

CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT

DECEMBER 2023 ISSUE

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS

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

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Local Area Plan

Tenders have been advertised for the preparation of a new Local Area Plan for Ferrybank/Belview. Closing date for applications is the 22nd January.

Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS) 2024 Historic Structures Fund (HSF) 2024

The closing date for the BHIS and HSF is 19th January 2024.

Festivals & Events

Work is now complete on a review of the Grant Scheme and applications will be accepted from 1st December this year for 2024 events. The closing date for receipt of applications is 31st January, 2024. KCC's

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yulefest KILKENNY 2023



ROADS

Major Projects

(Included in NDP- Funded by TII)

N24 Waterford to Cahir Scheme

The Display of Preferred Transport Solution is now scheduled for Q1 2024, with the actual dates to be confirmed subject to and following successful completion of the upcoming Phase 2 TII Project Peer Review process on the Option Selection Report. We are currently planning for a Public Display in January 2024.

Landowners within the Study Area will receive notifications on the Public Display of the Preferred Transport Solution in advance and notices will also be published in local newspapers, on local radio, on County Council social media platforms (*Kilkenny & Tipperary County Council*) and on the Project Website at: <https://n24waterford2cahir.ie/news/>.

A meeting will be held with Elected Members of both Kilkenny & Tipperary County Council in advance of the Public Display, to advise on the Phase 2 Preferred Transport Solution for the project. Date to be confirmed.

Minor Projects

(Not included in NDP-Funded by TII)

N24 Tower Road (Safety Scheme)

Works are continuing to progress well. Works are nearing substantial completion.



Overhead drone footage of the compacted grade separated junction under construction.

N77 Ballyragget to Ballynaslee

The award procedures for the construction of the N77 Scheme are on-going. Works are envisaged to commence in early February 2024 with a 12 month construction period envisaged.

The overall outturn cost for the project is expected to be in excess of €10m.

N24 Carrick Road

Simultaneous applications to An Bord Pleanála for 177AE Planning Approval and Compulsory Purchase Order Approval was made on the 25th November 2022.

There were 5 objections to both the Planning Application & Compulsory Purchase Order. An Bord Pleanála have sought some additional information from Kilkenny County Council re the third party submissions. This information has been forwarded back to the Bord.

Pavement Schemes

The construction works in respect of the N77 Knockroe to Littlefield Pavement Scheme was fully completed by Lagan Asphalt Ltd for a cost of in excess of €1.7m in November.



New pavement on the N77

Road Safety Working Together Group

The design work is ongoing in respect of the N76 Callan By Pass Pavement Scheme is on-going. The required PAAR report is in preparation. Design work and the preparation of tender documentation will be on-going during 2024 with a view to issuing a tender for the works during 2024. The overall cost of the scheme is expected to be in excess of €4m with varying sources of TII funding necessary to deliver the scheme.

In line with the Government's Road Safety Strategy (Action 94), Kilkenny County Council have established a Road Safety Working Together Group.

This group is chaired by Cllr. Matt Doran, Chairman of SPC2 and comprises representatives from the RSA, Ambulance Service, TII, Elected Representatives, Fire Service, An Garda Síochána, Director of Roads & Transportation, Cycling Officer, Road Safety Officer and Roads Engineering Staff.

The group had their inaugural meeting on 16th November, 2023 with the following Agenda:

- Review Kilkenny Road Safety Plan 2015 – 2020
- Introduction of the Road Safety Working Together Group (RSWTG) to adopt a Road Safety Plan for Kilkenny and to agree a meeting schedule.
- Present National and Local Collision Statistics and Trends which will inform the actions of the group
- Review the Draft Kilkenny County Council Road Safety Plan 2022 -2030 and adopt same
- Identify key actions for the Plan

The Group, having reviewed the Plan, agreed to its adoption. The RSWTG will meet 4 times per year.

The adopted Road Safety Plan was presented to the SPC2 – Road Transportation and Mobility on 7th December, 2023. It is listed for noting at the Council Meeting on 18th December, 2023.



ENVIRONMENT

CLIMATE ACTION

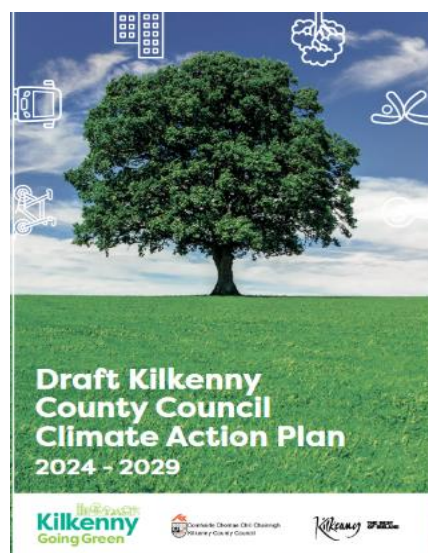
Draft Kilkenny County Council Climate Action Plan

The Draft Kilkenny County Council Climate Action Plan is out for public consultation until 20th December. It is a statutory 5-year Plan which outlines the measures that Kilkenny County Council will take to reduce energy use and carbon emissions, and adapt to the changing climate across its governance, services and operations. In addition, it sets out how Kilkenny County Council will facilitate, support and inspire stakeholder climate action in the County through leadership, collaboration and advocacy.



This Plan has been prepared in close collaboration with the Kilkenny County Council Climate Action Steering Committee, relevant staff from every service area in the local authority and Elected Representatives. Input has been provided by Strategic Policy Committee 4 (Environmental Protection, Climate and Energy), the Public Participation Network (PPN), the Climate Action Regional Office, adjoining local authorities, business and community stakeholders and the public.

The Plan is informed by the most recent scientific data and evidence. Six specialist reports were commissioned as part of the preparation of the Plan and the findings of these have been assimilated into the Plan. The key climate risks facing County Kilkenny, along with the greenhouse gas emissions produced by Kilkenny County Council and the County are presented.



96 actions were developed, and these will be undertaken by Kilkenny County Council over the next five years. By delivering these actions Kilkenny County Council will reduce its own greenhouse gas emissions by 51% and improve its energy efficiency by 50%.

It will also implement measures to prepare for climate change, support resilience and provide other benefits such as improved health and well-being, enhanced biodiversity, green job creation, sustainable use of materials and the circular economy. Collaboration with stakeholders including business, the community and other public sector organisations will be vital to the success of the Plan.

As part of the preparation of the Plan, Local Authorities are required to identify a Decarbonising Zone (DZ) – an area within the County which will act as a test bed for trialling what is possible for decarbonisation and climate action at a local and community level. Kilkenny City has been identified as the DZ for County Kilkenny. Building on its socioeconomic and environmental characteristics, the Kilkenny City DZ has a strong foundation of existing assets and services, with the potential to deliver a wide-range of decarbonisation opportunities

How can I get involved?

The Plan can be viewed on the [Council website](https://www.kilkennycoco.ie/council), and submissions can be made at <https://consult.kilkenny.ie/> until 20th Dec 2023.

The Climate Action Office ran a programme of public events to raise awareness about the Plan, including drop-in clinics at the Libraries in Kilkenny City, Ferrybank and Castlecomer and a public webinar hosted by the PPN.



Reduce your Use Energy Campaign

The Kilkenny County Council “Reduce Your Use” energy campaign for Winter ‘2023/24 is underway. Running from October 2023 to March 2024, the campaign consists of a programme of themed activities to promote energy efficiency within the organisation.



As part of the campaign, we have communicated with all staff to take simple measures to reduce energy use over the winter months. The Council has also selected the Thomastown and Callan Area Offices as a pilot area and is preparing Energy Reduction Plans to identify key works and changes in behaviour required to help reduce energy use in the Area Offices.

The campaign will be documented over the next few months, and a short video will be produced to communicate the key findings and results from the campaign. More details on the Reduce Your Use Campaign can be seen on the Climate Action page of the Kilkenny County Council Website.

<https://www.kilkennycoco.ie/eng/services/environment/climate-action/reduce-your-use.html>

Electrical Vehicle (EV) Demo at County Hall

Thanks to the Machinery Yard for organising an EV demo at County Hall from 22nd–24th November where Lyng Motors kindly brought EV's for staff to test drive and to find out more about the technology and learn what it is like to own an EV. Data commissioned by the Climate Action Office shows that transport is responsible for 36% of the green-house gas produced in Kilkenny City, so supporting people to walk, cycle, take public transport and move away from fossil fuels is vital in tackling the climate crisis at a local level.

Funding to help communities take Climate Action

The Community Climate Action Fund is expected to open to applications on the 6th December 2023. It is envisaged to be very well received by communities with plenty of interest to date. Our Community Climate Action Officer (CCAO), Breda Maher, has met over 30 communities to date to support and encourage them to look at any potential projects that would have a direct climate action impact and benefit their community.

Successful applicants under this scheme will deliver a variety of projects which support them and help to build low carbon communities. Kilkenny County Council has received an allocation of €511,000 grant funding from the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications for the fund and there is 100% funding for successful applicants.

Upon launch of this programme, the Climate Action Office will issue a press release and communicate through all our channels and networks. A webinar will also be held in January to answer questions and queries.

WASTE

Waste Enforcement

Kilkenny County Council had 57 enforcement files opened so far in 2023. Three cases have been before the District Court, with another case in the High Court for recovery of the landfill levy.

Our use of CCTV will be approved shortly following agreement of draft guidance with the Data Commissioner. The draft guidance will see risk assessments for all uses of mobile recording devices and greater emphasis placed on the need to have such systems in operation and ensuring GDPR compliance.

In October we finalised training for our drone within the Waste Enforcement Section. We have a 3D mapping drone that we will use to inspect and investigate authorised and unauthorised sites. The drone will allow us to create detailed maps of the sites and give details in relation to the volumes of material present on these sites.

Bring Banks Usage

The Council provides and manages 46 Bring Centres across the City and County. A total of 1,862 tonnes of recyclables were collected from our Bring Centres for the eleven month to the end of November 2023 compared to 1,875 tonnes for the same period in 2022. Loughboy Shopping Centre (12 tonnes collected), Aldi Kilkenny City (11 tonnes collected) and Newpark Shopping Centre (8.7 tonnes collected) were the busiest locations in the City and Aldi-Ferrybank (9.5 tonnes collected) was the busiest location outside of the City. Environment staff are continuing to work very closely with our service providers to ensure the collection service is in keeping with demand, especially around long weekends and holiday periods.

