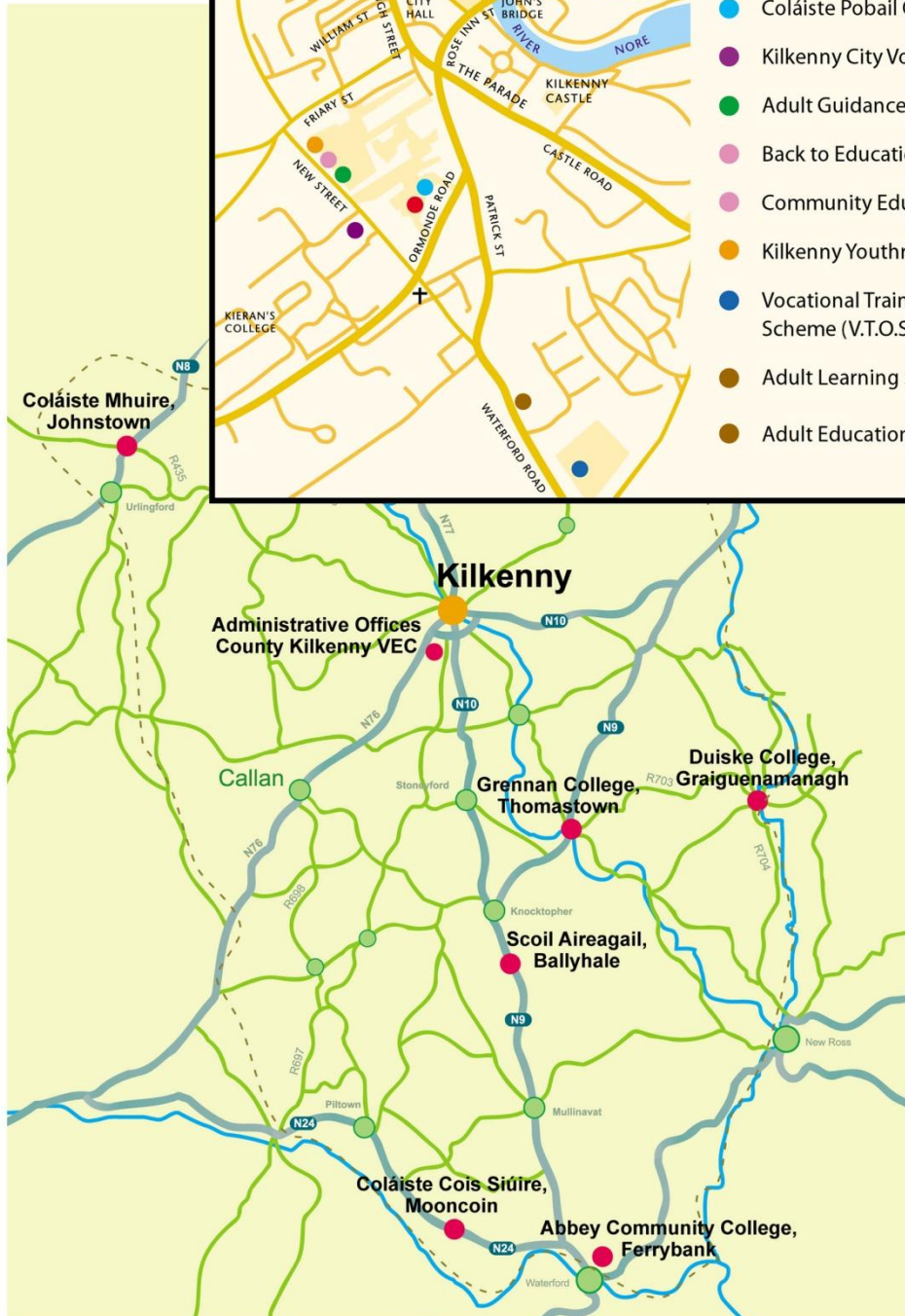
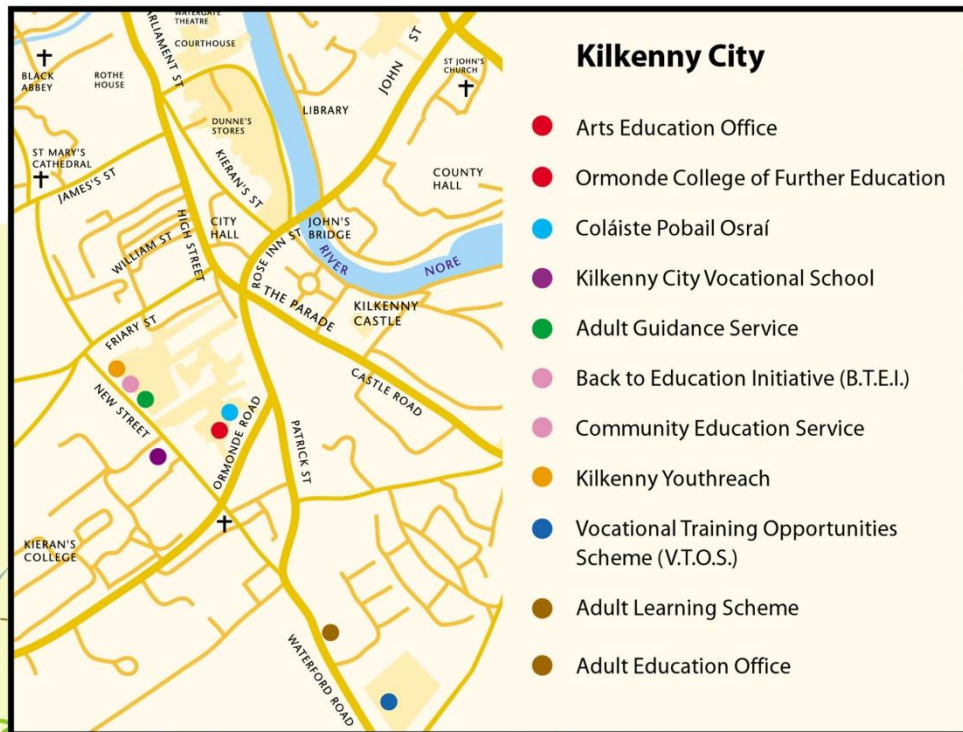




