



COMHAIRLE CHONTAE CHILL CHAINNIGH
KILKENNY COUNTY COUNCIL
TUARASCÁIL BHAINISTÍOCHTA MÍOSÚIL
MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT
MEITHEAMH - JUNE 2020

TO: EACH MEMBER OF KILKENNY COUNTY COUNCIL

Monthly Management Report to Members of Kilkenny County Council for consideration at the June Monthly Meeting.

**HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM COVID-19 [CORONAVIRUS]
INFLUENZA & OTHER VIRAL ILLNESS**



IF YOU ARE NOT FEELING WELL

Check if you have symptoms of coronavirus. These are a cough, shortness of breath, breathing difficulties, fever (*high temperature*).

If you do have symptoms of coronavirus, phone your GP or local Emergency Department [ED] without delay.

Do not go to your GP or ED. Phone them first. Tell them about your symptoms. Give them the details about your situation. Avoid contact with other people by self-isolating. If you do not have a GP, phone [112](tel:112) or [999](tel:999).

IF YOU ARE FEELING WELL

If you are feeling well, carry on with your normal routine.

Follow the [advice on how to protect yourself and others from coronavirus](#) and other infections such as [flu](#).

Avoid spending time with people who are ill with a cough, high temperature, or breathing problems.

If you develop [symptoms of coronavirus](#):

- avoid contact with people by self-isolating
- phone your GP or emergency department
- tell them your symptoms and the details of your situation





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EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS

A list of Orders made in the last month will be available in the Council Chamber for inspection by the Elected Members.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

15th to 23rd August
Heritage Week

REPORT AT A GLANCE

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CORPORATE

CORONA VIRUS

This pandemic has had a major influence on the way the Council has conducted its business over the last couple of months and this situation will continue into the future. It is acknowledged that it has not been an easy time as we all adjusted to new ways of working, e.g. working from home, in the office or a combination of both. The patience of the Elected Members is appreciated as this “new norm” comes into play.

Briefings to Corporate Policy Group and Elected Members:

In lieu of face to face meetings the Corporate Policy Group was briefed on a monthly basis in relation to current issues and the holding of Council Meetings with a Quorum.

Two Council Meetings with a Quorum were held. The CPG Members decided in March that due to restrictions that no other face to face meeting will be held for any Committee.

Briefings were provided for the members of the Municipal Districts on a regular basis.

It is intended to provide a briefing to each of the SPCs before the end of June, 2020.

The Health & Wellbeing of staff and the general public in the early onset of the crisis was and continues to be of paramount importance to the Council. The following measures were put in place:

- Initially guidance issued via the Health and Safety Officer advising all staff of the principles of good hygiene practice during this crisis.
- Hand sanitising products distributed to staff.
- Additional contract cleaners were engaged to sanitise commonly touched areas e.g. hand rails on the staircases, door handles, the clocking machine, lift buttons etc.

- Disposable gloves are available to staff for use when opening post, handling cash etc.
- COVID 19 posters and information panels were erected in all public buildings.
- Social/physical distancing requirements is being adhered to in offices, and in commonly populated areas.
- Protocol in place for the use of meetings rooms, if required.
- Check in and out protocol in place at Customer Service Desk for visitors.
- Return to Work Safely Response Plan in place.

Business Continuity Planning:

Maintaining essential services to the people of Kilkenny remains a key priority for the Council. In the very early stages of the crisis and in the first week in March, a COVID 19 Co-ordination Response Team comprising key people throughout the organisation to develop business continuity planning was established.

Each Directorate developed responsive business continuity plans for key essential services. The Business Continuity Plan for Coronavirus Pandemic was signed off by the Management Team in March, 2020.

The Business Continuity Plan prepares the Council for a state of readiness to respond to the threat to delivery of services posed by the Covid 19 crisis, to identify essential functions and roles and to put in place measures to maintain core business activities for several weeks during which there was likely to be increased pressures on the delivery of key essential services and during which time there was likely be high levels of absenteeism.

The Covid 19 Crisis Management Team: The Crisis Management Team met regularly to consider and assess critical issues and to manage, control and co-ordinate the Council’s delivery of essential services to the people of County Kilkenny, particularly the most vulnerable in our society at this time.



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Closure of Council Offices, Area Offices & Remote Working:

Following the announcement by An Taoiseach that creches and schools were to close from Friday, 13th March, 2020, measures were put in place to provide flexible working options for staff which included remote working, extended working hours and the flexibility to work Saturdays and Sundays in County Buildings across all services. All public buildings closed to the public following the Taoiseach's announcement at the end of March and remain closed until further notice.

Temporary Assignments:

Kilkenny County Council along with all other local authorities were requested to identify staff that may be reassigned to HSE in response to the challenges of COVID-19. Nine staff were temporarily reassigned to work with the HSE and twenty staff were reassigned internally primarily working on the Community Call Response Team. This Response Team is now operating from Loughboy Library premises.

Since the 18th May, 2020, we have recommenced additional areas of work and services in accordance with the Government Roadmap.

COMMUNICATIONS

Communications has played a central role in the Council's response to COVID-19. Effective and ongoing communication with staff, the elected members, the general public and the media has been maintained throughout the COVID-19 crisis. Regular and timely information has issued to ensure public confidence and safety during the period of the crisis. The following messaging channels were utilised:

- Regular press releases advising of services impacted and closure of facilities.
- Regular updates to the Elected and Staff members by email

- Kilkennycoco.ie, Twitter and facebook
- Radio
- Text alert

We have worked closely with other stakeholders and all Directorates to ensure the messages coming from the Council is clear and concise, and easy to understand.

Produced print, social media and radio adverts to inform the public about Kilkenny County Council's new operating arrangements.

Dedicated COVID-19 section created on the Council's website to keep the public up to date with the impact on services as well as supports available.

Dedicated COVID-19 Staff Updates section created on internal intranet.

We are also working with our counterparts in the HSE, Gardaí and other Local Authorities across the Region to combine our resources in getting the message about COVID-19 out to the public.

The following are the statistics in relation to the circulation of timely information through Press Releases, our website and on social media platforms:

Butler Gallery

Official opening of Butler Gallery due to take place in July 2020.





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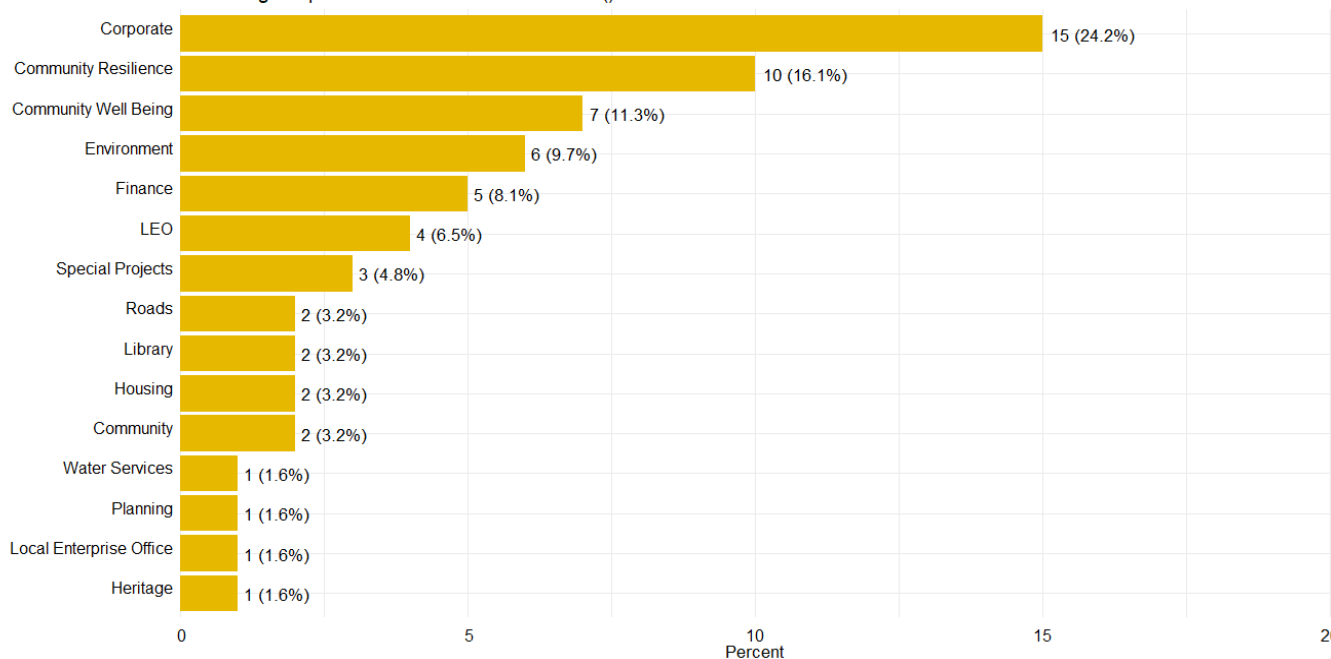
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PRESS RELEASES:

62 Press Releases issued since 01/03/2020

Percentage of press releases shown in brackets (%)



KILKENNY COUNTY COUNCIL WEBSITE:

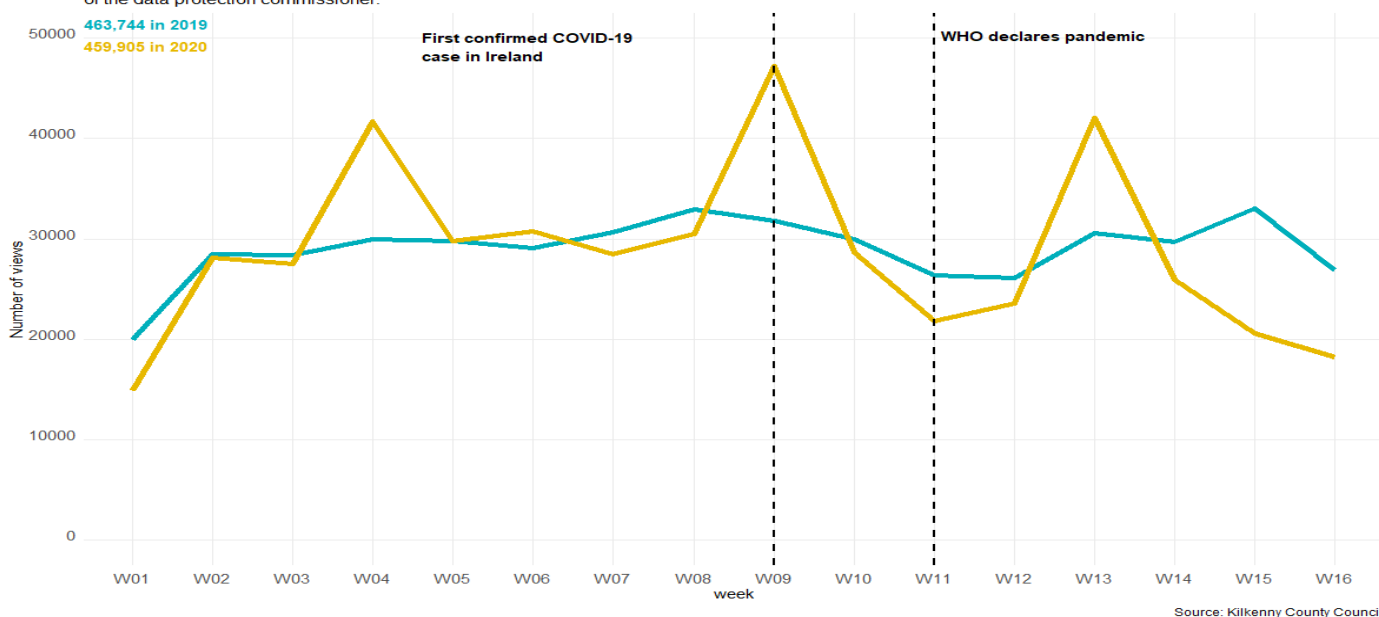
Website Views (Week 1 -16)

Note: W01 for 2019 is Week Ending 06/01/2019 and Week 16 is Week Ending 21/04/2019

W01 for 2020 is Week Ending 05/01/2020 and Week 16 is Week Ending 19/04/2020

Kilkenny County Council Website Views: Weeks 1-16 (2019 & 2020)

NOTE: Recording of website analytics stopped on Friday 17th April 2020 as directed by the office of the data protection commissioner.





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Facebook Unique Users (Weeks 1 to 21: 2019 & 2020)

Note: W01 for 2019 is Week Ending 06/01/2019 and Week 21 is Week Ending 26/05/2019
W01 for 2020 is Week Ending 05/01/2020 and Week 21 is Week Ending 24/05/2020

Weekly Facebook Number of Unique Users (Week 1-21: 2019 & 2020)

The number of people who had your Page's post enter their screen.
Posts include statuses, photos, links, videos and more.



