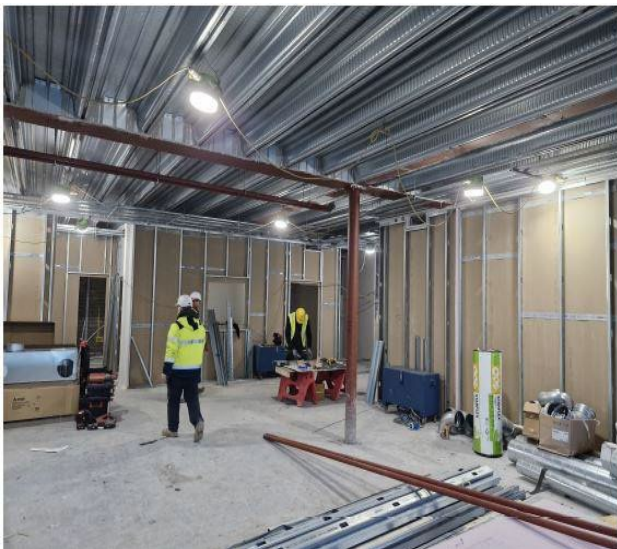




Comhairle Chontae Chill Chainnigh
Kilkenny County Council

CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT

MARCH 2025 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.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PLANNING.....	3
ENVIRONMENT	6
PARKS & SPECIAL PROJECTS	11
LEO/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.....	14
HOUSING.....	17
COMMUNITY.....	21
INTEGRATION	25
FIRE SERVICES	27
LIBRARY.....	30
ARTS	34
HERITAGE.....	36
CIVIL DEFENCE.....	37
FINANCE	38

PLANNING

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

Planning Summary	Total January to February 2024	Total January to February 2025
Planning Applications Received	123	108
Planning Applications Granted	120	41
Planning Applications Refused	10	12
Complaints Received	22	19
Warning Letters Issued	16	16
Enforcements Notices Issued	6	14
Cases Closed	18	53
Cases Sent for Legal Prosecution	0	0

FORWARD PLANNING

Variation 3 to the City & County Development Plan 2021

The Chief Executive's report on variation 3 which sought to rezone 0.18 ha open space in Loughboy to residential, for the provision of Age Friendly and Disability Accessible houses was considered and approved by the Members at the February plenary Council meeting.

Variation No. 4 to the City & County Development Plan 2021

This variation seeks to incorporate the Loughmacask Masterplan into the City and County Development Plan. It also seeks to amend text of Section 10.1.7 of the City and County Development Plan, Vol. 1, to allow for waste water treatment plans in certain circumstances. This variation is currently on public display for a 4 week period from Friday, 7th February to Friday 7th March, 2025. The Chief Executive's report is being brought forward for consideration by the Members at the March plenary Council meeting.

LOCAL AREA PLANS

Ferrybank / Belview Local Area Plan

The draft plan preparation continues. Significant issues relating to the role of Ferrybank as the second largest urban area in the County its role as part of the wider Metropolitan area and its role in contributing to the development of Waterford as envisaged under the National Planning Framework are being addressed as part of the plan preparation. It is anticipated that a draft plan will be available in Q1 of 2025.

Castlecomer Plan review process

The Proposed Settlement Plan, and the various accompanying assessments, including an Infrastructural assessment and environmental assessments, are being finalised. The Municipal District Members will be briefed prior to public display of the Proposed Plan.

Taking in Charge

Works are progressing on the following estates:

- TC184 Baun/Cnoc Baun, Ballyfoyle Road
- TC158 10 houses at Moneenroe
- TC167 Fiodh Mor & Leaca Ard, Abbeylands
- TC183 Hillview, Bennettsbridge
- The following estate was taken in charge in February 2025
- TC177 Weir View Gardens, Kilkenny

Active Land Management

The new Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT) has come into effect. Two sets of maps are still on public display, the Final Maps for 2025 and the Annual Draft Maps for 2026. Submissions are invited until 1st April. For the Annual Draft Maps, submissions can be made on the inclusion or exclusion of sites from scope for the tax. Rezoning requests can be made by landowners for impacted sites on the Final Maps 2025. The Council prepare the maps, and Revenue will administer the tax. The settlements currently liable are Kilkenny City, Rosbercon, Callan and Thomastown. Relevant landowners must file a return with Revenue by 23rd May, and any queries in relation to payment of the tax should be directed to Revenue.

There are 18 Vacant Sites on the Vacant Sites Register, and the number of cancelled entries due to site activation or improvement is 29. The Vacant Site levy (VSL) will be replaced by the RZLT later this year, but any outstanding VSL's will remain due to the Council.

Conservation

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

An advisory service on conservation matters is provided to the public and colleagues, while the conservation grants and funding applications are also delivered.

Built Heritage Investment Scheme 2025: An additional €54,451 has been made available under this scheme for projects in Kilkenny, bringing the total funding under this scheme to €253,062. An additional four projects will now be undertaken with this additional funding bringing the number to fifteen projects supported.

Historic Structures Fund and the Historic Thatch Building 2025: All applications for the Historic Thatch funding have been assessed, and the two projects will be funded: a private residence in Luffany, and the Cave Bar, Corbetstown.

Conservation Office awaits further correspondence from the Department concerning the Historic Structures Fund.

Architectural Conservation Area Trails 2024: The Wander Wonder Trails of Castlecomer and Freshford Architectural Conservation Areas are now complete and will be launched in March 2025. This has been a collaborative project between the National Built Heritage Service, the Conservation Office and the local community.

For the month of February, the Conservation Officer has completed reports on the following:

Planning Referrals	5
Further Information requests.....	1
Clarification of Further Information requests	0
Section 57 Declarations	1
Post planning	1
Part VIII.....	1

Building Control

Valid Commencement Notices Received	Disability Access Applications Received
February 2025..... 27	February 2025..... 10
February 2024..... 43	February 2024..... 8
February 2023..... 31	February 2023..... 6
February 2022..... 67	February 2022..... 13

TOWN REGENERATION OFFICE

The Town Regeneration Office [TRO] and Community Section met the Graiguenamanagh Town Team on 10th February. The process has commenced for the Town Health Check with an expected completion date of Easter. Once the Health Check is complete a Town Centre First Plan for the town will then progress.

Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant

The following are the full statistics up to end of February, 2025:

Number of Applications Submitted to-date	262
Number of Approvals / Approvals in Principle to-date.....	178
Grant Drawdown to-date	33
Number of Queries during the month of February.....	57

THRIVE

The call for funding under Strand 2 was announced in January with a closing date of 15th April. The Council are preparing an application for funding for the refurbishment of Carnegie library and the surrounding public realm area. The proposals under Part 8 were on public display up to 11th February, with 4 submissions received. It will be presented to the Council at their March meeting for approval.

Butts Area Regeneration Framework

This project is progressing well. A further public engagement event took place on 17th February, with 42 attendees. The consultants also met with the various departments in the Council to gather information. The next public engagement event is scheduled to take place towards the end of April where proposals will be presented. These proposals will be based on feedback received to date from surveys and consultations.

Derelict Sites

Invoices for the Derelict Sites Levy were issued in early February.

ENVIRONMENT

CLIMATE ACTION

Climate Action Steering Committee

The Kilkenny County Council Climate Action Steering Committee held the first Quarterly Meeting on 19th February, 2025. Kilkenny County Council established a Climate Action Steering Committee in 2023 to provide leadership within the Council to help deliver on their climate targets. The Committee, which has representatives from all service areas in the Council, meets quarterly to support and oversee the implementation of the 99 actions in the Kilkenny County Council Climate Action Plan.



