

Kilkenny County Council
Comhairle Chontae Chill Chainnigh

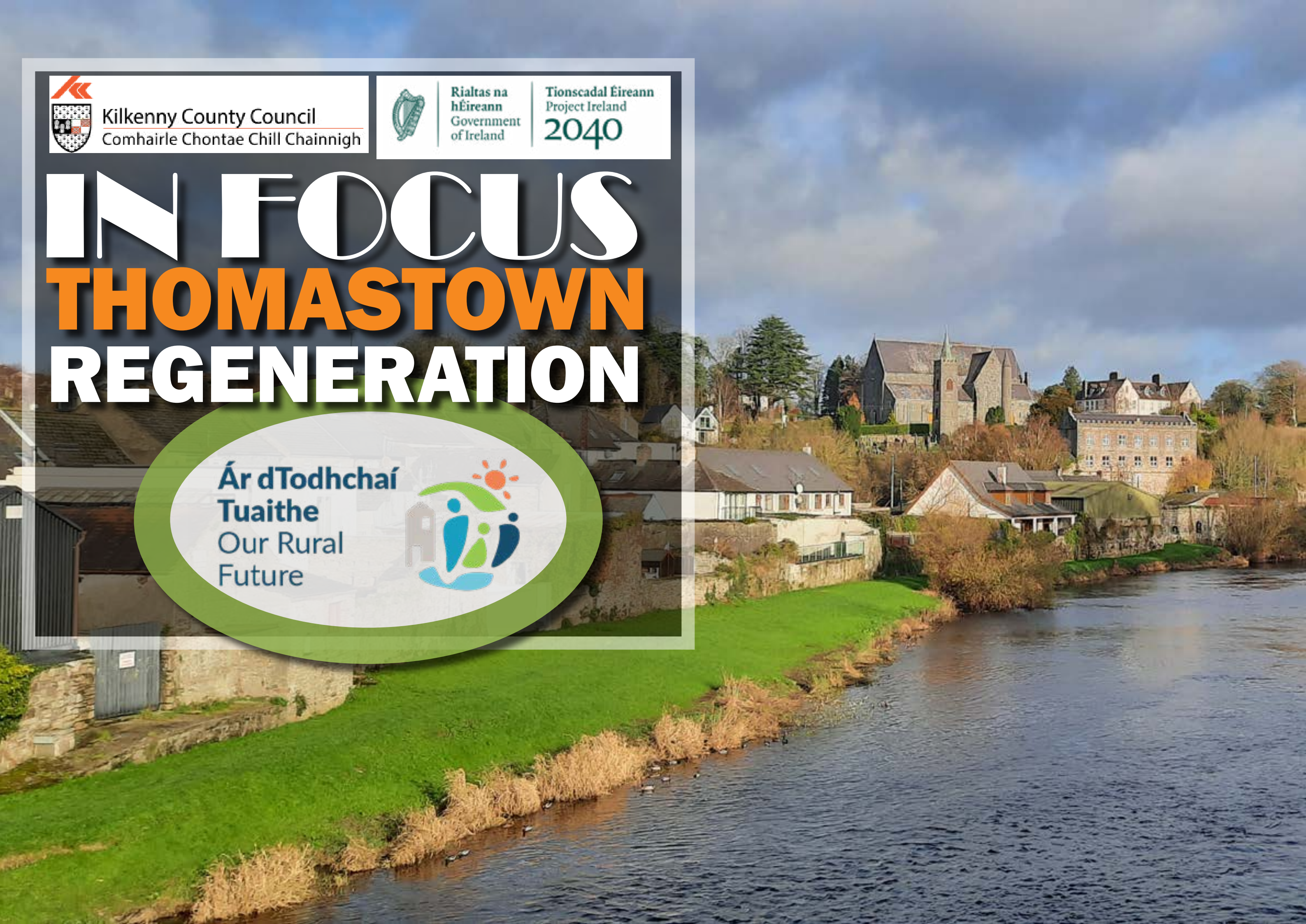


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IN FOCUS THOMASTOWN REGENERATION

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Message from the Cathaoirleach Kilkenny County Council



Welcome to the 2nd issue of the Kilkenny County Council Town & Village Renewal and Rural Regeneration projects *IN FOCUS* update. The first *IN FOCUS* edition highlighted projects in Callan and in this issue we have a closer look at projects completed and presently underway in Thomastown.

Kilkenny County Council has been successful in securing significant funding and implementing key projects in Thomastown and these projects are now having a very positive impact on the town. Kilkenny County Council look forward to continuing to work with our local communities to further develop projects in our rural towns and villages.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Executive of Kilkenny County Council and Local Community Groups in Thomastown for their efforts in assisting in the delivery of the various regeneration projects in Thomastown over the last five years.

Yours sincerely

Fidelis Doherty
Cathaoirleach
Kilkenny County Council



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THOMASTOWN BACKGROUND

Thomastown has changed since it was mapped in the first half of the 19th century by the Ordnance Survey, with modern residential and commercial developments extending the town north and south.

