



CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT

APRIL 2025 ISSUE



EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS

- A list of Orders made in the last month will be available in the Corporate Department for inspection by the Elected Members.

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CORPORATE



St. Patrick's Festival 2025



Wonder Wander Freshford and Wonder Wander Castlecomer walking trails launched by Cathaoirleach Michael McCarthy



Minister of State for Local Government and Planning, Deputy John Cummins, TD, visit to discuss URDF Projects and Housing Delivery in County Kilkenny, and also take a tour of our newest housing development at Crokers Hill, Kilkenny City



**Romanian Ambassador to Ireland visit:
Tim Butler, HE Laurențiu-Mihai Ștefan Romanian Ambassador to Ireland, Cllr. Andrew McGuinness**



German Ambassador to Ireland visit: Lar Power, David Gill, German Ambassador to Ireland, Cllr. Andrew McGuinness

ROADS

Kilkenny County Council received an allocation in 2025 of €7,057,426 from Transport Infrastructure Ireland for works on National Roads.

This includes funding for three Minor/Safety Schemes that are at different stages:

- N24 Tower Road
- N24 Carrick Road Improvement
- N77 Ballyragget Village to Ballynaslee Road Improvement

Grant allocations were also received from the Department of Transport in the amount of €19,570,700 for work on the Non-National Road Network. The key target areas for road improvement are the Restoration Improvement & Restoration Maintenance grants, amounting to 66% of the overall funding for non-national roads. Other works included in the grant are Bridge Rehabilitation, Safety Improvement Works, Drainage, Climate Adaptation & Resilience Works and Community Involvement Scheme for local tertiary roads.

Kilkenny also received an allocation of €552,025 from the Department of Rural & Community Development for 9 Local Improvement Schemes across the County in 2025.

MINOR PROJECTS

N77 Ballyragget to Ballynaslee

Construction of the scheme commenced in February 2024. The scheme is nearing completion with the final surfacing works progressing through April. Ancillary works are ongoing and the mainline is open to traffic.



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 application for a Judicial review of the decision by An Bord Pleanála was lodged with the High Court by 3 applicants in May 2024. The case is due for mention in court in May 2025.

CAPITAL AND URDF PROJECTS

South North Access Road - Ferrybank (URDF)

Part 8 for the scheme was approved in Dec 2024 and consultants are currently finalising drawings for CPO. Detail Design is underway and liaising with the Greenway Team with regards to the Carpark and link to the South East Greenway.

The scheme is c.940m in length with:

- Two Signalised Crossroad Junctions,
- Segregated Pedestrian/Cycle Facilities,
- Two Zebra Crossings
- Off-line Bus Stops
- Greenway Car Park (c.172 parking bays);
- Link to Greenway; and
- Accommodation Works

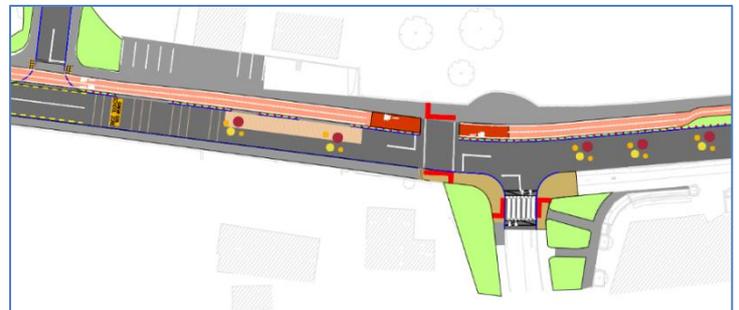


Greenway Underpass Concept

Sustainable Links -Ferrybank (URDF)

Consultants are appointed for the sustainable links, Ferrybank including traffic calming and active travel measures over c.3km of road on Belmont Road and Abbey Road.

