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2019

Wicklow County Council Library Service (Draft) Library Development Plan

2021 - 2025

Foreword from Chief Executive

Photograph.

Foreword from the Cathaoirleach

and photo.

Contents

Our Vision

To connect and inspire our communities and be the trusted source of information, education, culture & heritage.

Mission Statement

Through collaboration, partnership and engagement, we will be to the forefront of a first class public service that meets the ever changing needs of our diverse community.

Values

Our values inform our approach in fulfilling our mission and achieving our vision. Our core values are:

- Trust
- Adaptability
- Diversity
- Learning & Creativity
- Collaboration & Partnership

Achievements over the lifetime of the 2016-2020 Plan

New library launched in Arklow, April 2016 and 'My Open Library' launched in Arklow, April 2019

Wicklow joins Libraries Ireland, Summer 2016 – access to stock and request service nationwide

Refurbishment of Bray Carnegie Library - *2016*

Wicklow County Council Library Service wins prestigious *Public Sector Magazine Award,* **October 2017**

Healthy Ireland, Work Matters and Right to Read Campaigns Launched 2017

Removed the barrier of fines - January 2019 (Wicklow led the way with abolishing reg fees in 1999)

Home energy test kits purchased for all libraries (2020)

New Mobile Library Acquired, September 2019

Introduced "My First Library Card" for the under 5s, Jan 2020 *in conjunction with Kildare County Council Library Service*

Shelving in new Wicklow library

Genealogy source available to all

Rathdrum library under construction

What is My Open Library (MOL)?

"My Open Library" is a self-service library, open every day of the year between 8am and 10pm. Normal normal staffed opening hours remain unchanged, meaning the public have access to staffed services for almost 50 hours per week. Outside of staffed time, the public can use all the library's services, including study spaces, IT & printing, borrow & return items, and have access to the community room. The presence of a security guard ensures public safety. Arklow Library is one of only 15 libraries, nationally, that currently provides this service. MOL will be available in the new Wicklow branch in 2021. It is intended to further extend MOL to other libraries in county Wicklow during the lifetime of this document.

Wicklow County Council Library Service

Our Service

We operate 13 branch libraries in Arklow, Aughrim, Ballywaltrim, Baltinglass, Blessington, Bray, Carnew, Dunlavin, Enniskerry, Greystones, Rathdrum, Tinahely, Wicklow and an extensive mobile library service. These range from the Carnegie buildings of Bray, Enniskerry and Greystones to the modern, architecturally designed building in Arklow.

The County has a population of 142,425 (2016 census) representing a 4.21% growth since the 2011 census. The socio-economic profile of the County is positive in that 34% of its citizens are under the age of 25.

Wicklow Libraries during 2020

	2019	2020
Circulation of Physical Library Stock	562,480	236,838
eBooks Borrowed	13,337	28,550
eAudiobooks Borrowed	22,028	41,317

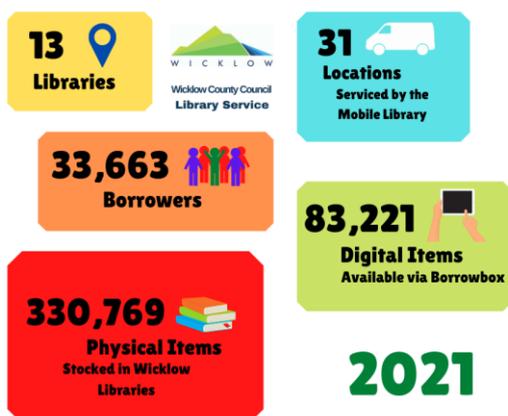2020 was a year where the Library Service had to rapidly adjust our method of service

delivery. Our buildings closed from late March to early June, forcing us to reimagine how to provide services to our customers, how we could continue to engage with them and how we could help our staff to adapt to working within a pandemic.

We demonstrated that whilst our buildings might be closed, we could maintain a strong presence in our communities through social media channels, by expanding our range of online events and by promoting our e-services.

Our staff adapted to the new environment by honing their information provision skills working on the Community Call helpline, delivering quality storytime sessions and craft tutorials on our various platforms. Many staff also availed of opportunities that arose for online up-skilling through courses, workshops and webinars.

Wicklow County Council Library Service mobilised quickly to be among the first authorities to open all libraries when it was deemed safe to do so, under public health guidelines in June. We have gone from contact and collect to offering study spaces whilst moving in and out of phases throughout.