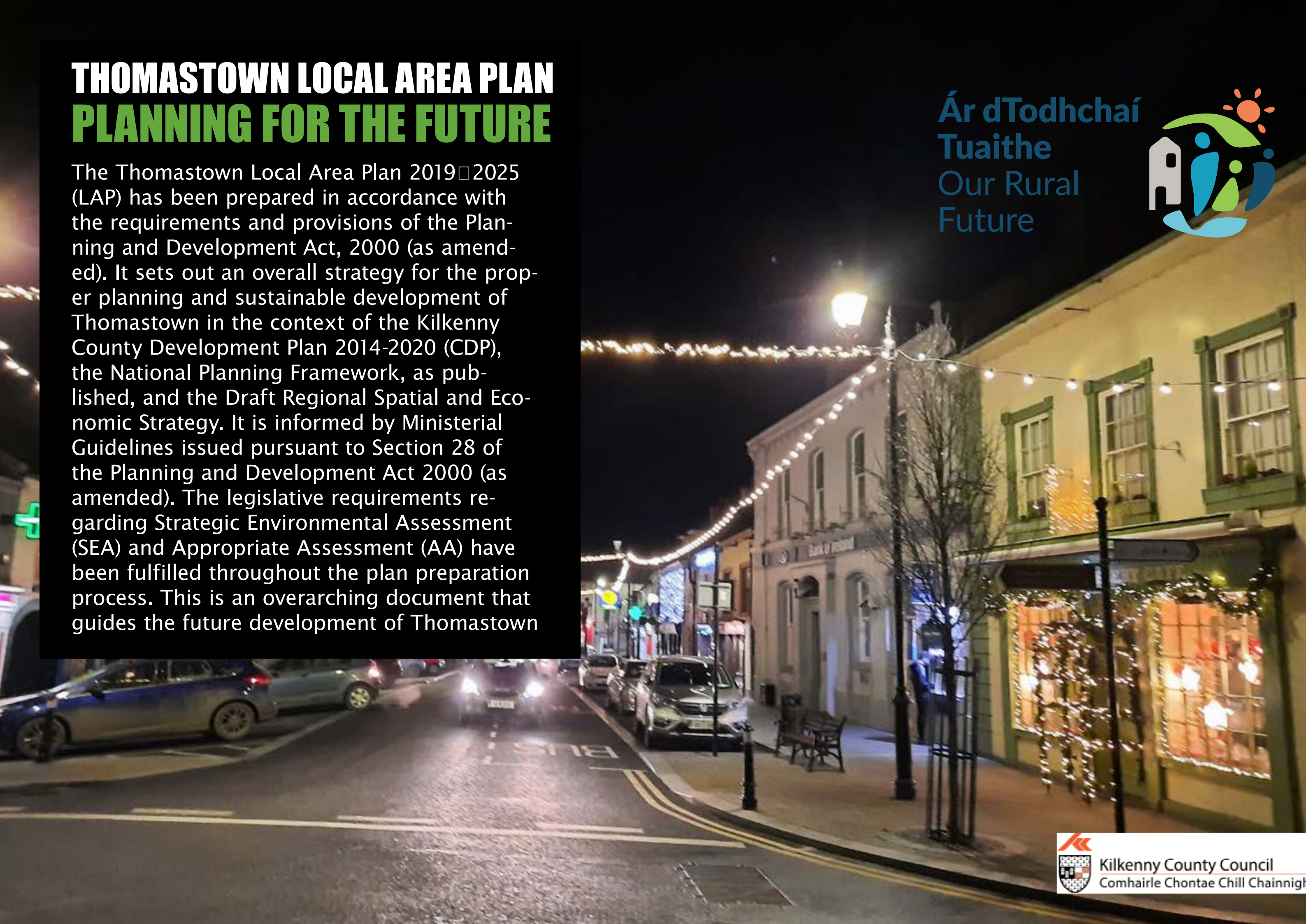
The town contains many individual features of archaeological, historical and architectural interest. These range from important medieval structures to fortified town houses, industrial archaeology and traditional single and terraced houses, as well as other potential features of archaeological merit not yet discovered, all worthy of protection. Such protection is provided not only by the designation of Protected Structures, but also through the identification of two Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) in Thomastown, these being the Thomastown Town Centre ACA and the Mill Street ACA.

The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage study of Thomastown identifies 89 structures within the confines of Thomastown Local Area Plan 2019-2025 area, with each designation given a national, regional or local importance classification. One designation was classified as being of national importance, ninety four as being of regional importance with the remaining three classified as being locally important.

THOMASTOWN LOCAL AREA PLAN PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

The Thomastown Local Area Plan 2019-2025 (LAP) has been prepared in accordance with the requirements and provisions of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended). It sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of Thomastown in the context of the Kilkenny County Development Plan 2014-2020 (CDP), the National Planning Framework, as published, and the Draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy. It is informed by Ministerial Guidelines issued pursuant to Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). The legislative requirements regarding Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) have been fulfilled throughout the plan preparation process. This is an overarching document that guides the future development of Thomastown

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STRATEGIC VISION LOCAL AREA PLAN

The future development of Thomastown is underpinned by a Strategic Vision which is intended to guide the future growth of the town in a sustainable manner, recognising its natural and built assets, and enhancing the town's character, heritage and amenities. The Strategic Vision is based on detailed analysis of the profile, functions and activities of

Thomastown in line with its position in the County Settlement Hierarchy: 'This Local Area Plan promotes the proportionate growth of Thomastown to maintain its share of the County population, approaching a population of 2,800 by 2026, building on its established character and consolidating its role as a District Town. To achieve this, the Plan will encourage population growth that is based on the capacity of physical and social infrastructure.

Thomastown will be supported as a vibrant service centre, and the Plan will encourage job creation, capitalising on local strengths including heritage and tourism. The plan will also promote sustainable movement and identify opportunities to enhance connectivity with particular regard to the train station. Development will be encouraged in a sustainable manner that promotes both a healthy environment and healthy living, and protects the unique heritage of the area'.

