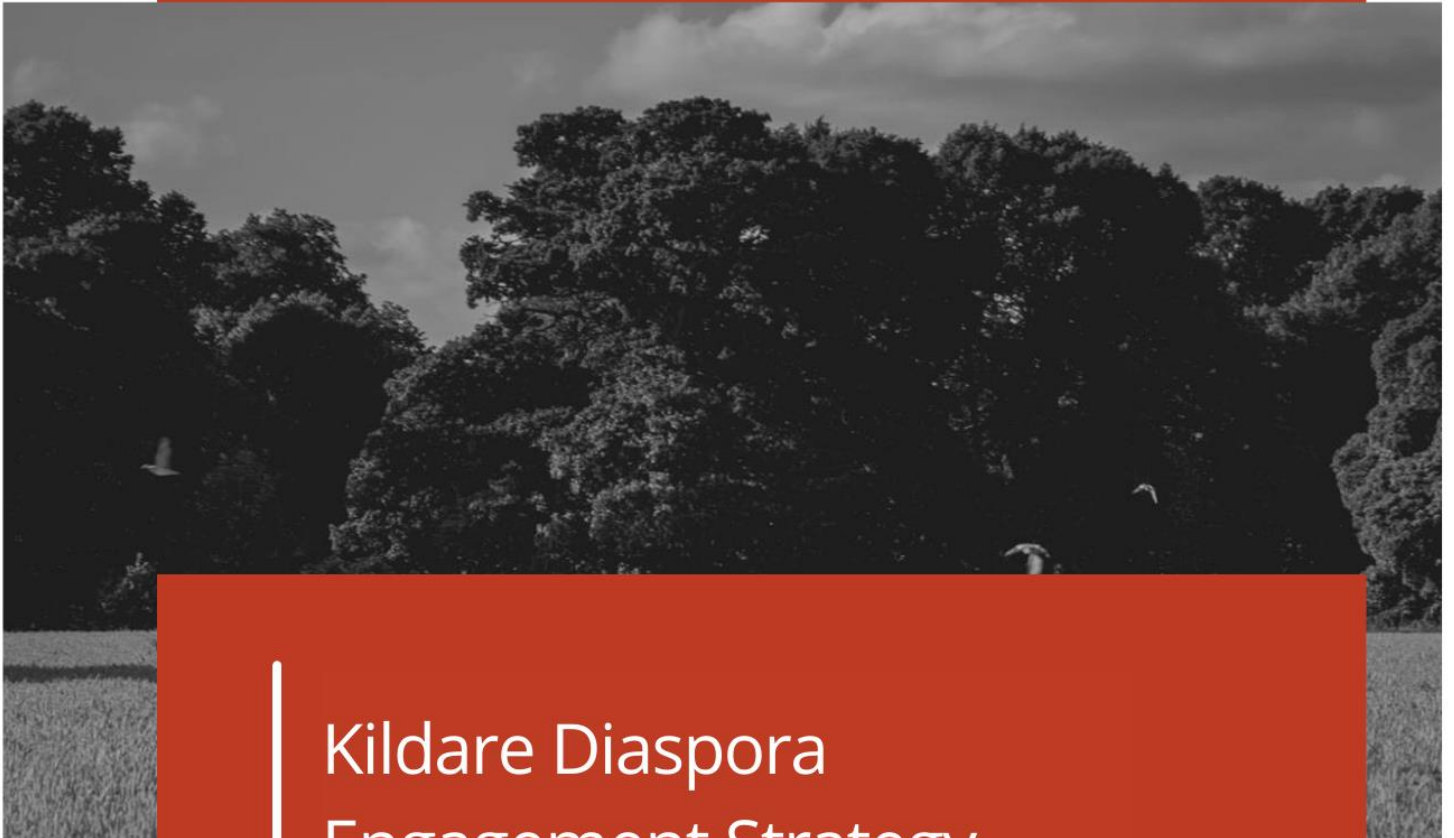




Kildare County Council  
Comhairle Contae Chill Dara



Kildare Diaspora  
Engagement Strategy  
2022-2026

**September 2022**

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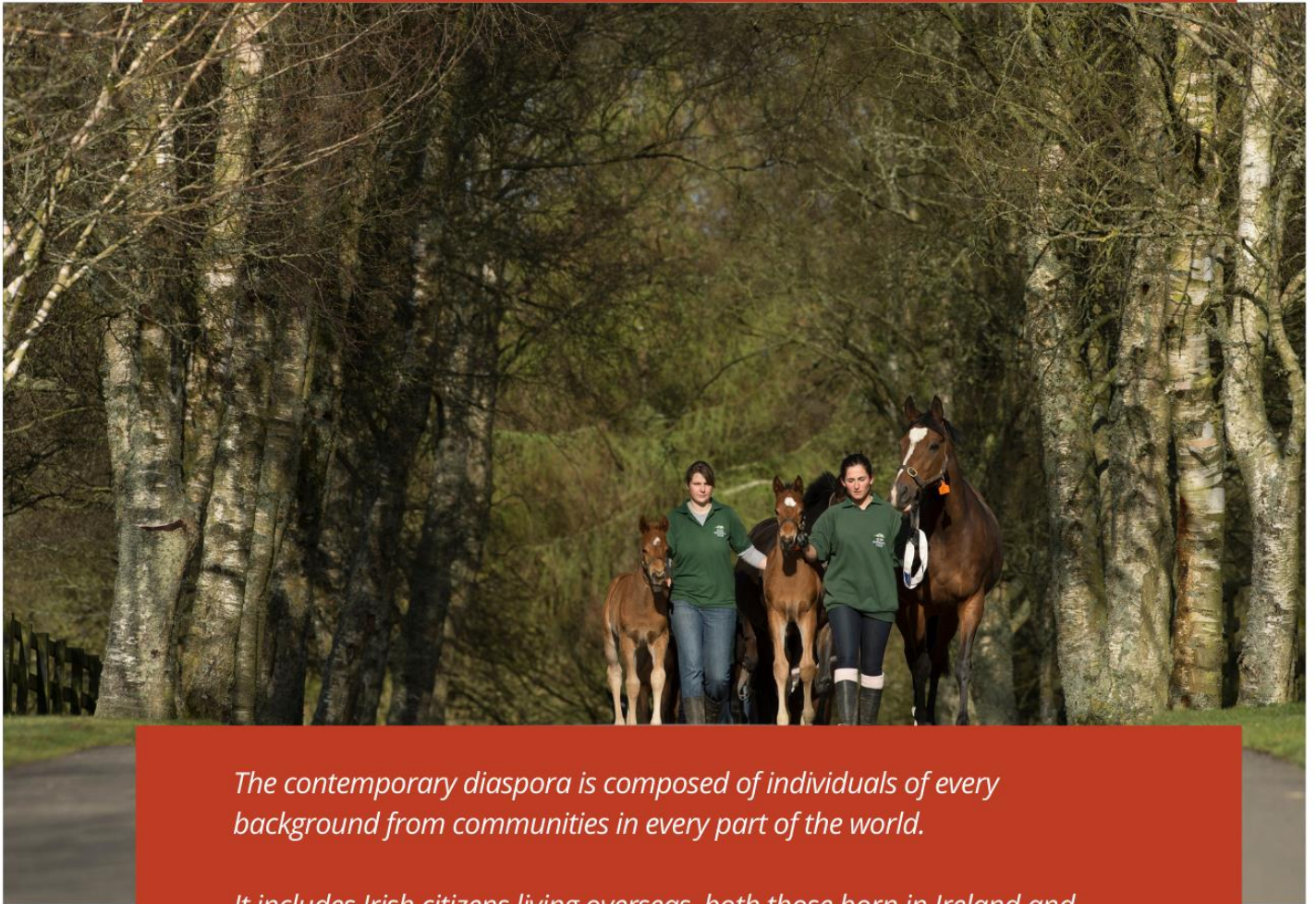
# Abbreviations

CDC	County Kildare Chamber
DF	Defence Forces
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
GPA	Gaelic Players Association
IK	Into Kildare
KAO	Kildare Arts Office
KCC	Kildare County Council
KDC	Kildare Diaspora Committee
KLS	Kildare Local Studies
KPPN	Kildare Public Participation Network
KTC	Kildare Twinning Committee



**welltold.**

This document has been prepared on behalf of Kildare County Council. It is not intended for and should not be relied upon by any third party and no responsibility is undertaken to any third party.



*The contemporary diaspora is composed of individuals of every background from communities in every part of the world.*

*It includes Irish citizens living overseas, both those born in Ireland and those born abroad to Irish families, as well as the heritage diaspora, those many millions of people of Irish descent around the world.*

*It also embraces the reverse diaspora of people who have lived, studied or worked in Ireland before returning to their home countries as well as the affinity diaspora who hold a deep appreciation for our people, places and culture. Together, these groups form the Global Irish.  
(Irish Diaspora Strategy 2020 - 2025)*

# Foreword

## A message from the Cathaoirleach

It is a great privilege for me as Cathaoirleach of Kildare County Council to introduce the Kildare Diaspora Engagement Strategy 2022-2026. We recognise the many opportunities for communication, networking and partnership for the vibrant community of County Kildare living at home in Ireland and across the globe.

This document represents our commitment to continue to foster two-way relationships with our diaspora, a community made up of people from every walk of life with a link to Kildare in some way - by ancestry, through business or community connections as well as friendship. Kildare County Council acknowledges the importance of sustaining this unique diaspora, creating a platform that deliberately connects with and supports this diverse community.

This Kildare Diaspora Engagement Strategy concentrates on the animation of existing and new networks, creating a long-term bond of people and place to strengthen local development. Central to this strategy is the celebration of St Brigid and the commemoration of the 1500th anniversary of her death that will take place in 2024, giving Kildare a defining moment on the global stage.

Organisations working to strengthen cultural identity in Ireland and around the world have a lasting impact on our diaspora, as do our key FDIs, our equine sector, the GAA, the Defence Forces and Maynooth University. Working with these partners will support Kildare's diaspora engagement and help deliver the aims of this strategy.

This strategy ensures that Kildare's diaspora can play an active role in the development of County Kildare into the future.



Councillor Fintan Brett  
Cathaoirleach - Kildare County Council

September 2022

## A message from the Chief Executive

The Irish diaspora maintains a web of interconnectedness across the globe that has supported us in nurturing Irish culture in many far-flung places. Global Ireland's Diaspora Strategy 2020-2025 recognises that our diaspora is comprised of many with varying degrees of connection to Ireland, something that is very evident in Kildare's global connections.

The Kildare Diaspora Engagement Strategy provides a strategic plan for engaging with those connected to County Kildare on a national and international level. This engagement will enhance Kildare's economic, social and cultural connections, building opportunities for engagement and collaboration for communities, enterprise, sports and cultural networks.

Kildare has a unique place in Ireland's global diaspora conversation with St Brigid's Day now a national holiday and a global celebration of Irish women. This strategy also makes provision for the Brigid 1500 anniversary commemorations in 2024, a year-long programme that will engage those around the world with an affinity for Kildare and our national saint – an unprecedented opportunity to showcase Kildare, its people, culture, arts and enterprise to a global audience.

