

CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT

JULY 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

Kilkenny Broadsheet

Official launch of Kilkenny Poetry Broadsheet taking place on 18th August at 11am in the Parade Tower, Kilkenny Castle.

Launch of Rás na mBan

Rás na mBan returns to Kilkenny on 6th September.

2023 National Pride of Place Awards 2023

The Judging dates for the 2023 National Pride of Place Awards have been confirmed for the 14th and 15th September, where Judges will come to Kilkenny to judge our 3 entries, St Canice's Community Action, Freshford Village and the Callan Community Energy Company.

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CORPORATE

Election of new Cathaoirleach & Leas Cathaoirleach

At the Annual Meeting of the Council held on Friday, 16th June, 2023 in the Council Chamber, Cllr. Michael Doyle was elected Cathaoirleach of Kilkenny County Council for 2023/2024.

Cllr. John Coonan was elected Leas Cathaoirleach.



L to R: Leas Cathaoirleach, Cllr. John Coonan F.F., Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Michael Doyle F.G.

Election of Cathaoirleach & Deputy Cathaoirleach of Municipal Districts

Following the Annual Meetings of the Municipal Districts the following were elected as Chairperson & Deputy Chairperson:

Kilkenny City Municipal District

Cllr. Joe Malone, Fianna Fáil, was elected Mayor of the Kilkenny Municipal District at the Municipal District AGM held on Friday, 9th June, 2023, in the Council Chamber, City Hall, Kilkenny.

Cllr. Martin Brett, Fine Gael, has been elected Deputy Mayor of Kilkenny City Municipal District.



Callan/Thomastown Municipal District



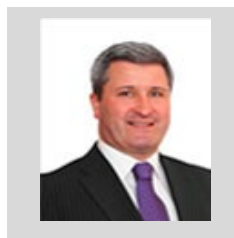
Cllr. Deirdre Cullen, Fianna Fáil, was elected Chairperson of the Callan/Thomastown Municipal District and Cllr. Joe Lyons was elected Deputy Chairperson.

Castlecomer Municipal District

Fianna Fáil Councillor, Cllr. Michael Delaney, has been elected Chairperson of the Castlecomer Municipal District and Cllr. John Brennan was elected Deputy Chairperson.



Piltown Municipal District



Fianna Fáil Councillor Gerard Frisby was elected Chairperson of the Piltown Municipal District and Cllr. Eamonn Aylward was elected Deputy Chairperson.

Launch of Rás na mBan

Rás na mBan returns to Kilkenny in September and Ireland's international bike race for women has a number of exciting new innovations for its 17th Edition.

This year's race is the seventh edition of the popular international stage race to be based in and around Kilkenny and features two all-new stages, another new finish location and the return of the double-helping of racing in Kilkenny on the final day.

Kilkenny County Council has supported the event since 2016 and once again, starting on Wednesday September 6th Ireland's best riders will fight it out over five days for the coveted Kilkenny County Council green jersey for best rider based in Ireland.

Riders from all over Europe, the USA, Oceania, Africa and Asia as well as the best of Ireland's international- and locally-based racers will descend on Kilkenny for the event which showcases the beauty and variety of roads and landscape of our County.

Sunday 10th September, the final day of racing will again feature a double helping of top class racing starting with the fifth stage 2.5km time trial set against the backdrop of one of Kilkenny's most iconic landmarks.

The race will end with the popular hour-long Kilkenny City Circuit Race on the familiar 2.1km circuit starting on The Parade in front of Kilkenny Castle, a spectacular and high octane end to the five days of racing.

While team rosters will also be revealed in due course, Rás na mBan has once again attracted Olympic, World and European Championship riders to face the best of the local talent.

Along with the race for the overall title, the best locally based talent is vying for the highly coveted green jersey awarded to the Kilkenny County Council Best Irish Rider. The leading Irish rider will be presented on the podium after each stage and recognisable in the bunch each day by the distinctive green Kilkenny County Council Best Irish Rider jersey.

Rás na mBan was launched on Friday, 24th June by Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Michael Doyle, in the surroundings of Kilkenny Castle.



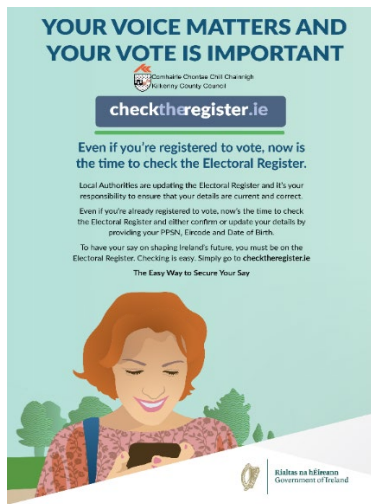
Everyone encouraged to ChecktheRegister

A second national campaign to encourage everyone to checktheregister to confirm that their details are correct was launched by the Minister of State for Heritage and Electoral Reform, Malcolm Noonan, T.D., on 21st June, 2023.

The [campaign](#) aims to encourage everyone, including those already registered to vote, to go to [checktheregister.ie](#) and either confirm or update their details. In a year when there is a referendum promised and less than 12 months before we have local and European elections, everyone is encouraged to act now to get ahead to ensure their information is correct.

The ability to engage online has been a game-changer in the registration process both for registration authorities and for the wider public. These changes give us a more accessible, flexible and modern system that's simple and straightforward to use. It has never been easier or quicker for people to register to vote or update their details, or simply let us know that their details are current and correct by adding their PPSN and date of birth, so that's what everyone is encouraged to do.





ROADS

MAJOR PROJECTS

(Included in NDP- Funded by TII)

N24 Waterford to Cahir Scheme

The design team is working on corridor options. Preliminary Ground Investigation Work has been completed. The findings of these investigations will input into The Preferred Transport Solution. This is scheduled to be put on public display at the end of Q4 2023.

Newsletter No. 11 has recently been published on the Project Website.

See <https://n24waterford2cahir.ie/news/>.

MINOR PROJECTS

(Not included in NDP-Funded by TII)

N24 Tower Road (Safety Scheme)

Works are progressing well. Bridge Beam installation was recently completed. Earthworks are ongoing, with top soiling work commenced in verges and on embankments. Works are well advanced on the Parallel Link road between the new Tower road roundabout and the Local Road L1038 at the inkbottle, with kerbing installed. Road Widening Works to the existing N24 has recently commenced. Scheme Drainage installation is ongoing.

Construction remains marginally ahead of schedule. Substantial completion is expected by the end of 2023.

N77 Ballyragget to Ballynaslee

The preparation of contract documents is ongoing and it is expected that the tender will be issued in early Q3 2023. 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. The public consultation period for both ran until the 20th January 2023.

There were 5 objections to the Compulsory Purchase Order Approval application. There were also 5 objections to the 177ae Planning Application.

It is a matter for An Bord Pleanála to determine if there is a requirement for oral hearings for both applications. Kilkenny County Council is in discussion with the valuers representing objectors to the CPO to discuss their concerns.

OTHER

Pavement Schemes.

The N77 Georges Tree to Dunmore West (*Phase 1 Ardloo Junction North*) Pavement Improvement Works has been awarded to Priority Construction Ltd. The civil works are complete and pavement works are to commence shortly.

The preparation of tender documents is ongoing in respect of the N77 Suttons Rath Pavement Scheme. This will link directly with the N77 Georges Tree to Dunmore West (*Phase 1 Ardloo Junction North*) Pavement Improvement referred to above. It is intended to have this project out to tender shortly with a view to construction commencing during Q3 2023.

The design work is ongoing in respect of the N76 Callan By Pass Pavement Scheme. The Callan By Pass scheme in particular is complex given its semi urban location.

National Road Bridge Works.

The N10 Ossory Bridge Rehabilitation Scheme works are progressing with Cumnor Construction Ltd. The works have started with an expected 22-week construction period. The overall outturn cost for the project is expected to be just under €2m.

