

3.4.7 Knightstown

3.4.7.1 Context

Knightstown is an attractive village located on the eastern side of Valentia Island. The Island is positioned off the western coast of the Iveragh peninsula. Knightstown is located on the Wild Atlantic Way approximately 3km north-east of Chapeltown and approximately 5.5km south-west of Cahersiveen. It is the largest village on the island and is directly connected to the mainland by ferry at Renard pier during the summer months.

Knightstown provides a range of services to its rural hinterland and acts as the main settlement on an island that benefits substantially from tourism. Many of the residential units in the village are holiday homes.

For its size, Knightstown has a broad range of services and facilities both for locals and visitors, however many of these facilities/services are only open during the tourist season. The village has two churches, a sensory garden, a residential/training centre for persons with intellectual disabilities, a RNLI lifeboat station, a heritage centre, along with several shops/cafes/restaurants. The breakwater and marina offer a broad range of marine based activities.

There are several bed and breakfasts, holiday home developments and a campsite in the village and surrounding area.

3.4.7.2 Planning Considerations and Proposals

Knightstown is an attractive settlement with a mix of architectural, historical and cultural heritage. The village still retains its distinctive character, and it is essential that this is retained, which will also add to its future development as a tourist destination. Knightstown has a number of innate strengths including an attractive seafront, spectacular sea views and a defined urban form, with character and charm. Knightstown has the potential to capitalise on its heritage and marine based activities, and the work carried out by

the Valentia Development Agency, to further grow visitor numbers and create sustainable long-term employment.

3.4.7.3 Population and Sustainable Land-Use Development

The 2016 Census recorded a population of 243 for Knightstown, an increase of 13% from 2011 when it had a population of 215. The 2022 Census shows a population of 244 for Knightstown. The ED of Valencia covers the entire island. The 2006 census showed 713 persons, which was an increase from 690 in 2002. This represented a 3% increase in population. The population decreased in the 2011 to 665 people, according to the CSO. The 2016 Census shows that the population of the area declined again, by 1.2%, to 657 people, and in 2022 the population of the ED is 658.

	2006	2011	2016	2022
Knightstown	156	215	243	244
Valencia ED	713	665	657	658

Table 3.17: Population Change 2006-2022

3.4.7.3.1 Residential Development

The development boundary for Knightstown defines the existing extent of the area where new development may be considered, whilst also allowing for expansion/re-development in the village core. It is an objective of the Plan, and the KCDP, to encourage the development of a compact and sustainable village structure by ensuring that new development is contiguous with existing development and makes effective use of backland and infill sites.


There has been a considerable amount of development in the village in recent years mainly to the south and west of the village core, off the R565. These developments are estate type developments and have not contributed to or extended the existing streetscape. However, a development of houses and apartments fronting Market Street and in the grounds of Reenellen House and a

smaller development at the eastern end of Market Street fronting the promenade have regenerated the village centre. Recent development has catered predominantly for the holiday home market. According to the 2016 Census, 60% of houses within the village are holiday homes. There has also been a limited demand for one off dwelling houses mainly to the west of the village.

Knightstown has not been given a specific population growth and housing target under the Core Strategy of the KCDP, consequently lands have not been zoned for R1 (*Proposed Residential*). Additional lands have been identified at suitable locations within the settlement and zoned as R4 (*Strategic Residential Reserve*) to ensure that the longer-term residential needs of the village can be met.

The Planning Authority recognises the challenges of providing for affordable housing in the Knightstown area. To this extent additional lands have been identified and zoned for housing in tandem with the upgrading of the wastewater treatment plant and subject to environmental assessment.

Residential development may also be accommodated within the village centre on lands zoned M1 and M2.

KENMD-KS-3	Preserve the village's architectural heritage and encourage development designed in a manner that is in keeping with the scale and character of the existing village. New developments should respect local design features.
KENMD-KS-4	Encourage the sustainable expansion in the range and number of commercial services within the village to provide local employment and improve the quality of life of the local community.
KENMD-KS-5	Promote the sustainable enhancement of the promenade/waterfront area, including the provision of further service facilities subject to environmental assessments.
KENMD-KS-6	Encourage the sustainable development of streetscapes in new development, particularly on frontages adjoining public roads.
KENMD-KS-7 	Facilitate and support the upgrade of existing wastewater treatment infrastructure in a timely manner to ensure the sustainable development of the area.
KENMD-KS-8	Support and facilitate the sustainable development of additional car parking at an appropriate location in the village.

