

CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT

MAY 2024 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

Anti-Litter and Anti-Graffiti Grant 2024

Deadline for applications is the 24th of May, 2024.

FREE Gardening for Biodiversity & Climate Action Workshop

Join us Saturday 25th May from 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. at the Mayfair Library for this fun & practical gardening workshop sponsored by Kilkenny County Council and Kilkenny PPN.

Kilkenny City Night Time Economy Diversification Fund

The deadline for applications under Call 1 is Friday 24th May.

“Team Up to Clean Up”

- Formal launch will take place on the week of the **27th of May, 2024**.
- Event will take place on the **20th-22nd of September**.

Africa Day

Taking place in the Castle Park on June 1st.

CLÁR Eligible Electoral Districts

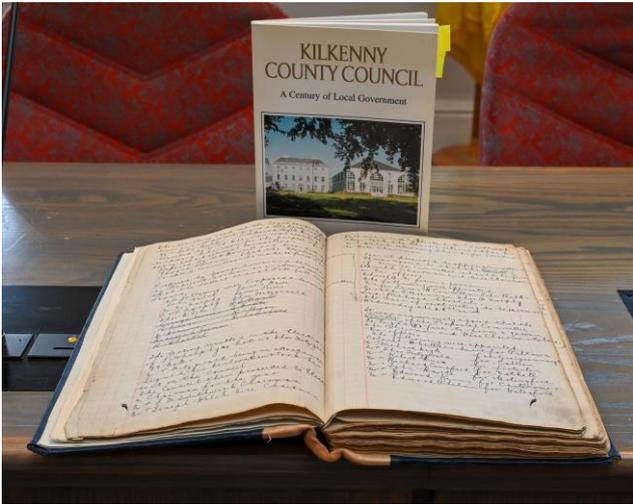
Completed applications are to be received by 4th June, 2024.

REPORT AT A GLANCE

CORPORATE:.....	2
ROADS:	3
ENVIRONMENT:.....	3
PARKS/SPECIAL PROJECTS:	9
PLANNING:	12
LEO/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	14
COMMUNITY & CULTURE:.....	17
ARTS:.....	22
HOUSING:	24
UKRAINIAN RESPONSE UNIT	30
FIRE SERVICES	31
LIBRARY SERVICES:.....	33
FINANCE.....	36P

CORPORATE

The Council celebrated 125 Years of Local Government. The first meeting of Kilkenny County Council was held in the Courthouse, Kilkenny on Saturday, 22nd April, 1899.



Elected Members with the actual Minute Book for the Minute in 1899.



Party Whips



Cllr. Michael Doyle acknowledged 50 years of service by Cllr. Mary Hilda Cavanagh.

ROADS

MAJOR PROJECTS

(Included in NDP- Funded by TII)

N24 Waterford to Cahir Scheme

Date for Publication of the Option Selection Report is Q2 2024.

To date no funding has been provided in 2024 to extend the project beyond Phase 2.

MINOR PROJECTS

(Not included in NDP-Funded by TII)

N24 Tower Road (Safety Scheme)



Chairman Cllr Michael Doyle officially opening the N24 Tower Road Project.

N77 Ballyragget to Ballynaslee

Construction of the scheme commenced on Tuesday 6th February 2024 with an expected 12-month time frame. Works are progressing well and are on schedule.



N24 Carrick Road

Kilkenny Council has received formal notification that An Bord Pleanála has approved the 177AE planning application subject to conditions and has confirmed the CPO without modifications as of the 20th March 2024. An eight-week period now applies to allow applications for leave to apply for judicial review. Should no applications issue a notice of the making of a confirmation order will be published within 12 weeks of the making of the order.

Pavement Schemes

The design work is ongoing in respect of the N76 Callan By Pass Pavement Scheme. Design work and the preparation of tender documentation are on-going. The overall cost of the scheme is expected to be in excess of €4m with varying sources of TII funding necessary to deliver the scheme.

ENVIRONMENT

CLIMATE ACTION

FREE Gardening for Biodiversity & Climate Action Workshop

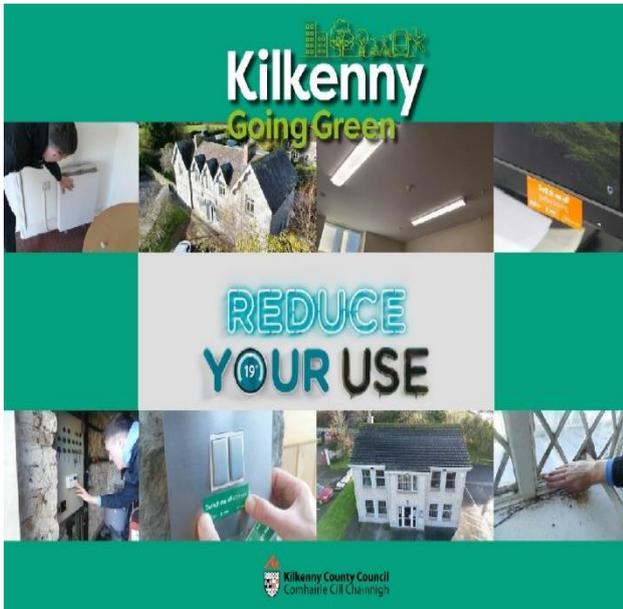
Join us Saturday 25th May from 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. at the Mayfair Library for this fun & practical gardening workshop sponsored by Kilkenny County Council and Kilkenny PPN. This course is suitable for adults who want to improve their area for biodiversity, reduce the effects of climate change and help build a more sustainable community. It is particularly of interest to Tidy Towns Groups, (Wo)Men's Shed Groups and Environmental Groups but is also open to other community & voluntary groups or individuals who wish to attend. See [here](#) for details



Community Climate Action Fund

The Community Climate Action Programme is currently closed to applications. Evaluation of Phase 1 is currently underway. Results will be issued on/before Aug 2024, following confirmation by the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC). A second phase of the Community Climate Action Programme is expected, subject to confirmation from DECC.

Kilkenny County Council Reduce Your Use Campaign



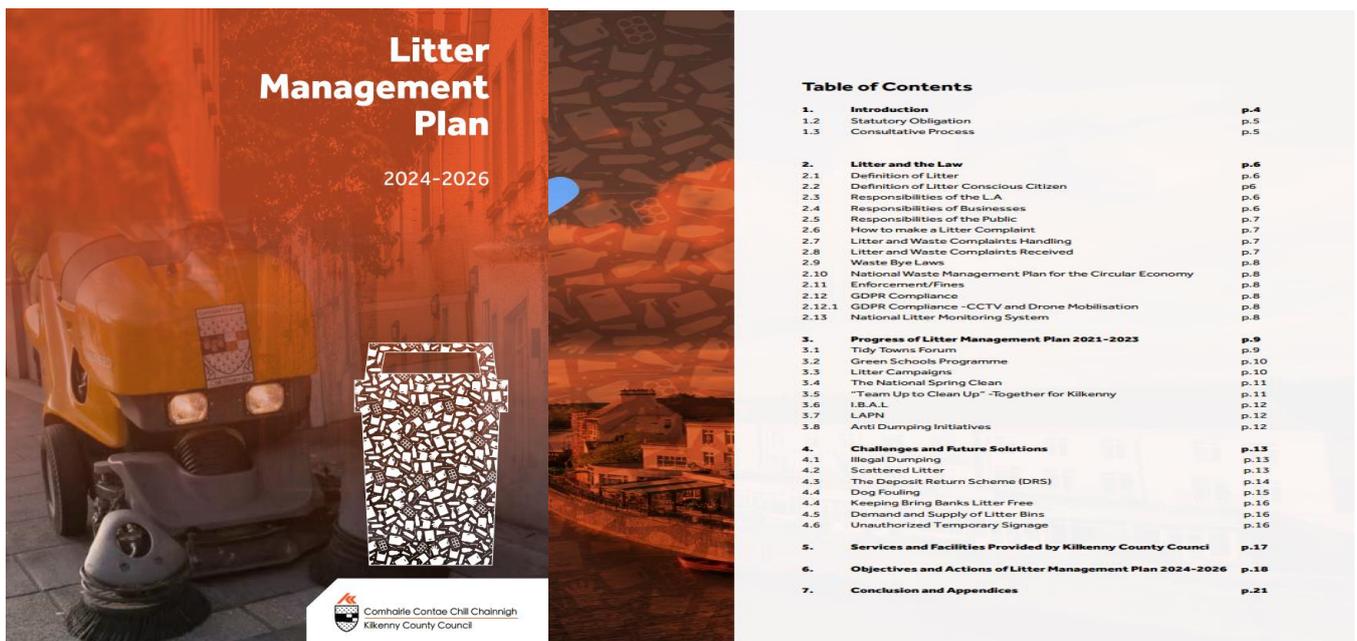
Kilkenny County Council's Reduce Your Use campaign has been a great success. The campaign (October 2023 to March 2024) consisted of promoting energy efficiency within the organisation with a particular focus on the Thomastown and Callan Area Offices.

[Reduce your Use](#) is a joint initiative of SEAI and the Office of Public Works which supports public bodies to run a winter energy awareness and energy reduction programme. The target is 15% energy reduction. The Kilkenny County Council project achieved 24% energy reduction in two buildings in the Callan/Thomastown MD. This was achieved with a combination of behavioural change and a small investment in energy reduction measures. A video and interactive report which documents the campaign will be available on the [Council website](#) and promoted in early May.

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Litter Management Plan

The public consultation process for the Litter Management Plan 2024 – 2026 closed on 15th March 2024 and on the 22nd April 2024, the Litter Management Plan 2024 – 2026 was approved by the Plenary.



Tree Care Webinar

Aoife Munn, a horticulturist completed a one hour webinar on the 1st of May and give tips on how to improve your tree care skills. Topics included staking, tree tie management, mulching, watering, pruning, and protecting young trees from pests and diseases. This was a collaborative project undertaken by the Environmental Awareness Officer, the Biodiversity Officer and Heritage.

Air Quality Campaign

In conjunction with the Enforcement Team in Environment, the EAO is coordinating a targeted campaign throughout the city and county on air quality and the continued use of smoky coals. The campaign seeks to raise awareness amongst the wider public, stakeholders, businesses and schools about the health and environmental impacts of poor air quality and the ways individuals can help reduce pollution. This will be a 4-6 week campaign commencing the week of the 15th of April 2024.