This document sets out to harness and build on existing connections as well as building new relationships for the long-term. This strategy identifies how best to further develop these relationships and presents a recommended engagement plan to deliver on Kildare County Council's objectives, identifying the resources and critical success factors for its delivery. Importantly, this approach to diaspora engagement will be built into existing and future strategic corporate plans, putting Kildare's diaspora engagement at the heart of Kildare County Council's strategic delivery.



Sonya Kavanagh  
Chief Executive

September 2022

# Executive Summary

Kildare's Diaspora Engagement Strategy is a five-year strategy 2022-2026 that aligns Kildare's diaspora engagement with Kildare's broader policy context. It will create a meaningful and sustainable roadmap for diaspora engagement.

Kildare's vision for diaspora engagement is that County Kildare will have a strong and dynamic outward reach to its global community, with deep, meaningful and active connections to its diaspora and international network that bring social, economic, educational and cultural benefits for Kildare people and those who have a special connection to Kildare at home and abroad.

Kildare's diaspora are not only those born in Kildare and their descendants. Here too, those with a bond to the county are included in its global community – Kildare's affinity diaspora. This is most evident in the equine sector – the sport, its power as an attractor drawing visitors to the county and its intersection with enterprise, research and innovation give it a footprint and web of connections that reach across the globe.

The overarching aims of the strategy are to:

- Know Kildare's diaspora network potential
- Connect with Kildare's global diaspora
- Collaborate to build networks and engagement
- Communicate and celebrate Kildare.

Realising this strategy will require a coordinated, cohesive approach from a broad and diverse stakeholder group, each active in engaging with their diaspora and willing to collaborate further. Bringing this group together with relevant Kildare County Council departments creates a strong multi-disciplinary team that is dynamic and equipped for broad outreach to the many places Kildare's diaspora call home.

There are a number of key deliverables from this strategy, including:

- A database of Kildare's diaspora and their contacts, that gives an overview of their locations, interests and preferred communication methods
- Actions to communicate and engage with the diaspora
- Establishing Kildare Diaspora Committee to oversee delivery of this strategy
- A Kildare diaspora web presence to signpost diaspora to further information.

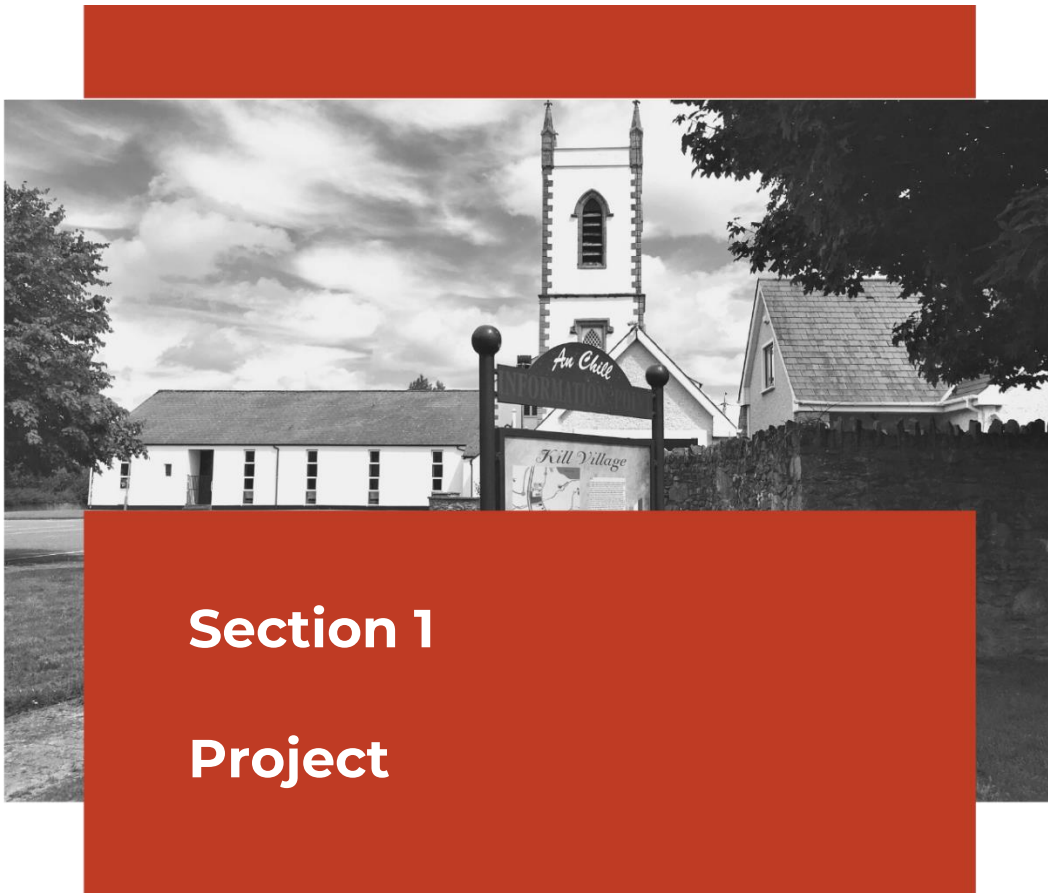
Central in focus for the duration of this strategy is the Brigid 1500 anniversary in 2024 – its celebration, its potential as a core theme to underpin many of the actions required to deliver on this strategy's aims and its legacy as a cultural connection to global Ireland for Kildare.

The implementation plan presents a series of short, medium and long term actions involved in the delivery of this strategy and identifies the factors critical to the successful delivery of these actions.

It identifies the role Kildare County Council must play in the delivery of this strategy, the importance of adequate resources and identifies potential funding sources for the activities proposed.

Importantly, the strategy seeks to include as broad a spread of Kildare's community in its delivery, recognising that it requires not just widespread support from key players, but also community buy in and commitment for its future success.





## Section 1

## Project

*County Kildare will have a strong and dynamic outward reach to its global community, with deep, meaningful and active connections to its diaspora and international network that bring social, economic, educational and cultural benefits for Kildare people and those who have a special connection to Kildare at home and abroad.*

## Introduction

Kildare's Diaspora Engagement Strategy is a five-year strategy 2022-2026 that aligns Kildare's diaspora engagement with County Kildare's broader policy context.

The strategy's goal is to create a meaningful and sustainable roadmap for diaspora engagement for Kildare. There is particular focus on supporting the realisation of Kildare 2025 Economic Strategy and Kildare's Local Enterprise Development Plan 2021-2024 where harnessing Kildare's diaspora and international relationships can bring meaningful benefit for both Kildare and its international community.

Through this strategic plan, Kildare County Council seeks to create linkages that establish and sustain relationships, share experiences, generate opportunities and deliver on further investment and economic activity for our County. In doing so, this strategy will celebrate Kildare, the place, Kildare, its people, its twinning relationships, as well as the arts and culture, the heritage, the music and the landscape that are uniquely of Kildare.

Ireland's second diaspora strategy<sup>1</sup> explores a broader understanding of Ireland's diaspora, recognising that the diaspora is increasingly diverse, and instigating an embrace of Ireland's 'affinity diaspora', people who hold '*a deep appreciation for our people, places, and culture.*'

The concept of an affinity diaspora is particularly relevant in County Kildare, a county where many have spent years studying at Maynooth or perhaps training or stationed at The Curragh Camp, and taken with them fond memories and a love for the county on their departure.<sup>2</sup>

This strategy is an action focused document that recommends a strategic approach to support and engage with Kildare's diaspora communities around the world. Prepared in consultation with Kildare Local Enterprise Office, it has sought consultation from a broad range of stakeholders.

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs - Global Ireland: Ireland's Diaspora Strategy 2020-2025

<sup>2</sup> <https://kildare-nationalist.ie/2020/11/18/new-diaspora-strategy-challenges-traditional-irish-abroad-image/>

These include business, enterprise, community and diaspora representatives along with representative bodies, historians and genealogists (a complete list of consultations is included in Appendix 1). Additional desk research and an online survey targeted at key stakeholders within the Kildare diaspora dialogue also informed the strategy development.

## **Vision**

*County Kildare will have a strong and dynamic outward reach to its global community, with deep, meaningful and active connections to its diaspora and international network that bring social, economic, educational and cultural benefits for Kildare people and those who have a special connection to Kildare at home and abroad.*

## **Mission**

*Our mission in delivering Kildare's Diaspora Engagement Strategy is to connect Kildare, its people and its diaspora globally, to lead a connected, international, multi-sectoral and community network that supports the cultural, social and economic wellbeing of Kildare people wherever they may be.*

## **Key Objectives**

The primary objective in developing the Kildare Diaspora Engagement Strategy is to present an innovative, action focused strategy that is unique to Kildare.

It sets out to strengthen current diaspora initiatives, harnessing and building on existing connections, as well as fostering new relationships and learning from best practices elsewhere.

The overarching aims and objectives of the strategy are:

<p><b>KNOW OUR NETWORK POTENTIAL</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide an overview of Kildare's diaspora</li> <li>• Summarise existing engagement with Kildare's diaspora</li> <li>• Identify how to enhance and further develop this knowledge base</li> <li>• Identify diaspora clusters and niche areas for particular focus</li> <li>• Identify and recommend sources of funding to support the delivery of this strategy</li> </ul>
<p><b>CONNECT WITH KILDARE'S GLOBAL DIASPORA</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a plan for engagement and communication with Kildare's diaspora via a broad array of media</li> <li>• Establish effective and meaningful communication channels, including social media</li> </ul>
<p><b>COLLABORATE TO BUILD NETWORKS &amp; ENGAGEMENT</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider ways to engage communities in an imaginative way with the diaspora</li> <li>• Recommend an approach to include diaspora engagement into existing strategic corporate plans – pushing it to the forefront of our thinking and tying into key priorities</li> <li>• Identify and explore initiatives to build relationships with and harness the power of the diaspora to develop economic, social and cultural relationships</li> <li>• Set out a methodology to create networks to build on existing Kildare Associations and other diaspora/twinning arrangements</li> <li>• Support diaspora networks and local communities to engage with their diaspora</li> </ul>
<p><b>COMMUNICATE &amp; CELEBRATE KILDARE</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A cohesive and integrated communications plan is pivotal to the success of the overall strategy</li> <li>• A central message is to celebrate Kildare - the place, the people and its global footprint</li> </ul>

## SWOT

The below presented SWOT analysis of Kildare and its diaspora considers existing engagement and the opportunities presented in this study, as well as the potential for the Kildare economy.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dynamic, young and prosperous county with lots to offer diaspora</li> <li>• Good diaspora engagement evident in Kildare genealogy &amp; informal social networks/social media</li> <li>• Strong heritage themes in Kildare to engage diaspora on</li> <li>• Stakeholders/Partners are already actively engaged with diaspora</li> <li>• Existing evidence of diaspora driven results in FDI/Enterprise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No CRM or database of diaspora developed to date</li> <li>• Reliance on Ireland-based partners rather than overseas partners in diaspora engagement</li> <li>• Limited digital footprint for local history groups</li> <li>• Kildare has significant 'affinity' diaspora, can be harder to make connections with</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technology/ease of communications</li> <li>• Diverse enterprise sectors &amp; 'affinity' diaspora that have strong Kildare connections</li> <li>• Significant network of Kildare alumni</li> <li>• Key heritage themes – Decade of Commemorations, Arthur Guinness, John Devoy &amp; Brigid 1500</li> <li>• Diaspora ambassadors</li> <li>• Branding and marketing of diaspora initiatives &amp; communications</li> <li>• Developing strategic partnerships in priority areas</li> <li>• Integrating diaspora initiatives into wider KCC strategic planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Globalisation – lack of that sense of being away from home</li> <li>• Disconnect from Irish heritage in 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> generation diaspora</li> <li>• Risk of disconnect from Irish heritage for future diaspora (those yet to emigrate)</li> <li>• Challenge to fund diaspora initiatives</li> <li>• Diaspora is very diverse &amp; may have very divergent interests/priorities</li> <li>• Diaspora engagement responds better to favourable economic conditions &amp; vulnerable to economic uncertainty</li> </ul>

## Impact of Brexit

Brexit has led to a marked rise in the numbers of Irish passports issued in Great Britain, with almost 500,000 Irish passport applications made in Great Britain between 2016 and 2020.<sup>3</sup> This surge in interest in Irish identity is recognised anecdotally as an interest in retaining citizens' rights within the European Union.