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THOMASTOWN HEALTH CHECK

In addition to the Development Plan in 2020 Kilkenny County Council engaged Turley's to undertake a 'Health Check' of Thomastown using a combination of desk based research and analysis, field work/site visits and community/stakeholder engagement. Following this, the Health Check concluded with a SWOT analysis informed by the following items:

1. Socio-economic research and analysis
2. Planning policy review
3. Urban (physical) analysis; and
4. Stakeholder engagement (in the form of an on-line survey)

The Health Check identified the key planning issues and development parameters associated with Thomastown including: its physical environment; population / community profile; access to services; and community life. The Health Checks also identifies existing assets, amenities, accessibility issues, environmental quality and service provision etc. A planning appraisal provides a legislative and policy context for the preparation of the Town Plans. Thomastown is small in relative terms and this limits the extent of published data (including for example commercial information). Therefore stakeholder engagement was carried out

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in order to complete the health check, an on-line survey was crucial to understanding the settlements including their assets and amenities and, importantly, the key characteristics and drivers of the community. Analysis of desktop research /published material and data collected through stakeholder engagement and a site visits enabled a detailed SWOT analysis to be carried out.

The assessment delivered a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of the structure and health of Thomastown and key issues of particular relevance and importance to local communities. This project sought to assess pre-existing causes of negative social and economic-impact and

set spatial regeneration objectives that could obviate them. Turley's adopted a people centered, stakeholder engagement process to inform an inverse Social Impact Assessment, to inform and validate the Town Health Check.

Working with key local stakeholders and the communities of Thomastown, Kilkenny County Council and Turley's sought to identify the issues arising and generate development objectives and solutions to be proposed as part of the new Thomastown Town Plan.





Consultation Feedback

Respondents were also invited to complete a short on-line survey to explain what makes Thomastown special and what improvements are required to make the town a great place to live, work and enjoy. The survey received 524 responses in total and 23% (118 No.) had a connection to Thomastown. The majority of Thomastown respondents (79%) live in the town, followed by 7% who use the facilities in the town and 6% who own a business in Thomastown.

In order to recruit respondents a blend of remote and digital consultation activities were undertaken including the hosting of a consultation website and a sponsored social media campaign across Instagram and Facebook. During the survey recruitment phase, the consultation website hosted 2500 new users and experienced 5500 page views.

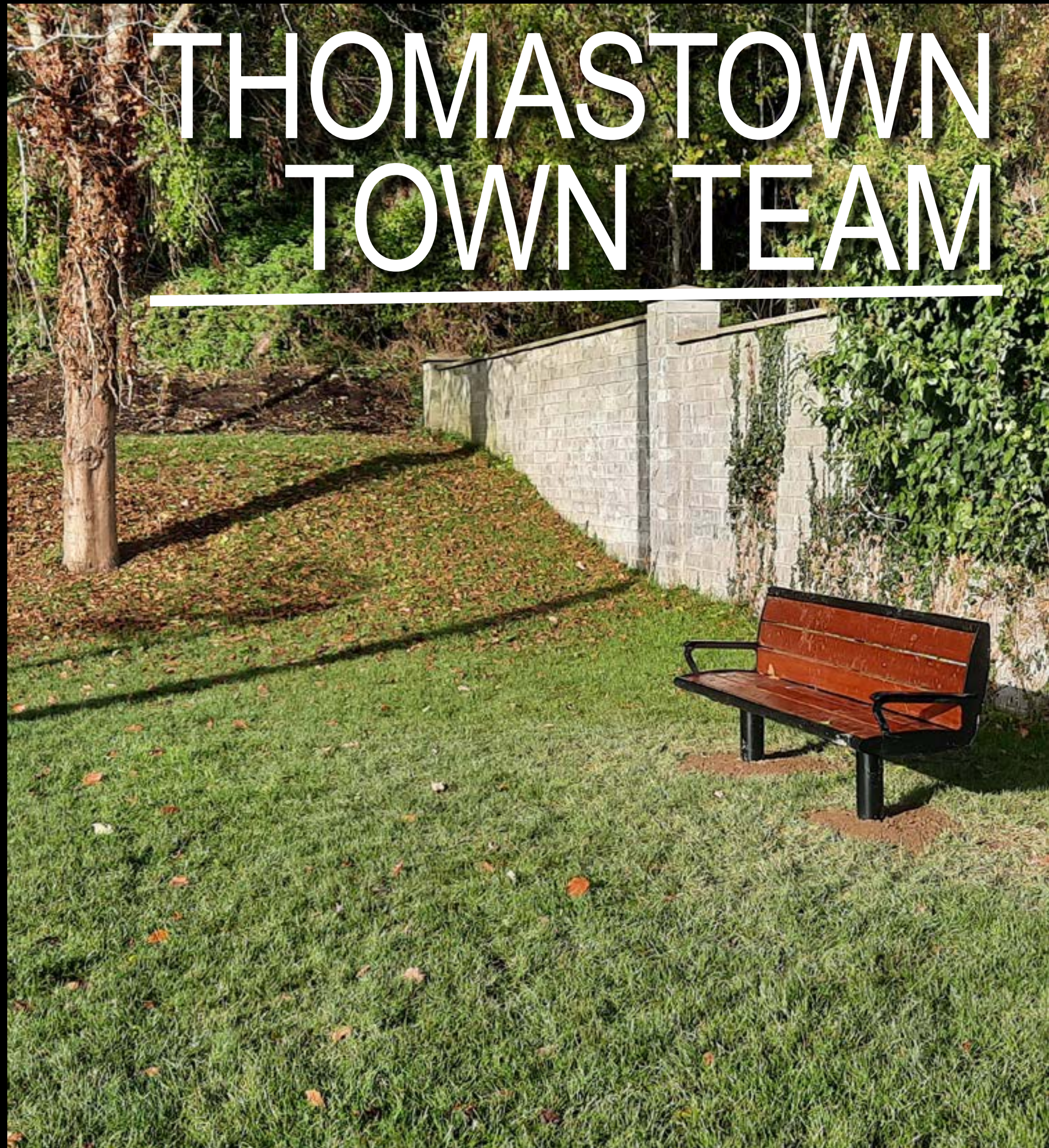
Establishment of a **Town Team**

The Town Team workshop, also held on-line in June 2021, comprised of an interactive session where Turley's worked with stakeholders to establish a mission, vision and aims of the project and refine the "resources", "activities", "outputs" and "outcomes" to deliver change through the Town Development Plan.