County Kilkenny Vocational Education Committee

Education Plan 2011-2015

Facilitating Quality Teaching and
Learning in County Kilkenny



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Foreword

We are pleased to introduce County Kilkenny Vocational Education Committee's Plan for 2011 – 2015 which sets out a framework for our work over the next five years.

As we do so we are conscious that this Education Plan is being developed in a time of unprecedented economic uncertainty and at a critical stage in the history of vocational education in Ireland. There is no doubt that over the course of this plan the educational landscape will change significantly. Notwithstanding what may lay ahead County Kilkenny Vocational Education Committee is of the view that it is essential to set those priorities which it feels are essential to the continued provision of quality teaching and learning for young people and adults throughout the county.

County Kilkenny Vocational Education Committee has a long tradition in providing for the educational needs of the young people and adults of County Kilkenny. We are proud of what has been achieved to date and we hope that this new Education Plan will build on the progress that has been made. This current plan reaffirms the vision, mission, values and themes set out in 2006 and outlines a series of aims, objectives and actions for the next phase of development. We would like to pay tribute to all the staff and Committee Members of County Kilkenny Vocational Education Committee for their commitment to this work over the years. The contribution of one and all has served to enhance the work of our schools, centres and services.

The task of preparing this Education Plan was undertaken by the Education Plan Steering Group comprising: Mr Rodger Curran, CEO, Mr. William Norton, Principal, Grennan College, Ms. Eileen Curtis, Adult Education Officer, Ms. Brigette Cahill, Deputy Principal, Abbey Community College and Ms. Christine Mc Grath, Staff Officer, VEC Head Office. Our gratitude is extended to one and all for their expertise and commitment to the planning process. We would also like to thank those who contributed to the consultation phase by completing questionnaires and providing valuable feedback. We hope that through the delivery of this plan we can continue to promote quality teaching and learning in the county.



Cllr. Mary Hilda Cavanagh
Chairperson



Eileen Curtis
Chief Executive Officer(Acting)

Section One

Introduction

Rationale

Under the terms of the Vocational Education (Amendment) Act 2001 (Section 30) the VEC is required to prepare and submit a plan setting out ‘the objectives of the VEC, the priorities to be accorded to those objectives and the measures to be adopted for the purposes of attaining those objectives’. As part of this planning process it is required that the VEC consult with the broad range of stakeholders involved in education including teachers, students, parents and others likely to be affected by or have an interest in the Education Plan. The VEC is then required to submit its plan to the Department of Education and Skills every five years.

Executive Summary

Co. Kilkenny VEC published its first Education Plan entitled *Facilitating Quality Teaching and Learning in County Kilkenny* in 2005. This provided a framework for the development and enhancement of the VEC education and support services over the five years. Under a range of themes, it set out a series of aims, objectives and actions to be progressed over the lifetime of the plan. A review of the progress of the plan to date shows that many of the priorities set out have been achieved, others are ongoing and need further work in the next phase. In addition, the consultation process has identified new priorities and concerns which need to be addressed. In combination these form the core of the work set out in this new Education Plan.

This education plan is being developed in a time of great global, national and local uncertainty. Notwithstanding the changes that may lie ahead it is the view of County Kilkenny VEC that the education and support services which it provides were never more vital or necessary and accordingly feels it essential to continue to set out those priorities which it feels are crucial to its continued provision of quality teaching and learning for young people and adults throughout the county.

County Kilkenny VEC is a large educational organisation with an extensive range of programmes and services catering for the diverse needs of young people and adults across the county. Over the years it has developed its educational provision to meet the ever changing demands of learners. Today, County Kilkenny VEC runs eight second level schools, an extensive Adult Education

Service and a range of Post Leaving Certificate courses. It is also involved in many partnership activities and has established a series of strategic alliances locally to enhance its services.

This current plan reaffirms the vision, mission, values and themes set out in the first plan and these create the foundations upon which the aims, objectives and actions for the period 2011 - 2015 have been set. The preparation of this plan has helped County Kilkenny VEC to assess and evaluate progress to date, to consult with stakeholders in determining new priorities and to formulate a plan which will lead it into the next phase of its development and assist in meeting the challenges ahead.