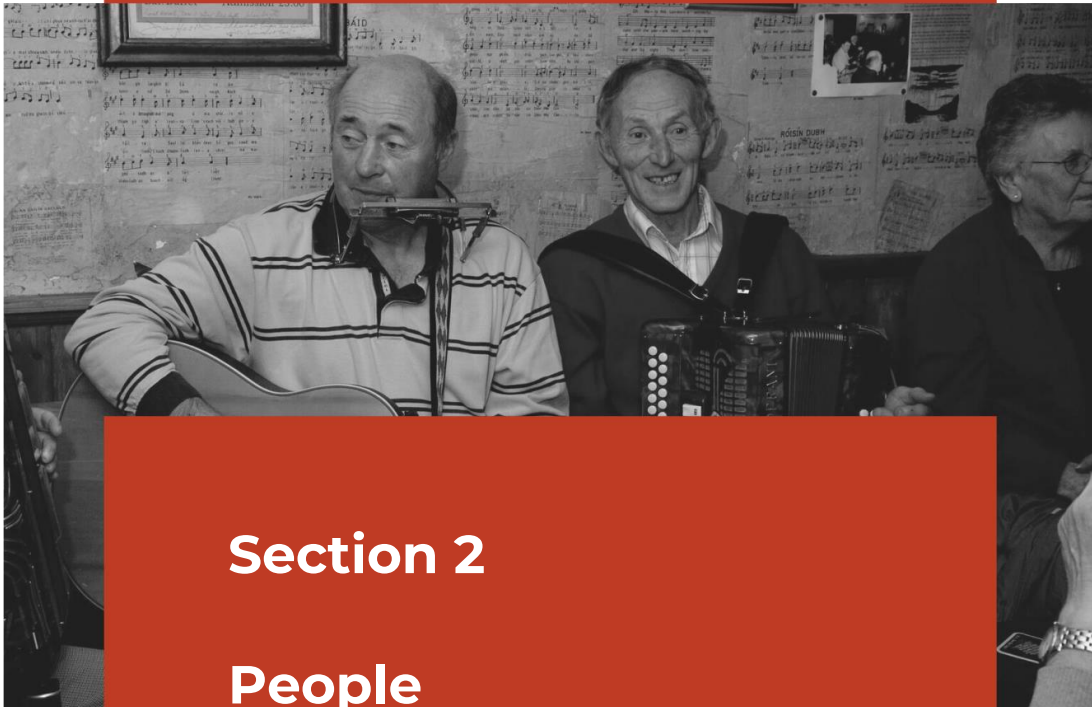
However, it also reflects the British-born global Irish increasingly turning to their Irish roots for connection and identity, realising their Irish citizenship rights in striking numbers. This renewed connection with Irish identity brings opportunity to foster a sense of shared cultural identity with Kildare's British-based diaspora, celebrating Kildare's cultural connections with its diaspora.

From an enterprise perspective, Kildare's SME base is relatively protected from the impact of Brexit on international trade thanks to the sectoral spread within the county.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, given the increased challenges in doing business in the UK, Kildare's transatlantic and international trade links are increasingly important to maintain.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/apr/03/brexit-vote-sparked-surge-in-irish-passports-issued-in-great-britain>

<sup>4</sup> Consultation with County Kildare Chamber, February 2022



## Section 2

### People

*Men wanted for hazardous journey. Small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger. Safe return doubtful. Honour and recognition in case of success.*

**Sir Ernest Shackleton's recruitment ad for his Endurance expedition**

## Context

### *The Global Irish*

An estimated 70 million people worldwide claim Irish roots, with the largest waves of emigration over the last 150 or so years.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, Ireland's diaspora is diverse and multifaceted - first generation adventure seekers, economic migrants and their descendants, many of whom cherish their Irish ancestral heritage.

Traditional emigration patterns saw many emigrants leave for North America in 'coffin ships', settling predominantly in the North East of the USA, clustered around cities such as Boston, New York and Chicago. Closer to home, many travelled to the UK, settling in large cities such as London, Birmingham and Manchester.

Today, Ireland's diaspora is more widely dispersed, due in part to changes in technology, global economic factors and increased access to travel and employment in non-traditional emigrant destinations. Emerging destinations for diaspora today include Australia, the Middle East and Far East,<sup>6</sup> a trend that is evident in the findings of the diaspora survey in this project.

Diaspora engagement has broadened in scope in recent years, recognising that the Global Irish community is in fact far more diverse than the cohort considered Ireland's contemporary diaspora – Irish citizens living overseas, both those born in Ireland and those born abroad to Irish families, as well as the heritage diaspora.<sup>7</sup>

The Global Irish community also includes the reverse diaspora, those who have lived, studied or worked in Ireland before returning to their home countries, and the affinity diaspora, who hold a deep appreciation for our people, places and culture. Technological and communications advances continue to make it easier to sustain regular and meaningful connections.

Ireland's diaspora has a keen desire to connect back to its home community, but also to represent Ireland well on the global stage.<sup>8</sup> Those who have succeeded desire to give back.

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<sup>5</sup> *Department of Foreign Affairs – Review of Ireland's Diaspora Strategy Consultation 2014*

<sup>6</sup> *Department of Foreign Affairs, Kennedy, Lyons & Russell - Supporting the Next Generation of Irish Diaspora: Report of a Research Project Funded by the Emigrant Support Programme 2014*

<sup>7</sup> *Department of Foreign Affairs - Global Ireland: Ireland's Diaspora Strategy 2020-2025*

<sup>8</sup> *Supporting the Next Generation of Irish Diaspora: Report of a Research Project Funded by the Emigrant Support Programme, Department of Foreign Affairs, Kennedy, Lyons & Russell; Dublin, 2014*



Similarly, Ireland's diaspora is eager to make a positive contribution in their host communities, often in celebration and promotion of Irish culture and heritage, or in supporting the marginalised or vulnerable. Irish business networks and diaspora associations across the world make valuable connections for Irish businesses and FDI.



## *Kildare's Footprint / Global Reach*

Kildare is home to 222,504 people, just under 5% of the country's population and growing rapidly, with a 65% increase between 1996 and 2016, attributed to a combination of birth rates and considerable inward migration to the County.<sup>9</sup>

The youngest county nationally, the 2016 Census recorded 37% of Kildare's population (81,517) aged under 25. Ten percent of the population is from countries other than Ireland. Kildare's Polish community its largest cohort (3% of the total).

Kildare is a complex county, largely rural in nature, yet its population is highly concentrated in urban areas, particularly in the north-east towns of Celbridge, Leixlip and Maynooth.

Economically, Kildare is somewhat polarised. Its economic base comprises 92% SMEs, and it has the second highest rate of FDI nationally.<sup>10</sup> Its strong economic performance, international reach and the export potential of its SME base are important considerations in the development of this strategy.

Kildare has a rich heritage of legends and stories from St Brigid and Fionn MacCumail. It is the birthplace of global brand Guinness and its eponymous founder Arthur Guinness, and of the great explorer Ernest Shackleton. The County has a long association with Ireland's Defence Force at The Curragh, and is known as the 'thoroughbred county' given its vibrant equestrian sector. Its proximity to Dublin makes it an attractive tourism destination with a diverse range of landscapes and experiences to enjoy from golf at the K Club to Pollardstown Fen.

Kildare's emigrant population has largely followed traditional Irish emigration routes. Today, they are typically found concentrated in large cities that provide English speaking employment opportunities in the UK, mainland Europe, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, with lesser numbers in the Middle East and further East in countries such as China and Japan.

The global footprint of Kildare's 'affinity' diaspora is unresearched. It is likely similar, with a particular focus on places that – through culture or industry – have a particular connection with the unique characteristics of Kildare, such as the strong link Kildare's equine sector brings to the Middle East.

Critical now for Kildare is to build a knowledge base of its diaspora and scope the potential that can be realised in deepening and broadening those relationships, both in terms of reaching out and giving back, and to engage meaningfully with all stakeholders to realise this ambition. The opportunities here are significant.

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<sup>9</sup> *Kildare Census 2016 Profile Summary, Kildare County Council & Local Community Development Committee*

<sup>10</sup> *Corporate Plan 2019-2024, Kildare County Council*

There is scope to collaborate with key strategic partners here to identify Kildare's diaspora footprint, to celebrate Kildare and its people, build educational, business and investment opportunities, support tourism, showcasing Kildare arts and heritage, and connecting people across the globe who have a particular connection or love for Kildare.

## Case Studies

### ARTHUR GUINNESS



Born in Celbridge in 1725, Arthur Guinness started his first brewery in nearby Leixlip, before moving to St James's Gate. There is, however, evidence and a local understanding that Guinness did initially commence brewing at Celbridge. He is buried in Oughterard Cemetery, a significant heritage site at a scenic, peaceful hillside location a few miles from Celbridge.

The Guinness Family are still connected to North Kildare today. Leixlip Castle was home to Desmond Guinness until his death in 2020. In the 1960s, Desmond Guinness bought and undertook to preserve Castletown House in Celbridge, said to be Ireland's finest Palladian house. Today, it is in OPW management and restored as a significant amenity for locals and visitors to the area.

A 16km walking and cycling trail 'Arthur's Way' links Leixlip, home of Arthur Guinness' first brewery, through to Celbridge, where a statue to Arthur Guinness can be found, to Ardclough interpretive centre and exhibition 'From Malt to Vault', and then on to the ancestral burial grounds in Oughterard Cemetery.<sup>1</sup>

Celbridge Tourism & Heritage Forum has a clear objective to work with Kildare County Council, Guinness Storehouse and related stakeholders to commercialise the Guinness connection, making the Guinness story more accessible to visitors and embedding it in the wider heritage story of Celbridge. It also has an objective to identify and promote opportunities for local businesses to take advantage of 'Arthur's Way'.

## **Sir Ernest Shackleton**

The great Antarctic explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton was best known for leading the 'Endurance' expedition of 1914-16. Born 15 February 1874 in Kilkea, Co Kildare, Shackleton's family were of English origin, having moved to Ireland to start a Quaker school in Ballitore. The family later moved to Dublin and then London, where Shackleton was educated. He left school at 16 to join the merchant navy, and a lifetime of polar adventures began.

