



Kilcoole Residents & Community Development Association (K.C.D.A)

Kilcoole Community Centre

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Submission by Kilcoole Residents and Community Development Association (KCDA) Local Area Plan Greystones-Delgany and Kilcoole, January 2024

Kilcoole is a vibrant rural coastal community in North Wicklow which was Ireland's 104th largest urban area in 2022 with a population of 4,569 (CSO) settlement going back to pre-Christian times but it is believed that the monks of Abbot Comgall who lived in Co Down in the sixth century, later established a monastic cell close to the Rock of Kilcoole. Kilcoole is a very important employment hub in County Wicklow with a network of four vibrant business/enterprise parks on its southern and south-western fringes.

On account of the soft low-lying coastline, now prized for its natural heritage assets, settlement developed historically on higher ground around and above the Rock. The urban area today suffers from poor public realm infrastructure, such as the traffic-clogged Main Street, lack of public seating, no cycle lanes to schools, no footpath for the last section of Sea Road to the coast and the Railway Station and no significant public spaces apart from the beach and flat dunes along the coast and the childrens' playground. In addition it is being left to the private sector to develop any form of town centre.

Kilcoole is widely used for recreation and leisure with a long tradition of walking, birdwatching, sea swimming and sea-angling along the coastal belt and by 1995 had seven golf courses within a five km radius (R Jennings, 1998, Kilcoole). Druids Glen is a renowned tourism and recreation hub, surrounding St. Patrick GAA Club just south of Kilcoole.

Wicklow Local Community Development Committee funded consultant Siobhán Geoghegan to undertake a community health-check assessment of Kilcoole in the years 2018/2019 and the subsequent report 'Kilcoole Health Check Assessment' (KHCA) resulted following public consultation. A list of Recommendations for Potential Public Authority Projects from this Assessment report is included in the four page Annex included with this submission. The Annex also contains the front page of the report and its table of contents.

Among the issues raised in the KHCA report is the need for quality community space for a growing population in Kilcoole, such as the upgrading of St. Patrick's Hall (Forester's Hall) to provide further community space for all sectors of the community. It points to the need for provision of more facilities for young people in the locality, such as courts and a skate-park.

The tourism potential of Kilcoole on Ireland's Ancient East route is referred to in the Health Check Assessment Report and could be enhanced further in carrying out development work in the area of the Rock – Lott lane and improved walkways. It is recommended that the view of the Rock be preserved from Sea Road. At the moment a belt of Leylandii trees is almost obliterating the view of the Rock from the top of Sea

Road near the entrance to Beachdale and Meadowbrook Estates as can be seen in *Fig 1. Photo of the Rock from Sea Road at Beachdale entrance.*

The Health Check also recommends improved infrastructure for access to schools: Kilcoole and Newtownmountkennedy are in the key catchment area for attendance of young people at both Coláiste Chraobh Abhann and Greystones Community College. The report stresses the importance of promoting positive mental-health and activity for young people. This could be facilitated by the provision of cycle lanes from Newtownmountkennedy to Kilcoole and further improvement of cycle lanes from Kilcoole to Greystones.

Priority Issues for Kilcoole

The ranking of Kilcoole as a Level 4 Core Region Self-Sustaining town in the current County Development Plan is appropriate but the descriptor for this category ‘weak employment base’ is not accurate in the case of Kilcoole as mentioned above.

Public Transport

The KHCA report indicated that 27% of respondents believed there was inadequate public transport for Kilcoole and this was a negative aspect of life for the community. The report further states that frequency and timetabling do not meet current demand. Small changes like stopping all trains in Kilcoole, as has recently commenced on Saturdays and Sundays, would improve the lives of people living in the community and reduce carbon emissions by making people move away from cars. The second morning train is usually full on arrival and provides standing-room only, for the hour’s journey to Dublin. The third morning train at 9:16 am is a welcome development. **There is still a lack of connecting bus links to/from the DART in Greystones.** There is currently only an hourly bus service to/from Greystones – compared to much more frequent services for Newtownmountkennedy and Charlesland. The bus service should be every half-hour and the train/DART times should coordinate with bus services. The Aircoach service does not serve Kilcoole at all.

