

LISTOWEL PORTFOLIO



ENTENTE FLORALE 2019



Contents

TITLE	PAGE
Fáilte	3
Planning and Development	4
Sustainable Environment	5
Built Environment	8
Landscapes	10
Green Spaces	13
Planting - Permanent and Seasonal	15
Environmental Education	17
Effort and Involvement	18
Tourism and Leisure	20

Fáilte, Welcome to our Town

The name 'Listowel' derives from the Irish, Lios Tuathail, which means 'Tuathal's ringfort'. It is a market town in County Kerry on the River Feale, the largest river in north Kerry. The population of Listowel town is 5,500 serving the North Kerry area (Listowel Municipal District) with a population of 28,418. Listowel is a heritage and is located at the head of North Kerry a limestone plain. Its hinterland is an area of mainly dairy agriculture use and is the home to multinational Kerry Group, which began trading in Listowel in 1974 as Kerry Co-op. The group now employs approximately 25,000 people throughout its manufacturing, sales and technical centres across Europe, North America, South America, Australia, New Zealand and the Asian markets with a revenue of over €7billion in 2018.

Listowel developed around the Castle, which was positioned at a strategic river crossing. It became an important trading and market town whose relative affluence derived mainly from trade in butter and grain. As a result, The Square developed in front of the castle and has been the principal cultural and commercial focal point for the town ever since the 1600s. It was also from The Square that Listowel's first streets emanated, William Street to the north, Church Street to the north-east and Bridge Road to the south east.

Several buildings of historical and architectural significance are located around Listowel's Square including the 15th century Castle, a number of 19th century Georgian residences and St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church on the west side.

The four arch bridge traversing the River Feale at the entrance to the town dates from 1829. Local plasterer and builder Pat McAuliffe 1846-1921 used stucco to decorate the facades of town houses and shops in the town. These have become synonymous with the town, are of great interest to our visitors and are a main feature on our heritage walk. They are listed as protected structures in the Listowel Town Development Plan 2009-15 (as extended & varied).

The people of Listowel have a strong sense of place, community spirit and deep pride in their town. This love and commitment to the town is exemplified in numerous ways including volunteer commitment to initiatives like the Tidy Towns, local festivals, sports organizations, charity and fundraising events. Thanks to these combined efforts, Listowel has progressed rapidly up the National Tidy Towns table first entering in 1994 and has secured 11 gold medals in the small-town category, won Ireland's Tidiest Small Town on three occasions in 2015, 2016 and 2018, as well as Ireland's ultimate accolade of Ireland's Tidiest Town in 2018/19. The Steering Committee and people of Listowel welcome this opportunity to participate on the European stage in the prestigious Entente Florale Competition.

We hope you enjoy your time with us.

Julie Gleeson

Chair of Listowel Entente Florale Steering Committee



Planning & Development

The Listowel Town Development Plan 2009-15 (as extended & varied) is the statutory Planning document that controls all development within the town of Listowel. The plan sets out standards and controls that are required for all development. The Plan and all proposals contained therein complies with all European Environmental Directives which provides for a high level of protection of the environment.

One of the principal tenets of the Plan is to ensure that all land use planning support the objectives and principles of sustainability.

The plan includes objective for land use zoning, conservation and protection of the environment, protection of structures, preservation of the character of the landscape, and preserving, improving and extending amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest.

The Council strongly encourages and facilitates Community involvement in both the decision-making process and the implementation of policies and projects. Listowel Heritage & Community Led Regeneration Strategy published in 2018, was developed following major consultation with all sectors of the local community and the process managed by a cross sectoral steering committee and identifies projects for the enhancement of the public realm and improved urban vibrancy in a sustainable sympathetic manner.

Listowel Town Development Plan 2009-15 has been subjected to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). The objective of the SEA is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the implementation of the plan with a view to promoting sustainable development.

The Listowel Town Development Plan 2009-15 was also screened for appropriate assessment in accordance with the Birds and Habitats Directives.

On a macro level other documents also inform planning policy including the Atkins Report on Urban Habitats and Biodiversity Survey for Listowel, commissioned by Kerry County Council.

Voluntary groups like the Tidy Towns Group and the Listowel Business & Community Alliance play an active role in promoting the green dimensions of development through lectures, information evenings, media releases and the commissioning of reports like the Flynn, Furney Environmental Consultants Biodiversity Report (2011), and Niamh Ní Dhúill Biodiversity Report (2016), which have guided improvements in the last number of years.





Sustainable Environment

The protection of the natural environment remains a key objective of the people of Listowel and their Council.

2.1 WATER QUALITY

The River Feale which flows through Listowel Town forms part of the Lower River Shannon Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and as such is a nature conservation site of International Importance. Species listed for protection in the SAC and which can be found in the River Feale include Atlantic Salmon, Lamprey and Otters. Further upstream can be found Ireland's longest-living animal (with lifespans of over 120 years) the critically endangered Freshwater Pearl Mussel.

The river is managed by the Inland Fisheries Ireland. In its entirety, the River Feale is made up of 83 tributaries with water quality outlined in the Feale Water Management Unit Action Plan. The section of the river that runs alongside Childers Park & Woodlands has a 'good' water quality status.

2.2 SOIL QUALITY

The importance of the River Feale corridor cannot be understated and complete invasive species eradication to protect the stability of the river banks has been identified as one of the most pressing challenges.

The planting of predominantly native trees along the river bank is an example of measures being taken to maintain the integrity of the soil through the prevention of erosion and mitigating against flooding.

