

DRAFT REPORT

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Living Loughboy: Exploring Community Needs & Opportunities

Public Engagement Process led by Workhouse Union on behalf of Village Childcare and  
Community Service and funded by Kilkenny Leader Partnership

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## 1 Introduction

The Living Loughboy report outlines community needs and opportunities in the Loughboy neighbourhood and wider environs in Kilkenny City. This report is the outcome of a Needs Analysis process that set out an opportunity for people who live, work and learn in Loughboy and the surrounding areas to take part in an exploration of what Loughboy means to them and to identify the broader needs of the locale. The report documents the public engagement process and details the background context; methodology and approach; outcomes and voices of the process and concludes with reflections, recommendations, and actions.

The Needs Analysis process was led by Workhouse Union on behalf of Loughboy Village Childcare and Community Service (formerly LARC) and funded by Kilkenny Leader Partnership. Workhouse Union delivered the public engagement process between February and December 2019. In February 2019 LARC rebranded as the Village Childcare and Community Service. The impetus for the Needs Analysis was set out in the organisations 2019 - 2024 Strategic Plan, to relocate the childcare services from the current rented premises to a more permanent and appropriate location. Currently, the facility is renting two attached houses in Hollybank Lawn, an estate in Clongowen to a more permanent and appropriate location. Alongside the core childcare facilities and counseling services, the organisation aims to expand a broader range of community and family services. The public engagement process was structured to take stock of the needs of the Loughboy neighbourhood and surrounding area. This resulting report and socio-economic profile provide necessary information to inform The Village Childcare and Community Service's future strategies.

Two distinct methods - creative public engagement process and a desk-top socio-economic profile of the neighbourhood - are complementary approaches in this report and offer a holistic analysis. A qualitative approach, with quantitative elements guided by creative workshops, community mapping, questionnaires, and conversation provides an in-depth insight into people's everyday necessities in Loughboy. Alongside this, a quantitative approach led by Richard Lawder (Kilkenny County Council, Information Analyst) provides a socio-economic profile of the neighbourhood to inform any future strategy.

The series of public workshops, focus groups, mapping, and conversations took place to identify the future needs of a wide breadth of people from Loughboy and the wider environs. The Workhouse Union team began a far-reaching public engagement process under the following themes:

- 1) Loughboy Neighbourhood: Understanding the Use of Spaces
- 2) Understanding Future Needs
- 3) Loughboy Open Space: Recreation and Nature
- 4) Loughboy Assets: Socio-Economic Mapping

Through creative methodologies, the public engagement process aimed to understand and explore community needs and opportunities in Loughboy. This process gauged the gaps, highlighted underused assets and amenities, and identified potential developments from people living, working, and learning in Loughboy. These included social activities and connectivity; social and cultural amenities; community groups and services; public and open space; and public infrastructures such as lighting, transport, and travel. A series of workshops mapped the use of spaces and understood the needs of the area. The public engagement process engaged directly with a total of 384 people, including 200 primary school students across three schools. 323 people took part in workshops, and 40 people completed A Day in The Life questionnaire - offering an impression of people's everyday lives. Conversations were held with the local authority, organisations, businesses and community and voluntary groups.

### Public Engagement Summary

- 11 Conversations Sessions
- 8 Fortune Teller School Workshops
- 3 Living Loughboy Library Workshops
- 2 Focused Engagement Workshops
- 2 James Stephens GAA Club/ Village Childcare and Community Services Engagement
- 2 Youth Spatial Design Workshops

Overall, the findings indicate that people have an overwhelmingly strong sense of belonging to the Loughboy area. Participants voiced that Loughboy was a vibrant and pleasant place to live, and brought to light the cultural and social facilities and activities used, underused and missing in Loughboy alongside the need to enhance the outdoor recreational opportunities of the neighborhood.



## 2 Loughboy

The townland of Loughboy covers roughly one-third of the city of Kilkenny, by far the largest townland in the urban area. Its designated breadth stretches from Bennettsbridge Road around the N10 to the Kells Road. However, colloquial knowledge differs significantly on this geographical breadth to limit Loughboy's area to the surrounds of the shopping centre and St. Patrick's Parish; this designation is nonetheless as large as St Patrick's parish and contains over a third of Kilkenny City's population. Loughboy was once the site of the Archer merchant family estate, with Larchfield Estate where the grand Larchfield House once stood. Larchfield Estate, originally developed in 1969 as Corporation Housing and celebrated its 50th Anniversary in 2019. The wider neighbourhood has, over the past fifty years, been converted from fields and trees to the urban borough it is today.

Today the Loughboy area is primarily as a largely residential neighborhood connected to Kilkenny city centre and can be understood as having a vibrant social fabric with a variety of nationalities, levels of education and work opportunities<sup>1</sup>. Sociological discourse has argued that this yields many positive outcomes; children absorb messages through everyday routines and play, including areas of difference such as gender, ethnicity, or family structure. By exploring differences in this way, we gain an appreciation of our common humanity as well as providing the optimal environment for children's cognitive, emotional, and social growth.<sup>2</sup> Within the remit of this report, a need for Village Childcare Centre to deliver services and benefits of equal access to harness the benefits of a good social mix.

James Stephens GAA Club, known as 'The Village', is located at Larchfield with an additional facility on the Kells Road. The club offers activities for adults and children across hurling, camogie, Gaelic football, and golf. The club has a long-standing coaching programme in partnership with the four primary schools in the area. The club at Larchfield hosts a popular Bingo night, line-dancing and other social activities. St. Patrick's Parish Centre includes rooms and spaces for support groups, health and well-being activities and events for senior groups. The centre hosts support groups and counselling sessions, social opportunities and health-based activities. St. Fiacre's Church, the Parish Centre and the Medical Centre are in a cluster adjacent to the busy Caulfield Shopping Centre with the Supervalu supermarket, chemist, butchers, newsagents, Insomnia coffee, Sam McAuley Chemist and dry-cleaners.

The Loughboy Library<sup>3</sup> is also within the Caulfield Shopping Centre. Weekly sessions include activities for young families, age action computer classes, a knitting group, Irish language sessions, a creative writing group while it also supports several book clubs. Kilkenny County Council has an integrated approach of the Arts, Heritage, and Libraries, and this collaborative

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<sup>1</sup> See socio-economic profile (Appendix 1).

<sup>2</sup> French, Geraldine; *The Framework for Early Learning: A Background Paper Children's Early Learning and Development*, Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2007 10.

<sup>3</sup> Kilkenny Libraries saw a 15% increase in members in 2018, with 260,074 visits in the same year and ran 30,843 internet sessions.

approach is in line with encouraging best practice of delivery and increasing diversity of participation in culture.

The Waterford Road area is a lively nexus with Aldi and Lidl supermarkets off a busy roundabout. The Smithfield Centre adjacent to Lidl includes a hairdresser, business centre, butchers, bridal shop, restaurants and a chemist. There is also a Physiotherapy Clinic, Pilates Centre for adult classes and the Kilkenny Academy of Dance.

There are four primary schools and one secondary school in this area; Gaelscoil Osarí, St. Patrick's De La Salle, John Of God, Kilkenny School Project primary schools and the Presentation Secondary school. There are a total of 1403 Primary School students, and 771 Secondary School students enrolled at the schools for the 2018/2019 school year. Bishop Birch Training Institute, Nuncio Road is home to Vocational Training and Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) who provide training for young people over the age of 21 years and who are in receipt of social welfare supports. They provide courses in a wide variety of subjects including Leaving Certificate qualifications. MacDonald Language Academy is an accredited and independent English language school based in the area. They run international English Summer Camps in June, July and August, placements for secondary school students and adult classes. The Young Irish Film Makers (YIFM) are based at St Joseph's Studios. YIFM are the national film, animation, and digital media organisation for young people aged 9 to 25 years.

