

CiviQ Opinion Analysis: Kilkenny Central Access Scheme

For new insights into public opinion



**KILKENNY
COUNTY COUNCIL**

"The process really helped me to clarify my own thoughts and realise that I wasn't as much in disagreement with others as I had thought." Stakeholder feedback

The story

When Kilkenny County Council was in the final stages of approval of a controversial bridge development for the centre of Kilkenny's medieval city, known as the *Central Access Scheme*, Citizens held public demonstrations protesting against the proposed bridge, yet the Council voted to proceed on the basis of its perceived economic benefit to the city.

CiviQ saw the need for more information on public opinion on the issue. We ran an analysis of public opinion on the issue that showed:

- Four related social perspectives on the issue.
- Opinions where there was consensus and most disagreement between each perspectives
- The relationship between perspectives

The challenge

The plan had been developed 5 years previously and had been granted planning permission by the national planning authority An Bord Pleanála.

There had been little local public consultation process as part of the development. Citizens protested against the plan and court challenges cost the Council €250,000 in project delays.

The controversy generated a large volume of opinion. However, there was no way to get insights to this opinion to help structure dialogue and decision-making on the issue.

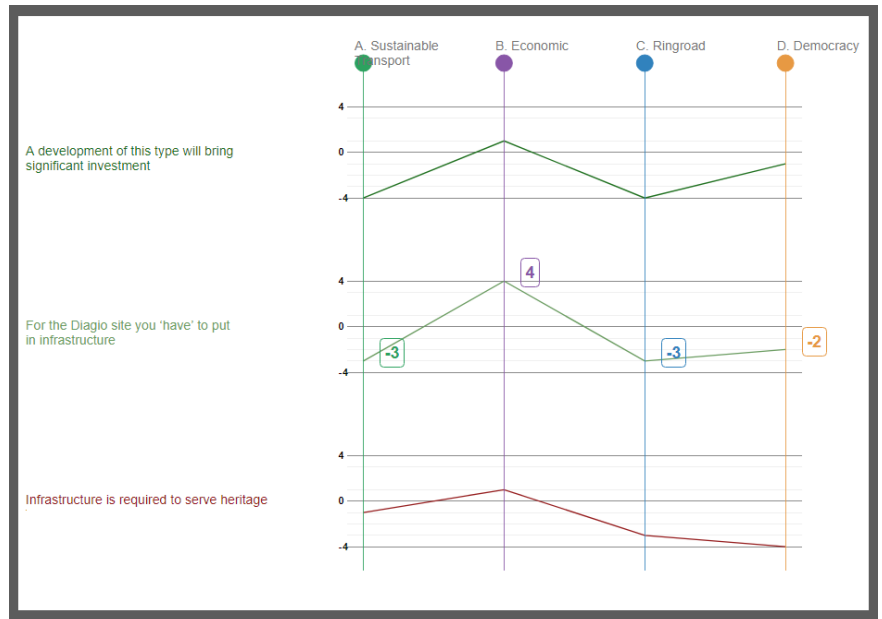
Piloting a new approach

CiviQ conducted an independent study of public opinion on the CAS issue. We offered a new type of information to Kilkenny citizens and Council on the issue. The information included:

- A comprehensive and searchable dataset of the range of opinion
- Identification of four coherent social perspectives on the issue
- Detailed reports on each perspective with visualisations

The study provided new knowledge to support dialogue on the issue as well as Council representation.

"It is very encouraging to see this type of study being conducted, particularly in cases where the public consultation has historically been very poor"
Stakeholder feedback



Visualisation of the importance of each sampled opinion across each of the four perspectives on the Central Access Scheme issue

Perceived value

The most important benefits for Kilkenny County Council was the new insight into opinion that could help communications on projects that are, or likely to be, controversial. Senior management of the Council aimed to engage this method in future consultations.

Of most value was:

- The potential ability to save conflict and associated costs downstream through a clearer understanding of public opinion
- The potential to offer new public consultation methods to generate the data for this new knowledge
- An ability to support Councilor's in their role as representatives

The analysis demonstrates that public opinion insights can be generated with citizens on an issue, which can support transparency in communication, dialogue and decision-making.