Flooding Kilkenny City 16th to 19th June 2023

The rainfall experienced over the weekend of 16th to 19th June was of an exceptional nature. This level of rainfall was not forecasted. Rainfall data for Kilkenny City indicates that 34.7mm of rain fell on Friday and 25.8mm fell on Saturday. All of this rain fell within a 24-hour period from Friday evening to Saturday evening and exceeded the average monthly rainfall for June. Drainage systems are not designed to cater for this level of rainfall but the systems in Kilkenny City largely withstood this exceptional level of rainfall on Friday and only became overwhelmed on the Saturday evening. The flooding receded within an hour of the rainfall ceasing on Saturday evening which again would not have happened if there were blockages in the system. Areas impacted included John Street, Irishtown and a number of housing estates,

Damage to infrastructure was caused in many areas throughout the City with the worst damage being caused on Patrick Street. An inspection has shown that there were no blockages in this area and that the damage was caused by the force of the flood waters once the system became

overwhelmed. The force of the flood waters in this area would have been particularly strong due to the steep gradients coming down Patrick Street. Traffic management was immediately put in place and repairs have been completed see figure 1 & 2.

Over 40mm of rainfall fell on Monday with the majority of this falling in a single hour around lunch time. This was truly exceptional breaking all previous records and again led to widespread flooding. Again, when the rainfall ceased the flooding again receded within an hour. John Street was particularly impacted.

There were no issues reported from around the County and Kilkenny City seems to have been the only area significantly impacted.



ENVIRONMENT

“Ours to Protect” Radio Discussion

The Climate Action Coordinator participated in a panel discussion on KCLR (8th June) for the launch of the new ‘[Ours to Protect](#)’ radio and audio project spearheaded by Independent Broadcasters of Ireland (IBI) which involves 23 local and regional radio stations broadcasting 1,200 programmes over the course of a year – all devoted to climate change and climate action.

Pre-draft Consultation on Climate Action Plan

The Pre-Draft consultation phase of the Kilkenny County Climate Action Plan has concluded. Over the course of May and early June the Climate Action Team met the public and gave talks at a number of public events engaging with over 120 people. In addition, they presented to the June Council meeting, and participated in 2 radio panel discussions. 10 formal submissions were received via the Council’s consult.kilkenny.ie portal and by

email, as well as 6 completed questionnaires and a number of informal queries and expressions of interest. A report on the Pre-Draft Consultation Phase will be presented to SPC4 (Environment Protection, Climate Action & Energy) in July.

The Climate Team has started work on the draft plan, incorporating the feedback from the public engagement and will meet with each Service Area over the next 3 months to agree actions to be included in the Climate Action Plan.

Energy Elephant - helping us to manage our energy and emissions data

It's a strange name, but a very useful platform. [Energy Elephant](#) is an energy and sustainability management platform which tracks all the Council's energy use, energy costs and emissions. It collates data from our energy bills on all our buildings, facilities, lights and fleet. This helps us to make informed decisions on where we need to reduce our energy, and where we can make cost savings too. In the coming months, the Climate Team will be liaising with key energy users, and emission producers in the Council to give them access to their data to help manage and reduce energy and emissions so that the Council can meet our statutory climate and energy targets.

Climate Action Training continues

Climate action training, organised by the Climate Action Regional Office (CARO) continued during the month of June attended by Council staff. This included:

- Climate Action Planning Workshop (Tullamore) 6th June
- Heritage and Climate Action (Webinar) 26th June
- Climate and Economic Opportunities (Webinar) 27th June

Climate Action at the Kilkenny PPN Forum, Ormonde Hotel

The first plenary of the year with members organised by Kilkenny PPN, took place on the 31st May in Ormonde Hotel, with presentations from the Climate Action Team on the Climate Action Plan and the Community Climate Action Fund. The importance of the PPN and their work in the community was highlighted as playing a key role in tackling climate change at a local level. There was good engagement with 40 PPN members in attendance.

Community Climate Action Programme (CCAP)

Breda Maher, our Community Climate Action Officer has started reaching out to Kilkenny Communities re the Community Climate Action Programme to support and encourage them to start looking at potential projects that would have a direct climate action impact and benefit their community.

The CCAP has not yet been launched formally. Grant funding is available for 100% of the project costs under the following tiers:

- Small scale projects: up to €20,000
- Medium Scale projects: €20,001 - €50,000
- Large Scale Projects: €50,001 - €100,000

All communities are welcome to submit applications and to date Breda has met with a large number of communities including Windgap, Tullahought, Urlingford, Freshford & Johnstown with further meetings being scheduled in the coming weeks reaching out to all communities in Kilkenny prior to the scheme launch.

Greening for Health Event

Kilkenny County Council's Community Climate Action Officer attended a "Greening for Health" event organised by Cork City Council in conjunction with Cork Healthy Cities, showcasing excellent work that communities have accomplished in tackling Climate Action. It highlighted opportunities available for all Local Authorities working together with communities.

Projects included:

[The Peoples Parklet Douglas Street](#) the first long term purpose built parklet in Ireland. An on street public space for people to relax and linger,



combining elements of seating, planting & bicycle parking.

[Togher Community Garden](#) a community garden established in a disadvantaged area where many residents do not have access to a private garden has now become an award-winning outdoor haven. With a polytunnel, raised beds, a hand dug pond and hedgerows this successful garden provides an inclusive, welcoming, educational

hub to all. The food grown is also provided free to the community (*along with a community developed cookbook available for all to download online*) therefore also providing a vital support to those experiencing food poverty.

Bring Banks Usage

The Council provides and manages 46 Bring Centres across the City and County. A total of 1,040 tonnes of recyclables were collected from our Bring Centres to date in 2023. This is the same amount as was collected from January to June 2022. Aldi-Kilkenny City (16 tonnes collected), New Park Shopping Centre (11 tonnes collected) and Loughboy Shopping Centre (10 tonnes collected) are the busiest locations in the City and Lidl-Thomastown (8 tonnes collected) is the busiest 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 weekends and holiday periods.

Environment Complaints

All Environment complaints received are logged on the CRM (Customer Relations Management) System. The number of complaints being received and logged by Environment staff for investigation for the first six months of 2023 was 476 compared with 504 for the same period last year (i.e. down circa 6% for the year to date). The nature of these complaints ranged from littering, illegal dumping, illegal signage and abandoned cars. The vast majority continue to be related to littering and illegal dumping.

Irish Business Against Litter (IBAL) Report

The latest nationwide survey by business group Irish Business Against Litter (26th June) shows the great majority of Ireland's towns clean, but two-thirds of city areas still littered. The survey presents a snapshot of cleanliness levels across Ireland as the peak summer tourist season commences. Levels were unchanged on 12 months ago, with Kilkenny ranking an impressive 3rd place out of 40 towns and Cities.

CCTV & Littering

Local authorities have sought to be in a position to make use of CCTV as an option in tackling illegal dumping and pollution for some time, and worked, through the County and City Management Association, with the Data Protection Commission and the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications to progress this.

The Circular Economy Act provides for the use of CCTV and other technologies to support waste management. In order to ensure a standard and compliant approach by the 31 local authorities, the LGMA are developing codes of practice for approval by the Minister. A working group has been established and the codes of practice are well advanced and now being legal reviewed. Once the code of practice is ratified, the Council will utilise its powers under the act to establish CCTV at appropriate locations within the County.

Public Electrical Recycling Day Events

Kilkenny County Council welcomed the WEEE Ireland operating collection days to recycle household electrical waste. Any appliances big or small, operated by a battery or plug can be dropped off. Our waste enforcement team is particularly welcoming of the collection days, as it makes it easy for households to dispose of their household electrical appliances and lessens the chances of electrical waste being dumped by the roadside.

Thomastown held a successful WEEE collection collecting over 10 tons. Piltown WEEE is scheduled for 8th July and Johnstown on the 15th July.

Community Monuments Fund

6 projects have been approved for community monument funding by the department for 2023.

Funding for Capital Projects (Stream 1) are listed below

- Butler Gallery complex/garden medieval wall
- Grangefertagh historic church and graveyard
- Thomple historic church and graveyard
- Duiske Abbey boundary wall (*Community lead Project*)

The tendering process has commenced to carry out the restorations works for the Thomple in Grennan, Thomastown. A contractor will be appointed in early July once the tendering process has been finalised.

