

CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT

MARCH 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

30th March, 2023

The South East Energy Agency, regional coordinators for the programme, are hosting a Sustainable Energy Communities Workshop on Thurs 30th March 10am-2pm at the Barrow Valley Hub, Old Dock, Graiguenamanagh.

1st to 30th April

Spring into Storytime

13th to 21st May, 2023

Bike Week 2023 will take place. A variety of events and activities will be held throughout Kilkenny, so dust off the bikes and get ready to cycle.

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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 will recommence in March 2023 and are due to be completed in April 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 commenced on the 16th January, 2023 and is on track for completion with a 12 month build period.

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.

Kilkenny County Council is aware of 5 objections to the Compulsory Purchase Order Approval application. A decision on the applications is not expected until Q3 2023.

OTHER

National Road Bridge Works

Tenders have been received by Kildare County Council in respect of the N10 Ossory Bridge Rehabilitation Scheme. Kildare County Council are project managing this 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. Subject to tender award procedures it is expected that works will commence after Easter 2023.

Pavement Schemes

The N10 Danesfort Pavement Improvement Scheme commenced construction during November. Weather conditions halted the works. Works are now substantially complete.

The N77 Georges Tree to Dunmore West (Phase 1 Ardloo Junction North) Pavement Improvement Works has been awarded. The works will start in Q1 2023 and is weather dependent.

The design work is ongoing in respect of the N76 Callan By Pass Pavement Scheme and the N77 Suttons Rath Pavement Scheme. It is intended to have these awarded for construction in 2023. The Callan By Pass scheme in particular is complex given its semi urban location.

ALLOCATIONS

National Roads

An amount of €12 million has been announced in respect of the maintenance and improvement of National Roads throughout Kilkenny City and Council for 2023. The funding included monies for N24 Waterford to Cahir Scheme and minor schemes like Ballyragget Village to Ballynaslee and Carrick Road Improvement works. Funding was also received for a number of pavement schemes along the network.

Non-National Roads

An amount of €17.7 million has been announced in respect of the maintenance and improvement of regional and local roads throughout Kilkenny City and Council for 2023. This represents an increase in funding of €787,000 for 2023 in Kilkenny.

The funding included €100,000 for the Northern Ring Road Extension in Kilkenny City.

ENVIRONMENT

CLIMATE ACTION

Minister Ryan instructs Local Authorities to start preparing Climate Action Plans

On the 24th February, the Minister for the Environment, Climate, Communications and Transport, Eamon Ryan, T.D. formally instructed all Local Authorities including Kilkenny County Council to commence the preparation of the Local Authority Climate Action Plan (LACAP). Under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, the 5-year plan must address both mitigation and adaptation measures, and must be produced and adopted within 12 months. The LACAP will strengthen the alignment between national and international climate policy and the delivery of climate action at local and community levels. Work has commenced on the preparation of the plan in Kilkenny County Council through the Climate Action Team and the Climate Action Steering Committee. In the coming months consultation with Elected Representatives, the public and stakeholders will take place as a critical element of preparing the LACAP.

The guidelines for the preparation of Local Authority Climate Action Plans were launched by Minister Ryan on 6th March. The guidelines state that local authorities are directly responsible for delivering actions across their own assets and infrastructure and are also tasked with influencing and facilitating stakeholders in the County to meet their respective sectoral targets. The development and delivery of a Local Authority Climate Action Plan is an action of the [National Climate Action Plan](#).

Join a Sustainable Energy Community to help address the climate crisis

Would you like to join one of the many Sustainable Energy Communities (SEC's) in County Kilkenny who are working together to ensure that energy is used sustainably and for the benefit of their community? Or would you like to set up a new energy community in your area?

There are 13 SEC's in Kilkenny who are actively working on initiatives to save energy in homes, transport, local business and community buildings. They get free expert mentoring, an Energy Master Plan and advice on applying for grant schemes. SEC's are located in Kilkenny City, Graiguenamanagh, Freshford, Thomastown, Ferrybank, Johnstown, Kilmoganny, Coon and Callan.

The [South East Energy Agency](#), regional coordinators for the programme, are hosting a Sustainable Energy Communities Workshop on Thurs 30th March 10am-2pm at the Barrow Valley Hub, Old Dock, Graiguenamanagh. On the day there will be opportunities to hear from energy experts, and from communities about their stories of challenges, opportunities and success, as well as visiting a completed Community Energy Project. Find out more and book a ticket [here](#)

The Sustainable Energy Communities Programme supports and guides communities to get involved in tackling the climate crisis. It is a priority under the [National Climate Action Plan](#) and an initiative of the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland.

Contact details of the South East Energy Agency for more information are:

Kilkenny Research & Innovation Centre, Burrell's Hall, St Kieran's College, Kilkenny, R95 TP64

T: +353 (0)56 7790856 Email: contact@southeastenergy.ie

Or make contact with the Council's Climate Action Co Ordinator Dearbhala Ledwidge at 056-7794000 for more information.

"Reduce Your Use" Awareness in County Hall

Energy expert Fintan O'Hora from [Optimising Power @ Work campaign](#) and Ketan Malik (South East Energy Agency) provided free advice to Council staff on 22nd Feb in County Hall on how to save energy at home or in work and avail of energy grants. The initiative, part of the public sector [Reduce your Use](#) Campaign (a mandatory campaign for the public sector to reduce energy use) was very successful with excellent staff engagement. A similar event will be organised for Johns Green House in the coming weeks. This programme is part of a range of energy reduction initiatives in the [National Climate Action Plan](#).



RECOMMENDED MINIMUM CRITERIA FOR ENVIRONMENTAL INSPECTIONS (RMCEI)

Our 2022 inspection data was submitted to the EPA on the 28th February 2023.