This co-operative "bottom-up and top-down approach" session sought to inclusively involve both statutory agencies, elected representatives, community representatives and wider civic society in an active discussion about the solutions to problems can have a transformative impact on communities, securing long-term buy-in and ownership.

The process invited willing organisations, individuals or groups, with a desire to continue their involvement in the project, to join the Town Team. The structure of the Town Team and the positions were outlined.

THOMASTOWN TOWN TEAM



PROJECT FUNDING

Whilst the Health Check and Town Team consultations were ongoing, Kilkenny County Council has been successful in the ongoing delivery of a number of Town & Village renewal projects for Thomastown. Kilkenny County Council has also been successful in securing significant funding for Thomastown under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund.

This funding stream is committed by Government to be invested in rural Ireland over the period 2019 to 2027. The purpose of the fund is to support job creation in rural areas, address de-population of rural communities and support improvements in our towns and villages.

The Fund is part of the Rural Development Investment programme which will assist and support economic recovery in rural areas. It includes a number of integrated funding interventions.

Examples include;

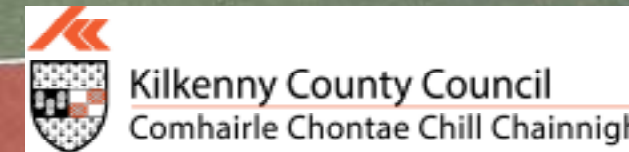
- Rural Regeneration and Development Fund.
- Town and Village Renewal Scheme.
- Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme.
- Local Improvement Scheme.
- LEADER.



The Town & Village Renewal Scheme has played a key role in funding projects in Thomastown

Since 2017, Kilkenny County Council has been successful in applying for, securing and administering funding for numerous projects in Thomastown. One of these funding streams includes the Town and Village Renewal Scheme. This scheme was first introduced in 2016 and is funded under Project Ireland 2040.

The scheme is targeted at towns and villages with a population of 10,000 or less and all projects funded under the Scheme must be completed within a 12 to 18 month period. The Town and Village Scheme is one of a series of national and local support measures designed to rejuvenate small rural towns and villages throughout Ireland.



TOWN & VILLAGE RENEWAL



Rural Regeneration Development Fund

The funding secured under the Rural Regeneration Development Fund is provided to further the aims of Our Rural Future, which highlighted the need to build strongly on existing investment and to strive for even greater ambition to achieve significant and rapid progress on the objective of balanced regional development. The fund is supporting coordinated and integrated projects between government departments, State agencies, local authorities, other public bodies, communities and, where appropriate, philanthropic funders and/or the private sector, which will have an impact on sustainable economic and social development in rural areas.

Some of the projects funded under this programme in Thomastown includes the development of a new Library, the development of Sessions House, the enhancement of Lowe and Logan Street including the provision of new footpaths, road surfacing, lighting and the development of the new Quay Car Park.



RURAL REGENERATION DEVELOPMENT FUND

THOMASTOWN REGENERATION PROJECTS UPDATE



New Scouts Den Car Park COMPLETE

**SESSIONS HOUSE
COMING SOON**

New Car Park COMPLETE

**NEW Library
COMING SOON**

Lowe St. COMPLETE

**NEW Recreational
Amenity COMPLETE**

Logan St. COMPLETE

Thomastown Regeneration Projects



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Tionscadal Athghiniúna Charrchlós Thaobh na Cé Quayside Car Park Regeneration Project

Arna oscailt go hOifigiúil ag
Officially opened by

An tAire Heather Humphreys T.D.
An tAire Forbartha Tuaithe agus Pobail

Minister Heather Humphreys T.D.
Minister for Rural and Community Development

I láthair / In the presence of

An Comhairleoir Fidelis Ní Dhochartaigh
Cathaoirleach ar Chomhairle Chontae Chill Chainnigh

Cllr. Fidelis Doherty
Cathaoirleach of Kilkenny County Council

Ar an 23 Iúil, 2021 / On the 23rd July, 2021

Mhainigh an Roinn Forbartha Tuaithe agus Pobail agus
Comhairle Contae Chill Chainnigh an tionscadal seo faoin
gCiste Forbartha agus Athghiniúna Tuaithe.

This project was funded by the Department of Rural and Community
Development and Kilkenny County Council under the Rural
Regeneration Development Fund.



An Roinn Forbartha
Tuaithe agus Pobail
Department of Rural and
Community Development



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QUAYSIDE CARPARK



As part of a larger application for Thomastown Kilkenny County Council secured €90,000 under the Rural Regeneration Scheme for the Quayside car park . Now fully complete the large car park also has new lighting and bus parking for tourists. Other works completed includes drainage, the upgrade of existing footpath and resurfacing of car park and markings.

This car park now provides much needed accessible parking close to the town centre which now supports residents, businesses and visitors. Other works completed includes landscaping, a new pedestrian walkway that links through the car-park leading into the town centre, (this was a key objectives of the Thomastown Mobility Plan).Lastly groundworks infrastructure is now also in place to cater for camper vans to park and access power on this site.



