

CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT

JUNE 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

14th June to 31st August
Summer Stars

12th August to 20th August
National Heritage Week 2023.

30th June, 2023.

Closing date for receipt of views from interested parties for consultation on Irelands 30-year strategy on Greenhouse Gas Emission Reductions.

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CIVIC RECEPTIONS MAY 2023



ROADS

MAJOR PROJECTS

(Included in NDP- Funded by TII)

N24 Waterford to Cahir Scheme

The Design Team is working on corridor options. The Project Liaison Officer (PLO) is continuing to work with landowners to agree access to facilitate the completion of the preliminary ground investigation works. Although investigation works commenced in November 2022, the works were suspended in December 2022 due to saturated ground conditions as a result of consistently poor weather.

The works recommenced in March 2023 and are due to be completed in June 2023. The findings of these investigations will input into The Preferred Transport Solution.

This was scheduled to be put on public display at the end of Q2 2023, however this is now scheduled to take place in Q4 of 2023.

MINOR PROJECTS

(Not included in NDP-Funded by TII)

N24 Tower Road (Safety Scheme)

The tender in respect of construction of the scheme was awarded to Wills Bros Ltd, Co. Mayo on the 1st December 2022. 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.

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 Suttonsrath 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 by June 2023 with a view to construction commencing during Q3 2023.

The design work is ongoing in respect of the N76 Callan By Pass Pavement Scheme is on-going. It remain targeted to have these awarded for construction in 2023. The Callan By Pass scheme in particular is complex given its semi urban location.

National Road Bridge Works

The N10 Ossory Bridge Rehabilitation Scheme has been awarded to 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.

Kildare County Council are project managing N10 Ossory Bridge Rehabilitation Scheme under a Section 85 Agreement on behalf of Kilkenny County Council.

The works will entail significant works to the approaches and parapets of the bridge structure and will provide a significant enhancement of the existing substandard shared surface facilities across the structure.

ENVIRONMENT

CLIMATE ACTION

Public Consultation on Climate Action Plan

The public was consulted during the month of May, on what they would like to see addressed in the new Kilkenny County Council Climate Action Plan currently being prepared by the Climate Action Office. This phase of consultation included PR, talks and information at events including the Kilkenny Bike Fest, the annual Tidy Towns Network Forum, Earth Day, the Kilkenny PPN Plenary, the Kilkenny County Council Plenary meeting and the Home Energy Information Event. Submissions were invited on consult.kilkenny.ie, and by email.

A review of climate-related submissions received on recently prepared plans was also undertaken, including the County Development Plan, the Local Economic and Community Plan and the National Climate Conversations Report and workshops. A report summarising the submissions is being prepared and the findings will inform the actions in the Climate Action Plan. The public will have a second opportunity to make submissions on the draft plan in the Autumn.



Climate Action Information, Kilkenny Bike Fest, 14th May. Dearbhala Ledwidge, Climate Action Coordinator; Catherine Byrne-Murphy, Community Development Officer, and Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick.

Home Energy & Climate Information Event, Loughboy

The Home Energy Information Workshop organised by South East Energy Agency and Kilkenny County Council Library Service, Loughboy was a great success and had a wonderful turn out with members of the public keen to learn about energy savings at home.

Kilkenny County Council's Community Climate Action Officer Breda Maher was a guest speaker on the day and advised on the Community Climate Action Fund due to be launched soon.

Climate Action at the Tidy Towns Forum, Castlecomer

The annual Kilkenny Tidy Towns Forum organised by Kilkenny County Council and Castlecomer Tidy Towns took place on the 24th May in Avalon Hotel, Castlecomer with presentations from the Climate Action Team on the Climate Action Plan and the Community Climate Action Fund. The importance of Tidy Towns and their work in the community was highlighted as playing a key role in tackling climate change at a local level. There was a terrific attendance with 16 Kilkenny Tidy Towns groups represented.



Climate Art Competition, City Hall

Hosted by the Mayor of Kilkenny, Cllr. David Fitzgerald, the Carbon Neutral Art Competition brought teachers, family and friends together to produce artwork and models of some of the City's best-known buildings, such as, Kilkenny Castle, City Hall and Nolan Park. Students made use of recycled materials. Alexander Grey took first prize for his depiction of City Hall.



The Mayor paid tribute to all the wonderful art projects. Speaking at the event, Acting Director of Services Denis Malone highlighted the importance of recycling and reusing materials. Kilkenny County Council supplied small goody bags to the children for their efforts in taking part.

Climate Hero Challenge

The national Climate Hero Challenge was a great success in County Kilkenny with 19 individual teams and 129 people (out of a total 517 participants in Ireland) taking part. Together in the 2 weeks Kilkenny saved over 8,500kg in CO₂ emissions – the same amount as 856 trees absorb in one year! This challenge showed how small changes to our everyday lifestyles do make a significant difference.

Kilkenny County Council led by example with 2 teams - Kilkenny Fire and Rescue Service placing a fantastic 4th and Kilkenny County Council placing 11th overall in the County.

See link for our media correspondence: [Kilkenny groups show small steps can have big impact on climate change - Kilkenny Live \(kilkennypeople.ie\)](#)



Is your community or business an energy leader?

The SEAI invites communities, businesses, individuals, and organisations from Kilkenny who see themselves as leaders in energy efficiency and renewable energy to enter their 20th annual energy awards, where your hard work and achievements could be celebrated at the SEAI Gala awards in November. Think you have what it takes? Find out more, and apply by June 23rd at [SEAI Energy Awards | Events | SEAI](#)

Consultation on Ireland's 30-year strategy on Greenhouse Gas Emission Reductions

Ireland's Long-term Strategy on Greenhouse Gas Emission Reductions, covering at least the next 30 years, outlines how Ireland proposes to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. Views are invited from interested parties until **5:30pm on Friday, 30 June 2023**. [Click here for more](#).

Bring Banks Usage

The Council provides and manages 46 Bring Centres across the City and County. A total of 874 tonnes of recyclables were collected from our Bring Centres so far in 2023. This represents a 18% increase on the same period last year. Loughboy Shopping Centre (18 tonnes collected), Lidl Johnswell Road (12 tonnes collected) and Aldi Kilkenny City (11 tonnes collected) are the busiest locations in the City and Mooncoin (12 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 long 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 five months of 2023 was 402 compared with 419 for the same period last year (*i.e. down circa 4% 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 (69%).

