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Tionól Réigiúnach  
an Deiscirt  
Southern Regional  
Assembly



Comhairle Chontae Chill Chainnigh  
Kilkenny County Council

## **PRESS RELEASE**

*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

### **THRIVE Projects Announced: €3.98 Million Government & EU co-funding Awarded to regenerate Carnegie Library, Kilkenny**

Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, James Browne has announced that €3,980,592 in funding has been awarded to Kilkenny County Council for the sustainable adaptive reuse of Carnegie Library, Kilkenny through THRIVE – the Town Centre First Heritage Revival Scheme.

Co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Union, THRIVE empowers local authorities to reimagine and adapt heritage buildings to create useful, vibrant and sustainable cultural and community hubs. THRIVE isn't just restoring buildings, it's nurturing a new design ethos in Irish town regeneration, combining Europe's green vision with local energy and ambition.

Carnegie Library on John's Quay, Kilkenny is set to be transformed into a vibrant cultural hub at the heart of the city and will become "The Stories of Kilkenny – Welcome to Your Past, Present & Future". The regeneration will see a refurbishment of the building to improve energy efficiency and accessibility and a redesigned space to the side and rear of the building providing a public meeting space within a sustainable garden.

The regenerated building will provide open access to local studies, research, and family history resources, alongside exhibitions and heritage programmes designed to celebrate Kilkenny's rich history. It will actively reach into the community, engaging schools, adult learners, cultural organisations, migrants, and marginalised groups through a dynamic programme of outreach, workshops, and lectures, ensuring the building serves as a welcoming and inclusive space for all in line with values and principles of the New European Bauhaus.

A protected structure, this detached single-storey Classical-style library, sits within the John Street Architectural Conservation Area. Designed in 1907 and serving as a public library since 1910, it remains an important part of Kilkenny's civic and cultural heritage.

This project reflects a citizen-led vision for regeneration, preserving a landmark of local identity while reimagining it as a vibrant cultural and educational centre for generations to come.

THRIVE demonstrates how strategic investment can ignite local regeneration, bringing design, innovation and community vision together under the New European Bauhaus approach and Town Centre First policy.

A number of projects have been awarded funding through this competitive funding call, local authorities demonstrated how citizen and community engagement determined the most beneficial end use for these buildings. Other successfully

funded projects include the transformation of disused libraries, barracks, halls and banks into multi-functional community hubs, museums and event spaces, some of which even have roof gardens for the public to enjoy.

Welcoming the funding awards, Minister Browne said:

*“This funding is about bringing our heritage buildings into the 21st century – giving local authorities the support they need to preserve and protect these important assets, and ensure their sustainable re-use for future generations. These kinds of regeneration projects add to the vibrancy of our towns and cities – revitalising our urban spaces and making them better places to live, work and visit.”*

David Kelly, Director of the Southern Regional Assembly, said:

*“The response to the THRIVE call has been exceptional, showing the appetite across our regions to tackle vacancy and bring heritage buildings back to life. THRIVE represents a turning point in how we approach regeneration in our regions. It brings together European funding, national funding and local expertise to create a blueprint for sustainable heritage restoration. This approach will not only transform individual towns but will also shape how we think about regeneration on a national scale.”*

Cathaoirleach of the Southern Regional Assembly, Cllr Andrew McGuinness, said:

*“Heritage buildings are part of the identity of our towns, holding memories and stories that matter to local people. This significant investment in the Southern Region and the Eastern and Midland Region puts communities firmly at the heart of town centre regeneration. It gives local people a say in how heritage buildings are repurposed, ensuring they meet the needs of modern life while celebrating their historic value.”*

A total of €63 million co-funding has been awarded through the ERDF Southern, Eastern and Midland Regional Programme, to transformative projects across the following urban centres:

<b>City/Town</b>	<b>Total Award</b>
Kilkenny	€3,980,592
Shandon, Cork City	€7,000,000
Longford	€7,000,000
Tralee	€7,000,000
Ennis	€6,997,047
King's Island, Limerick City	€6,567,454
Rathfarnham	€7,000,000
Dun Laoghaire	€7,000,000
Drogheda	€7,000,000
Carlow	€3,900,000

THRIVE is shaping a more beautiful, sustainable and inclusive future for Ireland's town-centres. Projects funded under THRIVE are required to embrace the values of the New European Bauhaus, incorporating sustainability, aesthetics, and inclusion. The initiative also encourages a citizen-centred, community-led approach to planning, design, and project selection within the Town Centre First framework.