Dunmore Civic Amenity Site

Our site at Dunmore continues to be one of the busiest amenity sites in the state. For the first 11 months of 2023 we have seen an increase in the volumes of material delivered to site when compared to the same period in 2022.

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Tidy Towns

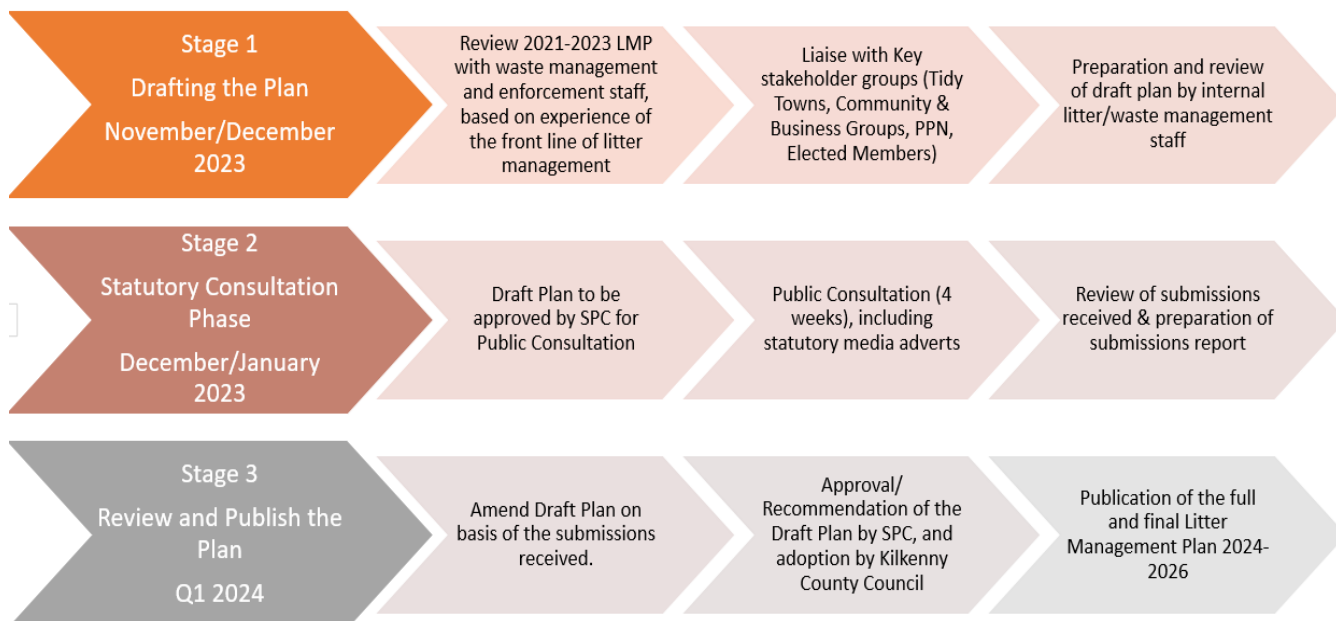
The final Tidy Towns forum for 2023 was held on Saturday 25th of November in Thomastown Community Centre.

On foot of the recent National Tidy Towns results, the theme for the Forum was biodiversity. Dr Mary Tubridy, Ecologist and Tidy Towns adjudicator provided a presentation to members on all aspects of the Tidy Towns application process providing practical actions that could be undertaken to increase their points and support biodiversity and natural habitat conservation. This was followed by a guided walk around Thomastown showcasing the work that has been undertaken to date by the Thomastown Tidy Towns and the Upper Paddock's Biodiversity Garden team.



Litter Management Plan

The Environmental Awareness Officer (EAO) is currently reviewing the Litter Management Plan 2021-2023, with a view to developing a new 3-year Plan for Kilkenny County Council. The EAO has presented to the MD's, the Council Plenary and SPC 4 to date to attain input and feedback for the development of the Draft Plan. A draft plan will be in place by Friday 8th of December, 2023. See the below timeline.



Green Schools

The EAO continues to support 92 schools as part of the An Taisce Green Schools Programme to renew or attain a flag. Green schools is an international environmental education programme, offering a well defined, controllable way for schools to take environmental issues into the curriculum and apply them to the day-to-day running of the school. Green schools is a holistic, long-term programme and has a two-year cycle in relation to preparation, assessment and attainment of a particular flag. The EAO is continuing to assist schools around the County to renew their membership as part of the Green Schools programme under their respective themes- Litter and Waste, Energy, Water, Travel, Biodiversity and Global Citizenship. Deadline for the applications for School Flags is March 15th, 2024.

Coil na nÓg- Biodiversity in Schools

Kilkenny Local Authority is collaborating with Coil na nÓg Coill na nÓg which is a native tree and hedgerow planting initiative delivered by Biodiversity in Schools and funded by a selection of County Councils across the island of Ireland.

Additional supplies have been provided to all participating schools in the form of notebooks and colouring pencils to encourage outdoor exploration and monitoring.

Yulefest

Kilkenny County Council Environment Department will be taking part in the Yulefest Christmas Market encouraging people to talk and become more aware of their impact on our environment. We will be working with the festival organisers to make this festival more “green” and creating a conversation around sustainable waste practices and the wider issue of food waste and sustainable practices especially over the Christmas period.

WEEE Ireland Recycling

WEEE Ireland are undertaking a Christmas E-Waste Recycling campaign and have asked all Local Authorities to support and publicise this initiative.

To remind those shopping for new appliances or devices, decorating the house or clearing out for Santa – that anything with a plug, battery or cable can and should be recycled for FREE at their [nearest free recycling drop off point](#). Used batteries can be recycled for free in WEEE Ireland Blue Battery Boxes in newsagents, supermarkets, civic amenity sites and wherever batteries are bought.



Environment Complaints

All Environmental complaints received are logged on the CRM (Customer Relations Management) System. The number of complaints that have been received and logged by Environment staff for investigation so far this year up to the end of November 2023 is 868, compared with 908 for the same period last year (i.e. a decrease of circa 4% for the year to date). The nature of these complaints ranges from littering, illegal dumping, burning of waste and abandoned cars. Whilst every effort is made to bring unacceptable environmental practice into compliance, Environment Enforcement staff continue to manage significant enforcement cases progressing through prosecution cases.



What can you do with 289 empty milk cartons:

The Environment entry in the Christmas Tree Festival being held in St. Canice's Cathedral, Irishtown, Kilkenny.

Well done to all involved in the production and making of the Christmas Tree.

EPA Report

The EPA 'Focus on Local Authority Environmental Enforcement Performance Report 2022' was published in November. The Report measures Local Authority performance in implementing their Recommended Minimum Criteria for Environmental Inspections (RMCEI) Plans for 2022. Each Local Authority RMCEI Plan sets out inspection targets under the National Enforcement Priorities (NEPs) across waste, air & noise, water and governance. In the case of Kilkenny County Council, over 2,100 inspections were contained in the 2022 RMCEI Plan. Unfortunately, we did not meet our targets across all NEPs in the RMCEI Plan. We accept the EPA Report and we take the findings seriously. We were very disappointed that we did not meet the high standards we set ourselves in our 2022 RMCEI Plan. The main reason for this failure was depleted resources during the year, with a number of long standing vacancies in the Environment section not filled.

The nature of the work involved in carrying out the majority of inspections in the RMCEI Plan is that it must be carried out by specialist and technical staff with the requisite skills and in some cases certification (e.g, to undertake septic tank inspections).

It proved difficult to replace specialist staff that left the Environment Section during 2022, and this had an adverse knock-on impact on implementation of the RMCEI Plan. The EPA Report was not all negative and did acknowledge that Kilkenny County Council sets itself ambitious targets, and has strong reporting and complaints handling procedures in place. While the EPA Report is an important measure of performance, it should not be the only means of defining the work of the Environment Section. The EPA Report does not cover all of the work of the Environment Section. For example it does not reflect the time and resources involved in pursuing complex legal cases; our work with Tidy Towns that do so well each year in the national tidy towns awards; the fact that Kilkenny City is regularly placed in the top 10 towns in the IBAL League; the fact that 63% of the County is litter free and we are second only to County Kildare in this regard; the success of our Team Up to Clean up Event that involved almost 200 groups, resident associations and organisations across the County; the fact that 93% of households in relevant agglomerations have access to a 3-bin service; and our work in animal welfare, in particular control of dogs and horses.

AIR NOISE WATER

Domestic Waste Water Treatment System Inspections 2023

Under the National Inspection Plan for Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems 2022-2026 the Environment Section is currently carrying out wastewater treatment inspections all over the County. All homeowners involved are given the statutory notice period before an inspection is carried out. From the 1st of January 2024, the septic tank grant will increase from €5,000 to €12,000. In order to apply for the grant all homeowners will either have to be inspected by the Local Authority under the National Inspection Plan or be located in a Prioritised Area for Action or High-Status Objective Area.

Farm Inspections

The Environment Section will carry out 80 farm inspections under our RMCEI Plan for 2023. 25 inspections have been carried out to date with a further 55 to be completed before end of year. The Environment Section will review all inspections and issue enforcement notices if required if any breaches of the Good Agricultural Practice Regulations are evident on farms.

Air Quality

The Environment Section of Kilkenny County Council are making plans to install an additional air quality monitor in Kilkenny City. The monitor was funded by the Department Environment, Climate & Communications and will give additional readings for air pollutions levels in the City.

The Environment Section recently held a meeting with representatives of Solid Fuel Merchants Ireland (SFMI) to discuss the new Solid Fuel Regulations. The Primary Focus on these regulations is on improving air quality and health outcomes. SFMI highlighted the issue of some unregistered fuel merchants not complying with current regulations and openly selling bituminous coal and turf throughout the County. The new Solid Fuel Regulations state it is illegal to sell or transport bituminous coal in the Republic of Ireland. The Environment Section are enforcing the Solid Fuel Regulations with inspections being carried out all over the County.

Discharge License's - Trade Effluents

Currently the Environment Section are reviewing all 25 Discharge licenses in the County. Discharge licences are issued under Section 4 of the Local Government (Water Pollution) Act 1977, as amended in 1990, in respect of the discharge of trade effluent to surface water or groundwater. Licences set conditions so the discharge is treated and controlled in a manner that protects the receiving environment.