The use of artificial pesticides is discouraged but with Kerry's high rainfall weed removal from footpaths and verges remains a challenge.

2.3 WASTE MANAGEMENT

Listowel promotes waste minimisation and prevention for both its municipal and domestic waste. Waste collection which was once the responsibility of Kerry County Council was privatised in 2010. This led to the introduction of waste segregation and recycling rates are now approaching 55%.

To promote greater and better waste segregation KCC developed two bring bank sites within the town which is offered free of charge for glass, aluminium and tin. In 2018 the Kenny Heights residents group established a residents communal composting site, which is used by all of the residents and will hopefully be the first of many in Listowel.

In 2017 the town through the Listowel Community & Business Alliance launched the "Green Your Festival" initiative. The aim of Green Your Festival it to reduce this environmental impact, and many events and destinations have already been greened in partnership with the local authority. In practical terms this has meant the segregation of waste during the event, use of eco-friendly materials such use biodegradable glasses, use of paper rather than plastic straws, and use of ph. neutral cleaning products at events.

Kerry County Council operate a daily town street cleaning service covering the town centre and surrounding streets and employs a litter warden, who enforces litter control and illegal dumping legislation. Litter control is supplemented by the great work carried out by Listowel Tidy Towns Group and Listowel Business & Community Alliance, Junior Tidy Towns and various Housing Estate Committees. The town has always achieved very high marks and positive report in the area of litter control in the annual National Tidy Towns Competition.

2.4 ENERGY EFFICIENCIES

Sustainable energy usage is a key objective and Kerry County Council has been to the fore of the energy movement in Ireland since the formation of the Energy Management and Conservation Business Unit in 2001. Kerry County Council are an exemplar Local Authority in terms of energy and sustainability receiving various national awards from Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland.

In 2016 KCC committed to implementing an ISO 50001 Energy Management System which resulted in the implementation of a structured systematic approach to Energy Management across the organisation, reducing energy consumption and minimising waste, creating an ethos of energy monitoring and saving across Kerry County Council organisation. Certification was achieved in 2017.

In 2018 Listowel became the only town in Kerry to have a connection to the natural gas network. This in turn provides an opportunity for Listowel town to embrace a cleaner, more efficient and cost-effective energy source. All Civic Buildings in the ownership of Kerry County Council in Listowel town have been connected to the natural gas network, as well as many commercial buildings and schools and the community hospital. The switch to natural gas is proving very attractive to both business and residential customers.

Kerry County Council are a member and leader in the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland administered Sustainable Energy Community Network. The aim of the Network is to catalyst and support a national movement of SECs operating in every part of the country. A Sustainable Energy Community (SEC) works together to raise awareness of how users can minimize their carbon footprint, the importance of energy conversation and develop a sustainable energy system. To do so, they aim as far as possible to be energy efficient, to use renewable energy where feasible and to develop decentralized energy supplies. The SEC Network is intended as a sharing and learning network.

Kerry County Council perform a mentor/enabler role to the Kerry community members of the SEC Network. Listowel Community Centre, is a member and following an energy audit has carried out a number of significant works including insulation improvements, upgrading of lighting to LEDs and has connected to the natural gas network. The centre will be visited by adjudicators as part of your visit.

Recently completed energy projects by Kerry County Council in Listowel include retrofitting of approximately 200 Local Authority public housing units with insulation and upgrades to the heating system. All new properties being built by the Local Authority in the town have a strong emphasis on energy efficiency and are designed to SEAI "House of Tomorrow" standards i.e. 40% better insulated than the 2005 Building Regulations. This promotes eco-friendly living and has also resulted in substantial savings for the tenants.

Kerry County Council also fitted new roof insulation to Listowel Library and upgraded lighting to LEDs in recent years. In 2013 Kerry County Council, with support funding from SEAI, the pumps were upgraded at both the Listowel waste water and water treatment plants. This has resulted in improved energy efficiencies and has secured a clean and reliable water supply for the town into the future. Street lighting is gradually being switched over to LEDs further enhancing the town's green credentials.





2.5 SMARTER TRAVEL

Smarter Travel Initiatives or Mobility Management initiatives are a broad collection of actions which support people to choose more sustainable travel options, including walking, cycling, public transport, car-sharing or reducing travel using technology or linked trips.

Smarter Travel Initiatives are often site-specific, for example Workplace Travel Plans or School Travel Plans.

However, they can also have city-wide, regional or even national application like car-sharing, car clubs or public awareness campaigns.

Sustainable travel can have significant benefits for both individuals and workplaces/schools in terms of health and wellbeing, costs and time associated with travel, and environmental improvements.

Sustainable travel results in reduced congestion and reduced emissions/pollution whilst exploiting investment in sustainable transport infrastructure and promoting a more active and healthier population.

Kerry County Council supports the Green-Schools Travel theme of An Taisce's Green-Schools programme. The aim of the Travel theme is to encourage schools to promote sustainable modes of transport to and from school.

Green-Schools Travel encourages pupils and parents to walk, cycle, Park n Stride, use public transport or car pool instead of using the private car on the school run. All the primary schools in Listowel have been awarded Green Flags for Travel and have conducted walkability surveys.