The County Development Plan proposes a modal shift to public transport linked to climate-change adaptation and we are happy that Kilcoole Railway Station has been included in the Plan with other rail stations in the County for improvement of parking facilities and bus links at or near it. The nearest bus stop is quite close, two-thirds the way down the length of Sea Road at the entrance to the cul de sac. We would like to see improvement of mainline train and DART service into Wicklow, and an increase in rail capacity along the coastal route south of Greystones and improvement of the Dublin-Rosslare line. The pedestrian and cycle link between Kilcoole centre and the train station will be a most welcome addition for the population of Kilcoole. **It is recommended that Kilcoole bus service be improved and that the Railway Station be further improved beyond the recent addition of a ticket machine and provision for tag on/off using leap cards. Facilities for public transport users should extend to the provision of a shelter at the platform.**

Coastal Zone Management/Marine Spatial Planning

Tourism and Recreation

“Kilcoole has a lot to offer visitors, to date this potential remains untapped. Its coastal location hosting Ireland’s largest nature reserve, its rich tapestry of history, wealth of biodiversity, its rural village vibe with its friendly people coupled with its proximity to the capital renders it a very attractive eco-tourism proposition. However, to maximise opportunities in this area and grow market share, strategic thinking and planning is required. Any such developments will need to be sensitive to the environment and ensure protection of the natural biodiversity and unique ecosystems”. (Direct quote from page 4 of the Kilcoole Health Check Assessment report). The coastal strip south of Greystones to Newcastle, centred on Kilcoole, is one of three areas in the South East to get the highest level of sunshine in Ireland (solar irradiance of 170 W/sq M. as shown on the map ‘Ireland – Solar PV’, La Tene Maps & Irish Solar Energy Association, January 2024 (www.latenemaps.com) along with Wicklow town and the area to the south and the tip of Hook Head, *see Fig 2.*

Kilcoole is located in the 'East Coast Maritime' outdoor recreation hub and is beside one of the counties four existing Integrated tourism/recreational/leisure complexes, at Druids Glen Golf Club, Woodstock Demesne. We are happy that Kilcoole is to be one of seven key settlements to be developed as visitor hubs in the County. The Local Area Plan should give greater clarity regarding the planned 'Greystones –Wicklow Coastal Route, versus the overlapping coastal route from Bray to Arklow. Kilcoole is strategically located along both of these.

Coastal Cells– Marine Spatial Planning and Coastal Zone Management

KCDA finds it difficult to understand the exclusion of Kilcoole from the series of 12 Coastal Cells. The logical one for the coastal community of Kilcoole to be part of would be Cell 5 Greystones to Kilcoole (Ballynerrin). Kilcoole is in fact excluded and its settlement boundary is the limit of this and the next cell, Cell 6 Kilcoole to Wicklow Town (The Murrough). Our view is that all **of Kilcoole should be included in Coastal Cell 5.**

Access to the coast at Kilcoole was improved by Irish Rail during 2023 with the replacement of the turnstyle-type gate with an improved access arrangement suitable for the disabled, infirm and buggies with a traffic light system which improves the safety of the rail corridor greatly. With the increased interest in sea swimming and other coastal activity it is recommended that a public convenience is provided in Kilcoole with the beach/station access area being the most logical location. An outdoor shower and a water tap would also facilitate leisure use of the beach. On account of the increase in swimming it is recommended that Wicklow County Council continue to monitor water quality at Kilcoole Beach.

Kilcoole Community Development Association is grateful to have this opportunity to participate in the public consultation regarding the future Local Area Plan for the Municipality of Greystones-Delgany and Kilcoole, it believes that the points raised and recommendations made in the submission are relevant to the Plan.