A synopsis of the data returned is captured in the table below:

RMCEI Inspections for 2022	Number of Completed Inspections at the end of 2022
Routine Waste Inspections	546
Non-Routine Waste Inspections	527
Routine Litter Patrols/Investigations	572
Routine Water/Wastewater Inspections	1,684
Non-Routine Water/Wastewater Inspections	41
Routine Air/Noise Inspections	28.5
Non-Routine Air/Noise Inspections	18
Routine producer Responsibility Inspections	0
Planning inspections	816

Our 2023 RMCEI plan has also been submitted to the EPA. The plan has over 4,300 inspections to be completed for the year ahead. Our staff are now using the National Environmental Management Information System (NEMIS) for inputting their inspections in 2023. The focus for this year will be on the National Enforcement Priorities which cover Waste, Air, Noise and Water.

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 two months of 2023 was 163 compared with 204 for the same period last year (*i.e. down circa 20%*). The nature of these complaints ranges from littering, illegal dumping, water quality and abandoned cars. The vast majority continue to be related to littering and illegal dumping. Whilst every effort is made to bring unacceptable environmental practice into compliance, Environment Enforcement staff continue to manage significant enforcement cases progressing through to prosecution.

WASTE, RECYCLING & COLLECTION

Bring Banks Usage

The Council provides and manages 46 Bring Centres across the City and County. A total of 352 tonnes of recyclables were collected from our Bring Centres so far in 2023. This represents a 7% decrease on the same period last year and is mainly down due to the lifting of all Covid restrictions. Loughboy Shopping Centre (25 tonnes collected), Lidl Johnswell Road (23 tonnes collected) and New park Shopping Centre (22 tonnes collected) are the busiest locations in the City and Graiguenamanagh (21 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.

LITTER AWARENESS



Let's Team Up to Clean Up, Together for Kilkenny received over 200 registrations and the registration portal is now closed. Preparations are now underway to prepare for the campaign weekend which takes place over the 24th, 25th and 26th March. Schools and workplaces are invited to participate on Friday, the 24th of March and the other groups can pick a suitable time over the rest of the weekend. It is estimated that over 5,000 volunteers will litter pick over the weekend, and 30,000 pollinator flowering bulbs will be planted across the County as part of this initiative.

Cathaoirleach Cllr Pat Fitzpatrick has been working alongside our sponsors to ensure the public is aware of their support for this initiative and a weekly press release is being issued throughout March, promoting the sponsors involvement.

The Transition Year students of CBS Secondary School has assisted in assembling the primary school kits while the army personnel in St Stephens Barracks are putting together the adult kits and are acting as the distribution point for Kilkenny City groups who did not participate last Autumn.



Bernadette Moloney, Environmental Awareness Officer, Cathaoirleach Cllr Pat Fitzpatrick and Gerri Hickey, Local Champion of Lets Team Up to Clean Up in Piltown

ANIMAL WELFARE



At the end of February there were 75 dogs handled by the Carlow/Kilkenny dog shelter. Of the 75 dogs, 67 were strays. There were 27 dogs re-homed by the shelter and 24 dogs transferred to charities for rehoming along with 13 dogs being reclaimed by their owners.

Calls in relation to dog control have increased from the public who are now more active in reporting incidences of loose dogs and in particular restricted breeds.

BURIAL GROUNDS

Columbarium Wall Garden St. Kieran's Cemetery

The construction of the Columbarium Wall and all associated site works is almost completed at St. Kieran's Cemetery. A total of 100 niches will be available within the Columbarium wall units in the garden, with the option to add more unit's subject to future demand. We are now waiting on ESB to connect up street lighting at three locations surrounding the columbarium wall as a measure to deter the potential of anti-social behaviour.



Community Monuments Fund

Kilkenny County Council have submitted three projects for capital funding under the Community Monument Fund for 2023:

- Butler Gallery complex/garden medieval wall
- Grangefertagh historic church and graveyard
- Thomple historic church and graveyard



Thomple Medieval Church

Further funding is currently being applied for projects at Tubrid and Rathpatrick historic churches and graveyards for proposed conservation works and repairs. Vegetation removal has recently taken place on both Tubrid and Rathpatrick historic churches which will enable conservation engineers to carry out an assessment with a view to carrying out future conservation work.



Rathpatrick Church & Graveyard with vegetation removed



Tubrid Church and Graveyard

Graveyard Grants

The closing date for the Graveyard Grants Scheme 2023 was Friday 24th February, 2023. There have been over 40 applications received. Each application will be assessed by the Environment Section in the coming weeks.

A grant contributes towards the cost of:

- Graveyard maintenance, including appropriate works to help pollinators
- Graveyard recording schemes
- Heritage studies of graveyards
- Costs associated with providing Public Liability Insurance

PARKS & SPECIAL PROJECTS

Local Biodiversity Action Fund

In recent weeks the Parks Department have made an application via our Heritage Officer to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHPLGH) under to the Local Biodiversity Action Fund. The objective of this grant funding is to carry out projects to enhance biodiversity and biodiversity awareness at a local level. The basis of the application is for Invasive Species Management in both Woodstock Gardens and Silaire Wood. If successful, the application would involve for the second year running the partnership of the local community in controlling Himalayan Balsam in Silaire Wood and the control of Cherry Laurel, Himalayan Honeysuckle and Rhododendron ponticum within Woodstock Gardens. A decision from the DHPLGH is expected in the next number of weeks on the application. It is the intention to carry out the works in early summer.

Playgrounds

Repairs are being carried out in a number of playgrounds across the County, namely Assumption Place, Paulstown and Garringreen, where the services of a specialist playground repair company have been engaged owing to the nature of the repairs. Alongside this our own staff are involved in the timely inspection and maintenance of all our playgrounds. Furthermore, an appointed contractor is painting timber elements of play equipment at five playgrounds around the county with a specialist wood preservative and sealant.

Woodstock Gardens

The approach of Spring has increased the planting programme within the gardens. In recent weeks staff have replanted elements of planting in the Winter sunken garden. This has been primarily the yew hedging around the perimeter which had not thrived due to underground drainage issues. Over 300 yew hedging plants have been replanted here as part of this process and this work will strengthen the overall feature that is the sunken garden.