Consultation

As part of the preparation of the first education plan in 2005 a major series of consultations took place both within and outside the VEC. In the current preparatory phase it was felt that much of this work was still current and relevant to the work of the VEC. Accordingly, the consultation for this phase sought to identify the key challenges and priorities from a cross-section of interests across the organisation. The following consultations took place

- Questionnaire to Committee Members, Senior Management and heads of centres/sections.
- Questionnaire to a cross-section of staff including teaching, administrative and support staff.
- Meetings with existing Task Groups (including Post Leaving Certificate, Accommodation, Human Resources and ICT Groups).
- Meeting with Senior Management Team.
- Meeting with Youth Co-ordination Committee.

The consultation process provided an opportunity to elicit the views of others and together with the contextual analysis has helped to identify the change agenda and developmental priorities which the organisation must embrace over the next five years.

Strategic Issues Emerging from the Consultation Process

The consultation process took place at a time of great uncertainty both in terms of the national importance to be afforded to educational provision in the years ahead as well as in terms of the extent to which the overall delivery structures within the VEC sector will be aggregated in the future.

Accordingly, the issues emerging from the consultation process reflect these concerns and these have key strategic implications for the work of County Kilkenny VEC.

Key Challenges Ahead

- To maintain a strong local VEC voice in Co. Kilkenny and to retain a strong local identity in any new situation
- To improve the school/centre infrastructure throughout the county ranging from new school buildings, additional rooms and better outdoor facilities
- To be pro-active in meeting the ever increasing demand within the local economy for additional education and training opportunities for young people and adults
- To continue to strive to maintain high standards of educational provision within the context of diminishing educational resources

Key Priorities for 2011 - 2015

- There was a strong sense expressed of the need to ensure that the highest quality infrastructure is provided for all educational provision.
- Fundamental to all the work of County Kilkenny VEC is the building of a culture of quality teaching and learning which caters for the needs and abilities of all learners, supporting the full range of learners from those striving for high academic achievement and those who require ongoing additional supports.
- The need for ongoing professional development for staff which promotes excellence in teaching and learning methodologies and encourages the sharing of good practice was emphasised.
- The continued development of ICT provision across the VEC to assist in the enhancement of teaching and learning provision and to upgrade the level of services throughout the VEC.

Section Two

Services

County Kilkenny VEC supports young people and adults through its four main areas of activity:

- Second Level Education
- Adult Education Service
- Educational Support Services
- Partnership Activities

The elements of each of these areas are outlined in the following profile:



Second Level Provision

| School | Programmes Offered | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|----------|------|------|--------|----------|-----|
| | J.C. | J.C.S.P. | T.Y. | L.C. | L.C.A. | L.C.V.P. | PLC |
| Abbey Community College, Ferrybank | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ | |
| Coláiste Cois Siúire, Mooncoin | √ | | | √ | | √ | √ |
| Coláiste Mhuire, Johnstown | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ |
| Coláiste Pobail Osraí | √ | | √ | √ | | | |
| Duiske College, Graiguenamanagh | √ | √ | | √ | | √ | √ |
| Grennan College, Thomastown | √ | | √ | √ | | √ | √ |
| Kilkenny City Vocational School | √ | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Scoil Aireagail, Ballyhale | √ | | √ | √ | | | √ |

County Kilkenny VEC continues to provide a broad range of programmes throughout its schools. In addition to the Junior and Leaving Certificate Programmes schools also offer specialised programmes like the Junior Certificate School's Programmes, Leaving Certificate Applied and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

Second Level Enrolments

| School | 2005/2006 | 2006/2007 | 2007/2008 | 2008/2009 | 2009/2010 |
|------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Abbey Community College, Ferrybank | 591 | 613 | 636 | 623 | 631 |
| Coláiste Cois Siúire, Mooncoin | 176 | 162 | 158 | 150 | 132 |
| Coláiste Mhuire, Johnstown | 350 | 365 | 364 | 356 | 353 |
| Coláiste Pobail Osraí | 72 | 70 | 74 | 78 | 94 |
| Duiske College, Graiguenamanagh | 96 | 89 | 93 | 94 | 102 |
| Grennan College, Thomastown | 194 | 201 | 220 | 232 | 252 |
| Kilkenny City Vocational School | 59 | 62 | 56 | 75 | 91 |
| Scoil Aireagail, Ballyhale | 334 | 318 | 335 | 331 | 311 |
| Total | 1872 | 1880 | 1936 | 1939 | 1966 |

The second level student population has grown by 5.02% from 1,872 students in 2005/2006 to 1,966 students in 2009/2010. This is attributable to increased enrolments in a number of schools.

Post Leaving Certificate Enrolments

| School | 2005/2006 | 2006/2007 | 2007/2008 | 2008/2009 | 2009/2010 |
|------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Abbey Community College, Ferrybank | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Coláiste Cois Siúire, Mooncoin | 12 | 16 | 18 | 9 | 24 |
| Coláiste Mhuire, Johnstown | 45 | 42 | 43 | 66 | 78 |
| Coláiste Pobail Osraí | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Duiske College, Graiguenamanagh | 35 | 52 | 28 | 48 | 70 |
| Grennan College, Thomastown | 134 | 146 | 130 | 130 | 123 |
| Kilkenny City Vocational School | 138 | 136 | 155 | 210 | 294 |
| Scoil Aireagail, Ballyhale | 49 | 46 | 41 | 39 | 52 |
| Total | 413 | 438 | 415 | 502 | 641 |

The Post-Leaving Certificate numbers have increased by 55.2% from 413 students in 2005/2006 to 641 students in 2009/2010. However it should be noted that the PLC cap for County Kilkenny VEC in 2010/2011 is 480. Therefore County Kilkenny VEC is providing educational provision for a large number of learners for whom it is not receiving any educational support.