SESSIONS HOUSE



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SESSIONS HOUSE
REGENERATION

PROJECT UPDATE

In 2019 Kilkenny County Council were successful in securing funding under the Rural Regeneration Development Fund for the refurbishment of the iconic Session House building, formerly the Thomastown Court-house on Logan Street. It has been a long-standing objective of both community/ arts groups and Kilkenny County Council to refurbish and re purpose this building to secure its future as a living building in Thomastown. Plans previously in place for the building were to create an arts centre and in keeping with the inherent creative and design culture in Thomastown.

As part of the redevelopment project for the Sessions House, Kilkenny County Council sought a partner in the creative sector to operate the building into the future. The Design and Craft Council of Ireland, based in Kilkenny City, with a strong presence also in Thomastown, have agreed to move forward with a proposal to develop an educational facility at Sessions House. This development represents a commitment to supporting and promoting the progression of new creative talent to employment in the creative sector in Thomastown. Working closely with the Design and Craft Council of Ireland, Kilkenny County Council developed plans for the refurb-



New Lease of Life for Landmark Building in Thomastown



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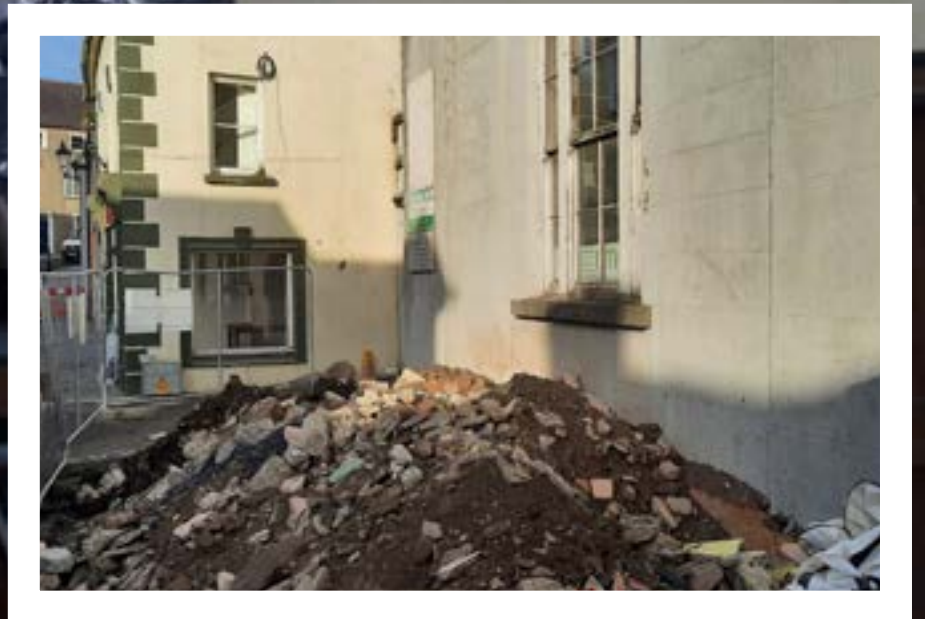




ishment of Session House which include some internal and second floor modifications, to meet the needs of modern building standards, as well as meeting the conservation needs of the building and ensuring the retention of its unique character. This is an exciting project for Thomastown, placing it firmly at the centre of a design and creative sector ecosystem in Kilkenny, supported by the Design and Craft Council of Ireland, Kilkenny Leader Partnership, the Department of Rural and Community Development and Kilkenny County Council.



**The Sessions House Development
is an exciting project for
Thomastown, placing it firmly at the
centre of a design and creative sector
ecosystem in Kilkenny.**





NEW TOWN CENTRE **RECREATIONAL AMENITY/PARK**

The recently opened Thomastown Recreational/Park Amenity by Minister Heather Humphreys and the Cathaoirleach of Kilkenny County Council Fidelis Doherty has been very well received by the local community. The widely used outdoor multipurpose amenity is located beside the centre of the town and since been opened, is now a hub of activity with teenagers, children and adults now having a space where they can congregate outdoors, play tennis, basketball or badminton or just relax and have a coffee in this rejuvenated outdoor space.

The previously underutilised space was developed by Kilkenny County Council in partnership with a recently established group of local volunteers called the TCRAG (Thomastown Community Recreational Area Group) and the Thomastown Community Centre.

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BEFORE



AFTER



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This state-of-the-art amenity secured €100,000 under the 2020 Town & Village Renewal Scheme to enhance the previously derelict amenity area behind the community centre. The project also received funding from Kilkenny County Council who co-ordinated the project and Kilkenny Leader Partnership. The works completed included resurfacing of the existing run-down basketball and tennis courts, the enhancement of the open spaces including tidying up the site, removing old fencing, landscaping and the building of an amphitheatre/seated area. Other works include adding LED lighting over the courts and adding an outdoor accessible shelter with seating and picnic benches.



This recreation/park facility now provides opportunities for active living and recreation for all ages in a safe and inclusive environment. This amenity also complements the existing and very well used children's playground providing an amenity for older children, adults and the elderly. This once unusable open space post Covid-19 is now very important to promote and facilitate the potential to engage in both formal and informal sport and recreation as a community resource in the centre of Thomastown. This amenity now provides an outdoor space in Thomastown where people can use additional amenities in a safe and open space and this is helping inhabitants in the town to overcome issues and challenges presented by Covid-19.

Furthermore, as noted by Orla Carroll, Failte Ireland, Covid 19 has seen more people engage in outdoor recreation and consumer research indicates that this is expected to increase going forward. Outdoor recreational amenities similar to this can have significant and wide-ranging health benefits.



NEW BASKETBALL COURT



NEW AMPHITHEATRE



NEW SHELTER & SEATING



NEW TENNIS COURT



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TOWN CENTRE

PARK SEATING & LANDSCAPING

The new seating and the installation of park benches are now installed at the new recreational amenity. These were funded by Kilkenny Leader Partnership with the first phase of this project now complete. The development of this formerly disused space now provides an inviting and safe outdoor space for locals and visitors to congregate in a safe environment. The seating and benches also add significant value to the overall development providing a welcoming park amenity located in the centre of the town.

