

Quality Assurance – In Depth Check

Section A: Introduction

This introductory section details the headline information on the programme or project in question.

Programme or Project Information	
Name	Kilkenny City North Transport Project (KCNTTP)
Detail	The scheme shall provide a high-quality transportation solution and when complete will connect strategically important elements of the existing land transport around Kilkenny City.
Responsible Body	Kilkenny County Council
Current Status	Expenditure Being Considered
Start Date	2021
End Date	2031
Overall Cost	€40m

Project Description

In the past, transport infrastructure was developed in Kilkenny City in response to an increasing demand for travel in the city. In stages over the last four decades a ring road has been constructed on the eastern and southern sides of the city, extending from the N77 Castlecomer Road on the north side of the city to the N76 Callan Road on the southwest and including a crossing of the river Nore at Ossory Bridge. That bridge carries about 40% of cross-river motor vehicle trips within the city. The remainder are carried by the other three city bridges (all within the city centre) John's Bridge, Green's Bridge and St. Francis Bridge. Over the last twenty years cycling infrastructure has been added to the Ring Road and to the radial roads of the city.

Within the last five years a city bus service has been put in place with two routes – one north-south and the other east-west. There was a 24% increase in public transport passenger numbers in 2023 compared with 2022.

This transport infrastructure has helped the city to cope with an increasing demand for travel arising from a growing population, increased tourist numbers and a daily influx of commuters. However, the north side of the city is not as well served, its transport network is old and not as well connected. The Kilkenny City North Transport Project aims to address its inadequacies.

Over a decade ago a plan was lodged with An Bord Pleanála to extend the ring road westward across the River Nore from the N77 Castlecomer Road (Junction 10) to the R693 Freshford Road (north of Aut Even Hospital). Consent for the proposed road was granted by An Bord Pleanála in 2014 but it was the subject of a subsequent legal challenge and did not progress further. The Kilkenny City North Transport Project for the north city area is now being considered afresh and the nature and scope of the options being considered for the intended project are not constrained by the proposals developed in the past.

The overarching objectives of the project are two-fold, to reduce motor traffic and to facilitate sustainable development in the city. Achieving those primary objectives would result in a flow of beneficial outcomes such as reduced noise pollution, improved air quality, improved road safety and increased accessibility to neighborhoods.

Kilkenny County Council engaged Consultants to prepare a Strategic Assessment Report (SAR) for the KCNTP in 2021. This SAR was submitted to the DoT in September 2022. The DoT identified a number of issues for consideration following a review of the SAR by the Strategic Research and Analysis Division (SRAD) and advice/feedback was received from the DoT in relation to how to progress the project. In June 2023 the DoT advised that the appraisal format for the project had changed from the SAR to a suite of alternative deliverables under Transport Appraisal Framework (TAF). The Consultants progressed with the new suite of documents which included a Programme Outline Document, Feasibility Report and a Project Execution Plan for the KCNTP which was submitted to the Department of Transport (DoT) in August 2024. The DoT reviewed these documents for the KCNTP and approval and funding in the amount of €200k has been granted to progress to the preferred option and development of Preliminary Business Case (PBC) (Gateway 1) under the TAF Guidelines. The DoT have requested that Kilkenny County Council use the TII Framework and follow the TII Guidelines through Phase 2 of (TII PMG) (PE-PMG-02041).

Section B - Step 1: Logic Model Mapping

As part of this In-Depth Check, Internal Audit have completed a Programme Logic Model (PLM) for the Kilkenny City North Transport Project. A PLM is a standard evaluation tool and further information on their nature is available in the [Public Spending Code](#).