Adult Education Provision

| Services | 2005/06 | 2006/07 | 2007/08 | 2008/09 | 2009/10 |
|----------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Community Education | 1,309.00 | 1,011.00 | 1,226.00 | 1,452.00 | 1,462.00 |
| Adult Literacy | 602.00 | 855.00 | 969.00 | 897.00 | 857.00 |
| Back to Education | 401.00 | 550.00 | 511.00 | 472.00 | 558.00 |
| Adult Guidance | 670.00 | 854.00 | 2,672.00 | 2,177.00 | 2,194.00 |
| Evening Classes | 1,363.00 | 1,311.00 | 1,132.00 | 1,056.00 | 1,484.00 |
| VTOS | 120.00 | 120.00 | 120.00 | 120.00 | 120.00 |
| Youthreach | 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 |
| Total | 4,490 | 4,726 | 6,655 | 6,199 | 6,700 |

Adult Education provision has remained constant over the years with a 49.22% increase over the 5 year period. The most significant increase has been in the area of Adult Guidance which has become integral to the delivery of all programmes in the Adult Education Service. However, the VTOS and Youthreach allocations have not increased during the period of the plan due to a cap on the number of places.

Staff Profile of County Kilkenny 2010

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Chief Executive Officer | 1 |
|-------------------------|---|

Second Level Team

| | |
|--------------------------|------|
| Principals | 8 |
| Deputy Principals | 8 |
| Teaching Staff | 186 |
| Administrative Staff | 7 |
| Ancillary Staff | 50 |
| Special Needs Assistants | 23.0 |

| | |
|--------------|------------|
| Total | 282 |
|--------------|------------|

Adult Education Team

| | |
|----------------------------|----|
| Adult Education Officer | 1 |
| Arts Education Officer | 1 |
| Co-Ordinators/Facilitators | 6 |
| Guidance Counsellors | 3 |
| Youth Officer | 1 |
| Resource Tutors | 5 |
| Teachers/Tutors | 11 |
| Information Officer | 1 |
| Administrative Staff | 4 |
| Ancillary Staff | 4 |

| | |
|--------------|-------------|
| Total | 37.0 |
|--------------|-------------|

173 Tutors/Teachers are employed on a part-time basis on Adult Literacy, Community Education, Back to Education and Evening Class Programmes.

Administration Team

| | |
|-----------------------------|------|
| Assistant Principal Officer | 1 |
| Finance Section | 3 |
| Human Resources Section | 4.5 |
| Education Support Services | 4.5 |
| Ancillary Staff | 0.41 |
| IT Technician | 1 |

| | |
|--------------|--------------|
| Total | 14.41 |
|--------------|--------------|

Section Three

Review of Education Plan 2006-2010

The following is a summary of the main achievements under the five themes set out in the 2006 – 2010 Education Plan.

THEME 1

MEETING THE LEARNING NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY IN COUNTY KILKENNY

Strategic Aim: *To develop a range of high quality education provision to meet the learning needs of the community.*

Progress for 2006 - 2010

- As part of the development plan for Coláiste Pobail Osraí it sought and was granted independent status in 2007 and a Principal and Deputy Principal appointed.
- A replacement building for Coláiste Pobail Osraí was secured on the existing site on the grounds of Ormonde College.
- The PLC Task Group produced a streamlined brochure in a standardised format for all courses throughout the county and developed an annual promotional campaign.
- County Kilkenny VEC organised a national PLC conference entitled *Sustaining Quality in a Changed Environment* in 2010.
- A review of accommodation needs and an access audit was undertaken on behalf of the Accommodations Task Group and a substantial programme of upgrading work undertaken in all schools/centres.
- A 3 year IT Enhancement Programme was initiated under the guidance of the ICT Task Group to upgrade computer hardware, purchase servers, install backup systems and upgrade ICT facilities across the county.
- An IT Technician was appointed to provide ongoing ICT support across the VEC.
- Schools and centres continued to develop policies and procedures to ensure the effective management of its activities.
- A Health and Safety Programme was undertaken across the VEC to ensure compliance with legislation. This included site visits and the roll out of a substantial training programme.

THEME 2***ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING***

Strategic Aim: *To strive to enhance the quality of our education provision by promoting and supporting quality teaching and learning.*

Progress for 2006 - 2010

- County Kilkenny VEC agreed its Quality Assurance Standards with FETAC.
- Schools/Centres participated actively in school/centre planning on an ongoing basis. Whole School/Centre Evaluation took place in Scoil Aireagail, Coláiste Cois Siúire, Kilkenny Youthreach, and Grennan College.
- Subject planning within schools/centres was promoted and developed.
- Classroom facilities for teaching and learning were upgraded with the roll out of interactive technology.
- Schools/Centres participated in the TL21 Programme in association with NUI Maynooth and Kilkenny Education Centre.
- Additional Teaching and Learning Methodologies were promoted including Assessment for Learning and Assessment of Learning.
- Teacher Peer Observation, Team Teaching and Peer Teaching were piloted in some schools.
- Study Skills Programmes and Homework Clubs were promoted to assist student learning.
- The School Completion Programme was extended to include areas in the south of the county e.g. Coláiste Cois Siúire.
- Accredited programme provision was significantly extended through the Back to Education and other lifelong learning initiatives.
- As part of the VEC centenary celebrations a VEC competition in traditional skills like wood and metalcraft, music and art and craft was run to showcase and celebrate the work of VEC schools/centres.
- Equality and Diversity Training was provided for staff.
- A mentoring programme was established to support the induction of new staff and enhance the teaching and learning process.
- A number of staff were supported to access appropriate training annually.