Climate Action Steering Committee with representatives from CARO and LAWPRO

New Staff in the Climate Action Office

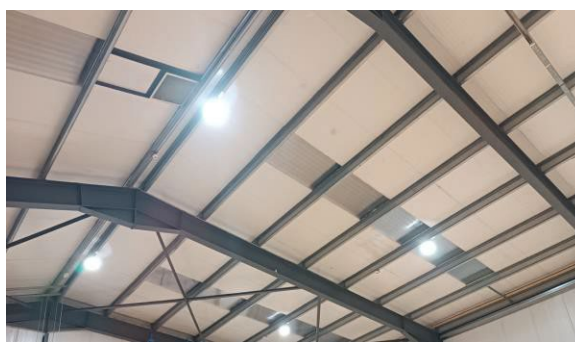
Two new staff joined the Climate Action Office in February. Johan Muller has taken up the role as the Energy Officer to help the Council to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and energy use.

Sarah Kent, Climate Action Regional Officer, works with the Eastern and Midlands CARO whose headquarters are in Kildare County Council. Sarah is based in the Kilkenny Climate Action Office as part of a partnership arrangement between Kildare and Kilkenny County Councils.

Spotlight on Community Climate Action

The Community Climate Action Officer is working with and supporting the successful community groups on their journey to deliver projects for the Community Climate Action Programme. Some of the groups have completed their projects and this month are showcasing two of the completed projects. Both projects were funded by Kilkenny County Council and the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications under the Community Climate Action Fund.

Paulstown Saving Electricity and Water



Paulstown Development Committee have successfully completed a project to replace 36 indoor lights at the Paulstown Community Centre which also incorporates Paulstown Boxing Club. The new energy efficient LED lights will dramatically reduce their electricity bills. They also installed a Rainwater Harvesting Butt to water plants during dry weather and to save water resources.

Graiguenamanagh Generating Solar Power



The Graiguenamanagh Abbey Hall Committee have successfully completed a project to make the Abbey Hall more energy efficient and comfortable, and to reduce their energy bills. They have installed 21 solar panels (9.97kW) on the roof, a 10kW commercial battery to store the electricity, and a 7kW electric vehicle charging point which is available for public use.

Local Authority Collaboration on Climate Action in Ferrybank

The Climate Action Office took part in a Connecting Communities event in Ferrybank jointly hosted by Waterford and Kilkenny Local Authorities providing advice and information on climate action measures people can take in their homes and communities, plus opportunities for climate grants.

Local Climate News

Stay up to date with local climate action news by subscribing to the monthly Kilkenny County Council Going Green newsletter [here](#)

Climate Conscious Clown Show at St. Patrick's Festival Kilkenny

Juanita is a clown who tackles the climate crisis with positivity and laughter, and she wants to lift the lid on your recycling bin. Using clowning, plastic pollution is tackled in a provocative, entertaining and ridiculous way. An important, urgent and utterly hilarious show full of hope for our future organised by the St. Patrick's Festival Kilkenny on Friday, 14th March. Suitable for ages 5-12 years.



Free Drop-In Energy Clinics, Castlecomer Library (12th March)

The South East Energy Agency in partnership with the Library Service are running free drop-in clinics in Castlecomer Library on 12th March to give personalised advice on home energy efficiency, upgrades and grants. Spaces are limited and pre-registration with the Library is essential.

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Green Schools Programme

The Environmental Awareness Officer [EAO] continues to support 92 schools as part of the An Taisce Green Schools Programme to renew or attain a flag. Green schools is an international environmental education programme, offering a well-defined, controllable way for schools to take environmental issues into the curriculum and apply them to the day-to-day running of the school. Green schools is a holistic, long-term programme and has a two-year cycle in relation to preparation, assessment and attainment of a particular flag.

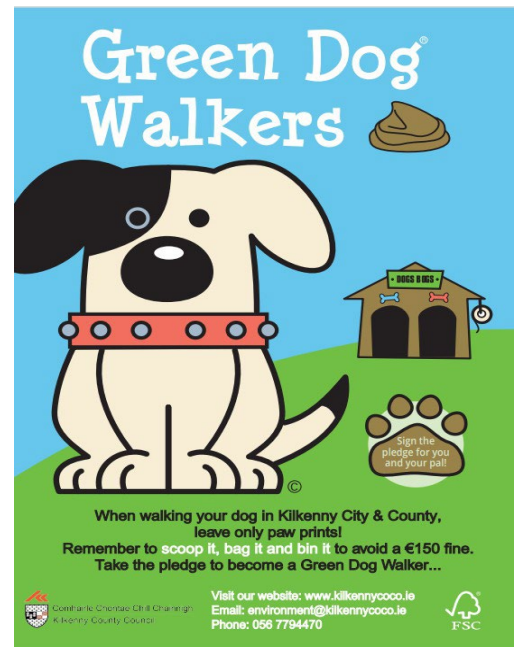
The EAO is continuing to assist schools around the County to renew their membership as part of the Green Schools programme under their respective themes- Litter and Waste, Energy, Water, Travel, Biodiversity and Global Citizenship. 11 schools have been assessed so far this month. **Deadline for the applications for School Flags is 28th March, 2024.**



Green Dog Walkers Campaign

The Green Dog Walker Programme will be launched on the 31st March, 2025 here in Kilkenny. It aims to be a positive, friendly way to change attitudes about dog fouling in the City and County and encourage responsible dog ownership. Dog fouling is a very serious health concern and young children are particularly at risk. This initiative aims to enhance the wellbeing of our communities by reducing the risk of infection posed by dog fouling.

Dog owners are encouraged to sign up to a pledge whereby, they agree to comply with certain criteria such as the wearing of a green armband when walking their dog, cleaning up after their dog, be happy to approach dog walkers who needs a bag and be a friendly reminder to other dog walkers to clean up after their dogs.



If Members of the public are interested in becoming a green dog walker, pledge forms will be available in pet stores, vets, kennels libraries and council offices throughout Kilkenny or alternatively, pledge online at www.kilkennycoco.ie. Each dog walker who makes a pledge will receive a free High Vis and a dog bone bag dispenser for their dog lead. If any Resident Associations or Community Groups would like to promote the campaign in their own local area, contact the Environmental Awareness Officer with Kilkenny Local Authorities on 056-7794487.

Roadside Clean-Up of R723- New Ross to Ferrybank

As part of the "Team Up to Clean Up" County wide initiative, Kilkenny County Council engaged Contractors to undertake a road side clean up exercise with traffic management along the R723 road from New Ross to Ferrybank. In excess of 20 refuse bags of rubbish was collected over a 2 day period.

WASTE

Bring Banks Usage

The Council provides and manages 47 Bring Centers across the City and County. A total of **350 tonnes** of recyclables were collected from our Bring Centers to date in 2025. This represents a 1% decrease from the same period in 2024. Loughboy shopping center (15 tonnes collected) Aldi - Kilkenny city (13 tonnes collected), Lidl - Johnswell Rd (9.5 tonnes collected) and New Park Shopping center, Kilkenny City (8 tonnes collected) were the busiest locations in the City in February. Aldi - Ferrybank (9.4 tonnes collected) and Graiguenamanagh (7 tonnes collected) were the busiest outside of the City in February. Environment staff are continuing to work very closely with our service providers to ensure the collection service is in keeping with demand, especially around long weekends and holiday periods.

Dunmore Civic Amenity Site (CAS)

Approximately 5,000 customers visited Dunmore in the month of February 2025. As a result, 5.84 tonnes of cardboard, 4.26 tonnes of plastic, 5.88 tonnes of paper, 0.8 tonnes of food waste (going for anaerobic digestion), 43.18 tonnes of green garden waste (going for aerobic composting) and 12.3 tonnes of WEEE (Waste Electrical & Electronic Equipment) were deposited at the facility for recycling in this period. There were 110 tonnes of municipal household waste deposited at the facility to be transferred for incineration and a further 84 tonnes of dry bulk waste to be transferred for further segregation with a possible 60 – 70% of this material being recycled.

As part of the continuous aftercare of the closed landfill situated adjacent to the CAS, 151 tonnes of Leachate were transported off site for treatment at the Purcellsinch waste water treatment plant. The 2023 Environmental Performance Report for Dunmore was compiled in February 2024 for submission to the EPA. This report is used by the EPA to gather data under the legally binding PRTR (Pollutant Release and Transfer Register), Large Combustion Plant and Waste Statistics regulations. The data is used by several teams in the EPA for a range of purposes. The report provides statistics across all activities carried out at Dunmore in relation to the CAS and Landfill site.