Funding for Conservation Reports (Stream 2) are listed below

- Tubbrid Medieval Church
- Rathpatrick Medieval Church



We are now in the process of getting specialists Consultants on site to carry our various assessments with regards to ecology & archaeology in order to submit



Conservation Reports for each of the above which will form part of a capital project community monument application (Stream 1) for next year.

PARKS & SPECIAL PROJECTS

Parks & Playgrounds

Grass cutting and ongoing maintenance continues around the County in our playgrounds and parks to maintain them to a high standard. Quarterly equipment inspections are currently being undertaken across all our playgrounds, parks and multi-use games areas by Parks Staff.



The main focus of our crew over the month of June was on the replacement of parts of old or worn play equipment and

re-mulching, with maintenance works carried out in playgrounds in Thomastown, Paulstown, Newpark, Windgap, Callan and Castlecomer.

Woodstock Gardens



The Tea Room was opened on Saturday's and Sunday's over the month of June and this service will be extended to 7 days a week over July and August. The offering extends a variety of gorgeous cakes, scones and hot

and cold beverages. Visitors can now enjoy our refreshments not only within the Tea Room itself but also in the beautiful surrounding outdoor terraces when the sun shines.

The Woodstock Coffee Truck and Ice-cream Parlour, located near the carpark and tented picnic area, were also in service at weekends during the month of June and this service will also be extended for the peak season.

Kilkenny Countryside Park

Phase One of the Kilkenny Countryside Park was substantially completed in June. The works included road widening along the Bleach Road, access to the new Bleach Road parking area, the latter which can accommodate 17 cars and 60 bicycles, enhancements to Dunmore Community Carpark, which has capacity for 65 cars, the construction of 2.2km of new trails traversing the Park, a viewing platform, a double sided hurling wall, a dog friendly enclosed zone, fencing, top soiling and seeding along with the construction of a 3 bay dedicated disabled parking area near the Civic Amenity Site (CAS) at Dunmore.

This initial phase of the project was delivered, in the main, via funding secured under the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme and Sports Capital Scheme along with the Council's own funds.



On foot of the recently secured funding, of €330,000, under the Community Recognition Fund, good progress has also been made over the last month on Phase 2 of the project. With tenders issued for:

- (a) Play & Exercise Equipment, which includes hammocks and sun loungers,
- (b) Perimeter fencing and
- (c) Interpretation, trail, entrance and direction signage.

It is expected that the contract for each of these three tenders will be awarded in July. The fourth, and final, tender for the landscaping will be advertised shortly and will include a significant amount of tree and hedge planting. This work will be undertaken in November when the plants can be purchased in bareroot. The species of plants chosen will have a strong focus on building upon the already rich biodiversity of the Park.

The Park will open to the public on completion of Phase Two. There will be three marked looped trails which will include:

- (a) The Mass Path Trail, which will commence at the Dunmore Community Carpark, and will be 3.0km in length,
- (b) the 1.8km Biodiversity Trail commencing at the Bleach Road Carpark and finally

- (c) the 1.3km Accessibility Trail, which will commence at the dedicated disabled parking bays at Dunmore CAS and will encompass the viewing platform within the Park, see image to RHS at Trailhead location.



Partnership Projects

Works continue in partnership with Kilkenny LEADER Partnership and local community groups on various projects across the County and good progress has been made in recent weeks on the following:

The Callan Heritage Trail

The Council has been working closely with our community partners, Callan Macra na Feirme to advance the above project. In June, a funding application to Kilkenny LEADER Partnership (KLP) was approved, securing 75% of the total project cost. The tender process for the signage design and interpretation was awarded to Abarta Heritage whilst the manufacturing and installation contract was awarded to Signiatec. The intention of the project is to develop a uniformed interpretative trail telling the history of Callan, that will enrich the local and visitor experience as they travel along same. The completed project cost will see an investment of circa. €47,000.

Slieverue Linear Park

On Wednesday the 14th of June, in front of a big crowd, including many excited local school children, the Cathaoirleach of Kilkenny County Council, Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick officially opened Slieverue Linear Park. This new amenity space, located at the northern end of the village was delivered under two phases. Under Phase One, works commenced back in 2021 on foot of funding secured under the Town and Village Renewal

Scheme, whilst Phase Two commenced late last year under the management of the Council and in partnership with KLP and the local community group, Slieverue Community Resource Centre Committee.



The new park has been designed to promote an open space where both people and biodiversity can flourish. It includes a central pathway that forms part of a wider walking route within the village, natural woodland play and exercise equipment, seating areas, an outdoor class room with blackboard and basketball area.

Surrounding these features the Park evolves into a more natural setting with a strong focus on native biodiversity planting and wildflower meadows.



This completed Park sees a combined investment of over €250,000 into Slieverue Village, made up of combination of funding streams including the Town & Village Renewal Scheme, the LEADER Programme, the Council’s own funds and local funds collected by the Slieverue Community Resource Centre.

Clover Meats Social Club

The former Clover Meats company had an active recreation and social club located on lands at Christendom Ferrybank, Co. Kilkenny. Over the years with the demise of the Clover Meats company and a dwindling membership the facility has fallen into disuse in recent years and no longer has any activity on site.

Some time ago the trustees of the Clover Meats social Club made an unsolicited approach to officials of Kilkenny County Council with an offer to transfer the assets of the Social Club to the Council for ongoing recreational use for the wider community.

Kilkenny County council agreed in principle to take possession of the facility subject to all necessary legal documentation and transfer being completed.

At an EGM of the Clover Meats Social Club held on the 28th June last it was agreed by the membership of the club to transfer the assets of the club to Kilkenny County Council.

The legal paper work to execute the transfer will be completed over the coming months.

Once the legal transfer is complete council will engage extensively with the local community and stakeholders to formulate a plan for the future of the facilities.

PLANNING

Development Management

Planning Summary	Total June	
	2022	2023
Planning Applications Received	424	447
Planning Applications Granted	355	286
Planning Applications Refused	49	57
Complaints Received	45	46
Warning Letters Issued	52	47
Enforcements Notices Issued	20	24
Cases Closed	62	27

FORWARD PLANNING

Masterplans:

Abbey Quarter

The Council has, following considerable fieldwork and consultation, prepared a draft Masterplan for an extended Abbey Quarter area (to include Vicar Street & Greensbridge Street) along

with a review of Policy and the Urban Design Code (2018).

The Draft Masterplan was on public display from Friday June 2nd to Friday June 30th June (*both dates inclusive*) and two in-person information sessions were held during this period along with an online information session on June 21st at 7pm on the ZOOM platform.

A total of 18 submissions were received on this Masterplan and the Interim Chief Executive's report will be prepared for the September Council meeting.

St. Canice's Campus

A final meeting took place with the HSE project working group on the draft spatial framework. A Masterplan is currently being written and will have to be issued to the HSE for approval. Once a Masterplan is approved by the HSE, it will be placed on public display for a round of public consultation. It is anticipated that consideration of the Plan by the HSE will be completed over the coming weeks which will allow public consultation to proceed.

Loughmacask

The Plan went before the Council for final consideration and was adopted at the June Council Meeting. The adopted Masterplan will soon be published.

Urlingford

A first draft of the Urlingford Town Centre Masterplan has now been received from the appointed consultants and has been reviewed and returned to the consultants for amendments. Once reviewed and proofed, the proposal to place this Plan on public display will be before the Municipal District Members at their July meeting. Meetings are ongoing and an update on the plan proposals will be provided by Turley's Consultants at the July Municipal District meeting. A public workshop on this draft plan will also take place once the draft plan is on display.

Ballyragget/Paulstown/Kilmacow

Work has commenced on the preparation of Masterplans for the settlements of Ballyragget, Paulstown and Kilmacow. Three public meetings, one for each town, took place on the 18th, 19th and 20th January, 2023. With due consideration of inputs from these meetings the consultants are

currently drafting the three Masterplans, which are expected in July 2023.

The draft plans will be presented to the respective Municipal Districts prior to them going on public display.