Early in 2019 Kerry County Council submitted a grant application to the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport to develop the Abbeyfeale (Co. Limerick) - Listowel section of the Great Southern Trail Greenway, which originates in Rathkeale (Co. Limerick) and measures 50 kilometers in total. This will provide a unique opportunity for both walkers and cyclists and will be very attractive to families both local and those visiting the area. A further application for funding is currently being progressed to connect the Great Southern Trail Greenway to Listowel town centre trans versing the countryside along the bank of the River Feale through the woods and into the town park.

Kerry County Council will also shortly be developing a designated cycle lane which is safe for all ages and levels of experience, from town square to Childers Park & Woodlands providing connectivity to all the amenities in our 17 hectares town park.

2.6 LOCAL AGENDA 21 PROJECTS

The ethos of operating in a sustainable manner in all their works is reflected in the number of projects successfully completed under Local Agenda 21 funding streams.

A presentation on Invasive Species by Kieran Cummins from EcoAdvocacy on held on the 26th March 2018 proved very popular, with Tidy Towns representatives from six villages attending the event. Biodiversity is a significant element of the National Tidy Towns Competition and managing invasive species plays an important role in protecting our native biodiversity.

On 5th May 2019 another Local Agenda 21 funded project come to fruition, when school children planted 420 native trees in Childers Park & Woodlands.

Built Environment

Listowel town is famous for its numerous features of archaeological and historical interest that contribute to its distinctive character and popularity as a heritage town. As the morphology or make-up of the town is essentially a few hundred years old, the character of the town; its street pattern, square, buildings and river, can be appreciated fully within the context of the town's heritage and cultural identity.

Of particular note are St. Marys RC Church of Ireland, St. John's Church of Ireland, Courthouse and Garda Barracks, stucco fronted shopfronts and the Georgian terraces of The Square which the adjudicators will see during their visit. It is also interesting to note that much of Listowel's older building stock; its fine public buildings, and town centre commercial buildings, were built over a very short period in the early to mid-nineteenth century.

3.1 STUCCO PLASTERWORK

Listowel is also famed for its striking and colourful shop-fronts, many of which have unique designs created by plasterwork craftsman, Pat McAuliffe who lived and worked in Listowel, Co. Kerry from 1846 to 1921. In a career as a plasterer and builder he applied exterior plaster, or stucco, upon shopfronts and townhouse facades in the region. From the 1870s on he began to develop an ambitious and often exuberant style, using a broad range of elements culled from the vocabulary of classical architecture and ornament while exploring an eclectic mix of art nouveau, Celtic and Byzantine influences.

The Listowel Business & Community Alliance was successful in their application for funding under the European Year of Cultural Heritage Community Grant scheme in 2018 to shine a light on the outstanding architectural works of Pat McAuliffe and his unique legacy to Listowel. The European Grant funded a condition survey and assessment of all his plasterwork within the town. A free open seminar and workshop entitled "Getting Stuck in with Stucco: Pat McAuliffe Listowel" was organised by the Architectural Conservation Officer of Kerry County Council and included various presentations on his work as well as practical conservation advice to all in attendance.

One of Pat McAuliffe's buildings, The Emporium, 15 Church Street, Listowel, was chosen to feature on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) as the Building of the Month in June 2018. Following this initial publicity, History Ireland also featured The Emporium as the "Gem of Architecture" in their Autumn edition.

3.2 HERITAGE TRAIL

The people of Listowel greatly appreciate its built heritage and its important link with the past which provides a sense of place and setting for those who come to visit our town. Our built heritage is also a testament to the creativity and skills of previous generations. A heritage trail with information panels and brochures was developed, with funding from Heritage Council Ireland and Kerry County Council and is an important part of our tourism offering.





3.3 ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION AREAS

An ACA designation recognises the value of groups of building and streetscapes. The Listowel Town Development Plan designates a large part of the historic town centre as a single ACA. Other ACA's are centred on other locations for example Courthouse Road/Colbert Street/Charles Street/Upper Church Street.

In Listowel the planning authority requires a high standard of urban design for all planning applications which when combined positively with the historic fabric ensures that development enhances and protects Listowel's rich heritage.

3.4 PROTECTED STRUCTURES

To ensure the protection of the built environment a record of protected structures as required by planning and development legislation has been compiled and currently totals 96 such buildings. These buildings are included for their architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic cultural, scientific, social or technical interest. The design of extensions and alterations to such buildings shall respect the character and scale of the existing building and shall be designed to a high architectural standard. Kerry County Council administers a conservation grant scheme which is available to the owners of protected structures for agreed building conservation works.



3.5 DERELICT SITES

Derelict Sites can have a negative impact on community well-being and quality of life.

A well-maintained built environment benefit everyone. In recent years, local communities in Listowel have given considerable time and effort in revitalising and enhancing the beauty of their town. Kerry County Council is committed to supporting such endeavours, through a range of services.

Provision for Irish Local Authorities to address dereliction in their functional areas is in the main governed by the provisions of the Derelict Sites Act, (1990). The definition of a 'Derelict Site' as set out in the Act is: *"any land which detracts, or is likely to detract, to a material degree from the amenity, character or appearance of land in the neighbourhood of the land in question"*.



In 2018 thirty-three properties were classed as derelict, however over 50% have now carried out significant remedial works. An additional fifteen new Derelict Sites have been identified by way of a general survey of the town during Quarter 1 of 2019 and formal communications including details of improvements required have been forwarded to the relevant owners.

In addition, Listowel Tidy Towns are continuously working with the Listowel Business & Community Alliance and property owners encouraging the continuous upkeep and maintenance of vacant properties particularly in the Town Centre.