Having secured funding under the Disability Participation Awareness Fund and the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS), fully wheelchair accessible play components will be added to our playground offering. Recently we took delivery of a wheelchair accessible see-saw and same is currently being installed and it is expected that a new play-tower will be installed later in the month.

The majority of the enhancement works funded under the ORIS have now been completed, some of the main works included the resurfacing of the Noble Fir and Monkey Puzzle Avenues, resurfacing of the carpark entrance and installation of dedicated age friendly and disabled parking bays, construction of a new accessible pathway and extension to the playground area and finally the upgrading of the carpark toilet block which is nearing completion.



Woodstock Gardens will be seeking seasonal staff to operate the Tea Rooms for the coming tourism season.

Advertisements have been placed in local press and on line where interviews for these posts shall be held shortly, with the intention of the Tea Rooms opening for the Easter period initially.

OUTDOOR RECREATION INFRASTRUCTURE SCHEME

Kilkenny Countryside Park

A big crowd turned out for the official sod turning of Phase 1 of the Kilkenny Countryside Park on the 17th February, the duties fell to the Cathaoirleach of Kilkenny County Council, Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick to turn the first sod marking a new chapter in the history of the site.



This project will see the development of a new Countryside Park on the site of the closed municipal landfill at Dunmore which occupies an area of circa. 17 acres and is located just 5km north of Kilkenny City Centre. The full realisation of the proposed park will include trails for walking, running, cycling, and orienteering, along with educational opportunities related to natural heritage and biodiversity enhancement and management. It is anticipated the park will be attractive to the general public, schools and recreation groups and those with specific environmental interests such as photography and bird-watching in the context of an amenity which is close to nature.

Phase 1 of the Project will see the delivery of some of the larger civil works, including the widening of the Bleach Road access, parking provision for both bicycles and cars, the construction of a series of trails over the remediated landfill and the provision of a small ball wall and dog friendly enclosed zone. These works when complete will be sufficient to open the park to the public.

The contract was awarded to SPL Ltd., who in the intervening period have made great progress and taken full advance of the dry weather.



Progress Works – Kilkenny Countryside Park

Other ORIS projects progressed over the month of February included the enhancement works at the Bishopmeadows Swimming Area in the City. Works included the installation of pathways, fencing, age friendly seating and 20 bike stands. Interpretative signage will also be installed over the coming weeks.



In Graiguenamanagh, the Dock Road linking the Campervan Park / Barrow Valley Outdoor Activity Hub with the Town Centre was resurfaced by the Area Office. This intervention was timely as the road was in very poor condition and the BVCD committee are expecting the facility to be completely booked out for St. Patrick's weekend. Additional works including the installation of linear paving flags will be installed over the next few months.

Under our ORIS Project Development allocation Consultants were recently appointed to prepare a Masterplan for Castlecomer Discovery Park along with developing design and planning documents for a new recreational bike trail.

Over the next number of months Council Officials will be working very closely with stakeholders to maximise the benefits from this body of work.





Sports Capital Grant Funding

Under the above funding stream the carpet at the Newpark MUGA (Multi-use GAMES Area) was replaced and works to enhance the perimeter fencing will be completed in March.

South East Greenway - On-line works:

Over the past number of months works have commenced on a number of small contracts to prepare the section of the greenway from Rosbercon to Glenmore for opening in Q2 later this year. The works included public light duct installation, fencing and the preparation of the temporary car parks at Rosbercon and Glenmore. In addition to these works final snagging items are also being attended to.

The tender documents for Lot 5A, 5km between Ferrybank to Luffany, has received final TII approval and will be advertised mid- March.



Ferrybank Car Park Option: Following detailed environmental assessments, a Part 10 planning application to An Bord Pleanála will now be progressed for the new North-South Link Road from Belmont Road to the Abbey Road. The Ferrybank Car Park and Trailhead will be accessed from this Link Road and will form part of the overall project. Consultants have recently been appointed by the Road Design Office to develop the planning and design documentation for this Road Scheme.

Connectivity links to Slieverue and Glenmore from the South East Greenway: The Route Selection & Design Options Report for each village is nearing completion. The next step is to advance to planning Part 8 process will be advertised over the summer.

Woodstock Estate and the South East Greenway Recreational Connectivity Link:

In a joint initiative Kilkenny County Council with Kilkenny LEADER Partnership and Trail Kilkenny, engaged the services of Punch Consulting Engineers to prepare a Feasibility Study & Route Selection Report to develop a Greenway Link between the South East Greenway (SEG) and Woodstock Estate, Inistioge.

These documents are nearing completion and draft versions of same have been presented to TII. The TII have agreed that this project has merit and subsequently allocated €100,000 recently to allow the scheme to progress in line with the TII Project Manager's Manual for Greenway Projects.

PLANNING

Development Management

Planning Summary	Total February	
	2022	2023
Planning Applications Received	119	125
Planning Applications Granted	134	78
Planning Applications Refused	16	21
Complaints Received	15	12
Warning Letters Issued	6	6
Enforcements Notices Issued	13	3
Cases Closed	19	10

FORWARD PLANNING

Masterplans:

Abbey Quarter

The process of reviewing the Abbey Quarter Masterplan commenced in October 2022. A public survey on the Abbey Quarter went live for 4 weeks and closed on 16th December.

A further online public consultation event took place on the 18th of January to inform the public of the survey results and of the review process. The meeting was well attended and valuable inputs were received.

The Consultants are currently working on the draft Masterplan and it is anticipated will be published in March for a series of public consultation events. It is anticipated that the process will be completed in the second quarter of 2023.

St. Canice's Campus

A final meeting took place with the HSE project working group on the draft spatial framework. This framework is now being finalised and will go forward to the HSE Board and the Council's Management Team before being brought to the Municipal District Members. It will then be placed on public display for a round of public consultation.