AIR QUALITY IN IRELAND

AIR POLLUTION IS HARMFUL TO HEALTH

Pollutants can damage the heart.

and the lungs

or increase the risk of cancer

TRAFFIC EMISSIONS cause high levels of Nitrogen Oxide & Particulate Matter in our cities

RESIDENTIAL BURNING OF SOLID FUELS causes high levels of Particulate Matter and Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAH) in our towns

OZONE CONCENTRATIONS are higher in rural areas and higher in the west (because of Ozone chemistry)

PARTICULATE MATTER CONCENTRATIONS are highest on calm, stable weather

OZONE CONCENTRATIONS are highest in warmer weather

THERE ARE CHALLENGES AHEAD

THE INCREASE IN ROAD TRANSPORTATION means Ireland did NOT meet the 2010 EU National Emission Ceiling for Nitrogen Oxides

IRELAND IS REQUIRED UNDER EU LAW to decrease exposure to fine Particulate Matter (PM_{2.5}) by 10% between 2012 and 2020 to reduce potential impacts on human health

86% reduction in emissions of sulphur dioxide between 1990 and 2010

The impact of emissions from industry an air quality has significantly reduced due to licensing and control by the EPA and others

The ban on bituminous coal in cities & towns has greatly reduced the levels of particulate pollution in those areas

359 fewer cardiovascular & respiratory deaths every year in Dublin



www.epa.ie/irelandenvironment/

Council's call to action on air pollution

Solid fuel combustion releases harmful particles and gases into the atmosphere, leading to elevated levels of pollution

Kilkenny County Council says it is taking steps to monitor air quality and tackle air pollution, against a backdrop of Ireland facing a growing concern over harmful pollutants and fine particulate matter arising from burning solid fuels, such as coal, peat and wet wood.

One of the significant contributors to air pollution in Ireland is the burning of solid fuels for heating purposes. Solid fuel combustion releases harmful particles and gases into the atmosphere, leading to elevated levels of pollution.

Recognising this issue, the Irish government implemented new solid fuel regulations in 2012 to curb emissions from domestic heating sources.

The new regulations set stricter standards for the types of solid fuel

make a meaningful impact on air quality and reduce the health risks associated with poor air.

"Kilkenny County Council plays a vital role in implementing and enforcing these regulations, as well as taking additional measures to improve air quality within its jurisdictions. Here in Kilkenny, efforts are being made to monitor air quality levels, identify sources of pollution, and develop action plans to protect emissions and reduce public health.

Environmental Awareness Office in County Council, Mags Whelan says air quality is a top priority for her department, and they are committed to working towards cleaner air for our communities in Kilkenny.

"By collaborating with local businesses, educational institutions, and

choosing cleaner transportation options, reducing energy consumption, and supporting initiatives that promote environmental sustainability."

According to statistics from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the World Health Organisation (WHO), the levels of harmful pollutants in the air have been on the rise, posing significant risks to public health and the environment.

Fine particulate matter arising from burning solid fuels, such as coal, peat and wet wood, remains the biggest contributor to poor air quality in Ireland, with worrying localised issues in cities, towns and even villages.

Pollutants are known to cause a range of health

Kilkenny County Council

A call to action: addressing air pollution and poor air quality in Kilkenny



Ireland has been facing a growing concern over air pollution and poor air quality. According to statistics from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the World Health Organisation (WHO), the levels of harmful pollutants in the air have been on the rise, posing significant risks to public health and the environment.

One of the significant contributors to air pollution in Ireland is the burning of solid fuels for heating purposes. Solid fuel combustion releases harmful particles and gases into the atmosphere, leading to elevated levels of pollution.

Recognising this issue, the Irish government implemented new solid fuel regulations in 2012 to curb emissions from domestic heating sources.

The new regulations set stricter standards for the types of solid fuel that can be used for heating, aiming to reduce the emission of harmful pollutants and protect public health.

By phasing out the use of high-polluting fuels and promoting cleaner alternatives, the government hopes to make a meaningful impact on air quality and reduce the health risks associated with poor air.

Kilkenny County Council plays a vital role in implementing and enforcing these regulations, as well as taking additional measures to improve air quality within its jurisdictions. Here in Kilkenny, efforts are being made to monitor air quality levels, identify sources of pollution, and develop action plans to protect emissions and reduce public health.

Mags Whelan, Environmental Awareness Officer in Kilkenny County Council comments, "Air quality is a top priority for our Department and we are committed to working towards cleaner air for our communities in Kilkenny and

its residents. By collaborating with local businesses, educational institutions, and community groups, we aim to raise awareness about air pollution and promote sustainable practices that will benefit both our health and the environment."

In addition to regulatory measures, public awareness and community engagement are crucial in addressing air pollution and improving air quality. Individuals can make a difference by choosing cleaner transportation options, and supporting initiatives that promote environmental sustainability.

The EPA and WHO emphasise the importance of collective action in tackling air pollution, as it is a complex issue that requires comprehensive solutions at local, national, and global levels. By raising awareness, advocating for clean air policies, and adopting sustainable practices, we can protect our health, preserve our environment, and create a healthier future for generations to come.

If you want to make a complaint about poor air quality in your area, visit Kilkenny County Councils Environment website on www.kilkennyco.ie/environment

For more information on air quality initiatives in Kilkenny and across Ireland, please visit the EPA website at www.epa.ie and the WHO's website at www.who.int

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Anti-Litter and Anti-Graffiti Grant 2024

Kilkenny County Council is offering community groups an opportunity this year to promote anti-litter and anti-graffiti awareness in their local community. The grant is to mobilize community groups to care for their local environment by decreasing the impact of litter by its removal and to promote a social message locally to encourage everyone to put litter in its rightful place – in a bin.

As funding comes directly from the Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment there are funding restrictions which must be adhered to.

This grant **cannot cover**:

- the purchase structural items such as street furniture
- the purchase of litter bins
- the purchase of dog bag dispensers
- the purchase of signage
- the purchase or rental of CCTV cameras

The grant **can** cover expenses such as:

- The purchase of bags for dog bag dispensers if dispensers are already installed at are under the care of the group
- The expense of litter disposal resulting from litter picks and the expense of disposal of rubbish from public street bins which are under the guardianship of the community group
- Awareness events highlighting the issue of litter and dog fouling in your local community

The application process will open on **Monday 8th of April** and applications can be accessed via our website: [Environment - Kilkenny County Council \(kilkennycoco.ie\)](https://www.kilkennycoco.ie/Environment) or by contacting Deirdre.traid@kilkennycoco.ie. **Deadline for applications is the 24th of May, 2024.**

Team Up to Clean Up-Together for Kilkenny



The formal launch of the “Team Up to Clean Up-Together for Kilkenny” will take place on the week of the **27th of May, 2024**. An online portal will open for registrations on **Monday 27th of May**.

This year’s “**Team Up to Clean Up**” will take place on the **20th-22nd of September**.

Kilkenny has a wow factor that is the envy of other Irish counties. Kilkenny City is recognised nationally as a litter free location, regularly winning medals in the IBAL and Tidy Towns competitions and even being awarded the much-coveted title of overall Tidy Towns national winner on two occasions.

The County-Wide Clean Up initiative brought together residents, businesses, and local organizations to collaborate in a mass effort to enhance the cleanliness and sustainability of our county. Last year we saw over 200 groups register with over 500 volunteers participate. This culminated in a collection of just over 24 tonnes of litter.

The “Team Up to Clean Up” event created a sense of community ownership and pride by engaging participants in a variety of cleanup activities, awareness campaigns, and environmental educational programs. It created a sense of ownership and focus for many communities, with significant additional interest by many groups and individuals outside of national campaigns such as the annual National Spring Clean which takes place during the month of April. All cohorts of society engaged resulting in the “Team Up to Clean Up” exemplifying best practice in the areas of social inclusion and environment.

We aim to take this event one step further this year by investing in the next generation of stewards through the Green Schools Programme and developing a series of education and awareness workshops.

WASTE

Bring Banks Usage

The Council provides and manages 46 Bring Centers across the City and County. A total of 684 tonnes of recyclables were collected from our Bring Centers so far in 2024. This represents that the 1% decreased to the prior year during the same period. Aldi - Kilkenny city (16 tonnes collected), Lidl - Johnswell, Kilkenny City (13 tonnes collected), Loughboy shopping center - Kilkenny City (12 tonnes collected), and are the busiest locations in the City. Aldi - Ferrybank (8 tonnes collected), Lidl - Thomastown (8 tonnes collected) and Aldi - Callan (7 tonnes collected) are 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.

Dunmore Civic Amenity Site

The Dunmore site continues to provide an excellent and essential service to the greater Kilkenny community and has cemented its place as one of Kilkenny County Council’s leading service providers with the addition of the Kilkenny Countryside Park on the closed Landfill site. This combined amenity has seen many recycling conscious people combine their trip to the Dunmore CAS with a healthy walk in the Countryside Park during March 2024.

AIR NOISE WATER

Water Quality - Farm Inspections

Inspections are ongoing with regards to Agricultural & Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems in the county in order to reach our RMCEI targets for 2024. We will also be conducting call backs in the coming months on inspections carried out in 2023 to ensure issues around non compliances have been rectified.

A meeting was recently held with the Environment Section of Kilkenny County Council and the Oversight & Reporting Team in the EPA for Agricultural Inspections. Various issues were discussed including the total number of National Agricultural Inspections that Kilkenny County Council have to complete in 2024 and reporting requirement for each inspection. A number of new staff are currently being recruited to specifically carry out these attentional farm inspections and the training courses are being set up in Gurteen Agricultural College next month for staff to get the appropriate training.

Air Quality

The Environment Section of Kilkenny County Council will start a media campaign with regards to air quality in the county and how we can improve it. The burning of fossil fuels releases particulate matter emitting an array of pollutants that reduce air quality and harm life, especially Sulphur Dioxide, Nitrogen Oxides, and airborne particles such as soot.

In conjunction with the Enforcement Team in Environment, the EAO is coordinating a targeted campaign throughout the city and county on air quality and the continued use of smoky coals. The campaign seeks to raise awareness amongst the wider public, stakeholders, businesses and schools about the health and environmental impacts of poor air quality and the ways individuals can help reduce pollution. This will be a 4-6 week campaign commencing the week of the 15th of April 2024.

Noise Action Plan Round 4

Kilkenny County Council is currently in the process of creating Round 4 of the Noise Action Plan. The Environment Section is currently in consultation with other sections in the council on selecting priority sites for inclusion in Round 4 of the Noise Action Plan. Links to EPA Noise Mapping in County Kilkenny can be located using the following link <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/>

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 April 2024 is 81 compared to 70 for the same period last year, an increase of 16%. The nature of these complaints ranged from littering, illegal dumping, burning of waste and abandoned cars. The 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 prosecution cases.

Community Monuments Fund

The Environment Section of Kilkenny County Council submitted Community Monument Fund Applications for Stream 1,2 & 3 projects in 2024.

The Council recently received notification of €572,057.48 being awarded under the 3 Streams

The Community Monuments Fund has 3 Streams:

Stream 1 will offer grants up to €100,000 aimed at essential repairs and capital works for the conservation and repair of archaeological monuments

Stream 2 will offer grants of up to €30,000 for development of Conservation Management Plans/Reports that are aimed at identifying measures for conservation of archaeological monuments and improving public access.

Stream 3 will offer grants of up to €30,000 for enhancement of access infrastructure and interpretation (including virtual/online) at archaeological monuments.