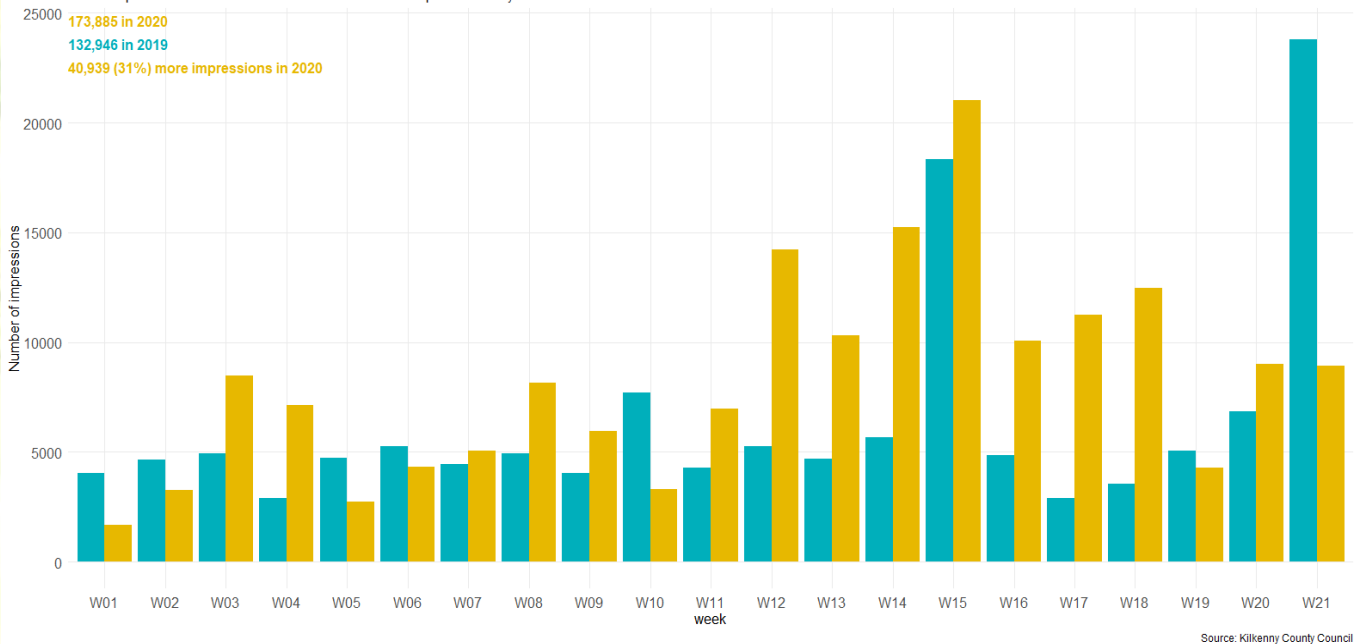
Twitter

Impressions (Weeks 1 to 21: 2019 & 2020)

Note: W01 for 2019 is Week Ending 06/01/2019 and Week 21 is Week Ending 26/05/2019
W01 for 2020 is Week Ending 05/01/2020 and Week 21 is Week Ending 24/05/2020

Weekly Number of Twitter Impressions (Weeks 1-21: 2019 and 2020)

Twitter impressions are the number of times a tweet shows up in somebody's timeline.





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ROADS

The following serves as an update to Elected Members on some of the roads projects that Kilkenny County Council has been working on over the last numbers of months. We are delivering an ambitious Road Works Programme in 2020 of €29 million. This is made up of €11 million on National and €18 million on Non-National Road Network.

NATIONAL ROADS

Kilkenny Major Schemes:

N25 Glenmore to Waterford Scheme

Phase 2 Options Selection on the N25 Glenmore to Waterford Improvement Scheme is progressing and is currently open for public consultation. This is a major scheme of approximately 10km linking the Glenmore Roundabout on the New Ross By-Pass and Luffany Roundabout on the Waterford By-Pass.

N24 Waterford to Cahir Scheme

Kilkenny County Council is the lead authority on the above scheme. The total length of the scheme is 60km which will tie into the Limerick to Cahir section. We are currently finalising the appointment of consultants and expect to start early design process in Q3 2020.

Kilkenny Minor Schemes:

A number of minor schemes are progressing through various stages in conjunction with TII on the National Road Network.

N24 Tower Road:

The oral hearing in respect of the CPO for the N24 Tower Road Junction improvement scheme was held on 11th March 2020. A decision by An Bord Pleanála is expected by early Q3 2020.

N77 Ballyragget to Ballynaslee:

A combined Section 177AE application to An Bord Pleanála under the Planning & Development Acts 2000 – 2019 for planning approval and CPO

for the N77 Ballyragget to Ballynaslee Improvement Scheme is expected to be lodged by the end of Q2 2020.

N24 Carrick Road:

A combined section 177AE application to An Bord Pleanála under the Planning & Development Acts 2000 – 2019 for planning approval and CPO for the N24 Carrick Road Improvement Scheme is expected to be lodged by the beginning of Q4 2020.

Pavement Improvements

N76 Ballymack to Castletobin and Brownstown to Ballybur - This €2.5m scheme is going through the latter stages of the tender award process. Subject to TII approval it is expected to commence in July, 2020 and has an expected duration of 10 weeks.

N25 Curraghmore - This €0.56m project is a combined pavement/safety scheme on the N25 at Curraghmore to create right turning lanes at three junctions. This work will be substantially completed by Priority Construction Ltd in June.

We are currently working on two other pavement schemes for 2020 - **N77 Oldtown, Ballyragget and N76 Riversfield to Ahanure North**. These are advancing through detailed design and contract preparation. Tenders are expected to be issued by the end of September.

OTHER PROJECTS:

Castlecomer Pedestrian Bridge

Kilkenny County Council secured planning approval from An Bord Pleanála for the Castlecomer Pedestrian Bridge under section 177AE on the 28th April. Some site investigation works and utility diversions are expected during 2020 in addition to the preparation of tender documentation for the main bridge structure.

Public Lighting on National Road Network

Kilkenny County Council has been approved by TII for the completion of a number of public



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lighting retro-fits as part of energy efficiency improvements on the national road network. Locations to be addressed include N29 Port Road, N77 Hennebrys Cross, N77 Dunmore and N24 Granny. Preparations are on-going for this work to commence as soon as possible.

NON-NATIONAL ROADS

A number of different schemes and works are underway on the non-national network throughout the county and are listed below. A large amount of the work is on restoration improvement and restoration maintenance on 158 separate projects. Whilst we were impacted during the COVID 19 shutdown we continued to provide essential services including road repairs, hauling of essential materials, street cleaning\emptying of bins in towns and villages, maintenance of graveyards and essential grass cutting.

All works are fully back up and running with new health and safety measures in place to manage COVID 19 public health requirements. A COVID 19 Compliance Officer has been appointed and is carrying out inspections on roadworks processes throughout the county. Whilst we are a number of weeks behind, it is our intention to gain back as much time as we can throughout the summer months to deliver on the schemes below.

- Restoration Improvement €7,847,500 (78 overlay projects)
- Restoration Maintenance €2,256,000 (80 surface dressing schemes)
- Drainage Works €652,195
- Discretionary Grant €2,648,500
- Safety Improvement works €368,000 (17 Schemes)
- Bridge Rehabilitation €200,000 (11 bridge projects)
- CIR Schemes €639,500
- LIS Schemes €289,000

FLOOD RELIEF SCHEMES

Graiguenamanagh Flood Relief Scheme [FRS]

Byrne-Looby Partners, a Cork based Engineering & Environmental Consultancy firm signed the contract with Kilkenny County Council in March 2020 for the Design and Implementation of the Graiguenamanagh-Tinnahinch FRS.

The Project comprises of 5 Stages. Stage 1 commenced in late March for Scheme Development and Preliminary Design. This Stage is due to completed in Q2 2021.

A dedicated project Website is currently under construction and will be available in the coming weeks for the public to use and interact with and to see progress on the project. A monthly Newsletter will be posted on the website and circulated within Kilkenny County Council's communication channels.

Ballyhale Flood Relief Scheme

DBFL a Dublin based Engineering & Environmental Consultancy firm signed the contract in March 2020. Given the current Covid Restrictions the normal method of Public Consultation [face to face contact] could not happen. The Consultants in conjunction with Kilkenny County Council used Consultkilkenny.ie to run a Public Consultation. This went live on 14th of May 2020 for a 4-week period.

Vicar Street Improvement, Kilkenny City

The Part 8 statutory process that was to commence towards the end of March was deferred due to the Covid-19 restrictions. It is now proposed to proceed to Part 8 by the end of this month. The scheme will include changing the road to one-way southbound (in-bound) to facilitate widening of footways and provision of a contra-flow cycle lane.

Temporary One-Way System in Kilkenny City

It is proposed to introduce a temporary one-way system consisting of Rose Inn Street from John's



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Bridge to The Parade and High Street from The Parade to Parliament Street. This one-way system will free up road space for use by pedestrians to facilitate social distancing and queuing for shops. Ormonde Street will also be made one-way from Patrick Street to Patrick's Court as per a previous approval. James's Street will be pedestrianised from 0900-2100 and the hours of pedestrianisation on St. Kieran's Street will be extended to 0900-2100.

Wolfe Tone Street Car Park, Kilkenny City

Currently in the Wolfe Tone Street Car Park there is a daily rate of €2/day which results in the car park filling up early in the morning and remaining almost full throughout the day. Consideration is being given to changing the tariff regime in Wolfe Tone Street Car Park to promote shorter stay car parking to facilitate customers of businesses on John Street and the surrounding area.

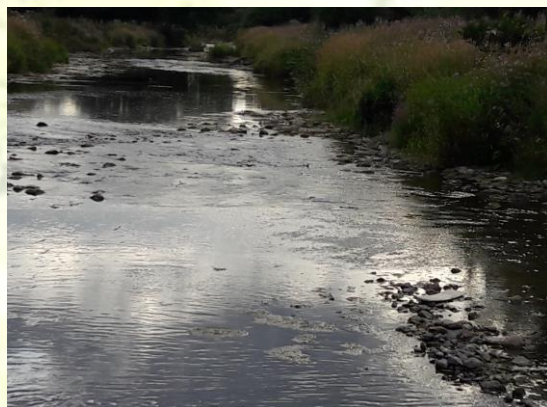
WATER SERVICES

The operation of our water and waste water plants which is an essential service continued throughout the national shutdown for COVID 19. The operational team have been busy over this time with measures to improve water supplies and there has been a steady rise in call outs to blocked sewers due to low flows and inactivity in some areas of the network.

Water levels are our biggest risk and are being continuously monitored as they are now below 2018 drought levels. We have a number of schemes in Kilkenny that will be impacted if the drought continues and as businesses get back up and running.

We have carried out some measures as outlined below to improve the situation.

- 3 significant leaks were repaired in Kilkenny City which has yielded water savings of 18m³/hr which is the equivalent of 860 new housing units.
- Works have taken place on the river Dinan in consultation with Inland fisheries to supplement the flow to Radestown supplying Kilkenny City.
- Find and fix measures and works to increase pumping capacity has kept Bennettsbridge demand under control at present. We are monitoring this scheme hourly to ensure we can reduce shut downs that were daily in 2018.
- Water is being tankered to Gorteen to supply the surrounding area. A new well on site is to be tested in the next few days to see if the water quality is satisfactory for treating.
- We are consulting with inland fisheries for river works at the intake of the Clogh\Castlecomer supply to supplement the capacity.
- A new well at Jamestown Piltown is to be tested in the next few days to see if the water quality is satisfactory for treating.



River Dinan in Low Flow



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ENVIRONMENT

Customer Relations Management System [CRM]

Since the Covid-19 restrictions were put in place in March, the Environment Section has received a significant increase in the number of complaints reported with respect to illegal dumping, littering, burning and so on. In the 10-week period to end of May, a total of 386 complaints were received which represents an increase of 47% compared to the same period last year.

To combat this unwelcome trend, the Environment Section has run numerous media campaigns and given interviews on local and national radio advising the public of the services that remain available during the lockdown period such as the Dunmore Recycling and Waste Disposal Centre and the 45 Recycling Bring Banks managed by the Council around the city and county. The campaigns also focused on the increased risks that illegal dumping, litter and dog fouling posed to the general public during the Covid-19 pandemic and the enforcement action that the Environment Section is taking. Those with a Covid-19 diagnosis and who were self-isolating were also advised how to deal with their waste in a safe manner.

Enforcement Action

The Environment Enforcement Team have been very active patrolling and carrying out investigations throughout the county and the Council continues to invest in technology to assist in evidence gathering, most recently securing funding for 10 additional CCTV cameras, which will be deployed at the Bring Banks in June to supplement the existing surveillance stock. Since January 2020 in excess of 160 litter fines of €150 have been issued, or are currently being processed on foot of evidence gathered under the Litter Pollution Act. This represents an increase of 48% on the number of litter fines issued during the whole of 2019. Also, under the Waste Enforcement Act, 12 Fixed Penalty Notices of €500 have been issued and 5 prosecutions are pending.



Recommended Minimum Criteria Environmental Inspection (RMCEI) Plan - March to May 2020

Inspections under the Council's RMCEI Plan continued over the months of March to May inclusive. However, the restrictions put in place to combat the spread of Covid-19 impacted on planned inspections that required site visits and meeting with landowners.