Shackleton's first Antarctic journey was as part of Captain Scott's Discovery expedition 1901 – 1904. He subsequently led three of his own Antarctic expeditions. The Endurance expedition of 1914 – 1916 is considered one of the greatest epics of human survival, earning Shackleton a reputation for his courage and commitment to the welfare of his colleagues in seeking adventure.

Shackleton's fourth expedition aimed to circumnavigate the Antarctic continent but on 5 January 1922, Shackleton died of a heart attack off South Georgia. He was buried on the island. His legacy contribution to exploration and geographical discovery is immense.

The Shackleton Museum in Athy houses an exhibition of family and expedition artefacts relating to Sir Ernest Shackleton and his travels as well as a 15 foot model of the 'Endurance', as well as a variety of artworks inspired by Shackleton and his achievements. The museum hosts an annual Shackleton Autumn School to celebrate the life and work of the great Antarctic explorer in the area of his birth.

## **Made Of Athy**

Made Of Athy<sup>11</sup> is an arts and tourism project that celebrates the town of Athy and the enormous influence it and its diaspora have had on the world of music. A trail of plaques throughout the town recalls the singers, producers, artists and musicians that are linked to Athy but are world famous.

These artists include Neil Hannon, Johnny Marr, Leonard Cohen, Mani, Erin Koivisto and Liam O Flynn, amongst others. Speaking in Athy in 2019, as he unveiled a plaque in honour of Leonard Cohen, President Michael D Higgins remarked *'The project celebrates the sense of place in the town, the sense of community and as many of the recipients of the award will have said as the plaques were unveiled, a sense of belonging.'*<sup>12</sup>

The project is a Kildare County Council initiative, administered by Kildare Arts Office.

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<sup>11</sup> [https://en.everybodywiki.com/Made\\_of\\_Athy](https://en.everybodywiki.com/Made_of_Athy)

<sup>12</sup> <https://kildare-nationalist.ie/2019/05/09/made-of-athy-project-gets-presidents-seal-of-approval/>

## MAURA LAVERTY

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Maura Laverty began life as Mary Kelly, born in Rathangan in 1907. Educated at the Brigidine Convent in Carlow, her career began as a governess and then secretary to the Spanish Royal Family. She returned home to Ireland in 1928.

A prolific writer, Maura Laverty's literary legacy has been somewhat forgotten and deserves to be revived.

Laverty worked for 2RN (Radio Eireann) on her return to Ireland, responsible for broadcasting women's and children's programming. As a result, her role at the heart of women's issues of the era earned her a commission as a cookery book writer, writing the wartime cookbook 'Flour Economy' and later 'Full and Plenty'.



Maura produced a remarkable volume of literary fiction, at times depicting the harsh realities of life in a rural Irish town with striking similarities to her own hometown of Rathangan. Some of her works were controversial in nature, and subsequently banned in Ireland.

In her later years, Laverty wrote the work for which she is perhaps best known – a novel that was dramatized under the name 'Liffey Lane', produced by Hilton Edwards and Michael MacLaimmoir. It would further evolve to become RTE's popular drama series *Tolka Row*, which ran from 1964-1968.

A biography '*The Story of Maura Laverty: From Rathangan to Tolka Row*' by James Kelly and a 2017 radio documentary '*Full and Plenty in a Hungry Country - Maura Laverty Remembered*' seek to bring her legacy into focus. The life and works of Maura Laverty would resonate strongly with older generations of Ireland abroad. A literary programme or creative bursary/residency may generate diaspora support, as would a reissue of one of her cookbooks.

Her legacy – as a strong woman, unafraid to address challenging topics, and somewhat forgotten – echoes the legacy issues of Irish women of her time. She is an ideal candidate to include in a St Brigid's Day showcase of Kildare's exceptional women.

## **Brigid of Kildare**

Ireland's only female patron saint, Brigid was born in 450AD in Faughart, County Louth. Her feast day – St Brigid's Day – falls on February 1<sup>st</sup>, the Celtic festival of Imbolc which honours the Celtic goddess Brigid after whom she was named, goddess of poetry, healing and fire. It too marks the reawakening of nature and the beginning of Spring.

Brigid converted to Christianity and dedicated her life to God, caring for the disadvantaged and tending to the natural world. She founded a monastery in Kildare, considered the most important in Ireland at that time, and notably, was a dual monastery for both women and men.

Brigid died in 725AD and was buried at her monastery in Kildare. Her remains were later reburied at with those of St Patrick and St Columcille in Downpatrick, Co. Armagh. There are many relics of the Saint scattered across the globe.

St Brigid has extensive patronage, including poetry, learning, healing, protection, blacksmithing, livestock and dairy production. There are many icons associated with St Brigid and her life, including the St Brigid's cross, made from rushes and traditionally hung over a door to ward off evil, fire and hunger. She is associated with an eternal flame at her abbey in Kildare, with oak trees and the colour white. Her traditional cloak is central to her story, reflected today in the Bratóg Bríde tradition, left outside on the eve of St Brigid to bring good health for the year ahead.

## **Her relevance today**

St Brigid and her life's work are particularly relevant in today's society, reflecting many of the contemporary challenges society faces as custodians of the earth and its environment, in championing justice and equality, and peace and reconciliation.

St Brigid's Day is today a celebration of women, their talent and their creativity. It is also a day dedicated to ancient traditions of the land, spiritual faith, cultural customs, myths and legends, reflecting a renewed interest today in the Celtic heritage of Ireland.

## **How Brigid is Remembered Today**

### **Féile Bríde festival, Kildare**

A week-long series of events commencing on the eve of St Brigid's day. Organised by Solas Bhríde, a retreat centre in Kildare run by the Brigidine Order, the festival typically includes a series of lectures with poetry, music, song and dance and has developed international offshoots in the US, Canada, Norway, Sweden, Italy, Germany and the UK.

### **Brigid of Faughart Festival, Louth**

This festival in the birthplace of St Brigid celebrates the Saint's feast day. It seeks to revisit and reclaim the traditions associated with Brigid of Faughart in ways that are relevant to life in the 21st century, through myth, landscape, folklore, spiritual customs, poetry, music and dance, as well as to act as a catalyst to refocus the presence of the Divine feminine in everyday life.



### **Biddy's Day, Kerry**

In a celebration similar to the Wren Boys and Straw Boys, St Brigid is honoured in Kerry by Biddy groups, who visit rural houses and villages on and around February 1<sup>st</sup>. They carry a Brídeóg with them to ensure evil spirits are kept away from humans and animals alike for the coming year.

A visit from the Biddies traditionally brought good luck, fertility and prosperity for the year ahead. The highlight of this festival is the torchlight Parade of the Biddy through Killorglin town and the colourful King of the Biddies contest.

### **Brigid's Way Celtic Pilgrimage, Louth to Kildare**

Brigid's Way is a nine-day walking pilgrimage from Brigid's birthplace in Faughart to Kildare that takes place annually in July. Organised by a voluntary committee, it invites those who honour Brigid in her Christian or Celtic form to walk in her footsteps, and in doing so, find peace, connect with ancestors and commune with the natural world.

### **Herstory, national and international**

The Herstory movement tells the stories of modern, historic, and mythic women, with a mission to give the public authentic female role models and a game-changing education programme, inspiring countries around the world to start their own Herstory movements. Herstory has been central to the dialogue and campaign advocating for a national holiday for St Brigid's Day.

The movement's public awareness campaign includes an annual light show on St Brigid's Day, illuminating iconic buildings to highlight women's achievements and causes associated with gender equality.

### **Department of Foreign Affairs, international**

The celebration of St Brigid's Day has become an established annual event for the Department of Foreign Affairs. On the day, Irish Embassies celebrate the talents and contributions of Irish women, and women across the world, through programmes of music, performances, talks, music and panel discussions. Irish communities around the world have responded enthusiastically, finding new and innovative ways to celebrate Brigid and the talents and achievements of women. International St Brigid's Day celebrations are coordinated by the Department's Irish Abroad Unit in cooperation with Ireland's Embassies and Consulates worldwide.

### **Brigidine Order, international**

The Brigidine Sisters is a global Catholic order founded in Tullow, County Carlow in 1807 in memory of St Brigid. The Brigidine Sisters mission is youth education. The order spread to Australia and New Zealand in the late 1800s and across the UK, USA, Africa, South America and Papua New Guinea during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Their work today remains largely overseas, although the Sisters collaborate with Solas Bhride Centre in Kildare. Their archive is housed at Carlow College.



## **St Brigid's Day - The Opportunity**

From 2023, St Brigid's feast day will be celebrated as a national holiday in Ireland on the first Monday of the month, except where February 1<sup>st</sup> falls on a Friday.

Giving the feast day prominence in the annual calendar paves the way for:

1. An enhanced celebration of Brigid the Celtic goddess and Catholic saint
2. Fostering an awareness of and appreciation for old traditions, folklore, heritage and customs surrounding St Brigid
3. A broader dialogue about St Brigid's values and beliefs, and their striking relevance in the world today
4. Showcasing Kildare as a tourism destination, its businesses, traditional and artisan crafts, and its women in leadership.

These themes are addressed in more detail below.

## **Celebrating St Brigid's Day**

Given St Brigid's close association with Kildare, there is great scope for Kildare to leverage Ireland's newest national holiday. Potential opportunities include:

- Supporting community festivals and events across the County to mark the feast day, with a focus on Kildare town for events of scale to draw visitors from outside the County and overseas
- Symbolic lighting of fires in towns and villages across Kildare with flame from the Perpetual Flame of Brigid
- Celebration of contemporary Kildare poetry, literature and musical artists
- Showcasing traditions, customs and arts related to St Brigid and the festival of Imbolc with workshops, musical celebrations, food festivals and talks

Given the spiritual significance of the national holiday, there is potential to develop a religious tourism product marking the feast of St Brigid, perhaps collaborating with Solas Bhríde on the development of a pilgrimage, symposium, reflective weekend or similar.

Given the range of St Brigid's celebrations established across the country and indeed internationally, there is merit in a collaborative dialogue on how best to develop the shared traditions, aspirations and momentum that exist to inform and shape a national celebration of St Brigid across the community spectrum in the county. A St Brigid Stakeholder Forum may be useful first step in planning ahead for St Brigid's 1500<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

## **Brigid 1500**

Looking ahead, the 1500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of St Brigid's death is approaching. Written records of the time of her death are scant, and so a true date of her death is unclear. However, the Brigid 1500 report by Abarta Heritage (2021) proposes that the commemorations run from 1 February 2024 to 1 February 2025, and it is on that basis that the following recommendations are made.

All plans to mark St Brigid's Day as a national holiday should build towards a significant celebration of her feast day in 2025, with enhanced investment in festivals and events in particular, and destination marketing showcasing Kildare to domestic and international visitors.

Strategic partnerships with Louth County Council, the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport & Media, Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland are important in leveraging the tourism and cultural potential of the anniversary.

A commemorative St Brigid's Day lapel pin for distribution, art posters or street art that will remain as a cultural marker for the anniversary celebrations is an important consideration.

Fáilte Ireland's recent work in developing the potential of the Samhain festival as a season extension and regional distribution mechanism across Westmeath, Meath, Louth and Dublin could be replicated in Kildare and Louth for the new national St Brigid's Day holiday to begin the tourist season earlier than the traditional St Patrick's Day.