Stream 1 CMF application as follows:

- Grangefertagh Historic Church and Graveyard (Stage 2)
- Tubrid Historic Church and Graveyard
- Rathpatrick Church & Graveyard

CMF24-1-KK001 Kilkenny Grangefertagh€84,034.30

CMF24-1-KK003 Kilkenny Tubrid Medieval Church.....€118,304.33

No monies were awarded in respect of Rathpatrick Church & Graveyard

Stream 2 CMF application as follows:

- Kellymount Historic Church and Graveyard
- Clara Historic Church and Graveyard
- Castleinch Historic Church and Graveyard

CMF24-2-KK001 Kilkenny Kellymount Graveyard €18,388.50

CMF24-2-KK002 Kilkenny Castleinch Church €18,265.50

CMF24-2-KK003 Kilkenny Clara Church and Graveyard..... €20,541.00

Stream 3 CMF application as follows:

- Garryduff Graveyard
- Cloghabrody Graveyard

CMF24-3-KK001 Kilkenny Cloghabrody Graveyard €13,245.60

CMF24-3-KK002 Kilkenny Garryduff Graveyard €23,903.25

PARKS & SPECIAL PROJECTS

South East Greenway

Lot 5a Ferrybank to Curraghmore

Glas Civil Engineering Ltd., commenced works on Lot 5A (c.5.5km section from Ferrybank to Curraghmore) in November last and works continue to advance to schedule. Works are currently progressing at Glenmore carpark and fencing has also started along the site. Works at a number of agricultural crossing locations are also well underway, online works also continue with c. 90% of the greenway sub-base completed along this Lot and the anticipated contract completion date remains the end of this year.



Adjoining Landowners

The Project Landowner Liaison Officer is continuing to engage with landowners adjoining the greenway in relation to boundary treatment and crossing points. The parameters for these discussions are set out within the Charter for South East Greenway Accommodation Works.

Technical Consultants

Three tenders were received following the tender process for the provision of Technical Services for a multi-disciplinary engineering consultancy team to complete all remaining phases of the greenway. The Tender Assessment and Recommendation Report has been finalised and issued to Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) for approval and it is expected to have this appointment process concluded in May.

Land Acquisition from Córas Iompair Éireann (CIÉ)

Legal contracts have now been signed by both the Local Authority and CIÉ and the final conveyance works are progressing to conclude the acquisition of the lands along the abandoned rail corridor.



Progress Images Along Lot 5A

Outdoor Recreation Instructure Scheme (ORIS)

Millennium Forest - Trail Enhancement and Accessibility Scheme

A contract was recently awarded to Shay Power Ltd., to carry-out trail enhancement and accessibility works in the Millennium Forest just outside the city. This contractor was procured using Coillte's Works Framework. Works are expected to commence in May and will include carpark and entrance enhancements, significant upgrading of the existing Green Loop to include 2.1km's of trail rehabilitation to facilitate universal access with a particular focus on wheelchair users. Other works include improvements to the longer Red Loop, the provision of universal and age friendly accessible amenity spaces, delineated disabled and age friendly car parking spaces. The wheelchair accessible toilet (Dry loo) which was installed last year under this scheme will be opened to the public in tandem with the completion of the overall project, which includes an access path to same. Funding of €200,000 to facilitate the above was secured under the ORIS Measure 2 and with match funding from the Council's own resources the completed project will see an investment of €227,000 into this public amenity.

Lacken Boardwalk Replacement Scheme

Following a competitive tender process the works contract for the Lacken Boardwalk Replacement Scheme was awarded to Triur Construction Ltd. The recycled plastic component's for the boardwalk have been signed off by the design team and the contractor has ordered same with works expected to commence in the coming weeks. It is noted to facilitate these works sections of the boardwalk will be closed to the public during this period.

The completed project will see the replacement of the existing 1.2m wide timber boardwalk with a c.3.6m wide boardwalk made from recycled composite materials. Funding for this project was secured under Measure 3 of the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme in the amount of €500,000 which will be supplemented from the Council's own funds.



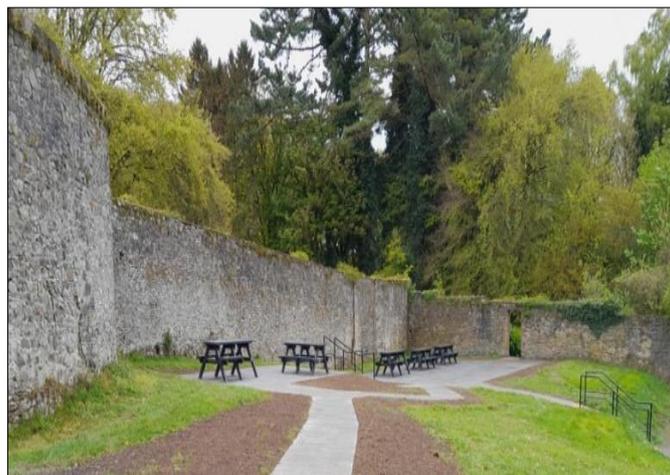
Computer generated image of completed boardwalk

Jeninstown Wood Enhancement Scheme

All works associated with the Jeninstown Wood Enhancement Scheme are now completed with the exception of new signage which is designed and at manufacture stage. It is expected that the signage will be ready for installation in the coming weeks.

The completed work provides for a new 1.2km trail around the Deerpark area within close proximity to the carpark and amenity area. This new walk will be called the *"Last Rose of Summer Walk"* in acknowledgment of Irish writer and poet Thomas Moore who wrote his poem the *Last Rose of Summer* while staying at Jeninstown House in 1805.

Other works completed include c.2km of upgrades in the form of trail reconstruction and drainages provision to existing walks, significant enhancements at the picnic area to make this amenity space more attractive and accessible, the provision of bike parking, installation of hand rails and landscaping.



Funding of €200,000 to facilitate the above was secured under the ORIS and with match funding from the Council's own resources the completed project will see an investment of c.€227,000 into this public amenity.

Kilkenny Countryside Park

The inaugural Kilkenny Junior Park Run took place on Sunday 21st April in the Kilkenny Countryside Park at Dunmore. The event was a great success with 175 participants and 26 volunteers in attendance. This free, fun and friendly 2km event, which will be held every Sunday morning, is suitable for children of all abilities aged from 4 years to 14 years old. These events offer families the opportunity to get involved and get active in the outdoors. Kilkenny County Council are delighted that our new Countryside Park was identified by Parkrun Ireland and the local volunteer group as the location for the Kilkenny Junior Park Run, and numbers attending to date have been very positive with the expectation the event will grow week on week.



The Library Services have also rolled out their Slí Na Scéalta outdoor family reading experience in the Kilkenny Countryside Park. This fun learning experience, featuring author Brendan McDonald's story "The Elephant on the Farm", is displayed across story panels located around the 1.3km accessible trail, so you can follow the story from beginning to end as you walk! The trail was previously located within Woodstock Gardens and proved very popular with our younger visitors.



Woodstock Garden & Arboretum

Tea Room

We are delighted to advise that the Tea Room, located in the conservatory, at Woodstock Gardens opened on Saturday 4th May, 2024. We are currently welcoming visitors to the Tea Rooms on Saturdays and Sundays, offering a delicious selection of freshly baked cakes and sweet treats, from 11am to 5pm.

Our Coffee Truck and Ice Cream Parlour, located beside the car park and playground are also now open at weekends offering a selection of takeaway hot and cold drinks, sweet treats and ice-creams.

Both offerings will open 7 days a week in July and August, returning to weekend opening only during September until the end of the season.

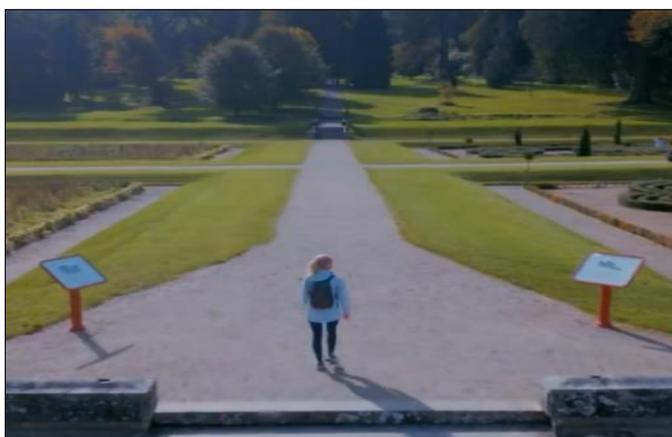


Woodstock House - Historic Structures Fund

Having secured funding, earlier in the year, under the Historic Structure Fund, to help secure the external walls of Woodstock House and remove vegetation, a tender competition was run to engage a specialist consultancy team to prepare the works contract for same. This process is now completed and a conservation consultant engineering firm were recently appointed. It is expected work will be undertaken in Q4 this year and Q1 in 2025.

Tracks & Trails

The South Leinster Way from Graignamanagh to Inistioge featured on the Tracks and Tails programme on Friday the 3rd May at 7.30pm on RTE One. The programme also focused on Woodstock Gardens where host Dr. Ruth Freeman discussed the story of the gardens with Head Gardener John Delaney. Kilkenny Tourism and the Parks Office have been working with the producers of this programme since last year and the show, which also featured the Nore Valley Walk from Kilkenny City to Bennettsbridge, attracts a huge audience and we hope to see an increase in visitor numbers to the city and county over the coming months on back of same.



Playgrounds

Enhancement works and repairs were carried out in a number of playgrounds across the City and County during the month of April. Some of the works included the painting of the timber play components in the playgrounds in Johnstown and Kells. A large new biodiversity mural was also painted on the wall within the playground in Stoneyford. This mural was painted by local artist Dan Leo in conjunction with Street Art Ink. The Project was co-funded by the Parks Department and the Environment Section with the latter securing funding through the Anti-litter and Anti-graffiti Awareness Grant.



PLANNING

Development Management

Planning Summary	Total at End April		
	2023	2024	Change
Planning Applications Received	67	59	-8
Planning Applications Granted	39	61	+ 22
Planning Applications Refused	9	2	-7
Complaints Received	11	17	+6
Warning Letters Issued	11	7	-4
Enforcements Notices Issued	8	4	-4
Cases Closed	6	4	-2

FORWARD PLANNING

Masterplans:

Abbey Quarter

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

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

St. Canice's Campus

A draft masterplan has been completed and the necessary environmental reports prepared and all documentation is being currently proofed. It is anticipated that the draft masterplan and environmental documents will be presented to the Kilkenny City Municipal District members mid 2024, before being placed on public display for a round of public consultation.

Ballyragget/Paulstown/Kilmacow

Masterplans are also being prepared for the settlements of Ballyragget, Paulstown and Kilmacow. Three public meetings, one for each town, have taken place. The feedback / inputs from these meetings have been incorporated into the draft Masterplans. The draft masterplans for Ballyragget and Paulstown were presented to elected members at the March Castlecomer MD meeting and placed on public display for a 4 week period from Friday 5th April until close of business on Friday 3rd May. A total of 9 submissions were received in relation to the draft Paulstown Masterplan and a total of 12 submissions were received for the draft Ballyragget Masterplan. A public drop in session was held in Paulstown on Monday 22nd April, from 5-9pm and in

Ballyragget on Tuesday 23rd April from 5-9pm. Approximately 60 people attended on each night.

The submissions on both these plans are now being assessed and a report currently being prepared and it is anticipated that these plans will be presented to the elected members at the Castlecomer MD meeting in June for adoption.