The new Thomastown amenity also presents a pleasant and clean environment; availability of green spaces with outdoor seating, safe pathways and accessibility. The amenity since opening during the summer has been a huge success and is used by young and old in throughout the area.





LOWE & LOGAN ST REGENERATION

NEW FOOTPATHS & ROAD SURFACE



Public Realm works at Lowe and Logan Street

Kilkenny County Council were successful in securing €890,000 funding under the Rural Regeneration Development Fund with the objective to enhance the visual appearance of both Logan and Lowe Street and to improve traffic flow in the area.

The recently completed works incorporate the upgrading of the existing streetscape using high quality paving materials, removal of existing overhead service cables, the relocation of these services underground, the provision of new heritage public lighting and a new road surface with line markings. Other works included landscaping and street furniture.

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As part of the €890,000 funding secured by Kilkenny County Council under the Rural Regeneration Development, traditional street lighting was installed on both Lowe and Logan street. These late Victorian style streetlights enhance the sense of heritage to both streets and add to the overall aesthetics of the works completed.



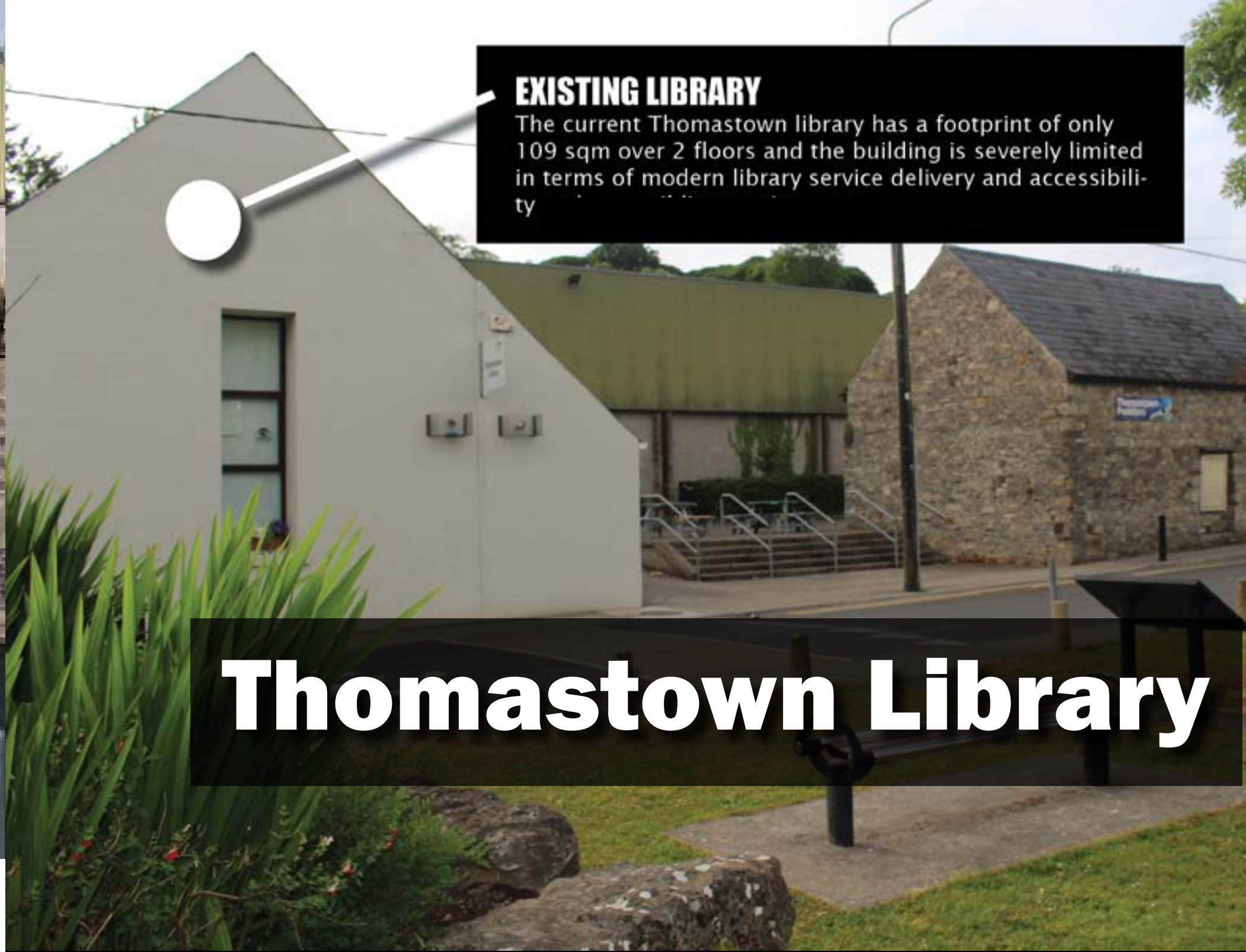
NEW LIGHTING



Your Town. Your Community Centre.
Be There All The Way.

Local Project Built With Funding From
Thomastown
Community Centre

**NEW THOMASTOWN
LIBRARY
COMING SOON**



EXISTING LIBRARY
 The current Thomastown library has a footprint of only 109 sqm over 2 floors and the building is severely limited in terms of modern library service delivery and accessibility

Thomastown Library

Kilkenny County Council was successful in securing €2.56 million for the development of a modern library and community facilities in Thomastown. The funding was part of a €75million announcement for 24 landmark regeneration projects in rural communities across the country. This development

will further compliment the other Rural Regeneration and Town & Village renewal projects completed and presently under way in Thomastown. The combination of all of these projects will result in significant investment in Thomastown.