AIR NOISE WATER

Water Quality – Farm Inspections

2024 farm inspections were reported and submitted to the EPA in March 2025, detailing findings and outcomes. Detailed information was provided under the National Enforcement Priorities and in specific Case Studies. Inspections for 2025 have commenced with 30+ inspections completed to date. The target for 2025 is 308 inspections.

Septic Tank Inspections

RMCEI reporting included the good news that all inspections for 2024 have been achieved with regards to septic tanks. 2025 inspections will commence over the next 2-4 weeks with 59 to complete this year.

Section 4 Discharge Licenses

2024 results found that there was a higher rate of compliance across current discharge licenses than in the previous year. This is down to the ongoing communication between Kilkenny County Council and the operators.

Misconnections

All misconnections were reported in the RMCEI return. The report detailed two different cases highlighting the importance of investigating misconnections.

Environment Complaints

All Environmental complaints received are logged on the CRM (*Customer Relations Management*) System. The number of complaints that have been received and logged for the month of February 2025 is 81 compared to 102 complaints received in February 2024. The nature of these complaints included littering, illegal dumping, burning of waste and abandoned cars. The majority continue to be related to 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 prosecution cases.

Noise

The final Noise Action Plan 2024-2028 was finalized and published on KCC website in January 2025. The Annual Report was returned to the EPA by the due date in February 2025. Works will progress during 2025 to work on Priority Important Areas identified in the plan. Works will be subject to available funding.

Air

Over 100 air inspections were completed and reported in the 2024 RMCEI return. Targets have been set for this year, with inspections commencing in March 2025.

PARKS & SPECIAL PROJECTS

OUTDOOR RECREATION INFRASTRUCTURE SCHEME (ORIS)

ORIS - Lacken Boardwalk

A big crowd turned out to mark the official reopening of the Lacken Boardwalk on the banks of the River Nore on Monday the 17th February 2025. Kilkenny City's first composite construction boardwalk was officially opened by the Cathaoirleach of Kilkenny County Council, Cllr. Michael McCarthy in the presence of the Mayor of Kilkenny Municipal District, Cllr. Andrew McGuinness.



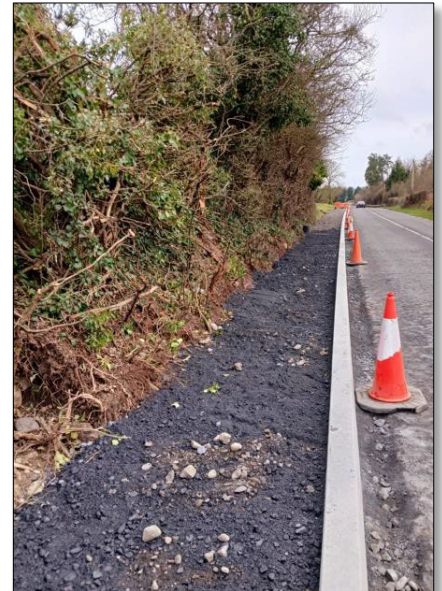
The design specification, demonstrating Kilkenny County Council's commitment to sustainability, utilises a very durable composite recycled material, and with the exception of the metal fixings and the hardwood decking used on the accessibility ramp and stairs section, it was constructed using 100% recycled plastic components. Therefore, as you walk along the boardwalk, you are in fact walking on a mixture of blended plastics from everyday household use items such as drink bottles, food trays, butter containers and plastic film.

During the construction of this boardwalk, over 163 tonnes of recycled plastic lumber was used. To help visualise the quantity of plastic that was recycled and repurposed to construct this boardwalk, it equates to just over 7.5 million 500ml plastic drink bottles.

The new boardwalk sees an investment of c.€800,000 into Kilkenny City's newest large-scale amenity offering. The funding to deliver this project was secured from the Department for Rural and Community Development under the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme, Measure 3 category, and supplemented with the Council's own funds.

ORIS - The Ennisnag Loop Walk - Walking Trail and Amenity Area

Funding under the ORIS Measure 2 category was secured in 2024 to develop a new 2.3km way-marked looped walking trail from the village of Stoneyford out into the townlands of Lawcus, Ennisnag and Cotterelsbooly. Works to construct a new footpath, linking the village with Ennisnag along the Kilkenny Road are progressing well with the slip-form kerbing completed recently. This trail, when complete, will start at a new trailhead within the Stoneyford Community Centre grounds and part of the trail development includes upgrades to the Orchard riverside amenity area beside the Kingsriver Community Centre. Tenders have also been awarded recently for seating and the way-marked and interpretative signage, with the latter telling the story of the rich local natural, built and cultural heritage along the trail.



ORIS- Woodstock Gardens & Arboretum Accessibility and Inclusivity Enhancement Scheme

Funding was also secured under ORIS Measure 2 category to continue with the enhancement works programme in Woodstock Gardens and Arboretum. This funding will allow for the following works:

- 1.5km pathway restoration, incl. drainage and resurfacing using bound and unbound materials.
- The installation of age-friendly seating at key and regular intervals along the various trails/walkways.
- This installation of a new accessible/inclusive play component in the playground along with the provision of communication and sensory boards for children with additional needs.
- The purchase of 3 all-terrain wheelchairs, which will be freely available to visitors.
- Extensive removal / treatment of invasive species, namely Cherry Laurel, within the wooded areas of the gardens and between the two main avenues.
- Provision of dedicated bike parking will be provided in the carpark to encourage a modal shift for visitors away from the car, with a particular focus on the local community.



The pathway restoration works commenced earlier in the month and the target is to have all works completed before the peak visitor season. Image of ongoing restoration works within Walled Garden above.

It is noted the civil works in both the above projects is being undertaken directly by the Area Office.

ORIS - Kells Pedestrian Bridge and Boardwalk

ORIS Project Development funding was secured to engage the services of a multi-disciplinary engineer led design team to advance this project through preliminary design, environmental assessments and planning. A competition was advertised recently and the closing date for the submission of tenders is the 21st March, 2025.

The successful tenderer will be tasked with advancing the proposal to create an off-road link between Mullin's Mill and Hutchinson's Mill by utilising the island between King's River and the Mill-Race located between both mills.

Subject to obtaining the necessary consents on foot of the above, the intention would be to put this project forward under a future Measure 2 or 3 application to advance to construction stage.

ORIS - Brandon Hill Submit Walk

Funding was also secured under the Project Development Measure category to engage specialist technical consultants to deliver a service brief for the restoration of the Brandon Hill Summit Walk which has suffered extensive upland erosion. Following a tender competition Cassywater Outdoors Ltd., were awarded the contract. The works requirements are nearing completion with the preparation of a Trail & Upland Restoration Report.

Once this report is complete and reviewed a decision will be made on the option of advancing this project to construction stage by submitting an application under the current ORIS Call for new applications.

LAMA All-Ireland Community & Council Awards

The Kilkenny Countryside Park was shortlisted in the Best Environmental / Ecological Large Project category at the 2025 LAMA All-Ireland Community & Council Awards. The



awards ceremony, held on Saturday, February 22nd, at the Rochestown Park Hotel in Cork City, celebrated the incredible contributions made by local authorities, communities, and individuals across Ireland. And while disappointing not to achieve that top prize we were delighted that the positive environmental impact the park is having on the local community, as well as the significant benefits for biodiversity, was recognised.

Tree Planting

During February over 60no. semi-mature native trees were planted within the Kilkenny Countryside Park, Slieverue Linear Park and Ferrybank Neighbourhood Park. These new trees will enhance biodiversity, improve air quality and contribute to the long-term ecological health of our public green spaces.

In addition to the above, 2,500 native tree saplings, including alder, birch, hawthorn, willow, oak and elderberry, will be planted along the new Lacken Boardwalk in March.