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

Requests for tenders will be issued in the next few weeks to contractors for prices in order to carry out the conservation works on all three projects.

Funding for Conservation Reports (Stream 2) are listed below

- Tubbrid Medieval Church
- Rathpatrick Medieval Church

Our consultant is now in the process of getting specialist consultants on site to carry out various assessments with regards to ecology & archaeology in order to submit a conservation report which will form part of a capital project community monument application (Stream 1) for next year



The Thomple in Thomastown where conservation works will be commencing soon



Vegetation recently removed from Tubrid Church and Graveyard

PARKS & SPECIAL PROJECTS

Woodstock Gardens

In recent weeks staff have undertaken significant replanting of the herbaceous borders of the Walled Garden. Whilst the planting is still quite young it will develop over the summer period. Owing to this fact; signage has been put in place to inform visitors of the current transition of this feature within the gardens. The planting palette has naturally drawn upon the varieties common to the Victorian era, but also to include pollinator friendly plants, which will provide a valuable food source for our important pollinators.

Additionally, our food and beverage offering is now in operation for the tourist season, currently open at weekends extending to the Tea Room Conservatory, coffee truck and ice cream hut. As the summer progresses the opening hours shall be extended to reflect the increase of visitors.



Woodstock - Accessible Play Equipment

In 2022, we were successful in seeking funding via the Disability Participation and Awareness Fund. This funding, along with funding secured under the ORIS, allowed for the provision of a new wheelchair See-saw and accessible Play Tower to complement our existing playground.

The installation was completed in May and has now undergone a ROSPA safety inspection, which allowed for the new components to be opened to the public for the June bank holiday weekend.



Woodstock - Wheelchair Accessible Buggy

Our new fully electric and wheelchair accessible buggy was delivered during the month. This new addition to the gardens builds on our objective to make the gardens more accessible for all. The vehicle was purchased from grant funding secured under the 2022 Disability Participation and Awareness Fund. The vehicle can accommodate wheelchair users without the user having to exit their wheelchairs as well as accommodating 9 additional passengers. Accessibility ramps are currently being constructed at the Toilet Block and Tea Room and driving training is to be rolled out shortly in anticipation that a scheduled service will be operational later in the summer.



Woodstock Committee.

The inaugural meeting of the newly established Woodstock Committee was held on Friday the 12th May. The Terms of Reference for the group were discussed, which focus on inputs and recommendations on the offering and promotion of Woodstock Gardens so as to maximise the natural, built and cultural heritage of same as a tourist destination. The Committee were given an overview of the annual budget and details of improvement works completed over the past five years from funding secured from various Capital funding streams. It was noted this investment amounted to just over €1,000,000 over the five year period. After the meeting the Committee were offered a tour of the Gardens to see some of the recently completed enhancement works.

Parks & Playgrounds

With the approach of summer undoubtedly sees the increased activity within our playgrounds. Staff continue to play a key role to ensure they are maintained to a high standard and any defects identified and remedied in a timely manner. In recent weeks repairs have been carried out in Rosehill and Newpark to include repairs to the safety surface around particular play items. This safety surface is a highly elastic playground surface which helps in preventing accidents and protects against injuries.

Many of our playgrounds comprise of timber-based products which are primarily robinia timber play items. Using timber incorporates the natural surrounding environment, however, it does require maintenance largely in the form of repainting with timber preservative. Staff have also overseen repainting in both Windgap and Bennettsbride as shown below, which shall further ensures their longevity.



Freshford Playground & Amenity Area

In front of a big crowd, the Cathaoirleach of Kilkenny County Council, Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick officially opened the much anticipated new playground in Freshford Village. The completed project, located beside St. Lachtain's GAA Club and National School sees an investment of over €240,000 into Freshford village, made up of a combination of funding streams, including Town & Village Renewal from the Department of Rural & Community Development, the Council's Community & Cultural Facilities Capital Scheme, the Council's own funds and funds collected locally by the Freshford Playground Committee.





The new Playground extends to just under one acre and includes a zip-wire, swings, slides, play tower, basket swing and woodland play equipment along with a new access road and carparking area to service the amenity.

The site also caters for a new wildflower meadow and additional tree planting, all of which will help to combat the decline of our pollinators.

Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme

The Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD, recently launched the 2023 Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme. An indicative budget of €16 million is available for successful projects nationally under the Scheme. Funding will be provided under four different categories of projects (Measures) based on the size of the investment requirement, similar to recent years. A list of eligible activities is detailed below:

		
Land-Based	Water-Based	Air-Based
Walking	Canoeing/Kayaking	Paragliding
Hillwalking/Hiking	Rowing	Hang-gliding
Leisure cycling	Wild swimming	
Mountain biking	Surfing	
Horse riding	Coasteering	
Running	Wind surfing/Kite surfing	
Orienteering	Sailing	
Bouldering, Scrambling, Rockclimbing, Mountaineering	Diving	
Caving	Angling	
Play in nature	Stand Up Paddleboarding	
Passive enjoyment of the outdoors		

Similar to last year each Local Authority can submit a maximum of applications under the following Measures:

- 7 Measure 1, max value €30k per application;
- 3 Measure 2, max value €200k per application;
- 1 Measure 3, max value €500k;
- 2 Project Development, max value €50K.

Under the scheme applicants are required to provide 10% match funding of the allocated grant.

The closing date for applications is as follows:-

Project Development – 28th July, Measure 1 - 5th September, Measures 2 & 3 - 27th October 2023.

Elected Members are invited to contact the Project Office and Parks Section with any Expressions of Interest they or constituents would like to have considered as part of the application preparation process.

PLANNING

Development Management

Planning Summary	Total May	
	2022	2023
Planning Applications Received	354	357
Planning Applications Granted	314	221
Planning Applications Refused	35	51
Complaints Received	42	42
Warning Letters Issued	50	40
Enforcements Notices Issued	18	24
Cases Closed	49	23

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 will be on public display from Friday 2nd June to Friday, 30th June (*both dates inclusive*) and may be inspected at the following locations:

On the Council website under View Materials on the right hand side.