Outlook in 2021

We have started 2021 where our buildings are closed to the public but our engagement builds all the time and we are reaching new, and often larger audiences, as people explore new ways of connecting. We have further expanded our online events with the resilience programme, Healthy Ireland, Engineers week and Seachtain na Gaeilge delivered completely online. Our home delivery service is very popular and delivers on our commitment to being an inclusive and accessible library service.

Public Consultation

The ongoing COVID-19 restrictions greatly reduced the scope for carrying out public consultation in advance of the Library Development Plan. An online survey was carried out in January/February 2021 via the Library Website and Social Media channels.

Respondents were asked to score the library service across 6 categories, a score of 1 being Very Dissatisfied and 5 being Very Satisfied. The areas of service and average scores were as follows:

Traditional library services performed strongly in the survey, with the vast majority of respondents borrowing physical library material from branches (87.68%). 39.13% of respondents use the librarys' digital services, such as Borrowbox and RB Digital to borrow virtual library items.

Input from our users

Respondents were asked for improvements they would like to see over the lifetime of the upcoming Development Plan.

Stock

The importance of having more copies of new books and DVDs was highlighted. (This will be contingent on increased book funds being secured). There was also a call for more face-out book displays.

Library Buildings

Suggestions with regard to **Library Buildings** included:

- More study spaces
- Provision of water fountains
- Additional signage
- Bookable community spaces – these are already a feature in Blessington and Arklow Libraries, with plans in the new Wicklow library for same.
- Provision of quiet spaces
- "Minipods" for taking phone calls or participating in online classes

- Improved lighting in some buildings
- The provision of sensory areas

Events and Outreach

The provision of more events of different kinds (e.g.: workshops and author visits) was requested, both in-branch and online.

The need for more events to take place in our smaller branches was highlighted.

Wider promotion of available events was suggested.

Local Studies

A local studies hub in the west of the county was suggested. (This will be considered as part of the new Baltinglass library / courthouse development).

A suggestion was made for a lendable local history stock, as well as more books of local interest to be available digitally.

Online Services

Feedback on our online services was generally very positive. These are provided as part of a national initiative, but have also been supplemented

Future Vision

In the context of the above the time is opportune to redefine the role and vision of our library service. Wicklow County Council Library Development Plan 2021 - 2025 will be set within the framework of the following:

- Project Ireland 2040 Our Plan: National Planning Framework.
- "Our Public Libraries 2022: Inspiring, Connecting and Empowering Communities" (Department of Rural and Community Development, 2018),
- "Public Library Standards and Benchmarks" (DECLG in association with the Libraries Development Committee of the Local Government Management Association (LGMA), 2015)
- "Right to Read Campaign - local authorities supporting literacy" (DECLG, 2014)
- "Wicklow County Council Annual Service Delivery Plan"
- Wicklow County Council Corporate Plan 2019 – 2024
- Wicklow County Council Library Service – "Local Studies Plan 2021-25"

Strategic Objectives

Our Buildings

Objective	Actions – capital programme
To continue to provide accessible, welcoming spaces that promote learning and inspiration.	• Open new library building and service for Wicklow town in summer 2021 comprising a community library, local history and County Archive • Open new library in Rathdrum in summer 2021. This new library will be prominently located in the new Market Square development and will be 4 times the size of the existing facility. • Build and develop a new library in Aughrim – projected completion date 2022, on a similar scale to Rathdrum. • Apply for grant aid funding to extend and redevelop Ballywaltrim Library, Bray, with an emphasis on increased study space. The vision is of a 2-storey building extension on the current site – approx 400 sq mtrs. Projected completion date 2023. • Apply for increased grant aid funding under RRDF scheme to develop Baltinglass courthouse & library, making it a centre of excellence in West Wicklow. Projected completion date 2023. Similar to the new Arklow library, Wicklow, Ballywaltrim and Baltinglass libraries will be built as MOL projects, with access 7 days per week from 8AM – 10 PM. Rathdrum and Aughrim will have almost double their current opening hours.

Literacy and Lifelong Learning

Objective	Actions
To foster self-directed learning as people move from home to school, school to work, work to explore other career choices and ultimately to an active retirement.	• Support parents and carers to read and show books to their babies and pre-schoolers in preparation for reading readiness when children start primary school. • Engage with Early Learning centres including registered childminders by facilitating block loans and encouraging library use and membership for children from birth. • Working with primary and secondary schools in each library catchment area by facilitating block loans through the local library and educating students as to the services available. • Maintain school access to online resources to support literacy and numeracy. • Continue to plan activities around the national programmes: Right To Read, Work Matters and Healthy Ireland.