Objectives	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
Reduce motor traffic by 25-50% in the north city centre. Reduce HGV dependence on city centre routes. Achieve KCC mode share for sustainable travel. Improve road safety in line with RSA targets. Connect the northwest city to the northeast. Connect the M8 & M9 motorways. Provide transport infrastructure for development of Western Environs and Loughmacask. Provide a good emergency route to St Luke's Hospital. Increase physical activity in the north city area. Reduce noise to below EU thresholds. Maintain good air quality.	Capital funding is currently in place from the DoT for €200k. Design Standards. Staff and administration from KCC. DoT resources. Engineering resources, materials, plant and labour.	Scheme development and appraisal in accordance with DoT TAF 2023, NIFTI, TII PMG and Infrastructure Guidelines. Planning. Public Consultations. Statutory Processes. Design. Advance works. Construction. Supervision. Post Completion Review.	Outputs will vary by option and may comprise of; Road safety measures. Junction improvements. Park & Ride or other demand management measures. New linear active travel, public transport or all-purpose infrastructure 1.5km in length including a bridge over the River Nore. Connections to existing active travel, physical activity or all-purpose transport infrastructure.	Less motor traffic in the city. Increased use of active travel. Increased reliability and use of public transport. Safer streets for users. Improved health due to cleaner air, less noise and increased physical activity. Improved accessibility and social inclusion. Reduced response times for emergency vehicles. Better integration of M8/M9. Increased Climate resilience. Reduced emissions from shorter trips and shift to sustainable transport.

Description of Programme Logic Model

Objectives:

Kilkenny County Council's primary objective for the project is to reduce the volume of vehicular traffic in the city centre to enable the city's streets to form a safe, efficient, integrated and accessible transport network primarily serving sustainable travel modes supporting the 10-minute city. Meeting the primary objective of reducing motor traffic in the city would be expected to result in a number of beneficial outcomes such as reduced noise pollution, good air quality, HGV prohibition on city centre routes, modal shift to sustainable travel, improved road safety, increased physical activity and improved access to St Luke's General Hospital.

The second primary objective of the KCNTP project is to provide sustainable development of the city. Meeting this objective would be expected to result in increased connectivity from the northwest area of the city to the city centre and allow for full development of the areas in the north without increasing motor traffic volumes in the city centre.

Inputs:

The primary input to the programme is the capital funding of €40 million to 2031 which will be required from the Department of Transport. Funding in the amount of €200k is currently approved to advance the project to Gateway 1. Kilkenny County Council engineering and administration Staff will oversee the project.

Activities:

There will be a number of key activities carried out throughout the project. These include the project development and appraisal in accordance with DoT TAF 2023, NIFTI, TII PMG and Infrastructure Guidelines. Planning consents, public consultations, statutory processes, design, advance works, construction and supervision of the project will also take place.

Outputs:

Outputs will vary by depending on the most suitable option selected. They may comprise of road safety measures, junction improvements, park and ride, new linear active travel, public transport options and better connectivity to existing active travel infrastructure.

Outcomes:

The KCNTP will endeavor to ensure that there will be less motor traffic in the city. There will be an increased use of active travel and public transport. The health of citizens will be improved due to cleaner air, less noise and increased physical activity. Greater accessibility and social inclusion will be enhanced.

Section B - Step 2: Summary Timeline of Project/Programme

The following section tracks the Kilkenny City North Transport Project from inception in terms of major project milestones.

2021	Tender process for consultants to do a Strategic Assessment Report (SAR) for the KCNTP
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Sept 2022	SAR completed and submitted to DoT for KCNTP
Jan 2023	The DoT identified a number of issues for consideration following a review of the SAR by the Strategic Research and Analysis Division (SRAD) and advice was received from the DoT in relation to how to progress the project
June 2023	Appraisal format changed from the SAR to a suite of alternative deliverables under TAF.
April 2024	Draft Project Outline Document (POD) submitted to DoT
June 2024	DoT advise that the POD was reviewed by the Department of Transport Regional & Local Roads Strategic Research & Analysis Divisions
June 2024	DoT request Kilkenny County Council to submit final versions of all necessary documents to progress the project for Gateway 1 approval
July 2024	POD submitted to Dot together with timeline and consultancy services cost estimates for Stage 2 requirements
Aug 2024	Submission of remaining documents to DoT for Gateway 1 comprising Feasibility Report, Programme Execution Plan and completed National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI) Assessment
Aug 2024	Capital Job Code set up on Agresso Financial Management System for project
Nov 2024	Presentation by Senior Engineer to DoT
March 2025	DoT reviewed the POD, Feasibility Report, Programme Execution Plan. NIFTI assessment and funding has been granted to progress to the preferred option and development of PBC (Gateway 1) under the TAF Guidelines. DoT have requested that KCC use the TII Framework.
March 2025	Request from Kilkenny County Council to use TII Framework to appoint Technical Consultants
March 2025	Deed of Adherence signed by Director of Services to use TII Framework
May 2025	DoT confirm that Kilkenny County Council are to develop tender documents to appoint consultants to follow the TII Guidelines through Phase 2 of (TII PMG) (PE-PMG-02041)
May 2025	Kilkenny County Council is currently preparing tender documents to appoint a multi-disciplinary team of consultants to progress the project

Section B - Step 3: Analysis of Key Documents

The following section reviews the key documentation relating to appraisal, analysis and evaluation for the Active Travel Programme.