LEO/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

New Local Enterprise Office Support Offering – Market Explorer Grant

The Market Explorer Grant will support first time and small-scale exporters to undertake essential market research and to support the development of viable and sustainable market entry strategies in new geographic markets for businesses. The financial assistance proposed will provide support towards costs incurred in researching new market opportunities for products and services. The Market Explorer Grant is available to eligible small enterprises in the Manufacturing and Internationally Traded Services sectors (with between 1 and 50 paid employees). The amount of the grant is to a maximum of €10,000 or 50% of eligible costs, subject to terms and conditions.



Night Time Economy - Café Lates

A new funding scheme has been launched to encourage local cafes in the City to extend their opening hours by offering innovative and cultural events after 6pm. Café Lates is a direct response to feedback from a public survey conducted last year under the Night Time Economy pilot initiative which showed that people would welcome later evening and night time opening hours for cafes.

Under Call 1, Kilkenny County Council are inviting local cafés located in Kilkenny City to apply for funding to introduce engaging cultural programming after 6pm for the evenings of Thursday 17th April and Thursday 29th May. The successful applicants must commit to extending their opening times by at least two hours after 6pm on both of those dates. The minimum grant award available is €350 and the maximum grant award is €750. The closing date for applications is 5pm on Friday 28th March. Further details can be found at <https://www.localenterprise.ie/Kilkenny/Enterprise-Development/Night-Time-Economy/>



TOURISM



Kilkenny County Council has provided funding for festival organisers to aid with the development and promotion of festivals with a significant tourism impact.

At its 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.

The increase in funding for festivals this year is much welcomed and facilitated the award of funding to 19 festivals including two new events.

Kilkenny Tourism supported by Kilkenny County Council will host two open evenings in the north and south of the County in March to provide a unique opportunity for business in the sector to expand their networks, grow business and secure valuable referrals.

- An overview of marketing opportunities with Visit Kilkenny
- Insights into tourism supports
- Practical tips to help build the success of businesses and Kilkenny as a domestic and international tourism destination.

Kilkenny Tourism continued its work in preparing Kilkennys marketing and PR plans for 2025. “Spring into Action” is the live campaign for the season aims to keep Kilkenny to the forefront of the domestic visitor’s mind for booking breaks throughout the shoulder season, for mid-term and for St Patrick’s Day.

16

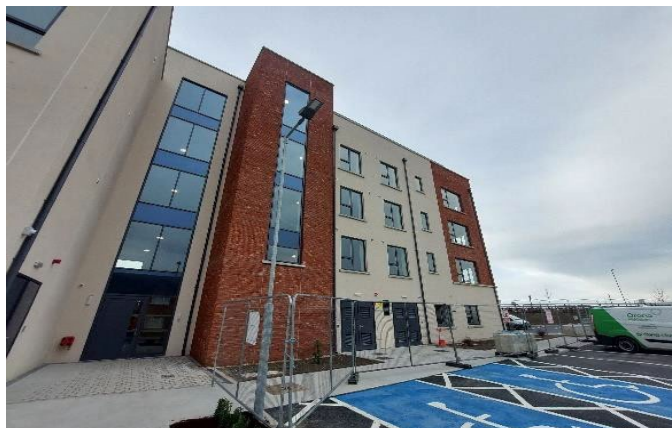
HOUSING

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 February, 2025 under the various support services.

HOUSING CAPITAL DELIVERY



*Abbeymeadows, Ferrybank
March 2025 - 18 Units*



*Castleoaks - 30 Apartments
Turnkey and Part 5 - Handed over February 2025*



*Croker's Hill Housing Scheme- Community
Centre incorporated into the build*



*Croker's Hill Housing Scheme - 88 Units
Getting ready for handover*

HOMELESS SERVICES

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

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

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

HOMELESS SERVICES SUMMARY FEBRUARY 2025	
Homeless Presentations	52
Homeless Assessment Outcomes	
Prevention & Interventions	42
Emergency Service	8
Not eligible / Did not avail of service	4
HAP Place Finder Service	
Number of Homeless HAP tenancies @ 1 st day of month	157
Number of Homeless HAP tenancies created during month	1
Number of Homeless HAP tenancies in place @ last day of month	158
Number of Homeless HAP tenancy breakdowns	0
Other Social Housing Tenancies supported / created during month	9
Provision of Emergency Accommodation	
Households in Temporary Emergency Supported Accommodation @ February 28 th	37
Households in Temporary Emergency B&B accommodation	7
Households in Temporary Emergency B&B Accommodation that are families	7
Households (<i>singles/couples</i>) in Transition Emergency Accommodation (<i>Own Front Door</i>)	40
Households (<i>families</i>) in Transition Emergency Accommodation (<i>Own Front Door</i>)	17

SOCIAL HOUSING PROVISION

SOCIAL HOUSING SUPPORT APPLICATION SUMMARY FEBRUARY 2025	
Number awaiting Social Housing Support at 28 th February (<i>Gross Need</i>)	1,385
Number awaiting Social Housing Support at 28 th February (<i>Net Need</i>)	646
Number of Social Housing Applications received in February	90
Number of applications incomplete/awaiting further information/clarification	57
Number of applications validated and ready for assessment during the month	25
Number of applications assessed during February	44
Number of applications awaiting assessment as @ February 28 th	18

HOUSING ASSISTANCE PAYMENT (HAP) SUMMARY FEBRUARY 2025	
Total active HAP Tenancies	450
New HAP Tenancies Set Up	8
HAP allocated Social Housing	12
Closed HAP Tenancies	13
HAP Rent Reviews	43
HAP Other Tenancy Amendments	27

HOUSING ALLOCATIONS FEBRUARY 2025	
LA/RAS/Leasing offers of allocations made in February	26
LA/RAS/Leasing offers of allocations made to-date 2025	32

TENANCY MANAGEMENT

Complaints

The Tenancy Management Section of Kilkenny County Council deals with anti-social behaviour complaints in relation to our tenants as outlined in the Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy. The number of cases received in February was 45.

MAINTENANCE HOUSING STOCK

The Housing Operations team have commenced a pilot scheme for roll out of a new app for stock surveys to existing housing stock as agreed with the department.

MAINTENANCE CALLS FEBRUARY 2025	
Maintenance calls in February	638
Maintenance calls year to date	1,441

PRIVATE HOUSE GRANTS

The 2025 housing grants allocation has been received from the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage in the amount of €1,920,000 comprised of €1,632,000 (85%) grant and €288,000 (15%) Kilkenny County Council's contribution.

GRANTS APPROVED & COMMITTED FEBRUARY 2025

SCHEME	NUMBER	AMOUNT
HGD - Housing Adaptation Grant	95	€937,765
MAG - Mobility Aid Grant	4	€10,420
HOP - Housing Aid for Older Persons	108	€600,164
Total	207	€1,548,349

GRANTS PAID OUT FEBRUARY 2025

SCHEME	NUMBER	AMOUNT
HGD - Housing Adaptation Grant	12	€88,240
MAG - Mobility Aid Grant	1	€2,863
HOP - Housing Aid for Older Persons	22	€125,654
Total	35	€216,757

HOUSING LOANS

The Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme 2016, which allows local authority tenants to buy their homes is being revised as of from 29th January, 2024. Changes to the scheme are as follows:

- **Minimum Income Requirements:** The minimum income required for an applicant to be eligible to apply under the scheme has been revised from €12,500 to €11,000 per annum. (*At least 50% of which must come from a reckonable primary source of income*).
- **Primary Sources of Income:** In addition to employment and the State Pension (*Contributory and Non-Contributory*) being considered as primary sources of income, the Widow's, Widower's, Surviving Civil Partner's (*Contributory and Non-Contributory Pension*), Blind Pension, Invalidity Pension and Disability Allowance are now also considered primary sources of income.

- ***Time Receiving Social Housing Supports:*** The period of time tenants will be required to be in receipt of social housing support to be considered eligible under the scheme remains at 10 consecutive years. However, in the case of joint tenancies only one tenant is now required to have been in receipt of social housing supports for 10 years.
- ***Income Included/Not Included as a Secondary Income for Assessment:*** Changes have been made to income that can be considered and not considered as secondary income when assessing for discount.