The relocation and development of the library was part of a broader Thomastown regeneration application which is redefining the Thomastown town centre with the provision of modern library services, flexible creative art space and improved public realm.

Projected population growths and changing demographics in Thomastown require a suitable centrally located library in order to provide for the needs of the community. There is significant potential for the new library service to be an important civic space within Thomastown community, working as a cultural asset and being part of the cultural infrastructure of the town. Design, layout, space allocation and anticipated usage within the new library is driven by a variety of factors. Kilkenny Library Service is looking to increase usage significantly across all audiences and communities. Current performance figures reflect the importance of Thomastown library in the community despite the fact the existing building is not adequate. Given the



NEW LIBRARY

central location aligned with a significant increase in opening hours and population growth figures, the range of services that the library will be able to provide will be significantly improved. The overall development will re purpose a town centre building for creative, cultural centre with the library as a core element will significantly benefit the residents, visitors and tourists in a cost-effective way.

The new Thomastown library will be located in the former sports hall which is part of the community centre. Approx 700 sqm will be allocated towards the development of the library spaces while approx 250sqm will be refurbished as a sports hall. Kilkenny County Council will operate the library space and the Thomastown Community Centre Ltd will operate the sports hall space. The library will be readily identifiable as a public building promoting openness and engagement.

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The development works will include;

- Change of use from vacant sports hall (partial) to library facility.
- Improved accessibility.
- Refurbishment of the remaining sports hall area for community use.
- Installation of new mechanical and electrical services including renewable technologies such as air to water heat pump to rear of building.
- Roof PV panels
- Restoration, alteration and refurbishment of the existing structure.



NEW BIN



Litter Infrastructure Support Grant Scheme

In 2021 Kilkenny County Council secured funding under the Litter Infrastructure Support Grant Scheme. Three solar compacting bins which alleviate overflow issues were purchased for three district towns including one that is now in place on the main street in Thomastown. The bin has a compacting force of 600 kg. Regardless of the type of waste, this can achieve a compaction ratio ranging from one fifth to one seventh of its size.



Scouts Den Car Park Regeneration

Kilkenny County Council was successful in securing €30,000 under the NTA Active Travel Additional Outdoor Infrastructure towards the regeneration of the Scouts Den Car Park. These completed works include the realigning of the car park at the Scouts Den and viewing area to allow safer access to the outdoor seating. These works were in line with the Thomastown Mobility Management Plan linking with the pedestrianisation of Chapel Lane and facilitating safe access for walking and cycling to the Thomastown Scouts Den, St Columba's Hospital and Dangan Terrace from the West side of Thomastown. These works also now facilitate safer access to St Mary's Primary School, the Church, town centre and housing estates from the east side of the town.



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QUAYSIDE CAMPING BAY

NEW THOMASTOWN Motor Home Bays

Kilkenny County Council recognises that the provision of a select number of motor-home Parking Bays in our Rural Towns are an important element in the provision of non-competing facilities for the expanding number of tourists traveling domestically during the Covid-19 pandemic. Kilkenny County Council was successful under the Town & Village Renewal Scheme in securing funding to pilot these bays in Thomastown. This motor-home parking bay located at the Quayside Camping Bay will also play a key role in helping to bring an additional tourist footfall into Thomastown.

The provision of these motor-home Parking bays will support rural tourism initiatives add value to rural enterprise, natural heritage assets and outdoor recreational activities.

These motor-home camping bays will provide standalone camper-van and motor-home facility.

**QUAYSIDE
CAMPING BAY**



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These motor-home bay developments will also demonstrate compliance with Fáilte Ireland's publication 'Caravan & Camping Parks Classification Matrix' or Fáilte Ireland's Welcome Standards and will respect the artistic, historic and cultural heritage of Thomastown while integrating with and benefiting the local economy and community in the identified locations. Kilkenny County Council have installed the first YORE ON camping bay in the Quayside car park in Thomastown.



NEW CHRISTMAS LIGHTS FOR THOMASTOWN



Kilkenny County Council was also successful in securing funding under the Town & Village Renewal Scheme for new Christmas lights in Thomastown. Having consulted with the local community, the upgrading of the festive lights was identified as a key priority. The funding was used for the provision of a much-needed upgrade of the older Christmas lights .



THOMASTOWN TOWN CLEANING



Thomastown was one of four district towns that received funding administered by Kilkenny Council under the Town & Village Renewal Accelerated Measures Scheme.

Funding was secured for;

- Deep cleaning of paving, signage and street furniture.
- All furniture including bins, seats tree grills etc were cleaned and painted with some minor repair works carried out.
- Entry signage outside Thomastown was cleaned and replaced in some areas.
- New signage outlining free car-parking spaces was erected.





NEW TOWN TEAM PLANS

**THOMASTOWN, GORESBRIDGE
MULLINAVAT, JOHNSTOWN
URLINGFORD & CASTLECOMER**

TOWN TEAM PLANS

GORESBRIDGE, MULLINAVAT, JOHNSTOWN, URLINGFORD, CASTLECOMER & THOMASTOWN

Kilkenny County Council were successful in securing funding under the Town & Village Renewal Scheme to undertake Health Check assessments for a number of other Towns & Villages in County Kilkenny. These included Goresbridge, Mullinavat, Johnstown, Urlingford, Castlecomer and Thomastown. The completed Health Checks provide a “stock-take” of the current economic, social, environmental and physical situation relating to the Town or Village in order to assess the vitality and viability of town / village centres. The assessment essentially analyses the strengths and weaknesses of a town / village and is based on a quantitative analysis of factors such as the range and quality of activities in the centre, its mix of uses, its accessibility to people living in the area and its general amenity appearance and safety.

