promote awareness around how general household waste is managed and the importance of reducing personal waste through reusing and recycling.





ACTIVITIES & FEATURES

Three themed Walking Trails
 Biodiversity Rich Planting
 360 Degree Vista Viewing Platform
 Natural Play & Exercise Elements
 Hammocks & Loungers
 Age Friendly Seating
 Interpretive Signage
 Dog Friendly Enclosure
 Two Bespoke Ball Walls
 Wheelchair Accessible Toilet
 Dedicated Age Friendly & Disability
 Parking and Bike Parking.

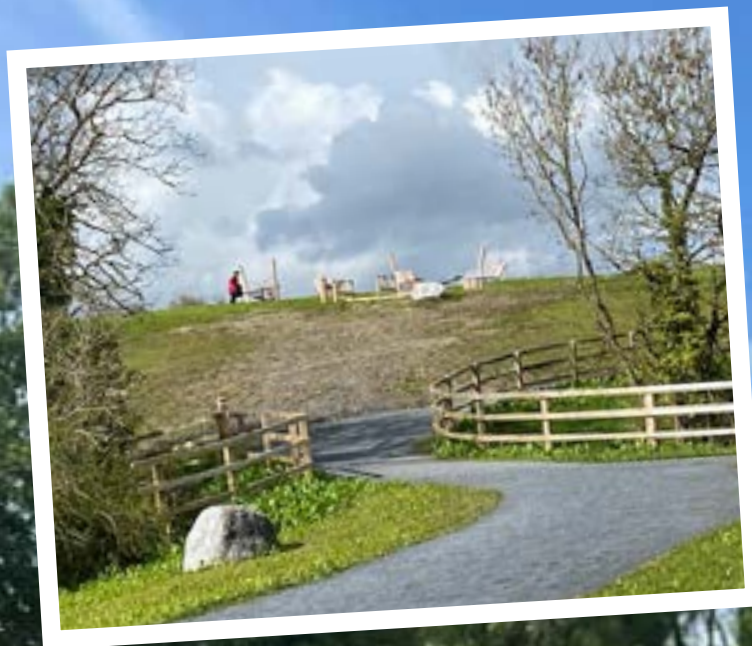




The countryside park is now a spacious, natural environment easily accessible to locals and an urban population centre as well as attracting visitors from across the region. The park combines nature, recreation and amenity in a countryside setting. The characteristics of this biodiversity rich park incorporate the following.

- Native and local provenance meadows of varying types and management regimes.
- Native trees and hedgerow planting.
- Woodland groves.
- Swales and damp areas &
- Pollinator friendly planting throughout the park.

The new park offers opportunities for people with reduced physical and mental ability to engage and immerse themselves in a biodiverse rich environment. And it will continue to aid and strengthen the Outdoor Kilkenny brand which is so important to the economy of Kilkenny City and County.



“The development of this biodiversity rich parkland has now created a regional destination for health and well-being, attracting fitness and outdoor enthusiasts of all abilities, nature lovers and educational providers”.

- **Nature hobbies- photography, bird watching, painting, food and foraging**
- **Education**



Biodiversity

The design layout of the park was informed by a Habitat Survey, in terms of trail and infrastructure location and a habitat protection construction management plan was strictly adhered to during the construction phase.

To support the already emerging habitats a significant amount of new planting was undertaken using semi-mature native trees, such as wild cherry, oak, birch and scots pine. Native wildflower mixes were also deployed at targeted locations where the existing flora could be enhanced.

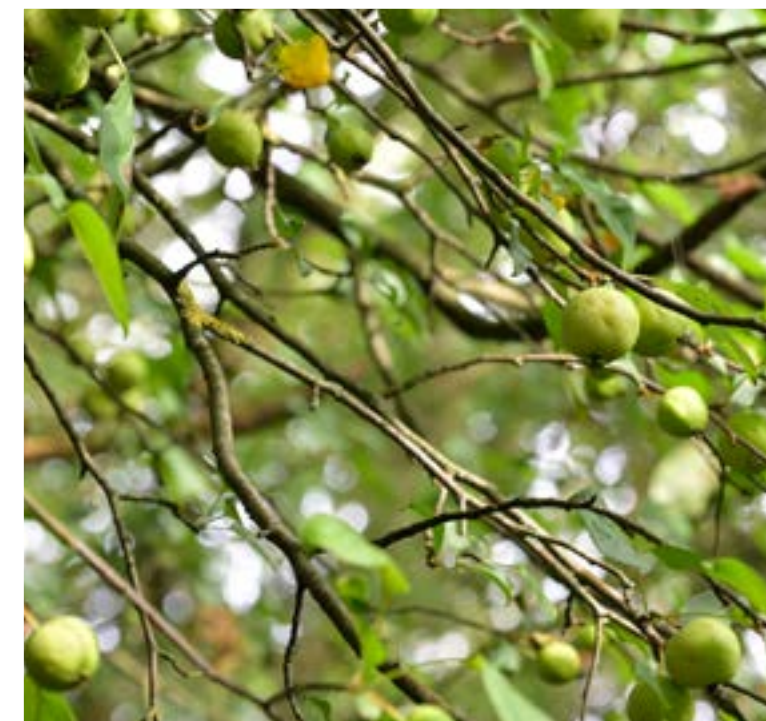
These rich natural areas within the park are designed to create different experiences of containment/protected microclimates provided by woodland copse, woodland scrub, hedgerow and treelines along with large open grass areas of varying meadow types.