Loughmacask

The draft Loughmacask Masterplan was placed on display from the 26th August, 2022 to the 28th October, 2022. Three public information sessions on the draft were held in September and October and a total of 182 submissions were received during the consultation timeframe. A workshop

was held with the Kilkenny City MD on the 10th of February 2023. The Interim Chief Executive's report will be presented to both the Municipal District Members and Plenary Council at their March meeting. Proposed amendments to the draft Masterplan will again be placed on public display for a further round of public consultation before the Masterplan is finalised.

Urlingford

The Council's Consultants have completed drafting the Urlingford Town Centre Masterplan and the draft plan is currently awaited and is expected March 2023. The draft plan will be presented to the Municipal District Members before being placed on public display. A public workshop on this draft plan is planned 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 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 May 2023. The draft plans will be presented to the respective Municipal Districts prior to them going on public display.

Taking in Charge

Progress to date in 2023:

- **Abbeygate, Ferrybank:** *works almost completed by developer.*
- **An Choill Rua, Paulstown:** *developer arranging to complete works outstanding.*
- **Ogenty, Gowran:** *works and timeline agreed with Castlecomer Area Office.*
- **Rioch Court, Kilkenny:** *works and timeline agreed with Kilkenny City Area Office.*
- **The Greens, Thomastown:** *developer continuing to carry out required works.*
- **Kilkenny Internal Road:** *developer to complete works.*
- **Lakeside, Kilkenny:** *all works completed.*
- **College Park, Callan Road:** *works not yet commenced.*
- **Greenoaks, The Fairways:** *developer to complete works.*

E-PLANNING

Kilkenny County Council volunteered to be part of the pilot project for the roll out of E-Planning nationally. E-Planning is now available as part of the planning application process in Kilkenny

County Council. Users must register on the e-planning portal at : <https://planning.localgov.ie/en/local-government-ireland-planning-system>, where after that 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.

Fifty seven percent (57%) of planning applications are now being made through e-planning. There has been positive feedback from both agents and members of the public that the service is quick and easy to use.

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, 4 of which include rezoning requests. These submissions are now being considered and landowners will be notified of the determinations by the 1st April next. A Supplemental Map must be prepared by 1st May, 2023.

A site on Kieran Street in Kilkenny was added to the Derelict Sites Register in February, bringing the total to 29 sites. Funding was announced in the third round of URDF specifically to address long term vacancy and dereliction and measures to utilise this funding are being examined.

There are 24 Vacant Sites on the Vacant Sites Register and the number of cancelled entries due to site activation or improvement is 23. Payment demands for 2022 will issue shortly. The Vacant site levy will be replaced by the Residential Zoned Land Tax in 2024. 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. Conservation grants and funding applications are also managed.

The Built Heritage Investment Scheme and the Historic Structures Fund conservation grant schemes have been assessed and forwarded to the

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage for final approval.

For the month of February, the Conservation Office has compiled reports on the following:

Planning Referrals:.....	9
Further Information Requests:.....	4
Clarification of	
Further Information Requests:.....	0
Section 57 Declarations:.....	1
Section 5 Declarations:.....	0
Post Planning:.....	2
Part 8:.....	0

Building Control

Valid Commencement Notices Received Start of Year to End of Month

February 2023	32
February 2022	67
February 2021	37
February 2020	67

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

February 2023	6
February 2022	13
February 2021	6
February 2020	14

COMMUNITY

2023 Kilkenny County Council Grants Booklet

The 2023 Kilkenny County Council Grants Booklet was launched by the Cathaoirleach in the Parade Tower on Monday 27th of February. This popular booklet gives communities details of relevant community grants with contact details and other information on programmes. The grants booklet is also available on the Kilkenny County Council website and accessible on all mobile devices including mobile phones, iPad's and home PC's.



Cathaoirleach Pat Fitzpatrick, Annette Fitzpatrick, Sean McKeown & Mayor David Fitzgerald

Community Awards Night

The annual Community Awards night was held in the Parade Tower on Monday 27th of February. This annual event celebrates the work carried out by community groups throughout the County. Awards were given to the Pride of Place Participants, Tidy Estates and other community groups.



Award Recipients

Thomastown Recreational Amenity

Works have commenced on Phase 2 of the Thomastown Recreational Amenity which was successful in an application under the 2022 Town & Village Renewal Scheme. It is envisaged that these works will be completed in May 2023.

Community Support Fund

The Community Support Fund administered by the LCDLC opened for applications on the 22nd February, 2023 with a total amount of €273,305 available in Community Grants. This fund will support groups particularly in disadvantaged areas with their non-pay running costs for example energy costs (electricity costs, refuse charges, heating charges) or other non-pay operating costs for example rental/lease costs, insurance bills. Groups will also be able to use the funding to carry out necessary repairs and improvements to their facilities or to purchase equipment. There are three levels of funding available i.e. small grants up to €1,000, medium grants up to €5,000 and large grants of €20,000. There will be 30% of the funding ring fenced for small grants and a further proportion ring fenced for Women's Sheds. The closing date for the 2023 Fund is Friday 31st March at 12 noon.

Bike Week 2023

Bike Week 2023 will take place from Saturday 13th to Sunday 21st May 2023. A variety of events and activities will be held throughout Kilkenny, so dust off the bikes and get ready to cycle.

HERITAGE

Local Biodiversity Action Fund 2023

An application in the amount of €100k has been submitted for the 2023 Local Biodiversity Action Fund. The application includes proposals for the following:

- programme of work to manage Invasive Alien Species at Silaire Wood and Woodstock through the Parks Section,
- Biodiversity Programme including an awareness and engagement campaign; county hedgerow survey; conservation measures for Swifts and Barn owls; a pilot project for identifying biodiversity and pollinator corridors; biodiversity training for local authority staff and education programmes for schools and tidy towns groups.