Collaborating with key Kildare diaspora stakeholders for events of scale in key diaspora hubs to mark the anniversary will build diaspora awareness and connection. These events should focus on key sectors of relevance to the diaspora they target, focusing on women in business, Kildare as a tourism destination, spotlighting Kildare female artists, etc to align with the themes of St Brigid.

As Ireland looks to achieve ambitious climate action targets, there is an opportunity to embed St Brigid's legacy in Kildare County Council's Climate Action planning. Commemorating St Brigid - who had a remarkable affinity with the natural environment and drive for fairness and justice - with long term ambitious community climate resilience initiatives, brings the wisdom and traditional practices of generations past to the present for future benefit, further perpetuating her legacy.



## Section 3

### Culture & Heritage

*'And straight I will repair  
To the Curragh of Kildare  
For it's there I'll find tidings of my dear'*

***Lyrics by Christy Moore***

## Culture & Music

Kildare County Council's Arts Strategy 2018 *'sets out Kildare County Council's public service role as conduit, enabler and instigator, working with the arts community, partner organisations and the wider public to ensure the maximum number of citizens have multi-layered opportunities to embrace the arts, be it as active participants, viewers, audiences or indeed, to make their own stories.'*<sup>13</sup>

The strategy recognises and values the large number of artists who live and work in the county, alongside the many arts organisations, all adding to the rich social, economic and cultural fabric of the community.

Music, arts and culture are excellent ways to engage with Kildare's diaspora, and people stay connected to home through much-loved musicians, writers and artists, or they stay up to date with emerging artists from Kildare so as to build new connections to home. Anecdotal evidence from arts venues programming content online during the Covid pandemic bears this out, with online audiences spread across the globe.

Arts and culture have a key role to play in reaching out to the diaspora and affinity audiences and sustaining their connection to home. This is evident through Irish cultural and arts centres overseas, international Irish festivals, the global St Brigid's Day celebrations and so on. The secondary messaging here supports Kildare County Council's objectives in showcasing Kildare to international audiences, as well as promoting Kildare's tourism potential and enterprise appeal internationally.

## Equine

Kildare's long-standing association with the equine sector can provide a meaningful hook for both diaspora and affinity diaspora engagement. While at times a transient sector, where some may come to work or to train in Kildare, or indeed to visit for races and events, the many facets of the equine sector mean that very many people involved in the sector in Ireland and internationally will have a connection with Kildare.

The significance of the sector to Kildare is clear in the Kildare 2025 Enterprise Strategy, where the equine industry is recognised as a key focus area for the strategy. The Local Authority has a commitment to supporting the sector's development and growth, in particular in relation to inward investment and innovation, with a particular emphasis on excellence.

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<sup>13</sup> Short Grass Stories: An Arts Strategy for Kildare County Council 2018-2022

Fáilte Ireland's Thoroughbred Country Destination Experience Development Plan in development with counties Kildare and Tipperary will bring opportunities to engage broader affinity diaspora audiences with Kildare's appeal as a tourism destination. Ireland's global reputation as a leader in the breeding and racing of thoroughbred horses will be central to the destination development plan, which will create a dynamic destination to attract domestic and international visitors and establish the region as the world's leading thoroughbred experience.<sup>14</sup>

Similar to the broader enterprise sector, there is scope to develop a partnership approach to engaging with the equine sector's diaspora community and those within the sector that have an affinity to Kildare and explore opportunities for mutually beneficial relationships.

## **GAA/Sporting**

Kildare GAA is undertaking a diaspora research project. The organisation seeks to establish the footprint of its diaspora, and using that information, create meaningful relationships with its international diaspora that reinforce the connections and synergies between its members and diaspora.

Establishing the global footprint of Kildare GAA is an important step in determining the global reach of Kildare people today, given the GAA is at the heart of so many communities and families. Collaborating with Kildare GAA to identify and establish potential international diaspora connections can help in exploring opportunities and synergies with other diaspora partners.

Of note in the years ahead are plans by Kildare Library Local Studies Department to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of Kildare's All-Ireland Football Championship wins in 1927 and 1928, when Kildare was the first county to win the Sam Maguire Cup in a final where they beat Cavan. A partnership approach to marking these anniversaries could be very beneficial. Given Sam Maguire's own Cork heritage, and Cavan's strong diaspora reach, there might also be scope to link with Cork and Cavan GAAs and their respective diaspora for enhanced scale and impact amongst the overseas diaspora for these celebrations.

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.failteireland.ie/Regional-experience-brands/Ireland-s-Ancient-East/Thoroughbred-Country-DEDP.aspx>

## Heritage

Kildare's built and natural heritage assets are a key element of the pride in Kildare that is evident in the research for this project, both in consultations, and in researching the many heritage or memory lane Facebook groups and pages for Kildare (see table below for a selection of relevant groups and pages).

<b>KILDARE HERITAGE &amp; HISTORY FACEBOOK GROUPS</b>	
Kildare Community Stories page	8.8k followers
Old Maynooth group	4.3k members
NUI Maynooth group	4.1k members
Curragh History group	3.7k members
Kill, Co. Kildare group	3.6k members
Maynooth Past – Present – Future group	3.6k members
County Kildare Heritage Office page	3k followers
People who lived in the Curragh group	2.9k members
Growing up in Celbridge group	2.5k members
Kildare GAA group	2.5k members
Prosperous Heritage Society page	2k followers
County Kildare Ireland Genealogy group	1.2k members
Kildare Decade of Commemorations page	1.2k followers
Athy Town Past & Present group	1.2k members

In Kildare, there are a remarkable 19 local history groups under the umbrella of the Federation of Kildare Local History Groups, and a Kildare archaeology group, all active and engaged in the discovery of and sharing the history and heritage of their local environs. This is a remarkable number of local history groups for a county of its scale, and further evidence of the depth of connection and engagement with their local area.

Anecdotally, the scale of response in the initial consultation phase of the Curragh Plains redevelopment project<sup>15</sup> gives further evidence of the intense depth of feeling Kildare people have for the place they call home.

While county pride in its traditional manifestation is not as commonly seen in Kildare, it is evident that the history and heritage of what makes Kildare home is significant, and therefore an important theme on which to engage Kildare's diaspora.

## Military

The Curragh Camp is a self-contained army base and military training college on The Curragh, outside Newbridge. The Curragh has always had an association with military training, right from the days of the Fianna. Handed over from the British Army to the Irish Free State in 1922, at its height, the camp was home to 10,000-15,000 people although those numbers have dwindled considerably today.

The Curragh Camp provided a very unique and specific upbringing for Irish military families as a self-contained town with schools, swimming pool, social clubs and more, although many played GAA locally for either Sarsfield or Moorefield GAA clubs.

The nature and structure of the Defence Forces and the military families has resulted in very strong historical and social ties for military personnel and their families who lived at the Curragh Camp over the years. Those connections are informal, and the links are sustained largely through social interaction and social media.

Kildare County Council and the Defence Forces are collaborating on a Conservation and Interpretation Plan for the Curragh Plains, to shape a shared and sustainable vision for the Plains.<sup>16</sup> A public consultation to understand the importance of the Curragh Plains received almost 4,000 submissions, over 8 times the number received for the County Development Plan, indicative of the strength of feeling the public have for this place.

In those responses, the military connection and historic significance of the Curragh was an important factor for many, as were family and community connections and memories. While the survey did not distinguish if respondents had a military connection to the Curragh, it is clear from the findings that some respondents did.

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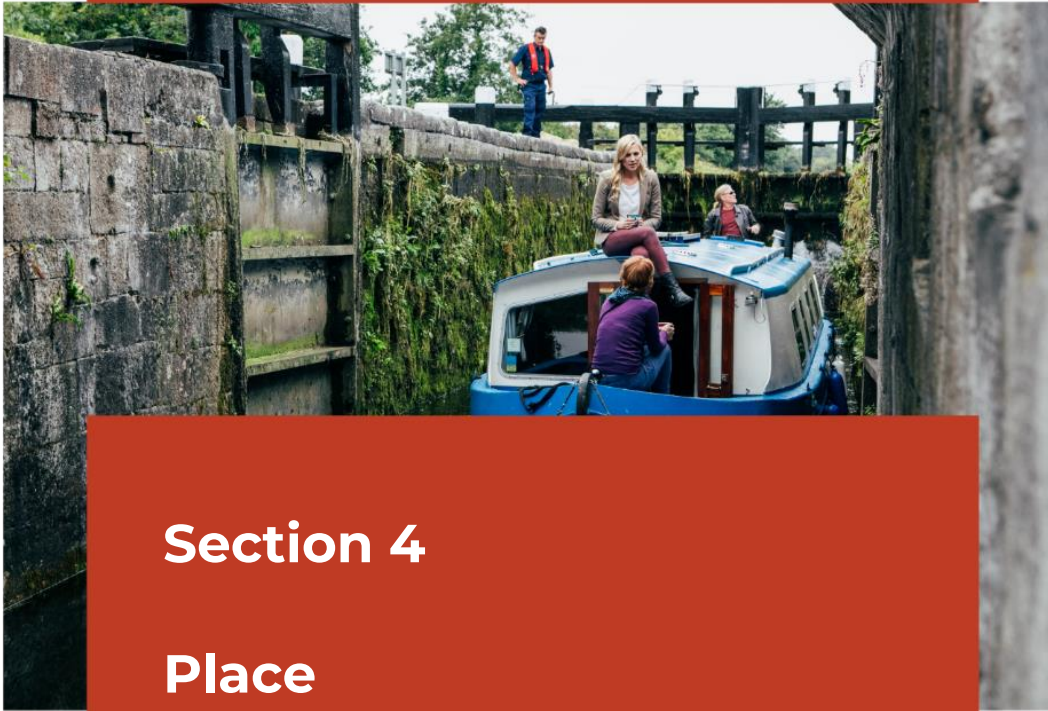
<sup>15</sup> *The Paul Horwath Company - THE CURRAGH PLAINS: Preliminary Public Consultation Findings, May 2021*

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.curraghplains.ie/>

The Irish Military Seminar takes place every June as part of JuneFest, in association with the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport & Media and Riverbank Arts Centre.

While the Defence Forces does not at present connect in a formal way with the Kildare diaspora other than via its Veteran Support Services, the Press Office and Personnel Section are well equipped and happy to facilitate Kildare County Council in connecting with its diaspora as required. The scale of response to the Curragh Plains consultation would indicate that Kildare's military diaspora would be favourably disposed to connecting in the future.





## Section 4

### Place

*"By 2024, Kildare and its hinterland will be among the leading entrepreneurial regions in Europe; characterised by a highly conducive environment for entrepreneurship and innovative start-ups"*

**Local Enterprise Development Plan Kildare Vision**

## Introduction

Research for this strategy indicates that the draw to home for Kildare people is largely about family, and a keen sense of Kildare as a place. That place is rooted deeply in Kildare's landscape – from the great plains of the Curragh to the canals and River Liffey, and to the many historic towns and villages that have been home to generations of people born in Kildare or choosing to make Kildare their home.

As a county, Kildare has a number of key hooks that can, and indeed have been, deployed to engage and magnetise its diaspora. They are explored here, with some detail on what these particular segments of Kildare society and business have achieved and planned in engaging with Kildare's diaspora.