PARKS & SPECIAL PROJECTS

South East Greenway

Mainline Works

Glas Civil Engineering Ltd., who were recently awarded the works contract for Lot 5A, a 5.5km section of the Greenway from Ferrybank to Curraghmore, commenced works on site on the 13th November. To-date, works have focused on the construction of the permanent carpark in Glenmore along with site clearance works / mulching along the full length of the Lot 5A. The contractor is also readying their hardstanding compound at Rathpatrick. The anticipated construction duration of Lot 5A is 12 months. Roughan & O'Donovan, Consulting Engineers, have been appointed as technical consultants to assist with the supervision and administration of this particular Lot.



Wexford County Council, as lead authority, are continuing to prepare a Technical Services Tender for a multi-disciplinary engineering consultancy team to complete all remaining phases of the Greenway. It is proposed to utilise an existing Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) tender frameworks for this competition.

Interpretation, Wayfinding & Orientation Plan

Faite Ireland engaged The Paul Hogarth Company (TPHC) to conduct an Interpretation, Wayfinding and Orientation Plan for the Greenway. TPHC held a public consultation event in the Rhu Glenn and Brandon House Hotel on 22nd November. The objective of this consultation, which was well attended, was to obtain information on the places, stories, people and communities along the historic railway route of the South East Greenway. The information gathered is currently being assessed and will be used to inform the animation of the Greenway.

Outdoor Recreational Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) - Funding Announcement

We are delighted to advise that our 2 Project Development Measure applications, submitted in September, were successful under the 2023 Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS), details provided hereunder:

Project Development Applications - Submitted

Project Name	Description	Grant Secured	Estimated Total Cost
Kings River Boardwalk & Pedestrian Bridge, Kells, Co. Kilkenny.	Engage technical consultants to deliver a service requirement brief to assess / update the existing Feasibility Study for the new Kings River Boardwalk and Pedestrian Bridge and to progress same through the statutory planning process.	€49,500	€55,000
Brandon Hill Summit Walk – Upland Trail Enhancement Scheme	Engage specialist technical consultants to deliver a service brief for the restoration of the upland section of the Brandon Hill Summit Walk, which has suffered from erosion. The proposal put forward will utilise natural stone steps along key sections of the slope.	€49,500	€55,000
Totals		€99,000	€110,000

It is expected that an announcement will be made in Q1 2024 on our pending Measure 1, Measure 2 and Measure 3 applications.

Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme- Works Update

Mooncoin Rose Walk

The Mooncoin Rose Walk was officially opened by the Cathaoirleach of Kilkenny County Council, Cllr. Michael Doyle on Friday the 1st December. The local community turned out in force to mark the occasion. The trail was blessed by Fr. Martin Tobin, followed by an address from the Cathaoirleach and the Chair of the Piltown Municipal District, Cllr. Ger Frisby. Mooncoin Tidy Town's held a competition within the local national school for the naming of the walk, the winning name, "Mooncoin Rose Walk", was put forward by 6th class student Muireann Keane. The Cathaoirleach presented a recognition certificate to Muireann on the day much to delight of Muireann's schools friends.



This trail is 5km in length and forms a loop walk through the townlands of Polerone and Doornane. Interpretative signage is provided along the trail, telling the history of the song "The Rose of Mooncoin," and the famous Mooncoin hurling families who lived along the route.

Jenkinstown Woods

Funding was secured under Measure 2 of the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) to undertake trail rehabilitation works and to improve accessibility in Jenkinstown Woods. The procurement of a contractor, utilising the Collite Procurement Framework is nearing completion and works are expected to commence early in the new year. The realisation of this project will see an investment of c.€230,000 into this amenity and will add significant value to the existing offering.

Kilkenny Countryside Park

We are delighted to advise that Kilkenny Countryside Park will be officially opened by Minister Heather Humpreys T.D. for the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD), in the presence of the Cathaoirleach of Kilkenny County Council, Cllr. Michael Doyle on Friday the 15th December at 2.30 p.m. This project sees the development of a new Countryside Park on the site of the closed municipal landfill at Dunmore which occupies an area of circa. 17 acres.



The Park will offer a number of themed walking and running trails, a ball wall, a dedicated dog friendly zone, a viewing platform, seating areas, play and exercise equipment, novel relaxation areas all set within a biodiversity rich environment.



The construction phase of this project commenced last February and monies to deliver same were secured under a number of different funding streams including DRCD, Measure 3 of the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS), the DRCD Community Recognition Fund, Sports Capital and Equipment Programme and the Council's own funds.

Lacken Boardwalk Replacement Scheme

Site investigation works for the replacement of the Lacken Boardwalk have now concluded and the detail design and contract documents are nearing completion. It is expected the tender will be advertised in January and that works will commence by the end of Q1 2024. The project will see the replacement of the existing 1.2m wide timber boardwalk with a 3.0m wide (minimum) boardwalk made entirely from recycled

composite materials. Funding under Measure 3 of the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) in the amount of €500,000 has been secured and the overall estimated cost of the project is c€750,000.

Woodstock Gardens & Arboretum

The promotion and marketing of the Woodstock Estate continues to be very active across key social media platforms, with regular posts including video content encouraging users to the Woodstock website to learn more about and visit the gardens.

Interaction and feedback from the public has been extremely positive in terms of the visitors experience and included below is a flavour of some of the reviews posted over recent months.

★★★★★ 3 weeks ago **NEW**

First visit, did the waterfall loop walk and then had a stroll around the gardens. Lovely, picturesque gardens with some beautiful tree specimens. Unfortunately tea rooms not open at this time of the year. Worth a drive out from Kilkenny



★★★★★ 2 months ago

Our favourite woodland. Dog friendly but must be on lead. Lovely kids play area. Wheelchair accessible facilities and age friendly parking available also . 5euro charge on exiting car park payable by cash or card.

★★★★★ 2 months ago

Absolutely stunning place. Brilliant for all ages. Kid friendly. Lovely little cafe. 5 euro entry for cars. A lovely playground for kids. The walkway through the gardens is just Absolutely beautiful. We'll worth a visit. Even coming through the little town to get to the gardens was a very pretty village. Definitely recommend

★★★★★ 2 months ago

Great spot for a day with the family or just walking the dog.. loads of walk ways and off course great place for a picnic. There's a great play area for children, loos, plenty of space to just walk and look and be calm. Amazing views. Coffee shop here aswell 😊. In summer ☀️ they hold concerts here. Well worth a trip.

★★★★★ 9 months ago

Beautiful dog friendly walk with multiple paths of different lengths. Family friendly. Great history here too which can be read about as you walk the grounds.
Worth the 5 euro car park charge.. plenty of parking too

Kilkenny Live also reported earlier this month that “Woodstock House and Gardens has been listed as one of the country's top ten most picturesque and lesser-known destinations in a new study commissioned by Polestar”.

★★★★★ 2 months ago

Beautiful gardens, lovely walks and a great tea room with nice friendly staff and great cakes. Great area for picnic with sun/rain sails. Only 5 euro for parking. Delightful area, highly recommend.

PLANNING

Development Management

Planning Summary	Total as at end of November	
	2022	2023
Planning Applications Received	768	801
Planning Applications Granted	603	562
Planning Applications Refused	93	109
Complaints Received	87	84
Warning Letters Issued	76	83
Enforcements Notices Issued	40	38
Cases Closed	82	119

FORWARD PLANNING

Masterplans:

Abbey Quarter

A variation to the Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 (CDP) is required to incorporate the The Abbey Quarter Masterplan User Guide into the CDP. Work will commence on this in Q1 2024. The Variation will require approval by the Elected Members. The publication can be accessed at:

<https://www.kilkennycoco.ie/eng/services/planning/development-plans/abbey-quarter-brewery-site/review-of-abbey-quarter-masterplan-2023/>

St. Canice's Campus

A draft Masterplan has been completed and the necessary environmental reports are currently being prepared. It is anticipated that the draft Masterplan and environmental documents will be presented to the Kilkenny City Municipal District Members in early 2024, before being placed on public display for a round of public consultation. The environmental documents are currently being finalised to allow publication.

Ballyragget/Paulstown/Kilmacow

Masterplans are being prepared for the settlements of Ballyragget, Paulstown and Kilmacow. Three public meetings, one for each town, have taken place. The feedback / inputs from these meetings have been incorporated into the draft Masterplans. The Planning Authority received draft Masterplans for each settlement and have reverted back to the Consultants with feedback along with the feedback received from Area Engineers, Community and Housing Sections. All feedback is currently being reviewed by Turleys and the draft Masterplans are being currently amended. It is anticipated that the draft

masterplan for Ballyragget and Paulstown will be presented to Elected Members at the January Castlecomer MD meeting and the draft masterplan for Kilmacow will be presented at the February Piltown MD meeting prior to them being placed on public display for a 4 week period. Walk in public meetings will also be scheduled for each settlement during the public display period.

Local Area Plan

Tenders have been advertised for the preparation of a new Local Area Plan for Ferrybank/Belview. Closing date for applications is the 22nd January. Tenders are seeking a multi-disciplinary team to prepare the plan. It is expected that Consultants will be appointed in Q1 2024 with a new plan in place by Q1 2025.

The tender documents provides for issues paper and public consultation along with the preparation of environmental reports and publication of the draft plan, the statutory public consultation and the final document for approval by the Council.

Taking in Charge

- The Final taking in charge of Steps at Talbotts Inch will be put before the December Council meeting. No submissions were received.
- Greenoaks/The Fairways - A schedule of works has been drawn up by the Ferrybank Area office. These works have now to be agreed with the Developer.
- RathUllord Phase 1 & 2 – works are ongoing and are nearing completion but it's unlikely the TIC will take place in 2023.

E-Planning

Since the introduction of e-planning, approximately 68.5% of all planning applications received have been through the e-planning portal. Users must register on the e-planning portal at: <https://planning.localgov.ie/en/local-government-ireland-planning-system>, where after they can then make a planning application, submit documentation online with the application and submit further information later if required. The status of applications can be viewed quickly and easily. Paper applications are still accepted and the same timelines apply to both an online application and a paper application.