Heritage Council's new Strategic Plan 2023-2028

The 'Heritage Matters' initiative is one of a number of ambitions for the future of heritage in Ireland set out in the Heritage Council's Strategic Plan 2023-2028, which was launched on the 22nd of February at the Royal College of Physicians in Dublin. Entitled 'Our Place in Time', it was developed in consultation with stakeholders with expertise across the built, natural, and cultural heritage. It seeks to celebrate and promote Ireland's heritage, while also identifying the challenges to be overcome to secure it into the future. The plan is available to view here: <https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/content/files/Strategic-Plan-2023-2028.pdf>



Royal Irish Academy Decade of Centenaries Bursary 2023 open for applications

The Royal Irish Academy have opened their Decade of Centenaries Bursary for 2023, dedicated to the memory of the late Dr Éamon Phoenix as part of the commemorative programme for the final phase of the Decade of Centenaries. This bursary aims to encourage new

local research and local history studies (local, national and regional) as a means of recognising the significant contribution of local historians in furthering fields of study relating to the struggle for independence and the civil war period within their communities. Closing date for online applications is 5th April, 2023. To read the grant guidelines and for online application forms go to Decade of Centenaries Bursary | Royal Irish Academy (ria.ie)

Dear Mother Film Officially Selected at 2 Film Festivals

“Dear Mother”, a short film by Kevin Hughes about the events in Kilkenny Military Barracks on 28th December, 1922 and funded under the 2022 Kilkenny Decade of Centenaries programme has been officially selected for the second year of Liverpool Indie Awards Winter Season 2022/2023 and the second year of Barcelona Indie Awards Winter Season 2022/2023.

ARTS

Grants & Bursaries

The Arts Act Grants have been assessed and a total of 24 applicants were awarded grants totalling €22,000. The Tyrone Guthrie Residency Bursary was also assessed and two artists were awarded two-week residencies in 2023, a total of €1,600.

Literature

We continue to work to ensure a balanced approach to the development of our adult literature programmes and activities across the City and County. Programmes for 2023 to date have included:

Creative Writing Workshop as Gaeilge

A creative writing workshop through the Irish language took place on the 25th in Butler House with writer and gaeilgeoir Róisín Sheehy. Feedback from the workshop was very positive one of the participants: *Bhain me taitheamh is tairbhe as. I found it enjoyable and useful.*



Poetry Phone

A new selection of poems has been selected for the Poetry Phone and will be uploaded during March. Anyone can free phone the Poetry Phone on 1800 272 994 and select a number between 0 and 9 to listen to a beautiful selection of poems written by Kilkenny poets and recorded by Kilkenny actors.

Critical Response Process (CRP)

A call out was issued for our first Critical Response Process session for Kilkenny writers this March. Depending on the success of this first iteration, we will run further CRP sessions into the future. The aim of this programme is to help to:

- Build capacity in our writing community
- Encourage collaborative supportive activity
- Empower local writers to support each other's development & progression
- Prepare writers at all levels to deliver work to a wider public audience
- Strengthen the local writing community and develop a mutually supportive community of writers across the County.

Your Voice Matters

In order to continue to develop and advance our various supports for Kilkenny writers we will work with writer & coach Anne Tannam to further support Kilkenny writers across the year. This programme will be delivered through a series of in-person workshops & online group coaching sessions and seminars. The programme aims to:

- Build capacity and confidence in Kilkenny's writing community.
- Strengthen the local writing community and develop a mutually supportive writing community across the County.
- Foster collaborative activity.
- Empower writers to support each other's development and progress.
- Prepare writers at all levels to deliver work to a wider public audience.
- Provide writers with the skills to build and sustain flourishing writing practices.

Visual Arts

Emerging Curator Development Programme

The new emerging Curator has been selected for 2023. We are looking forward to working with Shannon Carroll over the coming months. Shannon Carroll is an emerging curator who recently graduated with a distinction from IADT's

MA in Art & Research Collaboration. Her area of research focuses on ecological art practice and artists who prioritise working with reusable and sustainable materials.



Shannon Carroll, Emerging Curator in residence

LEO/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Kilkenny Start Up Showcase Event 2023

Kilkenny County Council, through its Local Enterprise Office staged an extensive seminar event showcasing the supports and funding opportunities for start-up businesses in Kilkenny at Newpark Hotel, Kilkenny on Thursday the 9th of February.

This event was designed to help entrepreneurs and start-up businesses to understand and find out more about the services provided by organisations with a remit for enterprise development. Expert advice was made available to inform entrepreneurs about where to start, what supports are available to set up and how to develop the business both on national and international markets.

Representatives from a range of state agencies and funding organisations such as Intreo, Southeast BIC, Kilkenny Leader Partnership, Enterprise Ireland, AIB, BOI, HSA and more were in attendance. A discussion panel with local entrepreneurs, including Brian Kelly, David Walsh, Luke McIntosh and David Wilson took place, hosted by Kieran Cuddihy of Newstalk to discuss their real-life experiences in the market today.



Local Enterprise Week

Local Enterprise Week is organised annually by the 31 Local Enterprise Offices across the country. This year Local Enterprise Week is taking place from Monday, March 6th to Friday, March 10th. Planned events for Kilkenny include; one to one mentoring clinics on social media marketing and finance; seminars are running throughout the week on business sustainability exploring business opportunities outside of Ireland and running a business in inflationary times.

Kilkenny is hosting an national spotlight event on Innovation. This online event which will be broadcast nationwide will inspire existing businesses to consider how they can use design thinking to innovate within their businesses. It will also provide information on how businesses can access a range of supports to apply Innovation in their business.



Student Entrepreneurship Programme Kilkenny County Final

Kilkenny County Council, through its Local Enterprise Office are hosting the Student Enterprise Programme County Final during Local Enterprise Week on Wednesday the 8th March at the Lyrath Hotel, Kilkenny. An estimated 130 students from ten participating schools will take part in the event.