A summary of some of the inspections undertaken over the last three months is provided hereunder:

RMCEI Inspections	Planned 2020	March -May 2020	RMCEI Inspections	Planned 2020	March -May 2020
Nutrient Management Plan Assessment (NMPs)	22	17	WFD investigative monitoring, samples and analysis	52	15
Inspections relating to water pollution incidents/	21	10	Other SW or GW protection inspections (source)	96	24
Insp. Under Solid Fuel Regs - out of hours	3	3	Ambient Monitoring (us/ds WWTPs)	192	58
Nuisance/Air pollution insps	4	7	WFD Monitoring, op & surv, samples taken (WFD)	377	70
Inspections of existing planning permissions (or in advance of grant)	550	144	WCP AR Validation	33	10
Ground water quality (Planning inspections)	80	61	Historic Landfills - Risk Investigation & Remediation	7	2
Post Planning Inspections	100	12	Waste Facility Permit application inspections - non routine	3	3



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Dunmore Recycling and Waste Disposal Centre



Queuing of vehicles to ensure social distancing within facility

Dunmore Recycling and Waste Disposal Centre, as an essential service, has remained open for customers throughout. Following a spike in customer numbers during the initial days of the Covid-19 restrictions, the public were advised to only bring essential household waste to the Centre. This measure was put in place in the interests of staff and public safety and in order to properly implement HSE / Government Guidelines regarding social distancing. In the 10-week period to the end of May there were 14,427 visits and this is a 5% increase compared to the same period for last year. The 903 tonnes of waste and recycling material were received an increase of 5%.

The restrictions were lifted in line with Phase 1 of the Government's Reopening Roadmap on 18th May.

Recycling Bring Banks

The tonnages of glass, steel and aluminium collected from 45 Bring Banks from 15th March to the end of May weighed 604 tonnes compared to 387 tonnes for the same period in 2019, (56.5% increase). This has created quite a challenge with respect to the servicing and maintenance of the sites. Environment Staff remain in daily contact with the Council's Service Providers to ensure an efficient service.

Anti-Dumping Initiative 2020

In April, the Environment Section applied for funding under the 2020 Anti-Dumping Initiative for funding of €146,000 for 12 projects.

Funding approved is as follows:

NO	PROJECT	ALLOCATION
1	Supply and install 10no. CCTV cameras at Bring Banks	€9,000
2	Bulky Waste Collection Day - Furniture	€18,000
3	Litter Black spot at Three Friar- work with Coillte/Garda re checkpoints to detect household waste	€15,000
4	Bikes for Africa	€8,000
5	Clean up of illegal dumping - Hillcrest Estate, Piltown	€8,000
6	Clean up of illegal dumping along R448 road from Mullinavat southwards	€8,000
7	Clean up of illegal dumping at Ballyinvarra and Coppengagh Viewing Points	€12,000
8	Clean up of illegal dumping - Abbey Road, Ferrybank	€10,000
9	Clean up of illegal dumping - Car Rd, St. Francis Tce, Kilkenny	€8,000
10	Clean-up of illegal dumping - Newrath Rd, Ferrybank	€10,000
	TOTAL	€106,000



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On foot of the above successful Anti-Dumping Initiative application, the Council intend to hold a two-day Bulky Furniture Event, whereby the public can dispose of old unwanted items of furniture, for a minimal charge of €5 per household/car, at Dunmore and Granny Recycling and Waste Disposal Centres. This initiative was run in 2019 and was a huge success with over 45 tonnes of waste collected between both centres. It is anticipated that this initiative will help to reduce the quantity of waste dumped illegally across our county and it is planned that same will run in the Autumn.

Historic Landfill Sites

In January, 2020 Kilkenny County Council submitted a funding request for €420K through the Southern Regional Waste Management Office (SRWMO) to the Department of Communications Climate Action & Environment (DCCAE) towards remediation works at 14 Historic Landfill sites. Funding was approved in March 2020. A Grant Agreement was subsequently entered into by Kilkenny County Council with the DCCAE. The table below provides details of the funding allocated and a current update on the status of each site.

Site Name	2020 Allocation	2020 Target	Status - May 2020
Gowran	€19,503	Remediation Completed 2019. Close out 12-month defects period in 2020	Up for review August 2020
Sherman's Donaghmore Ballyragget	€146,897	Complete Remediation & commence 12-month defects period.	Remediation completed March with final valuation due in June
Oldcourt Inistioge	€11,332	Tier 3 Report & Cert of Authorisation Application submitted	Consultant Appointed - Fehily Timoney
Talbotsinch Freshford Road Kilkenny	€29,495	Tier 3 Report & Cert of Authorisation Application submitted	Consultant Appointed - Fehily Timoney
Thorpes Ballyragget	€11,332	Tier 3 Report & Cert of Authorisation Application submitted	Consultant Appointed - Fehily Timoney
Seven Houses Newlands	€13,332	Tier 3 Report & Cert of Authorisation Application submitted	Consultant to be Appointed in June
Skehana Castlecomer	€28,332	Tier 3 Report & Cert of Authorisation Application submitted	Consultant to be Appointed in June
Ardreagh Urlingford	€15,000	Tier 2 Report	Consultant to be Appointed in June
Caherlesk Mallardstown	€20,000	Tier 2 Report	Consultant to be Appointed in June
Sheastown	€30,000	Tier 2 Report	Consultant to be Appointed in June
Granny	€30,000	Tier 2 Report	Consultant to be Appointed in June
Dungarvan	€27,500	Tier 2 Report	Consultant to be Appointed in early July
Ballykeoghan	€17,500	Tier 2 Report	Consultant to be Appointed in June
Mallardstown	€20,000	Tier 2 Report	Consultant to be Appointed in early July



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Spring Clean 2020

While the Spring Clean was paused during the Covid outbreak, some spring clean supplies were donated to St. Luke's General Hospital following their PPE appeal (*on April 2nd*). The National Spring Clean will recommence on the 8th of June. Participants will have to consider physical distancing and take all necessary precautions to operate within national Covid guidelines. The Council's Environment Section will assist with litter collections as communities complete their clean ups throughout the remainder of the summer.

Green Schools Programme

School closures in March greatly impacted on the Green Flag Programme, however 16 Kilkenny schools submitted their green school application and were awarded their green flag. St. Senan's National School in Kilmacow received their first green flag award and they deserve a special mention. The Environmental Awareness Officer was very impressed with the level of work completed on school sites when she assessed the schools last January. The Council provided a puppet show for the junior cycle in February and the senior cycle will be involved in an art project to celebrate their green school award on their return in the Autumn.

SCHOOL	LOCATION	AWARD
St. Senan's NS	Kilmacow	First Green Flag Award
School of the Holy Spirit	Kilkenny City	Litter and Waste (<i>Revisited</i>)
Graignamanagh B.N.S	Graignamanagh	Water
St. John's Infants School	Kilkenny City	Water
Kilkenny Model School	Kilkenny City	Water
Marymount N.S	The Rower	Travel
St. John of God N.S	Owning	Travel
Galmoy N.S	Galmoy	Travel
Scoil Naomh Fiachra	Freshford	3rd Renewal
S.N. Moin Ruadh Mixed	Hugginstown	Biodiversity
St. Brendan's National School	Hugginstown	Biodiversity
St. Beacon's N.S	Mullinavat	GC Litter and Waste
St. Colman's N.S	Clara	GC Litter and Waste
St. Patrick's N.S	Clogh	GC Litter and Waste
St. Colman's N.S	Conahy	GC Marine
Kilkenny School Project	Kilkenny City	GC Travel

Tidy Towns

The scheduled forum in March did not proceed, instead, the Environmental Awareness Officer developed A Tidy Towns 5 Year Plan; "How To" Guide and distributed it via the Tidy Towns Forum contact database (*19th March*). This plan is an important element of the competition submission. As the national competition has been cancelled this year, the Covid restrictions will also impact on the forums summer and autumn schedule.

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Temporary Signage Policy

The preparation of a new temporary signage policy commenced in March, with the purpose to provide clarity with respect to the erection of such signage. The document will set out a clear procedure for the application process, identify exclusion zones, set out fees, penalties for non-compliance, typical licence conditions, application forms and so on. It is anticipated that this document will be completed towards the end of the summer.

Veterinary Service

The Veterinary Section has been busy during the COVID 19 restriction period providing services to the slaughterhouses who have had an increase in throughput of circa 10% in the number of cattle and sheep slaughtered in the first 4-months of 2020 compared to the same period in 2019.

The Council had to deal with a number of difficulties due to service providers being in vulnerable groups but services were maintained, thus ensuring the food supply chains and allowing alternative markets for farmers for their animals at this critical time. Most of these slaughterhouses are supplied by farmers within their locality, however at this time of year lamb supplies can be tight and on occasion they must use the marts. This created a difficulty for their process efficiency, as marts were operating under COVID 19 restrictions RE tendering systems. However, the Council were able to provide the flexibility to ease these difficulties.

Control of Horses

Kilkenny County Council contracts a private Service Provider to provide an impounding service. The total number of horses seized to date in 2020 is 45. Since the middle of March, in line with HSE/ Government policy on essential services, the service provider remains on standby to deal with emergency call-outs, *e.g. stray horses on public road.*

There are currently no animals stabled by the Service Provider. Of the 45 animals seized so far this year, 27 have been rehomed, 5 were reclaimed and 13 were euthanised.

Carlow Kilkenny Dog Shelter

In line with HSE/ Government policy on essential services from mid-March the Dog Shelter was closed to the public. Kennel Assistants continued to attend the Shelter each day to feed and exercise the dogs kept at the facility. In early May, in conjunction with our Service Provider, an agreement and control measures were put in place to allow Animal Welfare Charities to collect dogs from the Shelter for re-homing.

Statistics provided hereunder for period up to the 27th May

Dogs	March	April	Up-27 th May
1 st of Month	6	5	9
Strays	24	6	2
Surrenders	0	3	5
Re-claimed	3	1	0
Re-homed	22	4	9
Put to sleep	0	0	0

Again, in line with HSE/ Government policy on essential services since mid-March the Dog Warden service remained available for emergency calls (*e.g. stray dogs attacking sheep; dogs considered a public risk etc.*). In the intervening period this service has been utilised on a number of occasions. In addition, the Dog Warden has been deployed to undertake regular patrols along popular dog walking routes to remind dog owners to clean up after their pets.



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Water Safety and Lifeguards

In line with National Policy Lifeguard Services will be provided at traditional swimming areas across the country this summer. Kilkenny County Council has finalised the employment process and will have a full panel of Lifeguards available for the summer months. Risk assessments have also been conducted in conjunction with Kilkenny Water Safety for each site and recommendations arising out of same have been addressed. In response to the Covid 19 pandemic Lifeguard protocols will be in strict accordance with the Standard Operating Guidance (SOG) for Open Water Lifeguarding, developed for Local Authorities to ensure safety of staff and public.

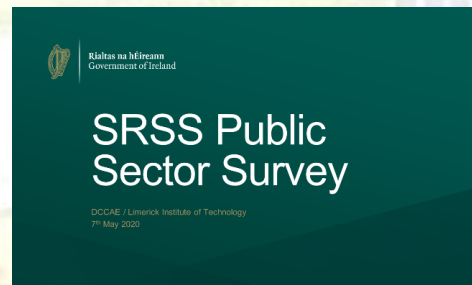
Lifeguards will be on duty on Saturdays and Sundays in June and 7 days a week during the months of July and August at the following five [5] locations:

- **The Meadows, Kilkenny City**
- **The Weir, Bleach Road, Kilkenny City**
- **Thomastown**
- **Inistioge**
- **Graiguenamanagh**



SRSS Survey and Building Register

The National Development Plan and Climate Action Plan (CAP - 2019) set a target for public buildings to achieve a Building Energy Rating (BER) of "B" by the end of 2030. The CAP also set a more ambitious energy efficiency improvement target for the public sector of 50% and introduced an absolute carbon target of 30% by 2030. The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) secured funding under the EU Structural Reform Support Service (SRSS) to compile a study on all Public Bodies across Ireland in relation to their building assets. The aim of the survey is to better inform DPER and Government of the total level of investment needed to deliver the retrofit programme, and make recommendations on potential financial solutions that could be successfully applied in addition to the NDP allocation of €750m. During the current restrictions, the Energy Team worked alongside Facilities Management and the Environment section to identify all the public buildings owned or operated by Kilkenny County Council for inclusion in the survey.



Kilkenny County Council - ISO 50001

ISO 50001 is the International Standard that enables organisations to establish the systems and processes necessary to improve energy performance, including energy efficiency, energy use, and consumption. The implementation of this standard is intended to lead to reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, energy cost, and other related environmental impacts, through systematic management of energy. The Energy Team in Kilkenny County Council is currently working towards ISO 50001 certification. During the recent restrictions, the Energy Team has continued with the training and mentoring support via webinars and conference calls in conjunction with SEAI. The team is currently working on the final stages of the Operation and Performance Evaluation sections with the aim of gaining certification before the end of the year.