- Planning Office, Kilkenny County Council, County Hall, John Street, Kilkenny
- Kilkenny City Library, John's Quay, Kilkenny
- The Draft Plan, will be on public display from Friday June 2nd to Friday June 30th June (*both dates inclusive*) and may be inspected at the following locations:

Submissions or observations may be made:

- online at <http://consult.kilkenny.ie/> or
- by e-mail to ourplan@kilkennycoco.ie or
- in writing to: A/Senior Planner, Planning Department, Kilkenny County Council, County Hall, John Street, Kilkenny

There will also be two in-person information sessions during this period. Both will be held on June 20th in the Ormonde Hotel, Ormonde St., Kilkenny.

- An afternoon session commencing at 3pm.
- An evening session commencing at 7pm.
- Each session will be approximately 90mins long.

Booking for the sessions can be made by searching the Eventbrite website under "Abbey Quarter Masterplan"

There will also be an online information session on June 21st at 7pm, on the ZOOM platform, which you can attend using the link below:

<https://kpmgireland.zoom.us/j/83000357077?pwd=VnlBalo0STh0VW93eVdvVkVwS3duUT09>.

The passcode is 444430. No booking is needed for the information session on June 21st. Please also refer to Consult.Kilkenny.ie for further details.

Following public consultation the Chief Executive's report will be brought back to the Council for consideration.

St. Canice's Campus

A final meeting took place with the HSE project working group on the draft spatial framework. This draft framework is still under consideration by the HSE and once approved will go to the Council's Management Team before being brought to the Municipal District members. It will then be placed on public display for 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 material amendments to the Loughmacask Masterplan and Environmental screenings reports were on public display from Friday 21st April 2023 to Friday May 26th 2023. A drop in public information session was held in St. Canice's Neighbourhood Hall on Monday 8th May 2023 from 7pm to 9pm. A total of 3 submissions were received and the plan will now go before the Council for final consideration and adoption at the June Council Meeting.

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, the proposal to place this plan on public display will be before the Municipal District members at their June Meeting. An update on the plan proposals will be provided at the July Municipal District meeting. A public workshop on this draft plan will also take place once the draft plan is placed on public 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 18th, 19th and 20th of January 2023. With due consideration of inputs from these meetings the consultants are currently drafting the three Masterplans, which are expected in June 2023. The draft plans will be presented to the respective Municipal Districts prior to them going on public display.

Taking in Charge

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

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

- Lakeside Housing Estate and Walkway/Cycleway: 2 submissions received
- Ogenty Housing Estate, Gowran advertised in Kilkenny People: 2 submissions received. The above submissions may result in delays to the taking in charge process.
- Abbeygate, Ferrybank – works complete and ready for final sign off.
- Internal Road to Retail Park –Developer to appoint contractor for required works.
- 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

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

Active Land Management

The Draft Maps of land in scope for the Residential Zoned Land Tax were published on the 1st November, 2022. A total of 25 submissions were made to the process. Determinations were made on each of these submissions, and landowners were notified of the determinations. A total of 12 landowners appealed their determinations to An Bord Pleanála. Along with 14 other Local Authorities, Kilkenny is not publishing a Supplemental Map, as there are 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 31 sites on the Derelict Sites Register. One site in Graiguenamanagh was added to the Register and two other sites were subject to notices of intent to be added to the Register.

There are 24 Vacant Sites on the Vacant Sites Register and the number of cancelled entries due to site activation or improvement is 23. A payment of €28,000 was received for a vacant site in Ferrybank in April. 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.

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: Three consultants have been invited to tender for the delivery of laser scans, photogrammetry and building interpretations for two 16th century buildings on Parliament Street. This process is ongoing.

Building Control

Valid Commencement Notices Submitted from Start of Year to End of Month

May 2023.....	112
May 2022.....	165
May 2021.....	175
May 2020.....	143

Valid Disability Access Applications Received from Start of Year to End of Month:

May 2023.....	22
May 2022.....	41
May 2021.....	27
May 2020.....	33

COMMUNITY

Sessions House Official Opening

On the 17th May, Minister Heather Humphreys officially opened the Sessions House redevelopment project. This project, funded under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, together with a contribution from the Leader Programme through Kilkenny Leader Partnership and match funding from Kilkenny County Council has delivered a significant investment in the creative sector and in Thomastown.

This development represents a commitment to supporting and promoting the progression of new creative talent to employment in the creative sector. Sessions House will accommodate the Jewellery & Goldsmithing on-site campus, previously located at Castle yard Kilkenny. These courses have attained Level 8 accreditation from Atlantic Technical University (ATU) in partnership with DCCI representing a significant move forward with the provision of Third Level Education in Kilkenny.



Community and Cultural Facilities Capital Scheme 2023

The closing date for the Community and Cultural Facilities Scheme was Friday the 19th of May. Kilkenny County Council have received 17 applications for funding from community groups across the County. The evaluation process will take place and results will be presented to the Elected Members at the July Council Meeting for approval.

Africa Day

The Africa Day Celebrations took place on Saturday 27th May in the Home Rule Club, Johns Quay. The event was well attended with 250 people visiting throughout the day. This was a multicultural event showcasing cultural music, dance, food and craft from across the continent.



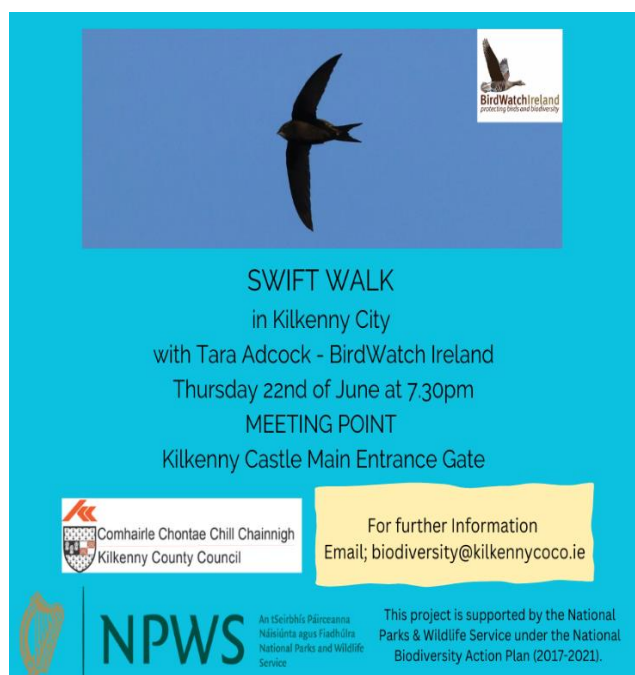
Biodiversity

Bernadette Moloney, the Council's Biodiversity Officer is now based in the Community Section. In May, she spoke at the Tidy Towns Forum and PPN plenary outlining the role and the interconnectivity the post will have with communities.