	• Help learners of all ages to improve information and digital literacy skills needed to access and use technology and information successfully. • Develop a media literacy training program and pilot during the lifetime of his strategic plan. • Facilitate and promote book clubs, explore new formats e.g. online bookclub using Audio books, particular interest areas. • Ensure that new and improved library facilities provide and prioritise dedicated study space and a learning environment for all.

Cultural Space

Objective	Actions
To promote the library as a cultural space, a meeting place for both people and ideas, creating opportunities to enhance community life.	- Collaborate with local and national partners to firmly place our libraries as cultural and community spaces at the heart of local areas. - Promote participation in activities and events to all sections of our communities. - Build on the passion and pleasure enjoyed by readers through author events, creative writing tuition, storytelling, poetry and a myriad of other creative opportunities. - Utilise Community Rooms and other library spaces as areas for library talks, author events, art exhibitions and other displays. - Loan musical instruments to young people who wish to try out an instrument before buying. - Consult with and develop an understanding of the needs of the diverse communities we serve. Provide events and activities that meet those needs.

Community Space

Objective	Actions
To promote the library as a welcoming, accessible and dynamic community space.	- Community room space will be provided / continue to be provided in new and refurbished libraries, in line with library policy. - Find ways to serve the needs of people 'with nowhere to go' through collaboration with relevant organisations and groups. - Develop low stress, calming sensory spaces or rooms in libraries - where space permits. - Place increased emphasis on the Library outreach programme and look at ways to work collaboratively with isolated and marginalised communities.

Library Technology & Digital Services

Objective	Actions
To respond to and promote the technological change essential for sustainable organisations and services in the digital age	- Work with Wicklow County Council's IT Department to upgrade older equipment throughout our service. - Monitor developments in technology at a national level, which enable improved access to services for the public and implement same in line with national recommendations. - Extend the provision of self-service technology to all newly built libraries. This will enable staff to provide a greater professional service with regard to assisting the public with information enquiries and service provision. - Work with and support Wicklow County Council Archives to develop an implementation programme for digitisation of local studies and archival materials in line with best practice.

Our Team

Objective	Actions
To ensure our staff work in an environment that encourages creativity and innovation, are well trained, and responsive to the changing needs of our users.	- To provide Continuing Professional Development opportunities for staff throughout their careers. - To provide training and development for all levels of staff. - To carry out annual reviews through the local authority's Performance Management Development System (PMDS) to ensure that staff are equipped with the skills of the modern library information professional. - To foster a learning culture that supports our staff to improve their skills and talents and in turn grow the organisation.

Co-operation, partnership and promotion

Objective	Actions
To deliver coordinated services based on cooperation and partnership to take the library service to new levels of relevance and value	- Deliver enhanced services and efficiencies through cooperation and partnership with government departments, agencies and national bodies. - Raise the profile of the library service in county Wicklow by local promotion and by working with a national programme of promotional activities. - Maintain the local library as a focal point in the community and play a pivotal role in working with other local authority services to drive economic and social development. - Be a key player in delivering the "Right to Read" programme for Wicklow County Council and partners. - Continue to explore the potential of social media to engage with library users and to promote and develop services. - Promote the benefits of library membership to reach a level where it is the norm within our communities

A Sustainable Future

Objective	In recent years, Wicklow County Council Library Service has successfully upgraded materials and energy levels in a number of its buildings. This programme will be further developed in the current programme
Our libraries to play a key part in making themselves and our communities sustainable	**Actions** • Support UN Sustainable Development Goals in creating a just, equal and inclusive society. • Ensure our new buildings comply with the highest environmental standards • Avail of potential grant aid to ensure the upgrading of energy levels in our current library buildings • Support our communities to be more sustainable, providing reading lists and environmentally-themed events and workshops. • Work towards paperless membership. • Build on partnerships with Wicklow County Council's Heritage Office and Environment Department. • Promote libraries as a green option for readers, highlighting e-book and e-audio book options. • Explore greener options for our supplies and services

Conclusion

This document is being formed in the knowledge that the current pandemic is changing our futures. While we can see light at the end of the tunnel, we are also aware that it will take a long time for everyone to trust the new "normality". Libraries, like other businesses and services will have to work to regain that trust, and may play a different role than in pre-2020.

Socioeconomic forecasts are for a "hybrid" model, which will see employees working partly from home and partly from their office. Many have become more aware of the possibilities of a more affordable life away from the cities. This is likely to see more people using the shops and facilities in their towns and villages.

Most importantly, the current situation has shown us what's really important – our families, friends and social contacts. While a person's financial situation will always matter, the pandemic has forced us to slow down and appreciate the bigger things in life. Our library service will be a core player, in this regard, ensuring its continuous presence as an integral part of our communities.