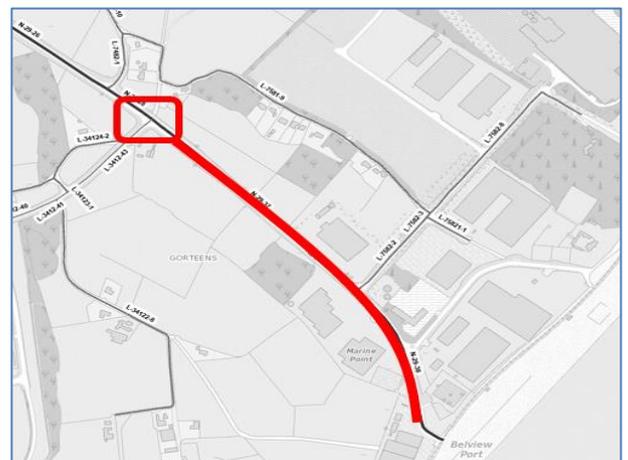
They are currently finalising the Options Report and Preferred Option Design Drawings for consultation with stakeholders (School, Cycle Groups, Local businesses etc.).



N29 Belview Port Road (URDF)

Consultants are appointed for the N29 Belview Port Scheme for traffic calming measures along c.900m of the N29 and junction improvements from the L3412 junction to the IDA business park south to the port access.

All relevant surveys have been conducted to progress the scheme and sub-consultants for Archeological & Environmental surveys have been appointed.



CBS School

Works on the road accessing the CBS are coming to a completion as per the Part 8 Loughmacask Link Road Phase 1(a).

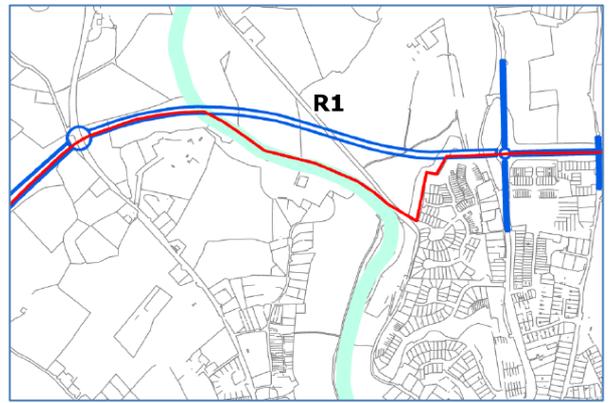
There is currently a road opening license in place for the final section of the scheme at the Freshford road roundabout which is expected to be completed in April/May 2025. Stage 3 Road Safety Audits, Substantial Completion Certificates and Handover process will follow in due course.



Kilkenny City North Transport Project (KCNTP)

Department of Transport (DoT) provided a further grant allocation to progress the KCNTP to develop the preferred option for the scheme.

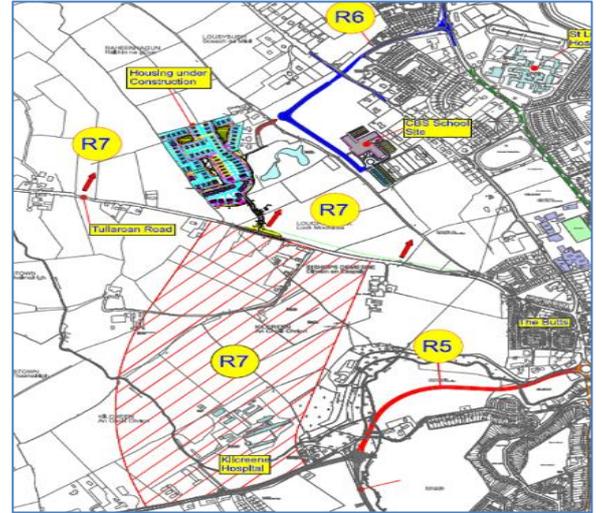
In March 2025, the DoT advised KCC to apply to TII to use their Framework to appoint consultants. An application was submitted in March and KCC are waiting approval. Tender documentation is currently being finalised to submit on receipt of approval.



R7 (Loughmacask Congestion Relief Project)

The Department of Transport provided a further grant allocation for Traffic Assessments in the Butts Green Area in 2025.

It is proposed to use the grant to build upon a Traffic analysis conducted in 2024. It is intended to appoint consultants to conduct a Strategic Assessment and develop the Preliminary Business Case for the R7 (Kilmanagh Road to the Freshford Road) and the R5 (Kilmanagh Road to Dean Street). Finalising of the Tendering documentation is underway and it is intended to upload the documentation to eTenders in Q2 2025.