Active Land Management

There are now 40 sites on the Derelict Sites Register. A site on Rose Inn Street in Kilkenny

was added to the Register during December. In addition, a site in Freshford was served notice of intent to be added to the Register. All sites subject to the Derelict Sites Levy will be served with payment demands in Q1 2024. The CPO process of 3 derelict sites (*in Callan, Thomastown and Mooncoin*) has now commenced.

A Final Map of lands in scope for the new Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT) was published on 1st December 2023. Variation 1 to the Development Plan was adopted at the November Council meeting, comprising two minor changes to zoning in the City, to ensure appropriate application of the tax. A new draft RZLT map will be published by 1st February 2024, and submissions will be invited at that point.

A site on the Castlecomer Road, adjacent to the Newpark Hotel was cancelled from the Vacant Sites Register in November following activation, leaving 23 Vacant Sites on the Vacant Sites Register. The number of cancelled entries due to site activation or improvement is 24. The Vacant Site Levy will be replaced by the Residential Zoned Land Tax from 2025, but any outstanding levies will remain due to the Council.

Conservation

The Conservation Office manages all protected structures in Kilkenny County and City. These structures are recognised for their Architectural, Historical, Archaeological, Artistic, Cultural, Scientific, Technical, Social special interest.

Conservation Grants 2024 as follows were launched in November, they include:

Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS) 2024

The aim of the Built Heritage Invest Scheme is to invest in a significant number of small-scale, labour-intensive conservation projects throughout the County and to support the employment of conservation professionals, craftspeople and tradespersons in the repair of the historic built environment. Kilkenny’s grant allocation is €156,800.

Historic Structures Fund (HSF) 2024

Funding for the Historic Structures Fund (HSF) is being made available as part of *Project Ireland 2040*. The primary focus of the Historic Structures Fund will be on conservation and enhancement of historic structures and buildings for the broader benefit of communities and the public.

Stream 1 will offer grants from €15,000 up to €50,000.

Stream 2 will offer grants from €50,000 up to €200,000.

Vernacular Structures Stream – In the context of *A Living Tradition: A Strategy to Enhance the Understanding, Minding and Handing on of Our Built Vernacular Heritage* (2021), the stream for vernacular structures is being retained for 2024, with funding of €150,000.

The purpose of this stream is to support conservation repairs and small capital works to vernacular structures that are not listed in Local Authority Records of Protected Structures or otherwise legally protected. Such structures may be located within an Architectural Conservation Area. All Local Authorities can apply for funding for specific projects of between €5,000 and €10,000 for eligible projects.

The closing date for the BHIS and HSF is 19th January 2024. More information may be found at <https://kilkennycoco.ie/eng/services/planning/conservation/conservation-grants/>

Heritage Stewardship Programme 2023: The recording of two 16th century buildings on Parliament Street, Kilkenny City is now complete. Final reports will be issued shortly.

Kilkenny’s Built Heritage Stocktake 2023: The collaboration between the Conservation Officer and the Department of Housing, Heritage and Local Government to undertake a stocktake of protected structures and National Inventory of Architectural Heritage structures in Graigueenamanagh and Castlecomer is now complete. Final findings are currently being compiled.

Building Control

Valid commencement notices submitted:	288
for the first 11 months of 2023.	
November 2023.....	288
November 2022.....	318
November 2021.....	421
November 2020.....	310

65 Disability Access Applications were received during the first 11 months of this year.	
November 2023.....	65
November 2022.....	68
November 2021.....	50
November 2020.....	78

International Protection

As per the Planning and Development (*Exempted Development*) (No. 4) Regulations 2023, buildings for temporary use on behalf of the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth to accommodate persons seeking international protection (IP) are exempted development. The following premises have been notified to the Council in accordance with the regulations: Kilkenny Inn, Vicar Street, Kilkenny; MacGabhinns Hostel, Vicar Street, Kilkenny; Kilkenny Hostel, Parliament Street, Kilkenny; Riverview House, Dublin Road, Kilkenny. Any properties used to accommodate IPs are still subject to Fire and Building Control Regulations.

Wind Energy Strategy

Sections 11.4 and 11.5.1 and the Wind Energy Map (i.e. Figure 11.4) of the City & County Development Plan 2021 - 2027 (CDP) remain suspended, pending the outcome of the Draft Ministerial Direction on the matter. The Chief Executive is still considering how best to respond to the request by the Elected Members at the October Plenary Meeting to bring forward a variation to the CDP on the Wind Energy Strategy. Other developments that further complicate the matter include:

- The Wind Energy Development Guidelines published in June 2017 and the Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines of December 2019 have both been redacted. The Wind Energy Development Guidelines (2006) are now the relevant policy guidance on wind turbine developments; and
- The National Planning Framework (NPF) is currently under review with timeline for completion of early 2024. Following completion of the NPF Review, and as part of the Government's Climate Action Plan, Regional Assemblies will be required to publish and implement Regional Renewable Electricity Strategies, to include onshore wind energy targets in line with the Renewable Electricity Spatial Policy Framework. Regional Assemblies as part of this exercise will be required to identify areas suitable for renewable electricity deployment at regional and county level. Government is to publish a White Paper on Renewable Energy shortly to provide guidance to Regional Assemblies on the process.

It is the view of the Chief Executive, that we should await the outcome of the above processes

before progressing any proposed variation on Wind Energy in the CDP.

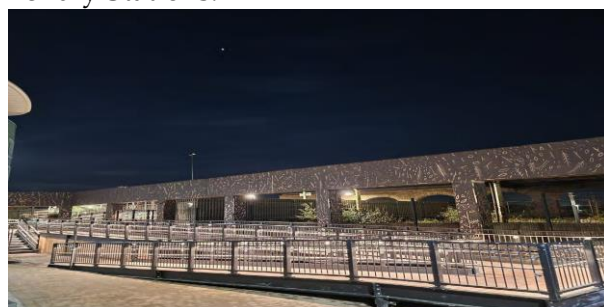
COMMUNITY & CULTURE

AGE FRIENDLY AWARDS

At the recent National Age Friendly Awards, Kilkenny won the 'Transport Category' for Ireland's First Age Friendly Train Station.

The aim of the initiative was to deliver MacDonagh Station as the first Age Friendly Train Station in Ireland. To deliver the initiative a Walkability Study of the station including road and bridge access areas took place. A working group was established and agreed an action plan based on the findings of the Walkability Study. A key feature of this development was the opening of a new walkway which links the station with the adjacent MacDonagh Junction Shopping Centre, significantly reducing the walking distance from the train to shops, Local Government Services and medical facilities.

MacDonagh Train Station in Kilkenny City underwent the World Health Organisations four stage process to be recognised as Age Friendly. Older people's confidence in public transport is greatly enhanced by safety features implemented in this project such as good lighting, pedestrian crossings, set down areas, and availability of trained staff to help as required. The Strategic Oversight Committee for this Age Friendly project consisted of Kilkenny County Council, Age Friendly Ireland, Kilkenny Chamber, Iarnród Éireann, the National Transport Authority, the Department of Transport, Kilkenny's Older Persons Council and MacDonagh Shopping Centre. On 21st November, 2022 Minister Malcolm Noonan, Minister of State for Heritage and Electoral Reform and Age Friendly Ireland acknowledged and awarded a Charter to MacDonagh Train Station as the first Age Friendly Station in the country. It is now recognised by the World Health Organisation (WHO) internationally as model of good practice for Age Friendly Stations.





CLÁR 2023

Minister Heather Humphreys, T.D., has officially introduced a new €5 million Fund designed to support more than 100 Sports Clubs in rural areas. This initiative is a crucial component of the CLÁR (*Ceantair Laga Ard-Riachtanais*) programme funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development and aligns with the Government's ambitious five-year policy for rural Ireland, known as "Our Rural Future".

CLÁR is a targeted investment programme for rural areas that aims to provide funding for small infrastructural projects in designated rural areas including parts of rural Kilkenny.

This funding is specifically directed at supporting clubs in rural communities and the vast majority of successful projects are from local GAA Clubs. The GAA is at the heart of rural parishes across

the country, instilling a strong sense of pride of place, community and belonging in young and old.

The total grant aid for County Kilkenny under the CLÁR programme for 2023 amounts to €174,916.

The approved projects in County Kilkenny include:

- Tullogher Rosbercon GAA Club €50,000
- Muckalee Football Club..... €50,000
- Kilmoganny GAA Club €30,150
- St. Martin's GAA Club, Coon €44,766

HERITAGE

Completions of Heritage Council County Heritage Plan Projects

Two projects relating to sacred sites in Kilkenny have been completed under the 2023 Heritage Council County Heritage Plan Grant. Phase one of the Kilkenny Holy Wells Survey was carried out by Shanarc Archaeology. It surveyed 116 holy wells in the County, ground-truthing historical and archaeological information regarding existing holy wells and discovering the location of additional holy wells through public engagement in the process. These Holy Wells will be mapped on the Kilkenny County Council GIS system to inform future planning.

A methodology for surveying mass paths in County Kilkenny, *Mass Paths in Memory*, was developed and piloted in two parishes by Pat Reid, Programme Manager of the Heritage Council's Heritagemaps.ie. This pioneering methodology will be used to survey mass paths in County Kilkenny in 2024 and can also be adapted and applied to other counties across the country.

Both of these studies will be published on the Kilkenny Heritage website in 2024.