The projects announced today are expected to start in late 2025 and will deliver long-lasting benefits for the local communities.

THRIVE is co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Union through the ERDF Southern, Eastern and Midland Regional Programme 21-27. The scheme has been co-designed by the Regional Assemblies and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage to address European, national and regional policy objectives. Further information is available on the [www.southernassembly.ie](http://www.southernassembly.ie)

## **ENDS**

### **NOTES to Editors:**

#### **For more information:**

Lisa Slater, Southern Regional Assembly

Phone: 087 1883406

Email: [lslater@southernassembly.ie](mailto:lslater@southernassembly.ie)

## **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Regional Programmes**

THRIVE – the Town Centre First Heritage Revival Scheme – is delivered under Ireland's two ERDF Regional Programmes:

- Southern, Eastern and Midland Regional Programme 2021-2027
- Northern and Western Regional Programme 2021-2027

The two ERDF Regional Programmes set out Ireland's investment strategy for €853 million, of which €396 million is financed by the EU. The ERDF supports Irish regions in promoting economic, social and territorial cohesion in line with key EU priorities.

The programmes focus on three strategic outcomes:

- developing smarter more competitive regions through measures like building Research, Development and Innovation (RD&I) capacity in public research institutions and by strengthening regional innovation systems in line with Ireland's Smart Specialisation Strategy and the Regional Enterprise Plans.
- supporting actions to scale up energy efficiency measures for those in energy poverty; and
- supporting the sustainable regeneration of towns and urban centres using a Town Centres First Framework.

The programme covering the north-west of the country is managed by the Northern and Western Regional Assembly and the programme covering the midlands, south and east of the country is managed by the Southern Regional Assembly, with significant collaboration from the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly.

### **Awards Made Through THRIVE Strand Two**

*Grants awarded to local authorities for the renovation, restoration and reuse of publicly owned vacant and derelict heritage buildings with the aim of revitalising urban centres.*

Full list of awards made nationally can be found at:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-housing-local-government-and-heritage/press-releases/thrive-projects-announced-90-million-government-eu-co-funding-awarded-to-restore-derelict-heritage-buildings-in-urban-areas/>

## **New European Bauhaus**

On 15 September 2021, the European Commission adopted a Communication setting out the concept of the New European Bauhaus (NEB). The NEB brings a cultural and creative dimension to the European Green Deal to strengthen sustainable innovation, technology and economy. The NEB is about the spaces where we live and the way we would like to live together, while respecting the planet and protecting nature. A triangle of three inseparable core values guides the NEB:

- sustainability, from climate goals to circularity and biodiversity;
- aesthetics, quality of experience and style, beyond functionality; and
- inclusion, including accessibility and affordability.

*“Through its transdisciplinary and participatory approach, the New European Bauhaus reinforces the role of local and regional communities, industries, innovators and creative minds that work together to improve our quality of life. Cohesion policy will transform new ideas into action at the local level.”* Previous Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms, Elisa Ferreira

### **Town Centre First**

The Town Centre First Policy was launched jointly on 4 February 2022 by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Department of Rural and Community Development and provides a co-ordinated, whole-of-government policy framework to proactively address the decline in the health of towns across Ireland and support measures to regenerate and revitalise them.

Key elements of the TCF Approach are:

- Collaborative and Plan led: Town Centre First Plans are integrated urban strategies produced by a Town Team of local community and business representatives, that set out a vision, and identify and develop priority projects to drive the revitalisation of their town centres
- Delivery Focused: Local authorities with eligible towns have been provided with a dedicated senior level Town Regeneration Officers who will lead Town Centre First implementation at a local level and support local Town Teams in the preparation of their TCF Plan
- Integrated: A National Town Centre First Office has been established within the Local Government Management Agency to drive TCF actions, coordinate stakeholder engagement, and share best practice at a national level and across the local government sector.