Local Biodiversity Action Fund

The National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage has approved grant funding of €99,252 to Kilkenny County Council under the Local Biodiversity Action Fund. Projects include biodiversity training, the continuation treatment programme to eliminate invasive alien plant species which threaten the biodiversity of Silaire Wood, and Woodstock Gardens & Estate, projects with BirdWatch Ireland to further safeguard the Swift and Barn Owl population in Kilkenny and ecological assessments to determine the condition of hedgerows throughout the County. The Biodiversity Officer will oversee these projects as part of her brief.

The first public event relating to the successful Local Biodiversity Action Fund is a Swift Walk that takes place in Kilkenny City on the 22nd of June with BirdWatch Ireland. Everyone is welcome to attend, to view swifts in flight, to learn more about these summer visitors to Kilkenny and hear what we can do to safeguard their population as it's a species in decline and they need our help.



A poster for a Swift Walk event. It features a large image of a swift in flight against a blue sky. The text on the poster includes: 'SWIFT WALK in Kilkenny City with Tara Adcock - BirdWatch Ireland Thursday 22nd of June at 7.30pm MEETING POINT Kilkenny Castle Main Entrance Gate'. It also includes logos for BirdWatch Ireland, Kilkenny County Council, and NPWS, along with contact information for further information.

SWIFT WALK
in Kilkenny City
with Tara Adcock - BirdWatch Ireland
Thursday 22nd of June at 7.30pm
MEETING POINT
Kilkenny Castle Main Entrance Gate

For further Information
Email: biodiversity@kilkennycoco.ie

NPWS An tSeirbhís Náisiúnaí
National Parks and Wildlife Service
This project is supported by the National
Parks & Wildlife Service under the National
Biodiversity Action Plan (2017-2021).

HERITAGE

Heritage Council launches National Heritage Week

The Heritage Council is calling on heritage newcomers, enthusiasts and experts of all ages across Ireland to focus on living heritage when registering in-person events and digital projects for inclusion as part of National Heritage Week 2023. National Heritage Week will run from Saturday, 12th August – Sunday, 20th August, and has become one of Ireland's largest cultural events. Events and digital projects can now be uploaded via the Organisers' Portal on www.heritageweek.ie. We are looking forward to a rich schedule of events in Kilkenny this year.



Archaeological walk of Newtown Jerpoint with Daniel O'Mahony takes place during Heritage Week 2023.

Irish Walled Towns Network funding awarded

Kilkenny County Council has been awarded funding for interpretation of the City Walls of Kilkenny under the Heritage Council ITWN grant scheme. The aim of the project is to design and install information plaques on 5 key sections of the Kilkenny City walls. This is Phase 1 of a larger project to develop a trail of Kilkenny City walls. Phase 2 will involve installation of further plaques and development of a trail route and information.

Holy Wells and Mass Paths of County Kilkenny

Kilkenny County Council has been awarded funding to undertake a countywide survey of holy wells (Phase 1) and to carry out a pilot study to develop a methodology for surveying mass paths in County Kilkenny.

The Heritage Office seeks your assistance in collecting information about these sites around the County.

If you are aware of a holy well or mass path local to you, please contact heritage@kilkennycoco.ie. Holy wells and mass paths are sacred places in the local landscape and are held dear by local people. They are of cultural, archaeological, ecological, folklore, spiritual, religious and geological significance.

This project will collect data and raise awareness about the holy wells and mass paths of Kilkenny and the traditions and practices associated with these often lesser-known aspects of our cultural heritage with a view to helping to ensure their care and protection.

ARTS

Visual Artists Needs Analysis

Kilkenny Arts Office has joined up with Visual Artists Ireland to conduct a County Kilkenny Visual Arts Needs Analysis. This consists of an in-depth online survey that artists in Kilkenny are asked to complete.

Visual Artists Ireland will then use this to map the strengths, weaknesses, gaps, cultural infrastructure and opportunities for visual artists in Kilkenny. This is followed by a visual artists café that will explore current visual arts practice in Kilkenny. A final report will be given to the Arts Office.

Your Voice Matters Collaboration Skills For Success Workshop

As part of the Arts Office Your Voice Matters programme a one-day workshop took place at Butler House on the 9th May. This full day, interactive, practical, and fun workshop gave participants across all artforms an experience of working together collaboratively and the knowledge, tools and resources to become more effective collaborators, whatever project they're working on.

A total of 20 artists across artforms attended and topics covered included:

- The Conditions required for True Collaboration
- Purpose – What Impact do we want our Work to have?
- Importance of Contracting & Building Trust

- Team Norms – What Behaviours will Lead to Effective Collaboration
- Communication – What gets in the Way? Agreeing a Common Language & Framework for Communicating
- Roles within every Collaboration
- Harnessing Conflict and Divergence. Understanding and Appreciating Different Strengths (DISC Energies)

Your Voice Matters 2023 Programme

Our *Your Voice Matters* programme for writers will be rolled out over a nine-month period this year. 7 writers have signed up to take part in the programme and the first session, an in-person workshop 'Sustaining a Flourishing Writing Practice' took place at Butler House on Saturday 13th May. It was a relaxed, informative and interactive workshop that set the foundation for their work over the year.

Poetry Broadsheet

Broadsheet editor Afric Mc Glinchey selected a total of 12 poems for publication in this year's poetry Broadsheet.

