

Embargo until Monday 16th May 2016.3pm

Kilkenny County Council highlights its achievements for 2015.

Kilkenny County Council has prepared its Annual Report on its activities in 2015. Amongst the highlights identified by its Chief Executive are the

- the award of a gold medal to Kilkenny City in the National Tidy Towns competition, the award of a silver medal to Inistioge & a bronze medal to Tullaghought
- the continued & ongoing support to the City & Counties festivals & events which are an integral part of the social, cultural & economic life of Kilkenny
- the extensive work undertaken to prepare & adopt the Local Economic & Community Plan 2016-2021 & the ongoing work to support & develop the Public Participation Network
- the effective emergency response of the Council to severe flooding events in December
- the continued development of the medieval mile and the Medieval Mile Museum in Kilkenny City
- the planning framework for the Diageo site
- the Capital of Culture bid process

“I am satisfied the Council substantially achieved its objectives as set out at the start of 2015”, according to its Chief Executive Colette Byrne, *“and it did so within the parameters of its 2015 budget”*. Ms Byrne thanked the Cathaoirleach of the Council Cllr. Mary Hilda Cavanagh, the Municipal District Cathaoirleach, Councillors Pat Millea, Pat Dunphy and Mayor Joe Malone whom she said distinguished themselves in their roles.

Cllr Mary Hilda Cavanagh Cathaoirleach complimented all Elected Members and those who serve on the various committees and sub committees of the Council who continuously dedicate themselves to the business of the Council and to representing their particular & general interests. *“The extensive range of business discussed and decided is outlined in the report and is testament to their ongoing dedication and service to the Council”* said Councillor Cavanagh.

The list of key achievements include

Economic Development and Tourism

- Business Incentive Scheme
- Ongoing support to Kilkenny Tourism which implemented a Tourism Mobility Plan
- Festival and Events Presentation nights
- Kilkenny –Winner of National Enterprise Award and Best Young Entrepreneur support by Local Enterprise Office.
- 750 people attended LEO organised Careers and Opportunities Fair.
- LEO grant assists 247 companies which provide 813 full time and 446 part time jobs.
- Launch of South East Action Plan for Jobs

Community Development

- The Preparation, Adoption and launch of The Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) for County Kilkenny, 2016-2021.
- Ongoing support to the Kilkenny Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)
- Establishment of Kilkenny Public Participation Network.
- €250,000 in Community & Culture Grants
- Recognition of Kilkenny County Councils role in the UNHCR Sudanese Resettlement programme through the invitation to meet UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon on his visit to Ireland
- Launch by Ferrybank Steering Committee of the Ferrybank Community Development Strategic Plan 2015-2020.
- REDZ funding for Graiguenanamagh & Castlecomer Discovery Park
- Community & Festivals funding continued
- In a unique regional approach, Counties Kilkenny, Waterford and Wexford have joined forces to bid for the European Capital of Culture title in 2020 and the Three Sisters successfully passed Phase 1 of this competition in 2015.

Roads and Transportation

- N.77 Ballinaslee Improvement Scheme
- Ballyragget Village Renewal Scheme
- Mooncoin Pavement Improvement Scheme
- Thomastown Urban Renewal Scheme
- Adoption of Kilkenny Road Safety Plan
- Medieval Mile development works

Fire & Emergency Response

- Flood Emergency Response Plan activated in respect of severe flooding along Rivers Barrow, Nore & Suir catchments
- Funding for a new Fire Station in Graiguenamnanagh
- Attendance of Civil Defence volunteers at 21 Community Events

Parks & Amenity

- Development of 3 Playgrounds at Windgap, Stonyford, and Paulstown by local communities with grant and technical assistance from the County Council and County Kilkenny LEADER Partnership Company.
- 35,000 visitors to Woodstock Gardens
- 100 Groups received Amenity Grants
- Co Hall Commemoration Garden

Planning and Development

- Adoption of Abbey Quarter Master Plan
- Amendment to Callan Local Area Plan
- Conservation works to Tea House at Bateman Quay
- 800 planning applications processed -increased from 639 in 2014.

Library Services

- 12000 members
- Provision of energy efficient measures in Library buildings
- 27,600 public internet sessions & 1900 website visits
- Online exhibitions-The monks of Graiguenamanagh & The Bridewell Jail in Thomastown
- Innovative & Comprehensive programme of events in all branches throughout the year.

Heritage

- Interceptive Signage at Granny Castle, at Talbots Tower Kilkenny City and at St. Lachtains Graveyard with the local community group.
- Audit of over 300 plaques, memorials and signs from across 61 towns and villages.
- Recording over 1000 fieldnames in 25 town lands in the Kilkenny Fieldnames Project
- Launch of new website dedicated to Kilkenny's heritage www.kilkennyheritage.ie

Arts

- Development of Public Art Policy
- Innovated & comprehensive programme of artistic events
- 13,300 people attended events organised by the Councils Arts Office

Housing

- Housing Strategy 2015-2017 adopted by Council
- Rental Accommodation Scheme increased to 532 properties
- 379 Private rented properties inspected
- 92% of repair requests made in 2015 were dealt with in 2015
- 259 Local Authority Houses were retrofitted and 32 were adapted to meet the needs of disabled tenants
- 209 Grants paid in respect of private housing adaptations for elderly & disabled persons.
- 24 Long term voids were returned to full occupancy
- 11 Voluntary Housing Groups included in the 2015-2017 Housing Strategy which will be providing 78 units of accommodation

Water Services

- Provision of 25 million cubic litres of water daily to 65,000 customers under a service level agreement with Irish Water
- Upgrade of Clonassey Water Treatment Plant & Completion of Freshford Waste Water Treatment Plant upgrade
- €876,000 in Grants & Subsidies to the Group Scheme sector

Environment

- Kilkenny City awarded gold medal in National Tidy Towns competition, Inistioge was awarded a silver and Tullahought retaining its bronze medal
- Adoption of Southern Regional Waste Management Plan & Kilkenny County Council Litter Management Plan
- Collection of 1100 tonnes of recycling material at Dunmore Civic Amenity site & 1450 tonnes of glass /cans at 42 bottle banks.
- 120 Community groups involved in National Spring Clean
- Investigation of 950 environmental complaints and almost 1500 routine environmental inspections were undertaken.
- 28 schools awarded a green flag bring County total up to 69
- Kilkenny and Tipperary County Council were appointed as joint Lead Authorities for preparation, consultation and implementation of the River Basin Management Plans 2017 to 2021. A new National Water Framework Directive Office was set up
- 170 First time Farm Inspections were undertaken under the European Communities (Good Agricultural Practice for the protection of Waters) Regulations 2014
- A Consultative Committee on Dog Re-homing and Welfare was set up in 2015 which is multi-disciplinary in makeup including elected representatives, Council officials from Carlow and Kilkenny, the County Veterinary Officer , representatives from Animal Welfare organisations and the IFA.
- 6,200 dog licences issued.
- Ongoing provision of lifeguard service supervising 3,000 swimmers in public bathing areas in the County

Full details of the Councils Annual Report for 2015 are available on the Councils website www.kilkennycoco.ie.

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