Taking in Charge

Initiation to have the following estates taken in charge were recently advertised in the Kilkenny People:

- Lakeside Housing Estate and Walkway/Cycleway: 2 submissions received.
- Ogenty Housing Estate, Gowran advertised in Kilkenny People: 2 submissions received.
- Abbeygate, Ferrybank – works complete and ready for final sign off.
- An Choill Rua, Paulstown – small number of items remain outstanding - to be completed by the developer.
- College Park, Callan Road – contact made with Developer. Schedule of works to be collated and agreed.
- Friarshill, Graiguenamanagh - schedule of works and costs agreed with the Area Office. Works will proceed later in the year.
- Rathullard – surface dressing completed on Phase 1, ramps to be installed by the Area Office. The Developer has applied to have the next phase of this development taken in charge

Rioch Court has now been taken in charge by Kilkenny County Council.

E-Planning

Applications through e-planning continue to increase.

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 statutory timelines apply to both an online application and a paper application.

Active Land Management

Two decisions were received from An Bord Pleanála in June confirming the determinations of the Council to include land on the Draft Maps of land in scope for the Residential Zoned Land Tax. Along with 14 other Local Authorities, Kilkenny did not publish a Supplemental Map, as there were no additions to the maps of land in scope for the tax. A Final Map of lands in scope for the tax will be published by 1st December 2023.

There are 32 sites on the Derelict Sites Register. One site in Graiguenamanagh was added to the Register at the end of June, and another site is subject to notices of intent to be added to the Register. Owners of 14 sites received notices of valuations, and they now have a right of appeal to the Valuations Tribunal.

There are 24 Vacant Sites on the Vacant Sites Register and the number of cancelled entries due to site activation or improvement is 23. The Vacant site levy will be replaced by the Residential Zoned Land Tax in 2024, 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 the following special interest: Architectural, Historical, Archaeological, Artistic, Cultural, Scientific, Technical, Social. An advisory service on conservation matters is provided to the public and colleagues, while the conservation grants and funding applications are also delivered.

Conservation Grants 2023

Engagement with successful applicants for the Built Heritage Investment Scheme and the Historic Structures Fund Conservation Grant Schemes are underway. Discussion will centre on agreeing appropriate specifications and methodologies for repair works.

Heritage Stewardship Programme 2023

Tenders have been received, with assessment in process.

Building Control

Valid Commencement Notices submitted:
150 for the first 6 months of 2023.

June 2023.....	150
June 2022.....	197
June 2021.....	233

June 2020	171
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28 Disability Access Applications were received during the first 6 months of this year.

June 2023	28
June 2022	44
June 2021	33
June 2020	39

COMMUNITY & CULTURE

Bike Week Report 2023



National Bike Week 2023 had over 2,000 participants of all ages and abilities taking part in 37 events in Kilkenny. Events ranged from family cycles, toddler events to mountain biking, cycling conversations and documentaries. There were 21 schools taking part with over 1,000 children participating in specific Bike Week events and many more participating in whole school initiatives.

Bike Fest became a weekend event in Kilkenny and a pop-up mountain biking course was set up in County Hall providing exciting cycling events for hundreds of school children and adults!

Bike Week 2023 for Kilkenny was coordinated by the Active Travel Team and Community Section of Kilkenny County Council. The flagship event, Bike Fest was run in conjunction with Cycling Ireland.

Bike Week events were supported by Cycling Ireland, Kilkenny Recreation and Sports Partnership, Kilkenny Leader Partnership, local cycling groups, On Your Rothar and Kilkenny Walking and Cycling Campaign Group, the Community Bike Ride leaders, local clubs; Callan, Marble City Cyclers, Kilkenny Pedallers and Kilkenny Collective Mountain Bikers, schools and community groups throughout the County.

The focus of Bike Week in Kilkenny was to provide people of all ages and abilities with a

variety of cycling events and to create awareness of cycling as an enjoyable form of transport and physical activity.

A pop-up mountain biking course was created in Kilkenny City. Bike Fest turned into a full weekend of celebrations and many new groups came on board for the first time. All the special schools in Kilkenny City hosted events, a recently formed Women's Shed ran family cycles, pre-schools had some great cycling fun and a newly opened bike shop provided bike maintenance courses and refreshment stops for one of the many community bike rides that took place over Bike Week.



2023 National Pride of Place Awards 2023

The Judging dates for the 2023 National Pride of Place Awards have been confirmed for the 14th and 15th September, where Judges will come to Kilkenny to judge our 3 entries, St Canice's Community Action, Freshford Village and the Callan Community Energy Company.

Judging dates below:

14th September, 2023 | 9:00am - 1:00pm - *St Canice's Community Action*

14th September, 2023 | 2:00pm - 5:30pm - *Freshford*

15th September, 2023 | 9:00am - 1:00pm - *Callan Community Energy Company*

The IPB Pride of Place Gala Dinner & Award Ceremony 2023 is due to take place in Armagh City Hotel on Friday 10th November 2023.

Thomastown Community Event/family Event July 8th 2023 - Thomastown Recreational Amenity.

Following the success of the first National Outdoor Basketball Exhibition event held last year, the event will once again take place in Thomastown on Saturday the 8th of July. Last year, large crowds came from all over Ireland to witness this unique and exciting family event that showcased the skills of top Irish International, National League and Professional Basketball Players. The event will once again take place on the newly developed amenity located in the centre of the town which was developed and funded

under the Town & Village Renewal Scheme by Kilkenny County Council.

Kilkenny County Council Disability Strategy

Consultations for the new Kilkenny County Council's Disability Inclusion Strategy 2023 -2026 are being finalised and the Draft Strategy will be presented at the September Council Meeting. This interim Strategy gives Kilkenny County Council a focused road map while working towards providing a universally accessible environment and services. This strategy will also assist Kilkenny County Council in working towards enhancing the quality of life for disabled people in County Kilkenny.

BIODIVERSITY

Swift Programme 2023

Kilkenny County Council supported BirdWatch Ireland's Swift Walk and Talk which took place on Thursday, the 22nd of June. There were 32 people in attendance at the first meeting in Kilkenny. Tara Adcock along with the local Kilkenny Branch members of BirdWatch Ireland surveyed the castle walls for swifts entering and exiting their nests.

The group then walked through the City visiting the Medieval Mile Museum to identify the artificial swift nest boxes which were placed onto the building façade during the renovation of the museum.

The group also visited the Auxiliary Hospital where swift activity was frequently observed against the evening sky. Kilkenny County Council would like to acknowledge and thank the local members of the Kilkenny BirdWatch Ireland Branch for supporting Tara with local information and the OPW staff of Kilkenny Castle for facilitating the event on the castle grounds.



ARTS

Emerging Curator Development Programme

The emerging curator Shannon Carroll has successfully hosted her first curated exhibition in Kilkenny, titled *Horizon Ag Bun na Spéire*, an immersive multimedia installation by visual artist Catherine McDonald which presents an imaginary landscape. As part of this exhibition workshops were provided titled *Blindfolded Clay Workshop*, a 2-hour workshop that offered an alternative way of experiencing the spaces of Kilkenny through activities based on touch and texture.

Participants used blindfolds while making clay objects and learned the principles of clay moulding without the pressure of creating a figurative piece. This exhibition has now closed and preparations are being put in place for events during the Kilkenny Arts Festival.

Bookings are now open for the following event: [Returning to the Earth / Ag Filleadh ar an Talamh - Kilkenny County Council Arts Office \(kilkennyartsoffice.ie\)](https://cruinniú.creativeireland.gov.ie/events/location/kilkenny/)



Kilkenny Poetry Broadsheet

The illustrator Louise Naughton has finalised designing and illustrating the Poetry Broadsheet and will be sent for printing shortly. We are preparing for the official launch taking place on the 18th August at 11am in the Parade Tower, Kilkenny Castle.

Creative Ireland Cruinniú Na N'Óg 10th June

Cruinniú Na N'Óg is a national day of free creativity for children and young people under the age of 18 years. Cruinniú na nÓg is a flagship initiative of the Creative Ireland Programme's

Creative Youth Plan to enable the creative potential of children and young people.