The draft Masterplan and associated environmental documents for Kilmacow were circulated to the elected members in the Piltown MD. The elected members will now arrange a workshop to discuss the plan, prior to it being presented. This workshop will be scheduled before the end of May, and depending on the outcome of this workshop, the draft plan and associated environmental documents will be presented at the June Piltown MD meeting, prior to the draft masterplan being placed on public display for a 4 week period. A Walk-in public meeting will also be scheduled for Kilmacow during the public display period.

Local Area Plans

Ferrybank / Belview Local Area Plan

Tenders have now been assessed and consultants, namely KPMG and Future Analytics have been appointed. An inception meeting has been held with the consultants and they have advised they expect to meet the timeline of a new LAP in place by Q1 2025.

The consultants will shortly prepare an issues paper and arrange for public consultation on same. The drafting of the LAP also provides for the preparation of environmental reports and publication of a draft plan, statutory public consultation and the final LAP to be presented for approval by the Council.

Castlecomer Local Area Plan

The Castlecomer Local Area Plan (LAP) is at pre-draft stage, with an issues paper currently being finalised and consultants being appointed to carry out a Flood Risk Assessment. It is estimated that a draft LAP will be advertised in Q3 of 2024 and a public consultation event will be held in Castlecomer once notification of the Councils intent to carry out this LAP is advertised.

Cluster Housing Design Guidelines for Co. Kilkenny

Consultants, Place +Urbanism Ltd, have been appointed to carry out Cluster Housing Design

Guidelines for County Kilkenny. An induction meeting was held with the consultants in February and after several weeks of gathering data, they have presented a potential format for the document, which they are finalising presently. A workshop will then be held with the Development Management Section of the Planning Dept. in June at which the document and its format will be presented and discussed. It is anticipated that a draft document for public consultation will be ready by Q3 2024.

Taking in Charge

Lime Grove in Ferrybank has progressed through initiation stage and the developer is progressing final works. Works are also continuing on various estates throughout the City and County.

Active Land Management

A Draft Annual Map of lands in scope for the new Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT) was published on the 31st January 2024. The first submission period has now closed, and 8 submissions were received on inclusions or exclusions to the land in scope for the tax. The second submission period, for landowners to make requests regarding a rezoning of their land, is still open until the 31st May.

There are 23 Vacant Sites on the Vacant Sites Register, and the number of cancelled entries due to site activation or improvement is 24. The Vacant Site levy (VSL) will be replaced by the RZLT from 2025, 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: Meetings have taken place with owners and project agents. Projects will now be tendered to suitable contractors.

Historic Structures Fund: Meetings have taken place with owners and project agents. Projects will now be tendered to suitable contractors.

Valid Commencement Notices Received:

April 2024.....	146
April 2023.....	90
April 2022.....	141
April 2021.....	132

Disability Access Applications Received:

April 2024.....	23
April 2023.....	15
April 2022.....	31
April 2021.....	20

TOWN REGENERATION OFFICE

Town Centre First

Graiguenamanagh: A public meeting will be held in The Hub, Graiguenamanagh on Monday, 17th May, 2024 at 7 p.m. with a view to forming a Town Team for the town. The Town Regeneration Officer will outline the process for this and for the creation of a Town Centre First Plan for Graiguenamanagh.

Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant

The following are the full statistics for the month of April:

Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant as at 30th April, 2024

Applications Submitted to-date	143
Approvals/ Approvals in Principle to-date.....	103
Grant Drawdown to-date.....	6
Queries during the month of April.....	37

Derelict Sites

The Town Regeneration Office have progressed CPO's at 3 locations to Vesting Order stage.

These properties are located at:

- Chapel Street, Mooncoin
- Lower Bridge Street, Callan
- Market Street & Low Street, Thomastown.

LEO/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Local Enterprise Office - Summary of 2024 Awards to Businesses

- €160,412 in direct financial assistance was approved for manufacture/export service businesses in located in throughout the county (€130,750 in Business Expansion Grant assistance and €29,662 awarded in feasibility study grant assistance).

- 4 Technical Assistance for Micro Exporter grant awarded to support them in exploring new export market opportunities.
- 14 Businesses have commenced LEAN one to one consultancy programmes to investigate possible resource efficiencies and process improvements their businesses.
- 8 Business is availing of the Digital Start programme to prepare and implement a plan for the adoption of digital tools and techniques across the enterprise.
- 6 business have been approved a Trading Online Voucher totalling €14,136 to support the enhancement of their online trading capacity.
- 6 Green for Micro Grant awarded. This scheme supports businesses to becoming greener and environmentally friendly.
- 4 applicants have been supported to make loan applications to the Micro Finance Ireland loan fund.
- 532 people participated on focused small business training, including 23 people participating on the Starting Your Business programme.
- 211 businesses have availed of specialised business specific mentoring on a variety of topics including finance, marketing, social media marketing and HR.

Broadband/ Digital Update

Digital Strategy Consultants Ltd, have complete a final report on the digital audit of assets, services and processes within Kilkenny County Council which is the first step in preparing a 3-year digital strategy for Kilkenny. The second phase of the process in the development of a digital strategy for the citizens of County Kilkenny.

Digital Strategy Consultants Ltd have been appointed and will carry out a stakeholder engagement process both internally and externally over the coming months with the final digital strategy due to be completed in Summer 2024.

Kilkenny County Council hosted the Telecommunications Action Group Meeting (TAG) on 25th April in the Council Chamber. Representatives from the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) and Local Authority Broadband Officers attended the meeting.

A number of attendees availed of the opportunity to visit the new Mayfair Library.

Night Time Economy

The Kilkenny City pilot Night Time Economy plan was launched in St Canice's Cathedral on Tuesday 30th April. The plan was published in tandem with the launch of Fáilte Ireland's Destination Experience Development Plan. The Action Plan offers a structured framework to continue nurturing Kilkenny's vibrant night time economy. Built upon four strategic pillars – placemaking, mobility & accessibility, safety & security, evening & night time activity and marketing and promotion, the 24-point plan sets out objectives and actions aimed at collectively strengthening and invigorating Kilkenny's night time economy over the next 18 months.



The plan can be found at

<https://kilkennycoco.ie/eng/services/economic-development/night-time-economy.html>

Kilkenny City Night Time Economy Diversification Fund

Under the Night Time Economy Diversification Fund the Council is seeking proposals from local businesses, community groups, event organisers, collaborators and individuals to develop projects that will support the growth and diversity of the night time economy in Kilkenny City. It has been designed to support applicants to try new and exciting concepts after 6pm between Sunday and Thursday. Call 1 will support events that take place between 9th June and 29th August. The deadline for applications under Call 1 is Friday 24th May.

TOURISM

Destination Experience Development Plan Launches



30th April saw the launch of Fáilte Ireland's and Kilkenny's Destination Experience Development Plan (DEDP). St Canice's Cathedral was the venue for a wonderful event to mark the occasion and many members of the tourism community attended on the day. The plan focuses on improving and increasing the tourism experiences available to visitors to Kilkenny both City and County, emphasising Kilkenny's rich cultural and creative design history, its vibrant city vibes and the wonderful outdoor and adventure activities it has to offer. The local implementation group will meet in June and will move to implement actions outlined in the plan immediately.

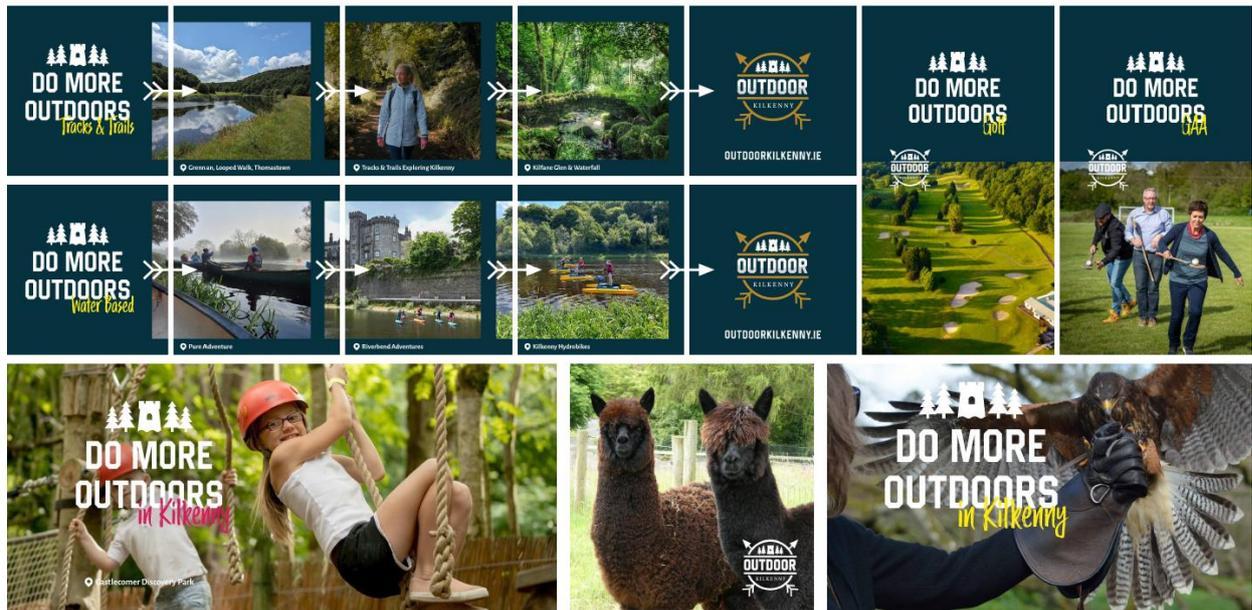
This DEDP is the five-year sustainable tourism destination development plan for Kilkenny City and County and is aligned with Kilkenny County Councils own Tourism Development Strategy 2023-2028.

Kilkenny Tourism and visitkilkenny.ie

Kilkenny Tourism continues its work in delivering Kilkenny’s marketing and PR Plan for 2024. The Summer 2024 campaign, “Love Kilkenny Longer” continues to keep Kilkenny to the forefront of the domestic visitors’ mind for a longer summer break this year with lots to see and do for visitors and great offers and packages to avail of when booking. April’s marketing efforts showcased and promoted arts, crafts, history and the outdoors here in Kilkenny with a bright, fun twist on the campaign.



CAMPAIGN VISUALS



April activity included the development of:

- Experience Packages – a new landing page for two new Kilkenny Experiences.
- B&Bs/Guesthouses Promo - A B&Bs and Guesthouses guide went live in April and was pushed out across socials throughout the month.
- Radio - Today FM promotion and a weeklong giveaway on 2FM, ran in April with prizes offered for breaks in Kilkenny.

Festivals and Events



April saw the launch of the Smithwicks Roots Festival, with a launch night held in the Smithwicks Experience outdoor performance space. Since 1998 the festival has attracted some of the finest names in the American/Roots canon.

Audiences sample a huge range of music in over 30 venues, hosting over 40 Irish and international acts. Roots has been supported by Kilkenny County Council’s Festivals Grant Scheme again for 2024.