The Watershed is a sporting complex and a significant asset for the whole of the County and region. It is home to a wide variety of sports clubs including Kilkenny Stars Basketball Club, Kilkenny Swimming Club, Kilkenny Harriers Athletic Club and Budo Martial Arts Centre. The Watershed runs an extensive range of fitness classes catering to all levels of fitness. Kilkenny Recreation and Sports Partnership working with The Watershed established exercise classes for older people, a social walking and running group for new parents and babies and an inclusive disability exercise group. The Watershed host the weekly Men on the Move group, which encourages social and exercise activities for an older adult group. A chronic illness exercise rehabilitation group called Exwell Medical has been set up.

The Kilkenny Bridge Club and has members from Loughboy, Kilkenny City and Kilkenny County. The Club, which operates out of its own building is open Monday to Thursday and operates as a members club.

Adjacent to the Gallows Hill Park on the Bennettsbridge Road is the Kilkenny 1st Scouts Den and the Kilkenny branch of the Irish Girl Guides. The Scouts cater for boys ages 6-18 years plus. They host regular meetings and events and organised outdoor activities. A significant part of the programme is leadership. The building has facilities that include a large hall, a meeting room, a fully-functioning kitchen, a climbing wall, toilets, and showers, plus a large grass area and car-parking. The Irish Girl Guides includes Ladybirds, Brownies, and Guides from ages 5 to 18 years plus and run an active programme of activities in training and skills. Jesters Stage

Academy runs performance classes from the Girl Guides building, delivering courses for all age groups, from parents and toddlers up to 20 years plus.

### 3 Policy Background

National and local policy initiatives relevant to the Village Childcare and Community Service's activities were considered to ensure suitable and sustainable recommendations for this report. Economic and community development plans and childcare policy provided a contextual framework for this report's public engagement process.

County Kilkenny has 97 centre-based childcare services with a range of educational models and approaches to suit parental choices including HighScope, Steiner, Outdoor, Montessori alongside private childminders. Community Child Care facilities are held to standards by Aistear and Siolta frameworks. Aistear is the Early Childhood Curriculum framework from birth to six years in Ireland. It celebrates early childhood as a time of being, and of enjoying and learning from experiences as they unfold. Siolta designs, delivers and supports the improvement of quality across all aspects of practice in early childhood care and education (ECCE) settings for children aged birth to six years. These settings include part-time and full-time daycare facilities such as childminding, infant classes in primary schools, daycare, and crèche facilities. Kilkenny Childcare Committee is the local agent for early childcare and education programmes. They support parents and service providers in the development and capacity of services locally which in turn cater to the needs of local parents and children. New registration fire safety requirements from TUSLA have been met with difficulty by many creches and childcare providers nationally. The new regulations are reportedly very onerous on childcare providers, especially older or expanded facilities<sup>4</sup>. These agencies, policies and registration requirements and increasing insurance costs will have a significant impact on the development of Village Child and Community Service's Strategic Plan.

Kilkenny Children and Young People's Services Committee's (CYPSC) socio-demographic Statement provides data to inform their strategic plan for 2018-2020. It reveals that children and young people represent a sizeable population cohort in County Kilkenny; over one-quarter of the population is aged under eighteen years. County Kilkenny can anticipate further and sustained growth in the number of children across the county over the next decade. The Sociodemographic Statement's needs analysis points to the importance of accessible services and enhanced public transport. Furthermore increased investments are required in many areas<sup>5</sup>. The village Childcare and Community Service intends to extend their childcare services to ensure more places are made available for childcare in the Loughboy area.

Kilkenny Leader Partnership's Local Development Strategy details the strategic actions and financial allocations for County Kilkenny until 2020. The objectives of the Plan are in the areas

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.rte.ie/news/ireland/2019/1129/1095903-tusla-regulations/>

<sup>5</sup> The Institute for Action Research, Kilkenny Children and Young People's Services Committee Sociodemographic Statement, Kilkenny: Children and Young People's Services Committees Kilkenny, 2018, ii



of Rural economic development, Rural environment, and Social inclusion. The initiatives of the plan align with Kilkenny Leader Partnership's mission to improve the economic, social and cultural quality of life of the people, communities and small enterprises of all County Kilkenny. Alongside this strategy, the Kilkenny Public Participation Network (PPN) is the new structure and platform on which the local community can engage with the Kilkenny County Council.<sup>6</sup> It forms the link between the Voluntary & Community, Social Inclusion and Environment sectors and the local governing body.

The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) is administered by Pobal and runs from 2018 to 2022. The programme aims to tackle poverty and social exclusion through local engagement and partnerships between disadvantaged individuals, community organisations and public sector agencies.<sup>7</sup> SICAP is managed at a local level helping people to upskill through training and personal development courses or find work by linking with placement programmes such as CE or Tús.

The Kilkenny Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2016 - 2021 aims to ensure Kilkenny continues to be a great place to live, work and play. The LECP took cognisance of European and national strategies such as Europe 2020 and Ireland's National Reform Programme. Its underpinning principles include the promotion and mainstreaming of equality; participative planning; community consultation and engagement; community development principles and accessibility and ownership. One of the high-level priorities of the LECP is to enhance community facilities and participation. It aims to ensure all Kilkenny citizens have access to appropriate community facilities and that all community facilities are utilised to their optimum capacity.<sup>8</sup>

Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities is a five-year plan supported by the Department of Rural and Community Development for the community and voluntary sector in Ireland. Its vision emphasises supporting communities in Ireland through the introduction of a sustainable funding model for the community and voluntary sector.<sup>9</sup> The funding is to support sustainable development across infrastructure and community projects and will allow projects to be developed in partnership with local development and local government.

#### 4 Village Childcare and Community Services

Village Childcare and Community Services (formerly Loughboy Area Resource Centre) has been providing a broad range of services to the Loughboy community for twenty-five years. Their

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<sup>6</sup> <https://kilkennyppn.ie/about-kilkenny-ppn/#what-is-ppn>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.pobal.ie/programmes/social-inclusion-and-community-activation-programme-sicap-2018-2022/>

<sup>8</sup> Kilkenny Local Community Development Committee, Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021, Kilkenny: Kilkenny County Council, 2016, 61

<sup>9</sup> Department of Rural and Community Development, Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities: A Five-Year Strategy to Support the Community and Voluntary Sector in Ireland 2019-2024, Dublin: Department of Rural and Community Development, 2019

scope has included youth, family, migrants and Travellers supports, childcare, counseling, education and training. Until recently, the organisation was called LARC. It began in a small community hall in the heart of the community of Loughboy, then moving to Bishop Birch Training Centre on the Waterford Road until it moved to its current home in Clongowen. Its growth into a full Community Development Project (CDP) was in response to the demand for services which have steadily increased since its beginning in 1994. The closure of a major employer within the community, Mahon and McPhillips, along with other closures of Industrial Development Authority (IDA) factories, compounded social issues and put pressure on low-income households in the Loughboy area, leading to an increase in demand for community services.

The Irish governments 'Cohesion' process in 2010 led to the transition of CDPs into Local Development Companies (LDC). The LARC Voluntary Board of Management decided to narrow its remit to community counseling and childcare services to avoid the new process of service-led community development. However the community focused organisation has long contended for response to the existing demand in the community for a broader base of family support, youth, and community development activities and a community plan to envision a sustainable future for everyone.

#### 4.1 Synopsis of Village Childcare and Community Services Visioning Session

In parallel with the public engagement process, Loughboy Village Childcare and Community Services initiated a needs assessment of the prospective expansion of its services from a business perspective. A group of staff and the management board through used a business model canvas to gauge needs and gather ideas for the future direction community and childcare organisation.

First, the group identified key funding partners such as TUSLA, the Enterprise Board, Kilkenny County Council, Kilkenny Leader Partnership and education and training stakeholders such as TÚS, the ETB and local schools.