The Student Enterprise programme runs annually and supports students to create, design and market their own business, all with the hope of reaching the National Finals.

Kilkenny County Council Festival Grant Scheme

Kilkenny County Council has provided funding for festival organisers to aid with the development and promotion of festivals with a significant tourism impact. At the February monthly meeting the Council Members approved supports for a wide -ranging calendar of festivals to take place in Kilkenny City and County throughout the year.

Event Name	Date of event	Visitor Number	2023 Grant
Abhainn Ri Festival	20th-23rd July	7,000	€ 2,500.00
Smithwicks Kilkenny Roots Festival	29th April - 1st May	8,000	€ 11,000.00
Kilkenny Tradfest	March 16th-19th	20,000	€ 6,000.00
Cannonball Ireland	17th September	18,000	€ 4,000.00
Kilkenny Animated	29th Sept- 1st Oct	2,000	€ 6,000.00
Kilkenomics	Nov 2nd to 5th	8,000	€ 6,000.00
Savour Kilkenny	Friday 27th to 30th Oct	50,000	€ 22,000.00
Kilkenny Cats Laugh	1st- 5th June	8,000	€ 11,000.00
Graiguenamanagh Town of Books	18th- 20th August	10,000	€ 3,000.00
Castlecomer Wellie Race	1st Jan 2024	8,500	€ 3,000.00
Keep Her Lit	18th - 20th August	3,000	€ 2,500.00
Iverk	26th August	23,000	€ 2,000.00
Alternative Kilkenny Arts Fringe Festival	4th - 13th August	10, 000	€ 5,000.00
Kilkenny County Fleadh Cheoil	21st - 23rd April	1000 - 1100	€ 1,000.00
Hughes Farm Pumpkin Festival	13- 31st October	23,000	€ 1,000.00
Rás na mBan	6-10th September	5,000	€ 2,000.00
			€ 88,000.00

Kilkenny Tourism and visitkilkenny.ie



Kilkenny Tourism continued its work in preparing Kilkennys Marketing Plans for 2023. Springs 2023 campaign is aiming to keep Kilkenny to the forefront of the domestic visitor's mind for early family summer holiday bookings. "Once Upon a time in Kilkenny" showcases family fun and the many and varied family friendly activities available throughout the City and County.

The "What's On" section of the Visit Kilkenny web-site signposts visitors to all the St Patricks Day celebrations in Kilkenny and also promotes all upcoming festivals and events.

Work will commence in the coming weeks on our "Outdoor Kilkenny" campaign with a new digital campaign and work will commence on the development of a new Outdoor Kilkenny Map for visitors to use.



Kilkennys marketing and PR campaign remains strong and in comparison with last year our audience reach continues to grow.



This year, Fáilte Ireland is focused on 'Driving Sustainable Recovery'. On February 20th they presented the organisational priorities and plans for 2023 to support the sustainable recovery of the tourism sector at a Virtual Industry Briefing event. The industry briefing covered 2023 Outlook, new Short-Term Lets Registration, Tourism Careers, and new consumer motivations research. The plans focus on maximising the return of inbound tourism while continuing to drive domestic demand for 2023.

UKRAINIAN RESPONSE UNIT

As of the 13th February 2023, there were 1,417 Ukrainians arrivals to County Kilkenny, representing 2% of Ukrainian arrivals nationally (CSO.ie).

137 are residing in Council managed properties at St. John of God Convent Temporary Rest Centre and The Friary Knocktopher.

854 are residing in 18 commercial properties throughout the County.

95 have moved from the Temporary Rest Centre to 28 homes offered by the people of Kilkenny under the Offer A Home Scheme.

134 have moved from the Temporary Rest Centre to 41 homes offered under the Irish Red Cross Pledge call.

197 living in private arrangements throughout the County.

Community Recognition Fund 2023

Further to the presentation at the February Council meeting, applications have now been submitted by the Community Department, Area Engineers and the Community Response Forum in collaboration with local communities. A total of €948,063 was allocated to County Kilkenny.

The aim of the fund is to support the development of community infrastructure and facilities in recognition of the contribution being made by communities in Kilkenny in welcoming and hosting significant numbers of arrivals from Ukraine and other countries.

It is specifically targeted at projects that are located in communities, towns and villages that are hosting Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection and/or International Protection applicants.

- Projects should be capital in nature;
- deliver tangible benefits for the communities in which they are located;
- capable of being delivered over the course of 2023 and 2024;

- a minimum spend of 60% of the allocation must be incurred in 2023 (*claims to be submitted before 6th October 2023*);
- no operational or running costs allowed; project completion – 18th October 2024;
- national procurement guidelines must be adhered to; all expenditure subject to terms of Public Spending Code.

Further to a pre-evaluation of the projects and evaluation by an Evaluation Committee, a funding proposal has been submitted to the Department for approval outlining the projects to be delivered.

The Department will examine each proposal and will revert to local authorities with any queries. All approved funding proposals will be the subject of a funding agreement between the Local Authority and the Department.

A full list of projects will be circulated following Department approval.

HOUSING

Homeless Services

HOMELESS SERVICES SUMMARY FEBRUARY 2023	
Homeless Presentations	47
Homeless Assessment Outcomes	
Prevention & Interventions	23
Emergency Service	5
Not eligible / Did not avail of service	19
HAP Place Finder Service	
No of Homeless HAP tenancies @ 1st day of month	1
No of Homeless HAP tenancies created during month	1
No of Homeless HAP tenancies in place @ last day of month	1
Number of Homeless HAP tenancy breakdowns	1
Other Social Housing Tenancies supported /created during month	1
Households in Temporary Emergency Supported Accommodation @ February 2023	
Households in Temporary Emergency B&B accommodation	2
Households in Temporary Emergency B&B Accommodation that are families	1
Households (singles/couples) in Transition Emergency Accommodation (<i>Own Front Door</i>)	0
Households (Families) in Transition Emergency Accommodation (OFD)	0

Social Housing Assessment

SOCIAL HOUSING SUPPORT APPLICATION SUMMARY February 2023	
Number awaiting Social Housing Support at February 28 th (Gross Need)	1,579
Number awaiting Social Housing Support at February 28 th (Net Need)	751
No. of Social Housing Applications received in February	85
No. of applications incomplete / awaiting further information / clarification	51
No. of applications validated and ready for assessment during the month	34
No. of applications assessed during February	23
No. of applications awaiting assessment as @ February 28 th	76

Income thresholds for eligibility for social housing supports have remained largely unchanged since 2011. Changes to the income eligibility thresholds come into effect on the 3rd January, 2023. An increase on the baseline income threshold by €5,000 has been agreed.