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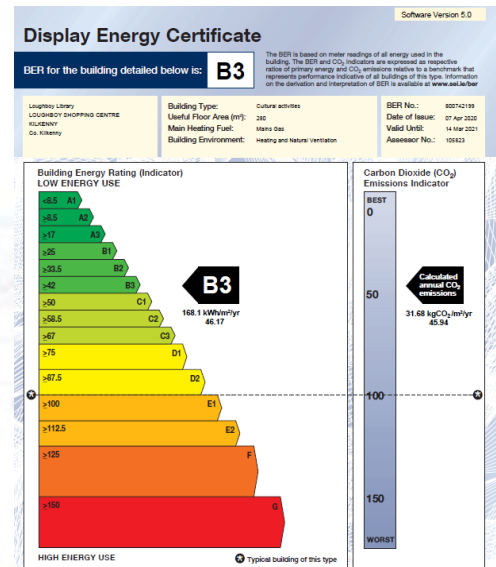
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Kilkenny County Council – Energy Management

The Energy Office and 3cea are currently working remotely on completing the following energy management actions for 2020:

- SEAI Monitoring & Reporting of the council's energy usage for 2019. The initial indications suggest that the council will remain on target for the 2020 energy reduction target
- Published 7 Display Energy Certificates, displaying the energy ratings of our public buildings frequently visited by the public
- Submitted a joint application to the Climate Action Fund expression of interest 2020 for energy efficiency projects across Carlow, Kilkenny and Wexford
- Collaboration with 3cea on two EU funded project RegEnergy and Housing 4.0
- Attended the Irish Green Building Council webinar "Build Upon" learning about the challenges for deep retrofit in our social housing and public buildings



LAWPRO

The Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO) is a national shared service managed jointly by Tipperary and Kilkenny County Councils (TKCC). LAWPRO supports the 31 local authorities and their ongoing work and service delivery in environmental protection, water quality management, land-use planning, and community and enterprise development. The programme operates in collaboration with WFD-implementing bodies and stakeholders to deliver the objectives of the River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) for Ireland, 2018-2021. It also supports the key objective of helping communities to become actively involved at a local level in restoring and protecting good water quality.

LAWPRO is committed to the highest environmental and safety standards and its operations have been accredited to the ISO 14001 and ISO 45001 standards.

COVID 19 Impact

There has been no change to the current deadlines for the river basin management planning process. The draft Plan for the 3rd cycle is due for publication in December 2020. This position is being kept under review by DHPLG.

Most LAWPRO fieldwork is currently suspended with almost all the staff working from home. Chemistry sampling from public areas has recommenced in Phase 1. The Catchment Assessment Team is focused on fieldwork reporting, progressing desk studies and internal training.

Ann Phelan, Community Water Officer, continues to be available to local communities. The development of a public consultation programme for draft 3rd Cycle RBMP is underway. This is likely to include for social distancing and other health and safety measures.

National and Regional governance meetings are continuing through various on-line platforms.



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Catchment Assessment Team

In Kilkenny, the Catchment Assessment Team are working in five prioritised areas for action (PAA's) in County Kilkenny. PAA's are river catchments (or sections of those catchments). The five areas: Nuenna, Dinin, Brownstown (Pococke), Breagagh and Duiske/Powerstown Stream have been priorities from focused assessment because of poor water quality.

Nuenna: The local catchment assessments have been completed in the Nuenna catchment. Agriculture has been identified as the activity that is impacting on water quality here, upgrade works at the Freshford wastewater treatment plant have had a positive effect. The Agricultural Sustainability and Support Advisors are now working with farmers in the catchment to identify improvement measures to be implemented.

Dinin: Local catchment assessments are on-going in the Dinin. We are looking at 3 sections of the Dinin; the Muckalee (known locally as the Douglas river) is a high-status objective river that is currently only achieving good status, further assessments are required here. The Dinin (south) channel has been assessed and is currently achieving good status, so no further work is required here. The Dinin main channel is not achieving good status and the ecology of the river is significantly impacted by excessive amounts of the nutrient phosphorus. Work is ongoing to determine the sources of these nutrients, and it is expected that a portion of the excess nutrient originates upstream of the priority area.

Duiske/ Powerstown Stream: The Duiske River and Powerstown Stream are tributaries of the Barrow near Graiguenamanagh. Local catchment assessments commenced here last year and ASSAP advisors are working with farmers in areas where agricultural activities are impacting on water quality. Further assessments are required and will continue during the summer months.

Breagagh: LAWPRO has not commenced in this catchment, it is scheduled for June 2020, however that is likely to be delayed until later in the year.

Brownstown (Pococke): LAWRPO has not commenced in this catchment. It is scheduled for 2021.

Community Water Development Fund – Graiguenamanagh Hub awarded €5,628

The Outdoor Activity Hub is a facility located in Graiguenamanagh on the confluence of the River Barrow and the Duiske River (which is a Priority Area for Action under Ireland's River Basin Management Plan for Ireland). The Hub is a social enterprise to drive the rural community economy through tourism and river recreation activities, for the benefit of the local community. Any or all profits go back into the community. The facility also provides for education and training on biodiversity and outdoor pursuits.

The 2020 project, part grant funded by LAWPRO, will enable camper vans to dispose of their grey water in a safe and sustainable way to the benefit of the local environment. The grant will help complete the project, in collaboration with Kilkenny County Council and Irish Water, and will have a beneficial effect on water quality.

Agricultural Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme (ASSAP)

Farm advisors have visited approx. 85 farms within the Dinin, Duiske, Powerstown Stream and Nuenna PAAs. They provide a free confidential service to farmers with land in the PAAs whose activities have the potential to impact on water quality. Much of the advice relates to behavioural change.

The advisors' fieldwork is currently suspended but the team is working to return in June, subject to government advice and maintaining social distancing. The Teagasc ConnectEd programme is running webinars every Friday morning and available on You Tube for viewing – June is water quality month.



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Blue Dot Catchments Programme

There is one Blue Dot waterbody in Kilkenny, the Douglas River near Muckalee. LAWPRO's internal blue dot working group continues to progress its understanding of the issues in blue dot sites nationally within 43 PAAs. A highly successful visioning workshop was held on March 5th with more than 40 participants. A report on the outcome will be presented to the next steering group meeting.

Stories From The Waterside

Stories from the Waterside was a new storytelling competition that encouraged people across Kilkenny and the rest of Ireland to share stories of what makes their local river, stream, canal, lake, estuary or seaside special in 600 words or less. The competition, open to all ages, is being run by the Local Authority Waters Programme, Inland Fisheries Ireland, the Heritage Council and Waterways Ireland.

The type of stories sought were memories from childhood, information about wildlife, heritage, folklore or traditions about your local waterbody. Only previously unpublished pieces were accepted and the closing date was May 31st. The winners will be announced during Heritage Week between the 15th – 23rd August.

Climate Action

The global COVID-19 quarantine has meant less air pollution and clearer skies. Animals are strolling through public spaces, and sound pollution has diminished. These relatively small and temporary changes arising mainly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and offer a glimpse of the deep changes in lifestyles that need to be implemented to effectively mitigate against climate change.

In late 2019 Kilkenny County Council were partnered with Kildare County Council for the Eastern & Midlands Climate Action Regional Office (EM CARO), one of four shared service Local Authority offices established to facilitate and coordinate climate action in the Local Government Sector. The Eastern and Midlands region was established based on topographical and climatic risk and consists of 17 of the 31 Local Authority areas. This partnership puts Kilkenny at the forefront in driving policy's and schemes at local government level.

The Kilkenny division of the EM CARO was tasked with developing mitigation measures to tackle climate change and staff are currently assisting DAFM in the roll out of the "Woodland Creation on Public Lands". The purpose of this scheme is to actively encourage public bodies to review their landbank and in doing so establish native woodlands on suitable bare land. The scheme is due to be launched in Q3 of 2020.

Another area the Kilkenny division of the EM CARO are exploring is the energy management of the local authority fleet. Research is ongoing with leading local authorities in transport, fleet management companies and SEAI. The aim of this research is to identify opportunities for local authorities to reduce their fuel consumption through more efficient driving practices. The energy consumption from the transport fleet in Kilkenny County Council is currently 21% of the Council's overall energy usage. The findings from this research will help the Council to reduce its overall carbon footprint and contribute towards the 2030 targets as set out in the Climate Action Plan.



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PLANNING

Development Management for the Month of May 2020

Planning Summary	Total to May	
	2019	2020
Planning Applications Received	385	332
Planning Applications Granted	301	238
Planning Applications Refused	33	19
Complaints Received	57	32
Warning Letters Issued	66	31
Enforcements Notices Issued	21	8
Cases Closed	59	28

The months of May & April saw a significant impact since the commencement of the Ministerial order with a reduction in planning applications. There were 130 applications in this period compared to 188 in 2019 which accounts for the difference in the totals above.

During the period from the 29th March to the 23rd May, access to the planning office was restricted. The Planning Department is now open for business subject to Covid-19 guidance. Visits to the Planning Office is by pre-booked appointment. Appointment can be made by telephoning the planning office at 056 7794010 or by email to info@planning.ie.

There are currently 238 planning applications for processing as of the 5th June.

FORWARD PLANNING

City & County Development Plan

Following the introduction of the Ministerial Order, the period between the 29th March and the 23rd May is to be disregarded for calculating all appropriate periods, specified periods or other time limits referred to in the Planning and Development Acts.

This impacted on the official recommencement date of the City & County Development Plan. A notice was published advising the public that the process of making the City & County Development Plan would recommence on the 11th May 2020.

The next step in the process is the preparation of a draft plan, which, once completed, will be presented to the elected members and then published for public comment in the third quarter (Q3) of 2020.

The Planning Section is currently preparing the text for the Draft Plan. Members will have time to consider the draft before publication and the next round of public consultation. Updates on the process are provided on the dedicated portal for the draft plan at Ourplan.Kilkenny.ie.

Graiguenamanagh Local Area Plan

A draft joint Local Area Plan for Graiguenamanagh and Tinnahinch has been prepared and will go before the Thomastown Municipal District meeting on June 10th for discussion. Carlow County Council are also reviewing the text of the draft plan before publication.

The expected publication date for the draft plan is July/August for the statutory consultation of a minimum of 6 weeks.

Vacant Sites

Seventeen (17) sites were added to the Register for 2020. Notices were issued to the relevant landowners in late December 2019, giving notice that their sites were being included on the Register. Three owners appealed these entries to An Bord Pleanála, and we have received one decision to date, confirming the entry on the Register. We are currently in the process of establishing the market value of these new sites. Once the valuations are complete, we will notify the owners, and they will then have an opportunity of appeal to the Valuations Tribunal.



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There is now a total of 37 sites on the Vacant Sites Register. 21 of these are now liable for the 7% levy. The Council were in the process of issuing payment demands in March, however that process was deferred following the Governments Emergency Order. The process will now recommence to ensure compliance with statutory deadlines. Two sites have had their levy discharged to date.

The number of cancelled entries due to site activation or site improvement now stands at 11 sites.

Conservation

There has been no confirmation of the Conservation Grants for 2020 as yet, therefore work has not commenced on these projects. The Built Heritage Unit of the DCHG have stated that a decision will be made shortly.

Discussions are ongoing with the National Monument Service of DCHG involving the remedial work to Kells Bridge. The Architectural Conservation Officer is helping our staff in assessing the remedial methodologies and specifications for the repair.

Building Control

A total of 143 commencement notices were received in 2020 to the 31st May. This compares with 135 commencement notices for the same period in 2019. Similar to other services the statutory time lines associated with Building Control were affected by the Covid-19 Ministerial Order. Since the 23rd May the time lines have reverted to normal and site inspections have resumed since the 18th May.

Taking in Charge

Due to Covid19 restrictions, works on the taking in charge process have been delayed. However, works were carried out on the following estates and some are almost near completion:

- Belfield, Ferrybank
- Banagher Court, Piltown
- The Green, Ballyfoyle

- Newpark Crescent
- Rath Ullard
- Glenvale, Ballyragget

PARKS

Playgrounds

While playgrounds continue to be closed due to COVID restrictions, works still continued on their maintenance to ensure all are in good order for the expected reopening on the 29th of June. Some playgrounds continued to be used in spite of signage being erected and where security fencing was put in place it was frequently removed. The Garda were notified of a number of anti-social incidents but these were few in number with the majority of the public heeding the warning to stay away. Weekly inspections also continued as required by our insurers.

Playground markings were added to the playground extension in the Fair Green in Callan which is currently being landscaped. Tree planting which was put on hold during the Covid 19 restrictions will commence in the next planting season in the autumn. The Parks team is currently working on replacement of safety surfacing in older playgrounds, giving priority to those most in need of repair such as Blackthorn hills and Garringreen in particular.



New playground markings recently added to Callan playground in the Fair Green

South East Greenway

Works will shortly commence on the rail lifting contract on the South East Greenway which runs from Ferrybank in South Kilkenny to New Ross,



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terminating at Mount Elliot. The rails and sleepers will be returned to CIE to their central yard in Portlaoise. The clearance of vegetation which was carried out earlier this year and the lifting of rails and sleepers will clear the way for access to commence the construction of the Greenway in September 2020 subject to funding. The route covers a distance of 24km in total, much of this travelling through rural south Kilkenny. In tandem with these works a team from Wexford and Kilkenny County Council are liaising with landowners along the route to finalise the detail of accommodation works. Upon agreements being reached the tender documents will be finalised. On-going contact is being maintained with the Department of Tourism, Transport and Sport to keep them updated on progress. Following receipt of their final approval the project will go to Public Tender for the construction phase. It is anticipated works will commence on site in September 2020 with a completion date being set at December 2021.



Examining one of the old bridge structures along the route of the South East Greenway at Carrickcloney.



View of the recently opened New Ross By Pass bridge from the old railway line at Carrickcloney.