The centre aims to provide a variety of services to the community. While many of these services are childcare-focused, many suggestions from the group extended that remit. Suggestions included arts and crafts classes, cooking classes, sports, mindfulness and relaxation, grinds and career guidance. To provide such services, a purpose-built building to fire safety regulation standards, trained staff (with ongoing training), equipment and furniture, transport, management, a community development officer and an outdoor area are needed.

The consultation process also focused on identifying the customers; this gave an idea of the individuals and groups who would avail of the services and facilities provided. The customer segments included children, parents and guardians, elderly citizens, women's and men's groups, adults with additional needs, and diversity groups. To best serve these groups, the centre would aim to have relaxing premises with an open door policy, personal customer service, staff that are professional, approachable, and caring and that the quality of services

and facilities remains consistent. Information could be disseminated to these customer segments through social media, newspaper articles, flyers, information evenings, and word of mouth through families and schools.

As this process took a business perspective, it focuses on the costs and potential revenue streams. Rent, wages, utility bills, supplies, transport, and insurance were the main costs identified. Potentially, funding could be sourced from TUSLA, grants, the Dept. of Education, Dept. of Social and Family Affairs, and through FÁS and TÚS. Revenue streams would include the fees for childcare and classes, activities like bingo and room rental, and fundraising events. There are also potential income opportunities from other grants.

Importantly, there was also a reflection on the value that the services and facilities provided would bring to the community. The benefits of the service itself were also listed, such as affordable and local quality childcare, homework support, and play spaces for children. It also included the safe environment the centre would provide for the area, the holistic development and education opportunities it would provide as well as support for children, parents, and guardians, and other members of the community.

## 5 Living Loughboy: Public Engagement Process

In recent decades in Ireland, we have been witness to much construction and development, and yet our understanding and connection to the processes and protocols of this development remain limited. The question exists on how to engage effectively. How can citizens participate in, and meaningfully contribute to the design, development and on-going care and maintenance of the spaces and places we live? How can we understand the assets and skills of a community to re-imagine our social and economic potential? How can we imagine underused and overlooked space as an opportunity for social, civic and economic renewal in our community?

Workhouse Union's public engagement approach for Living Loughboy utilised a variety of complementary methods and creative tools to engage a broad demographic within the wider Loughboy neighbourhood. It included those who live there, work there, attend school there and those who use its facilities and services. The process began with a premise of understanding people's everyday relationship with Loughboy, how the neighbourhood enhances their lives, and where the gaps are. The approach was anchored in creativity with each element of the engagement process, encouraging creative participation. The creative workshops were alongside site visits, focus groups and one-to-one meetings encouraged and facilitated reflective feedback.

### Conversations Sessions

Conversations with key stakeholders gave a background to the context of Loughboy. It initiated thinking on the needs and opportunities within the area as well as the issues with regards to

planning, both historical and future. These conversations provided a valuable sectoral perspective and provided scope in how to proceed with the needs analysis from a County Council planning and community perspective; from Childcare experts at Kilkenny Childcare Committee; Kilkenny Gardaí; journalists based in the area; local forums like the Keep Kilkenny Beautiful committee; teachers and principals from Loughboys four local primary schools and secondary schools and other educational facilities like the Young Irish Film Makers.

### Fortune Teller School Workshops

Following initial scoping conversations, creative workshops were led in three schools: De La Salle, St. John of Gods and Kilkenny School Project. A Fortune Teller game-used symbols to prompt conversation around subjects like sports, nature, play, facilities, and biodiversity (*See Appendix 3*). Students also put forward their creative ideas to enhance their use of Loughboy. These workshops allowed students to brainstorm on their communities, their participation and involvement and use of amenities as well as how they moved around Loughboy, collating issues brought to light by stakeholders and key community leaders in conversations.

### Living Loughboy Library Workshops

The series of library workshops were held the Autumn mid-term break and delivered in partnership with Loughboy Library. The workshops were disseminated to a wide demographic with local press with coverage in local newspapers (Kilkenny People and Kilkenny Observer); interviews on local radio (KCLR and Kilkenny Community Radio); posters displayed in local businesses and social media engagement, particularly on Facebook. Hosting the workshops during midterm break allowed for an extensive breadth of Loughboy to attend to make it as inclusive as possible. Children's activities were provided so that parents and guardians could participate in the workshops. This programming decision attracted families as well as the broader community, with everyone aged 10+ being able to attend. An interactive installation was set up in the library, giving the activities a very public and accessible setting. Three interactive mapping workshops were displayed. Designed to be engaging and initiate more extensive discussion, the workshops used the map of the Loughboy area along with five prompts to stimulate discussion (*See Appendix 4*). The questions included:

- A missing outdoor seat
- A missing social space/community space
- What do you think is missing in Loughboy?
- An underused green space
- Where do you feel at home in Loughboy?

Participants mapped the existing community assets and green spaces. These provided a springboard for ideas on how to enhance the area. The creative and conversational approach to the workshops allowed time for participants to expand ideas; these were collated on the map through stickers and annotation, as well as through note-taking by the workshop facilitators.

### Loughboy Memory Postcards

Postcards designed for distribution at the library workshop series (*See Appendix 5*) featured illustrations of distinctive buildings within the area, with space share a memory of Loughboy - or to send a note to a friend or a loved one.

### A Day in the Life

40 participants responded to the A Day in the Life questionnaires (*See Appendix 2*). These questionnaires were introduced and distributed at Loughboy Library, James Stephen's Bingo night and through the Village Childcare and Community Services. The findings of the questionnaires give a snapshot of everyday life in Loughboy - identifying the broader needs of the area alongside people's sense of belonging to Loughboy and what gaps they felt were in services, infrastructure and facilities. Using questions and prompts to stimulate people's responses. Questions focused on outdoor space, activities, and services, support, facilities, and transport within Loughboy and about the rest of the city. It also looked at where and how people feel at home in Loughboy. The questionnaire also encouraged participants to express what Loughboy means to them and quantitative feedback. The collated feedback gives an understanding of the patterns of use of Loughboy and what improvements people feel should be prioritised in the area.

### James Stephens GAA Club/ Village Childcare and Community Services Engagement

Further engagement workshops extended the reach of the process to include James Stephens GAA Club activities at James Stephens GAA Club. During the children's Easter Camp, an exploratory mapping workshop offered ideas on biodiversity, space to play and public infrastructure. The team also engaged the weekly Bingo group to respond to 'A Day in the Life' questionnaires - increasing the intergenerational range of participants in the survey.

### Inclusive Focused Engagement Workshops

In association with the Kilkenny Recreation and Sports Partnership, Workhouse Union undertook targeted engagement to ensure an inclusive approach. Two focused workshops as part of Watershed classes occurred: an older adult class and an inclusive, active disability group.

### Spatial Outdoor Workshops

Two outdoor spatial workshops took stock of the outdoor play and nature needs of the children and young people. The Scouts and Brownies participated in spatial mapping games at Gallows Hill Park. Working in small groups of three or four, each of the groups took on stakeholder roles by drawing a direction out of a hat. The participants imagined they were one of seven characters. These roles included older people (like Grandparents), giants, mice, and wizards. There were also three groups of Young People, but in different weather conditions, so these groups considered the park when it was raining, snowing or the sun was shining. These roles added fun and a humorous approach but importantly allowed for the young people to engage in the spatial consideration of the existing park from multiple perspectives enhancing the creative problem-solving approach.

The various constituent groups considered the importance of scale, which the future users might be, supports that older, smaller, taller people needed. By working together using role-play exercises and theatre games and by working in small groups, the participants were engaged, and the feedback and conversations of how they reimagined Gallows Hill were rich, focused, and valuable.