Poets included: Mike Watts, Anne Mac Darby Beck, Emily Murtagh, Paddy Doyle, Alice Bennett, Noel Howley, Eamonn Donovan, Nuala Roche, Mia King, Breda Joyce, Canice Kenealy and Darren Caffrey.

The poems are now with the illustrator Louise Naughton who will design and illustrate the Broadsheet.

Emerging Curator In Residence Programme

The emerging curator Shannon Carrol is in the process of setting up her first exhibition of the year titled *Horizon | Ag Bun na Spéire*, an immersive multimedia installation by visual artist Catherine McDonald which presents an imaginary landscape.

Blending fact with fiction, the exhibition speculates upon human ideologies of life on alternate planets.

The site combines natural and synthetic materials, evoking a world which appears both old and new; familiar and unfamiliar. The exhibition is located at Unit 27, The Goods Shed, MacDonagh junction.



National Final Student Enterprise Programme

Students from two Kilkenny schools were successful at this year's Student Enterprise Programme National Finals which held on 5th May in Croke Park.

St. Kieran's College students Cian Holohan and Jack Dooley who won third place in the main competition intermediate category with their student enterprise 'HD Horseshoe Designs', which sell a variety of ornaments made from repurposed horseshoes. In "My Entrepreneurial Journey" competition two Coláiste Abhainn Rí students were successful in the National Finals; Ruth O'Sullivan of Shake It Up Ltd. came third in the junior category and Darragh Lyons from Energelz was runner up in the intermediate category



LEO in the Community

In a joint initiative between the Local Enterprise Office Kilkenny (LEO Kilkenny) and the Kilkenny Library Services, during the month of May, LEO Kilkenny held business advisory clinics in the libraries throughout the County. Following from the success of this, LEO Kilkenny are hosting more FREE one-to-one business advisory clinics in various Kilkenny libraries later in the year with dates to be confirmed.

New Support – Energy Efficiency Grant for small Enterprises



Energy Efficiency Grant Launched

The Energy Efficiency Grant supports the investment in technologies and equipment identified in a Green for Micro Report, GreenStart Report or a SEAI Energy Audit with 50% of eligible costs up to a maximum grant of €5,000.

The aim of the scheme is to reduce the impact of enterprises on the environment thereby increasing the agility and resilience of these businesses.

WWW.LOCAENTERPRISE.IE/ENERGY

Eligible Costs

- Meters (*electricity, gas, diesel, oil, water, steam & loggers*) and installation costs
- Smart energy controls e.g., heating, cooling, lighting, automatic on/off systems, parasitic load controls
- Upgrade lighting to LED (*only as part of a package of eligible cost measures*)
- Replacement/upgrade with more energy efficient system, e.g. Heat Pumps (*including air, water, and ground source*) for manufacturing heating processes
- Heat recovery
- Small wind & hydro subject to feasibility assessment
- Equipment (*>10 years*) replacement/upgrade such as refrigeration unit, electric steam boiler, electric oven, industrial dishwasher, engineering equipment
- System components upgrades such as variable speed drives, pumps, fans, condensers, extraction systems, cold room doors

UPCOMING EVENTS

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

This Seminar, run in partnership with Kilkenny Chamber of Commerce, will enable business owners to examine the best ways to retain employees and to recruit new talent for the present and future needs of your business. This seminar will be held in Newpark Hotel, Castlecomer Road, Kilkenny on Thursday 15th June from 12.30pm-2.30pm.

Procurement

The Local Enterprise Office is running a free online information seminar on Thursday 22nd June to provide information regarding changes to the public procurement process that came into effect on 1st May. These changes have introduced a number of measures aimed at assisting SMEs to access public procurement opportunities

TOURISM

Kilkenny Welcome Team Returns for 2023 Summer Season



Kilkenny County Council in partnership with Kilkenny Volunteer Centre again launched the 'Kilkenny Welcome Team' on 24th May. The Welcome Team are a group of approx. 20 trained volunteers who will meet and greet visitors to Kilkenny, providing a warm Kilkenny welcome along with visitor information over the summer months.

The Kilkenny Welcome Team will be strategically placed at high footfall locations around Kilkenny City to provide a range of information from opening hours of local attractions, nearby toilet facilities, pharmacists, ATM locations, train and bus times. All Kilkenny Welcome Team volunteers are fully trained to engage and answer guests' queries and will be out and about and very visible around our cobbled streets throughout weekends during the summer. Volunteers will only engage

when asked and will not impose on any visitors uninvited.

Kilkenny Tourism & visitkilkenny.ie

Kilkenny Tourism continues its work in delivering Kilkenny's marketing and PR plan for 2023. Our Summer 2023 campaign continues to highlight lots to see and do for visitors to our County. May's marketing efforts showcased and promoted arts, crafts, history and the outdoors here in Kilkenny with a bright, fun twist on the campaign. "Destination Kilkenny" was showcased at the national Bloom Festival.



Familiarisation Trips

May saw us welcome a variety of guests to our City and County, all interested in learning more about our history and heritage whilst also seeing and experiencing all the wonderful things to see and do throughout the County.

We hosted a delegation from Savannah Georgia, on a visit hosted by TradeBridge to enhance economic links between both partners.

Kilkenny Leader Partnership hosted a group of decision makers from both Italy and France interested in all outdoor activity throughout the City and County whilst Failte Irelands entire team held their staff conference here in the City. All this activity is important in showcasing our County as a welcoming place to come to do business, to invest in and to visit!



HOUSING

The Directorate of Housing incorporates a wide range of services for applicants and tenants to facilitate and support the provision of independent and supported accommodation. The following information gives the up to date progress for 2023 under the various support services.

Homeless Services

HOMELESS SERVICES SUMMARY APRIL 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 @ April 30th	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. (Own Front Door)	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 May 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 and 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 among the suite of measures under the pathway to addressing 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 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 is kept for follow up when details and application forms are provided.

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.