Woodstock Gardens

Woodstock remained open to the public right through the recent restrictions. This was to facilitate local people living within 2km of the gardens. Unfortunately, students and FAS workers who give us great support in maintaining the gardens during the year were not permitted to work during the Covid 19 restrictions so the garden staff was reduced to Council only employees since March. Despite this our employees have done great work keeping the gardens in good order whilst working within the social distancing guidelines. The conservatory which houses the tea rooms was repainted and retiled in preparation for its planned reopening which unfortunately will now not take place this summer. In lieu of the tea room we will provide a refreshment service for our visitors from our mobile coffee van.

Funding of €14,000 which was received from the Sports Capital Grant through the Department of Tourism, Transport and Sport for the development of an outdoor exercise trail will shortly be spent. This will provide a children's activity adjacent to the natural playground in Woodstock. Work will commence on site shortly.



The Morello cherries on the north facing wall of the Walled Garden in bloom at Woodstock.

Ferrybank Neighbourhood Park

Work is now 90% complete on the construction of the Ferrybank Neighbourhood Park. The site closed for a number of weeks during the Covid 19



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restrictions but is now open with contractors working under social distancing guidelines. The path network is now in place along with the terraced area for the seating area and climbing wall. The tree planting of over 130 semi mature trees is now complete and the playground equipment is installed. The majority of grassed areas are also now complete. The aim is to manage the park as a pollinator friendly space. Grass cutting will be kept to a minimum around more formal or entrance areas. Elsewhere longer grass will be maintained with an annual cut and lift approach taken. This will encourage a more diverse grass sward with wildflowers in the seed bed coming through. The park is expected to be open for July 2020 subject to Covid 19 restrictions being lifted.

The park is being jointly funded by the Department of Housing, Planning, and Local Government (50%), Kilkenny County Council (25%), and Waterford City and County Council (25%). The project represents a practical manifestation of the two Local Authorities in the area working together for the benefit of Ferrybank, and the wider Waterford City area.

The construction of the park will create a much needed central amenity facility for Ferrybank, incorporating a children's playground, walking route, teenager meeting point, and playing pitch.



The terraced seating area in Ferrybank Neighbourhood Park. As the site is on elevated ground, there are great views of Ferrybank and Waterford city from this area



Some of the playground equipment on high ground overlooking the new park at Ferrybank.

Amenity Grants

Over 158 groups have applied for grant assistance under the Amenity Grant Scheme for 2020. The Parks Department administers the scheme, which is available to voluntary community organisations from all over the County. The main objective of the scheme is to encourage and aid small-scale works to improve the local environment and encourage community involvement in the upkeep and maintenance of public amenities.

The range of works funded includes landscaping, grass and meadow maintenance and development of open spaces, the provision of street and outdoor furniture and small-scale improvement works. In 2020 there will be more of a focus on supporting pollinators through projects which are funded. Community groups will be encouraged to manage amenities in a more sustainable manner. maintain and upkeep their local neighbourhoods.

ORIS Project - Silaire Wood, Graiguenamanagh

Following a successful application under the Outdoor Recreational Infrastructure Scheme Fund, Consultants were appointed earlier this year to prepare a detailed design and contract documents for the replacement of the boardwalk along the River Barrow in Silaire Wood, Graiguenamanagh.



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The works will involve the removal of the existing timber structure and the construction of 400lin.m of recycled plastic boardwalk. This material was chosen as it is ideal for areas close to or around wetland areas such as rivers, lakes and bogs. The works will also provide for viewing and seating areas also constructed in this composite material.

The tender will be advertised in June and works will be undertaken between the months of July to September. The completion of this project will provide an attractive, safe and comfortable access for locals and visitors alike to this wonderful amenity just 1km upstream of Graiguenamanagh town centre.



Photomontage of proposed replacement boardwalk.

TOURISM

Kilkenny County Council continues to work closely with Kilkenny Tourism CLG to support the Tourism Sector during this challenging time for the tourism industry.

It must be acknowledged that COVID 19 has had a huge impact on the tourism industry in general and for individual businesses in the Tourism and Hospitality sector. Kilkenny Tourism is preparing a marketing strategy to assist businesses when they can re-open in keeping with the national Roadmap. We have offered training and webinars to members of Kilkenny Tourism in partnership with the Local Enterprise Office.

It is important that we continue to work to support the tourism industry here in Kilkenny. We are currently working to implement a recovery strategy and will work closely with Failte Ireland and all other statutory agencies that are working towards the shared goal of maintaining Kilkenny as a top tourist destination for domestic visitors when people can travel in keeping with the Roadmap.

A *Destination Recovery Taskforce* is being established to develop a re-opening map for Kilkenny City and County to welcome back visitors having regard to the Health Guidelines. The tourism and hospitality sector is a significant economic driver for Kilkenny.

Visits to Kilkenny

Press releases have been sent out to all media stating 'Kilkenny Prepares to Open Up for Tourists in July'. There has been a positive response to this release and as a result a number of print media have confirmed features, namely:

- The Sunday Independent – Travel News May
- Irish Daily Star – Travel
- The Herald – June Feature
- The Sun – June Feature
- Independent – Staycation Feature
- Independent – Cycling Routes

Interviews on local radio and in the Kilkenny People have also been secured.

Influencers, travel writers have also been confirmed, e.g. Roz Purcell, Sarah Slattery – The Travel Expert.

LEO/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Student Enterprise Programme

Two Awards For Kilkenny Students At The National Student Enterprise Virtual Final

The Kilkenny County Final of the Student Enterprise Programme was held in the Lyrath



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Estate Hotel on Wednesday 11th March. A total of 747 students from 14 schools entered in the Student Enterprise Programme this year. It was a great achievement for approximately 125 students from 12 secondary schools to reach the County final. The Programme is funded by Enterprise Ireland and delivered by the Local Enterprise Offices in the 31 local authorities in the country.

April Walsh, a student in Duiske College, Graiguenamanagh scooped the overall senior category award. April was presented with a specially commissioned piece of Jerpoint Glass and €1,000 prize fund for her business - Artistic Adventures, which supplies hand-drawn colouring books with fun characters and doodles that graduate in difficulty, in order to progressively improve colouring skills. Twin brothers Mark and Evan Srouji from Colaiste Eamann Rís, Callan were awarded first prize in the Intermediate Category for their high-quality handmade Bee and Bug Houses. In the Junior Category Award, Aly Cantwell, Ella Cantwell and Rosa White from St Brigid's College, Callan with their business 'Phone Essentials' took first prize.

The **National Final** was held virtually and hosted by RTE's Rick O'Shea and Student Enterprise Programme Ambassador, Josh Van Der Flier. The Student Enterprise Programme is the largest entrepreneurship programme in Ireland, with almost 26,000 students from approx.. 500 second level schools across the country participating in the Programme this year.

Kilkenny's finalists were among 85 student enterprises from schools the length and breadth of the country competing in the National Final. Students from Coláiste Éamann Rís in Callan scooped two awards for Kilkenny at the National Final, which was streamed live on social media on Wednesday 27th May.



Nathan Ryan from Colaiste Eamann Rís, Callan took first place at the Intermediate level in a new pilot competition "My Entrepreneurial Journey". Nathan impressed the judges with his imaginative account of his future life as a self-made businessman and his grasp of the likely ups and downs of running a business having researched the area and interviewed a real-life local entrepreneur. In Nathan's case he interviewed Morgan Ging in Ballykeefe Distillery.

Colaiste Eamann Rís, Callan also had further success with twin brothers Mark and Evan Srouji winning a Special Merit Award in the Intermediate Category of the main Student Enterprise Programme competition for their business idea (*referenced above*).



LEO Update in Numbers so far in 2020

€193,065 has been approved to 9 businesses, which will create 10 jobs in their first 3-years of operation (€166,290 in *Business Expansion Grants* and €26,775 in *Feasibility Study Grants*)

881 business owners and employees attended 43 enterprise training programmes including seminars from Financial Training to Management Development Programmes. Training has been delivered remotely since March.



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367 entrepreneurs have received one-to-one mentoring to assist them in relation to issues within their business.

338 entrepreneurs have attended Business Advisory Sessions with LEO staff to discuss starting a business or growing an existing business.

52 participants have attended 3 Start Your Own Business programmes, which explore all aspects encountered when starting up a new business.

44 Trading Online Vouchers (TOVs) have been approved totalling €97,460. The TOV assists business owners to implement an e-commerce strategy for their business.

3 businesses participated on the 'Lean for Micro Programme, which is aimed at assisting owner-managers to look at their competitiveness and innovation specifically in relation to Brexit

3 businesses have been approved a Technical Assistance Micro Export (TAME) Assistance Grant, which assists them to access overseas markets totalling.

MFI introduced a new COVID-19 Business Loan through the LEO for businesses impacted negatively by COVID-19. Loans of between €5K and €50K are available for eligible businesses and are repayable over a 3-year period with the 6 months interest free. 16 businesses have been assisted so far this year to make an application to MFI. 3 have been approved loans totalling €125K.

216 COVID-19 related enquiries have been processed by LEO Business Advisors, covering issues relating to the COVID-19 Wage Subsidy Scheme, COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment (Employees and Self-Employed), Cashflow Management and HR issues.

BUSINESS CONTINUITY VOUCHERS



Minister Humphreys announced a new Business Continuity Voucher for businesses impacted by COVID-19. The Vouchers are available through Local Enterprise Offices.

The voucher is worth up to €2,500 and can be used by companies and sole traders to develop short-term and long-term strategies to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The goal is to help companies make informed decisions about what immediate measures and remedial actions should be taken to protect staff and sales. The closing date for applications was Friday 15th May. 310 applications were received by LEO Kilkenny and 209 of these have been approved to date, with total funding allocated of €500K.

TRADING ONLINE VOUCHERS

Changes to the Trading Online Voucher (TOV) Scheme were also announced as a result of COVID-19. The TOV is worth up to €2,500.

To date there has been 257 enquiries, 75 applications received and 40 applications have been approved totalling €88k.

URDF

The Urban Regeneration Development Fund (URDF) supports regeneration projects in cities and large towns.

Kilkenny City is the only urban centre for which Kilkenny County Council can make applications under the URDF.

Kilkenny County Council secured c€6.1m under the last URDF Call for the regeneration of the Abbey Quarter (AQ), towards a number of projects including: a new Riverside Linear Park;



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public realm along Horse Barrack Lane, Mayfair Building and Brewhouse Building; and upgrading of Medieval Mile along Parliament Street into Irishtown. These projects are well underway.

The deadline for receipt of applications under this current URDF Call was 26th May next and Kilkenny County Council submitted 2 applications as follows:

Application 1 relates to Phase 2 of the Abbey Quarter Development as follows:

- development of a new urban street through the AQ and a 1-hectare urban park and public plaza around St Francis' Abbey. The urban street will have pedestrian and cyclist priority, enhancing the accessibility to the AQ. The urban park will open-up access to St Francis' Abbey for public enjoyment and create an inclusive park, appropriately expressing the many archaeological elements on the site;
- construction of a Boardwalk at Greensbridge to link the River Nore Riverside Walk with the new Riverside Linear Park in the AQ, completing the missing link to join up these two significant amenities in the City;
- repurposing of 2 large maturation vessels/tanks, formerly used by the Smithwick's Brewery on the AQ - following a design competition (*e.g. repurposing as a small performance space, etc.*);
- restoration of the second Tea House (protected structure) on the AQ as a public amenity (*e.g. tourist / local information kiosk*). The refurbishment of the other Tea House was funded under URDF Call 1; and
- further refurbishment of the former squash courts in the Abbey Quarter as a cultural hub.

Application 2 is aimed at radically improving the streetscape and accessibility of the City Centre,

and rebalancing the perceived centre of gravity of the City, by attracting more visitors from the Castle into the City Centre.

Summary of Works

- upgrade streetscape, improve the public realm and introduce mobility/smarter travel options and shared spaces along High Street and Rose Inn Street.
- upgrade streetscape and public realm along Ormonde Street to include provision of a new one-way system.
- upgrade streetscape along the pedestrianised Kieran Street and the laneways and slips that connect it with High Street.
- upgrade streetscape and laneways in the St Mary's Precinct; and
- upgrade the public realm in Carnegie Plaza and the streetscape along Barrack Lane, linking to John Street.

HOUSING

Housing Capital Delivery

This is the third year into the Rebuilding Ireland housing delivery programme. The Minister for Housing notified Kilkenny County Council of its revised delivery targets under Rebuilding Ireland i.e. 599 units for the period 2018 to 2021.

Rebuilding Ireland Targets

Kilkenny Revised Targets 2018-2021			
Build, Acquisition & Leasing	Build	Acquisition	Leasing
600	402	78	120
Delivered in 2018 - 2019			
544 (91%)	216 (54%)	231	37

Proposed Housing Delivery 2020

Kilkenny County Council has not yet been advised of its target (*set by the Department*) for 2020. The capital schemes proposed for delivery



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in 2020 is outlined in the table below. These are estimated figures and are subject to change.