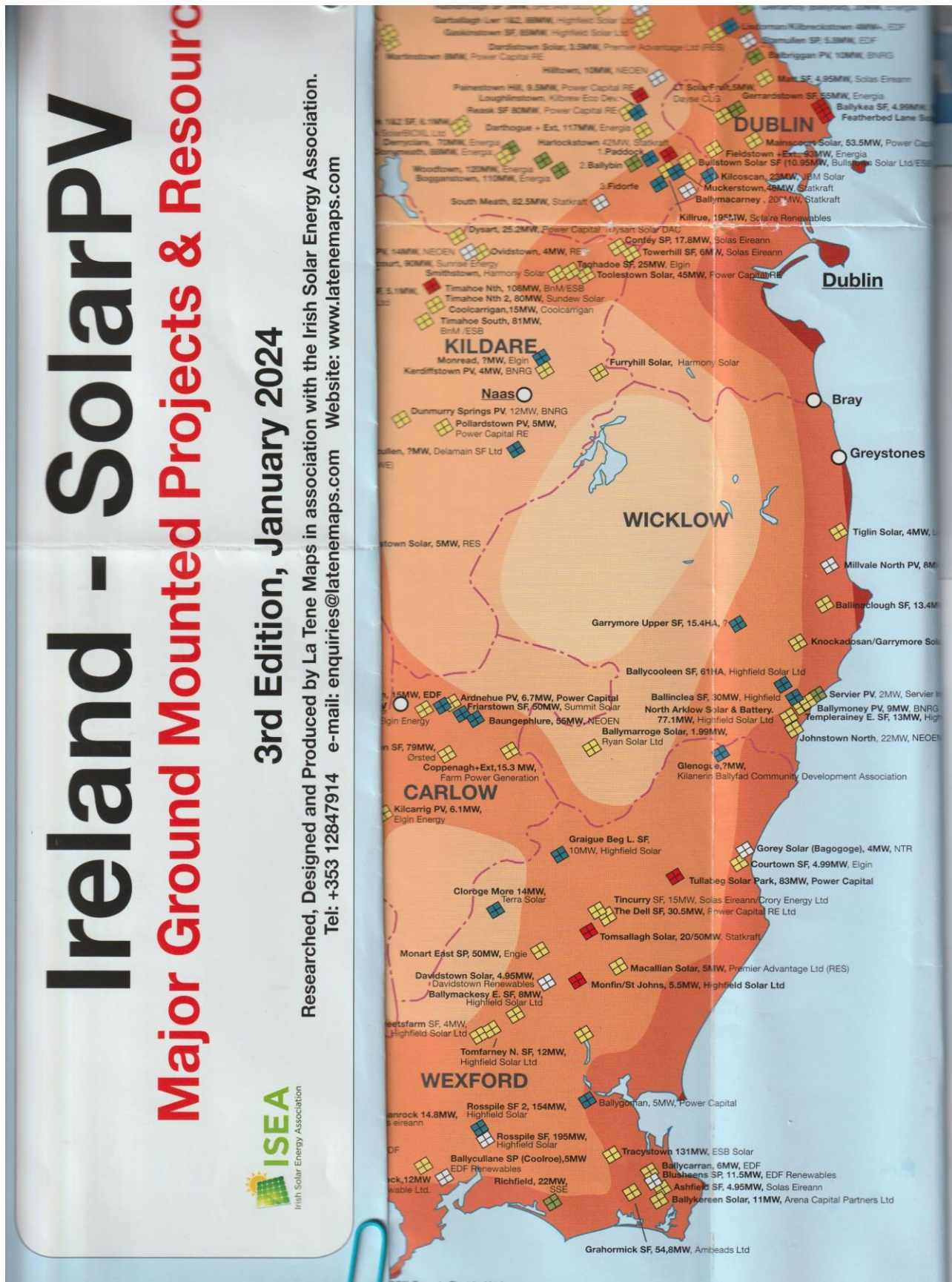
Mary Keddy

KCDA Secretary

Fig 1. Photo of the Rock from Sea Road at Beachdale entrance



Fig 2. Solar Map of South East Ireland





2018/2019

Kilcoole Health Check Assessment



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Siobhán Geoghegan Consulting

20. Recommendations

Potential Public Authority Projects

Development & Implementation of an appropriated Village Design Plan for Kilcoole

- Develop an overall Regeneration Plan /Village Design Statement for Kilcoole, including improved public realm, development of a 'village centre'/Civic Space/Green Spaces/Ornamental lighting/visual enhancements/sensitive/environmental planting and appropriate signage) that is sensitive to Kilcoole's village

Improve Access to Key Services and Amenities

- Develop a footpath with appropriate lighting to Kilcoole Train Station and beach (Sea Road)
- Potential to develop village square/civic square at junction of Lott Lane/Sea Road/Main Street
- Address derelict sites/buildings (potential for community facilities)
- Introduce more green spaces /protect wildlife
- Develop a traffic management plan for certain areas particularly in school/church area
- Increase number of bins and improve anti-littering awareness
- Lower Green re-surfacing and maintenance plan development
- Develop cycle lanes in particular -Kilcoole to Newtown, Kilcoole to Greystones

Local Businesses & Services

- Lobby to have public transport services and frequency increased. Potential for shuttle bus.
- Address capacity of local schools as priority and lobby appropriately for expansion and development as planned
- Support for local businesses – promote local employment and good mix of businesses, reduce commuting
- Develop additional facilities/activities for Kilcoole's aging population
- Seek a reduction in rates

Tourism & Heritage

- Development works at Kilcoole Rock/St Mary's for locals and visitors as a major attraction/amenity
- Develop footpath linking village to coast/beach
- Development of sensitive coastal greenway with services
- Ensure future community & recreational developments at Darraghville House (Luisne Centre)
- Introduce new walking routes and preserve mass paths
- Develop a 'Pilgrim Path' and promote under Ireland Ancient East Brand
- Appropriate signage. Interpretation and access to heritage sites and places of interest to tell Kilcoole's 'story'

Youth Focus

- Develop new facilities/activities/amenities for young people – sporting and non-sporting in line with the interests of young people (survey and identify needs)
- Develop and promote youth Arts initiatives
- Develop programmes/activities that seek to nurture the wellbeing of Kilcoole’s young people
- Promote Garda involvement with TY student programmes/initiatives/engagement

Safety

- Introduce CCTV cameras in areas most at risk (train station/etc)
- Seek more community Garda presence