Social Housing Assessment

SOCIAL HOUSING SUPPORT APPLICATION SUMMARY MAY 2023	
Number awaiting Social Housing Support at May 31 st (Gross Need)	1584
Number awaiting Social Housing Support at May 31 st (Net Need)	789
No. of Social Housing Applications received in May	94
No. of applications incomplete / awaiting further information / clarification	69
No. of applications validated and ready for assessment during the month	36
No. of applications assessed during May	26
No. of applications awaiting assessment as @ May 31 st	80

Tenancy Management

HAP Summary Year to date 2023	
Total active HAP tenancies	657
New HAP tenancies set up	27
HAP allocated Social Housing	24
Closed HAP tenancies	55
HAP Rent Reviews	140
Other tenancy amendments	424
HAP calls received	1500

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. We are not in a position to 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.

The Tenancy Management Team deal with allocations, maintenance and anti-social behaviour complaints in relation to our tenants.

LA/RAS/Leasing allocations in May (offers made):.....	11
LA/RAS/Leasing allocations to date (offers made):.....	79
Tenant Liaison Officer cases in May:.....	47
Maintenance Calls for May:.....	463
Maintenance Calls year to date	2,600

The Tenancy Management section has commenced legal proceedings in respect of four 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.

Voids

At the end of March 2023 [end Q1] there were 44 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 it is envisaged that a minimum of 75 units will be refurbished under this programme during 2023.

Self Help Scheme

The Self-Help Scheme is a new scheme available to Council tenants in 2023. The objective of this scheme is to assist Local Authority tenants to carry out improvement works to their home, which are deemed to be tenant responsibility. Kilkenny County Council will pay 50% of the cost of the works up to a maximum contribution of €1,250.

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%) Council's 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 31st May 2023		
Scheme	No.	Amount
HGD - Housing Adaptation Grant	108	€1,148,723
MAG - Mobility Aid Grant	12	€48,614
HOP - Housing Aid for Older Persons	141	€718,389
Total	261	€1,915,726

Grants Paid out up to 31st May 2023		
Scheme	No.	Amount
HGD - Housing Adaptation Grant	25	€260,911
MAG - Mobility Aid Grant	5	€26,247
HOP - Housing Aid for Older Persons	69	€339,211
Total	99	€626,369

Housing Loans

Housing Loan Activity 1st January - 31st May, 2023					
Loan Type	Received	Approved	Amt approved	No. Paid	Amt Paid
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:

- In 2023 - expected delivery is 121 units (not including acquisitions or leasing). Housing for all Target (HFA) is 149 units.
- In 2024 - expected delivery is currently 237 units whereas the HFA target is 153.
- In 2025 - delivery currently stands at 114 units. This is expected to increase as more projects come on stream.

The improvements made by Department of Housing to the CALF programme, which funds AHB delivery is expected to result in additional units to the delivery programme above, as activity in this area has increased.



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



The above photo is 4 units now completed at Breagh Terrace, Main St, Piltown

The Vacant Homes Data Survey is underway. This will assist in identifying suitable properties for reuse that will be acquired by agreement or CPO. 393 properties (which were identified in Geodirectory as being vacant) have been surveyed to date with 153 being confirmed as vacant.

The Vacant Homes refurbishment grant continues to receive applications from people seeking funds to bring vacant properties back into use as homes.

UKRAINIAN RESPONSE UNIT

Offer A Home

The 'Offer a Home' programme is asking 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. Kilkenny County Council 'Ukrainian Crisis Unit' is managing this programme at local level & liaising directly with property owners. A Government tax-free recognition payment of €800 per month is available to property owners offering accommodation to those fleeing the Ukraine. Further details are available on the 'Offer a Home' programme on www.offerahome.ie

'Offer A Home'	June 2023
Number of Properties Offered	66
Number of Properties Assessed as suitable	44
Number of Allocated Properties	36
Number of Registered Tenants in Occupied Properties	126
Number of Properties that require Minor Works	9
Number of Properties - unsuitable/ require Major Works	10
Number of Properties Withdrawn	9

Community Forum Monthly Focus



Kilkenny Volunteer Centre is part of the network of 29 Volunteer Centres across Ireland who are affiliated to Volunteer Ireland, the national development agency for volunteering in Ireland. The Volunteer Centre has become a great place for Ukrainians to integrate into the local community.

The following are projects that the Volunteer Centre have co-ordinated and linked with our Ukrainian Community into volunteering in Kilkenny.

One Million Stars

This project is in support of the Amber Women's Refuge and a large number of Ukrainian volunteers have woven stars for the project.



Daffodil Day 2023

Ukrainian volunteers helping during our March collections for the Irish Cancer Society.



Army Barracks Sorting Centre

This was back in the early days of the Ukraine crisis when we facilitated local volunteers to help sort donated clothes from public appeals.



Sunflower Shop

Set up at the start of the crisis, the Sunflower Shop provided an Information Centre and location to pick up items for free and was operational in Meubles on John Street until October 2022 and Ukrainian volunteers were very involved in this project. This facility has now moved to the temporary rest centre at St. John of God Convent.



Kilkenny Welcomes Community Recognition Funding

A total sum of €948,063 was announced in May for 19 projects around the County under the first Community Recognition Fund, which aims to support the development of community infrastructure and facilities in recognition of the contribution being made by communities across the country in welcoming and hosting significant numbers of arrivals from Ukraine and other countries.

The funding is specifically targeted at projects that are located in communities, towns and villages that are hosting the Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection and/or International Protection Applicants (*'new arrivals'*) including towns identified for the rapid build homes programme.

The Fund aims to support the development of facilities that will be used in the future by all members of the community. It is separate in its objectives and scope to any other public funding streams which aim to support the development of public service needs arising from the significant number of arrivals from Ukraine.

€50 million was made available under the Fund and this has been allocated between each local authority based on the number of new arrivals located there. €30 million of the Fund will be available in 2023 and €20 million in 2024. A minimum spend of 60% must be incurred by the local authorities in 2023 with the remaining 40% in 2024.

The applications submitted by Kilkenny were based on the number of Ukrainian arrivals to County Kilkenny as per CSO statistics in December 2022. There are currently over 1,550 Ukrainians now resident in Kilkenny.

Cathaoirleach of Kilkenny County Council, Cllr Pat Fitzpatrick has welcomed the funding stating that *"this will have a positive impact on communities throughout Kilkenny and thanked those communities for welcoming Ukrainians into their towns and villages"*.