Project/Programme Key Documents	
Title	Details
Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework (NPF)	NPF is the Government's overarching policy and planning framework for the social, economic and cultural development of our country.
Project Ireland 2040: National Development Plan (NDP) 2021 – 2030	As part of Project Ireland 2040 the NDP sets out the Government's over-arching investment strategy and budget for the period 2021-2030.
National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI)	NIFTI is the Department of Transport's high-level strategic framework to support the consideration and prioritisation of future investment in land transport.
Ireland's Government Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030	Ireland's fifth Government Road Safety Strategy outlines our road safety priorities for the next decade.
National Sustainable Mobility Policy	National Sustainable Mobility Policy sets out a strategic framework to 2030 for active travel (walking and cycling) and public transport journeys to help Ireland meet its climate obligations.
Climate Action Plan 2023	The plan implements the carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings and sets out a roadmap for taking decisive action to halve our emissions by 2030 and reach net zero no later than 2050.
Healthy Ireland Strategic Action Plan 2021 – 2025	The Healthy Ireland Strategic Action Plan 2021-2025 provides a clear roadmap of how we can continue to work together to bring about good health, access to services, healthy environments and the promotion of resilience to ensure that everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential.
Town Centre First Policy	The Town Centre First policy aims to create town center's that function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community.

National Roads 2040 (April 2023)	This document is Transport Infrastructure Ireland's Strategy to enable Project Ireland 2040, responding to evolving national policy and aligning to the Department of Transport's National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI).
CycleConnects Irelands Cycle Network	AECOM, as part of the NTA Cycle Design Office, have been requested by the NTA to develop comprehensive cycle plans for counties outside the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), including Kilkenny County Council. CycleConnects is intended to form a comprehensive cycle network for all cycle user types across each county in Ireland and to develop on from the cycle network proposed for the counties in the GDA.
Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) – Southern Regional Assembly	The RSES provides a long-term, strategic development framework for the future physical, economic and social development of the Southern Region.
Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021 - 2027	The City & County Development Plan details the overall strategy of the Council for the proper planning and sustainable development of the County over a 6-year period.
Transport Appraisal Framework (TAF)	The Transport Appraisal Framework (TAF) provides appraisal and implementation guidance that aims to promote investment in the transport system.
Infrastructure Guidelines	The Infrastructure Guidelines sets out the value for money guidelines for the evaluation, planning and management of public investment projects, including purchase or acquisitions of assets or shareholdings, in Ireland.
Transport Infrastructure Ireland Project Management Guidelines (TII PMG)	These Project Management Guidelines provide a framework for a phased approach to the management of the development and delivery of National Road, Greenway, Active Travel and Public Transport Capital Projects.
DoT 2025 Regional & Local Road Grant Allocations RW 02/25	Confirmation of funding from DoT including €200k for KCNTP.

Key Document 1: Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework (NPF)

The NPF aims to enable more effective traffic management within and around cities and re-allocation of inner-city road-space in favour of bus-based public transport services and walking/cycling facilities.

Key Document 2: Project Ireland 2040: National Development Plan (NDP) 2021 – 2030

The NDP emphasises the need to provide safe alternative active travel options such as segregated cycling and walking facilities. These can also help alleviate congestion and meet climate action objectives by providing viable alternatives and connectivity with existing public transport infrastructure.

Key Document 3: National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI)

Section 2.4 of the NIFTI Framework states that one of its main purposes is to “*Deliver Clean, Low-Carbon and Environmentally Sustainable Mobility*”. Furthermore, the reduction in Greenhouse gas emissions is a foremost priority. It is a national objective to achieve a low-carbon, economically competitive and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050. NIFTI will support investment in public transport, walking and cycling within cities and large towns to encourage modal shift away from the private car.

Key Document 4: Ireland’s Government Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030

This Strategy outlines our road safety priorities for the next decade.

Key Document 5: National Sustainable Mobility Policy

It contains actions to improve and expand sustainable mobility options across the country by providing safe, green, accessible and efficient alternatives to car journeys.