HOUSING LOAN ACTIVITY 2025

Loan Type	Received	Approved	Amount Approved	Number Paid	Amount Paid
Local Authority Home Loan	6	10	€0	1	€120,000
Caravan Loan	0	0	€0.00	0	€0
Total	6	10	€0	1	€120,000

VOIDS

At the end of February 2025 there were 43 vacant units of local authority accommodation awaiting refurbishment or remediation works. 8 vacant units have been upgraded in February 2025 ready for allocation



COMMUNITY

Community Projects

The table below outlines in summary ongoing projects and schemes in the Community Department.

TOWN & VILLAGE SCHEME			
Community Group	Project Description	Grant	Status
Glenmore CLG Project Development Measure 2022	Develop plans for a building purchased under Building Acquisition Measure. The building will be used as a community shop/café and meeting facility	€49,950	In progress
Callan 2023	Restoration and clean-up of the King's River to enable the community to use it for activities fishing, swimming & canoeing and kayaking	€247,500	In progress
Dunnamaggin Local Community Group 2023	The Transformation of a community green space into and events amenity for all the community knows as Madge's Garden	€247,500	In progress, Project Office is working with quality surveyor to prepare draft document for tender
Urlingford Town Team 2023	Refurbishment of Community Hall. Phase 2	€500,000	Tender process ongoing
Callan Project Development Measure 2024	Develop plans to establish an outdoor classroom community space in Abbey Field and examine the re-development of a derelict cottage in Moate Field and complete biodiversity studies on both sites	€49,950	Brief finalised, documents to be prepared for tender
Paulstown Community Group Project Development Measure	Complete feasibility and design studies for the creation of a centre point in the village, consisting of an open public green space with seating and leisure facilities. This will redevelop the village centre and provide accessibility between the main street and residential areas	€49,950	Tender submitted to e-Tenders on 21 st February 2024. Process ongoing

Rural Regeneration Development Fund			
Community Group	Project Description	Grant	Status
Piltown	Phase 1 of the project comprises of main street urban renewal enhancement, parking bays, EV charging points, and bicycle bays x2	€2,180,931	Detailed design in progress
Glenmore	Develop the South East Greenway Connectivity Link and Pink Rock Cycle Loop & Amenity Trail	€2,356,423	Detailed design in progress
Thomastown	Thomastown Library and upgrade to Community Centre	€4,013,115	Works progressing as scheduled

Community & Cultural Facilities Capital Scheme			
Community Group/ Year Approved	Project Description	Grant	Status
Johnstown Sports Field 2022	Contribution to development of walk way around complex	€40,000	Specifications are with the quality surveyor to be formalised. Preparing tender
1 st Kilkenny Scout Group 2022	Upgrade of lighting to LED lighting, improve installation in attic, upgrade boiler and installation of solar panels	€15,000	Not yet commenced
Mooncoin Celtic AFC 2023	LED Floodlighting for extra training area	€20,000	Not yet commenced
John Lockes GAA Club 2023	Walkway improvements, CCTV, Sensory activity outdoor wall panels/litter bins/walkway benches & security gate	€11,000	Waiting on club to finalise their paperwork for claim to be paid
Cois Nore 2024	Develop and Refurbishment of Community Space	€40,000	To be completed by June 2025
Piltown AFC 2024	Walkway, Lighting and Security Fencing	€36,000	To be completed by August 2025
Callan United AFC 2024	Upgrade of Dressing Rooms and Storage facilities	€35,000	Works due to commence
Inistioge Community Council 2024	Bi folding doors to increase space for large functions	€14,000	Works commenced
Danesfort GAA Club 2024	Extension of floodlit walkway	€15,000	Work in progress
Mullinavat Community Group 2024	Installation of CCTV and fob entry system	€9,000	Works to be completed by March 2025
Ballyhale Shamrocks 2024	Upgrade of toilets / disability access	€9,000	Works not yet commenced. Finalising another project in advance of commencing CCFCS
Gowran Community Complex 2024	Contribution towards the refurbishment of a community hub	€27,000	Tender process on going
Johnstown Community Hall 2024	Refurbishment of balcony area	€15,000	Works complete. Claim submitted
Conahy Shamrocks GAA 2024	Upgrade to lighting around walk way	€25,000	25% of works complete

CLÁR			
Community Group	Project Description	Grant	Status
Tullogher Rosbercon GAA Club	Provision of tarmacadam car park, passing bay and emergency access road to new playing field	€50,000	90% of works completed
Kilmoganny GAA	Upgrade car park and walkway	€30,150	Complete

St. Martins GAA	Lighting, nets, railing and gates	€44,766	Complete
Kilkenny County Council Supported by Coolagh Community Group	Upgrade works outside Community Hall	€45,000	In progress
Kilkenny County Council Muckalee Public Lighting (Phase 2)	Upgrade of public lighting	€24,750	In progress
Galmoy Community Hall	Provision of a MUGA	€30,015	Not yet commenced
Windgap Tidy Towns	Provide tarmac surface at Windgap Lake car park.	€20,788	Completed
Skeoughvosteen Community Centre & GAA	Provision of outdoor public and wheelchair accessible public toilets	€50,000	Procurement in progress

Completed Project - Kilfane Handball Club

Kilfane Handball Club received funding of €25,000 for the construction of a gym under the Community & Cultural Facilities Capital Scheme 2023. Kilfane Handball club is a 100 year old sports club playing handball indoor at leisure and at competition level of club, local, national and international. It is also a community hub for the local community through use of the meeting room. The Club were successful in applying for gym equipment through the Sports Capital Grant. the construction of the gym will allow handball and local community Members to access gym equipment in their newly built gym.



Front of Gym Building



Back of Gym Building

LAMA Awards

The *Urban Action Against Cancer* (UcanACT) pilot project, aimed at promoting physical activity for cancer prevention in urban green spaces, was shortlisted as a finalist under the category of “Community Wellbeing – Collaboration and Leadership” for the 2025 LAMA Awards. Developed under the EU Erasmus+ programme with co-funding from the EU Commission, UcanACT brought an innovative approach to enhancing physical activity and health opportunities in the outdoors.

Over the past three years, Kilkenny County Council has collaborated with physiotherapists, the HSE, and academic institutions across Ireland, Belgium, Germany, Italy, and Spain. The UcanACT project, led locally by Kilkenny County Council, recently implemented a successful pilot physical activity programme in parks in the Kilkenny City area with over 50 citizens participating. The programmes included physiotherapist-led exercise programmes tailored for adults over 50, designed as a cancer prevention tool. As part of the

pilot project a Physical Activity App and Citizen Engagement Strategy were developed to enhance participation and outreach. The UcanACT project exemplifies innovation in promoting health and physical activity opportunities outdoors, demonstrating leadership and collaboration in community wellbeing across Europe.

The LAMA Awards took place on the 22nd February 2025 in the Rochestown Park Hotel, Cork where the project was awarded a certificate in recognition of the shortlisting.

The Council and Community Section were delighted that this project was recognised nationally for its successful implementation.



Lar Power, Katherine Peacock, Janette Boran, Anne Marie Shortall & Joe Malone at LAMA Awards

Healthy Ireland

The Connecting Communities Roadshow Ferrybank was a successful event for the community and jointly facilitated by Kilkenny County Council and Waterford County Council. This event offered a great opportunity to showcase the supports and services available to Ferrybank residents while also providing networking opportunities for attending agencies to foster better working relationships and invoke more collaboration in the near future.



Kilkenny County Council staff at Connecting Communities Roadshow in Ferrybank

There were many areas represented from both sides of the river including; Community and Culture teams, Planning, Creative Ireland, Healthy Ireland, Public Participation Network, the Library Service, Local Enterprise, Climate Action, Integration Teams the Local Development Companies and the Local Sports Partnership.