COMMUNITY & CULTURE

Official Opening of Exit 4 Urlingford - Remote Working Hub

Minister Heather Humphreys TD. officially opened Urlingford remote working hub on the 24th April, 2024. Exit 4 Urlingford is the first fully dedicated remote working hub in rural Kilkenny. Cathairleach Cllr. Michael Doyle and Chairperson of the Castlecomer Municipal District Cllr. Michael Delaney both welcomed the Minister and guests gathered and stressed the importance of the remote Hub in the regeneration of Urlingford. Dympna Hayes thanked Minister Humphreys and her Department and the Community Section of Kilkenny County Council for their Funding and Support in the delivery of this project. She said "The Hub will help to sustain our community by promoting job creation direct and indirect; Increasing community engagement".

The repurposing of the former Bank of Ireland branch office as Exit 4 was undertaken with funding from the Department of Rural and Community Development, Kilkenny County Council as well as support from Kilkenny LEADER Partnership and the Local Enterprise Office. Exit 4 Urlingford is now part of Ireland's National Hub Network and of the Government's ambitious plans to revive rural Ireland by providing people with the opportunity to live and work locally. The Hub offers both desk and office space both short and long-term as well as excellent conference facilities. Further information and booking details are available on the Hub website www.exit4urlingford.ie



Minister Heather Humphreys officially opening Exit 4 - Urlingford Remote Working Hub



L-R: Katherine Peacock, Community, Cllr Pat Fitzpatrick, Cllr. Mick McCarthy, Cllr. Mary Hilda Kavanagh, Cllr. John Brennan, Cathairleach Michael Doyle, Anne Marie Shortall, Community and Dympna Haye, Chair of Urlingford Town Team.

Age Friendly Kilkenny Older People's Council Annual Conference

Kilkenny Older People's Council held their annual conference on Thursday 4th April in the Age Friendly Ormonde Hotel, which saw over 170 members and 30 guests attend the event.

The aim of the event this year was to provide information to OPC members from all corners of Kilkenny City and County by means of various speakers and information stands. Mary O' Hanlon, Chairperson acted as MC for the day.

Cathairleach of Kilkenny County Council, Cllr. Michael Doyle said he was delighted to be invited to address the gathering. He recalled that Kilkenny County Council has been hosting the Age Friendly Programme since 2016 but it has been an active participant since 2009 when it helped to establish the Age Friendly Structures such as the Alliance and the extensive consultations with older people which led to the first five-year strategy and an extensive programme of work by all of the partners who are represented on the Alliance.



Mary Harding, Kilkenny OPC, Mary O' Hanlon, Chair Kilkenny OPC, Alison McGrath, Anne Marie Shortall, Kilkenny Age Friendly Programme Manager, Ashling Slattery, and Michael Delahunty from Kilkenny OPC.



Members of Kilkenny Older People's Council Executive

CLÁR (Ceantair Laga Árd-Riachtanais)

CLÁR is a targeted investment programme for rural areas that aims to provide funding for small infrastructural projects in areas that have experienced significant levels of de-population. The funding works in conjunction with local/Agency and other Departmental funding programmes and on the basis of locally identified priorities.

The CLÁR programme allocation has increased to €8.7million nationally in 2024. The CLÁR 2024 programme will be delivered through 3 separate Measures as follows:

- Measure 1:** Developing Community Facilities & Amenities
- Measure 2:** Mobility, Cancer Care and Community First Responders Transport and Meals on Wheels Transport.
- Measure 3:** 'Our Islands'

Measure 1 is administered through Kilkenny County Council, and can be applied for by Kilkenny County Council in conjunction with groups in Local Communities. Measure 2 and Measure 3 is being administered through the Department of Rural & Community Development.

Kilkenny County Council is seeking applications for the CLÁR 2024 funding scheme from Community Groups. Measure 1 will support a variety of capital interventions that contribute to the enhancement of existing, and/or the development of new, accessible Community Recreation Facilities. The list below provides an indication of the types of interventions that may be supported, but is not exhaustive:

Multi-Use Gaming Areas (MUGAs)/Astro-Turf Facilities, Skateboard Parks, Playgrounds, Handball Alleys, Tennis Courts, Basketball Courts, Community

Gyms, Community Cinemas, Sensory Gardens, Community Gardens, Outdoor Bowling areas, Walking/Running Tracks, Outdoor Toilet Facilities, Car Parking, Public Lighting.

Measure 1 applications can also include small scale renovation works to community facilities. In addition, Measure 1 will support projects which develop and enhance access to unique local heritage sites and/or areas of natural beauty in local communities e.g. Walkways to important local sites. The Department is encouraging and promoting an enhancement of biodiversity when reinstating/landscaping areas e.g. native pollinator plants under Measure 1 of the CLÁR 2024 programme.

Grant Aid

A minimum grant of €5,000 and a maximum grant of €50,000 for projects will be available. The maximum grant payable will be 90% of the project cost or a maximum of €50,000, whichever is the lesser. The remaining 10% or balance of the cost should be provided through local authority/community/other resources with a minimum of 5% cash contribution from the Community. Philanthropic contributions may be accepted as full or part of match funding costs.

CLÁR Eligible Electoral Districts

Coolaghmore	Tullahought
Killamery	Attanagh
Kilmaganny	Clogharinka
Kilmanagh	Kilmacar
Scotsborough	Mothell
Boolyglass	Muckalee
Muckalee	Brownsford
Tubbrid	Dysartmoon
Jerpoint West	Balleen
Listerlin	Ballyconra
Tiscoffin	Baunmore
Castlebanny	Clomantagh
Castlegannon	Galmoy
Kilkeasy	Glashare
Pleberstown	Lisdowney
Ullard	

Application Forms and further particulars may be downloaded from www.kilkennycoco.ie or Alison McGrath, Community Section, Patrick's Court, Kilkenny on Tel: 056-7794967.

Completed applications are to be sent to Kilkenny County Council's Community Department, Patrick's Court, Kilkenny, R95 N28F, Kilkenny by 4pm, 4th June, 2024.

All intended applicants should contact Alison McGrath, Kilkenny County Council 056-7794967 or Catherine Byrne-Murphy, Kilkenny County Council, 056-7794115 prior to the submission of their applications.

BIODIVERSITY

Launch of "Puffin Rock" Activity Book

The Biodiversity Officer joined the Heritage Council to launch the "Puffin Rock Habitats" educational workbook, in collaboration with Cartoon Saloon at St Aidan's National School in Kilmanagh, Co. Kilkenny. The project invites you to dive into the enchanting world of "Puffin Rock Habitats", through a captivating touring exhibition, interactive workshops, and the magnificent "Puffin Rock Activity Book". Bursting with fun and educational activities, the Puffin Rock Activity book brings the wonders of Ireland's wild habitats straight into your home or classroom! The workbook is dedicated to sparking a deep love and understanding of Ireland's nature and biodiversity in young children. A 1,000 copies of the workbook will be distributed throughout the County while the exhibit will launch in the Mayfair Library in May, 2024.



Bumblebee Identification Workshop with Dr. Una Fitzgerald

The Heritage Office ran a bumblebee identification workshop in association with the

National Biodiversity Data Centre on the 13th of April. The ambition is to build capacity in Kilkenny to increase knowledge and identification skills to enable more people to contribute to the national bumblebee monitoring scheme.



Kilkenny Swift Programme

Kilkenny County Council in conjunction with BirdWatch Ireland hosted a Swift Online talk targeting local builders, engineers and architects to promote the integration of swift nest bricks into new construction builds. Over 40 people attended online. The Saving Swifts Publication and Birthday Wall Calendar was distributed to local firms to highlight the upcoming webinar and the wall calendar was designed to highlight the special habitats and floral species on Kilkenny City's Historic Stone Walls.

A Discussion Paper on Biodiversity The Biodiversity Officer continues to promote the Biodiversity Discussion Paper, inviting people to express their views on what should be included in the County's Biodiversity Action Plan which will be prepared over the summer. The consultation period is open until the 28th May, 2024.

Biodiversity Week 2024

Keep an eye out for the range of Biodiversity activities which are being planned for around Biodiversity Week which runs from the 17th-26th of May. Events are running countywide, from the 16th of May - 5th of June. Activities will include library talks, bat walks, a moth identification workshop and a number of different organisations are also organizing their own events. Spot the 6 different art pieces from the Creative Ireland Leave the Long Grass Grow project which will be displayed across the City.

BIODIVERSITY EVENTS SCHEDULED FOR MAY



Celebrate Kilkenny's BIODIVERSITY



Indicates the event is weather dependent, keep up to date with event alerts via Kilkenny's Heritage Office Facebook page www.facebook.com/kilkenny.heritage.

Kilkenny County Council with support from the Heritage Council is delighted to provide a number of talks and walks to celebrate local biodiversity as part of their Bugs, Bats and Bees Citizen Science Programme. Many events coincide with National Biodiversity Week organised by the Irish Environmental Network. Come join us, find out about nature on your doorstep and actions you can take to protect and restore local biodiversity.

Date	Location	Event	Time & Meeting Point
May 16 th	Urlingford Library	Gardening for Pollinators Indoor Talk	11am
May 16 th	Ballyragget	Bat Walk & Talk	9pm meeting at the Community Hall
BIODIVERSITY WEEK 17TH – 26TH OF MAY			
May 18 th	Kilkenny City	Bat Walk & Talk	9pm, meeting at the Hurling Statue on Canal Square
May 19 th	Dunmore Biodiversity Park	Field Identification of Moths	Meeting at 9.45am, in car/bike park off the Bleach Rd
May 19 th	Kilkenny City Bike Fest	Biodiversity Stand & Child Friendly Nature Walks	11am-2pm at the County Hall Car Park
May 22 nd	Piltown	Bat Walk & Talk	Meeting at 9.20pm at the Community Centre
May 23 rd	Thomastown Library	Gardening for Biodiversity & Pollinators. Indoor Talk	11am
May 25 th	Mayfair Library, Kilkenny City	Biodiversity & Climate Action 1 Day Course. Indoor & Outdoors!	Pre-Booking Essential Email: ppnkilkenny@kilkennycoco.ie
May 26 th	The Loop Café, Freshford	An Introduction to Composting Workshop	11am – 1pm Pre-Booking Essential Email: biodiversity@kilkennycoco.ie
May 30 th	Ferrybank Library	Gardening for Biodiversity & Pollinators Indoor Talk	11am
WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY 5TH OF JUNE			
June 5 th	Graignamanagh	Bat Walk & Talk	Meeting at 9.45pm at the Fair Green Car Park

Listed events are funded under the Local Biodiversity Action Fund from the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Tune into KCLR Live, every morning throughout Biodiversity Week to listen to a diverse range of biodiversity experts as part of the special feature "Biodiversity in Focus" a special biodiversity segment to celebrate Biodiversity Week, a collaboration between Carlow & Kilkenny County Councils in association with the Heritage Council.

Leave the Long Grass Grow, an art project funded by Creative Ireland and supported by Kilkenny County Council invited artists to engage with their local habitats to bring different species into the visual awareness of communities by celebrating them through a creative process. Spot the six different art pieces on display across Kilkenny City during Biodiversity Week, information on the wider programme can be found on www.theacornproject.ie.