Each group completed their Gallows Hill Inspection Worksheet with a list of opportunities and potential hazards. Participants considered hazards and opportunities regarding how the Gallow Hills park could meet their needs as young people. The changes they recommended were to add benches and shelter for rest and recreation in all-weather conditions, play equipment, including a sizeable slide (two people wide), swings for teenagers, and a goal post in the open green space. The groups suggested creating more nature-friendly planting, trees for climbing, and to keep the open green spaces with the sloping grass for free play and sports. A total of 59 children and young people, 37 Girl Guides and 22 Scouts took part in the two workshops. Their ages ranged between 10-17 years old.

## 6 Findings

This section includes a summary of findings from the A Day in the Life questionnaires, followed by a section of collated findings under the themes: Understanding the Use of Spaces, Understanding Future Needs, Recreation and Nature and a Socio-Economic Mapping. These findings are collated together and include the recommendations from the wider public engagement process which included the Fortune Teller Workshops, Library Workshops and Conversations Sessions and the Youth Spatial Design Workshops.

### 6.1 A Day in the Life Questionnaire

A Day in the Life was a two-page anonymous survey questionnaire divided into four sections exploring what the Loughboy area means to people. The sections focus on participants' experiences of the outdoors, travel and transport, and sense of belonging and their needs in the area. There was both quantitative and qualitative information recorded. The questions were designed to capture a range of potential issues that would involve qualitative information uncovering how people felt about Loughboy while allowing for tangible improvements if they thought they wanted to put forward any other issues.

People were invited to participate, whether they lived, worked, or were learning in Loughboy. From the forty people who filled in the questionnaire, thirty-two people lived in Loughboy, three people worked in Loughboy, and one person was studying in the area. Eight people both lived and worked in Loughboy, and four participants not specifying whether they lived, worked or studied in the area. The survey includes ten male participants and thirty females. The forty participants ranged in age from 11 to 76 years old. This breakdown included two people under 20 years, four people aged 21-28 years old, six people aged 31-38 years old, eight people

42-47 years old, four people aged 50-58 years old, ten people aged 60-69 years old and three people aged 70-76 years old. (Note: will include a visual chart in the designed report)

Do you think that outdoor space in Loughboy could be improved?

Eighteen participants felt that a dedicated space for a children's playground would be an improvement. A further four people suggested that the area would be enhanced with more trees and provision of green infrastructure (goal posts, bins for dog walkers) to the existing green spaces. Two people highlighted that the existing street lighting needs to be upgraded in particular areas. Two additional people felt that there was nothing to improve about the outdoor spaces, and six people left this question blank on their questionnaires. The remaining seven people suggested better car parking, enhanced cycling safety, wheelchair-friendly infrastructure, more connections for travel with more bus stops, and prominent taxi rank would enhance their experience of the outdoor spaces in Loughboy.

*There needs to be a park/playground that is safe for children, and it would be lovely to see an area that people can go to have a walk or a picnic or to unwind and relax.*

*There should be an outdoor communal area for young people/teenagers  
Loughboy could do with a children's playground*

*Need more communal ground where children and adults can enjoy a community centre with good outdoor space for children and everyone to use community gardens*

*Loughboy and surrounding areas are the only places without a playground and something for teens. The other side of town has a playground in a lot of the estates...*

*We need a space for young kids to play in. I think we need a playground, so kids have somewhere to go.*

*I think there is always room for improvement. Maybe an area for children to play where there could be nice seating. A lot of areas are now putting in outdoor exercise machines. Good for mind and health.*

*There are a few places in Loughboy where a playground could be put/.*

*Should be a playground for kids,*

*There could be a play area for small children. There is nothing here at the moment.*

*There is really no play space in Loughboy for parents and grandparents to bring little children.*

Do you have any transport/travel issues that you would like to highlight?

Nine people from the forty surveyed mentioned the need for a better bus service; this was before the new service was launched (Dec. 2019) and the majority of people were not aware that a new service was imminent. Five people suggested that upgrades to the cycling

infrastructure were needed to improve safety and that the current cycle paths were inadequate. People felt cycling across busy roads and junctions was dangerous and that cycle paths needed to be free from illegal car parking which was a significant issue around St. Fiacre's Church. Two people highlighted the need for a taxi rank, and ten people suggested that road safety was an issue with particularly dangerous traffic during school drop off and pick up times. Two people highlighted the lack of sufficient parking spaces. Of the remaining thirteen people, seven had no problems that they wanted to stress, and six left this section blank.

*The area around Lidl and Aldi is not very cycle friendly It is extremely difficult to navigate. More crossways built at the junction between Mario's and Aldi and Lidl are extremely dangerous.*

*Pedestrians and cyclists trying to cross the ring road into the industrial estate find it very difficult and dangerous. Perhaps an overbridge could be put in there. Also, if you want to utilize the shops where woodies are, you have to drive- it's car-centered.*

*School runs are dangerous. Cycle paths are intermittent and do not line up.*

*Cycle lanes are inadequate, not enough bicycle parking facilities.*

*Footpaths on Nuncio road need a significant improvement for mobility and bikes. Shoppers and mass goers are parking in the cycle lanes by the church, impossible for cyclists to pass safely.*

*Traffic at the school area is very heavy*

*Around the primary schools, traffic is very busy during school hours*

*Traffic jams at Black Quarry Petrol Station. Traffic/parking systems could be improved.*

*I feel it's a great part of the city to live you can walk everywhere.*

*Parking on the road near the church on the cycle track.*

*Stop people parking outside my house at Larchfield Estate and leaving their cars all day my daughter and grandchildren cant park when visiting.*

*Trying to get outside my gate is hard car traffic has become heavier over the last few years.*

*Roads are narrow, speed limits should be very low to improve people's (pedestrians and cyclists) security.*

Do you feel at home in Loughboy?

Thirty-one people said that they felt at home in Loughboy. Seven people left this section blank, one person said not really and another stated that Loughboy needed more diversity. Overall 77.5% of people felt very at home in Loughboy with a strong sense of belonging to both the area and to their neighbours. Positive aspects highlighted included the amenities and that it is a safe and quiet area.

*Yes I do feel at home in Loughboy it's a beautiful place.*

*I like the shops and parks.*



*I feel at home in this parish its close to where I grew up (new street) and where I attended school. We use the library and the local schools.*

*Yes. I moved to Loughboy fourteen years ago. No need to go into town as there are many facilities in the area.*

*I do as I grew up in the area, and my family home is still there. I also work and know a lot of people in the area through work and personal. I think it's a great area with a lot of facilities.*

*Yes, from the village and I just move back. It's the best place I could be.*

*Yes U do, Its nice and quiet and also I grew up in Loughboy.*

*Yes I do feel safe. Yes after forty years I feel very safe.*

*Yes friendly people, lots of local amenities, shops, post office, and library.*

*Community of good people that look out for each other.*

*Yes very nice, close knit community.*

*I like Loughboy, people are friendly and amenities are good.*

*Yes its a friendly area.*

*Yes the neighbours are there to help if you nrrf anything.*

*Yes loughboy is a lovely place to live/be as everyone is lovely up here.*

*Yes I have been living here all my life and my neighbours are so friendly and caring.*

*Yes I have been living here since 1982 our estate is quiet and we have nice neighbours.*

*Yes great vibe, great facilities, great people.*

Is there anything that would make you feel more at home in Loughboy?

Twenty-three respondents left this section unanswered or that they couldn't think of anything that would make them feel more at home. Of the seventeen answers offered, four suggested a community centre, four suggested additional activities for teenagers and children, a men's shed, and community games and events. One person suggested the need for more resident associations, and the remaining people suggested a variety of infrastructural improvements like seating at the taxi rank, trees, adding goalposts to the green area and more lights at night. Two people suggested that if the traffic lights were maintained and working and footpaths kept clear, it would improve mobility in Loughboy for wheelchair users.