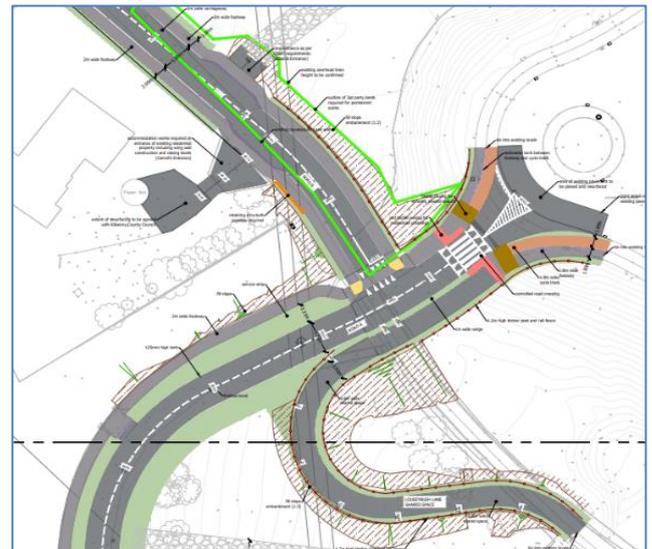


Lousybush Lane link to CBS

Consultants are currently preparing the Lousybush Access Road Scheme for Detail Design and tendering for construction.

The scheme will link the houses at the northern extents of Lousybush Lane to the CBS link road which will in turn allow the existing Lousybush lane to be repurposed as a shared use facility for cyclists and pedestrians as per the Loughmacask masterplan.

Detail Design is currently underway and continuous engagement is being held with relevant residents and landowners.



PLANNING

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

Planning Summary	Total January to March 2024	Total January to March 2025
Planning Applications Received	191	185
Planning Applications Granted	175	162
Planning Applications Refused	18	15
Complaints Received	38	37
Warning Letters Issued	27	24
Enforcements Notices Issued	11	18
Cases Closed	27	76
Cases Sent for Legal Prosecution	0	1

Forward Planning

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

This Variation was made up of 2 elements, Variation 4a sought to incorporate the Loughmacask Masterplan into the City and County Development Plan. Variation 4b sought to amend text of Section 10.1.7 of the City and County Development Plan, Vol. 1, to allow for Waste Water Treatment Plans in certain circumstances.

Variation 4a was adopted. Variation 4b was not adopted for reasons set out in the Chief Executive's Report.

Local Area Plans

Ferrybank/Belview Local Area Plan

The Draft Plan preparation continues. Significant issues relating to the role of Ferrybank as the second largest urban area in the County its role as part of the wider Metropolitan Area and its role in contributing to the development of Waterford as envisaged under the National Planning Framework are being addressed as part of the Plan preparation. It is anticipated that a Draft Plan will be available in Q2 of 2025.

Castlecomer Plan Review Process

The Castlecomer Municipal District Members were briefed at their March Municipal District Meeting on the progress with the Proposed Settlement Plan. The Plan and the various accompanying assessments, including an Infrastructural Assessment and Environmental Assessments are being finalised for public display. It is anticipated that this Draft Plan will be on public display in May 2025..

Taking in Charge

Works are progressing on the following estates:

- Baun/Cnoc Baun, Ballyfoyle Road, Kilkenny
- Rathullord Phase 2
- Hillview, Bennettsbridge

The following estate was taken in charge in March 2025

- Housing development at Kerrs Cross, Moneenroe.

Active Land Management

The new Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT) has come into effect. The Council prepare the RZLT maps, and Revenue will administer the tax. The settlements currently liable are Kilkenny City, Rosbercon, Callan and Thomastown. Relevant landowners must file a return with Revenue by 23rd May, and any queries in relation to payment of the tax should be directed to Revenue. Two sets of maps were on public display until April; the Final Maps for 2025 and the Annual Draft Maps for 2026. Five rezoning requests were made by landowners for impacted sites on the Final Maps 2025. A total of ten submissions were made on the inclusion or exclusion of sites from scope for the tax, on the Annual Draft Maps. The rezoning requests will now be considered, and decisions will be communicated to the landowner by 30th June. Determinations must be made on the ten submissions on scope, and the landowner notified not later than 1st July. The landowners will have an opportunity to appeal the determinations on scope to An Bord Pleanála.