A total of 11 organisations in Kilkenny hosted a large variety of events from theatre and performance workshops, to song writing and art workshops. For example, TADA! Theatre in Thomastown hosted a series of workshops where children learned how to write a movie script and then make a film from this script. The final film was screened in Thomastown Community Centre on the 10th June for Cruinniú na nÓg.

The full list of events can be found at: <https://cruinniú.creativeireland.gov.ie/events/location/kilkenny/>



Place Based Practices - Collaboration Project

The main objective for this collaborative project is to examine the distinct leadership role that local authorities Arts Services and their Arts Officers play in place-based practice. It is creating a platform for sharing and learning in the field of place-based collaborative arts practices. The central role of local Arts Services has been and continues to be critical to socially inclusive and place-based programmes.

Our initial meeting took place on June 7th where we revisited the key emphasis of the project and discussed our experiences as they relate to this research project.

This project is a collaboration between Kilkenny, Carlow, Wexford, Cavan, Meath, Dublin, and Wicklow County Councils and CREATE

Post Primary Supports

We continue with our programmes for secondary school teachers supporting them with new and effective teaching and learning resources, to support them in delivering and implementing the new curriculum for the junior & senior cycle.

Our third project delivered Translations, an introduction to Socially Engage Art. This was facilitated by International Master Educator at the Amsterdam School of Art John Johnston

In this workshop participants:

- engaged in a collaborative dialogue to discuss and critically examine a contemporary issue through the arts.
- created an artwork (*can be visual, writing, music*) in response to the collaborative dialogue.
- reflected on socially engaged art and its impact and how it might be approached in the classroom

Some of the key messages that the teachers took from this workshop include:

To bring fascination back to the classroom. To focus on issues-based art and not just skills. To include and empower every child to raise their issues and take the focus off technical ability. To show my students that art can change the world

The importance of nurturing learners to actively listen to promote empathy

Engage more with my own creative practice which will help inform a more socially engaged art culture in my school

Facilitate dialogue with social issues. Teachers have power + We need to use it wisely

LEO

Summary of 2023 Awards to Businesses

- €112,253 in direct financial assistance was approved for 7 manufacture /export service businesses in located throughout the County.
- €41,313 in Business Expansion Grant assistance and €43,940 in Priming assistance.
- €27,000 awarded in a feasibility study grant
- 5 Technical Assistance for Micro Exporter grant awarded to support them in exploring new export market opportunities.
- 10 Businesses have commenced LEAN one to one consultancy programmes to investigate possible resource efficiencies and process improvements their businesses.

- 2 Business is availing of the Digital Start programme to prepare and implement a plan for the adoption of digital tools and techniques across the enterprise
- 17 business have been approved a Trading Online Voucher totalling €33,942 to support the enhancement of their online trading capacity.
- 1 Intellectual Property (IP) Start Grant has 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 award of €138,782
- 2 Green for Micro Grant awarded. This scheme supports businesses to becoming greener and environmentally friendly.
- 8 applicants have been supported to make loan applications to the Micro Finance Ireland loan fund.
- 503 people participated on focused small business training, including 72 people participating on the Starting Your Business programme
- 234 businesses have availed of specialised business specific mentoring on a variety of topics including finance, marketing, social media marketing and HR.

National Enterprise Awards Final 2023

CHI Environmental based in Grannagh represented County Kilkenny at the National Enterprise Awards which was held in the Round Room at the Mansion House, Dublin on 1st June. The operation has grown from being a family business with a core management team consisting of Directors Bob Murphy along with his sons Richard, Pat and Nicholas and 10 employees, 8 fulltime and 2 part time.



Recruitment & Retention - Investing in the Right People for Your Business

50 businesses attended a lunchtime seminar event on Thursday 15th June in the Newpark run in

partnership with Kilkenny Chamber of Commerce. Guest speakers included Andrew Webb, Chief Economist Grant Thornton; Caroline Reidy, The HR Suite and John O'Shanahan, LEAN BPI who each spoke on the topic of recruitment and retention of staff with Noel Davidson, the Entrepreneurs Academy as MC for the event



Launch of Local Economic and Community Plan
Monday June 12th, saw the launch of a new Framework document, the Local Economic and Community Plan 2023 to 2028 for Kilkenny in a joint initiative by Kilkenny County Council and the LCDC.



TOURISM

General Background

Tourism figures confirm that Visitor number to date in 2023 are well up on balance in every region and in most sectors nationally. Failte Ireland reports a strong outlook for visitor levels from almost all sectors this year. All sectors are expecting visitor levels during the remainder of this year to be up on 2022. Restaurants are the exception – 29% expect to be up, but 51% expect to be down.

Concerns in most sectors are less about visitor volume and more about operating costs and inflation. Visitor Attractions are one of the best performing sectors this year to date with 69% of

attractions having had more visitors so far this year than in 2022. The return of the overseas market is key – 74% of attractions are up on overseas visitors; 81% expect the remainder of 2023 to be up on last year; only 8% expect to be down on 2022 numbers. (Source: Failte Ireland Tourism Barometer 2023)

June has been a busy month for the tourism team in terms of events and the promotion of Kilkenny both at local and national events.

Bloom 2023

Bord Bia Bloom took place over five days on the June Bank Holiday weekend (June 1st – 5th).

Kilkenny Tourism supported by Kilkenny County Council attended Bloom 2023 to showcase Kilkenny as a great domestic tourism destination to the festivals 100,000 attendees. A competition was ran to win a trip to Kilkenny and this attracted over 700 entries.



Kilkenny Tourism Summer Networking

Kilkenny Tourism, supported by the Council and the Local Enterprise Office held a networking event on the evening of 22nd June where all tourism & hospitality businesses in Kilkenny were welcomed. The event gave both existing and prospective members of Kilkenny Tourism the chance to meet and discuss ways to work together to promote Kilkenny as a great tourism destination.

Guests heard tourism thoughts & insights from leading travel writer Pól Ó Conghaile who was guest speaker on the evening. It also offered guests on the evening the chance to enjoy Kilkenny's fabulous new tourism offering - Smithwick's Experience. Finger food and refreshments were served and positive feedback was received by many who attended.



Festival Supports

Funded by Kilkenny County Councils Festivals Grant Scheme saw the return of the happiest festival in Ireland in June.

This year things were done a little differently at Kilkenny Cat Laughs! Alongside some of our favourite Irish comedians, lots of brilliant new stand-ups from England, Scotland and Wales

who've never played in Ireland or Kilkenny before were introduced.

Marketing and PR

All marketing and social media campaigns promoting Kilkenny to visitors near and far continues. "Kilkenny in Summer is buzzing" continues to showcase everything to see and do in Kilkenny City and County over the summer months with Autumn shopping and food campaigns currently being developed.



HOUSING

Homeless Services

HOMELESS SERVICES SUMMARY June 2023	
Homeless Presentations	48
Homeless Assessment Outcomes	
Prevention & Interventions	29
Emergency Service	6
Not eligible / Did not avail of service	13
HAP Place Finder Service	
No of Homeless HAP tenancies @ 1 st day of month	117
No of Homeless HAP tenancies created during month	0
No of Homeless HAP tenancies in place @ last day of month	117
Number of Homeless HAP tenancy breakdowns	0
Other Social Housing Tenancies supported /created during month	4
Households in Temporary Emergency Supported Accommodation	37
Households in Temporary Emergency B&B accommodation	5
Households in Temporary Emergency B&B Accommodation that are families	4
Households (singles/couples) in Transition Emergency Accommodation (<i>Own Front Door</i>)	31
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.

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 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 has 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 June 30th 2023

No of Applications Submitted to date	64
No of Approvals / Approvals in Principle to date	15
No of Queries during the month of June	130

Social Housing Assessment

SOCIAL HOUSING SUPPORT APPLICATION SUMMARY JUNE 2023	
Number awaiting Social Housing Support at June 30 th (Gross Need)	1,668
Number awaiting Social Housing Support at June 30 th (Net Need)	858
No. of Social Housing Applications received in June	93
No. of applications incomplete / awaiting further information / clarification	50
No. of applications validated and ready for assessment during the month	23
No. of applications assessed during June	8
No. of applications awaiting assessment as at June 30 th	93

HAP SUMMARY YEAR TO DATE 2023	
Total active HAP tenancies	645
New HAP tenancies set up	29
HAP allocated Social Housing	30
Closed HAP tenancies	69
HAP Rent Reviews	177
Other tenancy amendments	500
HAP calls received	1,800

Rent -a Room Scheme

Announcements have been made in the media that the Rent -a- Room scheme will be extended to local authority social housing tenancies. This action is included in *Housing For All* and seeks to secure additional accommodation due to growing pressures in the private rental sector.