*Better community interactions more clubs/activities for people who want to get to know each other better.*

*Maybe more trees around the community centre.*

*Loughboy and the surrounding area needs a community centre where people can gather and have access to other services. Somewhere for the teenagers to go is badly needed.*

*A bigger, better community centre that the community can use where we can meet other groups run different groups, and larger community childcare that offers full daycare. Not groups that involve just sports or the parish centre.*

*If there was something for the teens to do instead of messing around the street, nothing for the children to do either.*

*More recycling bins and a men's shed.*

*We need more residents associations, garda patrols, and social events at night.*

Loughboy is...

The feedback from the prompt 'Loughboy is' gives a sense of how people use Loughboy, how they move through it and interact with its public and outdoor spaces. Most importantly, it provides an understanding of how people feel about Loughboy. From the questionnaires, it was clear that people felt that Loughboy was an excellent place to live, work, and attend school. Here is a sample from the forty surveys that were completed:

*A nice place to live - good buzz with the schools and parish centre*

*A very pleasant area overall*

*A safe place to live in*

*A good to live in*

*A vibrant and lovely area with plenty of shopping facilities all one would need for a good living area*

*A very nice, clean, welcoming area. There are a variety of services.*

*Wonderful, safe, pleasant*

*A nice quiet area to raise your family up in*

*A community*

*A nice place to live*

*What I see of it I'm ok with it*

*Grand, lovely*

*Fairly decent*

*A nice place*

*Accessible to lots of amenities i.e. supermarkets, post office. chemist and church*

*Nice place to live - good buzz schools, shops, parish centre etc..*

*Is handy as you are near the shops.*

*Okay to live in, I'm new to the area.*

*A vibrant and lovely area. Plenty of shopping, facilities all one needs for a good living area.*

*Good to live in.*

*Good to do shopping in*

*A very pleasant area overall*

*A mostly nice area to live in*

*A safe place to live in.*

*A very nice, clean, welcoming area. There are a variety of services.*

*A huge area. It has many facilities, and a great area to work and live. Near to the city centre and is mainly clean looking.*

*A nice area to live in and to shop in*

*A big community that has much to offer in one location it is fast growing.*

*A lovely area most people are friendly*

*A friendly place to live  
A lovely area to live in, its close to shops and schools.  
Good, but it can be improved on little aspects.  
A lovely and quiet place and I grew up there and also love being up there, I  
wouldn't change it well, only to put a playground there  
Mostly a nice place to live in  
Good to do shopping in  
Is handy you are near the shops*

Loughboy could be...

When prompted to give a sense of the potential of Loughboy, participants were, again, very positive. Completing the idea of what 'Loughboy could be', participants revealed the positive ideas that people have about Loughboy, with 4 people feeling there were no changes needed to the area. However, the prompt also shows that Loughboy could be enhanced with some small scale infrastructures and additional facilities for specific age groups:

*County champions  
There is very little to change as I can see.  
Safe for people at night, around the Loughboy areas.  
A little more safe for people waiting for taxis or bus service  
Do with and iceland and tesco shopping centre.  
More open to gatherings, social events and transport? Why are there so many  
empty houses?  
Done up a bit as I said a few times already something for children/teens and  
even adults classes/activities/play centre/playground....  
Better for younger generation by having more activities for them*

## 6.2 Understanding the Use of Spaces

During the schools and library workshops, the feedback on Loughboy's facilities and amenities was overwhelmingly positive. People listed many assets and services in Loughboy, including James Stephens GAA Club, Scouts Den, Parish Centre, Shopping, St. Fiacre's Church, The Watershed, Smithfield's, Loughboy Library, Dance studios, Hairdresser, green spaces, and Larchfield all regularly featured as a favourite place in Loughboy. The library was cited as a well-attended community space and was described by many as a 'community hub.'

*(Note: in final designed version : MAP Loughboy Neighbourhood: Understanding Use of Spaces)*

The Loughboy Neighbourhood: Understanding Use of Spaces map highlights the numerous existing facilities, assets and services in the Loughboy area. These are wide-ranging from religious and cultural activities to social sporting and recreational clubs. They include both well established and new services and enterprises. Participants listed key assets and amenities and the comments made were mainly positive. For example, a significant proportion of the

activities in St Patrick's Parish Centre were cited as being suitable for older people but with few opportunities for younger people. The library was listed by many people as an amenity that they frequently attended. Finally, YIFM provides a safe space for young people in Kilkenny to collaborate in creative projects with other young people. Although many students attend from the Loughboy area, they also have young people attending from Carlow and Tipperary. Several students walk from the Presentation, Gaelscoil and O'Loughlin's to attend YIFM every day. Overall there are approximately seven YIFM students who live in wider Loughboy area. Children in the schools took part in many after school activities including soccer, Gaelic Football, basketball, athletics, hurling and camogie, Jester, scouts and brownies. Many of the sports clubs are over subscribed due to the high demand and popularity of various sports and clubs in the Loughboy area.

### 6.3 Understanding Future Needs

During the library workshops, several people highlighted the importance of community spaces, places where everybody is welcome and have a sense of belonging and share a sense of Loughboy identity. The recent closure of the local coffee shop has been another loss of social meeting space for the community. Older people said they did not currently attend the franchised cafe at the Caulfield Shopping Centre.

Moreover, with a lot of the sports clubs oversubscribed, children and young people do not always get a place in their preferred sports group or club. Participants gave the example of the Father McGrath Family Resource Centre as a positive model of community facilities. Its model, alongside the benefits of a cultural centre, was discussed in workshops as a place where people could drop-in and/or take part in scheduled activities. Men's and Women's Sheds were also highlighted as positive examples of community-based inclusive spaces where men and women of all ages and backgrounds gather and work on projects under the objective to advance the health and wellbeing of all involved.

*We (Loughboy) need a place where services are combined so that we can feel like a community again. A combined place, so it prevents isolation.*

*Loughboy would be a much better place to be if it had more activities for children- not all children like sports. Better if it catered more for younger kids age 2 to 4.*

*Loughboy would be better if it was done up a bit as as few things for children /teens and even adults classes/activities /play centre/playground.*

*It's a wide community it needs more activities to offer more groups in one location where the community can go like in Newpark and others. Loughboy could do with an Iceland and Tesco's in the shopping centres. Loughboy could be a bit better if somewhere in loughboy had a playground then the kids could have fun.*

During one of the library workshops a number of people mentioned the impending disruption of their medical services when the Loughboy Medical centre is relocated. Loughboy Medical Centre, along with John's Green Medical Centre, is set to move to Newpark on the other side of Kilkenny City in 2021. Two people highlighted their concerns on the questionnaires and two people mentioned in the workshops. This was described as being a massive loss to the area, and will significantly affect a lot of people.

*Loughboy could be better if we could keep our medical centre and have more amenities for young families and teenagers.*

#### 6.4 Loughboy Open Space: Recreation and Nature

*(Note: in final designed version: MAP Loughboy Open Space: Recreation and Nature future needs)*

Overall throughout the workshops, adults, children and young people thought that Loughboy had ample green spaces; however, the majority of people engaged in the process suggested that the green areas in Loughboy were missing recreation features. People also suggested leaving some green areas less cultivated to improve biodiversity and habitats for wildlife. Children who engaged in the Fortune Teller workshops in the schools were keen to see more trees planted both for climbing and for environmental development.

*More meadows*

*To bury plants in the playground so that the bees can collect pollen*

*Loughboy need to have more flowers for polin. Save the bees!*

*Flowers on roundabout*

*Save the bees, we need their honey because honey helps us when we are sick*

Adding seating alongside goalposts or basketball hoops to create meeting points was frequently suggested during school workshops. The most popular suggestion was a standard play goal post that would suit rugby, hurling/camogie, Gaelic football and soccer simultaneously. The Westfield Estate side of Loughboy Neighbourhood Park was described by children in a schools' workshop as having teenagers hanging around with nothing to do. The feedback suggested that small meeting areas of the larger public and green spaces could be upgraded to create lively public spaces. People felt that upgrades and modest infrastructure additions to green spaces could make a significant impact on outdoor experiences of the Loughboy area.