Key Document 6: Climate Action Plan 2023

The Plan details how Ireland’s transport system needs to make accessible, sustainable transport modes more attractive and shift away from car dependency through consideration of the proximity between people and places in land use and housing policy.

Key Document 7: Healthy Ireland Strategic Action Plan 2021 – 2025

The Plan promotes the implementation of the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (2013) which incorporates good planning and design practice to support and encourage active travel (walking and cycling) in urban areas.

Key Document 8: Town Centre First Policy

There is a strong national policy framework in place to support a Town Centre First approach, from the overarching aspect of Project Ireland 2040, through to specific policies on climate action, housing and rural development.

Key Document 9: National Roads 2040 (April 2023)

National Roads 2040 addresses the needs of current and future users across Ireland ensuring a connected and efficient transport system. It expresses TII’s understanding of and response to environmental challenges such as the impact of climate change and biodiversity loss

Key Document 10: CycleConnects Irelands Cycle Network

The Draft Plan includes existing cycle networks such as urban cycle routes, greenways and interurban routes. This will be supplemented by proposed cycle routes/links outlined in latest development and transport plans and other networks required to maximise the connection of the network to communities. It should be noted that this network does not specify any infrastructure types on any route and is focused on highlighting the key links required to form a comprehensive cycle network connecting all major communities and destinations.

Key Document 11: Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) – Southern Regional Assembly

The RSES seeks to achieve balanced regional development and full implementation of Project Ireland 2040 – The National Planning Framework. It will be implemented in partnership with local authorities and state agencies to deliver on this vision and build a cohesive and sustainable region.

Key Document 12: Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021 - 2027

This Development Plan emphasises the sustainable economic and physical development of the city in a compact form, combined with efficient transport links between the various land uses such as employment, education and residential, with strong policies for the conservation and protection of the natural and built environment and ensuring a good quality life for its inhabitants. Within the County Development Plan there is a specific Road Objective as follows: “R1- Reserve the proposed line of the western by-pass for the city from the Castlecomer Road to the Waterford Road free from development, including for a river crossing and seek approval from An Bord Pleanála for Phase 1 of the Western By-pass, the Kilkenny Northern Ring Road Extension.

Key Document 13: Transport Appraisal Framework (TAF)

The TAF framework meets the needs of society, fulfils strategic policy objectives and delivers value for money through a common framework for appraising transport investments in accordance with the Infrastructure Guidelines.

Key Document 14: Infrastructure Guidelines

The Infrastructure Guidelines sets out the value for money guidelines for the evaluation, planning and management of public investment projects in Ireland. The Guide replaces the Public Spending Code requirements for capital expenditure outlined in Public Spending Code.

Key Document 15: Transport Infrastructure Ireland Project Management Guidelines (TII PMG)

These Project Management Guidelines provide a framework for a phased approach to the management of the development and delivery of Transport Capital Projects.

Key Document 16: DoT 2025 Regional & Local Road Grant Allocations RW 02/25

Confirmation from DoT that funding in the amount of €200k is in place to progress the KCNTP project.

Section B - Step 4: Data Audit

The following section details the data audit that was carried out for the Kilkenny City North Transport Project. It evaluates whether appropriate data is available for the future evaluation of the project.

Data Required	Use	Availability
KCNTP Project Outline Document	In accordance with TAF a project in excess of €15m requires a POD to be prepared	Yes

	for investments in the transport sector. The POD assesses the project in detail and compiles a long-list of needs based and objectives led project options.	
KCNTP Feasibility Report	The feasibility study aims to assess the practicality and viability of the KCNTP. It helps determine whether the project is worth pursuing. The goal is to provide decision-makers with enough information to make informed choices about whether to proceed with the project.	Yes
Project Execution Plan	The Project Execution Plan (PEP) aims to define how a project will be carried out, including the specific activities, resources, and methods to be used, to ensure successful project delivery.	Yes
National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI) Assessment	This assessment reviews the project against the four NIFTI investment priorities of decarbonization, protection and renewal and the mobility of people and goods in urban areas.	Yes
Details on Project Expenditure on Agresso FMS	Financial monitoring of projects and compliance with budgets	Yes
Signed Deed of Adherence	Application to use TII framework to tender for consultants	Yes
Presentations to DoT & Council members on project progress	Ensure the DoT & Elected Council Members are kept up to date with progress on KCNTP.	Yes