The Rent-a-Room Scheme currently allows a householder to earn up to €14,000 per year tax-free by renting out a room (or rooms) in their home to “private tenants”.

Recent announcements indicate the governments intention to extend this scheme to local authority tenants but no details are yet in place. The Council cannot therefore process any applications to proceed under this scheme at present. There are many concerns around the implementation of this scheme which need to be addressed before it can proceed.

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 June and to date this year:

LA/RAS/Leasing allocations in June (<i>offers made</i>):.....	8
LA/RAS/Leasing allocations to date (<i>offers made</i>):.....	87
Tenant Liaison Officer cases in June:.....	71
Maintenance Calls for June:.....	439
Maintenance Calls year to date	3,039

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.

VOIDS

At the end of June 2023, there were 50 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 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 Department's 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 June, 2023		
<i>Scheme</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Amount</i>
HGD - Housing Adaptation Grant	114	€1,235,415
MAG - Mobility Aid Grant	13	€52,484
HOP - Housing Aid for Older Persons	160	€821,993
Total	287	€2,109,892

Grants Paid Out up to 30 th June, 2023		
<i>Scheme</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Amount</i>
HGD - Housing Adaptation Grant	33	€354,401
MAG - Mobility Aid Grant	6	€28,667
HOP - Housing Aid for Older Persons	84	€415,256
Total	123	€798,324

Housing Loans

Housing Loan Activity 0 1 st January to 30 th June, 2023					
<i>Loan Type</i>	<i>Received</i>	<i>Approved</i>	<i>Amount Approved</i>	<i>Number Paid</i>	<i>Amount Paid</i>
Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan	0	0	€0	1	€62,500
Local Authority Home Loan	21	4	€413,900	6	€658,900
Caravan Loan	0	0	€0.00	0	€0
Total	21	4	€413,900	7	€721,400

Housing Capital

The current Kilkenny County Council Housing Delivery Pipeline is:

- 2023:** Expected delivery is 121 units (*not including acquisitions or leasing*). Housing for All (HFA) target is 149 units.
- 2024:** Expected delivery is currently 237 units, HFA target is 153.
- 2025:** Delivery currently stands at 114 units.
This is expected to increase as more projects come on stream.

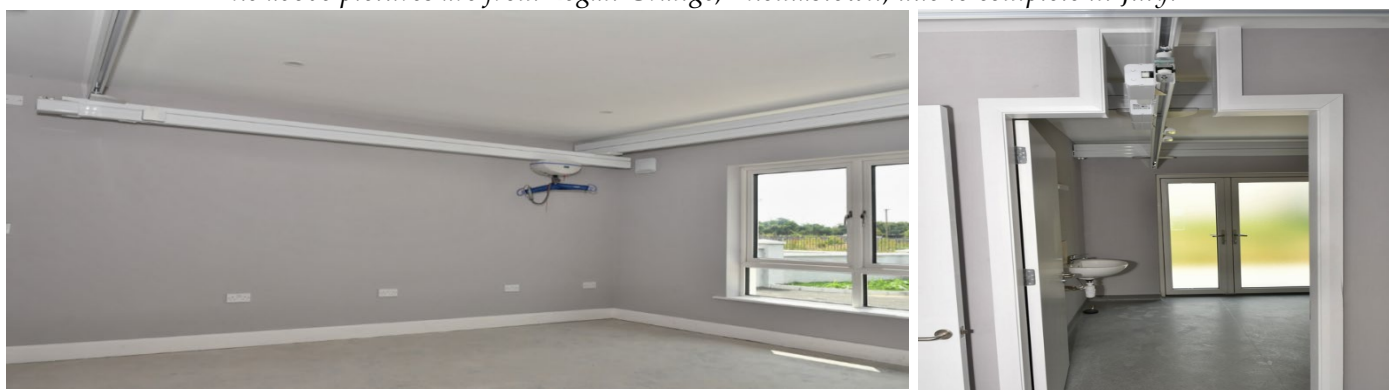
Completions:

The following developments are due for completion and allocation in July/ August:

- 6 Units at Golf Links Road, Kilkenny
- 25 Units at Ladywell, Thomastown.
-



The above pictures are from Legan Grange, Thomastown, due to complete in July.



The above photos are of a bespoke disabled unit at Circular Road, Kilkenny which was allocated this month





The above photos are of the 6 units, including 2 wheelchair accessible units, at Golf Links Road, Kilkenny due to be complete in July



Construction Continues at Pace in Crokers Hill (photos above)

Section 179A Planning:

There are 3 projects currently on public display as part of the new Section 179A planning process

introduced by Government.

These are:

- 42 Housing units at Newtown, Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny (*site in front of the new Primary Care Centre*)
- 6 Housing units at the Old Weather Station Site, Dunningstown Road, Kilkenny City
- An extension to an existing 3 bedroom house at Cloghs Gregg, Thomastown

Section 179A Provisions for Housing Developments is a temporary measure to allow for accelerated delivery of social, affordable and cost-rental housing by local authorities by way of exemption from the local authority own development 'Part 8' process under Section 179 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended (the Act) in strictly defined circumstances.

Link to the relevant regulations is here [S.I. No. 101/2023 - Planning and Development \(Section 179A\) Regulations 2023 \(irishstatutebook.ie\)](https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2023/si/101/2023-01-01/planning-and-development/section-179a-regulations-2023)

All drawings and documents associated with these developments can be viewed on: <https://consult.kilkenny.ie/>



Above: 3D Impression of the 42 Units at Newtown, Ladywell, Thomastown which is in front of the new Primary Care Center in Thomastown (To be known as Abbey Hill Estate when complete)

CIVIL DEFENCE

Civil Defence Activity

[January 2023 to June 30th 2023]

Event Type	Number of Events	No of Volunteers Attending	No of Hours
First Aid	19	80	447
Search & Rescue	5	23	92
Ukraine Response	4	7	22
Community Assistance	9	9	22
Medical Assistance	4	8	52
Emergency Response	1	2	18
Safety Boat	3	14	78
Total	45	143	731

The above activity equates to a fulltime member of staff working for 20.88 weeks (based on a 35hr week).

Training

Training Course	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 & Flood Rescue Boat Operator	4	2

The first half of this year has seen us invest in our Search and rescue capabilities with the purchase of a new boat allowing us access all types of River Rescue. Between the Nore, the Barrow and the Suir, within the County of Kilkenny, there are

approximately 98.3kms of water with 3 very different types of river systems.

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 applied to the Department of Defence for a grant towards this which was successful.

The Department of Defence is also launching a new Volunteer and Equipment Management system (VEMS). Here in Kilkenny Civil Defence we have been heavily involved in the end user testing and it is hoped to go live mid-July 2023. This will allow us plan courses and events, manage our stock and equipment all through the software eliminating large amounts of paper usage.

We have implemented Proworks for our fleet, with the assistance of the Health and Safety Team. This is helping us further implement our Climate Action Plan. Over the next few weeks we have many more first aid duties planned and are working with CYPSC to do our annual toy delivery to children with special needs across the County.

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 been engaging with other water groups such as, Kilkenny Kayak club and Kilkenny Sub Aqua in joint training exercises to strengthen our communications.

We have ran Community First responder courses with some GAA clubs. This will allow us train some of their members in correct CPR and use of an AED. This is proving very successful to date.

10 of our Volunteers also operate a community first responder group in Kilkenny City since last August. Outside of their work and regular Civil Defence training they respond to 999/112 calls for cardiac arrest within the City. We have assisted other Community first responder groups throughout the County with training.