Leave the Long Grass Grow Workshops

Join artist, Kasia Kaminska on Saturday, the 25th of May at 11am for a plant walk and photogram workshop to explore native wild plants through a camera-less photography process which harnesses the natural chemistry of plants to create images and representations. Wear walking shoes and dress for the weather. A free workshop, limited places, book via www.theacornproject.ie or contact Maura on 086-3104008.

Join artists from Leave the Long Grass Grow and special guests for a panel discussion on the importance and value of our wild plants for healthy ecosystems on Saturday May 25th at the Square in Freshford at 1.30pm. Experience their choir who will launch the Leave the Long Grass Grow Song.

The Kilkenny Volunteer Centre proudly presents their biodiversity art installations of knitted and crocheted pollinator friendly flowers, insects and bees. The installations will be on display in St. Canice's Credit Union Window, High Street, Kilkenny City from the 13th -27th of May and Johns Green House from the 10th - 27th of May.

Kilkenny's Library Service is hosting the Cartoon Saloon Puffin Rock Habitats Exhibit which is embarking on a nationwide tour after its inaugural exhibition at Kilkenny's newest library, the Mayfair running from May 13th - 15th of July. Come visit the Mayfair library and explore the interactive biodiversity exhibition created by Cartoon Saloon.

Who else is celebrating National Biodiversity Week?

The Butler Gallery invites you to join them for National Drawing Day on the 18th of May between 12noon and 4pm. This year's theme is Drawing from Nature. The Gallery will be hosting a variety of activities, for more information on National Drawing Day and other biodiversity themed events which are taking place throughout Biodiversity Week, check out; www.butleryallery.ie/whats-on.

The National Reptile Zoo is hosting "Stories by the River" on Sunday the 19th and 26th of May. They invite you to connect with nature, discover the importance of biodiversity and learn how to play your part in protecting it. For more information check out; www.nrz.ie.

Kilkenny Branch of Birdwatch Ireland in association with the OPW, invites you to attend a dusk chorus on May 23rd at 8pm in Kilkenny Castle Park, meeting point is at the main gate. Hear the birds before they settle down for the evening, enjoy their birdsong and learn about our native birds.

Join Etaoin Holahan on a walk around the Abbey Meadow and the Moat Field on Saturday, the 25th of May to introduce the newly planted trees as part of a community led 'Til Now' Future Town Planting project. This project was funded by a Climate Action Fund II funded by Creative Ireland in partnership with Kilkenny County Council and the Callan Town Team. Meeting at Fennelly's of Callan on Upper Bridge Street at 11.30am. Wear waterproof shoes and dress for the weather.



HERITAGE

Heritage Awareness and Engagement Campaign - Pledge Your Garden

The Council Heritage Awareness and Engagement Campaigns funded under The Heritage Council County Heritage Plan grant will commence in May. The programme comprises of 6 themed adverts/campaigns on aspects of Kilkenny's heritage for the months of May, June, July August, September & October. The theme for May is 'Pledge Your Garden'. Advertisements can be heard on Beat 102-103, KCLR & Kilkenny Community Radio. Also keep an eye out on their social media. The campaign is about taking simple actions to help pollinators. For further information and a free brochure on how you can help the bees and butterflies on your patch, and pledge your garden, see www.pollinators.ie or contact the Heritage Office.



Community Monuments Fund 2024

12 projects in Kilkenny have been awarded funding totalling €572,000 from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Housing under the 2024 Community Monuments Fund (CMF) to help owners and custodians of archaeological monuments to safeguard them into the future. This funding is administered by the Heritage Office in the Council in partnership with the Environment Section.

The following 12 Kilkenny projects have been awarded funding under the 2024 Community Monuments Fund:

Stream 1 - Essential repairs and capital works for the conservation of archaeological monuments.

- Grangefertagh Medieval Church and Graveyard -€84,034
- Tubbrid Medieval Church€118,304
- 19 Parliament Street€100,000
- 21 Parliament Street€100,000



Grangefertagh Medieval Church

Stream 2 - Development of Conservation Management Plans/Reports and detailed Specification of Works aimed at identifying measures for conservation of archaeological monuments and improving public access.

- Kellymount Medieval Graveyard €18,388
- St David's Medieval Church and Graveyard, Castleinch..... €18,265
- St Coleman's Church and Graveyard, Churchclara €20,541
- St Catherine's Medieval Church and Graveyard, Rathbeagh.....€15,375

Stream 3 - Enhancement of access infrastructure, interpretation at archaeological monuments.

- Cloghabrody Graveyard..... €13,245
- Garryduff Graveyard..... €23,903
- St Canice's Cathedral Close €30,000
- Kenny's Well €30,000

Oral History Ireland Networking Event

The Oral History Network of Ireland in partnership with the Heritage Office hosted a Networking Event on Saturday 13th April at Kilkenny City Library. The event was well attended and provided an opportunity for oral historians in the South East to meet in an informal setting to discuss ideas and meet other people involved in oral history in region.

Bees for Biodiversity Project

The Heritage Officer, Regina Fitzpatrick spoke at the launch of "Bees for Biodiversity Project" at Rothe House organised by Kilkenny Volunteer Centre on Thursday 25th April, 2024. For the past year volunteers from all around Kilkenny, Carlow and Waterford have been knitting and crocheting bees, flowers and insects with Bernadette Roberts who retired from Kilkenny County Council Heritage and Arts Office last year. All the work will be curated by artist Sheila Jordan for National Biodiversity Week and National Volunteering

Week - 20th to 26th May and will be on display in St. Canice's Credit Union window and John's Green House Gallery window from 13th May.



Creative Ireland Heritage Office/Library Service Programme

This year marks the 700th Anniversary of the Kilkeny Witch Trials, during which Alice Kyteler became the first person in Europe to be condemned to death for Witchcraft and Petronella de Meath became the first person to be burned at the stake for witchcraft. Funded by Creative Ireland, the Heritage Office in partnership with the Library Service will curate a programme of initiatives to commemorate this iconic event in our history and will engage a wide audience (primarily focused on younger people) in creativity and heritage in County Kilkeny through this story. This will include author talks, an educational resource pack and creative workshops for primary school children, history workshops for secondary school children, a video shorts series for young adults and a witch trial tour for the general public.

Public Commemoration Programme 2024

Kilkeny County Council received an allocation of €15,000 from the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media under the new Public Commemoration Programme. This programme follows on from the highly successful Decade of Centenaries Programme. The Public Commemorations Committee have allocated this funding towards two projects: the production of a podcast on the Kilkeny Witch Trials which will be broadcast on the anniversary of the trials 700 years ago. The second project *Mná Feasa/Wise Woman* is an inter-generational story telling project facilitated by Artist Helena Byrne and involving female transition year students and older women in Kilkeny. The theme of women and power will be explored in this project to commemorate the women convicted in the

Kilkeny Witch Trials. The project will give voice to older women in Kilkeny by recording their stories and empower young women to interpret these stories through performance. The collection will be then archived in the Kilkeny Digital Archive and edited into a podcast for broadcast to a wider audience.

ARTS

Poetry Broadsheet

The 2024 Kilkeny Poetry Broadsheet editor James Harpur has made his selection of poems for the 2024 publication. He has chosen thirteen poems from thirteen different poets, who include: Cathy Hogan, Fergal Canton, Ian Chambers, Janis Woodgate, Alice Bennett, Gbnait Kearney, David Kirby, Susie Lamb, Noel Howley, Carmel Hogan, Angela Esmonde, Aoife Riach and Paddy Doyle. All selected poets are delighted to have their poem selected and published in our twenty fourth edition of this very popular Arts Office publication. Illustrator Tim Harper will design and illustrate the final Broadsheet.

Professional Development Opportunities for Artists.

On April 10th expert facilitator and life coach Anne Tannam ran a very successful workshop for artists of all disciplines on practical skills required to design and deliver workshops. The group was diverse, and all were very engaged throughout. There was opportunity for group discussion and connection as Anne shared methodologies for effective facilitation.

On April 9th Richie Egan delivered the first of Career Development Talks for Emerging Musician in Cleeres Bar. Eight people attending which created an imitate discussion followed by a Q & A session with Richie.

On April 10th Liz McMahon ran a CPD workshop for artists whose practice is focused on working with children and young people. Liz led the participants through two project she ran in primary schools, one of which was a Percent for Arts Project. There was great interest in her work and participants where keen to hear about her approach, with lots of questions and discussion. Two participants highlighted how vital these opportunities to connect with other artists and hear about their work.

EDI Bursary

We received eleven applications for our new bursary - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). The EDI Bursary will offer financial support of €5,000 for an artist across all artforms who is from under represented background, including those based on age, civil or family status, disability, gender, membership of the Traveller Community, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. Assessment will be commencing in early May.

Performing Arts

The Arts Office are currently undertaking a Performing Arts Needs Analysis with Kilkenny's sector. This is being undertaken in collaboration with the Irish Theatre Institute. The current supports that are available to the performing arts in Kilkenny are being evaluated in order to refine how we can support career development for performing artists and organisations and provide opportunities to nurture the sector at this time. The Needs Analysis will consist of an online survey, a session with Kilkenny based key informants and four in-depth interviews with national and internationally based performing arts professionals.

Climate Action Collaboration project

As part of our commitment to climate action we are working collaboratively with the Local Authorities of Wexford, Cavan, Clare, Galway and Offaly on a research phase with a view to developing an artists assembly. The Creative Sector is essential for climate adaptation. It is critical to use this time to learn what the ecology of our own community is, where the interdependencies lie, and what unique opportunities for collective action could emerge through a specific Climate Art Assembly.

Art is a critical pathway because it does not rely on language alone, communicating through emotion and the senses.

Rhyme Rag - Youth Arts

Ten poems have now been selected by Rhyme Rag Editor Colm Keegan. Four of these poems have, to date, been published on our Rhyme Rag Instagram page and our other social media platforms. This year the editor produced audio feedback for the students to listen to, giving it a personal touch.



Growing Pains

I cannot remember exactly when she went away. When she got lost.

Her brightly coloured scribbles on the walls were coated with a fresh coat of paint and I grew out of all the clothes she used to wear.



Blue Happiness

Blue Happiness is my first friend leaving for her dream college.

Its my brothers thirteenth birthday and the anniversary of my mother being cancer free.

Its packing a suitcase, and the smell of my old perfume.

The Art of Change - Youth Arts

Four workshops for the project have now taken place with a group of 7-10 young people attending each session. So far, they have attended an information session on Climate Change by Education for Sustainability, a workshop on sustainable fashion by The Rediscovery Centre, an illustration and food experience with artist Rudi-Lee McCarthy and workshop with Alan James Burns creating brain wave imagery which naturally reflect shapes and images found in nature.

Climate Action Community Arts - Waste Not Want Not

As part of our Community Arts and Climate Action 2024 programme Waste Not Want Not. The Arts Office will be running another set of sewing workshops after the successful and very positive feedback of participants in the 'Sewing Machine Basics Classes' at St. Canice's Community Hall and Thomastown over the past few months. This set of 'Upcycling Sewing' classes will take place at Harry's Bar in Langtons, John Street, Kilkenny for anyone who have a passion for transforming and repurposing textiles

and fabrics saving clothing from landfill and giving new life. The classes will take place across May and June with three time slot options. This programme is part of our Climate Action programme plan for 2024



A new phase of the Waste Not Want Not programme has commenced in the City working with participants to make a collaborative piece from recycled denim in partnership with our local St Vincent de Paul charity shop.