THEME 3***DEVELOPING THE PROFILE OF COUNTY KILKENNY VEC***

Strategic Aim: *To develop the corporate image and profile of the VEC and to build a positive sense of identity for those involved it.*

Progress for 2006 - 2010

- A new range of signage was designed for schools/centres and rolled out to most centres.
- A common standardised format for publications was developed profiling the VEC and its activities e.g. brochures, notepaper, banners etc.
- Extensive use was made of local newspapers for the promotion of the activities of schools/centres.
- A Customer Service Plan and Charter were developed and a Customer Services Officer appointed to assist the process of providing more effective customer services.
- The VEC and individual school and centre websites were developed and a range of on-line activities promoted e.g. courses and job vacancies were advertised on-line.
- A series of new information brochures were developed by schools and centres.
- A Service Plan and an Annual Report was completed each year.
- The VEC used its centenary celebrations to promote the benefits and value of vocational education provision.
- A history of County Kilkenny VEC entitled '*A Century of Change – 100 Years of Vocational Education in County Kilkenny*' was commissioned and published as part of the Centenary Celebrations in 2007.

THEME 4***BUILDING THE HUMAN RESOURCE AND ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY OF COUNTY KILKENNY VEC***

Strategic Aim: *To develop the personnel resources and organisational structures to enable the delivery of high quality services.*

Progress for 2006 - 2010

- A Human Resources Task Group was established to assist in reviewing and developing practices and procedures in the area of human resource management.
- *A Guide to Recruitment and Selection Handbook* was developed to implement good practice in relation to recruitment and selection procedures.
- Training was provided for Interview Boards to ensure high standards in relation to staff recruitment and selection.
- A Mentoring and Induction Programme for staff was introduced for new teaching staff.
- A Training and Development Sub-Committee was established to assist in the support of ongoing professional development within the organisation.
- A Training and Development Fund was established and an access policy agreed.
- An annual In-Service Training event was held for members of the Senior Management Team focusing on aspects of leadership and management.
- An organisational review of administrative provision in Head Office was completed and implemented.
- Financial, personnel and adult education data management systems were upgraded to ensure more effective service delivery.
- Corporate governance was improved in line with legislative demands with the setting up of a Finance and Audit Sub-Committee.

| |
|---|
| THEME 5 PROMOTING PARTNERSHIP AND INNOVATION |
|---|

Strategic Aim: *To foster a culture of innovation and partnership to enhance relationships and extend the services provided.*

Progress for 2006 - 2010

- A Youth Officer was appointed to begin the implementation of the provisions of the Youth Work Act (2001).
- A strong working relationship was established with the Kilkenny Sports and Recreation Partnership.
- Training was provided for members of Boards of Management to enhance their awareness and understanding of their ongoing responsibilities as board members.
- Student/Learner Councils were established in schools/centres to assist in ensuring the development of the student voice within schools/centres.
- Ongoing links were maintained between the VEC and the NUI Maynooth Outreach Campus as part of a strategy to promote stronger links with the third level sector.
- As part of the National Partnership Forum a series of initiatives were undertaken to promote and develop the role of the Local Partnership Working Group.
- Strong working relationships were established with the County Development Board, Kilkenny Leader Partnership and other relevant local agencies.
- The partnership with Kilkenny Collective for Arts Talent (KCAT) was strengthened.
- VEC representatives contributed to a range of national and local fora including Waterford Institute of Technology, the National Adult Guidance Steering Committee, Maynooth Outreach Steering Committee.

Section Four

Review of the Current Context

At this present time as we seek to set out the plan for the future of the education services of County Kilkenny VEC we do so against the background of an increasingly uncertain future. The constancy which we have known in the past will undoubtedly change and our challenge will be to maintain our existing services and identify any opportunities for growth which we see in the challenging times ahead. The context within which we will be operating will be determined by:

- Political and Economic Influences
- Social and Technological Influences
- Local and Internal Influences

Political and Economic Influences

The instability in the current political and economic environment is without precedent in modern times. Recent reports (Special groups on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure, 2009) dominate debate on public services and are likely to determine the shape of the future delivery of public services, including education at national and local level. The recent announcements regarding the aggregation of VECs suggest that major changes regarding the governance, management and delivery of services will take place. In addition, it is apparent that there will be budget cutbacks in education expenditure in the years ahead. Allied to this will be the demand from existing services to provide greater levels of efficiency with less resources. Also, the national educational debate is likely to focus on emerging issues in the education sector which will see the shape of educational provision into the future change. These changes are already heralded by the recent transfer of the skills training sector to the recently renamed Department of Education and Skills and the appointment of Co Dublin VEC as patron of primary schools. The publication of recent European reports *Europe 2020* and *Learning for Jobs 2009* published by the OECD will also impact on future developments in the education sector.