Landscape

Listowel town is set within the wider landscape of North Kerry stretching from the lowlands of the Stacks mountains north to the Shannon Estuary. Agricultural land dominates the town's surrounding rural landscape. Agriculture and farming are synonymous with the town's cultural heritage with rural life inspiring its rich traditions in literature and drama. Listowel's setting in this agricultural landscape is intertwined with its natural heritage.

The Listowel Town Development Plan recognises the importance of promoting and fostering an awareness of the town's natural environment, including protecting and developing biodiversity. Biodiversity or biological diversity is the variety of life in all its forms, levels and combinations. It includes ecosystem diversity, species diversity, and genetic diversity. Pressure for development within the urban area is probably the greatest single threat to biodiversity in the town as natural and semi-natural habitats are altered through the development process.

The River Feale winding its way along North Kerry passes through the town on its journey west to the Cashen Estuary and ultimately the Atlantic. As the Feale passes through the town it is designated as the Lower Shannon Special Area of Conservation (SAC) - part of a pan-European network of Natura 2000 sites that seek to protect the rare and unique habitats and species of Europe. Natural heritage is interwoven with landscape particularly approaching Listowel from the south/east. Here sweeping views along the floodplains

of the Feale with its extensive riparian woodlands conserved in the Lower Shannon SAC are protected as designated Views and Prospects under the county's main land use plan - the Kerry County Development (KCDP). Closer to the environs of the town landscapes are protected under Secondary Special Amenity zoning which seeks to preserve the visual amenity and landscape of the town as it is approached via the Feale.

The Woodlands to the east of the Town also form part of the SAC. These mature mixed broadleaf woodlands flank the River Feale and extend into the Town Park. These woodlands can be enjoyed year-round. Spring is the time for the blossoming ground flora (Primula, Allium, Violeta, Hyacinthoides), Autumn is characterised by the fall of the leaves and winter is the time when the presence of colourful and varied lichens and moisture loving bryophytes are most pronounced. These woodlands support a rich array of wildlife including many Bat species, Woodcock, Hedgehog and Badgers. Badgers can also be found foraging in the meadow fields located between the River and the Town. Even within the heart of the Town centre wildlife can be found, with caliciphilic wild flowers making their homes in the historic limestone walls found throughout the town. The unmistakable sound of the Amber listed Swifts is welcomed in this urban environment, as they soar above the town and make their summer homes in many of the Town's buildings.

4.1 MANAGED AREAS

The multi-layered fabric of Listowel's heritage permeates throughout the town. New layers are added to the local landscape with each generation and their emerging needs. This is evidenced in the town park which has been transformed as a key asset for the social, cultural and natural heritage of the town. Consisting of over 17 hectares of green space it offers a significant amenity space to the community connecting the urban area with the natural landscape. It also provides a mosaic of habitats and other "ecosystems services" within the heart of an urban landscape.

Taking initiative from the roll out of The All Ireland Pollinator Plan which seeks to promote "wild areas" for the benefit of pollinators, the Tidy Towns are working with Kerry County Council to implement initiatives at a local level. This involves building on several initial plans already undertaken - namely the strategic Urban Habitats and Biodiversity Survey of Listowel undertaken in 2011. From this a specific plan lead by the community was identified as a priority for the woodland habitat in the park and has culminated in the Gurtinard Wood Biodiversity Project.



The local community continue to work in partnership, with Kerry County Council, LEADER companies, and Inland Fisheries Ireland, in the identification of invasive species and are actively seeking solutions to manage both terrestrial and aquatic invasive species.

In 2019, Kerry County Council in partnership with Listowel Tidy Towns commissioned an arborist to survey the existing trees in Childers Park & Woodlands and prepare a five-year management plan which addresses any issues identified from the survey and incorporate a pollinator plan / grass cutting programme for the overall area.





4.2 PROTECTED HABITATS

The focus of the next phase is to manage extensive areas of grassland within the park in a manner that will be pollinator friendly in-line with National Policy on biodiversity. Much of the Park comprises improved amenity grassland of low biodiversity interest. However intensive management of the park is being reduced to allow some semi-natural vegetation to develop.

Kerry County Council have allowed the central meadow and strips around the edge of the park to remain unmown providing vital habitat for invertebrates. The growth and spread of habitats are being monitored by the Biodiversity Officer of Kerry County Council.

Well-lit trees at the edge of stands and other trees scattered about the Park support a range of epiphytes, small plants that grow on other plants. These include mosses, liverworts and lichens, which do not harm or take anything from the trees they grow on, but simply use them as a platform to escape competition from taller plants on the ground.

Prominent mosses on trees in the park include silky wall feather-moss, a much-branched golden-yellow plant, and lateral cryphaea. There are some eye-catching lichens, particularly the bushy *Ramalina farinacea* and the bright yellow *Xanthoria parietina*. Lesser celandine/ *Ranunculus ficaria* / Grán arcáin can also be found in the Park.

To expand the tree cover, suitable native and naturalised species will be planted in the park to include

downy birch, hazel, holly, yew, and in wetter areas alder, grey willow, white willow and crack willow. All felled trees are turned into bark mulch which is liberally used for planted areas and pathways in the Biodiversity area especially.

As part of the Community Fruit & Nut Orchard, and the Niamh Ní Dúill Pollination Plan, Transition Year Students in the Presentation Secondary School created two herb beds and 'A Bug Hotel'.