UKRAINIAN RESPONSE UNIT

OFFER OF A HOME

The 'Offer a Home' programme is seeking property owners who have a house, apartment or holiday home that is not currently being used to offer it to people and families from Ukraine who need a safe place to stay.

The 'Offer a Home' Programme is being managed by Local Authorities on behalf of Government. A Government tax-free recognition payment of €800 per month is available to property owners offering accommodation to those fleeing the conflict in Ukraine.

Further details are available on the 'Offer a Home' programme on www.offerahome.ie or contact the Kilkenny County Council Ukrainian Response Team.

June 2023

Properties Offered.....	70
Properties Assessed as suitable.....	46
Allocated Properties	40
Registered Tenants in Occupied Properties	137
Properties that require Minor Works	9
Properties Unsuitable/require Major Works.....	11
Properties Withdrawn.....	12



COMMUNITY FORUM MONTHLY FOCUS

The Kilkenny Adult Learning Service as part of Kilkenny and Carlow ETB (KCETB) have the responsibility for organising English Language classes for people of other nationalities, where English is not their first or other language. Classes are taking place across Kilkenny City and County.

Since March 2022 over 700 Ukrainian learners have engaged with the Adult Learning Service Kilkenny. The vast majority of English language programmes run for four hours per week with the exception of three intensive courses, which runs over 5 days a week and provide the learner with 16 hours of English language tuition.



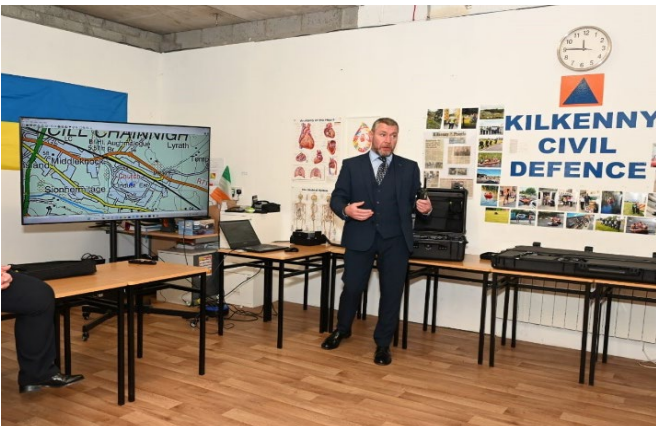
Launch of the new boat "Lady K"



Top Left: Paul Brophy, Technical Officer, from Roscrea. Top Right: Volunteers were addressed by Inspector Alma Molly, where she thanked them for their continued hard work.

Bottom Left: Katherine Peacock, after whom the vessel is named, with some of the crew.

Bottom Right: Director of Services Mary J Mulholland, Cathaoirleach Pat Fitzpatrick, Bishop Niall Coll and Fr Scriven



Mr. Paul Brophy, Technical Officer, From Roscrea giving a demonstration of our new Sonar and new Mapyx system

The Adult Guidance Service support the learners on the intensive programmes in relation to career preparation and educational opportunities.

Within Kilkenny City, classes take place in the following venues - Springhill Hotel, Club House Hotel, Ossory Youth, the Adult Learning Service and St. Kieran's College. In County Kilkenny classes run in Thomastown, Knocktopher, Freshford, Ballyragget, Ferrybank and Urlingford. The service is committed to supporting the learners in their local community.

Some of our highlights for this year include the following:

St. Brigid's Day

To support the integration of our Ukrainian learners into Irish society, on 1st February, St. Brigid's Day a group of Ukrainian learners took part in a St. Brigid's Cross Weaving Workshop in the Loughboy Library, Kilkenny.

As part of this workshop several styles of weaving were taught, they listened to many Irish legends in relation to St. Brigid, practiced their English language while interacting with other non-nationals and local people. It was also a great opportunity to introduce these learners to both the facilities and services of the local library.

European Cultures United Conference

The European Cultures United Conference was held on the 16th March in the New Park Hotel, Kilkenny. This event was organised by the Twilight Community Group and the Adult Learning Service, KCETB were invited to represent the Ukrainian culture.

The group, together with their tutor hosted a stand decorated in Ukrainian style with traditional embroidered shirts, accessories, some food and other cultural elements. This was a great experience for the learners involved as they listened to speakers from many other countries, socialised while having to converse in English.

It was also an opportunity for them to network as well as it being an important team-building activity. It also afforded them the opportunity to meet with the Mayor of Kilkenny, David Fitzgerald.



Ukrainian Folklore

The Ukrainian Family Learning Group from Springhill and Wallslough hosted a reading of 'The Kolobok' a Ukrainian folktale in Loughboy Library in Kilkenny on Wednesday 26th April.

All the props and back drops were made by both parents and children. Those in attendance were library staff, Ukrainians from other programmes

and many Irish people who took a great interest in what was going on. The story was read in both English and Ukrainian. The children sang the song associated with the folklore.



FIRE SERVICES

Capital Projects

The tender for the design consultancy services for the new fire station for Kilkenny City went for publication on the OJEU on Friday 30th June, 2023. The site for the new station is a 3-acre site at the Kilkenny Business and Retail Park, Waterford Road, Kilkenny.

The tender for the supply of a command and control vehicle is currently on the etenders website.

The construction of a new fire station for Urlingford is completed.



Fire Safety Certificates

68 applications for fire safety certificates were received to date.

48 applications were received for the same period last year.

Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003

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

6 Licence Applications were processed under Section 24 of the Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003.

23 Fire safety inspections of premises have taken place so far this year.

Fire Brigade Operations

The Brigades have attended 328 incidents to date in 2023. These incidents included a number of road traffic collisions including a fatality, public road hazards, domestic fires, automatic fire alarm

activations, fires and an increasing number of ambulance assists in recent weeks.

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) is provided to all our staff. It represents an integrated 'system' of interventions, which are designed to prevent and/or monitor impact and/or mitigate the adverse psychological reactions that so often accompany emergency services, public safety and disaster response functions. CISM interventions are especially directed towards the monitoring and mitigation of post-traumatic stress reactions.

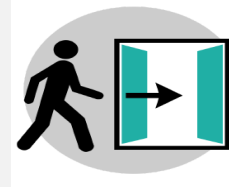
The system has a number of components (*internal and external to Kilkenny Fire and Rescue Service*) that all work toward providing a package of care to all operational staff. The individual components are as follows:

- Pre Incident Awareness Training,
- Peer Supporters and Defusing Sessions,
- Liaison Officer,
- Trained Personnel for Debriefing Sessions,
- One on One Confidential Counselling Session's and a 24 Hour Helpline.

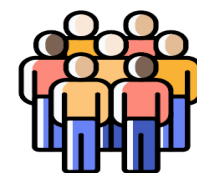
LIBRARY



26,415 Items borrowed



17,648 Visitors



1,678 Members

Cruinniú na nÓg

Cruinniú na nÓg, the national day of free creativity for children and young people, also made its return on June 10th. Children all over the County had the opportunity to embrace their creativity and learn new skills at their local library.

Castlecomer, Urlingford and Ferrybank Libraries each held two Lego workshops which encouraged problem-solving, communication and spatial intelligence skills in a fun, creative environment. Graiguenamanagh Library hosted two Lego stop motion animation workshops where children learned how to storyboard and create their own Lego movies.

Thomastown Library held an introductory podcasting workshop with CreateSchool aimed at teens and tweens where participants learned how to script, record, edit and share their very own short podcast episode with the world.

Loughboy and Thomastown Libraries also distributed a number of Cruinniú na nÓg spinning plates which library members (and staff) enjoyed experimenting with.

To keep the creativity flowing, on Saturday mornings we have also been hosting a summer painting series on Facebook with tutorials from Tribe Art Studio.

Summer Stars Reading Challenge

Kilkenny County Council Library Service were delighted to welcome back the Summer Stars reading challenge this year. This summer reading challenge is a national initiative as part of the Right to Read literacy programme which aims to promote the enjoyment of reading among children and minimise the decline in reading levels, or “the summer slide”, over the summer holidays. Participants are encouraged to read or listen to 8 books, eBooks, eAudiobooks or even eMagazines and track their progress on their Summer Stars reading card.