General Objectives	
Objective No.	It is an objective of the Council to:
KENMD-KS-1	Ensure that the high-quality natural setting of the village is maintained and protected from inappropriate development.
KENMD-KS-2	Ensure that future development should support the existing role and function of the village as a rural service centre and small tourist village.

KENMD-KS-9	Ensure that the visual openness of the corridor and vista of the First Message Building is maintained.
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3.4.7.4 Heritage

3.4.7.4.1 Built Environment & Heritage

Knightstown has a highly developed and attractive street layout. The prolific Scottish engineer, Alexander Nimmo, was commissioned by the Knight of Kerry in 1830 to prepare a layout plan for what was then referred to as the New Town of Valentia. The village was developed in the 1840s and has managed to retain its distinctive character. The attractive streets and impressive terraces give Knightstown an attractive architectural character. Market Street which forms the core of the village runs west to east from the Church of Ireland and terminates in the beautifully restored clock tower on the pier.

The Cable Station building which is one of over fifty Protected Structures in the village was designed by the renowned 19th century Cork architect Thomas Deane in 1868. Many of the officer's houses, which form the terraces along the promenade and are on the RPS, have been bought as holiday homes and are well maintained by their new owners. It is necessary to ensure that the local character and sense of place are enhanced. It is considered that future development should preserve and enhance the elements of the built environment which define the character of the village.

A section of the Main Street which is attractive in form and character has been designated an ACA. The structure, known as the 'First Message Building' in Knightstown has now been included on the RPS in accordance with Sections 54 and 55 of the PDA 2000, as amended.

The structure comprises a single storey structure located within the Valentia Slate Yard site (the Slate Works industrial complex is protected in the KCDP, RPS Ref KY 079-026). This recommendation arises from the structure's special historical and social interest in recognition of its role in the Trans-Atlantic Cable project (Appendix D of this LAP provides additional details). Also see Section 2.5.2.1 and Section 2.5.2.3 for further details.

A proposed extension to the ACA is also included as part of this plan. This is to be known as the Trans-Atlantic Cable ACA and it includes the three main sites associated with the history of the Trans-Atlantic Cable, on Valentia Island: The Cable Station, the "First-Message" building and the structure at Foilhommerum.



Figure 3.94: Built Heritage within Knightstown

3.4.7.4.2 Valentia Transatlantic Cable UNESCO Project

The Transatlantic Cable linked Europe with America by underwater cable. It ran from Valentia to Newfoundland in America. It is an objective of this Plan to support the designation of the Valentia Cable Sites as an UNESCO World Heritage Site. An application has been made to UNESCO for it to be designated a world heritage site.

It has been confirmed that the Valentia Transatlantic Cable project has been added to the World Heritage Tentative List for Ireland. This announcement is an important next step for the Cable Foundation. This project is covered in more detail in Section 2.10.3 of this LAP. *The Trans-Atlantic Cable as World Heritage* report prepared by Professor Alexander Gillespie identifies the relevant sites to this project, including the visual corridor between the harbour and the Old Slate Yard/First Message Building.



Figure 3.95: First Message Building Visual Corridor

A visual corridor is proposed as indicated on Figure 3.95. It is proposed that the visual openness of this corridor and vista of the First Message Building is maintained.



Figure 3.96: View of Cable Station Terrace

3.4.7.4.3 Natural Heritage & Archaeology

Knightstown is located on a flat coastal plain at the north-eastern tip of Valentia Island. The village's sheltered harbour area makes it a popular location for water-based activities. It is part of the Valentia Harbour/Portmagee Channel candidate SAC. The site contains important examples of reefs, shallow inlets and tidal mudflats.

3.4.7.5 Economic Development

The Valentia Development Agency through its work with other agencies has successfully created new employment on the island. The provision of fibreoptic connectivity and the creation of a digital hub would greatly enhance the economic potential of the village. To facilitate this, ongoing work and inter agency co-operation, additional lands have been zoned as M1 and M5.