4.3 BIRDLIFE

The more mature trees within the park provide the habitat for the Treecreeper, as one of the more interesting species within the park. Also, the Spotted Flycatcher has been recorded in the park. It is our intention to put in place specialised nest boxes for these birds based on the recommendations of Birdwatch Ireland.

We are also aware of the need for more nesting sites for birds in the park due to the young age of many of the trees, particularly for hole-nesting species of birds. Decaying wood, fallen deadwood and fallen logs are retained in the park as valuable wildlife habitat for the wood pigeon / *Columba palumbus* / Colm coille.

The River Feale is also home to an array of birdlife, including Whooper Swans and their Cygnets. The wildlife in this area, mostly the ducks, are fed by a rota system of volunteers and the food is donated by local businesses.



Green Spaces

5.1 CHILDERS PARK & WOODLANDS

For a town of its size Listowel has generous green open spaces. The dominant green space is the centrally located Childers Park & Woodlands which acts as a "green lung" in the heart of the town and provides a tranquil and reflective environment.

Originally a town common, this has since developed as an outstanding municipal park, distinctive for its relatively large size, quality of environment and range of services. The park now occupies 17 hectares, most as open parkland, but also contains a large wooded area (Biodiversity Area), formal garden (Garden of Europe), playground, and a Community Fruit & Nut Orchard. A recent addition has been the 1916 Commemorative Garden, which commemorates the 1916 Easter Rising which led to Irish Independence.

In addition, a wide range of sporting facilities are provided in the park, including angling, community centre with sports complex, athletics, tennis, GAA, pitch & putt, rugby, as well as a weekly parkrun and children's play area. A comprehensive system of walks and pathways are signposted and enjoyed by many.

While the town park and woodlands are essentially a local amenity, it has an important role in Listowel's economic development. The park gives Listowel a quality of life and environment which increases its overall attractiveness as a place live, visit and invest in. Plans are in place to develop trailheads in the park for the Great Southern Trail Greenway and River Feale Blueway.

Also, there are plans to further extend the Community Centre, create a sensory garden and upgrade all the playing pitches.

Management of the park rests with Kerry County Council, but several community voluntary organisations also play a hands-on role including Listowel Tidy Towns Group, Listowel Community Centre, pitch & putt club, athletics club, GAA club and rugby club.

Kerry County Council is currently exploring a new shared management approach, a Town Park User Forum which will bring together all stakeholders, working in cooperation with the Local Authority. This will provide a helpful framework to support funding applications, income generation, increased marketing and promotion, management and further development.

In 2018, the Childers Park & Woodlands was the first park in Kerry to be awarded the European Green Flag accreditation, an international scheme which promotes best practice. Criteria included conservation, heritage, safety & security, maintenance, sustainability, community engagement and management.



5.2 GARDEN OF EUROPE

These beautiful gardens are a hidden haven, containing a selection of over 2,500 plants and shrubs from European countries. The Garden of Europe was an innovative project completed in 1995 with the help of Listowel Rotary Club. Twelve mini-gardens were created, one to represent each member of the European Union at that time. The Garden of Europe celebrates Ireland's membership in Europe. It contains Ireland's only public monument to the Holocaust and invites visitors to pause and reflect on a dark time in the world's history. The two oak trees at the memorial grew from acorns, which came from the Auschwitz Concentration Camp, outside Krakow in Poland.

In 2018 two new pebble mosaics were crafted and gifted to the Garden of Europe by Canadian artist Kathleen Doody. Using pebbles from local beaches at Ballybunion and Beale she created the two pieces which were set adjacent to the pathway and benches. The mosaics represent the River Feale and park.

5.3 NATURE WALKS

The Sive Walk commences at the Lartigue Monorail Museum, on the Ballybunion road, and passes through wild bogland where turf cutting takes place.

The terrain is mainly bogland and it is a moderately difficult walk. The River Walk is an easy ramble along the banks of the River Feale and around the Listowel Town Park.