The History Show on KCLR - Full Series Now Available On-line

The History Show on KCLR has come to an end after another successful series. Presented and produced by John Moynihan, this series showcased Heritage projects across the County and highlighted creative collaborations between people and communities, artists/ archaeologists/ historians/ archivists etc. The series was funded through the Creative Ireland Programme at the Kilkenny County Council Heritage Office which is supported by the Department of Tourism,

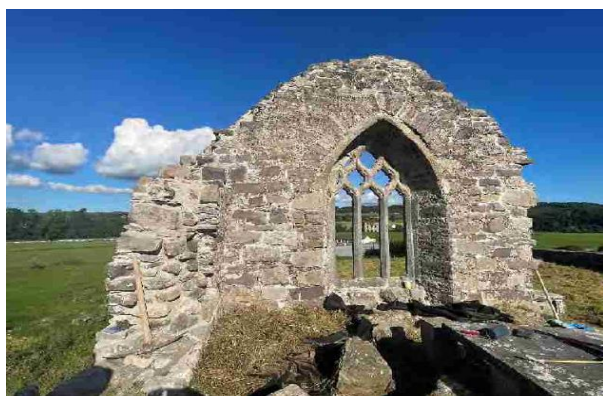
Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht and Sport and Media. You can listen back to the full series on: <https://kclr96fm.com/the-history-show/>

Community Monuments Fund

The Heritage Office has availed of funding for six projects carried out under the Community Monuments Fund 2023. The projects awarded under Stream 1 funding (i.e. *Capital Conservation Works*) were: Grangefertagh Medieval Church and Graveyard; Thomple Medieval Church and Graveyard; Infirmary Wall at Duiske Abbey and works on the west wall of the Augustinian Priory of St John the Evangelist, Kilkenny City. The projects awarded under Stream 2 funding (i.e. *Conservation Management Report*) are Tubbrid Medieval Church and Graveyard and Rathpatrick Medieval Church and Graveyard. This funding was administered by the Heritage Office of Kilkenny County Council in partnership with the Environment Section of Kilkenny County Council.

The Community Monuments Fund is open for applications for 2024. This grant scheme is for the conservation, maintenance, protection and promotion of archaeological monuments. Closing date for applications to Kilkenny County Council is Thursday 1st February 2024. Applications and queries to heritage@kilkennycoco.ie. To learn more and to download the application forms and handbook visit

<https://kilkennyheritage.ie/2023/12/community-monuments-fund-2024/>



Conservation works at Thomple Church, funded under the CMF, 2023

Heritage Stewardship Fund and Organisation Support Fund is now open for applications.

The Heritage Council Heritage Stewardship Fund and Organisation Support Fund is now open for applications. The Stewardship Fund supports staff in local authorities, state agencies and third-level institutions responsible for heritage programmes. For more information about the scheme visit.

<https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/funding/heritage-stewardship-scheme>

The Organisation Support Fund supports not-for-profit, non-governmental organisations working in the heritage sector in Ireland by providing funding towards their core costs. For more information in relation to the Organisation Support fund, please visit

https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/funding/heritage_orgs-fund

Kilkenny's Decade of Centenaries

1912-23/2012-23 Book Launch

The Decade of Centenaries programme has come to an end at Kilkenny County Council after another successful year of projects, events and initiatives ranging from walking tours, to films, theatre, talks, workshops and oral history funded under the Community Strand of the Decade of Centenaries Programme.

To mark the end of the Decade, the Heritage Office has produced a booklet to document all of the initiatives supported by Kilkenny County Council under this programme over the past Decade. This will be launched in Set Theatre on Friday, 15th December, 2023 at 11am-1pm.

ARTS

Waste Not Want Not Workshop

Waste Not Want Not Workshop is a climate action community project which commenced on Thursday 9th November and is running over 5 weeks. Participants are releasing their inner creative and turning worn-out denim into unique creations such as aprons, bags and cushion covers as well as learning the beautiful art of Sashiko & Boro stitching techniques. This project is in partnership with Kilkenny Arts Office and St Vincent's de Paul Charity Shop Kilkenny, working together to utilise their waste streams and encouraging the public to reuse and to buy second hand.





ArtEd

The Artists and schools have been working together since 6th November on ArtEd and are due to finish up on the 12th December. The four Artists and schools chosen to take part in the project are:

- Visual artist Kiri Tulloch with Scoil Mhuire N.S Mooncoin 2nd class
- Musician Mark Colbert with Gaelscoil Osrai 6th class
- Writer Tara Heavey with St. Mary's Thomastown 4th class
- Musician /Songwriter Kairen Waloch Presentation Castlecomer 5th/6th

Artist in Residence - Youth Art

Over the past eight weeks, 14 young people from Foróige and Ossory Youth have been working with artist Threadstories (aka Carrie Lynam) and have been exploring various forms of self-portraiture. They have created numerous individual self-portraits using a variety of materials and techniques, culminating in a final piece of personal work taking the form of a mask. A total of 11 participants were photographed, creating a striking self-portrait wearing their masks.

These images were then printed and made into postcards for each participant. As part of the residency they have also been working with video artist Freddie Greenall to document the project and their process. The participants have worked closely with Freddie, giving direction to ensure the video reflects their experience of the project. To end the project both groups came together to celebrate their work, review the first draft of the video, to reflect on the project and share some well-deserved pizza.

The artist has been blogging about the project at <https://kilkennyartsoffice.ie/youth-arts-residency-blog-whats-in-a-face/>



Career Development for Emerging Musicians

Kilkenny Arts Office organised an information session for Emerging Musicians on Career Development on Tuesday 5th December from 5:00 to 8:00pm at Cleere's Bar, Kilkenny. Matthew Nolan, a Musician, Music Curator and Academic will offer practical advice and resources for those interested in developing their career pathway. The topics covered include; Working and Performing, Career Development, Marketing, Legal and Money and Wellbeing.

Creative Ireland

The Kilkenny Creative Ireland fund supported meaningful collaborations between people, groups, organisations, communities and artists, with 111 artists being employed. The partnership strengthened social inclusion and were directly linked to Kilkenny County Council's Creative Kilkenny's key strategic priorities. There was €142,653 in funding allocated towards 24 projects throughout Kilkenny. Bridging the barriers to participation by working collaboratively with key stakeholders, 27,137 people both young and old participated in creative activities. The projects funded promoted; inclusion, individuals, communities, culture, wellbeing and climate action awareness.

Projects included, Radio Shows promoting and raising awareness on themes such as arts and heritage. Digitising our history captured the Mount Juliet Memories accessible on Kilkenny Libraries website. Bridging the barriers to participation by working collaboratively with key stakeholders, projects such as Bookville and the Reader in Residence hosted workshops in schools and libraries.

The fund enabled marginalised groups such as the Travelling community, Single parents and older persons to gain access to creative projects that promoted health, wellbeing and diversity. Programmes raised awareness for climate change such as the Parks Biodiversity Mural, Biodiversity Mural Wall in Primary schools, Leave the Long Grass Grow and Bee Part of It. Celebration of our rich heritage and culture of our music, art and drama with Taken for a Ride, The Countess, Rothe House Miscellany, Alternative Kilkenny Arts Festival, Moving Up & Transition Year Programme, Jazz at Hole in Wall and Feile Lachtain 2023.

Healthy Kilkenny

Enhancing Mental Wellbeing Takes Centre Stage in Kilkenny GAA Clubs

Initiated by Kilkenny GAA Health & Wellbeing Committee in collaboration with Mental Health Ireland, HSE Connecting for Life (*South East Community Healthcare*) and Healthy Kilkenny, new signage to highlight both means of minding your mental health and supports available have been developed. The signage was launched at UPMC Nolan Park at the Kilkenny GAA County Board meeting on the 20th of November, 2023.

Cathaoirleach Cllr Michael Doyle, addressed the GAA clubs emphasising the significance of prioritising mental health. He noted, "This signage will help communities increase awareness around how you, yourself can support your own wellbeing and how you can access supports for yourself or others." Echoing these sentiments, Mayor of Kilkenny Municipal District, Cllr. Joe Malone, underlined the pivotal role of GAA clubs as the heart and soul of communities. Cllr Malone also emphasised that these signs are not just for players but for the entire community, including volunteers, coaches, spectators, and visitors.

Speaking of the initiative, Carmel Kenny of Kilkenny GAA Health & Wellbeing Committee explained how the initiative developed *'With the support of the HSE National Lottery Funding we collaborated with Mental Health Ireland, HSE Connecting for Life and Healthy Kilkenny. The expertise of each agency helped to develop and refine the signage, ensuring the messaging is clear with key support services for mental health and wellbeing'*

Tracy Nugent, HSE Lead for Connecting for Life Suicide Prevention in the South East, discussed

the importance of the HSE funded services highlighted on the signs, emphasising their availability 24/7. Tracy Nugent also highlighted the availability of safeTALK training (*Suicide Alertness for Everyone*), delivered by the HSE Regional Suicide Resource Office. This training is a key component of the Healthy Clubs initiative in the GAA.

Gina Delaney of Mental Health Ireland delved into the specific themes on the signage, outlining its details regarding the "Five Ways to Wellbeing" campaign. She explained that these are simple actions to practice each day to maintain or improve mental health. Having these signs in GAA Clubs across the County will serve as a visible reminder to all and positively impact community wellbeing.



L-R Carmel Kenny, Kilkenny GAA Health and Wellbeing; Janette Boran, Healthy County Coordinator Kilkenny County Council, Tracy Nugent, Regional South East Suicide Resource Office, HSE; Cllr. Joe Malone, Mayor of Kilkenny Municipal District; Cllr Michael Doyle, Cathaoirleach, Kilkenny County Council; Paddy Deegan, Kilkenny GAA; Gina Delaney, Mental Health Ireland

LEO

Summary of 2023 Awards to Businesses

- €375,342 in direct financial assistance was approved to 19 manufacturing /export service businesses located throughout the County. This includes €107,759 in Business Expansion Grant assistance, €213,190 in Priming assistance and €54,393 awarded in feasibility study grant assistance.
- 11 Technical Assistance for Micro Exporter grants were awarded to support businesses in exploring new export market opportunities.
- 12 Businesses have commenced LEAN one to one consultancy programmes to investigate possible resource efficiencies and process improvements their businesses.

- 4 Businesses have availed of the Digital Start programme to prepare and implement a plan for the adoption of digital tools and techniques across the enterprise.
- 39 businesses have been approved a Trading Online Vouchers to support the enhancement of their online trading capacity.
- 2 Intellectual Property (IP) Start Grants have been approved to support a client company in obtaining expert IP advisory and support services in relation to Trademarks.
- 1 Agile Digital Process Innovation Grant was awarded in the amount of €138,782.
- 9 Green for Business supports have been awarded. This scheme supports businesses to become greener and more environmentally friendly.
- 10 applicants have been supported to make loan applications to the Micro Finance Ireland loan fund.
- 953 people participated on focused small business training, including 134 people participating on the Starting Your Business programme.
- 461 businesses have availed of specialised business specific mentoring on a variety of topics including finance, marketing, social media marketing and HR.