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 2024 under the various support services.

Affordable Homes:

Applications Open for 45 new affordable homes in Kilkenny. 35 at Nyne Park, Callan Road & 10 at Cluain Glasan, Granges Road

Kilkenny County Council, working in partnership with Developers Cairn & Glenveagh Homes Ltd. and the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage is delighted to launch the first two schemes of Affordable Homes in Kilkenny City under the Local Authority Affordable Purchase Scheme.

The Cairn development, comprising a mix of A-rated 3-bedroom homes, is located at Nyne Park, Callan Road. Homes will become available on a phased basis from Q2 to Q4 of this year.

Successful applicants will be able to avail of up to €90,000 reduction on the full market price, depending on the price of the property and the applicant's own financial circumstances.



House Type	No of houses	Floor Area Sq M	Market Value	Minimum Affordable Purchase Price	Maximum Affordable Purchase Price	Gross Income Threshold*
3 bed Mid Terrace	17	117.25	€345,000	€255,000	€327,750	€73,744
3 bed End Terrace	16	117	€360,000	€270,000	€342,000	€76,950
3 bed End Terrace Side Entrance	1	118.5	€365,000	€270,000	€346,750	€78,019
3 bed Semi -D	1	115	€345,000	€255,000	€327,750	€73,744
	35					

Cluain Glasan



The Glenveagh development, comprising a mix of A-rated 3-bedroom homes, is located at Cluain Glasan, Granges Road. These homes are ready to go. Successful applicants will be able to avail of up to €75,000 reduction on the full market price, depending on the price of the property and the applicant's own financial circumstances.

House Type	No of houses	Floor Area Sq M	Market Value	Minimum Affordable Purchase Price	Maximum Affordable Purchase Price	Gross Income Threshold*
3 bed Mid Terrace	1	95.90	€330,000	€255,000	€313,500	€70,538
3 bed End Terrace	1	95.90	€345,000	€270,000	€327,750	€73,744
3 bed Semi-Detached	8	96.40	€365,000	€290,000	€346,750	€78,019
	10					

The houses in both Schemes are generally targeted at first-time buyers (exceptions apply) who need assistance bridging the gap between their own available funds (including the Help to Buy scheme), the mortgage that they can obtain and the cost of the new home.

Making these homes available for sale at discounted prices has been facilitated through the Affordable Housing Fund (AHF) which is a subsidy provided by the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage to Local Authorities as a direct subvention on housing development costs.

Under the Affordable Purchase Scheme, managed by Kilkenny County Council, eligible buyers will be able to purchase their own new home by availing of this shared equity scheme. Under the Scheme, Kilkenny County Council will retain an equity share and successful applicants have the option of buying out this share over time. Equity shares are calculated on an individual basis and are linked to an applicant's income, their savings and their mortgage capacity.



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Applications can only be made online via the dedicated application portal accessible via the Council website. There is an Individual online application portal for each scheme as follows:

Nyne Park: <https://kilkennycoco.ie/nyne-park>

Cluain Glasan <https://kilkennycoco.ie/cluain-glasan>

The application portal opened for both schemes on Wednesday 24th April at 12 noon and will close on Wednesday 22nd May at 12 noon.

Potential applicants are being advised to familiarise themselves with the eligibility criteria and to compile the requisite documents to complete their applications subject to them meeting the qualifying criteria. Full information is available at <https://www.kilkennycoco.ie>.

It is expected that demand will be high for these homes. It is strongly recommended applicants have Mortgage Approval in Principle prior to applying for this scheme, as applicants will be required to demonstrate their capacity to purchase. Only valid applications (i.e. applications with all required documentation submitted) will go forward for assessment. Applications which are incomplete or those not accompanied by the required documentation will be deemed invalid.

If there is any queries in relation to any of the above please email affordablehousing@kilkennycoco.ie and a member of the team will revert back.

HOMELESS SERVICES SUMMARY APRIL 2024

Homeless Presentations	49
Homeless Assessment Outcomes	
Prevention & Interventions	37
Emergency Service	5
Not eligible / Did not avail of service	7
HAP Place Finder Service	
No of Homeless HAP tenancies @ 1 st day of month	128
No of Homeless HAP tenancies created during month	10
No of Homeless HAP tenancies in place @ last day of month	138
Number of Homeless HAP tenancy breakdowns	0
Other Social Housing Tenancies supported /created during month	0
Households in Temporary Emergency Supported Accommodation at April 30th	40
Households in Temporary Emergency B&B accommodation	4
Households in Temporary Emergency B&B Accommodation that are families	3
Households (singles/couples) in Transition Emergency Accommodation (Own Front Door)	34
Households (Families) in Transition Emergency Accommodation (OFD)	11

Homeless Prevention Measures

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

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

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

SOCIAL HOUSING ASSESSMENT

SOCIAL HOUSING SUPPORT APPLICATION SUMMARY APRIL 2024	
Number awaiting Social Housing Support at April 30 th (<i>Gross Need</i>)	1,556
Number awaiting Social Housing Support at April 30 th (<i>Net Need</i>)	735
Number of Social Housing Applications received in April	105
Number of applications incomplete/awaiting further information/clarification	57
Number of applications validated and ready for assessment during the month	47
Number of applications assessed during April	31
Number of applications awaiting assessment as at 30 th April	77

HAP Summary Year to date 2024	
Total active HAP tenancies	524
New HAP tenancies set up	24
HAP allocated Social Housing	65
Closed HAP tenancies	75
HAP Rent Review amendments	85
HAP Other tenancy amendments	265

TENANCY MANAGEMENT

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

LA/RAS/Leasing allocations in April (offers made):	13
LA/RAS/Leasing allocations to April (offers made):	45
Tenant Liaison Officer cases in April:	48
Maintenance Calls for April:	641
Maintenance Calls year to date:	2,480

Where anti-social behaviour is ongoing, tenancy notifications and warning notices continue to be served and monitored. Where tenants engage in anti-social behaviour relating to offences under the Misuse of Drugs Act or violence and intimidation resulting in criminal charges the local authority will take enforcement action to terminate the tenancy and alternative social housing supports will not be provided.

Grants Approved & Committed up to 30th April 2024

Scheme	No.	Amount
HGD - Housing Adaptation Grant	131	€1,391,212
MAG - Mobility Aid Grant	8	€24,569
HOP - Housing Aid for Older Persons	149	€713,130
Total	288	€2,128,910

Grants Paid out up to 30th April 2024

Scheme	No.	Amount
HGD - Housing Adaptation Grant	32	€339,032
MAG - Mobility Aid Grant	2	€9,700
HOP - Housing Aid for Older Persons	58	€249,825
Total	92	€598,557

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 1st January -30th April, 2024					
Loan Type	Received	Approved	Amount Approved	Number Paid	Amount Paid
Local Authority Home Loan	14	5	€683,900	7	€1,053,926
Caravan Loan	0	0	€0.00	0	€0
Total	14	5	€683,900	7	€1,053,926

VOIDS

At the end of April 2024, there were **55 vacant units** of local authority accommodation awaiting refurbishment or remediation works.

Works are ongoing on this voids maintenance programme and its envisaged that a minimum of 75 units will be complete under this programme during 2024.

Housing Capital Delivery



Adaptation of an existing bungalow at Closhgregg, Thomastown to a Disability Unit

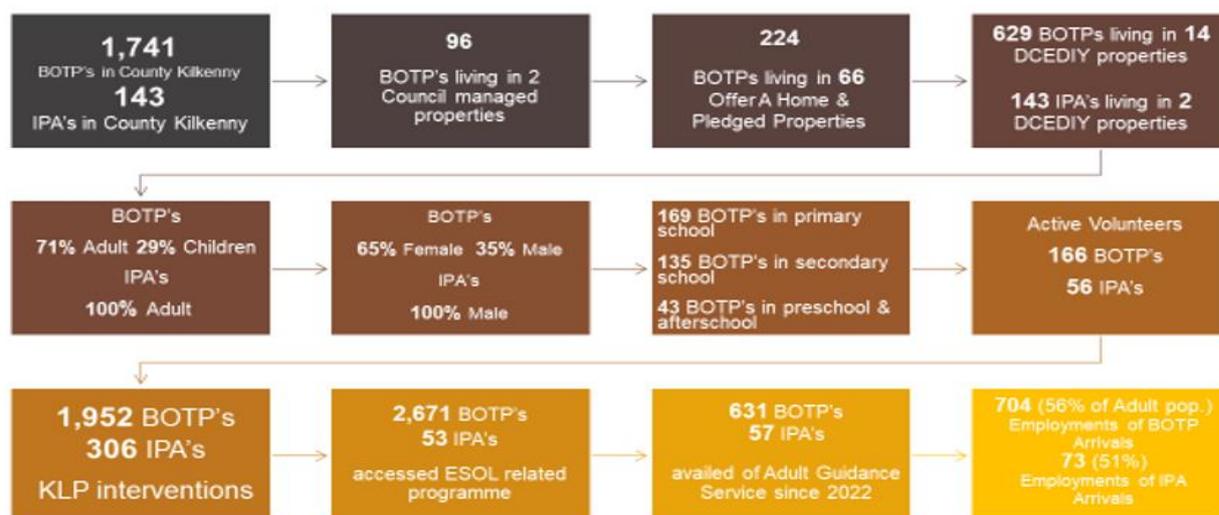


Construction of 2 Wheelchair Accessible Houses at the Old Community Center in Loughboy, Kilkenny The Houses are being constructed using Insulated Concrete Form (ICF)



Construction ongoing at Crokers Hill, Kennyswell Road. Due for completion this year.

Community Integration Monitor to 11.04.24



Offer of Home Programme

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

The 'Offer a Home' programme is currently seeking property owners who have a house, apartment or holiday home that is not currently being used to offer it to people and families from Ukraine who need a safe place to stay for short-term accommodation. When owners commit to a pledge of their vacant property, suitability is determined by Kilkenny County Council. When Ukrainian residents commence residing at the property, a licence agreement is signed by both owner and residents for minimum period of six months. The conditions attached to the pledge of a property are set out in the Licence Agreement.

For existing Licence Holders who have committed to the Offer of a Home Scheme, all licences can only be extended to March 2025 in line with the Temporary Directive. Further details are available on the 'Offer a Home' programme on www.offerahome.ie or contact the Kilkenny County Council Ukrainian Response Team.

	MAY 2024
Number of Allocated Properties under the Offer of a Home Scheme	56
Number of Registered Ukrainians in Offer of a Home Properties	186
Number of Pledged Properties	10
Number of Ukrainians in Pledged properties	34

Local Area Integration Team (LAIT)

The LAIT continue to connect with residents in both Council managed properties, the 2 IPAS Centres, and have expanded their reach to the commercial properties with Ukrainians in residence. The team are currently in the process of meeting residents in all properties to establish needs.