The new thresholds are outlined below:

Band	Counties	Revised Threshold
1	Cork City, Dublin City, Dun Laoghaire – Rathdown, Fingal, Galway City, Meath, South Dublin, Kildare, Wicklow	€40,000
2	Carlow, Claire, Cork County, Galway County, Kerry, Kilkenny, Laois, Limerick, Louth, Waterford, Westmeath, Wexford	€35,000
3	Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Longford, Mayo, Monaghan, Offaly, Roscommon, Sligo, Tipperary	€30,000

The revised thresholds for different household compositions are detailed in the table below:

Band	Single Adult	2 Adults	1 Adults 1 Child	1 Adult 2 Children	2 Adults 1 Child	2 Adults 3 Children	2 Adults 4 Children
1	€40,000	€42,000	€41,000	€42,000	€43,000	€45,000	€48,000
2	€35,000	€36,750	€35,875	€36,750	€37,625	€39,375	€42,000
3	€30,000	€31,500	€30,750	€31,500	€32,250	€33,750	€36,000

HOUSING ASSISTANCE PAYMENT SUMMARY UP TO February 28 st 2023	
Number of active HAP tenancies to Feb 28 th 2023	688
New HAP tenancies set up	14
HAP tenants allocated Social Housing	4
Closed HAP Tenancies	11
HAP Rent Reviews	36
Other tenancy amendments	30
HAP Calls Received 2023 year to date	900
HAP Calls Received February	300

Tenancy Management

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

- LA/RAS/Leasing allocations in February (offers made):8
- LA/RAS/Leasing allocations to date (offers made):.....195
- Tenant Liaison Officer cases in February:51
- Maintenance Calls for February:520
- Maintenance Calls year to date.....1,176

The tenancy management section has also 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.

Housing Grants

Grants Approved & Committed up to 28th February 2023

Scheme	No.	Amount
HGD - Housing Adaptation Grant	54	€571,700
MAG - Mobility Aid Grant	5	€17,814
HOP - Housing Aid for Older Persons	82	€424,503
Total	141	€1,014,017

Grants Paid out up to 28th February 2023

Scheme	No.	Amount
HGD - Housing Adaptation Grant	54	€571,700
MAG - Mobility Aid Grant	5	€17,814
HOP - Housing Aid for Older Persons	82	€424,503
Total	141	€1,014,017

Grants Paid out up to 28th February 2023

Scheme	No.	Amount
HGD - Housing Adaptation Grant	12	€121,636
MAG - Mobility Aid Grant	1	€2,349
HOP - Housing Aid for Older Persons	32	€157,526
Total	45	€281,511

Housing Loans

Housing Loan Activity 1st January - 28th February 2023

Loan Type	Received	Approved	Amount Approved	No. Paid	Amount Paid
Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan	0	0	€0	0	€0
Local Authority Home Loan	9	2	€210,400	2	€227,400
Caravan Loan	0	0	€0.00	0	€0
Total	9	2	€210,400	2	€227,400

Housing Capital

Kilkenny County Council is ambitious and innovative in the delivery of housing units and will utilise all available measures within the Housing For All plan to meet and exceed the targets set for the County to 2026.

Housing Capital as at end February 23

On site

- 79 units for delivery in 2023
- 88 units for delivery in 2024

Units in the Pipeline (with funding approval)

- 50 for delivery in 2024
- 36 for delivery in 2025



Legan Grange, Thomastown (25 units due in Q2 2023)



Second pic is Old Creamery, Kilmacow (9 units due in Q2 2023)

Vacant Homes

The Vacant Homes Officer is currently processing applications under the Vacant Homes Refurbishment Grant. This is now extended for applications to rural applicants. For further details contact vacanthomes@kilkennycoco.ie New CPO procedures are to commence in respect of a further six properties around the County with five previous CPOs reaching conclusion.



KILKENNY

FIRE and RESCUE SERVICE

2023-IN-NUMBERS



FIRES ATTENDED



195



DOMESTIC

84



INSTITUTIONS

1



INDUSTRIAL

18



COMMERCIAL

8



VEHICLE FIRES

26



OTHER

23



AGRICULTURE

5



VEGETATION FIRES

30

TOTAL INCIDENTS



730

FALSE ALARMS

127



MALICIOUS

3



GOOD-INTENT COMMERCIAL

39

GOOD-INTENT

124



GOOD-INTENT DOMESTIC

85



SPECIAL SERVICES

408



ROAD-TRAFFIC COLLISIONS

141



WATER-PUMPING / FLOODING

25



RESCUE / REMOVAL OF PERSONS FROM WATER

6



OTHER NON-FIRE RESCUES

0



HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

6



MISCELLANEOUS

24



PUBLIC ROAD HAZARD

136



GARDA / AMBULANCE ASSIST

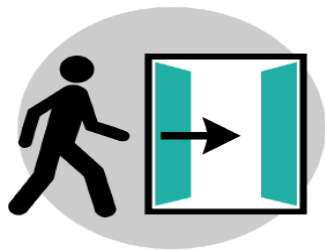
70



LIBRARY



26,415 Items borrowed



14,755 Visitors



1,314 Members

Ireland Reads



Ireland Reads is a national campaign run for the third successive year in 2023. Aiming to get people reading across the country, people were asked to pledge time to read on Saturday 25th. Our Libraries ran a host of events to encourage people to get back into the habit in the weeks leading up to Ireland Reads day. We held 20 events from author visits for children and adults to storytimes and a podcast. 422 people of all ages participated and enjoyed the events. Staff visited schools to read to the children and 1st year students from St. Kieran's College visited the library to stock up on books.