Kilkenny Public Participation Network (PPN)

Kilkenny PPN membership across the County of Kilkenny is currently 458 member groups. The membership registration form is on the Kilkenny PPN website and eligible groups in Kilkenny can register at any time. There are PPN representatives for the Community & Voluntary, Social Inclusion and Environmental seats listed in the new SPC scheme for each of the local authority's Strategic Policy Committees.

Kilkenny PPN representatives and staff recently attended an event on advocacy and how to engage with the Oireachtas. This training will be available online to all member groups later this year. PPN member groups are also being offered a diverse mix of other free training opportunities to build their capacity. Trainings include topics around good governance, financial management and digital skills. Member groups are continuously being updated on a weekly basis around public consultations, events and funding opportunities. Visit www.kilkennyppn.ie and Kilkenny PPN Facebook page for further information on funding streams, public consultations, events, daily updates and membership applications.

INTEGRATION

The Local Authority Integration Team (LAIT) continue to provide on-going integration support to people categorised in the following groups living in County Kilkenny:

- Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection (BOTP) (Ukrainians)
- International Protection Applicants (IPAs)
- Programme Refugees
- Refugee, Subsidiary Protection or Permission to Remain status

Currently there are 412 Ukrainians in 12 properties under contracts with the Department of Children Equality Disability Integration and Youth (DCEDIY), 207 Ukrainians living in Offer A Home properties and Irish Red Cross pledged properties, of which they avail of the Accommodation Recognition Payment. There are 169 International Protection Applicants (IPA's) in 3 properties under contract with the DCEDIY. 69% of Ukrainians and 60% of IPAs are registered as employed.

In February, the LAIT continued their work providing information, advice and advocacy to:

- 55 Ukrainians with 72 interventions including queries relating to temporary protection renewals and healthcare.
- 52 IPA's with 133 interventions including healthcare, access to English language classes, immigration process supports and queries.

Upcoming Events

The LAIT collaborates with partner agencies and are planning events for the year ahead, for example:

- On February 5th the LAIT team held an Employment Rights talk for our cohorts at the Mayfair Library, in collaboration with the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC).
- For March the LAIT are planning a talk on Revenue and Taxation in collaboration Revenue.
- The LAIT are working to organise the involvement of a multicultural group in the Kilkenny St. Patrick's Day parade.
- In collaboration with Creative Ireland the LAIT plan to facilitate a photography workshop for some Members of the local migrant community which will culminate in an exhibition at the Butler Gallery entitled 'I am Me, Before I was a Refugee'.
- The LAIT continue to facilitate weekly drop-in clinics in collaboration with Kilkenny Leader Partnership, held at the Fr. McGrath Centre Neighbourhood Hall every Tuesday morning.

*Olena Kryvulya & Ruth McEvoy,
LAIT Support Workers with our
visiting speakers from the WRC*



Offer of a Home and IRC Pledged Properties at 28th February 2025

February 2025	Number of Pledged Properties	Number of Residents
Offer a Home Scheme	55	184
Pledged Properties (<i>shared and not shared</i>)	6	23
Total	61	207

The 'Offer a Home' Scheme is managed by Local Authorities on behalf of the Government. A Government tax-free Accommodation Recognition Payment (ARP) of €800 per month is available to property owners offering accommodation to Ukrainians with Temporary Protection status up to end of March 2025 currently. Further details are available on www.offerahome.ie or you can contact the Kilkenny County Council Ukrainian Response Team. Currently 55 properties have been pledged under the Offer of a Home Scheme in Kilkenny, providing accommodation for 184 Ukrainians.

A separate programme is in place run by the Irish Red Cross which is seeking pledges of spare rooms or accommodation that would be shared with the owner or others. If an owner wishes to pledge a spare room in their house, they can contact the Irish Red Cross at (01) 6424600 or email info@redcross.ie.

Community Recognition Fund

The Community Recognition Fund was first introduced in 2023 to recognise the huge efforts made by communities in welcoming and supporting Ukrainians coming to Ireland. This funding is specifically targeted at projects that are located in areas within Kilkenny hosting Ukrainians Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection. The following is a list of successful projects under Window 3 of the Community Recognition Fund 2024 recently announced. These groups have recently been awarded funding from the Department of Rural and Community Development.

GROUP	PROJECT	AMOUNT AWARDED
St. Canice's Community Action CLG	Enhancement of Fr. McGrath Family Resource Centre	€100,475
Kilkenny Christian Centre Kilkenny City	Phase 2 of the Light House Project	€390,607

FIRE SERVICES

Fire Safety Certificate Applications

Kilkenny Fire and Rescue Service Fire senior fire officers advise on current Building Regulations in relation to the fire safety standards required for proposed developments. In addition, Kilkenny Fire and Rescue Service fire prevention officers hold fire safety certificate/fire prevention clinics under Section 18(5) of the Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003. These are predominantly held on a weekly basis and/or upon request in Fire Station HQ.

This process has been a huge success as it has aided greatly in reducing:

- (i) our Fire Safety Certificate invalidation rates and,
- (ii) our Fire Safety Certificate refusal rates and,
- (iii) expand the knowledge of the professional cadre within this construction industry.

It is our belief that this has produced a positive culture of compliance amongst the business/commercial community and the professional bodies (*Registered Architect/Chartered Engineer*) in relation to fire safety in the City and County of Kilkenny.

- 12 applications for fire safety certificates were received to date.
 - A Fire Safety Certificate is a certificate issued by the Building Control Authority which states that the works or building to which the application relates will, if constructed in accordance with the plans and specifications submitted, comply with the requirements of Part B of the Second Schedule to the Building Regulations 1997.
- A number of risk premises throughout Kilkenny City and County have been subject to review and fire safety certification applications to ensure minimum standards.

Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003

- Fire Prevention staff made targeted inspections of premises both to provide advice and to enforce legislation during the first few months of 2025.
- 4 Licence Applications were processed under Section 24 of the Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003.
- 1 licence applications under the Dangerous Substances legislation was assessed to date
- 7 Fire safety inspections of premises have taken place to date.

Fire Brigade Operations

The existence of a professional fire and rescue service is fundamental to public and personal safety. The Fire Service plays a crucial role in making our communities safer, whether it be preventing and protecting people from fire and other risks or responding swiftly and effectively to the incidents and emergencies that occur 24 hours per day/7 days per week/365 days per year. 188no callouts were received to date. These incidents included a number of road traffic collisions, house fires, ambulance assists, car fires, chimney fires and automatic fire alarm activations.

Recruitment of Retained firefighters

Our second recruitment campaign is well underway to recruit fire fighters in Castlecomer, Freshford, Urlingford, Thomastown and Graiguenamanagh. One new recruit firefighter has successfully completed his training in Bunclody Fire Station and has commenced his employment with Urlingford Fire Brigade. Another 3 recruits for Thomastown (2) and Castlecomer (1) are undergoing extensive initial training in Galway Fire Station to equip them with the skills to be a Retained Firefighter. As well as responding to emergency calls and undertaking community fire safety initiatives, Retained Firefighters attend weekly training nights to maintain competency levels and undertake routine checks on their equipment.

Retained Firefighters are men and women who are on call to respond to a range of emergencies. Many retained firefighters have other full or part-time jobs but when the call comes they are ready to drop whatever they are doing and become part of a team, ready to face any emergency.

Training

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

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

Training has traditionally been delivered at varying levels (*e.g. local station, fire authority, region, national and international*) and through a variety of arrangements.

A senior fire officer has also successfully completed his Breathing Apparatus Initial wearers course in Dundalk Co. Louth.

A number of Fire Fighters attended a Mod 1 and instructors attended a training course in Castlecomer Fire Station. The aim of this 5-day course is to provide the learners (firefighters and Drivers), with the skills, knowledge and competency necessary to perform as Incident Commanders at fire service incidents. This course provides practical training on the knowledge and skills that are required to enable Incident Commanders to safely work within the incident command structure. The course develops participant skills/knowledge in the effective and efficient management of smaller-scale fire service incidents.



Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Michael McCarthy and Fiona Deegan, Director of Services with students from Kilkenny, Carlow and Kildare and their instructors.

Community Fire Safety

TY students from the CBS Secondary School visited Kilkenny City Fire Station to learn about some history of the fire and rescue service - the fire officers capitalised on this visit to get some first aid life skills and road safety messages across to the very receptive students.



Fire Appliances

The chassis of our 2 seater fully electric- light commercial fire appliance has arrived at HPMP Fire in Tullow, Carlow. The building of the vehicle should be completed towards end of Q2 2025. This light commercial fire appliance will assist in developing our capability within the medieval streets of Kilkenny and for us to comply with our Climate Action Plan in reducing our CO2 emissions in our fleet of vehicles.



LIBRARY



Leap Into Literacy

Kilkenny County Council Library Service in collaboration with Kilkenny Carlow ETB are delighted to begin recruiting volunteer tutors for a new adult literacy programme, Leap into Literacy. Leap into Literacy will provide 1-to-1 tutoring for people looking to improve their basic literacy needs. Volunteer tutors will be partnered with learners and will meet regularly at a mutually convenient time in the library. Learners will learn to read short letters, magazine articles and chapter books, write sentences, use upper- and lower-case letters, spell everyday words and use everyday numbers. Training and ongoing support will be provided to tutors. More information can be found at <https://volunteerkilkenny.ie/> The closing date for applications is March 14th 2025.

LEAP INTO LITERACY

We are seeking Literacy Volunteer Tutors

Are you interested in helping members of the community with their reading, writing, spelling, grammar, numbers and some digital literacy needs?

Do you want to share your love of reading and writing?

1-TO-1 LITERACY VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

To find out more and register your interest visit <https://volunteerkilkenny.ie/>

Apply by March 14th

LEAP INTO LITERACY

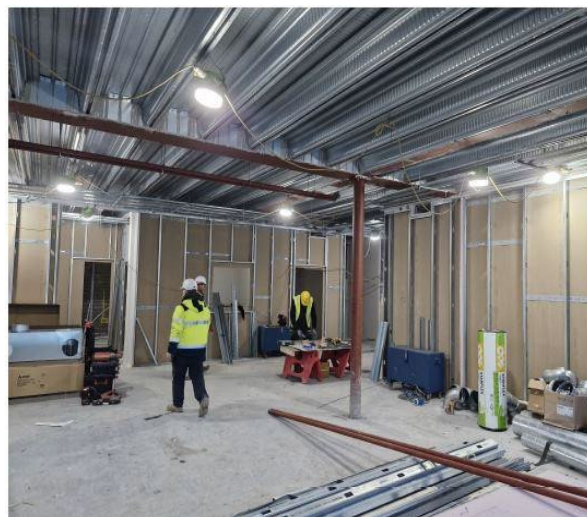
Comhairle Chontae Chill Chainnigh
Kilkenny County Council

Kilkenny County Council
Library Service

kcetb
Kilkenny Carlow Education Training Board

Thomastown Library Update

- Superstructure blockwork to the front entrance is completed.
- Lift shaft blockwork is currently up to roof level, roof penetration is currently being marked out awaiting Kingspan flashings.
- Wall cladding cleats and rails are proceeding.
- Revised steel over the windows are completed except for one number. External wall cladding has commenced.
- Doors and windows installed on the ground floor all other windows for the First floor are on site awaiting installation



Age Action “Getting Started” Classes

Kilkenny County Council Library Service and Age Action recently hosted “Getting Started” IT classes in the Mayfair Library. Getting Started is a digital literacy programme designed to help older people to improve their digital literacy skills, enabling them to stay connected, informed and supported.

Classes were held on Wednesdays starting on January 15th, for a period of five weeks. Each learner was matched with a dedicated tutor and received personalised, one-on-one instruction tailored to their specific needs and the device they use including phones, tablets and laptops.

Ireland Reads

Ireland Reads, the national celebration of reading, took place on February 22nd with a number of events across our branches to mark the occasion including silent book clubs, a poetry workshop, comic book creation station, bookmark making workshop and an online workshop for secondary school students with author Peadar O’Guilín.

We recorded a podcast episode with recommended reads and our mobile library also had a pop-up event on the Parade alongside the Kilkenny Farmer’s market.



Library Activities

This month we held lots of activities and events across our libraries. These events included:

- A repair café in the Mayfair Library
- An energy advice clinic in Loughboy Library
- A teen book club in Ferrybank Library
- A Pokémon trading card event in Graig Library
- Style and colour classes in Castlecomer Library
- ETB lino printing classes in Thomastown Library
- Flower arranging classes in Urlingford Library
- A Cois Nore cancer support information session in Callan Library
- A mobile library pop-up on the Parade for Ireland Reads



Online Services Usage Feb 2025



3,332

eAudiobooks borrowed



381

online learning sessions



1,484

eBooks borrowed



117

language learning sessions



10,801

eNewspapers and magazines borrowed



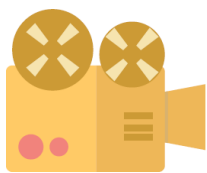
30

eComics borrowed



96

movies streamed



Digital Engagement

Library staff prepared, recorded, edited and published 305 posts and videos on our social media platforms in February. Our engagements for the month were 3,004 and our videos and reels had 6,061 views. Our virtual newsletter was sent to 8,086 email accounts.

Alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals



Here are 2 ways in which Kilkenny County Council Library Service helped to further the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in February:



Graig Library had a chartered physiotherapist from UPMC out to do an osteoarthritis education session which was very well attended.

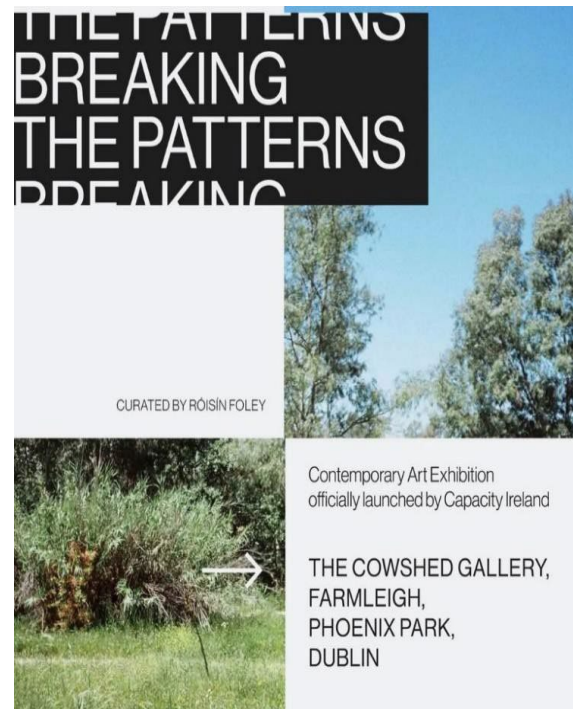


Kilkenny County Council Library Service partnered with Kilkenny Carlow ETB to provide a range of free workshops for our Members including lino printing and flower arranging.

ARTS

Artists Professional Development

Capacity Ireland in association with Creative Europe, the Arts Council of Ireland, and the Local Authority Arts Offices in Carlow, Kilkenny, Wexford, and Waterford launched *Breaking the Patterns* on 22nd February 2025 at The Cowshed Gallery, Farmleigh, Dublin. The exhibition was curated by Róisín Foley and brought together a collective of Irish and international emerging visual artists who have completed residencies in Seville and Lisbon in 2024. Inspired by their surroundings, they created works that reflected their experiences and engagement with these locations. Working across a range of mediums, each artist brings a unique perspective to the theme Breaking the Patterns; pushing creative boundaries and exploring new artistic possibilities.



Arts Act Grants and Artists Residency Bursary

The Arts Act Grants have been assessed and a total of 49 applications were received which is the highest number of applications received in recent years. The total grant fund is €25,000 and a total of 33 applicants were awarded. The Artists Residency Bursary had a total of 22 applications received. There were four artists awarded a one-week residency at either the Tyrone Guthrie Centre or Greywood Arts Centre.