Careers Kilkenny

The 2024 Careers Kilkenny event will take place on Saturday, February 3rd 2024 from 10am to 2pm in St. Canice's Cathedral, Kilkenny. #careerskilkenny will showcase the volume and variety of high-quality jobs on offer in Kilkenny City and County both now and in the future, and highlight the advantages that Kilkenny offers as a location to live and work.

The event will offer attendees a chance to engage directly with representatives from top businesses in Kilkenny who will be on hand to answer queries about the roles and opportunities on offer. Local Enterprise Office Mentors will also be in attendance to provide useful tips on creating an effective CV, preparing for interviews and progressing your career.

Design Kilkenny 2023 - Global Ambition

Following on from the success of Design Kilkenny 2022, Kilkenny County Council held a second Irish Design Week event on Friday, 17th November. The conference which took place at the Parade Tower at Kilkenny Castle examined the global impact and continuing influence of the

Kilkenny Design Workshops on business, academia and entrepreneurship.



Night Time Economy

Since his appointment in October, the Night Time Economy (NTE) Advisor, Conor Sweeney, has been meeting with a number of stakeholders within Kilkenny City.

Meetings have also taken place with the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media and Night Time Economy advisors from other pilot areas. The first stakeholder forum has been organised and will take place in the County Council Chambers on Monday 11th December, to progress the development of an Action Plan for the night time economy in the City.

Broadband

In September 2023 Rita McGarvey took up the role of Broadband Officer within the Local Enterprise Office (LEO). This post is part funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD), and the key aspects of the role are to develop a Digital Strategy for County Kilkenny and to work with the broadband connection points (BCP'S) and remote working hubs across the County, to provide support and develop an Action Plan for the next 12 - 18 months.

During recent months the Broadband Officer met with the broadband connection points (BCP's) and remote working hubs across the County.

TOURISM

Kilkenny County Council Tourism Development Strategy

Kilkenny County Councils Strategy has now being renewed and will align with the Failte Ireland Destination Experience Development

Plan (DEDP) for Kilkenny. The Council's Plan will be overseen and implemented through SPC1 with regular updates and presentations on progress.

The Plan, once adopted will form the basis of annual cross departmental action plans for the development of the tourism offering in the County for the coming years. The plan focuses on 1. attracting visitors to Kilkenny, 2. encouraging visitors to stay longer in Kilkenny, 3. allowing the visitor to easily navigate the County and 4. maintaining our partnership approach to all development of the sector going forward.



Kilkenny Tourism - Marketing

Closely aligned and complementary to the national campaign is Kilkenny Tourism's local "Christmas in Kilkenny" campaign.

The campaign continues to keep Kilkenny to the forefront of the domestic visitors' mind for Kilkenny to be top of the visitors "must see" destinations for great festive experiences and world class events.

CAMPAIGN VISUALS

CHRISTMAS IN KILKENNY



The shopping in Kilkenny campaign was very successful during Q3 and attracted over 17,000 additional subscribers to the visit Kilkenny newsletter. Winners of the prize have been announced just in time for Christmas shopping breaks to Kilkenny.



Faillte Ireland have confirmed additional support to Kilkenny County Council in November to support the delivery of specific marketing initiatives to drive demand to the cultural and heritage attractions of Kilkenny in the off-peak season, in line with Failte Ireland's operational and industry recovery plans 2023 including:

- A radio advertising campaign to focus on the promotion of cultural and heritage attractions
- Creation of a promotional video of cultural and heritage attractions
- Sponsored article (digital print) to promote visitor attractions in Kilkenny in the off-season

Festivals & Events

Kilkenny County Council continues to support our year-round calendar of events. Work is now complete on a review of the Grant Scheme and applications will be accepted from 1st December this year for 2024 events. The closing date for receipt of applications is 31st January, 2024. KCC's Festivals Kit is also available to event organisers who might want to consider outdoor events as part of their programme. Budget has been set aside to support organisers to deliver this type of event.

HOUSING

HOMELESS SERVICES SUMMARY NOVEMBER 2023

Homeless Presentations	49
Homeless Assessment Outcomes	
Prevention & Interventions	42
Emergency Service	5
Not Eligible / Did not avail of service	2
HAP Place Finder Service	
No of Homeless HAP tenancies @ 1 st day of month	122
No of Homeless HAP tenancies created during month	1
No of Homeless HAP tenancies in place @ last day of month	123
Number of Homeless HAP tenancy breakdowns	
Other Social Housing Tenancies supported / created during month	6
Households in Temporary Emergency Supported Accommodation @ November 30th	37
Households in Temporary Emergency B&B accommodation	6
Households in Temporary Emergency B&B Accommodation that are families	5
Households (singles/couples) in Transition Emergency Accommodation (Own Front Door)	30
Households (Families) in Transition Emergency Accommodation (OFD)	12

Homeless Prevention Measures

The Government have put in place a number of measures to prevent homelessness arising from the reactivation of notices of termination of tenancies in June 2023.

We are currently providing advice and directing Tenants to the appropriate services required to prevent homelessness. Where a household is in receipt of a valid notice to quit and requires assistance in establishing what options are available to them to avoid potential homelessness they are advised to contact the Housing Office at its dedicated email address NTQEnquiries@kilkennycoco.ie. Further details are available on www.kilkennycoco.ie.

Any tenants who may have received a notice of termination or a landlord who has issued a notice of termination to their tenants or who may wish to in the coming months should direct any queries to the dedicated email provided and all queries will be responded to in a timely manner.

SOCIAL HOUSING ASSESSMENT

SOCIAL HOUSING SUPPORT APPLICATION SUMMARY NOVEMBER 2023

Number awaiting Social Housing Support at November 30 th (<i>Gross Need</i>)	1,562
Number awaiting Social Housing Support at November 30 th (<i>Net Need</i>)	743
No. of Social Housing Applications received in November	123
No. of applications incomplete / awaiting further information/clarification	61
No. of applications validated and ready for assessment during the month	49
No. of applications assessed during November	24
No. of applications awaiting assessment as @ November 30 th	88

HAP Summary Year to date 2023

Total active HAP tenancies	600
New HAP tenancies set up	60
HAP allocated Social Housing	76
Closed HAP tenancies	150
HAP Rent Reviews	327
Other tenancy amendments	637
HAP calls received	3,200

RENT-A-ROOM SCHEME

We have recently received a Circular from the Department regarding extending Rent-a-Room scheme to local authority tenancies.

The broad outline of how the Scheme will to operate is as follows:

- The local authority tenant advertises an available room - gov.ie/room for a student provides information to those wishing to rent a room to students in full time education, along with information for students.
- Once the tenant and the student are happy to proceed, they apply to the local authority for consent for the duration of the academic year.
- The local authority may decide to carry out a Garda check in respect of the student.
- The local authority has discretion to approve or refuse the application.
- Grounds for non-approval include, but are not limited to:
 - Rent arrears without a payment plan;
 - Overcrowding;
 - Anti-social behaviour or on good estate management grounds;
 - The property is unsuitable on other grounds e.g. size, condition, access, facilities, etc.
- Following an approved application, the tenant may let the relevant room or rooms under licence for the duration of the student's academic year.
- The tenants may charge and receive a rent from the student – such rental income will be considered reckonable income under the local authority's Differential Rent Scheme, with rent charged by the local authority according to that scheme.
- The student will not be included on the tenant's rent account, that is any income generated by the student renting a room will not be assessable for differential rent purposes.
- All other matters, including contributions to utilities and energy costs, security deposits, disputes and mediation between the tenant and licensee, etc. are matters solely for the residing tenant. The local authority has no role in this regard.
- Reporting of income for the purposes of availing of relevant tax relief, medical card and social protection disregards, when available, are matters solely for the residing tenant.
- The local authority may request the tenant to revoke the licence on grounds of anti-social behaviour, overcrowding, etc.
- The tenant is ultimately responsible for any breach of the tenancy agreement by any member of their household, and if necessary the local authority may issue a tenancy warning for any such breach.
- At the end of the academic year, the student must vacate the property. Should the tenant and student wish to continue the arrangement into the next academic year, consent of the local authority is required.

TENANCY MANAGEMENT

The Tenancy Management Team deal with allocations, maintenance and anti-social behaviour complaints in relation to our tenants. Below is a summary of activity in November and to date this year:

▪ LA/RAS/Leasing allocations in October (offers made):	34
▪ LA/RAS/Leasing allocations to October (offers made):	145
▪ Tenant Liaison Officer cases in October:	28
▪ Maintenance Calls for November:	814
▪ Maintenance Calls year to date	6,293

The Tenancy Management Section has commenced legal proceedings in respect of tenancies where repossession orders have been sought. Where anti-social behaviour is ongoing, tenancy notifications and warning notices continue to be served and monitored. Where tenants engage in anti-social behaviour relating to offences under the Misuse of Drugs Act or violence and intimidation resulting in criminal charges the local authority will take enforcement action to terminate the tenancy and alternative social housing supports will not be provided.

PRIVATE HOUSE GRANTS

The 2023 housing grants allocation has been received from the Department of Housing, in the amount of €1,991,076, comprised of €1,592,861 (80%) grant and €398,215 (20%) KCC contribution.

This allocation exceeds the amount included in the budget for 2023 and reflects the Departments confidence in the Grants Section to meet and exceed its targets for 2023. The funding approval also confirms that the local authority cannot exceed the maximum grant amounts under legislation and that these maximum amounts have not been revised.

Grants Approved & Committed up to 30 th November 2023		
Scheme	No.	Amount
HGD - Housing Adaptation Grant	179	€1,914,680
MAG - Mobility Aid Grant	17	€65,784
HOP - Housing Aid for Older Persons	230	€1,141,100
Total	426	€3,121,564

Grants Paid out up to 30 th November 2023		
Scheme	No.	Amount
HGD - Housing Adaptation Grant	72	€796,968
MAG - Mobility Aid Grant	10	€40,714
HOP - Housing Aid for Older Persons	155	€799,123
Total	237	€1,636,806

HOUSING LOANS

Housing Loan Activity 1 st January - 30 th November, 2023					
Loan Type	Received	Approved	Amount Approved	No. Paid	Amount Paid
Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan	0	0	€0	1	€62,500
Local Authority Home Loan	43	12	€1,539,240	9	€1,013,900
Caravan Loan	2	2	€80,000	2	€80,000
Total	45	14	€1,619,240	12	€1,156,400

VOIDS

At the end of November 2023 there were **51 vacant units** of local authority accommodation awaiting refurbishment or remediation works.