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

Conservation

The Conservation Office manages all protected structures in Kilkenny County and City. These structures are recognised for the following special interest: Architectural, Historical, Archaeological, Artistic, Cultural, Scientific, Technical, Social. An advisory service on conservation matters is provided to the public and colleagues, while the conservation grants and funding applications are also delivered.

Built Heritage Investment Scheme 2025: Discussions concerning methodologies for successful projects with applicants is ongoing.

Historic Structures Fund and the Historic Thatch Building 2025: Four conservation grant applications were forwarded to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Due to the high number and standard of applications, the assessment process was highly competitive. Unfortunately, none of the submitted Historic Structures Funds were successful this year.

Architectural Conservation Area Trails 2024: The Wander Wonder Trails of Castlecomer and Freshford Architectural Conservation Areas were launched on the 26th March by Cathaoirleach Cllr. Michael McCarthy. There was plenty of engagement from the local community and the Presentation School in Castlecomer and St. Lachtains in Freshford. This has been a collaborative project between the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage, the Architectural Conservation Office and the local community.

The trails are within the confines of the Architectural Conservation Areas in both towns and bring the walker on a route past some of the most significant structures, while also providing snippets of interesting information. There is also a 'Scavenger Hunt' for young and old alike to seek out some of the more notable and fascinating architectural features within the Architectural Conservation Areas.

All walking trails are free and are available to download as PDFs at www.buildingsofireland.com with a link on the building conservation page of our website shortly.



Cathaoirleach Cllr. Michael McCarthy, Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick, Francis Coady, Architectural Conservation Officer, Jane Wales, Senior Architectural Advisor, NIAH, John Beattie, Architectural Conservation Advisor, NIAH, and local community representatives at the launch of Wonder Wander Trail in Freshford.



Cathaoirleach Cllr. Michael McCarthy, Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick, Francis Coady, Architectural Conservation Officer and NIAH staff at the launch of Wonder Wander Trail in Castlecomer

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

- Planning Referrals.....4
- Further Information requests1
- Clarification of Further Information requests.....0
- Section 57 Declarations.....1
- Post planning1
- Part VIII1

Building Control

Valid Commencement Notices Received	Disability Access Applications Received
March 2025 27	March 2025 10
March 2024 93	March 2024 8

TOWN REGENERATION OFFICE

Work has been ongoing during the month of March gathering data through surveys and site visits to develop the health check report for Graiguenamanagh. It is proposed to present to the Town Team before Easter.

The TRO submitted an application under RRDF Cat 2 for a project in Urlingford. Cat 2 funding is for design and plan and the application focuses around funding for a redesign of the public realm area in the Town Centre and for the provision of off street car parking and a town park.

Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant

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

Number of Applications Submitted to-date.....	269
Number of Approvals / Approvals in Principle to-date	190
Grant Drawdown to-date.....	34
Number of Queries during the month of February	69

THRIVE

The proposals under Part 8 for the redevelopment of Carnegie and surrounding public realm area was approved by the Council at their March meeting. This enables us to submit an application for funding under the scheme in April.

Derelict Sites

The Council instigated a CPO for a property in Parliament Street in Kilkenny. The derelict site known as The Nightcap in Dunkitt was put on the market for sale.