## Enterprise

Kildare is a dynamic county that performs well in attracting FDI and has a strong indigenous SME base, largely unaffected by the impacts of Brexit. It has many international links and connections in the enterprise sector. Kildare 2025 Economic Strategy articulates a vision that:

*“Kildare will become a major economic force in the Irish and European economy, a leading centre for commercial investment – both foreign direct investment and indigenous business growth, capitalising on the strength of its higher education institutions and further education champions, the skills and wellbeing of its workforce and its environmental and heritage attributes.”*

That vision reflects much work done on the ground in the business community and with Kildare County Council's Economic Development Department. Kildare's diaspora too has a role to play in realising this vision, reflected as a Strategic Objective in this economic strategy – *'Identify and leverage the County Kildare Diaspora to encourage mobile investments into the County.'*

County Kildare Chamber in particular has worked to leverage Kildare's international connections for the economic benefit of the county. This includes business connections in the city of Boston, developed in partnership with Maynooth University with support from Kildare County Council's EIU.



2019 Kildare - Boston Trade Mission (Chamber of Commerce)

A city of strategic interest to Kildare from an enterprise perspective, Boston is a relatively short journey from Ireland, easy to do business in as a smaller city, and, with over one-third of the population claiming Irish heritage, interested in connecting with Irish businesses.

A number of trade missions between Boston and Kildare have taken place in recent years, exploring opportunities for FDI in Ireland and export, research and investment opportunities for Kildare-based SMEs in the Boston area. The partnership with Maynooth University has made it easier to connect with Boston-based MU alumni, helping expand Kildare's network of connections there. To date, the relationship has brought investment from Keurig Dr Pepper, with 85 high value roles created in Kildare.

Kildare Chamber is also building relationships in Florida (data centre sector), Dubai and the Middle East (equine sector), and a lesser extent New York. In all cases, the relationships focus on the synergies between Kildare and these destinations, and the potential for mutually beneficial business relationships, as well as promoting Kildare's tourism offering.

An innovative initiative by Kildare Chamber to bring international business to Kildare was its bid to host the American College Series High School Games Series as part of a five-year agreement from 2022-2026. This showcase will bring up to 12 US based high school American to Kildare, along with parents, sponsors and associated corporate travel.

There is real potential here to leverage these opportunities to connect with Kildare diaspora and MU alumni in the home cities of these teams and develop relationships with them.

Similarly, the Brigid 1500 anniversary brings greater potential to showcase Kildare on the global stage for the enterprise sector. There is scope to harness the strong relationships developed globally in celebrating St Brigid's Day to create wider opportunities to showcase Kildare's enterprise and FDI potential.

## **Education**

Maynooth University's Development and Alumni Relations Office works to foster long-term connections with MU's graduates. There are numerous engagement channels, through newsletters, social and networking events and class reunions on campus. Additionally, the university alumni network has a number of international chapters in Beijing and in France where locally based alumni can network and connect with other graduates.

The Maynooth University Foundation offers graduates a vehicle to make financial contributions towards priority projects at the university, including scholarships and bursaries for present day students.

In addition to its independent work, Maynooth University are strong collaborators with County Kildare Chamber in developing an enterprise relationship with international diaspora. This is particularly the case in the Kildare-Boston enterprise connections, and similarly, the University has an important offering as a base in the county for the American College Series High School Games Series 2022-2026.

MU's potential to build long term relationships with graduates as their careers develop is an exceptional resource for Kildare to have at its disposal in reaching out and developing international networks. This is particularly so in the USA, where college affiliation and alumni networks are very strong. Leveraging these relationships as MU has done in partnership with County Kildare Chamber and Kildare Economic Development Dept is an important and strategic approach to developing potential for diaspora engagement.

## Twinning

Twinning can be defined as ‘The coming together of two communities seeking, in this way, to take action with a European (or international) perspective and with the aim of facing their problems and developing between themselves closer and closer ties of friendship.’<sup>17</sup>

Kildare’s Twinning Strategy (2021) specifically identifies areas such as education, economic development, arts and culture, tourism, sports and community where common interests can strengthen the relationship between two communities or regions for mutual benefit. A Twinning Liaison Committee coordinates Kildare’s twinning initiatives and Twinning Committees coordinate individual twinning arrangements.

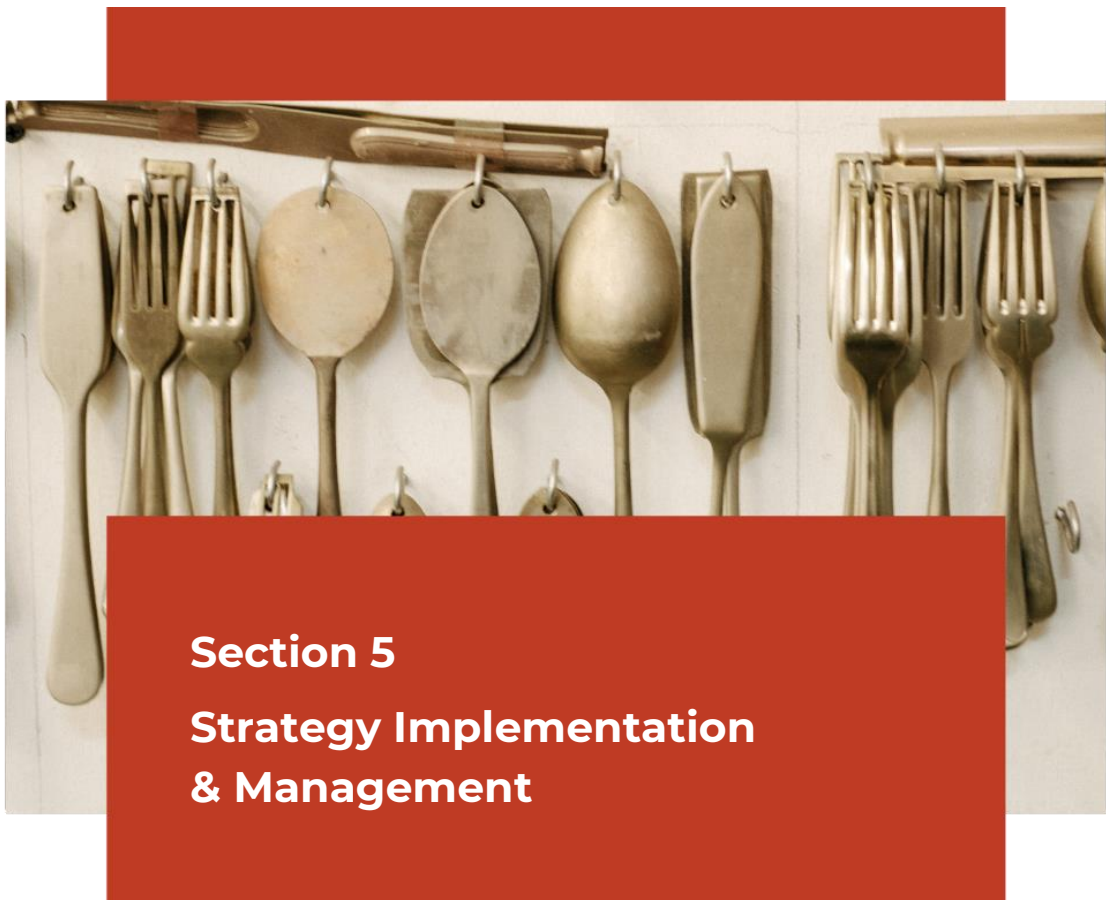
MD	Name of town	Twinned with	Dates
County	County Kildare	Lexington	1984
		Deauville	Early 1990
Kildare/ Newbridge	Newbridge	Bad Lippspringe, Germany	1997
		Ocala, Florida	2008
		Argentré-du- Plessis, France	2017
	Kildare Town	Corps-Nuds, France	1992
Celbridge/ Leixlip	Leixlip	Bressuire, France	1996
		Niles, USA	2000
Athy	Athy	Grandvilliers, France	2003
Naas	Naas	St David's, Wales	1990
		Dillingen, Germany	1990
		Casalattico, Italy	1990
		Allaire, France	1990
		Omaha, USA	1990
	Kilcullen	Saint Contest	2018
Maynooth	Maynooth	Canet-en-Roussillon, France	2011

In Kildare, there are a number of twinning relationships. County level relationships are managed by the Local Authority, and town or regional level twinings are managed via community-led twinning committees.

Kildare’s Twinning Strategy recommends that all twinning committees have a strong foundation in the community, and fulfil their role in developing a strategic plan and programme of activities to support relationship development between their community and their twin towns.

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.twinning.org/en/page/a-quick-overview#.Yhdv-lp\\_gM9](http://www.twinning.org/en/page/a-quick-overview#.Yhdv-lp_gM9)

With the broader context of Maynooth University and the rich enterprise and FDI sector in Kildare, coupled with the distinct military and equine traditions in the county, expanding the scope of some twinning relationships may bring additional opportunities.



## Section 5

### Strategy Implementation & Management

*'In a recent survey of its global customer base, estate agent Knight Frank found that nearly two-thirds of expats (64 per cent) said that lockdown had influenced their decision to buy a property in their home country.'*

*"Ireland is another country whose citizens are returning. The latest figures from the Central Statistics Office show that 28,900 Irish nationals went back to live and work in the year to April 2020 — the highest number in 13 years. The Department of Foreign Affairs fielded about 8,000 inquiries from Irish people abroad seeking to return between March and September.*

*"Ten per cent of our new-build home sales in Dublin have been to [returning] expats," says Ray Palmer-Smith of Knight Frank's Irish office. "Most are cash buyers, but there are specific 'home to return to' mortgages available for Irish expats [who buy] before making the move." EBS bank is one such lender offering these products."*

<https://www.ft.com/content/efe0c3d3-877f-400b-8a49-0c4762b29251>

## Actions & Next Steps

The Implementation Plan for Kildare’s Diaspora Engagement Strategy identifies short, medium and long term actions to be implemented over the lifetime of the strategy. Actions are grouped according to the strategic aim they seek to address:

Know our network potential
Connect with Kildare’s global diaspora
Collaborate to build networks & engagement
Communicate & celebrate Kildare

The key deliverables in this implementation plan are:

- A database of Kildare’s diaspora and their contacts, that gives an overview of their locations, interests and preferred communication methods
- Actions to communicate and engage with the diaspora
- The establishment of Kildare Diaspora Committee to oversee Kildare’s diaspora engagement
- A Kildare diaspora web presence, either housed on kildare.ie or a stand alone website managed by Kildare County Council) that signposts diaspora to further information.

## Critical Success Factors

### Focus

Ireland’s Local Diaspora Toolkit outlines a recommended framework for successful diaspora engagement initiatives. This approach recommends the following steps:

- Identify Your Diaspora – Define, Locate, Map.
- Engage Your Diaspora – Strategise, Listen, Plan.
- Share Your Project – Open Up, Communicate, Build a Brand.
- Grow Your Project – Expand, Embed<sup>18</sup>

This approach – now tried and tested - is critical to the continued success and momentum building of Kildare’s diaspora engagement activities.

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<sup>18</sup> UCD Clinton Institute for the Office of the Minister For Diaspora Affairs - Local Diaspora Toolkit, 2015



## **Resources – funding the plan**

Fostering international relationships and the activities that support these relationships can be costly, and securing resources and funding for such activities is an essential factor in successfully delivering on the objectives of this strategy.