The worsening economic crisis has transformed the landscape in which County Kilkenny VEC is working. The serious reduction in public expenditure over the next five years will have a significant impact on the capacity of the VEC to deliver existing services. These structural changes will present challenges to those managing educational services. The moratorium on staff recruitment will inevitably lead to cutbacks in services. The significant rise in unemployment will

lead to increased demand for education and training. The fall in income will also impact on people's capacity to meet the financial demands of educational participation at all levels.

Table 1: Live Register Figures for County Kilkenny (December 2010)

| Local Office | Thomastown | Kilkenny | Kilkenny County | Total |
|----------------------|-------------------|-----------------|------------------------|----------------|
| Males Under 25 | 152 | 711 | 863 | 1726 |
| Males Over 25 | 832 | 3401 | 4233 | 8466 |
| Total Males | (984) | (4112) | (5096) | (10192) |
| Females Under 25 | 74 | 404 | 478 | 956 |
| Females Over 25 | 360 | 1572 | 1932 | 3864 |
| Total Females | (434) | (1976) | (2410) | (4820) |
| Total Persons | 1418 | 6088 | 7506 | 15,012 |

Source: CSO

Social and Technological Influences

Over the period of the previous plan the social environment in County Kilkenny changed considerably with higher levels of employment and enhanced household income. This created a set of circumstances where almost all those seeking employment were able to source jobs. In addition, the economic boom attracted considerable numbers of other nationals to Ireland creating within a very short timeframe a multi-cultural, diverse population in the county. However, while participation rates in education increased there continues to be a significant under representation from specific areas and groups particularly in Third Level education. Despite the advances of the last ten years some sectors of the population have continued to experience marginalisation and social exclusion.

The population of County Kilkenny is 87,558 (As of the 2006 census, by the Central Statistics Office). The settlement pattern for the county is one of a large city area with a high proportion of rural dwellers living in small, scattered townlands and villages. 28% of the population live in the city area while the remaining 72% live in rural areas. County Kilkenny has a strong agricultural base with an associated food processing industry. It is recognised as an international centre for arts, crafts and tourism and for its rich mediaeval and cultural heritage as well as its hurling traditions. Kilkenny has no large modern industry and relies heavily on small enterprises and the service and retail sector for its employment.

The recent downturn in the economy has impacted significantly on the VEC as a local education provider with Post-Leaving Certificate Programmes and the Adult Education Service oversubscribed. The introduction of an annual charge for PLC programmes may act as a disincentive to participation in further education at a time when upskilling is imperative for our young people and adults.

The past 10 years has seen a veritable revolution in the technological environment which has impacted on the way all of us lead our lives. Interactive technology has increasingly become a familiar means of everyday communication and has transformed the working environment. In addition, the educational landscape and the process of teaching and learning has had to change to meet these demands. Many schools and centres of education have sought to respond to these changes by building their information and communications infrastructure and seeking to ensure that the modern classroom environment is stimulating for students. There has been a national strategy to promote science and technology in education and to try to ensure that Ireland is well placed to attract high-end jobs and foreign industry.

Co. Kilkenny VEC had in its previous plan prioritised the development of ICT across its schools and centres. Through its Information Technology Enhancement Programme it sought over a three year period to comprehensively improve the hardware and software throughout its the schools and centres. This involved the purchase of computers, printers, servers, interactive whiteboards and other digital technology to improve the facilities available to learners and to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. The recent ICT grants have enabled this project to be advanced considerably.

Local and Internal Influences

The above sets out the external context which will impact in the work of County Kilkenny VEC over the next five years. Over the lifetime of the last plan from 2005-2010 there has been considerable change within the VEC itself. These changes have impacted on all aspects of the organisations work.

A variety of local factors continue to affect the manner in which County Kilkenny VEC responds to the learning needs of the wider community. These include:-

- The need to respond to the increased demand for places in some schools.

- The need to provide for the up-skilling and re-skilling needs of a growing cohort on the live register.
- The absence of a third level education facility in the county.
- The growing pressure for places on existing Adult Education and Post Leaving Certificate Programmes.
- The realignment of the VEC with the new local development and other emerging structures in the country.
- The ongoing need to work towards improved educational outcomes for a changing learner profile.

The changing internal environment within the VEC will also influence the shape of the organisation in the future. Some of the most significant of these include:-

- The realignment of the vocational education sector throughout the country.
- The continuing pressure on education services and budgetary resources.
- The impact of the moratorium on recruitment and its impact on middle management, administrative and ancillary services.
- The challenges posed by changes to allocations to support learners with Special Educational Needs and other programmes designed to enhance learner participation.
- The impact of the proposed changes to the profile of services provided by VEC's eg changes to school transport, third level grants, teacher allocation, etc.

It is evident from the foregoing analysis that County Kilkenny VEC will experience significant change during the five years of this plan. The unstable political and economic environment will propel much of this change. Additionally, the translation of this uncertainty into the local context will place increasing pressures on County Kilkenny VEC as it seeks to continue to meet demand within reduced resources and staffing. This is the framework within which planning for the next five years must be set.

Section Five

Vision, Mission and Values

Vision

Our vision for County Kilkenny VEC is of a listening and learning organisation which is vibrant, dynamic and responsive.