Pipeline Delivery 2020	Proposed
KILKENNY CITY	
Nuncio Road	28
Ayrfield, Granges Road - Turnkey	8
20 Green Street (<i>Buy & Renew</i>)	1
25 Green's Bridge (CAS)	2
Sub Total	39
COUNTY	
Hoban Park, Bolton, Callan	38
Breaghagh Place, Main Street, Piltown	17
Lime Grove, Belmont, Ferrybank (<i>Turnkey</i>)	4
Group Home, Cloghabrody, Thomastown	4
Willow Grove, Belmont, Ferrybank (<i>Part 5</i>)	3
Main St Kilmoganny	1
Old Health Centre, Windgap (B&R)	1
County Sub Total	68
Total	107

Schemes under Construction at 31st May 2020:

38 units Hoban Park, Bolton Callan,
 28 units Nuncio Road - to be developed over 2 phases (Respond Housing)
 17 Units at Breaghagh Place, Main Street, Piltown
 33 units at Glebeside, Donaguile, Castlecomer
 6 Units at New Road and Chapel Street, Mooncoin
 22 units at Station Avenue, Ballyraggett
 40 units Margaretsfield, Callan Road, KK
 4 units (*Group home*) at Cloghabrody, Thomastown
 1 unit at 47 Barrack St, Castlecomer (*Buy & Renew*)
 1 unit at Old Health Centre, Windgap (*Buy & Renew*)
 1 unit at Main St, Kilmoganny (*Buy & Renew*)

Schemes due to start in June 2020

18 units at 'Broguemaker', Castlecomer Road, Kilkenny

Schemes at Tender Stage

5 units at Grennan Villa, Thomastown (Camphill)
 2 Units at Shanganny, Jenkinstown

Schemes at Detailed Design Stage

6 units at Golf Links Road (*Mulhalls Shop*) Kilkenny
 2 Units at Inchacarron, Mullinavat
 2 Units at Old Fire Station, Graignamanagh
 Development of 86 units (*houses/apartments*) and community facility at Crokers Hill, Kennyswell Road, Kilkenny

Schemes at Planning Stage:

18 Wolfe Tone St, extension and full refurb, long term void
 Health Centre Kells, extension
 Old Fire Station, Thomastown, refurb to 1 bed unit
 25 Units at Ladywell, Thomastown



Glebeside, Donaguile, Castlecomer – 33 units under construction

Vacant Homes:

10 vacant properties have been identified for the commencement of Compulsory Purchase Order procedures in the coming weeks. A further 4 projects are being advanced under buy and renew and site aggregation to deliver residential units at Johnstown, Castlecomer and Windgap. Assessment of further vacant sites will continue around the county to locate viable housing options.



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Turnkey Development Projects:

5 projects located at Hebron Road, Kilkenny, Kilmacow, Freshford, Ferrybank and Piltown are being brought to construction as turnkey developments supported by the Housing Capital delivery team. These developments consist of 111 housing units.



3 bedroom house at Hoban Park, Bolton, Callan



Breagh Place, Piltown – 17 units under construction

May Monthly Statistics

Number awaiting social housing support at 31 st May, 2020 (<i>Gross Need</i>)	1,977
Number of assessment interviews carried out in May:	33
LA/RAS/Leasing allocations in May (<i>offers made</i>):	15

Number of HAP tenancies to 31 st May:	886
Number of LA tenancies surrendered in May:	2
Anti-social behaviour cases in May:	97
New Homeless Presentations in May:	14
Maintenance Calls for May 2020	2,29
Maintenance Calls year to date	2111
No. Housing Loans Approved to date (Annuity/Construction)	9
Amount of Loans Approved to 31 st May, 2020	€1,221,430

Housing List

1 st June, 2020	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed
1,977	744	770	394	69
	38%	39%	20%	3%

The current **gross** Housing demand at 1st June is 1,977 and a comparative analysis with previous years is outlined below:

Year	Number on Housing List
February 2020	1,977
December 2019	1,988
December 2018	2,067
December 2017	2,180
December 2016	2,059
	(Statutory Assessment 2016)
December 2015	2,744

Housing Loan Activity

1st January to 31st May, 2020

Loan Type: Annuity/RI Home Loan

Received	10
Approved	9
Amount Approved	€1,221,430
No. Paid	9
Amount Paid:.....	€1,275,230



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Private Grants

Kilkenny County Council approved a budget of €1.5m for all three private grants (HOP/MAG/HGD). The Council recoups 80% of all eligible expenditure from the Department. Projects already committed and approved for 2020 are in excess of the allocated budget. Only emergency cases can be processed for the remainder of 2020. The estimated position at 31st May, 2020 is as follows:

GRANTS PAID 2020

Scheme	No.	Amt. Paid
HGD: Housing Adaptation Grant	34	€378,713
MAG: Mobility Aid Grant	21	€68,988
HOP: Housing Aid for Older Persons	35	€161,810
Total	90	€609,512

GRANTS APPROVED & COMMITTED 2020

Scheme	No.	Amt. Paid
HGD - Housing Adaptation Grant	82	€910,056
MAG - Mobility Aid Grant	25	€92,749
HOP - Housing Aid for Older Persons	85	€462,590
Total	192	€1,465,395

Covid19 Challenges:

- Majority of applicants are elderly or very ill and have been advised to cocoon.
- Builders not able to carry out works, source materials or provide quotations.
- Builders had to delay starting works as they were unable to access applicant's home.
- Backlog of works building up after the restrictions are lifted.
- Occupational Therapists were unable to carry out assessments during restrictions. They are now resuming work but they will need to follow restrictions/guidelines from HSE.
- Housing Department were still progressing applications. Desktop assessments were carried out where possible as site inspections could not take place.

Rent Review 2020

Members are reminded of the rent review that was undertaken in January/February 2020 with a view to having the revised rents in place for 4th April 2020. The implications of COVID has resulted in deferring the implementation of the revised rents. Tenants were advised that where their *employment was impacted* by the ongoing COVID -19 crisis to contact the Housing Department. In total 157 tenants made contact to advise that their income had changed. Weekly Rents were adjusted accordingly.

Homeless Update

Details of homeless presentations up to June 2020 along with the comparative, monthly presentations for 2016, 2017, 2018, 2020 are set out below. There have been 107 Homeless/Potentially Homeless presentations at 31/05/2020.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
January	37	29	37	27	23
February	30	26	32	14	27
March	18	26	21	16	24
April	26	25	18	20	19
May	34	28	29	20	14
June	145	134	137	97	107
July	31	24	20	16	
August	31	34	15	31	
September	32	27	26	28	
October	27	24	19	26	
November	30	27	27	25	
December	32	29	23	16	
Total	21	19	6	17	
	349	318	273	353	

Currently, there are 4 households in Hotel emergency accommodation and 5 households in transitional emergency accommodation.

A Homeless Prevention & Support Worker has recently joined the Homeless Services Team and her appointment is greatly welcomed.

Scheme of Letting Priorities (Allocation Scheme)
Houses are allocated in accordance with each Council's **Scheme of Letting Priorities**. The



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Scheme of Letting Priorities (*Allocation Scheme*) was last updated in 2011. The existing and proposed Scheme of Letting Priorities was presented for discussion at the Housing SPC meetings held on 24th October 2020, 12th December 2020 and 27th February 2020. As statutorily required a copy of the draft Scheme was also sent to the Minister for Housing for comment.

The adoption of the Scheme of Letting Priorities (*Allocation Scheme*) is a reserved function of the Council and is recommended by the Housing SPC to have the Scheme adopted. All allocations of accommodation to those approved for housing supports will be made in accordance with this revised Scheme of Letting Priorities.

HERITAGE

Supporting the Community During Covid 19

The Heritage Office is contributing to the delivery of the Kilkenny Community Wellbeing Programme for Covid 19 through the following projects:

"My Local Area" on KCLR

In partnership with KCLR the Heritage Office developed a new radio slot called "My Local Area" - a series of 2 minute recordings made by the listeners of KCLR Live on their mobile phones, during the month of May, telling about the history, heritage and biodiversity that they see in on their daily walks. The series which, according to KCLR, has been very popular with listeners and is co-funded by Creative Ireland. To listen back to these recordings from Coon, Dunkitt, Gowran, Inistioge, Thomastown and many more, see <https://kclr96fm.com/documentary/my-local-area/>

"Gardening for Biodiversity" booklet: The Heritage Office purchased and disseminated over 1,200 copies of the "Gardening for Biodiversity" booklet to members of the public, teachers, Elected Reps, TD's, Senators and County Council staff. The feedback, on social media and by email, has been fantastic, particularly from teachers, parents who are home-schooling, and grandparents who want to encourage their

grandchildren to enjoy nature. To download a copy, see www.kilkennycoco.ie

Bulbs for Cocooners: The Heritage Office provided packs of pollinator friendly bulbs for people cocooning, which were included in care boxes distributed by the Library service.

"The Robin Song" Workshop for Kids

The Heritage Office commissioned a free children's singing workshop about our beautiful native robin, which will take place online on June 13th for Cruinniú na nÓg (national day of childrens creativity, funded by Creative Ireland).

Heritage Week will go ahead

National Heritage Week will go ahead as scheduled on the 15th - 23rd August. However, the format will be different according to the Heritage Council, in line with Covid 19 restrictions.

Pollinator News to Tidy Towns

In partnership with the National Biodiversity Data Centre, the Heritage Office produced and disseminated a national newsletter for Tidy Towns groups, with practical advice and tips for groups entering the Local Authority Pollinator Award in the national Tidy Towns competition. It includes feature articles from Keep Kilkenny Beautiful and Tullahought Tidy Towns. With the competition postponed for 2020, there's plenty of time to start planning for next year.

Biodiversity campaign on BEAT FM

The Heritage Office is running a series of biodiversity themed adverts on BEAT FM in 2020. The biodiversity themed adverts will run during the months of April, May and August to raise awareness about simple steps that the public can take to help protect Kilkenny's precious biodiversity.

Wetland Audit

Phase 1 (*i.e. the desk-based element*) of the audit of wetlands in Kilkenny, commissioned by the Heritage Office, with co-funding from the Heritage Council, continued. Surveys of a number of wetlands will commence as soon as current restrictions are lifted.



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COMMUNITY

Community Support Helpline

The community helpline commenced on March 27th. It is available from 8.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m. seven days a week and is based in Loughboy Library.

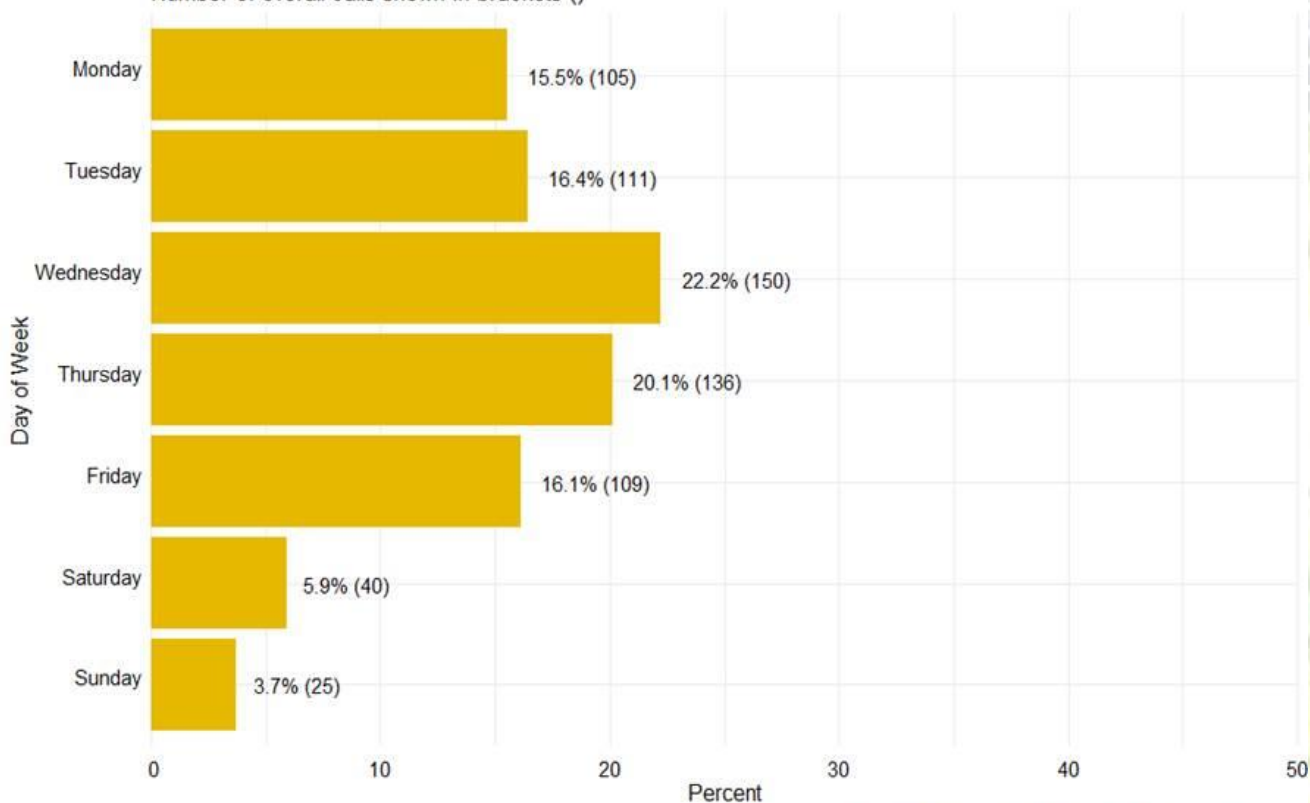
Call content is varied but mainly involves queries and assistance relating to collection and delivery of food, fuel, medication and essential household items, social isolation and support, transport issues and HSE related queries.