In terms of human resources, it is recommended that the delivery of this strategy and the resources required to establish and coordinate Kildare's Diaspora Committee be ring-fenced within Kildare County Council, either from the Enterprise Development Department, Community Section or Local Studies Department, or perhaps a combination of all three, with each focusing on a specific element of strategy delivery.

Funding sources for the delivery of this strategy and its associated activities can vary, particularly between EU funding programmes. Present available funding resources to be explored would include:

- Local authority funding
- Local authority Sports Partnership funding
- Local Enterprise Office funding for international business networking/trade show exhibitions
- Tourism, Heritage and Arts festival funding (via Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports & Media, Arts Council of Ireland, Fáilte Ireland and local authority), particularly funds that apply to EU artistic collaborations.
- Enterprise development and festival development, in particular for Brigid 1500 commemorations could potentially attract funding from Fáilte Ireland's Festival Innovation Fund and LEADER
- Creative Ireland EU Collaboration Projects or European Networks Fund
- Culture Ireland
- Rethink Ireland
- IBP Insurance Community Engagement Fund
- Private corporate social responsibility or philanthropic funding, in particular from Kildare's larger domestic & FDI businesses
- Arts and cultural collaborations internationally via Department of Foreign Affairs and overseas Irish cultural institutions – most relevant for Brigid 1500

It is also recommended that Kildare County Council work closely with Kildare Diaspora Committee to initiate and lead additional fundraising and sponsorship efforts to widen the opportunities to fund the activities of this strategy implementation.

## **Networking & knowledge sharing**

A key element in delivery of the strategy will be galvanising resources and ensuring momentum with Kildare's diaspora builds in tandem with plans for Brigid 1500 commemorations in 2024, a flagship event for Kildare County Council and the county of Kildare on the global stage.

There are thought leaders in the Irish diaspora field. Knowledge sharing and collaboration are at the heart of this strategy, and learning from Ireland's leaders in diaspora engagement would bring great benefit in the delivery of this strategy.

This is particularly relevant in the animation of St Brigid's Day and her 1500<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemorations. Both Donegal County Council and Mayo County Council in particular have strong track records in delivering large-scale County Day initiatives with global reach for a number of years now.

In tandem, establishing Kildare's Diaspora Committee and ensuring that momentum builds in the roll out of this strategy is key to its success.

## **Best practice**

Reflecting best practice in diaspora engagement is essential in the delivery of this strategy. The strategy implementation plan seeks to leave a legacy footprint for others to follow, and good oversight by Kildare County Council management and its Diaspora Committee is key.

Ensuring this strategy and its actions are woven into the corporate policy framework of Kildare County Council is pivotal in supporting delivery of this strategy's actions. Ongoing engagement with stakeholders in this strategy implementation is vital to ensure a diaspora and international focus remains embedded in future policy. This too must ensure that the diaspora relationship remains at all times mutually beneficial.

## Kildare Diaspora Committee

The establishment of a Kildare Diaspora Committee is a key deliverable in this action plan. Comprising key stakeholders in County Kildare's engagement with its diaspora and international networks, the role of this committee is to:

- Meet periodically for knowledge sharing and to review the progress of this strategy
- Drive the actions of this strategy for the mutual benefit of all diaspora stakeholders, the Kildare community and its diaspora
- Identify new and innovative ways to continue to harness the power of Kildare's diaspora for the county.
- Through their networks, create international opportunities for Kildare
- Grow Kildare's diaspora network and contact database, as well as
- Continue to identify and recruit additional Kildare ambassadors
- Build awareness of Kildare's diaspora engagement at every opportunity
- Collaborate to secure funding commitments to resource international activities

The Committee should include representation from the broader stakeholder group, including but not limited to - Kildare County Council, County Kildare Chamber, Defence Forces, Kildare Arts Office, Kildare Federation of Local History Groups, Kildare GAA/GPA, Kildare LEO, Kildare Local Studies Department/Genealogy Service, Kildare PPN, Maynooth University.

It is important to remember that, at times, our diaspora engagement efforts must respond to the needs of all, with equality and inclusion at the heart of all activities. In doing so, outreach must respond to the needs of those most excluded as well as celebrating the good times and those who succeed.

### **The Role of the Local Authority**

Kildare County Council has a pivotal role to play, both in driving its international relationships and as a 360-degree facilitator in developing international networks in collaboration with strategic partners - facilitating communications and connections between Kildare County Council, its Diaspora Committee, Kildare GAA, the Defence Forces, Maynooth University, County Kildare Chamber and Kildare's communities at home and abroad.

Meaningful support of international partners and networks can be achieved by maintaining positive relationships, especially with facilitators and leaders. It is important that the Local Authority is represented at key overseas events, engaging with the activities and leadership committees of overseas networks.

## INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS/OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT WITH

<p><b><i>Business/Sectoral Links</i></b></p> <p>Lansdowne Club, Sydney            Irish International Business Network(particularly Middle East)            Back for Business Programme supported by the Government's Emigrant Support Programme            Boston/County Kildare Chamber connections            International FDI source cities            International Defence Forces/United Nations connections            Maynooth University Alumni Groups (France &amp; China in particular)</p>	<p><b><i>General Diaspora Links</i></b></p> <p>Irish Clubs in key diaspora cities/countries            London Irish Centre            Irelandanditsdiaspora.com – UK            Irishcentral.com – US            Canada Ireland Foundation            Irish in France</p>
<p><b><i>Sports</i></b></p> <p>GAA clubs            Horse racing enthusiasts &amp; Kildare racing festival regulars            Motor racing enthusiasts &amp; Kildare (Mondello/Gordon Bennett) regulars            International members of The K Club</p>	<p><b><i>Cultural Links</i></b></p> <p>Irish dancing schools abroad            Irish Arts Centre New York            Irish Cultural Centre Paris            Kildare artists performing/touring internationally</p>
<p><b><i>Brigid of Kildare</i></b></p> <p>Brigidine Order &amp; schools            Department of Foreign Affairs &amp; Embassy network            Irish diaspora in general</p>	<p><b><i>Philanthropy</i></b></p> <p>The Ireland Funds, in particular donors who are members of Kildare diaspora</p>

## Implementation Plan

SHORT TERM		
KNOW YOUR NETWORK	Define Kildare's diaspora - those with Kildare ancestry, Kildare-born living overseas/outside the county, those with an affinity for Kildare	All partners
	Audit of diaspora and international contacts, e.g., Depts Foreign Affairs, Enterprise, Trade & Employment, IDA, Enterprise Ireland, Global Irish Network, Irish Business Network, Tourism Ireland, media, entertainment & arts	All partners
	Create a database of Kildare diaspora	KCC
CONNECT	Collate an annual calendar of diaspora engagement opportunities - festivals, annual events, commemorations, etc.	KCC
	Develop a global list of Kildare Ambassadors, with cross-sectoral representation, reflecting Kildare's diversity	KCC & KDC
COLLABORATE	Establish Kildare Diaspora Committee (KDC) with a role in connecting and collaborating for diaspora engagement. The proposed make up and terms of this committee are outlined on page 29	KCC
	Via KDC, build connections with a shared interests to deepen diaspora relationship, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wider GAA network</li> <li>• St Brigid international connections</li> <li>• Diaspora business networks</li> <li>• Department of Foreign Affairs</li> <li>• Irish Embassies globally</li> <li>• Fáilte Ireland/Tourism Ireland</li> <li>• Leverage KDC and its connections for Brigid 1500 celebrations</li> </ul>	KDC & global diaspora network
	Collaborate with RootsIreland to leverage database of contacts for destination marketing, market research or an invitation to sign up to the Kildare diaspora database & newsletter	KCC
	Consider Kildare's archives (military, equine, local history) and how they can be leveraged for special interest talks/seminars, etc.	KCC, DF, National Stud, GAA
COMMUNICATE	Support Kildare Arts, Culture and Heritage venues and organisations in programming online or hybrid to continue diaspora engagement – either as audience or event participants	KCC, KAO, KLS
	Create an online digital archive of Kildare arts, culture and heritage events (subject to licence).	
	Establish communication channels for diaspora engagement - via existing newsletters, social media, local newspapers, schools,	KCC, KDC

	international networks and media. Leverage diaspora partnerships and networks.	
	Invite the Diaspora to share their Kildare-related stories and news on the Kildare Community Stories Facebook Page	KCC
	Create a dedicated Kildare diaspora LinkedIn page targeting FDI and enterprise in Kildare, supporting trade connections with international partners	KCC, CKC

## MEDIUM TERM

KNOW YOUR NETWORK	Undertake an online survey of Kildare diaspora to add to the diaspora database - how best to communicate with the diaspora, their areas of interest and their relevant local networks	KCC, KDC
	Use market research to understand Kildare's affinity diaspora identity, what connects them to Kildare and how to connect with this group	KDC, DF, Equine sector
	Identify clusters or networks of diaspora and international connections for engagement	KDC
CONNECT	Ensure Kildare Ambassadors have a role in all Kildare festivals and events at home and overseas, supporting community groups and diaspora connections	KCC, KDC, IK
COLLABORATE	Use the mechanism of Kildare's Public Participation Network to encourage broader engagement at community level. This should include focus on younger communities at home and abroad to harness the potential of future generation diaspora	KCC
	Connect local history societies with the wider diaspora network to make introductions, knowledge sharing, potentially offer tours for visiting diaspora	KCC, KLS
	Explore the possibility of twinning GAA clubs in Kildare with overseas clubs or establishing clubs in twin towns	KCC, GAA
CHOOSE KILDARE – A KILDARE SHOWCASE IN CELEBRATION OF ST BRIGID	<p>Develop a month long 'Choose Kildare' campaign for February – underpin cultural and heritage celebrations with a Kildare showcase to local, national and international audiences who have an affinity with Kildare, the saint and the goddess.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Tourism</b> – Align destination marketing with St Brigid's Day to drive visitation for the festival period, and a showcase of Kildare's heritage, activity, festivals and events offering. Niche tourism markets to explore include Celtic tourism, religious tourism and pilgrimage.</li> <li>• <b>Business</b> – Promote Kildare businesses across key markets, showcasing the breadth of business that operates in Kildare and exports from the County, including overseas trade missions for St Brigid's Day to develop relationships and open doors. The Kildare Association in New York may be supportive. Kildare Chamber of Commerce and large FDIs in Kildare may support in scoping out opportunities overseas</li> <li>• <b>Crafts, Food, Culture and Creative Sectors</b> – Promotional activity to showcase Kildare's talented craftspeople, food producers and creatives</li> <li>• <b>Women in Leadership</b> – The ethos of St Brigid's gives a strong basis to showcase the achievements of Kildare's trailblazing women of the past, present and future, well-known members of Kildare's diaspora, leaders in sectors such as business, education, arts or science who have significant achievements in their field.</li> </ul>	All stakeholders