Under the 2023 Voids Maintenance Programme, Kilkenny County Council have recently received Department funding in the amount of €528,000 for renovations to 48 units.

Works are ongoing on this voids maintenance programme and its envisaged that a minimum of 75 units will be complete under this programme during 2023.

HOUSING CAPITAL NOVEMBER 2023

Vacant Homes

The Vacant Properties Refurbishment Grant, Croí Cónaithe is one of the measures in order to address vacancy and efficient use of existing stock in Housing for All. The grant is aimed at bringing vacant and derelict properties back into residential use. The scheme was originally for people who were refurbishing vacant properties for use as their principal private residence. The Government has recently announced that as of 1st May 2023, there will be a number of changes to this scheme including that the scheme will be expanded to property owners who wish to refurbish their vacant property for rental purposes. The detail and guidance regarding the modified scheme have not yet been issued by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

There has been a substantial increase in the number of calls to the Housing Department regarding this scheme and a register of all inquiries to the Council will be kept for follow up when further details of the revised scheme are available.

All queries in relation to this grant should be submitted by email to Vacanthomes@Kilkennycoco.ie and will be responded to in a timely manner.

Vacant Homes Refurbishment Grant as at November 30 th 2023	
No of Applications Submitted to date	113
No of Approvals / Approvals in Principle to date	53
Grant Drawdown to date	3
No of Queries during the month of November	54

Affordable Homes:

The Affordable Housing Team have been working in preparation for the roll out of the first Affordable Purchase Scheme by Kilkenny County Council. It is expected that the advertisement of this first scheme in Kilkenny City will commence in the coming weeks with the actual application process for this scheme opening in Q1 2024. Application will be via an online portal.

Under the Local Authority Affordable Purchase Scheme, Kilkenny County Council will make homes available at a reduced price for eligible applicants who are seeking to purchase a newly built home but need additional funds to bridge the gap between their mortgage and deposit to cover the full price of the home. In return, Kilkenny County Council will take a percentage Equity Share in the Affordable Home. Purchasers will enter into an Affordable Dwelling Purchase Agreement with Kilkenny County Council. The purchaser can redeem or 'buy out' this Equity Share at a time of their choosing but there is no obligation to do so. If the purchaser chooses not to redeem the Equity Share while living in the home, the Council can do so when the property is sold, transferred or after the death of the owner.

Departmental approval for the scheme has been sanctioned.

For more details on the Local Authority Affordable Purchase Scheme please check out the Kilkenny County Council Information Webpage at <https://www.kilkennycoco.ie/eng/services/housing/local-authority-affordable-purchase-scheme/>

The Scheme will be advertised publicly via the Council's website, Social Media channels and via print media. Advertisements will direct interested parties to the appropriate website/online platform from where they will be able to access the respective documentation (*scheme details, eligibility criteria, income limits, time frames, FAQs etc.*).



Official Opening of Legan Grange and Legan Close, Thomastown - 15th November 2023

Kilkenny County Council are pleased to announce the completion of 25 new homes at Legan Grange & Legan Close, Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny. The development was funded by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage under the Housing for All Programme at a construction cost of €6m. Constructed on lands at Ladywell/Newtown, Thomastown, the development is a mix of 1,2 and 3 bed accommodation including wheelchair accessible homes. This estate is well located at the edge of the Town Centre, close to all amenities which will be of benefit to the new community here.

Welcoming the completion of the project, Cathaoirleach of Kilkenny County Council, Councillor Michael Doyle said:

"I am delighted to see this development being finalised. It's very positive news and it is great to see Kilkenny County Council's Housing Construction Programme continuing to progress at pace." Cllr Doyle wished all the very best to the families moving into their new homes here before Christmas.

Thanks and congratulations were extended to the design team led by CJ Falconer Architects and including David Kelly Partnership, Douglas Carroll Consulting Engineers and Nolan Construction Consultants. Cllr Deirdre Cullen, Cathaoirleach of the Callan/Thomastown Municipal District welcoming the delivery of these new A rated homes, acknowledged the high quality of the housing scheme and congratulated builder John Somers on a job well done.



Conversion of the former Health Centre in Kilmacow to a 1 bed house is almost complete



*Crokers Hill, Kennyswell Road, Kilkenny City
88 Units due October 2024 – works ongoing*



*8 x Part V units at Fox Meadow, Tullaroan Road,
Kilkenny City*



*30 Part V and Turnkey Apartments at Castleoaks,
Breaghagh Valley, Kilkenny City*



*Works have commenced on 22 Part V and Turnkey
Apartments at Marnellsmeadows, Callan Road,
Kilkenny City*

CIVIL DEFENCE

Report on Kilkenny Civil Defence Activity from 1st January 2023 to December 31st 2023.

Event Type	Number of Events	No of Volunteers Attending	No of Hours
First Aid	36	160	932
Search and Rescue	8	41	721
Ukraine Response	7	13	38
Community Assistance	15	41	237
Medical Assistance	13	18	78
Emergency Response	2	8	36
Safety Boat	4	21	115
Total	85	302	2,392

This equates to a fulltime member of staff working for 68 ½ weeks (based on a 35-hour week)

Training Courses January to 30th November

Course Title	No of Volunteers Certified	No of Volunteers Re-Certified
Missing Person Search Responder	9	3
Missing person Team Leader	4	
Community First Responder	5	
Community First responder Advanced	7	
People handling	13	
Manual Handling	26	
Swiftwater Responder	3	3
Community First Responder – Member of Community/ GAA	21	
Critical Incident Stress Management	1	
MapyX	9	
Swiftwater and flood rescue boat operator	4	2
Severe Weather Off Road Driving (SWORD)	12	
CFR instructors	3	
Emergency First Responder	6	
Sonar Operator	4	
Swiftwater Rescue Technician	3	
People & Manual Handling Instructor	2	
Safety Boat Instructor	1	



Overview of 2023

2023 has been a very successful and progressive year for Kilkeny Civil Defence volunteers in terms of fulfilling our role in supporting the principal response agencies of An Garda Síochána, Fire Service and HSE and supporting our local community. The commitment from Civil Defence volunteers is a credit to the unit in Kilkeny. Alongside attending first aid duties, missing person call outs and community support events our dedicated volunteers have continued to upskill with new training courses and recertifying in existing ones to ensure they are always ready to respond when the time comes.

During the year volunteers have attended nearly 1,000 hours' of first aid duties and as many hours on search and rescue call outs. We have also received much appreciated assistance from Carlow, Wexford, Laois, Wicklow and Waterford Civil Defence Units and we have been glad to return the favour when they have sought assistance for same. This is also key to building resilience and a valuable support network amongst Civil Defence Units in the South East.

In addition to attending First Aid duties in the community 10 of our Volunteers also operate a community first responder group in Kilkeny City. Outside of their work and regular Civil Defence training they respond to 999/112 calls for cardiac arrest within the City.

Our medical team have continued to be of assistance to the community in providing a fully staffed ambulance for certain patient and hospital transfers.

Our community assistance is ongoing throughout the year with the St Patricks Day Parade, Homecoming and Yulefest being the key ones. A favourite of the volunteers is our annual toy delivery for CYPSC to children with special needs across the County. We have also displayed and promoted Civil Defence at the National Ploughing Championships in Ratheniska and National Services in Kilkenny Castle.

In March, a major emergency was declared at Wexford Hospital and under the Major Emergency Management Framework Kilkenny Civil Defence were able to provide resources in the transport of 9 elderly patients by minibus from Wexford Hospital to St Luke's Hospital in Kilkenny

2023 has seen us invest in our search and rescue capabilities with the purchase of a new boat allowing us access the main river systems of the Nore, Barrow and Suir and some of the tributaries that pass through and along County Kilkenny boundaries.

To complement this, we have purchased a new Hummingbird PWMA Sonar. This state-of-the-art sonar can show the boat crew several different images of the riverbed at once. We successfully secured a grant from the Department of Defence towards the purchase. Training for boat crew on use of the sonar equipment was carried out October. Apart from Search and Rescue duties our boats have been used as safety boat assist on a number of water-based events in Kilkenny, New Ross and Carlow.

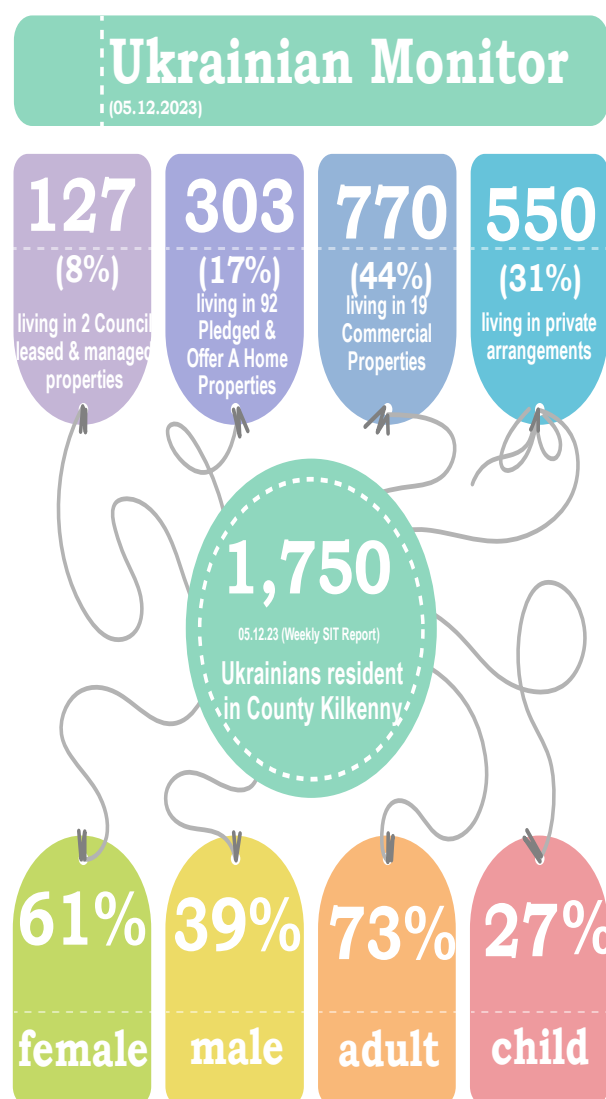
The Department of Defence also launched a new Volunteer and Equipment Management system (VEMS) which went live in July. Kilkenny Civil Defence had been heavily involved in the end user testing. The new system is helping us plan courses, training and events, manage volunteer certifications, our stock, equipment and vehicles. It is already eliminating large amounts of paperwork.