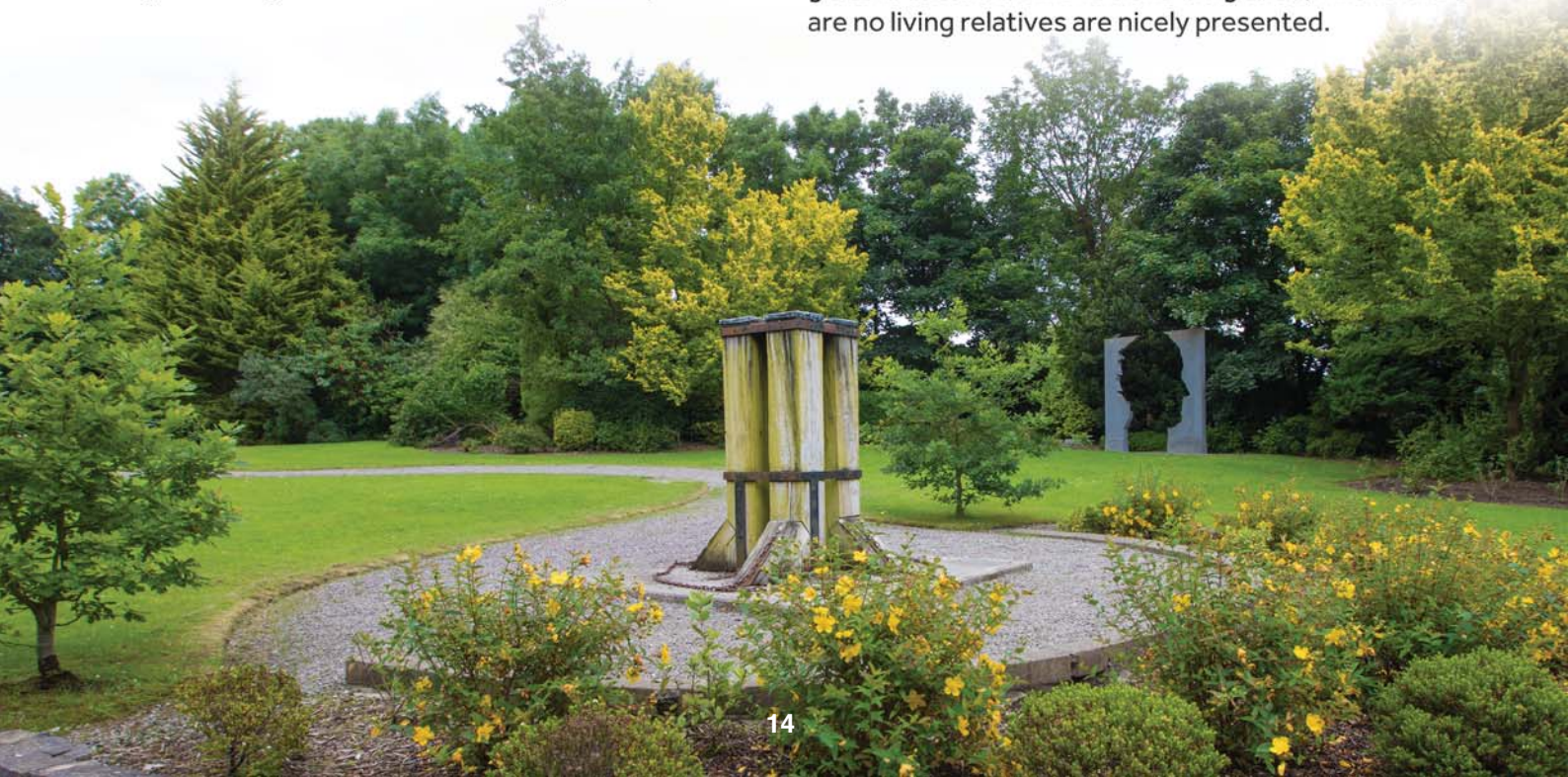


5.4 PLAYING PITCHES

Listowel has over eight outdoor playing pitches catering for Gaelic football (for which County Kerry is famous), soccer, rugby, tennis, and pitch and putt. Two of these are located within Childers Park & Woodlands creating a hub for year-round physical activity. Other playing pitches are at the Listowel Emmets GAA Club, Listowel Celtic Soccer Club and each of the primary and secondary schools.

5.5 GREEN SPACES IN RESIDENTIAL AREAS/GRAVEYARDS

There are numerous green spaces in the residential housing estates around the town with all new proposed residential developments having to provide a minimum of 10% usable open spaces in the design. There are many residents' groups, who are encouraged to take ownership of their local areas and the annual Listowel Tidy Towns Awards Ceremony each year honours local heroes such as the hard-working residents' groups in the town. Listowel also has two burial ground committees who ensure grass is cut and strimmed and old graves, where there are no living relatives are nicely presented.





Planting - Permanent and Seasonal

6.1 SEASONAL PLANTING

The arrival of our colourful summer flower displays is welcomed and enjoyed by resident and tourist alike. Listowel Tidy Towns and Listowel Business & Community Alliance encourage local communities and businesses to enhance their premises with floral displays. Special rates are negotiated with local garden centres for flower boxes and baskets and a free watering service is provided by the Tidy Town group in the town centre.

The Garden of Europe is well cared for both by Kerry County Council staff, Listowel Tidy Towns and Community Employment Scheme workers with attractive displays of colourful plants representing several European countries. Street-side planters are positioned around the town with hanging baskets mounted on poles and buildings. The hanging baskets are nurtured in the polytunnel of the local garden centre which strongly supports the Tidy Towns endeavour. The perennial bed at the Tim Kennelly Roundabout and Tralee Road entrance is enhanced with summer bedding.

6.2 TREE PLANTING

In recent years an extensive tree planting programme was undertaken throughout the urban district, funded by the local authority and managed by the municipal gardener and Senior Executive Engineer. We look forward to the maturing of these trees and the natural beauty they will bring to our built environment.

In 2019 children from Listowel joined in a global tree planting initiative. The easy treesie – Crann’s ambitious project aims to plant one million trees in Ireland by 2023 and as part of National Tree Week 2019, local school children attended an educational presentation on the seven native trees followed by the planting of 420 saplings within the park. Members of the Listowel Tidy Town’s Group and staff from Kerry County Council were in attendance to assist the children with the planting. This initiative received funding under Local Agenda 21 and was covered extensively on social media, print media at local and national levels.



6.3 WILD FLOWER PLANTING

A selection of flowers, herbs, and plants that assist the survival of bees and butterflies can be found in Childers Park & Woodlands as per the National Biodiversity Data Centre. Without bees there is no pollination and reproduction of flora so to ensure pollination local native woodland wildflowers are planted annually under trees throughout the park. This planting programme is of special interest to our Junior Tidy town’s committee who play a significant role advised by the Biodiversity Officer at Kerry County Council. It is our policy to source local species of wild flowers.