Feedback from callers is very positive and members of the public are grateful for the assistance, support and contact being provided to them. Feedback from the teams of staff is very positive re the unified community response and the positive work operating with groups out in our communities.

Helpline staff are proactive in raising awareness of the helpline and correspondence has been sent to pensioners, housing estate resident groups, tidy town groups and Kilkenny Age Friendly Council.

Percentage of calls to COVID Support Helpline by Day of Week: 30/03/2020 to 24/05/2020 (Week 14-21)

Number of overall calls shown in brackets ()



Note: 27-29 March excluded to allow for full week comparisons



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Community Forum - In addition to the Community Support Helpline, and as part of the "Community Call" launched by the Government at end of March, the Council also established the Community Forum. The Forum is made up of state agencies and other organisations that work with different communities, e.g. religious groups, Volunteer Centre, IFA, GAA etc. The Forum meet regularly by conference call. The purpose of the Community Forum is to ensure a co-ordinated approach between the different voluntary groups and state agencies to deliver services to our elderly and other vulnerable groups in society.

COVID Grant - The COVID-19 Emergency Fund is a grant programme to provide funding to groups that are directly involved in the Community Call response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development.

It is intended that the majority of the funding that is allocated will be ring-fenced for grants of €1,000 or less. Application forms and Guidelines for Applicants were circulated to all groups registered with the community call helpline.

Town & Village - The Government announced Town and Village Renewal Schemes for 2020 on Wednesday, 27th May. This year there is a focus on projects that can respond to the new challenges associated with COVID-19.

There is an open call for applications under the standard Town and Village Renewal Scheme. KCC can submit up to six applications under this strand.

In addition to the standard Town & Village Renewal Scheme a new strand of funding for interventions that can be delivered in the short term has been introduced. Closing dates for this strand are 3rd July and 14th August. The Council can submit up to 10 applications. There is no open call for applications under this strand.

CLAR - This scheme was announced on Monday 25th May. Advertised by Kilkenny County Council on 3rd June, 2020. Closing date for receipt of applications is 14th August, 2020.

Rural Regeneration and Development Fund - Works are nearing completion at the Fair Green, Callan under RRDF funding allocated in 2018 to deliver a fresh new amenity area for the town. Also, under construction are the river side car park at Thomsatown and the Motte Field walkway in Callan. Both of these projects have been delayed due to Covid 19 restrictions but are now underway.

Further projects under RRDF include the Sessions House, Thomastown which commenced Part 8 planning during the opening days of Covid 19 emergency measures. To ensure full compliance with public consultation requirements the period for making submissions has been extended to July 8th 2020 and all documents can be viewed at <https://consult.kilkenny.ie>, at the planning department or Thomastown area office by appointment. This is an ambitious project repurposing the Sessions House building for use as an educational creative space in collaboration with the Design and Craft Council of Ireland. A Design Team has also been appointed to further progress the development of the Thomastown Community Centre and procurement is underway for the delivery of Logan Street/Lowe Street refurbishment measures.

Kilkenny Integration Strategy

Kilkenny County Council in conjunction with Kilkenny LEADER Partnership and Kilkenny Public Participation Network, is currently developing a Migration Integration Action Plan for the county.

Phase one: Review of the Kilkenny Integration Strategy 2013-2017 includes an update of statistics, a needs analysis and an audit of service provision. Completed.



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Phase Two: Involves consultation, under the Covid-19 Government restrictions we have commenced this aspect with an online survey that has been promoted widely and has also been translated into French, Polish and Arabic. All available at the link below:

https://www.kilkennycoco.ie/eng/Publications/Public_Notices/Kilkenny-Migrant-Integration-Survey-.html

Kilkenny Syrian Resettlement Programme:

During the Covid -19 Restrictions engagement and support with families has been difficult but a few positive projects have commenced since March. Audiobooks, videos links to activities are sent weekly via WhatsApp for children and adults. KCC Library Services and the Civil Defence have dropped out books and games to children.

A short informative/cultural awareness video on Ramadan was made whereby families explained what Ramadan is, what it entails and what it means to them. It will also show how families are celebrating while in Lockdown.

Healthy Kilkenny (Healthy Ireland)

Our Healthy Kilkenny Co-Ordinator, Janette Boran, has been in post since the beginning of February and is progressing the work of Healthy Kilkenny. Healthy Kilkenny has been in a position since March to be responsive to Covid 19. The LCDC Healthy Kilkenny subgroup have adapted the work programme and are providing 80 care packages to vulnerable adults as well as 80 hospital packs to ambulance services, PHNs and the Gardaí.

Healthy Kilkenny has recruited a Community Engagement Facilitator to work with communities. The Engagement Facilitator, Muirne O'Connor is prioritising outreach to lone parents in the county on foot of the Voice and Visibility Research on Lone parents carried out last year by Kilkenny LCDC and partners. A website- and lone parents hub will be up and running as a one stop shop for lone parents in the county. Lone parents are one of the most

vulnerable groups in society and have experienced particular difficulties during the Covid-19 Government restrictions. It is hope to capture these issues and identify key actions to respond to these over time.

Kilkenny PPN

The PPN has increased its membership and now has 351 members.

Kilkenny PPN had commenced a process of workshops throughout the City and County in conjunction with the Department for Rural and Community Development and Social Justice Ireland called "A Vision for Community Well Being". This entailed working with community and voluntary groups and organisations in relation to what they want and need in their communities in respect of environment and sustainability, health and well-being, social community development, Participation, Democracy and good governance, Values and Culture. These workshops have been put on hold in line with Government guidelines. As of 1st of May 2020, Kilkenny PPN has commenced a process of online consultation.

Community Department has partnered with the Public Participation Network on a number of projects since March. We are supporting the Kilkenny PPN Webinars 2020 programme which is a series of practical one-hour webinars to help organisations with good governance, the Charities Governance Code, GDPR, social media, funding and social enterprise. This programme will help participants to increase the effectiveness and impact of their work.

The PPN in conjunction with Healthy Kilkenny is supporting 100 Covid-19 Infection Control Packs being distributed to vulnerable families that find it hard to social distance. The packs are designated for Traveller Families and the Syrian community. Any remaining packs will be distributed on a needs basis in conjunction with Family Resource Centres and the Gardaí.



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Covid-19 Community Interactive Newsletters

During the Covid -19 crisis 3 Community Information / Interactive Newsletters were completed that incorporated interactive information relevant to Covid-19 with updated information on Kilkenny County Council Services during the crisis, Covid-19 Advice for Volunteers, Covid-19 services for the elderly the business and wider community.

Rural Regeneration Application (Callan Friary)

An application was submitted under Call 2 of the Rural Regeneration Fund. The works proposed under **Category 2** will focus on preparing the Friary Complex for a **Category 1** application. The works identified to be completed under **Category 2** will include; Carrying out Consultations, preparing a Design Brief, Design Team Tender, Environmental Impact Assessment, Refurbishment Survey, Bat Survey, Screening Report, Architectural Heritage Impact Statement, Topographical & Measured Building Survey, Opening Up Works, Geotechnical Site Investigation, Part VIII planning process, detailed design and preparation of tender documents.

Pride of Place

As a result of Covid 19 the 2020 application and judging process will change this year. Community groups with assistance from Kilkenny County Council must now enter the IPB Pride of Place 2020 competition online, we are preparing applications.

The groups that we are working with this year are:

- Castlecomer Discovery Park – Community Tourism
- Clogh (Population 0-300)
- Ferrybank Community Garden (Community Wellbeing)
- Callan Town (Population 1000-2000) – Town Team

FIRE SERVICES

The Fire Service is an essential public service and has operated and responded to calls all during the current pandemic.

During this public health crisis our focus is on

- protecting the communities, we serve and to limit the spread of COVID 19.
- to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our staff in the pursuance of their duties.
- to maintain an effective Emergency Response we have continued to respond to all incidents.

Capital Projects

Kilkenny Fire Service have taken the delivery of two new jeeps for Callan and Freshford fire brigades. The delivery of a new fire engine for Callan is due in July 2020. Approval for 2 second hand fire engines has been approved by the Department of Housing Planning & Local Government. Revised layout drawings and cost plans for the new Urlingford Fire Station are being worked on by our Design Team and will be with the Department shortly.



Fire Safety Certificates

49 applications for fire safety certificates were received to 19th May 2020. This was a 40% increase in 2019 applications for the same period last year. These applications were administered and assessed by staff working remotely and from our Headquarter station due to Covid 19.



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Fire Services Acts 1981 & 2003

- Fire Prevention staff made targeted inspections of premises both to provide advice and to enforce legislation.
- 1 Fire Safety Notice under the Fire Services Acts 1981 & 2003 was served during Covid 19.
- 1 Fire Safety Assessment was ordered under the Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003 during this period.

Community Fire Safety

- Ongoing public messaging campaigns are being maintained through our social media channels to encourage members of the public to install smoke alarms and to test their smoke alarms once a week to ensure that they are working.
- Talks and information to various communities is on hold due to current Public Health restrictions.
- Kilkenny Fire and Rescue Service Primary Schools Programme (PSP) is postponed for the time being. This programme has been running since 2006 and over 19,000 3rd class pupils have received fire safety programme to date.

Operations

Fire Brigades responded to 342 turnouts up to the 22nd May 2020. The same period last year we responded to 272 turnouts. With the current dry spell and people staying at home there has been an increase of 20 % in fire calls and a decrease of 13% in road traffic accidents. The Fire Service is a very resilient and useful resource to the Local Authority in that Brigades (*trained and equipped manpower*) can be mobilised within minutes of an emergency in their area. Etc.



Picture taken by drone operator of a multiple car fire incident

The provision of a fire service drone in recent months has been a huge benefit to the Brigades response to all types of incidents. Incident Commanders now have access to a bird's eye view of incidents together with thermal imaging camera to detect hot spots providing key information for safer management of incidents and the photographing for post incident debriefing.



Handing over the Drone by Cathaoirleach Peter Chap Cleere and Director of Services Mary Mulholland to our trained operators. (just before lockdown!)

CIVIL DEFENCE

In response to the Covid 19 pandemic the Civil Defence transgresses from an auxiliary support to a frontline role; since the 29th March Kilkenny Civil Defence has carried out 110 tasks in the community and will continue to do so while the need remains. The unit has had the 7th highest number of taskings of all Civil Defence units in the Country to the end of May.

The units Medical and Welfare services have been called upon by the HSE, the Local Authority, An Garda Síochána, the Irish Cancer Society, and many community groups in a variety of roles. The units ambulances remain on stand-by to support the National Ambulance Service. The volunteers are a reassuring presence in the community offering meaningful supports and relief across all municipal districts and many of the roles undertaken have been Covid facing.



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Tasks Include:

- Patient Ambulance transfers to and from hospitals countrywide.
- Assistance at the Irish Blood Donor Clinics daily for 3 weeks.
- Transport to Doctor Appointments.
- Delivery of essential items & medications to vulnerable persons.
- Collection and delivery of PPE to nursing homes.
- Transport to Covid assessment centres.
- Transport to Covid test centers.
- Packing and delivering over 250 care packs and infection control packs to vulnerable persons

Due to the fast-moving nature of the crisis the service has been tasked by the HSE in a variety of roles that have also been stood down at short notice including the setting up of a second Covid Test Centre.

In total 23 of the 30 volunteers have been engaged through the pandemic response with particular demands being made on the higher level medically trained volunteers.



The unit has put stringent infection control measures and safety equipment in place to protect both the volunteers and community from the virus.

The core services of the Civil Defence are still being called upon during the pandemic and the units boat was activated and later stood down in May.

To support the Civil Defence Officer a temporary Assistant Civil Defence Officer was employed for a 3 month period with funding made available from the Department of Defence.

The volunteers have shown great strength of character in the face of adversity throughout the pandemic and will continue to do so and serve the people of Kilkenny.

ARTS OFFICE

Overview

Many of our programmes have been moved online since March and all of our invitations and engagements to date, to groups and individuals inviting them to work with us online have been met with great enthusiasm and appreciation.

Kilkenny Poetry Broadsheet 2020: This year's Poetry Broadsheet editor, poet Colm Keegan, has completed his selection for the 2020 broadsheet and our designer, Alé Mercado, is working on his final design for print.

Online Writing Classes: Our adult online Creative Writing and Poetry workshops in March and April with tutor Jessica Traynor were very well received.

We are currently organising our summer/autumn literature programme which will be online.

These online workshops are enabling us to continue to support writers both emerging and professional in these challenging times.

Our teen writing group enjoyed their online workshops and we also focussed on publishing weekly posts on Facebook from the Rhyme rag editor to prompt and encourage young writers to keep writing and expressing themselves. The Arts Office invited the young writers from Waterford Youth Arts (WYA) to join the workshops and that invitation has been reciprocated and many of our young Kilkenny poets are attending the WYA Open Mic sessions weekly.