An organisation:

- Building on its long tradition and capacity.
- Consolidating its reputation for the provision of high quality education services.
- Responding to the changing education needs of learners
- Valuing the contribution of staff and learners
- Dedicated to the promotion of lifelong learning
- Committed to partnership and innovation
- Striving for excellence and celebrating achievement.

Mission

It is the mission of County Kilkenny Vocational Education Committee to be a key provider of quality, inclusive education opportunities and support services that enable young people and adults to reach their full potential and contribute in a positive and meaningful way to society.

Organisational Values and Principles

The core organisational values and principles of County Kilkenny VEC are:

- To place the learner at the centre of all our work
- To provide quality services
- To promote quality teaching and learning
- To engage in building positive, respectful relationships
- To value and respect all staff and learners
- To promote a culture of openness and fairness
- To promote inclusiveness and embrace diversity
- To be responsive in our approach and promote innovation and partnership
- To be an integral part of the local community.

County Kilkenny VEC is a local education authority founded on the belief that access to education is a basic right which has the potential to enhance people's lives enabling them to participate more fully in their communities and contribute to the development of a caring and just society. It is in this context that it sets out its themes, aims, objectives and actions for 2011-2015.

Section Six

Strategic Themes 2011-2015

Theme 1
Meeting the Learning Needs of the Community in County Kilkenny

Strategic Aim: *To develop a range of high quality education provision to meet the learning needs of the community.*

Objectives

- 1) To ensure that current curricular provision across the county is appropriate and reflective of existing and emerging needs and trends.
- 2) To promote and develop a second level Irish school on a greenfield site in Kilkenny City.
- 3) To develop and enhance the range of education and training opportunities provided to learners to meet the changing economic circumstances and the upskilling and reskilling needs of young people and adults
- 4) To provide a comprehensive range of lifelong learning opportunities for learners in County Kilkenny designed to meet existing and emerging skill needs.
- 5) To strive to ensure that the accommodation and infrastructure in schools and centres meets the highest possible standards.
- 6) To ensure that schools/centres/offices have access to the highest standard of information and communication technologies (ICT).
- 7) To provide a safe learning environment for all employees and learners.
- 8) To ensure that all schools/centres operate to the highest standards of practice and management.

Actions

- a) Undertake regular curricular review of provision to ensure relevance, monitor trends and meet emerging educational needs.
- b) Progress plans for the identification and acquisition of a new site for Coláiste Pobail Osraí.
- c) Plan and review the provision of Post Leaving Certificate Courses (PLC) throughout the county and seek to expand services if the PLC cap is lifted.
- d) Continue to develop Ormonde College as a dedicated Further Education College and promote the strategic development of PLC provision in the other schools throughout the county.

- e) Expand the range of lifelong learning options available to adult learners by increasing the numbers on existing provision and developing new opportunities relevant to emerging skill needs.
- f) Review and update the current Accommodation Needs Plan and prioritise annual work programmes which seek the replacement of non-permanent accommodation.
- g) Continue to roll out the IT Enhancement Programme setting priorities on an annual basis.
- h) Continue the Health, Safety and Risk Management Programme to enable schools/centres to operate to the highest standards.

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| Theme 2 Enhancing the Quality of Teaching and Learning |
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Strategic Aim: *To strive to enhance the quality of our education provision by promoting and supporting quality teaching and learning.*

Objectives

- 1) To ensure that each school/centre promotes a culture of planning and evaluation in relation to its programme provision.
- 2) To continue to promote a culture of quality in teaching and learning that is appropriate to the needs of learners at all levels of ability.
- 3) To develop and support methodologies for learners who require learning supports.
- 4) To continue to promote the development of effective learning support interventions in schools/centres like study skills.
- 5) To promote ICT as a tool for the enhancement of the dynamic of teaching and learning in the classroom.
- 6) To develop the range of provision to ensure that learning options provide opportunities for progression for learners from FETAC Levels 1 to 6.
- 7) To strive to ensure that retention, participation and performance rates in schools and centres are improved.

Actions

- a) Support schools/centres to develop their planning and evaluation processes in line with Department of Education and Skills regulations.
- b) Support teachers/tutors in all sectors to further develop their skills to meet the needs of a diverse learner group.
- c) Review the range of supports available to learners with specific learning needs and promote and disseminate best practice.
- d) Ensure that County Kilkenny VEC's Quality Assurance Agreement with FETAC is maintained, developed and co-ordinated throughout the county.
- e) Establish a Programme Approval Agreement with FETAC and develop appropriate procedures for Programme Validation.
- f) Expand the range of effective learning interventions promoted in schools/centres like Assessment for Learning and Assessment of Learning programmes.
- g) Promote the use of ICT in the classroom and encourage interactive ICT based teaching and learning methodologies across all schools and centres.
- h) Review retention, participation and performance rates on an annual basis to identify trends and improve outcomes for learners.

Theme 3
Developing the Profile of County Kilkenny VEC

Strategic Aim: *To develop the profile of County Kilkenny VEC as a teaching and learning organisation with a positive sense of identity for those involved in it.*

Objectives

- 1) To ensure that County Kilkenny VEC is recognised as a leading provider of education services in the county.
- 2) To ensure that the nature and quality of service provided to VEC customers is of the highest standard.
- 3) To ensure access to the highest quality information across all schools/centres and services throughout the VEC.
- 4) To promote the benefits of lifelong learning and the achievements of schools/centres as a means of profiling the educational work of the VEC.