Environmental Education

Education plays an important role in changing human environmental behaviour and the earlier it starts the greater its impact. Listowel embraces the Green-Schools Ireland initiative which is operated and co-ordinated by the Environmental Education Unit of An Taisce (FEE member for Ireland), and supported by the Environment Section of Kerry County Council. The Council's Environmental Awareness Officer provides invaluable on the ground support to schools undertaking the programme. All of Listowel's primary and post-primary schools have achieved the Green Flag accreditation and adjudicators will have an opportunity to visit one of these - Scoil Réalta na Maidine - which already has Green Flags in Water, Energy Awareness and Travel and is working on its fourth Green Flag for Biodiversity.

Hands-on activities form a key element of the education process - litter surveys by students in local schools, schools' art competitions on environmental themes with works exhibited at the annual Listowel Tidy Towns Awards Night.

Class visits of school children are regularly organised to Childers Park & Woodlands. On 5th May 2019, the primary and secondary schools of Listowel held a Climate Action Day to mark National Tree Week. Over 300 pupils from Listowel took part in a global tree planting initiative, the Easy treesie-Crann's ambitious project to plant one million trees in Ireland by 2023.

420 saplings supplied by Kerry County Council were planted on the day, with oak, birch, alder and holly included in the mixture of native trees. The native trees were supplemented by lime trees specially selected for this site for their grandeur and beauty. The lime species has nativized in Ireland over the centuries. The limes have also been selected to make provision for Kerry's future climate and to ensure resilience in the new woodland as several of our native species such as the ash have had to be struck from the planting list due to disease. The planting party was preceded by a presentation to the children on the importance of tree planting for capturing carbon dioxide.



Effort & Involvement

The people of Listowel have a strong sense of place, community spirit and deep pride in their town. This love and commitment to the town is exemplified in numerous ways including volunteer commitment to initiatives like Tidy Towns, local festivals, sports organisations, charity and fund-raising events.

In 2014 the Kerry Public Participation Network (PPN) was established to enable people and community groups in Kerry to have a say on issues that concern them.

The PPN is the mechanism through which the Local Authority links/engages with the broader community sector and are the representative voice of the community and voluntary, social inclusion and environmental sectors.

As a town and as a community Listowel has achieved much over the past years. There are vibrant groups, active communities, great businesses, hugely successful tidy towns and great volunteerism, in fact 76 volunteer groups in total from Listowel town are registered with the Kerry PPN. The town has been recognised nationally through its success in the 2015 Pride of Place Awards, 2017 Enterprising Town Awards, internationally through 2017 Communities in Bloom Awards, and ongoing through its successes in the National Tidy Town Competition.

Late 2017 saw the launch of the Listowel Business & Community Alliance, which in collaboration with all key stakeholders, has the goal of making Listowel a great place to work, live, do business, visit and shop. Local businesses contribute financially toward the administration of the Alliance and to projects such as the town centre health check, new town web site and marketing programme.



The process of the health check of the town was undertaken by Tralee Institute of Technology. Members of the public were asked about their opinions of Listowel Town, what activities they undertake in the town centre, their suggestions for the future of the historic town centre, and what environmental improvements they would like to see implemented. Commercial owners were surveyed about the strengths and weaknesses of the town centre and their expectations for trading and investing locally in the coming years.



The Town Centre Health Check (2018) highlighted positive perceptions about Listowel on parks and green spaces, general attractiveness, feeling of safety and security, cafés / restaurants, standard of service, feeling of vibrancy, quality and variety of shops, ease of getting around the town, pavement cleanliness and range of events.



In addition to local sporting and community groups there are many residents' groups who are encouraged to take ownership of their local areas. Many responded enthusiastically including Kenny Heights, which adjudicators will visit. Here work evenings are held throughout the Summer with approximately 24 people attending on a weekly basis. The participants are actively involved in the environmental management and maintenance of their estate. The group have created pollinator beds, a "Vedge" and planted bee friendly plants including creeping jenny and sedum around trees in the estate. Also last year, with Council support, the residents developed a community composting area, and seating area. The annual Listowel Tidy Towns Awards Ceremony each year honours local heroes such as the hard-working residents' groups in the town.





Tourism and Leisure

The Tourism Strategy and Action Plan for County Kerry sets out the priorities and investment plans for tourism development in the County, over the 2016 – 2022 period. The county is hugely dependant on tourism, with one in five employed in the sector. The plan was developed and adopted by Kerry County Council, but it also involved extensive engagement throughout the County with tourism providers, business interests, community groupings, state sectors and Fáilte Ireland, the National Tourism Body.

Kerry's clean green image, its unspoilt environment, its people, its built and cultural heritage are the main drivers of tourism in our county and are precious national assets. The economic viability and competitiveness of Kerry Tourism can only be sustained if the quality of our natural resources is maintained and the local communities that cherish, protect and foster them are supported.

We strive to foster and grow a sustainable tourism industry based on development that respects both local people and the visitors, our cultural heritage and the environment.

Listowel situated in North Kerry just 9 miles from the coastal touring route of the Wild Atlantic Way has experienced a growth in visitor numbers in recent years. Its rich literary tradition has put Listowel on the tourist trail and the Kerry Writers Museum provides a stimulating journey of discovery through the stories and songs of our renowned writers. Other experiences that can be enjoyed in the museum include traditional Irish music and writing classes, lectures and readings.



Another attraction hugely popular with visitors is the Lartigue Monorail Museum and Interpretive Centre. The Listowel to Ballybunion monorail was the only one of its type in the world. It was invented and developed by a French engineer, Charles Lartigue. The line ran for 36 years, until 1924 and this unique attraction offers a trip on a working replica of the train which runs on 1 kilometre of track.