Development and roll-out of a site specific Landscape Management Plan will help to protect and significantly enhance the biodiversity richness across the site year on year.

“The Kilkenny Countryside Park is managed without the use of chemicals”.



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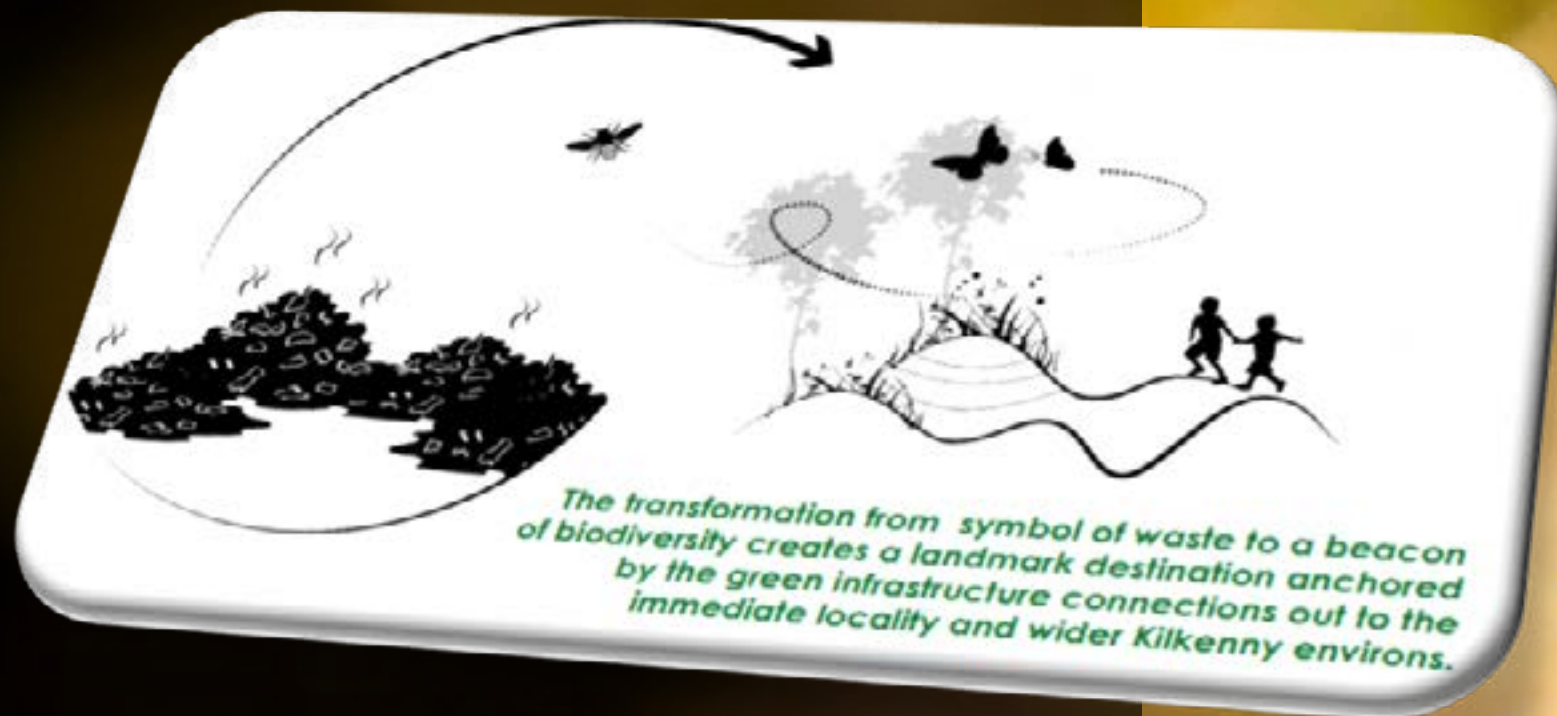
PARK USAGE & ACCESSIBILITY

We were also delighted to work with Junior Park Run Ireland, who now use the park every Sunday morning for their run.

Other local initiatives to promote education and physical activity included the roll out of the 13 panel Slí Na Scéalta (“Elephant on the Farm”) by our Library Service. This ongoing outdoor, free and self-guided family reading experience combines creativity, reading and exercise in a fun and interactive way.



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FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Kilkenny County Council will continue to identify appropriate funding opportunities that could add value to the overall offering of the park. For example, in partnership with Kilkenny Recreation and Sports Partnership, a funding application was submitted under the Participation Nation Outdoor Fund 2024. Under this application funding was sought for the installation of a purpose built 3.3m high bat house within the park along with engaging interpretation around the importance of bats. It is expected that an announcement will be made soon on this application.

It is also our hope to put the Kilkenny Countryside Park forward as a candidate under the international Green Flag Award and we are confident that the park will achieve all 8 standards assessed to obtain same.



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THANK YOU



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