List of successful Applications under the Community Recognition Fund 2023

CRF REF	Area Group Contact Person	Project	Amount Awarded
CRF 01	Kilkenny Countryside Park, Dunmore.	Construction of a recreational and biodiversity park on the site of the now closed municipal landfill at Dunmore in Kilkenny City.	€329,405
CRF 02	St. Vincent de Paul (SVP) Charity Shop, Butts Green.	Fit out of refurbished and expanded premises at Butts Green facility, the centre of St. Vincent Paul activities	€30,000
CRF 03	Community Radio Kilkenny City (CRKC), Unit 32 Hebron Ind. Est.	Purchase and fit-out of mobile studio for new Outside Broadcast Unit.	€35,200
CRF 04	Kilkenny Home Rule Club, 3 John's Quay.	Upgrading of kitchen to meet HACCP standards for Pop Up Cafes	€10,000
CRF 05	Newpark Close Family Resource Centre, Newpark Lower.	To construct a demountable Community Centre, toilet and offices	€206,000
CRF 06	Fr. Mc Grath Family Resource Centre, St. Joseph's Road.	(1) flooring and painting work (2) office and meeting space furniture (3) the purchase of 2 laptops (4) storage for materials/resources/files	€12,000
CRF 07	Ossory Youth, Desart Hall, New Street.	Purchase of a Community Bus	€60,000
CRF 08	St. Lachtain's GAA Club, Moat Road, Freshford,.	Funding for lighting of new Walking Track	€43,900

CRF 09	Castlecomer MUGA & Outdoor Gym, Kilkenny Road, Castlecomer.	Playground Enhancement Works to include Upgrade of Ball Wall/MUGA and surrounding surfacing, Items of outdoor gym equipment and Bike Stands.	€25,630
CRF 10	Ballyragget - Fair Green & Playground, Ballyragget.	Playground Enhancement Works to include items of outdoor gym equipment, bike stand/s, upgrade of goal posts and goal mouth, perimeter path to green, within the green with unbound gravel finish, meeting focal point off adjoining playground and green area, seating and additional play units junior/senior.	€34,757
CRF 11	Bus Shelter, Ballyhale, Co. Kilkenny	A new bus shelter for Ballyhale to service all the surrounding area.	€17,500
CRF 12	Thomastown Area Recreational Event, Thomastown Concert Hall, Marshes Street, Thomastown.	Thomastown Recreational Area Community Event Thomastown Concert Hall, Marshes Street, Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny	€2,500
CRF 13	Amenity Area, Scouts Den Car Park, Chapel Lane, Thomastown.	Amenity Area at the Scouts Den Car Park with a new picnic area	€28,000
CRF 14	Dock Road, Graiguenamanagh.	Purchase of land, landscaping and provision of an amenity seating area at the entrance to the Hub in Graiguenamanagh	€25,000
CRF15	Bennettsbridge Playground, Bennettsbridge.	Bennettsbridge Playground Enhancement includes the provision of an inclusive roundabout, inclusive play panels, the installation of bike parking stands and general upgrades	€35,500
CRF 16	Thomastown Community Allotments, Dublin Road, Thomastown.	The erection of a polytunnel including the standardisation of all the allotment bed sizes by enclosing each one in a timber frame	€9,500
CRF 17	Fifty Shades of Graig, Lower Main Street and High Street, Graiguenamanagh.	Painting of properties along Lower Main Street and High Street in Graiguenamanagh in bright colours as part of a wider Tidy Towns Project.	€5,248
CRF 18	Kilmacow Playground, Greenville, Kilmacow Lower, Kilmacow.	Playground enhancements works at Kilmacow Sports Complex to include replacement of retaining structure to facilitate play component, replacement of swings, cradle swings, cableway and planning of Pollinator Trees	€17,320
CRF 19	Mooncoin Celtic Soccer Pitch, Suir Crescent, Mooncoin.	Surfacing of the access road servicing Mooncoin Celtic Soccer Pitch	€20,603

FIRE SERVICES

Capital Projects

Contracts for the purchase of a new site for a fire station for Kilkenny City have been signed subject to planning. The site for the new station is a 3-acre site at the Kilkenny Business and Retail Park, Waterford Road, Kilkenny. Invitation to tender for the provision of design consultancy services for the new fire station will be submitted for tender in the coming days.

The construction of the new fire station for Urlingford is complete and is due to be handed over in June 2023.



Fire Safety Certificates

61 applications for fire safety certificates were received to date.

44 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.

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

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

Community Fire Safety

Fire service personnel call to houses by appointment and give fire safety advice to the occupants. A HFSV is usually carried out by two uniformed operational fire service personnel. The primary aim of these HFSVs is to reduce the numbers of fires, deaths and injuries in the home by firstly preventing fires occurring and to ensure that when fires do occur, the occupiers are given early warning and they know how to react quickly and safely.

A number of school visits to our fire stations was facilitated by our firefighters. Topics ranged from – Call the emergency services 112 – Testing your smoke alarm – Road safety awareness were covered in a fun and engaging way.

Firefighters have been very busy in visiting their local primary schools to deliver the very successful primary schools programme. This programme has been delivered since 2006. as part of annual on-going community fire safety programme – the fire officers delivered the Primary School Programme (PSP) which covers: Fire safety in the home, the importance of smoke alarms, Test it Tuesday, what are the hazards and risks of accidental fires we have in our homes, how these can be prevented, how to call your local fire brigade 112, What to do if you do have a fire in your home

Fire Brigade Operations

The Brigades have attended 287 incidents to date in 2023. These incidents included a number of road traffic collisions, public road hazards, domestic fires, automatic fire alarm activations chimney fires and an increasing number of ambulance assists in recent weeks.

National industrial action SIPTU Retained Fire Fighters.

SIPTU have advised that their members in the Retained Fire Service will commence industrial action on the 6th June this will be followed by rolling strikes on the 13th June and all out strikes on the 20th June.

SIPTU have confirmed that throughout the strike action it will comply with the provisions of the Code of Practice on emergency disputes reflecting the professionalism and dedication of its retained fire service personnel to ensure that fire services are provided even in a strike situation and have confirmed that it will respond to all emergency calls involving life-threatening situations.