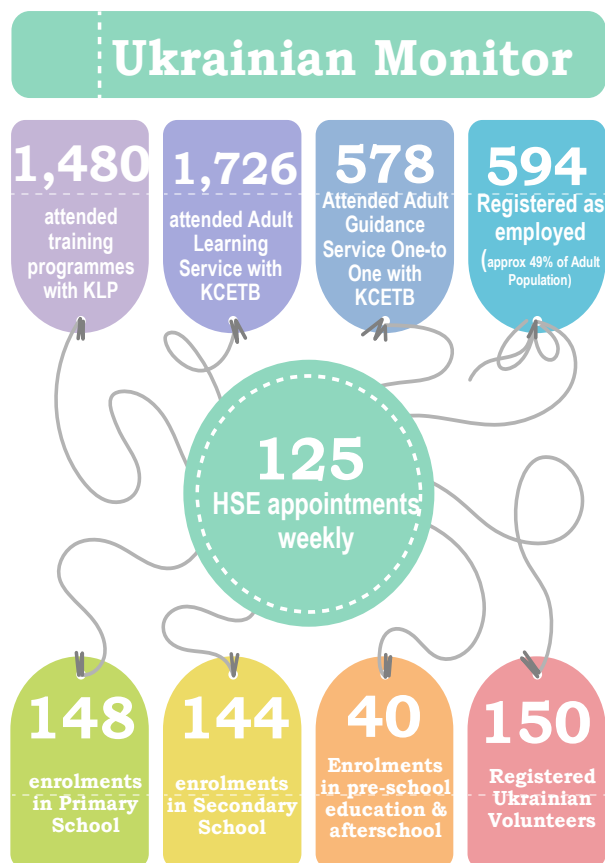
On the theme of reducing paperwork we have also implemented Pro-Works for our fleet of jeeps, vans, ambulances and boats with the assistance of the Health and Safety Team. This is helping us further implement our Climate Action Plan. Our Climate Action Plan and decarbonisation plan has been drafted and is being implemented within the unit seeing the removal of the large capacity diesel engines from the fleet.

We have also invested in our new mapping system Mapyx. This system allows us plan events and track missing person searches, including running a track on a missing persons phone. We are working very closely with An Garda Síochána assisting them with same. We have also built excellent relations and contacts with Kilkenny Fire Service and the National Ambulance Service regarding these and other taskings. This inter agency cooperation will further enhance the resilience of our community during times of emergency.

In summary, all of the above is not possible without the dedication, commitment, passion and leadership of our volunteers in Kilkenny and they deserve a huge thank you for all they have done for our communities.

UKRAINIAN RESPONSE UNIT





FIRE SERVICES

Capital Projects

The construction of a new fire station for Urlingford is now completed and is scheduled to be officially opened in early 2024.

Fire Safety Certificate Applications

- 123 applications for fire safety certificates were received to date.
- 82 applications were received for the same period last year.
- Ukrainian Response Unit - Fire Safety Certificate compliance
- The fire authority technical staff have been involved in the newly established Kilkenny County Council Ukrainian Response Unit.
- This included a new large swathe of technical workload.
- A large number of risk premises throughout Kilkenny City and County have been subject to review and fire safety certification applications to ensure minimum standards.

Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003

- Fire Prevention staff made targeted inspections of premises both to provide advice and to enforce legislation.

- 1 fire safety assessment was ordered under Section 18(6) of the Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003.
- 2 fire safety notice was served under Section 20 of the Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003, where the fire safety remedial works has been completed. Such notices can be subsequently withdrawn
- 46 Licence Applications were processed under Section 24 of the Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003.
- 60 Fire safety inspections of premises have taken place so far this year.

Fire Brigade Operations

The Brigades have attended 617 incidents to date in 2023. These incidents included a number of road traffic collisions, public road hazards, domestic fires and automatic fire alarm activations. Kilkenny Fire and Rescue Service maintain fire appliances in all seven (7) fire stations throughout the County.

There are a variety of different types of appliances in operation i.e. Standard Class B Pumping Fire Appliance (normal fire appliance), Emergency Tenders, Combined Aerial and Pumping Appliances, Water Tankers, Incident Command vehicle and 4-Wheel Drive Vehicles with off road capabilities.

Primary School Programme

Kilkenny Fire and Rescue Service continue to deliver the National Directorate Fire and Emergency Management Primary Schools Programme. It is targeted at all 3rd Class Primary School children. The fire authority has delivered this programme from inception in 2006 and every year subsequently (except during the recent pandemic). Over 20,000 pupils have participated in the Primary Schools Programme to date. The fire authority has provided training and refresher training for a number of firefighters in each brigade to assist them to deliver this Programme to all school children in 3rd classes in Kilkenny City and County where the school management accept our invitation to visit their schools.

Training

Kilkenny County Council's Fire and Rescue Service are obliged under the Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003 and the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 to ensure that our Fire-fighters and Officers are adequately trained and competent to deal with tasks and varying roles they may encounter in the performance of their duties.

All personnel responding to Fire and Rescue Service incidents require a minimum level of training to meet core requirements. In addition, many personnel also require further training for specialist or supervisory roles. A number of Fire and Rescue Service personnel have completed Instructor courses in order that they can instruct and direct delivery of training sessions / courses. Personnel also require appropriate refresher training in all of the above throughout their careers, generally delivered either through on-station training or through specific refresher courses.

We delivered quality training to date in 2023 e.g. QQI Initial Firefighting skills, QQI BA, BA refresher, Emergency Services Driving Standard (ESDS), Emergency First Responder (EFR) and EFR recertification and Chainsaw initial and refresher training



Breathing Apparatus Training – Hacketstown



Chainsaw Training in Urlingford



Chainsaw Training in Urlingford

LIBRARY



31,371 Items borrowed



19,297 Visitors



1,961 Members

Storyteller in Residence

Kilkenny County Council Library Service are delighted to announce that Helena Byrne has been appointed as our first ever Storyteller in Residence. Helena has been working with the Library Service since September to deliver a 16-week programme of activities across the County. These activities are designed to promote literacy and foster the habit of enjoyment of reading and library usage amongst children and young people.

Helena has worked with children in a creative capacity for over twelve years, regularly visiting primary schools and libraries across the country to run storytelling and song workshops for children. Her workshops combine interactive storytelling with speech and drama, fun vocal warm-ups, self-confidence exercises and musical games.

Throughout her residency, Helena has run a number of very successful Mini Members workshops for younger children, Halloween story workshops for older children, and even a “Learn to DJ” storytelling through music series.

Science Week 2023

Science Week is a week-long event in Ireland each November, celebrating science in our everyday lives. This year, Kilkenny County Council Library

Service celebrated the week with 10 events including Bricks 4 Kids Lego engineering workshops and textile workshops for adults. 210 flower bulb packs were also distributed through our mobile and branch library network.



Throughout the month of November, our library branches hosted 223 events with a total of 2,761 attendees both in our branches and on visits to local creches, schools and community groups.

Mayfair Library Update



Library Activities

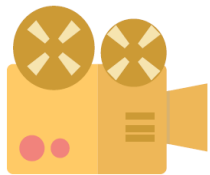
Events	In Branch	Online
223	217	1
Offsite	Live	Numbers
6	196	2761

This month we had lots of activities and events across our libraries. These events included a writing masterclass with renowned author, Niamh Mulvey in City Library, regular meetings of a Ciorcal Comhrá Gaeilge in Loughboy Library, beginners French classes in Castlecomer Library, a bird feeder making workshop in Thomastown Library, Baby Rhyme Time in Graiguenamanagh Library, a kids slime workshop in Ferrybank Library and a number of community book clubs which were facilitated by Mobile Library staff.

- Site Clearance completed.
- Demolitions have been completed.
- All Blockwork completed.
- Installation of windows and curtain walling is complete.
- Mechanical and electrical installations are substantially complete.
- Ground works are approximately 75% complete.
- Painting is 70% complete.



	
2,957 eAudiobooks borrowed	675 Online Courses sessions
	
1,328 eBooks borrowed	1,923 eMagazines borrowed
	
54 Class sessions	



Digital Engagement

Our staff prepared, recorded, edited and published **290** posts and videos on our social media platforms in November.

Our engagements for the month were **2,141** and our videos and reels had **9,105** views. Our virtual newsletter was sent to **5,879** email accounts.

FINANCE

The expenditure by service division to the end of October is set out in table 1. Total Expenditure for the period was €97.2m compared with the annual budget of €98.75m

Table 1	Actual YTD November 2023	Budget Full Year 2023
	€'000's	€'000's
Housing & Building	23,942	22,698
Road Transport & Safety	28,733	27,560
Water Services	7,258	7,736
Development Management	11,092	11,754
Environmental Services	11,272	13,520
Recreation & Amenity	6,775	8,091
Agriculture, Education, Health, Welfare	551	692
Miscellaneous Services	7,643	6,698
OVERALL TOTAL	97,266	98,749

Finance Update

The bank overdraft facility was not utilised in the eleven-month period to the end of November 2023. The overdraft facility for 2024 has been approved by the Department at €20m.

Budget 2024

The Statutory Budget meeting took place on Friday November 24th 2023. A Budget of over €111 million gross expenditure for Kilkenny County Council was approved by the Members for the year ending 31st December 2024. A 3 year Capital Budget for the years 2024-2026 will be presented to the Council in early 2024.

Rates

A total of 80% of the rates available for collection have been collected to date.

Rates Revaluation

Further to Revaluation 2017, 197 customers with a total rate demand value of €4.5m appealed their new valuation to the Valuation Tribunal. To date 192 appeals have been completed. The following is a breakdown of the appeal outcomes to date:-

Decrease in Revaluation on Appeal.....	149 cases
Appeal Withdrawn	33 cases
Increase in Revaluation on Appeal	1 case
No change to Revaluation on Appeal.....	9 cases
Appeals Outstanding.....	5 cases

The total annual Income lost to date stands at €853k.