Data Availability and Proposed Next Steps

The necessary data is available on file to evaluate the Kilkenny City North Transport Project. The project is currently 'being considered' by Kilkenny County Council and the DoT. The documents and reports that were undertaken for the project thus far are available on file. The financial management information is available from Agresso (Financial Management System). In March 2025 the DoT reviewed the POD, Feasibility Report, Programme Execution Plan and NIFTI assessment. Funding has been granted to progress to the next step which is the

identification of the preferred option and development of Preliminary Business Case (Gateway 1) under the TAF Guidelines. The DoT have requested that Kilkenny County Council use the TII Framework and follow the TII Guidelines through Phase 2 of (TII PMG) (PE-PMG-02041).

Section B - Step 5: Key Evaluation Questions

The following section looks at the key evaluation questions for Kilkenny City North Transport Project based on the findings from the previous sections of this report.

Does the delivery of the project/programme comply with the standards set out in the Public Spending Code? (Appraisal Stage, Implementation Stage and Post-Implementation Stage)

The delivery of the Kilkenny City North Transport Project complies with the broad principles of the Public Spending Code. The project is in the early Appraisal Stage progressing towards the next step to Gateway 1. The DoT has clearly indicated that Kilkenny County Council is to follow the TAF Guidelines and use the TII Framework and follow the TII Guidelines going forward.

Is the necessary data and information available such that the project/programme can be subjected to a full evaluation at a later date?

The necessary data and information is available on file should there be a requirement for a full evaluation of the programme in the future.

What improvements are recommended such that future processes and management are enhanced?

Kilkenny County Council is working closely with the DoT which is the Approving Authority for this project. It is essential that this collaboration is continued as it allows the Approving Authority advance knowledge of proposals and creates the opportunity for Kilkenny County Council, the Sponsoring Agency, to receive feedback on proposals as they are developed and streamlines the project lifecycle and approval process.

Following a tender process in 2021 Kilkenny County Council engaged the services of an Engineering/Transportation Consultancy Team to carry out a Strategic Assessment Report for the KCNTP. The tender was awarded for the fixed price lump sum fee of €21,795 excluding vat. The Consultants prepared the SAR and it was submitted to the DoT for review in September 2022. In June 2023 the DoT advised Kilkenny County Council that the appraisal format for the project had now changed from the SAR to a suite of alternative documents under TAF. The DoT now required the Council to submit a POD, Feasibility Report, Programme Execution Plan and NIFTI assessment. The Council requested the same Engineering/Consultancy Firm that had prepared the original SAR to prepare the new suite of documents. Kilkenny County Council omitted to re-tender or implement a Change Order for the preparation of the new documents. The Consultancy firm was paid €37,470 ex vat. in total. In this instance Kilkenny County Council is not adhering to Procurement Legislation. Kilkenny County Council's Management must ensure that all projects are in compliance with Procurement Legislation.

It is noted from the Feasibility Report that potential risks and their mitigations have been considered. It is imperative that Quantitative Risk Analysis is carried out in accordance with Section 7.9 of the Transport Appraisal Framework, Appraisal Guidelines for Capital Investments

in Transport Module 7- Detailed Guidance on Appraisal Techniques. A Risk Register should be completed with an accurate description of mitigation actions outlining the proactive measures to be taken on an ongoing basis to minimize the level of risk.

Section: In-Depth Check Summary

The following section presents a summary of the findings of this In-Depth Check on Kilkenny City North Transport Project.

Summary of In-Depth Check

Overall, I find that the Kilkenny City North Transport Project complies with the broad principles of the Public Spending Code. Kilkenny County Council is in the early appraisal stages of the project. The DoT have reviewed the relevant reports submitted to them thus far and have granted approval and funding for the Council to appoint Consultants to progress the project to the preferred option and develop the preferred PCB (Decision Gate 1) under the TAF guidelines.

Kilkenny County Council has identified the need to engage a multi-disciplinary team to advance the Kilkenny City North Transport Project. The KCNTP will now progress through Phase 2 of the current editions of Transport Infrastructure Ireland's Project Management Guidelines (TII PMG) (PE-PMG-02041). The tender documents are being prepared for publication in Q3 2025.

The Council will adhere to the frameworks and guidelines as outlined by the DoT to ensure that the project progresses and achieves its objectives as outlined in the Project Outline Document.