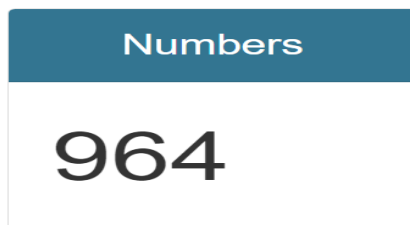
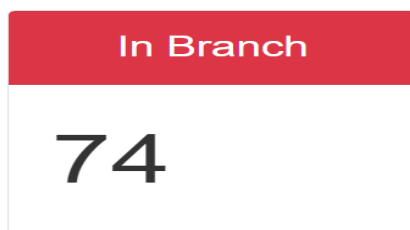
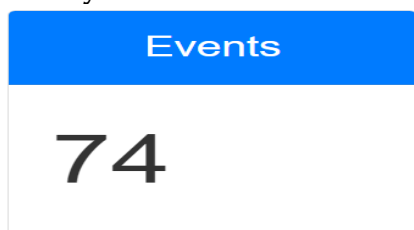
Increased Opening Hours



In addition to extending opening hours in Thomastown Library and Castlecomer Library, Loughboy library is now open an additional 5 hours with no lunchtime closures and on Fridays until 8pm.

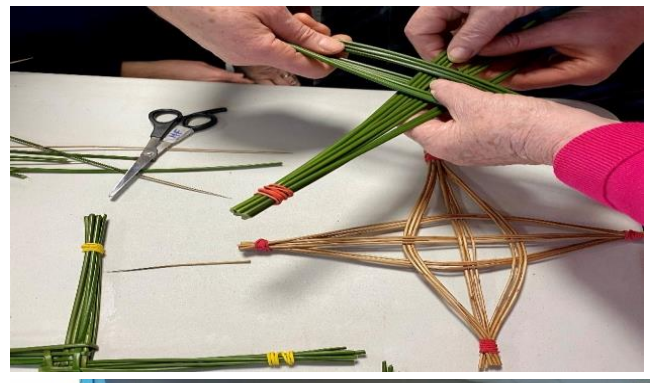
Ferrybank Library now opens an extra 4.5 hours - a total increase of 19.5 hours across our service.

Library Activities



This month we had lots of activities and events across our libraries. These included felting classes in Thomastown, Chess classes in Urlingford a chess tournament in Loughboy.

We hosted 42 class visits in our libraries across the county, bringing 888 school children through our doors. 253 people attended craft sessions and workshops learning sewing, knitting, flower arranging, St. Brigid's Day crosses and much more.



Mayfair Library Update



Mechanical and Electrical first fix under construction. Fin façade to the southern elevation is complete. External render to eastern elevation has commenced. Work on stud partitions ongoing

Online Services Usage



2,650 eAudiobooks borrowed



208 Class sessions



847 eMagazines borrowed



1,100 eBooks borrowed



171 Online Courses sessions



713 Songs accessed



Digital Engagement

Our staff have prepared, recorded, edited and published **484** posts on our social media platforms. Our video views for were **2,648**, with **12,959** story views.

Upcoming Events

14th March: Your Online Library Day: Call to your local library and get help navigating our suite of online services.

1-17th: Seachtain na Gaeilge: Buaileann an Ciorcal gach maidin Dé Céadaoin, ar a haon déag a chlog. Bíonn comhrá, ceol agus craic acu i Leabharlann Loch Buí.

This is an enthusiastic gathering, seeking to use their “cúpla focail”. It is open to all levels of fluency, beginners, improvers and advanced. Just come along any Wednesday agus beidh fáilte romhat!

April 1-30th: Spring into Storytime.

FINANCE

The expenditure by service division to the end of February is set out in Table 1. Total Expenditure for the period was €11.7m compared with the annual budget of €98.75m.

Table 1	Actual YTD February 2023	Budget Full Year 2023
	€'000's	€'000's
Housing & Building	3,434	22,698
Road Transport & Safety	2,320	27,560
Water Services	1,119	7,736
Development Management	1,362	11,754
Environmental Services	1,458	13,520
Recreation & Amenity	830	8,091
Agriculture, Education, Health, Welfare	64	692
Miscellaneous Services	1,155	6,698
OVERALL TOTAL	11,742	98,749

Finance Update

The bank overdraft facility was not utilised during the two-month period to the end of February 2023. The draft Financial Statements for 2022 are finalised and will be presented to Council at the March meeting. 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.

Rates Incentive Grant Scheme 2023

The 2023 "Rates Incentive Grants Scheme" is available to all Rate Payers subject to certain terms and conditions. As approved at Kilkenny County Council's 2023 Budget Meeting, Rate Payers can avail of a grant of 5.8% of the value of their 2023 Rate Demand (*excluding arrears*) to a maximum value of €250. The terms and conditions of the 2023 "Rates Incentive Grants Scheme" are as follows. There are two payment options:

Option 1: Pay in 2 Moieties - Pay your first moiety & arrears, plus any outstanding Property Entry Level (PEL), before the end of May 2023. Pay your second moiety before the end of October 2023 at the latest, and deduct 5.8% up to the maximum from your 2023 Demand.

Option 2: Monthly Payment Plan - Pay your Rates & Arrears plus any outstanding PEL, in full in equal consecutive monthly instalments by standing order/direct debit or by other consecutive monthly arrangement before the end of October 2023 and deduct 5.8% up to the maximum from your 2023 Rate Demand. Your monthly payment plan must commence prior to 31st May 2023.