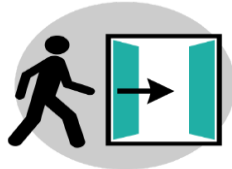
Fire Service Training



A working at heights course for fire service instructors took place in Callan Fire Station in recent weeks. This course reflects instructional techniques on the safe work procedures at height for the operational requirements of our firefighters. This includes training on the safe working practices, equipment uses and maintenance and risk assessing to enable firefighters to work at heights safely.



27,624 Items borrowed



17,158 Visitors



1075 Members

Bealtaine

Kilkenny County Council Library Service were delighted to celebrate the national Bealtaine Festival again this year with a wide range of activities and events. The Bealtaine Festival, held each May celebrates the arts and creativity as we age and is co-ordinated by Age and Opportunity, who promote active living as we get older.

Our programme included flower arranging at Thomastown Library, an art workshop at Callan Library, memoir writing workshops in the City and Graiguenamanagh Libraries, a poetry workshop in Ferrybank Library and a live musical performance by the Moylan sisters at Castlecomer Library. Teresa Hennessy, HSE facilitated a workshop at Loughboy Library on “Why creativity is good for our health”.

Library staff also hosted Connect Cafés in each library branch, in conjunction with ALONE during the month of May where we invited members of our community to connect with each other over a cuppa and chat.



Mobile Library Update

May has been another very busy month on our Mobile Library. Overall we served 77 locations, had 1,113 visits and issued 4,179 books.

Staff are currently amending the timetable to facilitate visits to schools in Ballyfacey, Mooncoin and other locations. For the first time, rural schools served by the mobile library are taking part in the annual Summer Stars Reading Adventure.

Over the past few months a number of book clubs have been established countywide. Meetings take place monthly at The Loop Café, Freshford, The Lakeside Tearooms, Windgap and The Rod Iron Café, Mullinavat. All are at maximum capacity. Book sets are provided by the library service and the meetings are facilitated by mobile library staff. This new outreach initiative has created a vibrancy around our villages and has resulted in increased awareness and usage of our service.

Visits took place to a number of nursing homes in celebration of World Poetry Day. The nursing homes staff are most appreciative of all the library service does for them. They feel well supported and are impressed with our creativity.



Conahy NS



Poetry Archersrath



Storytime Gathabawn NS

Library Activities

Events	In Branch	Online	Offsite
229	220	0	17
Live	Numbers		
177	3544		

This month we had lots of activities and events across our libraries. These events included stitch drawing in Thomastown library, and a talk from Dr. Ann-Marie Eustace Ryan in Ferrybank library on Gut Health and the power of the microbiome as part of our Healthy Ireland Programme.

HQ, City and Loughboy staff brought Kilkenny Library Service out to the public with outreach events to MacDonagh Junction and Market Cross. This was met with positivity from the public with many inquiries on our service and people being able to sign up on the spot.

Urlingford and Ferrybank libraries hosted art classes for beginners with artist Graham Carew, funded by the KCETB.

City Library Kilkenny hosted Writer-in Schools Caroline Busher and 6th class from St John's Senior NS 6th class for 2 Poetry as Commemoration workshops. This class was wonderfully creative and focused when working with Caroline. They created poetry using local history Decade of Commemoration resources. Their work will be deposited in the UCD Poetry as Commemoration repository.

As part of our Healthy Ireland programme, Graiguenamanagh library hosted a talk on the walks and trails of Brandon Hill by Kevin Higgins from Tyndall Mountain Club. Afterwards, the participants received Healthy Ireland windshields provided by Healthy Kilkenny.

As part of our Decade of Commemoration programme, a workshop took place with Carrie Lynam, visual artist and arts educator telling the true story of De Valera's escape from Lincoln prison. The participants then made storyboards to inspire their art with Carrie.

We had visits in our libraries from visiting communities, schools and creches.



Art, Ferrybank



Ferrybank Class Visit



HI Graiguenamanagh Talk



Loughboy Knitters

Mayfair Library Update



- Structural steel for the mezzanine structure has been installed.
- Roof construction completed.
- Installation of windows and curtain walling is substantially complete.
- External insulation to western and eastern elevations completed.
- Reinforced Concrete stairs installed.
- Underfloor heating system installed.
- Floor screeds laid.
- Mechanical and Electrical first fix under construction.
- Fin façade to the southern elevation is complete.
- External render to eastern and western elevations is under construction.
- Work on stud partitions ongoing
- Existing floor in the children's section has been removed and construction of new floor is ongoing.

Online Services Usage



2768 eAudiobooks borrowed



242 Class sessions



772 eMagazines borrowed



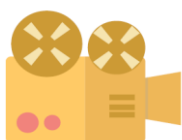
1413 eBooks borrowed



312 Online Courses sessions



2394 Songs accessed



Digital Engagement

Our staff have prepared, recorded, edited and published **447** posts on our social media platforms in May. Our video views for the month were **11,555**.

FINANCE

The expenditure by service division to the end of May is set out in Table 1. Total Expenditure for the period was €35.9M compared with the annual budget of €98.75m.

Table 1	Actual YTD May 2023	Budget Full Year 2023
	€'000's	€'000's
Housing & Building	9,734	22,698
Road Transport & Safety	8,773	27,560
Water Services	2,948	7,736
Development Management	4,178	11,754
Environmental Services	4,192	13,520
Recreation & Amenity	2,640	8,091
Agriculture, Education, Health, Welfare	233	692
Miscellaneous Services	3,238	6,698
OVERALL TOTAL	35,936	98,749

Finance Update

The bank overdraft facility was not utilised during the five-month period to the end of May 2023. The draft unaudited financial statements for 2022 were finalised and presented to Council at the March meeting. The Local Government Auditor commenced the audit for 2022 on the 22nd of May 2023. The annual rate demands for 2023 were sent to all rate payers in February.

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.

Working Capital Facility for Community projects co-funded with Kilkenny Leader Partnership

There are a number of community projects jointly funded by Kilkenny County Council (KCC) and Kilkenny Leader Partnership (KLP). These projects require a working capital facility from KCC until the KLP grants are paid out. Elected Members have approved a revolving working capital facility for community groups subject to detailed terms and conditions. A maximum of €500k has been provided for all projects.