School Bus Subsidy

The annual School Bus Subsidy received 7 applications from primary schools for support towards the cost of bus hire to attend a Barnstorm Theatre production in March. A total of 454 children will attend the production.

Art of Change

Art of Change is an Arts Office Climate Action Programme initiative with workshops running in local youth centres and schools. Thomas Duffy led the youth centre workshop of 16 young people creating a group sculptural work using natural found materials and everyone individually worked on making a rope by hand. Miriam Keegan of Sew Sustainable led a Sustainable Fashion workshop with a 4th year group in the Presentation secondary school, Kilkenny. The students learned about the impact of linear economy of the environment, completed a short quiz and improved their sewing skills through a fun exercise making a key ring.



Art of Change workshop with Presentation secondary school

Rhyme Rag

The 'Rhyme Rag' poetry programme has commenced the poetry workshops in Loreto secondary school in Kilkenny and Grennan College in Thomastown. Poets Alice Bennet and Enda Coyle-Greene delivered workshops to 85 fourth year students. By the end of March, the young people will have completed their own individual poem to submit to this year's Rhyme Rag editor Jessica Traynor to review and give feedback. The poems will be published on the Rhyme Rag website and Instagram page.

Creative Ireland

Applications for Creative Ireland and Cruinniú na nÓg grant schemes are being processed and reviewed by an assessment panel. There were 24 applications for Cruinniú na nÓg and 67 applications for the Creative Ireland grant scheme. The successful applicants will be notified in the coming weeks.

The Living Artfully project, a collaborative project with Kilkenny and Carlow County Council Creative Ireland, had a successful month of activities. Weekly activities for minority groups include:

- Creative Art workshops for migrant and persons experiencing mental health or social isolation issues every Tuesday afternoon at the Cathedral Cafe.
- Sing for Memory for Dementia support services at Bishop Birch centre every Wednesday.
- Creative Art workshops for Cancer support services in collaboration with Cois Nore at St. Canices Neighbourhood Hall Thursday afternoon. Referrals through Cois Nore Service.
- Photography for Mental Health Services at the Involvement Centre 10 Colliers Lane every Monday.
- Art and Poetry workshops at St Canices Neighbourhood Hall Wednesday morning.

Living Artfully **Creative Health & Wellbeing**

FREE WEEKLY EVENT!

SING for MEMORY

RELAXED GROUP SINGING
SUPPORTING PEOPLE LIVING WITH
CONDITIONS AFFECTING MEMORY

CARLOW
An Gairdín Beo
Dublin Road
R93 E1HF
WEDNESDAYS
11:00am to 12:30pm
Enquiries: 087 668 9945

KILKENNY
Bishops Birch Centre
Bishops Birch Place
Leggistrath West
R95 V098
WEDNESDAYS
10:30am to 11:30am
Enquiries: 085 326 2844

SONGS, CONNECTION, FUN!

LIVING ARTFULLY
CLC For Dementia
Cois Nore
Kilkenny County Council

HERITAGE

Kilkenny County Heritage Strategy, 2026-2030: Open for Public Consultation

The consultation on the Kilkenny County Heritage Strategy is underway. The strategy will help preserve, protect, and promote the rich heritage of our County within a local, regional and national context. A discussion paper has been prepared to start the process of consultation and this is available to view on www.consult.kilkenny.ie. Submissions can be made until 5.00 p.m., Friday, 28th March, 2025. Presentations on the Strategy are currently being made at Municipal District meetings and a series of pre-draft consultation sessions have been scheduled for March and April.



Heritage Council Community Heritage Grant Scheme 2025

The Heritage Council Community Heritage Grant Scheme is open for community and voluntary groups, and NGOs. The scheme funds a large range of heritage projects. The closing date for applications was 14th March 2025. Further information on the scheme can be found on www.heritagecouncil.ie.

Irish Walled Towns Network AGM

The AGM of the Irish Walled Towns Network was held in Cashel on 28th February 2025. The Heritage Officer, Regina Fitzpatrick attended as a representative of Kilkenny City. The meeting outlined the calendar of training events and details of grant schemes. Regina Fitzpatrick was elected onto the IWTN Management Committee to represent Kilkenny and the Local Authority Heritage Officer Network. The IWTN will celebrate its 20-year anniversary this coming year with an event in Kilkenny City.

BIODIVERSITY

Probation Service supporting the Biodiversity Actions

The community service unit of the Probation Service provides support to many community organisations across Kilkenny. Their work includes maintaining public gardens, graveyards and other community venues as well as lending a hand to keep areas litter free and tidy. As a lot of the work is concentrated outdoors, they want to ensure their work practices are biodiversity friendly. They have teamed up with the Biodiversity Officer of Kilkenny County Council to get ideas on how they can participate in monitoring schemes and assist in practical work to assist pollinators. Fiona Deegan, A/Director of Services presented the Probation Service with biodiversity field resources to aid identification of plants and animals that they may observe as part of their working day. They will record all their findings with the National Biodiversity Data Centre.

This collaboration meets the objective to “Provide Biodiversity Leadership at a Local Level”, under the public participation action and the objective “to foster engagement and promotion of Biodiversity Best Practice” in the Kilkenny’s Draft Biodiversity Action Plan.



Fiona Deegan, A/Director of Services and Bernadette Moloney, Biodiversity Officer presenting the Probation Service with biodiversity resources

CIVIL DEFENCE

The Civil Defence Annual Awards Night took place on Friday 7th February 2025. Inspector Alma Molloy commended the volunteers for their outstanding service to An Garda Síochána on recent missing person searches. The volunteers were activated for two separate missing person searches in Kilkenny on the 8th and 9th of February, 2025. The second search is still ongoing with over 200 volunteers' hours having being dedicated to date. The volunteers continue to assist in searches each weekend and assisting An Garda Síochána when possible. The volunteers provided first aid cover at the Cois Nore 5km run in Kilkenny City on 3rd February 2025.



Tim Butler, Director of Services, Cllr. Michael McCarthy, Cathaoirleach, Michelle Colclough, Civil Defence Officer, Fiona Deegan, A/Director of Services, Paraic Kelly, Assistant Civil Defence Officer, Cllr. Andrew McGuinness Mayor of Kilkenny and Alma Molloy, Inspector, An Garda Síochána at the Civil Defence Awards Night



Volunteer Sinead Brennan receiving her 10-year service medal from Tim Butler.



Gary Meany, Liam Dowling, Cathaoirleach Cllr. Michael McCarthy, Mayor of Kilkenny, Cllr. Andrew McGuinness, Conor Turner and Joe Hennessy at the Civil Defence Awards Night

The expenditure by service division to the end of February is set out in Table 1. Total Expenditure for the period was €16m compared with the annual budget of €120m.

Table 1	Actual YTD February 2025	Budget Full Year 2025
	€'000's	€'000's
Housing & Building	4,690	30,784
Road Transport & Safety	1,786	31,383
Water Services	897	7,180
Development Management	1,426	15,417
Environmental Services	2,210	18,991
Recreation & Amenity	810	9,425
Agriculture, Education, Health, Welfare	58	354
Miscellaneous Services	1,024	6,938
Central Management Charges for Allocation	3,128	
OVERALL TOTAL	16,030	120,472

Rates Invoices 2025

The annual rate invoices for 2025 totalling €24.4 million were issued to 2850 rate customers in February. Commercial rates are payable in full from 1st January 2025. A prompt payment discount of 8.3% (*capped at €300 per rate account*) is available for customers who pay bill in full before end of May 2025 or enter into a monthly payment plan before April 2025.

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

Decrease in Revaluation on Appeal.....	149 cases
Appeal Withdrawn	33 cases
Increase in Revaluation on Appeal	1 case
No change to Revaluation on Appeal	9 cases
Appeals outstanding	2 cases

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

Finance Update

The bank overdraft facility was not utilised during the two month period to the end February 2025. The draft financial statements for 2024 have been finalised and will be presented to Council at the March meeting.