An online Directory of Local Services is currently being developed to ensure accessibility. LAIT's are actively signposting individuals to the appropriate services and ensuring avoidance of duplication through maintaining strong communication with key agencies/stakeholders. The Community Integration Forum has issued the new terms of reference and has formally invited member organisations to nominate representatives to the Forum.

LAIT team attended a National Network of Integration Support Workers & Integration Support Coordinators in April focusing on the establishment of a national network for teams to ensure a streamlined approach across the board. Africa Day is being hosted in the Castle Park on June 1st. The LAIT are supporting the African community in coordinating this event. It is expected to be a fun day with music, dance and African cuisine.

FIRE SERVICES

#Capital Projects

Urlingford Fire Brigade will host the official opening of its new fire station on Wednesday 29th May 2024. Urlingford Fire Brigade will also be receiving their new Fire Engine in the 2nd week of May 2024.

The design of the new HQ fire Station for Kilkenny City is progressing well.

All major construction projects, including major refurbishment projects at Fire Stations require capital funding from the NDFEM. Ongoing day-to-day maintenance of Fire Stations is funded from the Council's revenue budget.

Fire Safety Certificate Applications

- 34 applications for fire safety certificates were received to date.
- Ukrainian Response Unit - Fire Safety Certificate compliance
- A large number of risk premises throughout Kilkenny City and County have been subject to review and fire safety certification applications to ensure minimum standards.

Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003

- Fire Prevention staff made targeted inspections of premises both to provide advice and to enforce legislation during 2023.
- 9 Licence Applications were processed under Section 24 of the Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003.
- 7 licence applications under the Dangerous Substances legislation were assessed to date.
- 27 Fire safety inspections of premises have taken place in 2024.

Fire Brigade Operations

The Brigades have attended 373 incidents to date in 2024. These incidents included a number of road traffic collisions, house fires, ambulance assists, chimney fires and automatic fire alarm activations.

Recruitment of Retained firefighters

A competition for the recruitment of Retained Firefighters is well underway for Kilkenny City, Castlecomer, Freshford, Urlingford, Thomastown, Callan and Graiguenamanagh. Shortlisting and suitability tests have taken place to date.

Fire Appliances

Fire and Rescue Service maintain fire appliances in all seven (7no) fire stations throughout the County.

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

Kilkenny County Council Fire and Rescue Service have received the replacement of Graiguenamanagh 2nd Class B Fire Appliance. We will continue with a replacement programme and refurbishment programme as capital funding is made available.

Primary School Programme

Fire and Rescue Service continue to deliver the National Directorate Fire and Emergency Management Primary Schools Programme. It is targeted at all 3rd Class Primary School children. The fire authority has delivered this programme from inception in 2006 and every year subsequently (*except during the recent pandemic*). Over 20,000 pupils have participated in the Primary Schools Programme to-date.



The Fire Authority has provided training and refresher training for a number of firefighters in each brigade to assist them to deliver this Programme to all school children in 3rd classes in Kilkenny City and County where the school management accept our invitation to visit their schools.



Callan Fire Brigade attended Templeorum National School to give a talk on Fire safety in the home.



St Marys National School visited Thomastown Fire Station.

Training

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

All personnel responding to Fire and Rescue Service incidents require a minimum level of training to meet core requirements. In addition, many personnel also require further training for specialist or supervisory roles. 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.



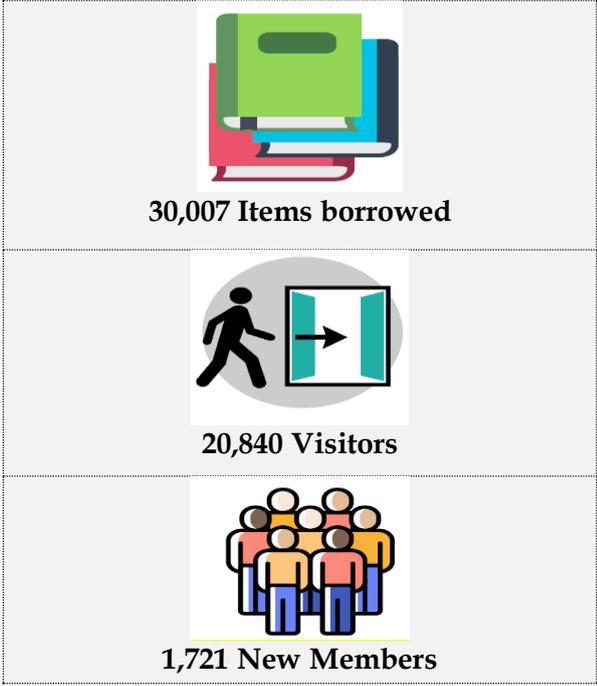
Firefighter specific awareness training for the LIFTS within Fennor Hill Care Facility was organised and offered by the premises owners for Urlingford Fire Brigade.

This awareness session provided practical training on the knowledge and skills that are required to enable firefighters to safely work on lifts.

A transportation incident training course was held in Castlecomer Fire Station., The aim of this 5-day course is to equip the learner with the relevant knowledge, skill and competence to effectively and safely operate at a transportation incident, as a member of a fire service team, cognisant of one's own safety, the safety of their team and the public. This course provides practical training on the knowledge and skills that are required to enable recruit firefighters to safely work at transportation incidents, within the incident command structure and procedural norms. Photos below show fire fighters participating in some of the extrication exercises.



LIBRARY



Opening of Mayfair Library

On April 24th Kilkenny County Council Library Service were delighted to welcome Heather Humphreys TD, Minister for Rural and Community Development to officially open our brand-new Mayfair Library. This 1,800 m² state of the art library offers a wide variety of opportunities for all ages and will provide significant cultural, community and educational opportunities for the local community.

Services in this bright and spacious building include community exhibition space, a meeting room, study spaces, young adult area, dedicated children’s area, a makerspace with access to 3D printers, sewing machines and more comfortable spaces to sit and browse, WiFi and PC access and printing, scanning and photocopying facilities.

The Mayfair Library will be accessible to the public Monday-Saturday including two late evenings on Tuesdays and Thursdays. This fantastic new facility has already been well used by the public with over 4,500 visits during the first week alone.



Funding Announced for New Mobile Library Vehicle

During her visit, Minister Humphreys also announced an investment of €180,000 to go towards the acquisition of a next generation mobile library vehicle for Library Service. Our mobile library service currently serves over 60 schools, creches, nursing homes and community stops across the City and County on a monthly basis making this a very welcome announcement.





Spring into Storytime 2024

This April, Libraries welcomed back Spring into Storytime. This annual literacy programme is a key strand of the Right to Read framework and is designed to encourage young children to develop a love for reading and storytelling. This year, we held 32 events with 531 participants.



Library Activities

Events	In Branch	Online
136	135	1
Offsite	Live	Numbers
0	124	1712

This month we held lots of activities and events across our libraries. These events included an oral history networking event in City Library, a shark teeth workshop in Loughboy Library, a Lego Club in Castlecomer Library, a Spring STEM workshop

in Thomastown Library, children's chess classes in Urlingford Library, a new adult community group in Graiguenamanagh Library, a wildlife and heritage workshop for children in Ferrybank Library, a number of community book clubs which were supported by library staff and a mobile library pop-up in Woodstock Gardens.



Throughout the month of April, our library branches hosted 136 events with a total of 1,712 attendees both in our branches and on visits to local creches, schools and community groups.

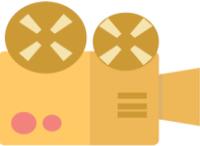
Online Services Usage

	3,006 eAudiobooks borrowed
	1,418 eBooks borrowed
	63 eComics Borrowed


40 Language Learning Sessions

1,155 eMagazines borrowed

84 Movies Streamed



Digital Engagement

Our staff prepared, recorded, edited and published 243 posts and videos on our social media platforms in April. Our engagements for the month were 12,165 and our videos and reels had 14,856 views. Our virtual newsletter was sent to 6,225 email accounts.

Alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals

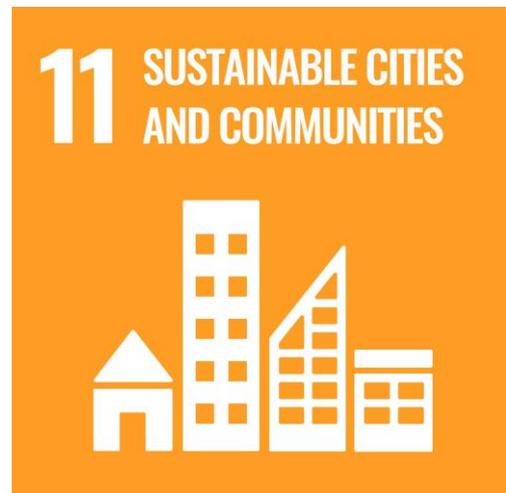
Here are 2 ways in which Kilkenny County Council Library Service helped to further the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in March:

SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy

Kilkenny Library branches make home energy kits including thermal leak detectors, plug-in energy monitors and temperature and humidity meters accessible to the public so they can better understand their energy consumption.



SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities
 Graiguenamanagh Library launched "Community Connections", a new community group for adults where people can come together to enjoy word searches and board games and connect over a cup of tea and a chat.



FINANCE

The expenditure by service division to the end of April is set out in table 1. Total Expenditure for the period was €32.8m compared with the annual budget of €111m.

Table 1	Actual YTD April 2024	Budget Full Year 2024
	€'000's	€'000's
Housing & Building	8,283	26,258
Road Transport & Safety	6,323	29,958
Water Services	2,364	7,699
Development Management	4,035	14,720
Environmental Services	4,123	16,899
Recreation & Amenity	1,918	8,759
Agriculture, Education, Health, Welfare	190	690
Miscellaneous Services	2,875	6,331
CMC for distribution	2,700	
OVERALL TOTAL	32,811	111,134

Finance Update

The bank overdraft facility was not utilised during the four-month period to the end of April 2024. The draft unaudited financial statements for 2023 were finalised and presented to Council at the March meeting. The Local Government Auditor has commenced the audit for 2023.

The annual rate invoices for 2024 were sent to all rate payers in mid February. In previous years, Commercial Rates were payable in two moieties, with the first 50% (*plus any arrears due*) being due on issue of the demand and the second 50% falling due on the 1st of July. Commercial Rates are now payable in full on receipt of the rate invoice.

Rates Revaluation

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

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

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

Commercial Rates Vacancy

The commercial rates vacancy is 50% for 2024 as agreed at the Annual Budget Meeting. A 50% 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.

Increased Cost of Business (ICOB) Grant Scheme

As part of Budget 2024, the Government signed off on a package of €257m for the Increased Cost of Business (ICOB) Grant as a vital measure for small and medium Enterprises. This rollout will be managed through the local authorities and funded by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE). Eligible businesses will receive a once-off grant which will be based on the value of their Commercial Rates bill in 2023.

The milestones and timelines are as follows:

- Social Media Communications in relation to ICOB occurred in late February/early March.
- A letter detailing how to apply for the grant was sent to ratepayers in the week starting 12th March.
- Social media communications were ongoing up to the closing date.

The closing date for applications was 1st May 2024

Total number of applications.....	1,211
Total Grants Paid out.....	769 [€1,375,000]
Currently being assessed	442