We are currently planning for summer / autumn programme for the Rhyme Rag

ArtLinks: The Collaboration Award for Professional and Emerging Artists who are members of ArtLinks has been assessed and awarded to three artists from Kilkenny, Wexford



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and Carlow. The aim of this new award is to encourage further and deeper collaboration between artists across the Artlinks counties and support artists seeking to expand their practice and networks regionally. The ArtLinks Collaboration Award for 2020 received applications from 33 artists, with submissions coming from all four of the ArtLinks partner counties: Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford, Wexford.

Teacher Artists Partnership (Tap) – Based on the go ahead from the Department of Education and Skills we have advertised and selected the artists for the 2020 Teacher Artist Partnership training in partnership with Kilkenny Education Centre. We are currently waiting for dates for the training from the Department

Cruinniú na nÓg: “My Creative Life” is a series of short radio pieces that hears a young person taking us on a joyous dive into their creative world as we explore their passions ranging from art to aerial dance, cooking to coding, history to heritage that will feature on RTEjr Radio and podcast and aired on RTE Radio in June, July and August 2020.

TADA! Theatre School is making a movie for Cruinniú na nÓg. Using Zoom, *When Heroes Collide* is the chance for children to get creative and clever online with their heroes. TADA! Theatre school is all about children creating and performing their own scripts and *When Heroes Collide* is no different. This movie is sure to be a big hit when it broadcasts on Zoom on the 13th of June.

KNITTED TOGETHER



Crochet or knit a square to help vulnerable children in South Africa

One Million Stars to end violence

We have partnered with Amber Women’s Refuge to invite people to get weaving at home with family and friends and to help spread the word. The woven Stars will be assembled and curated into an exhibition in Kilkenny during the 16 Days of Activism in November 2020 and throughout the Christmas period.



Stars made from ribbon and an old pull up banner

Poetry Phone

Dial a free-phone number to listen to poetry. Twelve wondrous poems written by Kilkenny poets, have been recorded for a free phone line.



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LIBRARY

March - May 2020 cumulative figures

* New online members & their use of online services is not reflected in these figures

eBooks

▲ 159% on 2019

**4518
borrowed**

eAudiobooks

▲ 99% on 2019

**4585
borrowed**

eMagazines

▲ 167% on 2019

**5357
borrowed**



**eOnline
Courses**

▲ 391% on 2019

**12098
Uses**

eNewspapers

▲ 34824% on 2019

**30733
Issues read**

eLanguages

▼ 30% on 2019

**375
sessions**

Door to Door delivery Service to Cocooning Library Members

A new model of service delivery was developed to help make life cocooning easier on our library members that are over 70. Members were invited to take up our offer on a branch by branch basis. Staff selected material and packed bags. These were then delivered directly to the door of members' homes and nursing homes across the County by our Mobile library driver, Tom. 459 people received over 702 books since the initiative began and feedback had been excellent from everyone.





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Spring into Storytime

National Spring into Storytime Campaign took place over April and May this year in a digital format, continuing to bring story times to children and families and encourage everyone to continue reading and sharing stories and keep literacy levels from declining. Staff have been learning new recording skills and putting these into practice in developing podcasts and videos to share with our younger library members. These had over **4,419** views and **1,658** engagements.

A Time to Relax

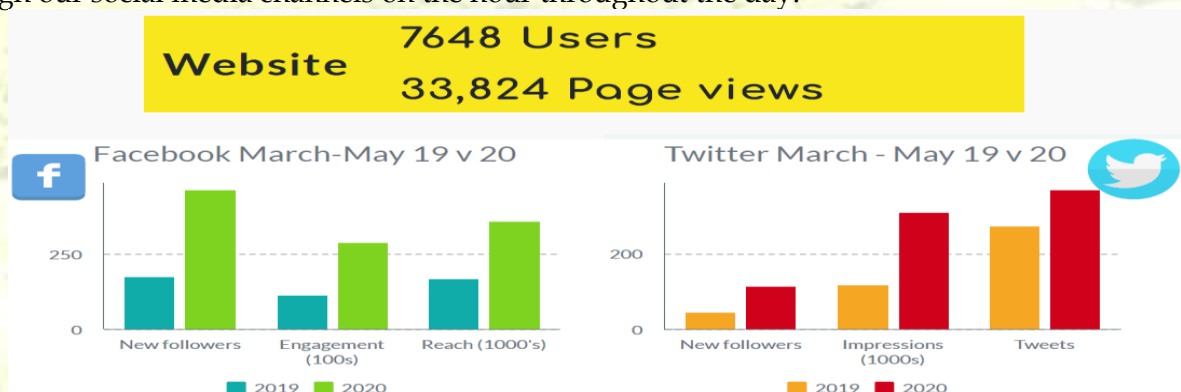
As part of our Community Wellbeing Initiative, we hosted a series of four 15-minute video workshops on our social media channels and website during May to offer people practical tools and simple ideas to improve overall wellbeing during this difficult time. Led by Kilkenny practitioner Dee Hennessy of Mindful Facilitation, sessions covered dealing with anxiety, staying grounded, resilience and compassion. Over 480 people engaged with these online workshops.

Hear Your History

Staff have developed a series of online audio talks/podcasts to give people confined to home a taste of Kilkenny City and County's rich history and heritage. Talks are researched, recorded and posted weekly to give listeners a flavour of the resources held by our Local Studies Department. Some of our recent themes include - Woodstock House and Estate, the Cuffes of Desart, Kilkenny City in the early twentieth century and The Spanish Flu in Kilkenny.

Poetry Day

To mark Poetry Day Ireland the Library Service invited local writers and poets to submit work under this year's apt theme "There will be time". Submissions of 13 well know local poets were showcased through our social media channels on the hour throughout the day.





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PROCUREMENT

Notwithstanding the difficulties imposed by the restrictions arising from the Corona 19 pandemic, Kilkenny County Council's Procurement Unit have continued to facilitate the progress of a steady flow of contract opportunities in line with the organisation's public works programme. Since March, significant tenders have progressed at various stages from advertising to the award of contracts in the areas of Housing, Roads, Flood Relief, Corporate and the Machinery Yard.

Perhaps the most significant project currently going to tender is where we are the lead authority procuring on behalf of the whole South East Region a multi supplier framework agreement for the provision of pavement and associated works for national, regional and local roads. It would be expected that between 3-10 contractors will be on this framework which is to last 24 months with the possibility of extensions to this time period. The estimated value of works across the South East within the scope of this framework is €80 million.

INFORMATION SYSTEMS

The Information Systems Department has had a very busy few months since the arrival of Covid-19 and the Department operations have now been reconfigured to support staff across all departments in the use of remote working technologies.

The existing stock of laptops were reconfigured, and an additional 135 laptop have been purchased, configured and distributed to staff. Additional capacity was added to remote working technologies to allow more staff connect remotely.

Mobile phones and mobile data devices were distributed to staff that required them. A new online meetings system was rolled out across the organisation to facilitate online meetings.



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FINANCE

The covid-19 crisis will have a serious impact on the finances of the Council in 2020. All major income streams will suffer a significant reduction for the year. The primary focus of the Finance Team to date since the beginning of the crisis has been the collection of cash to ensure the Council has sufficient cash to pay the bills for the coming months.

All outstanding grant monies for both capital and revenue expenditure have been followed up. Central Government agencies have paid various grant monies more promptly than previously. The DHPLG has also paid two instalments of the LPT allocation early amounting to €4m. Two thirds of the annual allocation has now been paid at the end of April. On commercial rates the focus has been on collecting monies from the larger organisations that have not been impacted by the crisis. To date a total of €5.5m has been paid compared with €7.5m for the same period last year. The term loan of €5m to provide part funding for the Western Environs and the Butler Gallery projects was approved by the DHPLG in March and was drawn down from the HFA in the last week of March. Income from parking which was running at approximately €45k per week has now ceased. Income from housing rents has been reduced by approximately €5k per week to date. The Housing Department is continuing to receive calls from tenants whose income has been reduced as a result of the crisis. It is anticipated that further reductions will continue in the coming weeks.

The DHPLG has also approved the temporary increase in the overdraft facility from €13m to €20m until the end of 2020. This facility is now in place with the Bank.

A further detailed review of the impact of the crisis on commercial rates income has been carried out by the finance team as part of a national review for the DHPLG. It is estimated that the annual rate demand for rate payers impacted by the crisis is in the region of €10.6m out of a total annual rate demand of €21m. The net cash loss arising from commercial rates in 2020 is estimated at €8.7m. Certain assumptions have been made in arriving at this figure. It is difficult to predict with accuracy the final outturn at this stage due to the high degree of uncertainty for businesses arising from the crisis.

On May 2nd last The DHPLG announced two commercial rates alleviation measures relating to COVID-19 restrictions.

Firstly, the Government decided that commercial rates for a 3-month period beginning on 27th March, 2020 will be waived for all businesses that have been forced to close due to public health requirements. A Government fund of €260m will be provided to fund this initiative. The announcement goes on to state that the position post 27th June, 2020 will be considered as part of a wider review of options to support enterprises and employment. The detailed guidance on this Scheme has not yet been published by the DHPLG.

The estimated compensation for Kilkenny arising from this Government announcement on commercial rates is €2.5m. This still leaves an estimated shortfall of €6.2m on commercial rates alone for 2020.



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Secondly the Government has announced that it is providing €250m for the establishment of a Restart Fund targeting micro and small businesses that have suffered a dramatic loss in turnover due to the COVID-19 restrictions and which require assistance in reconnecting with the marketplace. Businesses will receive no more than the equivalent of their 2019 Rates bill capped at €10,000 per business. The minimum grant payment is €2,000.

This grant is funded by the Department of Business and Innovation and is being administered by KCC on their behalf.

The eligibility criteria are as follows:

- Business must have a commercially rateable premises
- Turnover of less than €5m **and** employs 50 people or less.
- Business must have suffered a 25%+ loss in projected turnover from 01-04-20 to 30-06-20
- Business must commit to reopen or remain open.
- Business must commit to retain employees benefiting from the Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme.

Businesses can apply through a simple on-line application process at www.kilkennycoco.ie. Grants will be processed in line with the Government reopening roadmap.

In addition to commercial rates all of the other income streams such as parking, rents from property, planning fees etc. will be significantly reduced. The estimated loss arising from other income sources is €2m. The extent of these losses will depend on how soon activity levels increase and return to normal.

The total estimated loss in income for 2020 is €8.2m in the absence of any further compensation package from the Government. This income loss is and will have a serious impact on the finances of the Council both in terms of the availability of discretionary funding and in the reduction of the cash reserves of the Council.

All activity on construction sites has recommenced after the shutdown. This will impact cashflow as working capital will be required to fund all of the projects on site. Additional term loan finance of up to €7.5m will be required to be drawn down in 2020 to provide the match funding for current capital commitments the biggest one being the Western Environs infrastructure project. This will bring the total term loan balance outstanding to €24m in addition to the outstanding balance on completed capital projects of €10.5m.

The cashflow on development contributions has also stalled since the beginning of the crisis. The original estimated income from this source for 2020 was €3m. The current estimate is for receipts of half that amount. All of this income goes towards the funding of the capital programme.

A full review of all budgets both revenue and capital is currently underway and will be discussed with the Elected Members in the coming months. Changes to all budgets are unavoidable as the income sources will be significantly reduced for 2020 and into 2021.



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The expenditure by service division to the end of May is set out in table 1. Total Expenditure for the period was €34.4m compared with the annual budget of €83.6m.

Table 1	Actual YTD May 2020	Budget Full Year 2020
	€'000's	€'000's
Housing & Building	9,016	17,623
Road Transport & Safety	7,306	22,688
Water Services	2,805	6,576
Development Management	3,974	10,525
Environmental Services	3,918	11,463
Recreation & Amenity	2,379	6,425
Agriculture, Education, Health, Welfare	247	639
Miscellaneous Services	4,782	7,623
OVERALL TOTAL	34,427	83,562

The unaudited Annual Financial Statement for 2019 has been completed and will be presented to Council at the June meeting. The audited statements will be presented to Council later in the year on completion of the annual audit by the Local Government Auditor.

Commercial Rates Appeals Update

The Valuation Office conducted a revaluation of all commercial properties throughout County Kilkenny to come into effect for the year 2018 as part of its ongoing programme to revalue all such properties within the State.

The following is an update on appeal outcomes and outstanding appeals:

- 195 Rate Customers appealed their valuation to the Valuation Tribunal.
- Total value of rate demand under appeal is €4.5m, (22.6%)
- 143 appeals have been completed to date (22 withdrawn)
- 115 of the 143 appeals have resulted in a reduction in rates income, 5 confirmed the decision of the revaluation, 1 resulted in an increase in rates income & 22 were withdrawn.
- Income lost to date = €688,431
- 51 appeals outstanding (1 appeal withdrawn)
- If this trend continues the total loss will be in excess of €1m

Motor Taxation

The Motor Tax office has continued to maintain a high level of customer service since the onset of COVID-19. The public office remained open until March 27th but had to close on Government health advice. The office now operates a 'drop service' where customers can drop their application in a post box and staff will process the application and send out the tax disc on the same day by post.

There has also been a significant increase in the processing of applications online since the closure of the public counter. Approximately 90% of motor tax renewal transactions now take place online compared with 73% prior to COVID-19. The public counter will re-open later this month in-line with national guidance. Procedures will be put in place to ensure the safety of staff and customers at all times.