COMMUNICATE	<p>Develop a Kildare diaspora webpage (this could be on kildare.ie) to signposts diaspora to further information, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Newsletter sign up field for news of Kildare</li> <li>• Link to Into Kildare - tourist information, festivals and events</li> <li>• Kildare heritage – Kildare archives, genealogy, local history groups and their events</li> <li>• Kildare arts - showcasing Kildare arts and culture</li> <li>• Kildare LEO &amp; County Kildare Chamber – connecting with Kildare for business</li> <li>• Kildare GAA news and results</li> <li>• Key Kildare heritage and memory lane social media accounts</li> <li>• Information on returning home</li> <li>• Link to local radio and newspapers, online parish newsletters, community and youth services</li> <li>• Link to the Kildare Association NY, key diaspora networks and groups</li> <li>• A dedicated email address such as <a href="mailto:diaspora@Kildarecoco.ie">diaspora@Kildarecoco.ie</a>, to be managed by Local Authority</li> </ul>	KCC & partners
	Develop an annual Kildare County Council award or honour system to formally recognise the achievement and positive influence of Kildare's community at home and diaspora	KCC
	Consider nominating suitable Kildare diaspora for awards such as the Presidential Distinguished Service Award for the Irish Abroad.	KEC
	Consider nominating those active in diaspora engagement for awards such as LAMA or Pride of Place in recognition of their work.	KCC



## LONG TERM

KNOW YOUR NETWORK	Develop an interactive map of Kildare's global footprint, its diaspora and their areas of interest in connecting with home	KCC
CONNECT	Periodic newsletter communications with Kildare diaspora with news from home and overseas on key themes – heritage, business, education, Ambassadors, planning your visit home	KDC
	Together with Irish diaspora partners overseas, ensure Kildare County Council and diaspora community fulfils its social responsibility to its diaspora. This can include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Localised outreach in key diaspora communities</li> <li>• Information online on relocating home to Kildare</li> <li>• Supporting genealogical research.</li> </ul>	KCC  Diaspora groups overseas
	Develop a best-practice model for how to establish and maintain links with diaspora communities for the benefit of all. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring all engagement is meaningful, and all trade missions/delegation visits have a results driven agenda</li> <li>• Broadening the stakeholder base on both sides to mitigate risk in the event of a loss of a key player in the relationship</li> <li>• Including younger people to build connections for the future – educational scholarships, cultural, early-stage career &amp; work placements</li> <li>• Ensuring international relationships and networks are inclusive, diverse and representative</li> <li>• Build diaspora and international engagement into the development of future strategic planning at Kildare County Council</li> <li>• Include KDC in community consultations process</li> </ul>	KCC, KDC
	Identify key diaspora networks and build on these networks to maximise synergies. Potential areas of interest for future international collaborations are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education - School and/or student exchange, scholarships, Erasmus programmes</li> <li>• Third level alumni</li> <li>• Active aging</li> <li>• Cultural &amp; tourism, particularly around County Kildare's signature festivals</li> <li>• Ecclesiastical/monastic heritage</li> <li>• International trade and enterprise</li> </ul>	KCC, DEC
	Develop a Kildare-specific international philanthropic network & identify appropriate projects for philanthropic support	KDC
	Ensure Kildare's international relationships are visible in everyday life in the county, by including touring exhibitions, cultural showcases, festivals and artistic performances celebrating the culture, arts and heritage of Kildare's international partners.	KCC, KAO, KLS

	Support the Twinning and Diaspora Committees in developing additional funding streams for their activities, including corporate sponsorship, public and private grant support, philanthropic funding.	KCC, KDC, KTC
COMMUNICATE	<p>Include the diaspora in Kildare's annual festivals and events (and incentivise festivals and events to include the diaspora with additional funding/supports). This could be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hybrid or online programming for content that has particular interest for Kildare's diaspora, e.g., John Devoy Memorial Event in Naas with Kildare Association NY</li> <li>• Inviting diaspora to speak at relevant talks, lectures and seminars, particularly if remote participation can be facilitated</li> <li>• Links with local schools to deepen knowledge of diaspora connections</li> <li>• Online genealogy workshops for Heritage Week</li> </ul>	KCC, IK, KLS
	Support Kildare local community groups in pursuing and developing diaspora projects	KCC, KPPN
	<p>Kildare's festivals and events can be a showcase of Kildare and its story –St Brigid's Day, Racing Festivals (cars, horse racing, Gordon Bennett), heritage events showcasing the military and Quaker connections, Kildare arts, Kildare's big houses, food festivals, twinning themed festivals such as Bastille Day, Fourth of July.</p> <p>Reciprocal festivals in twin towns and key diaspora destinations, e.g., St Brigid's Day celebrations globally connecting back to Kildare (symbolism like a perpetual flame, HerStory building illuminations, pilgrimage walks). Consideration of a Twin Derby Festival between Kildare and Kentucky .</p> <p>A sense of shared identity between communities is key to deepening and strengthening connections.</p>	KCC, IK, KDC, KTC

## Conclusion

The core principles of diaspora engagement are to provide a structure that supports communities to engage – person to person - across borders based on areas of mutual interest – be they social, cultural, educational, political, professional or genealogical.

In this process, Kildare County Council seeks to develop meaningful international relationships with its diaspora and affinity communities. This strategy identifies how best to further develop these relationships and presents a recommended engagement plan to deliver on Kildare County Council's objectives, identifying the resources and critical success factors required for the strategy to be successfully delivered.

It is recommended that this plan its implementation be reviewed and evaluated as it is delivered to measure its success against its objectives. It is essential that Kildare County Council takes action to review and potentially change direction in these relationships if they do not deliver the anticipated results, considering new opportunities if necessary to fulfil its objectives.

Developing this strategy has begun an important engagement with Kildare's strategic partners, asking what these relationships mean and how these partners envisage the relationships developing in the future. It is important now that these relationships be nurtured and the dialogue with partners remains open for the future to optimise the potential results.

Central to all of Kildare's international relationships and their potential is the development of a civic pride and community engagement at home. This is key to building sustainable community engagement for the greater social, cultural and economic good of not only Kildare's international relationships, but also for the county and its people at home. Delivering on this brings huge potential for Kildare's future generations and diaspora, in terms of county pride, community and international relations and for its people in creating rich, cultural and engaged communities throughout the county. Events will catalyse connections, but community will sustain these connections for the future.

# Appendix 1 - Consultations

The following organisations and individuals were contacted or consulted with in the preparation of this report:

Adrian Mooney, Kilkea Castle  
Cllr Angela Feeney, Elected Member, Kildare County Council  
Cllr Kevin Duffy, Elected Member, Kildare County Council  
County Kildare Chamber  
County Kildare Genealogist  
Defence Forces – Curragh Camp  
Into Kildare  
Kildare Community Stories Facebook Page  
Kildare County Council  
Kildare County Council - Arts Officer  
Kildare County Council - Community Section  
Kildare County Council - Heritage Officer  
Kildare County Council - Local Community Development Committee  
Kildare County Council - Local Studies  
Kildare GAA  
Kildare LEO  
Kildare Public Participation Network  
Kildare Town Heritage Centre & Tourist Office  
Riverbank Arts Centre

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- Aer Lingus College Football Classic - <https://collegefootballireland.com/the-games/kildare-high-school-showcase/>
- County Kildare Federation of Local History Groups [www.kildarelocalhistory.ie](http://www.kildarelocalhistory.ie)
- Curragh Plains website - <https://www.curraghplains.ie/>
- Department of Foreign Affairs - Global Ireland: Ireland's Diaspora Strategy 2020-2025
- Department of Foreign Affairs – Review of Ireland's Diaspora Strategy Consultation 2014
- Department of Foreign Affairs, Kennedy, Lyons & Russell - Supporting the Next Generation of Irish Diaspora: Report of a Research Project Funded by the Emigrant Support Programme 2014
- Fáilte Ireland – Thoroughbred Country Destination Experience Development Plan - <https://www.failteireland.ie/Regional-experience-brands/Ireland-s-Ancient-East/Thoroughbred-Country-DEDP.aspx>
- ISP & Celbridge Tourism and Heritage Forum - Celbridge – Gateway to Ireland's Ancient East Tourism and Heritage Strategy 2016-2020
- Kildare County Council & Local Community Development Committee - Kildare Census 2016 Profile Summary
- Kildare County Council – Kildare 2025: Economic Development Strategy
- Kildare County Council - Twinning Policy 2021
- Kildare County Council - Corporate Plan 2019-2024
- Kildare County Council Arts Office - Short Grass Stories: An Arts Strategy for Kildare County Council 2018-2022
- Kildare Local Enterprise Office – Local Enterprise Development Plan 2021-2024
- Kildare Nationalist - <https://kildare-nationalist.ie/2020/11/18/new-diaspora-strategy-challenges-traditional-irish-abroad-image/>
- Local and Regional Europe - Twinning - [http://www.twinning.org/en/page/a-quick-overview#.Yhdv-lp\\_qM9](http://www.twinning.org/en/page/a-quick-overview#.Yhdv-lp_qM9)
- The Guardian - <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/apr/03/brexit-vote-sparked-surge-in-irish-passports-issued-in-great-britain>
- The Paul Hogarth Company – The Curragh Plains: Preliminary Public Consultation Findings, May 2021
- UCD Clinton Institute for the Office of the Minister For Diaspora Affairs - Local Diaspora Toolkit, 2015
- World Travel & Tourism Council - 2020 Global Economic Impact Trends Report
- World Travel & Tourism Council - To Recovery & Beyond: The Future of Travel & Tourism in the Wake of COVID-19, 2020

**Ernest Shackleton resources:**

Shackleton Museum, Athy - <https://shackletonmuseum.com/>  
Sir Ernest Henry Shackleton (Shackleton Family webpage) - <http://www.ernestshackleton.net/>

**Made of Athy resources:**

Kildare Nationalist – <https://kildare-nationalist.ie/2019/05/09/made-of-athy-project-gets-presidents-seal-of-approval/>  
Wikipedia - [https://en.everybodywiki.com/Made\\_of\\_Athy](https://en.everybodywiki.com/Made_of_Athy)

**Maura Laverty resources:**

Ireland's Own - <https://www.irelandsown.ie/maura-laverty-the-creator-of-irish-tvs-first-soap-died-50-years-ago/>  
Irish Independent - <https://www.independent.ie/lifestyle/the-mammy-of-irish-cookery-26743950.html>  
Irish Times - <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/the-maura-laverty-story-from-rathangan-to-tolka-row-review-a-full-life-1.3414509>  
Wikipedia - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maura\\_Laverty](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maura_Laverty)

**Brigid of Kildare resources:**

Brigid Of Faughart Festival - <http://www.brigidoffaughart.ie/>  
Brigid's Way - <http://bridgsway.ie/>  
Brigidine Sisters - <https://brigidine.org.au/>  
Department of Foreign Affairs - <https://www.dfa.ie/news-and-media/press-releases/press-release-archive/2022/january/departement-of-foreign-affairs-marks-st-brigids-day-la-fheile-bride.php>  
HerStory - <https://www.herstory.ie/home>  
Reeks District - <https://reeksdistrict.com/providers/culture-heritage/biddys-day/>  
RTE - <https://www.rte.ie/lifestyle/living/2018/0201/937553-st-brigid-5-things-to-know-about-the-iconic-irish-woman/>  
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St Brigid's Girls National School, Glasnevin - <http://www.stbrigid.ie/story-of-st-brigid.html>  
Wikipedia - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brigid\\_of\\_Kildare](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brigid_of_Kildare)