The new Town Teams presently being set up will work in partnership with Kilkenny County Council similar to the process piloted in Callan.





The new Town Team plans were developed following consultation workshops and information exchanges and input from various sources including various local community interests, visitors and traders. Following a needs assessment, recommendations and actions were identified based on factual findings and community needs and inputs.

The NEW Town Team plans set out a shared vision for the identified towns, a strategy to deliver key objectives, an identification of suitable projects to address economic decline and restore vibrancy. Other areas covered in the plans include projects that will improve the physical and social environment and also the identification of projects suitable for the Town and Village Renewal/ Rural Regeneration funding streams.





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NEXT STEPS

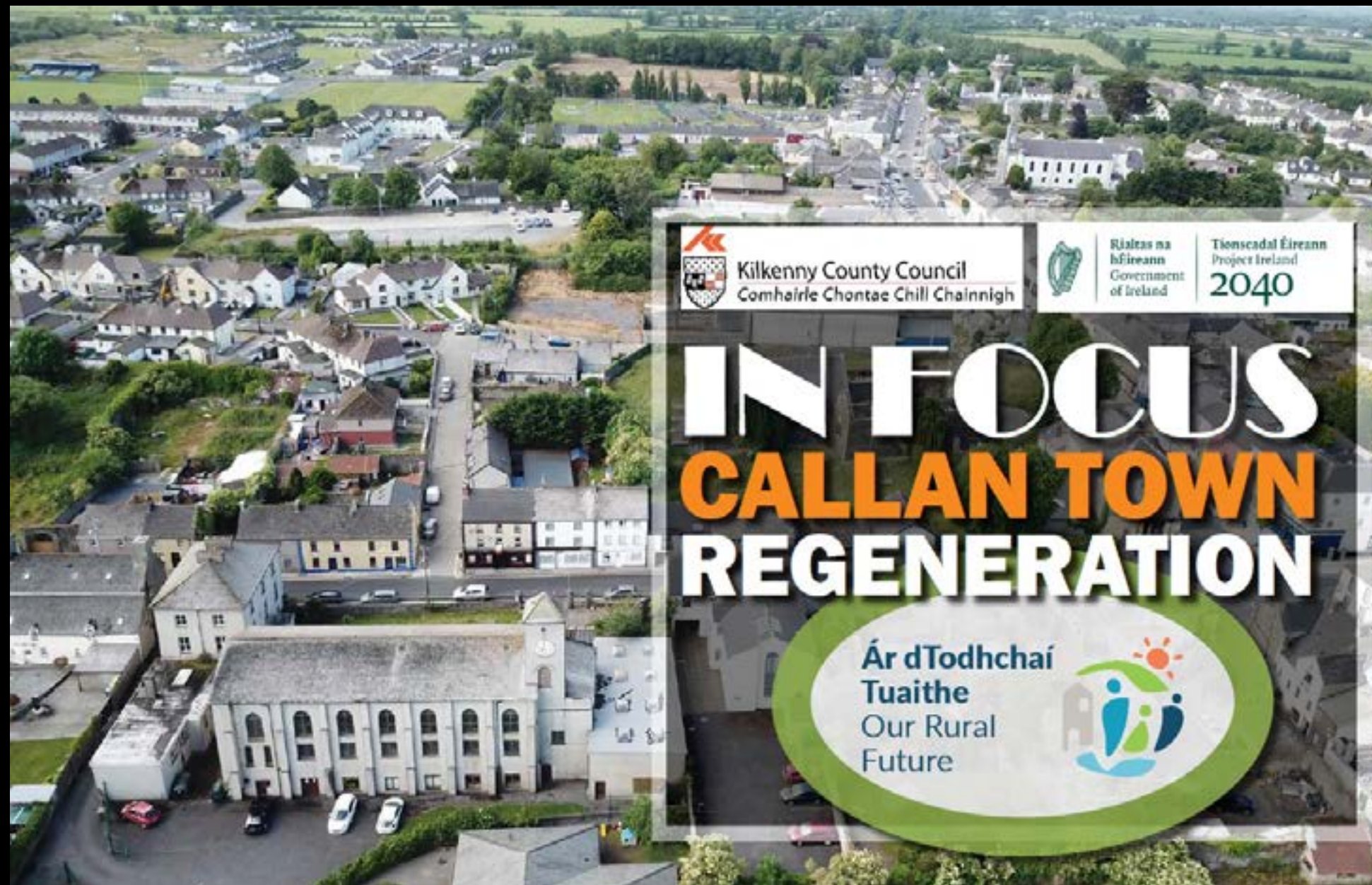
THE THOMASTOWN TOWN TEAM PLAN

NEW TOWN TEAM PLAN

The purpose of the Thomastown Town Plan is to act as a planning tool to assist the Town Team to tackle the challenges identified in Thomastown through a range of regeneration projects, programmes and activities. The New Thomastown Town Team can be viewed [here](#).



**Click on the image below for details on
Regeneration Projects completed and
underway in Callan**



Message from the Chair of the Callan/ Thomastown Municipal District Kilkenny County Council



I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the groups and individuals in Thomastown who have participated in the development of these projects. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Executive and the staff of Kilkenny County Council who applied for the funding and facilitated the development and implementation of these very significant projects in Thomastown

I would also like to take this opportunity to also wish the Thomastown Town Team the very best and we look forward to working with you in building on the great work completed in Thomastown to date.

Yours sincerely
Michael Doyle
Chair Callan/Thomastown Municipal District
Kilkenny County Council



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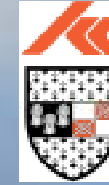
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