*I would like to see change and have more play stuff for older kids.*

*I wish there was more playgrounds in loughboy*

*I wish there were more parks in Loughboy*

*There are lots of places you can play in*

*Make more playgrounds in Loughboy, there isn't much around Loughboy*

*I wish there was more playgrounds, we need to take care of the playgrounds  
More speed bumps in estates near playground.*

People suggested Gallows Hill Park could be used more if it were upgraded. Children and young people described walking, climbing trees, picking blackberries, cycling, and sledding in the snow in this area. Generally, people thought it was currently unsafe as it has lots of overgrown bushes and tree coverage making it more difficult to see across the park. Families and young people equally felt that this area would be used more frequently if it was enhanced with better lighting.

The feedback from the outdoor workshop at Gallows Hills highlighted the risks of the existing space, e.g., insufficient lighting, narrow paths, no bins for dog walkers, broken glass, overgrown hedges, lack of hand-rails for older people at the steep steps. The groups suggested that wider footpaths would encourage more people with buggies, and more people with mobility support needs like wheelchair users could utilise the park if the paths were more extensive. That shelter would encourage more people to use the park in wet weather while providing shade for the park users in the summer months.

Suggestions were made that Pinewood Avenue would benefit from more trees.

*Loughboy Park is a great grassy area, but it is full of dog poo, which makes it difficult and dangerous for children to play on. A basketball court or goals would be a great addition. Also, a few seats, some fruit trees, and more rubbish bins. The grass in the open area of Larchfield Park needs to be cut. Goals could be put up. This would help with individual training as the small goal post in the estate is in bits.  
A nicer place for people to sit and relax, more for children.  
Improved if more bins and goals in the green spaces.*

Loughboy's need for traffic and connectivity improvements was brought to light during the engagement process. Control illegal parking, reduce rush-hour pedestrian hazards, maintaining clear footpaths and wheelchair accessibility needs to be considered across Loughboy. People especially felt that there was a strong need for a safe cyclist crossing from the Waterford to Bohernatounish Road and that footpaths remained clear. Frequent illegal parking was mentioned at Larchfield resident's houses, Corcoran Terrace, the Kells Road and on footpaths outside St. Fiacre's Church among other places.

Feedback highlighted the need for more buses to service the Loughboy Schools. Several people said that buses would help people get around Kilkenny City and to connect Loughboy to the other parts of Kilkenny County. People hoped that accurate information would be available at the City service bus stops. Suggestions for traffic issues included connecting existing cycle-paths, providing shelter for parked bicycles and a focus of traffic management issues around the schools, St. Fiachra's Church and Caulfield's Shopping Centre.

*Cars speeding in Clongowen estate where there are lots of small kids playing. Speed ramps are needed.*

*Parking is a nightmare. Parking outside houses happens in Larchfield Estate and also happens in Corcoran Terrace, Kells Road.*

*It would be great if a local bus could leave Roselawn Estate as a lot of retired personnel in that area and they need to travel into city shopping and meeting friends etc.*

*The buses will also need to connect with the main transport routes such as the train station so that the elderly and those with free travel can access the national transport routes.*

*Not enough bicycling facilities and Loughboy needs the new bus route as we depend on taxis.*

*A pedestrian crossing at Waterford Road near St. Josephs would be great.*

*Traffic jams are frequently the Blackquarry petrol station. The traffic/parking systems of the area could be improved.*

*More bus services in the area*

*Roads narrow, speed limit should be very low to improve people cyclist pedestrian) security*

*Made better with cycle lanes.*

*Improved with better access(transport) and an open park area.*

*Footpath on Nuncio road needs a major improvement for mobility and bikes shoppers and mass goers parking in cycle lanes.*

*Children cycle to the Gael Scoil - cycle Wednesday initiative and bike rack provided at the school.*

Many Loughboy residents reported poorly lit streets at night. Lighting and footpaths made people feel safe when walking around Loughboy especially people who walked their dogs at night. Participants commented on several locations that lacked sufficient lighting. These included Gallow Hill Park, Loughboy Neighbourhood Park and Pinewood Estate. The addition of streetlights to various dark estates and parks like Riverview, Ardnoe, Westfield, and Pinewood Avenue would improve the sense of safety for many people.

*Riverview Estate is very dark. Trees should be cut back. The new ramps have been welcomed.*

*Loughboy could be improved with more lights in Pinewood Avenue as its very dark at night as there is very little lightning.*

*More lighting in the area.*

*Better lit. No lights on the James Stephens Hurling Club side paths very uneven. Could be better no lights on the road. James Stephens hurling club paths very uneven. Better lighting at the club house. More lights in as Pinewood very dark at night very little lighting*

*Better lightening around club area*

*More inclusive neighbourhood watch- garda liaison etc.*

Children listed many activities and sports available in Loughboy, however, they are often oversubscribed and have long waiting lists, and girls reported a lack of sports for girls.

*I wish there was more space to play sports*  
*I would like to join a club for football*  
*I wish I could start basketball with my friends*  
*I play sports in Loughboy*  
*I play basketball in the Watershed, make more basketball courts and halls in Loughboy*  
*I wish there were more basketball places so friends can meet up and play sports*  
*More basketball courts or tennis courts*  
*There is a hug hall that you can do sports in and you can swim*  
*You can join Harriers in Loughboy*  
*I love Kickboxing*  
*Have a basketball court and more grass*  
*Get people out playing more*

A lack of bins encourages littering with dog mess being a particular problem throughout Loughboy, particularly for children who play on the open grass spaces. Primary School students were particularly vocal about the needs of everyday recycling facilities and bins across all the public spaces of the area. Sheltered seating along the new bus route on Bothernatourish Road was suggested. Also, people indicated that seating should be provided at the Caulfield Shopping Centre, Westfield Park and Larchfield Park and at the Presentation School private bus stops.

*Loughboy would be improved by more bins and goals in the green spaces.*  
*There aren't many bins, benches or lights in Loughboy park*

## 6.5 Loughboy Assets: Socio-Economic Mapping

Alongside the public engagement activities, a statistical-based research initiative was driven by Kilkenny Leader Partnership to give a socio-economic profile of Loughboy. This profile devised by Richard Lawder, Kilkenny County Council provides detail on the population of Loughboy, including figures of age groups, education levels, employment rates, and nationalities (See *Appendix 1*). It offers a qualitative measure to compare with Kilkenny County and City as well as the whole of Ireland. It was undertaken to ensure a broad as possible picture of Loughboy for this report a summary of the findings is illustrated here.

The methodology is focused through a Deprivation Index to detail the affluence and disadvantage of Loughboy. The word 'disadvantaged' connotes a different meaning from person to person. While the Deprivation Index paints a statistical picture of what a socially deprived area is, discourse on Quality of Life and social inclusion illustrates a definition of



'disadvantaged' as a term. It relates to structural inequalities between members of more advantaged and more disadvantaged population groups. The UN sees social disadvantage as the antithesis of social inclusion and thus as an essential issue for the progress of society.<sup>10</sup> The statistical data gathered for this socio-economic profile give further clarity to these terms and offers a means of comparison.

The scope of Kilkenny's population is changing. Immigration brings new residents into County Kilkenny, giving rise to population gains, an influx of diverse skills, and facilitating international relationships, but there are challenges as well. By 2016, the county had a diverse population with people born in over 120 countries recorded in the Census, making up 12.8% of the population. This figure is made up of mainly people from the UK and Poland, with also sizeable communities of people from Romania, Lithuania, Latvia, and Slovakia. Foreign nationals from the EU comprise workers, students, and dependents, while those from the rest of the world, including refugees and asylum seekers.