9.1 COMMUNITY TOURISM, EVENTS & FESTIVALS

Community based tourism is very strong in Listowel with active participation of local people, many organisations, companies and clubs. Community tourism adds value to the experience of both domestic and overseas visitors.

In a recent Town Health Check carried out by Tralee Institute of Technology, the open friendliness of the people in the town was identified as a major asset. This is in line with Tourism Ireland research which has identified friendliness of the Irish people as a main attraction for international visitors, even ranking ahead of the Irish landscape.

Provision of good signage for the visitor highlighting attractions and facilities is a priority for Kerry County Council. Events and festivals are an integral part of what Listowel has to offer and they are delivered to a very high standard. An example is Listowel Writers Week, which celebrates our literary tradition and heritage and will mark its 50th anniversary in 2020.

Each year Kerry County Council delivers a Tourism Ambassador Programme for several communities. This was held in Listowel in 2018 with fifteen individuals attending a five-night course on how to make our visitors stay more memorable, how to cross sell attractions, promote our food and restaurants and help ensure that our visitors sell Listowel for us, when they return home.

Above all Listowel attracts the visitor because it is a typical Irish market town, with small independent traders some which have passed down from generation to generation, that have huge pride in the quality of goods and services as well as their properties and shopfronts.

Kerry County Council in its tourism strategy has identified several key tourism developments for the town of Listowel and its hinterland. These include development of a Greenway and Blueway on the River Feale.





Listowel is about to be linked to the extended Great Southern Trail Greenway, connecting the town to Abbeyfeale, Newcastlewest and Rathkeale in County Limerick. This development should offer fresh opportunities for the town. The extension of the Great Southern Trail to Listowel will bring the length of the current greenway route from 42 kilometres to almost 50 kilometres, a substantial enlargement. This will introduce an extended cycling route with a more challenging and wider experience and will increase the overall numbers using the Greenway. The plan is to integrate the arrival point of the Greenway with the town park, woodlands and River Feale walk, highlighting the numerous activities in the park and bringing the Greenway users directly into the town centre. Listowel will act as a destination town for the Greenway, offering the features of urban heritage, local shopping, interesting pubs, restaurants and the attractive ambience of the medium sized Irish town. The existing tourism products such as the Kerry Writers Museum, Lartigue Monorail & Museum, Listowel Castle, all within immediate walking distance of the Greenway, complement the cycling and walking activities for individuals and families.

In 2018, a report has been completed into potential Blueway projects in North Kerry and Listowel. A Blueway is a recreational water activity trail for use by non-motorised water activity enthusiasts. It is defined by trail heads, access and egress points and readily available trail information. Blueway's can be developed on canals, rivers, lakes or along the coast and can

incorporate other associated land-based trails adjacent to the water trail. Linkages to the Great Southern Greenway could thus be very significant. The report identifies six trail heads in North Kerry for the Blueway as suitable for kayaking, including a point on the River Feale near Duagh and near Listowel town park. Infrastructure will be required including installation of a pontoon on the River Feale near the Gardens of Europe in Listowel and potential funding opportunities are currently being identified.



9.2 SPORT & LEISURE

As well as being a popular tourist destination Listowel is an extremely active town in terms of leisure activities.

Within the town a substantial amount of physical activity takes place at a wide range of purpose-built facilities. The town boast numerous sporting clubs including GAA, soccer, rugby, athletics, tennis, badminton, basketball, boxing, angling, gymnastics and pitch and putt. Additionally, there are numerous martial arts clubs, and walking, running and cycling groups.

A parkrun takes place within the town park every Saturday and the Listowel Community Centre gives people a chance to participate in a wide range of activities at its gym and leisure centre. The centre also delivers a specialized activity program including outreach sessions for both active retirement and special needs groups. It also works closely with the Kerry Recreation and Sports Partnership to ensure delivery of the Partnerships Strategic Plan 2017-2022 with initiative such as Bike Week, Go for Life Games, an older adults programme Child Safeguarding training and the Active School flag. Scoil Realta na Maidine is currently participating in the daily mile program, where pupils walk for one mile around the park every day.

Listowel Race Course is also a dominant feature of the town, attracting an annual attendance of over 90,000 at its June and September race meetings.



9.3 ARTS

Kerry County Council recognises that the arts perform a valuable role in society and nowhere more so than in Listowel described as the "literary capital of Ireland". We celebrate the arts in our county and support the widest possible access to the arts for all our citizens. Kerry County Council has provided an Arts Office since 1987 and the Kerry County Arts Strategy 2016-2021 provides financial and other assistance for stimulating public interest in the arts, promoting knowledge and improving standards in the arts.

9.4 CALENDAR OF LOCAL EVENTS

Mar.	St Patricks Day Celebrations
Apr.	Easter Celebrations, Kerry Crusaders Charity Cycle
May	Listowel Writers' Week Festival Remembrance Weekend
June	June Horse Racing Festival
July	Thrashing & Vintage Day, Visual Arts Festival
Aug.	Heritage Week Ring of North Kerry Cycle Revival Music Festival
Sept.	Harvest Festival & Horse Racing Meeting 24 Hour Endurance Festival
Oct.	Féile an tSolais
Nov.	Young Adults Writers Festival Listowel Food Fair Kerry Crusaders Half Marathon
Dec.	Christmas Celebration

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