Figure 3.97: View of Knightstown

3.4.7.6 Tourism & Outdoor Recreation

Knightstown's location on Valentia Island and in the scenic south-western coast of the Iveragh Peninsula makes it an ideal location and base for leisure activities and informal recreation. While being a popular stop located off the Ring of Kerry driving route, Knightstown is also itself a tourist destination. Knightstown offers a very high-quality tourism product including year-round attractions of golfing, fishing and hiking/walking.

Further investment in sustainable future fisheries development have the potential to significantly contribute to increased tourism days and spend in the area. The town is very reliant on tourism for its economic development and viability. Nonetheless, it is important that the town and the surrounding area should further develop in a sustainable manner and enhance its tourist potential and explore the option of promoting itself more as a year-round tourist destination. Improving the attractiveness of the urban environment

within the town will also be key in promoting the town as a year-round visitor destination.

The Planning Authority will encourage the appropriate reuse and sensitive restoration of unused/derelict vernacular properties in the town to facilitate the creation of attractive and active streetscapes. In addition, the promotion of a high standard of architectural design will also be key to increasing the vibrancy of the town centre and promoting the tourist potential of the town.

The Local Authority recognises that the area around the seafront has a central part to play in the development of tourism in Knightstown. The Council will encourage investment in this area to enhance its tourism potential through the provision and promotion of sustainable tourism and leisure facilities and the environmental upgrading of the area. In this regard, the amenity value of the waterfront will be promoted and sustainably enhanced. There is a need to market Knightstown as a tourism destination, both in terms of the facilities available in the town and as a base from which to access the surrounding area. This involves improving signage into and around the town and developing a tourism strategy for the town and promoting Knightstown as a tourism destination nationally and internationally. Efforts need to be made to lengthen the tourism season in this area and this could be achieved by further promoting ecotourism in the area and the development of other niche markets.

3.4.7.6.1 Marine Activity

The Local Authority recognises that the maritime sector is a growing sector and selling point for the region. KCC is committed to supporting and facilitating the development of a vibrant and successful marine leisure and tourism sector. The development and completion of Valentia Harbour Marina and associated facilities is supported in this plan.

3.4.7.6.2 Natural Environment & Recreational Amenity

The village also has an attractive promenade extending along the seafront which forms the eastern boundary of the village and includes the pier area. There are opportunities to extend this walkway amenity throughout the town. There is a large park in the village, Cracow Park which also contains a tennis court and a playground. Within the park there are footpaths and a wildlife area. The park links in to the Altazamuth Public Walk that links Jane Street to the promenade.

KENMD-KS-14	Facilitate the development of an art, culture and heritage centre, at an appropriate location.
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3.4.7.7 Water & Wastewater Management


A new wastewater treatment system began operation in 2017. Uisce Éireann's Wastewater Capacity Register identifies that it has a PE of 500 with no spare capacity currently available. The village is served by a public water system.

3.4.7.8 Flood Risk Management

The majority of the town of Knightstown is not usually at risk of flooding. There may be some seasonal tidal/coastal flooding along the waterfront. These areas are not zoned for highly vulnerable development. For further details see references in the SFRA.

3.4.7.9 Connectivity

Knightstown is the terminus for the Valentia Island ferry which operates from March–October. The ferry generates some traffic especially during the months of July and August. During the winter season access to Knightstown from the mainland is via the bridge at Portmagee. Knightstown's attraction as a tourist centre and the future projects proposed for Valentia will necessitate the provision of additional parking in the area. It is the policy of the Local Authority to support provision of additional parking at an appropriate location.

Tourism Objectives	
Objective No.	It is an objective of the Council to:
KENMD-KS-10	Promote the sustainable development of Knightstown as a year-round tourist destination, based on a high quality and diverse range of tourism products, whilst protecting the environmental attributes & resources in the area.
KENMD-KS-11	Facilitate the sustainable development of high-quality visitor accommodation within the town at appropriate locations.
KENMD-KS-12 	Support the sustainable provision of a Blueway between Knightstown and Cahersiveen subject to inclusion in National Strategy and subject to environmental assessments.
KENMD-KS-13	Facilitate the sustainable restoration of the key cable related sites at the Old Slate Yard and 'First Message' building including the visual corridor from the harbour, subject to environmental assessments.