The socio-economic profile of Loughboy through the HP Deprivation Index shows that the score ranges from disadvantaged through to affluent. Only three of the SAs are classified as "disadvantaged." Altogether, Loughboy has a deprivation score of 2.4, which is categorised as "marginally above average." Furthermore, the profiles of each SA shows that Loughboy has a good social mix. Various statistical factors are used to calculate the score. For example, Loughboy has over an 11% lower dependency rate than the County Kilkenny average. It also has lower rates of unemployment. In terms of education, the Loughboy population has a 7% higher percentage of third-level education than the rest of the county.

Furthermore, Loughboy has a higher level of lone parents, 6% more than the County Kilkenny average. There is also a higher level (7.4%) of privately rented accommodation and a slightly higher (1.8%) level of local authority housing rented in Loughboy. Loughboy has a smaller percentage of Irish Travellers while a broader community of other ethnic backgrounds than the rest of Kilkenny. The full summary of indicators (See Appendix 1), leads to a Deprivation Index score of 2.4, 'marginally above average.'

## 7 Recommendations

Living Loughboy outlines people's everyday experiences and needs. The findings outlined in the report can inform the Village Childcare and Community Services strategic opportunities and expansion of activities. It can also inform the overall strategic development of the area. The initial stakeholder conversations provided a valuable perspective and shaped the recommendations for how to proceed with the needs analysis. It is apparent that there will be a need for integrated strategies and cross-agency support for any relocation and expansion of the services and activities.

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<sup>10</sup>"social inclusion is presented as the process of improving the terms of participation in society for people who are disadvantaged on the basis of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, and economic and migration status" ([Leaving no one behind: the imperative of inclusive development](#). 2016 Dept. of Economic and Social Affairs, UN)

## 7.1 Understanding Future Spaces and Needs

The Loughboy area is densely developed and contains established community activity (Parish Centre, Loughboy Library etc.) alongside newer activities (Pilates Centre, Kilkenny Academy of Dance). The addition of a clearer community hub could develop a networked sense of activities while maintaining community cohesion and effectively delivering services. A Men's Shed, Women's Shed, parenting groups, and youth groups could be established in existing venues in Loughboy to demonstrate need and evaluate uptake. Loughboy groups and community leaders can work in partnership with the Public Participation Network, Kilkenny County Council, Kilkenny Leader Partnership, Kilkenny Library Service to develop these initiatives. In future plans for the relocation and expansion of the services and activities of the Village Childcare and Community Services, there is a need for integrated strategies and cross-agency support. The various conversations with stakeholders have developed a differentiated picture, and a clear vision, supported by the various stakeholders needs to be established.

The perspective of the Kilkenny County Council Planning Department is critical to the broader Needs Analysis process. The planning department provided important feedback regarding future development to the area from an urban planning perspective, Loughboy is well developed (sports facilities, roads, housing, schools, new bus service) and from a commercial viewpoint could even be understood as over-developed. The area has a high amount of retail space and businesses continue to move from the city centre out to the ring road commercial areas - creating a doughnut effect. Planning needs to take into account and ensure that the right development takes place in the right locations and at the right time. From a county and even city perspective, Loughboy has many advantages. Loughboy is not a designated area for community capital development investment at this moment in time.

As discussed earlier in the report LARC's Strategic Plan gives an overview of their journey from 1994 as a Community Development Project with a full range of community, social inclusion, youth, childcare, education, and family services until the government 'Cohesion' process led to the reduction in services in 2010 from a full Community Development Project to its current activities. Currently, there are four Family Resource Centres operating in County Kilkenny: Newpark Close Family Resource Centre; Fr. McGrath Community Centre; The Mill Family Resource Centre, Urlingford and Droichead Family Resource Centre, Callan. As Loughboy is not designated as a disadvantaged area, community activities beyond the childcare services need to be imagined within the context of social and cultural participation and not service led. Inspiration and approach for this could come from some of Kilkenny's rural towns who have reimaged the idea of 'the heart of our town' - highlighting community creativity, participation, and identity. Windgap villages' recent rejuvenation (playground, walks, community cafe) is a positive example.

There is a high uptake and motivation in the wider Loughboy neighbourhood for the tidy towns. Keep Kilkenny Beautiful campaign supports the formation of resident associations and promotes the use of shared spaces through plantings, recycling facilities with annual Tidy

Towns competitions. Keep Kilkenny Beautiful Chairperson Peter Bluett noted many resident associations in the Loughboy area are successfully participating in the annual awards. However, there is scope for increasing community uptake in comparison to wider Kilkenny.

Neighbourhood Watch groups are in decline and support from the local authority could help re-establish these in council-run estate, once resident associations are up and running. Many participants mentioned the notable absences of the community Gardaí in the area of Loughboy over the last few years. There is a Local Policing Partnership between the An Garda Síochána and Kilkenny County Council that was launched in May 2019.

While there are increased pressures on existing childcare facilities from increases in the insurance sector and also to meet Tusla re-registration requirements is increasing pressure on the provision of childcare alongside the increase demand for childcare places. There is a perceived shortage of childcare spaces for babies in the county, these spaces are more costly to run due to, among other things, the requirement of higher staffing ratios; and with no known plans for new childcare facilities in County Kilkenny<sup>11</sup>, and rising costs its a sector that have increasing severe challenges. Village Childcare and Community Services have an ever-increasing demand for their services with waiting lists for childcare places. The demand for good integrated childcare is clear.

The Kilkenny Childcare Committee welcomed the proposal for the relocation of the childcare services to the Village Campus. However, this was not possible and Village Childcare and Community Services are reconsidering their options. Kilkenny Childcare Committees there is a clear need for community childcare facilities within Loughboy. It is apparent that there will be a need for integrated strategies and cross-agency support for any relocation and expansion of Village Childcare and Community Service to ensure the support of all stakeholders. The World Health Organization (WHO) notes that early childhood is one of the most critical developmental phases across the lifespan. Healthy early child development – including physical, social-emotional, and language-cognitive development – is fundamental not only for childhood but throughout the life course.<sup>12</sup> It is thus vital to ensure that access to stimulating environments is wholly inclusive.

#### Proposed Actions:

\_ Village Childcare and Community Service and other community groups to explore the feasibility to establish new social activity in Loughboy, enhancing social connection in the area (including a Men's Shed, a new Women's group and Youth Group so strong social networks can develop. Run activities in currently under-utilised spaces).

\_With the lease agreement in their current Clongowen houses until the end of 2020 Village Childcare and Community Services to develop their strategic plans in partnership with childcare and community agencies to explore overlapping funding possibilities.

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<sup>11</sup> Kilkenny Childcare Committee

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.who.int/maternal\\_child\\_adolescent/topics/child/development/10facts/en/](https://www.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/topics/child/development/10facts/en/)

\_Create a Community Leadership Training programme with Kilkenny Leader Partnership to foster future leadership, build capacity, support continued development, and increase participation activity and action in the voluntary and community sector in the Loughboy area.

\_Create greater awareness of all courses and classes in the area (signposting - areas for greater visibility of services and activities) while increasing the profile of Loughboy Library or other another facility as a community hub.

\_Resident associations to work with Kilkenny County Council (to support estates with local authority managed housing) to upgrading street lighting to contribute to the positive character of the area and to increase people's feelings of security and safety.

## 7.2 Loughboy Open Space: Recreation and Nature

The feedback from Living Loughboy highlights the need to upgrade the green infrastructure of Loughboy to increase use, feelings of safety, connection and belonging. Various parks were considered underused and under-resourced. To maximize the use of the shared public green spaces in Loughboy, play, recreation, and green infrastructures should be added. The parks and green spaces most mentioned in need of upgrades include Loughboy Neighbourhood Park (and adjoining Hazelbrook Green), Gallows Hill Park, Larchfield Park, Parcnagowen and The Paddocks. Positioning several elements together like a goal post, benches and bins can positively influence the atmosphere of a park or communal social space to create encounters - a lively space, that balances play, activity, recreation, and relaxation.