The 2023 challenge runs from June 15th to August 25th. We held a variety of events to celebrate the launch including bookmark making workshops in City and Castlecomer Libraries, a launch party with Jellybean Julie in Loughboy Library, balloon modelling and face painting in Thomastown and Ferrybank Libraries and a fun-filled afternoon in Graiguenamanagh Library with The Funky Kids Club.

To-date, 1,212 children have signed up to take part in the challenge and set off on their summer reading adventure. Every time a child comes to visit the library and return books, they can get their reading card stamped by a member of staff and are entered into a weekly prize draw to win a book token.

Staff have also been busy preparing a weekly Summer Stars book quiz on Facebook and a recommended reads video to provide inspiration to children selecting their next read.

Little Library Bags

Kilkenny County Council Library Service will once again be taking part in the First 5 Little Library Bag initiative which offers a free book bag with storybooks for children and supportive information for parents to all children starting school in September 2023. The specially selected books explore themes such as starting school, self-confidence and making friends.

These free bags can be collected from any Kilkenny Library Branch along with a gift of a special library card wallet and a postcard to introduce themselves to their new teacher. Approximately 1,300 children across Kilkenny are due to start primary school in September and are therefore eligible to avail of this service.





Library Activities

Events	In Branch	Online	Offsite	Live	Numbers
160	154	0	8	142	3274

This month we had lots of activities and events across our libraries. These events included ETB patchwork classes in Thomastown Library, Saturday Creation Stations in Graiguenamanagh Library, and a Teddy Bear’s Picnic and music workshop for babies and toddlers in Ferrybank Library.

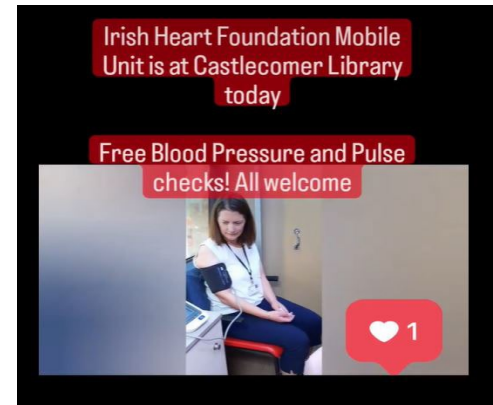
To celebrate Biodiversity Week, Loughboy Library hosted the first in a series of four biodiversity workshops. These walks showcase the fascinating biodiversity of Kilkenny meadows and explore the importance of native wild flowers and plants for biodiversity and pollinators. Participants learned a range of hands-on practical surveying skills using the Library Citizen Science Kit as well as how to record findings through the National Biodiversity Data Centre. For children, a colouring competition took place to teach younger library members about biodiversity.

Loughboy Library also held a highly enjoyable clothes swap and upcycling demonstration where attendees had the opportunity to refresh their wardrobes in a more eco-friendly way and also learned how to update pieces they already own.

The Irish Heart Foundation’s mobile unit paid a visit to Castlecomer Library where members of the public were able to avail of a free blood pressure and pulse check. Thomastown Library

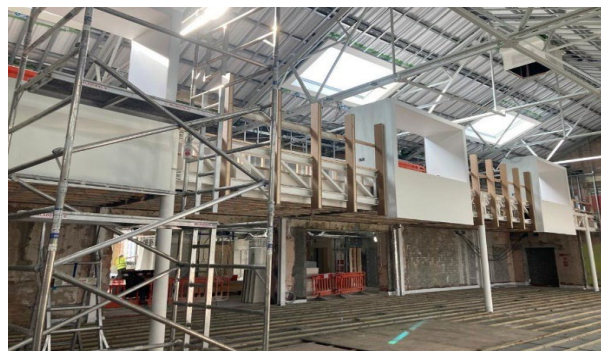
also put a healthier spin on reading with our first ever walking book club. Members of this novel book club discussed this month’s book club pick, “The Four Winds” by Kristin Hannah, while on a walk around

Thomastown. Throughout the month of June, our library branches hosted 160 events with a total of 3,274 attendees both in our branches and on visits to local creches, schools and community groups.

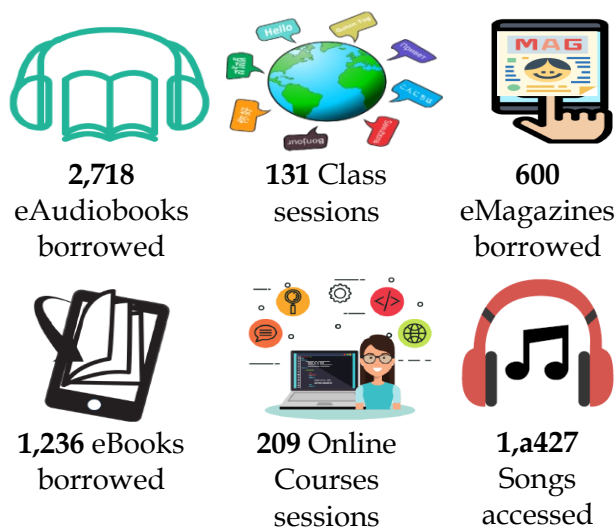


Mayfair Library Update

- Installing of ventilation ducting 1st FL Southwest Extension ongoing
- Lagging of ducting ongoing
- Installing of pipe work for UFH Children’s Area ongoing
- Installing of pipework GF Northeast Extension for heating/ water services
- Installing pipework and pumps 1st FL Pump Room for heating services
- Erecting of metal studding and lining of walls GF Adult Area ongoing
- Lining of walls 1st FL Store ongoing
- Taping and jointing of studding 1st FL. Southwest Extension and GF Adult Area ongoing
- Fixing of grounds to top hats, IT Area for Acoustic Panels ongoing
- Rendering of internal walls 1st FL Southwest Extension
- Skimming of internal walls 1st FL Stairs 1
- Tiling of walls and floors GF WCs ongoing



Online Services Usage



Digital Engagement

Our staff have prepared, recorded, edited and published 320 posts and videos on our social media platforms in June. Our engagements for the month were 2,932 and our videos had 10,057 views.

FINANCE

The expenditure by service division to the end of June is set out in Table 1. Total Expenditure for the period was €45M compared with the annual budget of €98.75m.

Table 1	Actual YTD June 2023	Budget Full Year 2023
	€'000's	€'000's
Housing & Building	10,899	22,698
Road Transport & Safety	12,400	27,560
Water Services	3,534	7,736
Development Management	4,888	11,754
Environmental Services	5,785	13,520
Recreation & Amenity	3,184	8,091
Agriculture, Education, Health, Welfare	278	692
Miscellaneous Services	4,007	6,698
OVERALL TOTAL	44,975	98,749

Finance Update

Inflation is still having an impact on the cost of delivering all services and on the delivery of the Capital Programme. This issue will be kept under review as we go through the year. The bank overdraft facility was not utilised in the six-month period to the end of June.

The total expenditure on the capital account to the end of June was €35.9m (2022 €23.7m) with housing accounting for €19.3m (2022 €15.2m) of the total.

The audit by the Local Government Auditor for Financial Year 2022 is ongoing.

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 193 appeals have been completed. The following is a breakdown of the appeal outcomes to date:

Decrease in Revaluation on Appeal	149 cases
Appeal Withdrawn	34 cases
Increase in Revaluation on Appeal	1 case
No change to Revaluation on Appeal	10 cases
Appeals outstanding	3 cases

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

Commercial Rates Vacancy

The commercial rates vacancy remains at 90% for 2023. A 90% vacancy strike off will be applied to eligible commercial rate accounts for 2023 where the customer formally applies, provides proof of vacancy and clears any outstanding rate arrears, where applicable.

Abbey Quarter Funding

At the June Plenary Meeting Kilkenny County Council approved an additional equity investment of €3.5m in Kilkenny Abbey Quarter Development Partnership. This will be matched by an equivalent equity investment from the NTMA. This funding is required to fund the next phase of the development which includes the development of two commercial projects namely, a new building currently in the planning process and the refurbishment of an existing building called the "engineers building" which is currently being acquired by the Partnership from Diageo. The total estimated investment required for these two buildings is €23.5m.