Actions

- a) Continue to roll out the range of signage as appropriate across VEC schools/centres.
- b) Ensure that VEC association is highlighted across all school/centre events.
- c) Extend the range of on-line services provided through the VEC.
- d) Promote the use of the web-site as a communication tool and explore options for developing an intranet system.
- e) Develop a VEC newsletter as an information sharing tool and resource for profiling the achievements of learners, schools and centres.
- f) Review the use of ICT as a means of promoting the work of the VEC.
- g) Develop an annual countywide event to profile and celebrate a particular aspect of educational provision e.g. area of arts, culture or civic responsibility.

Theme 4
Building the Organisational Capacity of County Kilkenny VEC

Strategic Aim: *To promote the professional expertise of staff and develop the organisational structures and resources to enable the delivery of high quality services.*

Objectives

- 1) To ensure the recruitment and retention of high quality staff in the context of restriction of the moratorium
- 2) To ensure the promotion of ongoing Continuing Professional Development for all personnel.
- 3) To continue to develop the leadership and management capacity within the organisation.
- 4) To continue to meet the corporate governance and legislative requirements of the organisation.

Actions

- a) Continue to review and update the *Guide to Recruitment and Selection* to ensure best practice.
- b) Ensure recruitment practices for all staff are in line with legislation.
- c) Develop a Staff Handbook for all employees.
- d) Review the Mentoring and Induction Programme.
- e) Maintain a Training and Development Fund to support ongoing professional development for staff.
- f) Promote the use of ICT in the provision of all services within the VEC.
- g) Work with the Senior Management Team to review and develop codes of practice, policies and procedures for the effective management of all its activities.

Theme 5 Promoting Partnership and Innovation

Strategic Aim: *To promote a culture of innovation and partnership to enhance relationships and extend service provision.*

Objectives

- 1) To enhance the relationships with a range of service providers locally.
- 2) To foster working partnerships with key education stakeholders like parents and learners.
- 3) To build strategic alliances with key local agencies to promote the lifelong learning and training agenda for the benefit of those living in County Kilkenny.
- 4) To build alliances with the third level sector to explore progression options for learners which might be explored and advanced.
- 5) To link with local youth, community, business and professional interests to identify gaps in educational provision and respond to ever changing demands.
- 6) To build strategic partnership alliances to promote the infrastructural development of the scheme.

Actions

- a) Continue to provide opportunities for training and engagement with Board of Management representatives across schools and centres.
- b) Maintain fora in schools/centres for learner engagement, participation and feedback.
- c) Explore ways of supporting the role of Parents Councils as key voices in the education process.
- d) Identify and provide representation to a range of key local bodies e.g. County Development Board, Kilkenny Leader Partnership, Kilkenny County Childcare Committee, HSE.
- e) Work with other local agencies to ensure the strategic provision of education and training in response to the county *Employability Strategy*.
- f) Continue to work with NUI Maynooth and other colleges as appropriate to establish appropriate linkages with third level institutions.
- g) Review the implications of the Social Inclusion Measures Group Research to effectively map educational provision throughout the county.

Section Seven

Management and Monitoring

The overall themes, aims, objectives and actions provide the framework for the development of services in County Kilkenny VEC over the next number of years. The actions set out relate to five key themes:

1. Meeting the Learning Needs of the Community in County Kilkenny
2. Enhancing the Quality of Teaching and Learning
3. Developing the Profile of County Kilkenny VEC
4. Building the Organisational Capacity of County Kilkenny VEC
5. Promoting Partnership and Innovation.

The implementation of this strategic plan will be overseen by an Executive Planning Team who will meet three/four times per year.

In addition, a series of task groups will be set up to progress the various aspects of the plan prioritised each year thus ensuring a cohesion and an integration of provision and service throughout the VEC which the plan strives to achieve.

An annual report on progress will be presented each year to the VEC committee. This progress report will also be posted on the VEC website and will be available to all stakeholders.

The plan through its consultation phase seeks to reflect on the work of schools/centres and services throughout the VEC and will equally be used as a tool by them in their own planning, development and evaluation processes. The actions selected annually will be based on the overall priorities of the organisation, the key sectoral issues identified and the progress from the previous year. It is anticipated that this process will be participatory and reflective and will ensure that the VEC is pro-active in its approach to education provision in County Kilkenny.

Appendix

Committee Members(2009-2014)

Cllr. M.H. Cavanagh *Chairperson*
Cllr. Cora Long *Vice Chairperson*
Cllr. Maurice Shortall
Cllr. Pat Dunphy
Cllr. William Ireland
Cllr. John Brennan
Cllr. Catherine Connery
Cllr. Sean Treacy
Cllr. Marie Fitzpatrick
Cllr. Martin Brett
Cllr. Sean Ó'hArgáin
Ms. Joan Vaughan
Mr. Mr. Sean Warren
Mr. Gerard Dowling
Ms. Eleanor Parks
Ms. Emma Barron
Mr. Fintan Byrne
Ms. Eilish Holden
Mr. Brian Harris

Steering Group

Mr. Rodger Curran, CEO(Retired)
Ms. Eileen Curtis, Adult Education Officer
Mr. William Norton, School Principal
Ms. Brigette Cahill, Deputy Principal
Ms. Christine Mc Grath, Staff Officer

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