The Loughboy area has various issues of traffic, congestion, parking and dangerous roads and footpaths. Congestion and better parking systems are required at Caulfield Shopping centre to reduce road hazards for pedestrians, cyclists and wheelchair users. There is a need to create clear, safe cycle paths. In public engagement activities, residents of Pinewood and Clongowen reported cars speeding. Traffic calming infrastructures would improve safety in these estates where children play outside. Illegal parking is also an issue for residential estates because of their proximity to commercial centres.

Over a fifth of the people who filled in the questionnaire survey highlighted the need for a connected bus route. However, this was prior to launch the new Kilkenny City Bus Service. This public transport network provides better connectivity across Loughboy and Kilkenny City. The service is already having a positive effect on wellbeing and quality of life for the people living, commuting to work and studying in Loughboy and surrounding area and should reduce pollution and traffic congestion.

### Proposed Actions:

\_Various community groups, schools work in dialogue with the parks department of Kilkenny

County Council, Kilkenny Sports and Recreation Partnership and Kilkenny Leader Partnership to identify and deliver upgrades to various green spaces in Loughboy and surrounding area.

\_Increase seating areas and benches to foster a friendly interaction point of communication and social connection to create lively social spaces in Loughboy.

\_ Provide signage to facilities and amenities like the Loughboy Neighbourhood Park, Gallows Hill, and any new play, recreation, and green infrastructures. This will identify the park as an autonomous location in the area, avoiding the ambiguity of the estates' green spaces.

\_Develop Loughboy's expanding identity through programmed outdoor festivities that encourage activity, recreation, play, and social connection.

\_Through a traffic survey in partnership with Kilkenny Recreation and Sports Partnership, explore ways to increase road safety and make Loughboy more pedestrian and cycle-friendly and promote cycling and walking as sustainable travel options. Link amenities with pedestrian paths and cycle routes for safe access and to encourage use.

\_Work with Cycling Officer, Kilkenny Recreation and Sports Partnership and local schools to map and promote connected, safe cycle routes across the Loughboy area and create cycling infrastructure that had segregated or raised cycle paths built to accommodate safe crossings to protect cyclists.

\_ Initiate conversation with the Road Dept of the Kilkenny County Council, An Garda Síochána, and resident associations to ease traffic hazard points and consider measures to manage specific areas. These can include enforcing illegal parking breaches and examining the parking facilities of the main shopping areas.

\_Working with the Roads Dept of Kilkenny County Council, resurface various footpaths including Nuncio Road and paths outside James Stephens GAA Club to create a more pedestrian and age-friendly streetscape.

## 8 Conclusion

This research has explored the needs of the Loughboy and surrounding area among a large and inclusive cohort of children, abilities, young people, and adults of all ages. It is accompanied by a statistical analysis and recommendations that will allow future planning for the Village Childcare and Community Services. The recommendations to improve outdoor spaces, explore the feasibility for enhanced social connections and community leadership, support residents' associations and community policing, and provide additional integrated child care and counseling services. These proposals are based on opinions and suggestions clearly-voiced by participants. They are in line with national and local policy initiatives like the Kilkenny Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP). These plans aim to provide participative planning, community consultation, and engagement, and the recommendations should be developed with multiple voices. With potential new funding streams likely from the Dept. of Rural and Community Development's five-year strategy, Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities there is a real opportunity for a local development organisation to take a lead

role to work with others to increase accessibility and a strong sense of belonging in Loughboy. An organised who could work with various groups in partnership with the local authority, Kilkenny Leader Partnership, and in cooperation with key organisations Keep Kilkenny Beautiful, Kilkenny Recreation and Sports Partnership, Loughboy Resident Associations, sports and community groups, schools, educational facilities, and local businesses.

Each of the recommendations focuses on enhancing civic space, connection, community facilities, and increasing social participation and a wider sense of belonging. In order to progress the recommendations from this needs analysis, the aim would be to strategically plan a sustainable community stakeholder groups with Kilkenny County Council Partnership, Public Participation Network, and other stakeholders so that Loughboy can continue to develop with strong local and government partnerships.

## 9 Acknowledgements

Workhouse Union works with artists, designers, architects and crafts-people to develop projects examining housing, civic infrastructure and the commons, engaging people with the spaces and places we live in. We firmly believe that art has a positive and real role to play in civic life. We're committed to finding meaningful ways of connecting creativity, participatory design and public engagement processes to the planning and development of our neighbourhoods.

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Socio-Economic Profile: Richard Lawder, Information Analyst, Kilkenny County Council  
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## Logos

Kilkenny Leader Partnership, Workhouse Union, Village Childcare and Community Services

- Appendix 1 Socio-Economic Profile by Richard Lawder (sample workshop sheet)
- Appendix 2 Living Loughboy, A Day in the Life (sample questionnaire)
- Appendix 3 Living Loughboy Fortune Teller (sample workshop sheet)
- Appendix 4 Living Loughboy poster for public engagement activities in Loughboy Library
- Appendix 5 Living Loughboy postcard

## Appendix 6 Public Engagement Summary

Conversation	Denis Malone, Kilkenny County Council (Planning)	3 June	1
Conversation	Ronan Ryan, Kilkenny County Council (Community)	4 June	1
Conversation	Clare Goodwin, Kilkenny County Council (Parks)	2 June	1
Conversation	Richard Lawder, Kilkenny County Council (Statistics)	4 October	1
Conversation	Greta Murphy, Kilkenny Childcare Committee	9 June	1
Conversation	Robert Chaney, Kilkenny First Scouts Den	30 Oct	1
Conversation	Jimmy Ratigan, The Kilkenny Observer	25 Oct	1
Conversation	Aoife Anderson, Young Irish Filmmakers	3 December	1
Conversation	Michelle O'Connor, Parish Centre	13 Sep	1
Conversation	Catriona Kenneally, Loughboy Library	21 October	1
Mapping Workshop	James Stephens GAA The Village Club, 20, 8-9yrs	17 April	20
Primary School Workshop	St Patrick's De La Salle National School, 5th class	24 Sept	26
Primary School Workshop	St Patrick's De La Salle National School, 5th class	24 Sept	26
Primary School Workshop	St John of God National School, 5th class	1 October	28
Primary School Workshop	St John of God National School, 5-6th class	1 October	28
Primary School	St John of God National School, 6th class	1 October	30

Workshop			
Primary School Workshop	Kilkenny School Project, 5th class	2 October	28
Primary School Workshop	Kilkenny School Project, 5th-6th class	4 October	28
Primary School Workshop	Kilkenny School Project, 6th class	4 October	26
A DAY IN the LIFE questionnaires	Loughboy Library	29-31 October	24
A DAY IN the LIFE questionnaires	James Stephens GAA The Village Club	10 September	18
A DAY IN the LIFE questionnaires	Village Children and Community Services	27 November	6
Mapping Workshops	Loughboy Library	29 October	4
Mapping Workshops	Loughboy Library	29 October	2
Family Mapping Workshop	Loughboy Library	31 October	7
Drop-in Workshop	Loughboy Library	29-31 October	6
Mapping Workshops	Kilkenny Sports and Recreation Partnership	20 November	3
Mapping Workshops	Kilkenny Sports and Recreation Partnership	22 November	2
Conversation	Robbie, Roche, Access Kilkenny	Fri 22nd Nov	1
Spatial Workshop	Kilkenny First Scouts Den	Thur 21st Nov	22
Spatial Workshop	Kilkenny Girl Guides	Thur 21st Nov	37
Conversation	Lindsey Butler, Kilkenny County Council (Community)	Mon 16th Dec	1
Conversation	Peter Bluett, Keep Kilkenny Beautiful	Thur 12h Dec	1
Total			384



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