ENVIRONMENT

CLIMATE ACTION

Spotlight on Community Climate Action

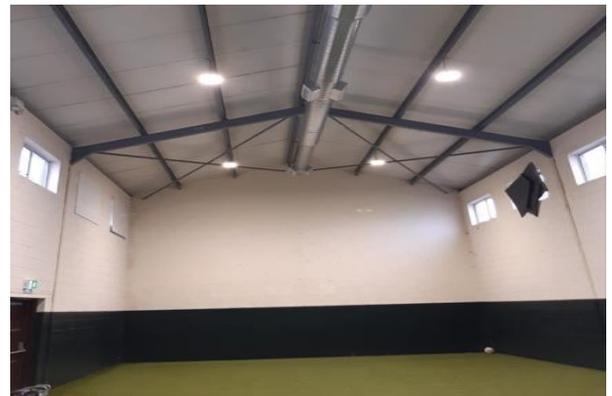
The Community Climate Action Officer is working with and supporting the successful community groups as they deliver their projects for the Community Climate Action Programme. Some of the groups have completed their projects and this month we can showcase two of the completed projects.

Inistioge Tidy Towns



Inistioge Tidy Towns have successfully completed their project which involved installing a water refill station in the village. This will help to discourage people from using single use plastic bottles and thereby reduce litter and lead to a cleaner environment. The water station is located in the centre of the village and is close to the sports pitch and on a popular walking route.

Hugginstown & District Community Centre



Hugginstown & District Community Group have successfully completed their climate action project by upgrading the lighting in the Community Centre to more energy efficient LED. This group was successful in obtaining funding from the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications under the Community Climate Action Programme.

Climate Action Plan Implementation Report (Year 1)

The first Implementation Report of the Kilkenny County Council Climate Action Plan outlines the positive progress made in 2024 by the Council in delivering climate action. 82% of actions in the Plan were started in 2024. The report provides details of actions undertaken, targets achieved, and case studies of projects. Governance and leadership, mitigation, adaptation, delivery across services, and community activation and engagement are the key themes of the report.



The Civil Defence Team are taking Climate Action

The Kilkenny Civil Defence team have drawn up a Climate Action Policy which outlines the changes they are committed to making. They have removed all the older large diesel engines from their fleet, and have started to switch over some of the newer vehicles to run on Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO). They have replaced their petrol generators with power banks that can be charged by solar, as well as the everyday changes such as vehicle logs, removing single use plastic etc.

Ballyfoyle Development Group receives National Funding

Congratulations to local community group - Ballyfoyle Development Group on receiving €2,500 in funding under the Climate Actions Work Community Engagement Fund. The funding will contribute to informing and engaging the local community of the Ballyfoyle Climate Action & Biodiversity Plans. The fund is focused on climate engagement, awareness and communications - helping communities to reach new audiences in their locality. Ballyfoyle Development Group are also one of the 22 communities in Kilkenny who are taking part in the Community Climate Action Fund.



The Climate Action Office recently published the March Issue of the Kilkenny Going Green newsletter, and is available to view [here](#). If you want to be a part of the Kilkenny Going Green Network, click [here](#) to join our mailing list.

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Green Schools Programme

- 23 Schools were assessed as part of the Green Schools Programme. Deadline for assessments was the the 28th of March, 2025.
- Flags will be awarded across the themes of Biodiversity, GC Energy, GC Food and Bio, GC Litter and Waste, GC Marine, and Water.
- There were two new school entries on their 1st flag of Litter and Waste.
- Green schools is a holistic, long-term programme and has a two-year cycle in relation to preparation, assessment and attainment of a particular flag.
- Green schools is an international environmental education programme, offering a well-defined, controllable way for schools to take environmental issues into the curriculum and apply them to the day-to-day running of the school.

Green Dog Walkers Campaign



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

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

If members of the public are interested in becoming a green dog walker, pledge forms will be available in pet stores, vets, kennels libraries and council offices throughout Kilkenny or alternatively, pledge online at www.kilkennycoco.ie. Each dog walker who makes a pledge will receive a free High Vis and a dog bone bag dispenser for their dog lead.

If any resident associations or community groups would like to promote the campaign in their own local area, contact the Environmental Awareness Officer with Kilkenny Local Authorities on 056-7794487.

Anti-Litter and Anti-Graffiti Grant 2025

Kilkenny County Council is offering community groups an opportunity to promote anti-litter and anti-graffiti awareness in their local community. The grant is to mobilise 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.

Hard copies of the Application Form are available from the Environment Section, County Hall, John Street, Kilkenny City. Closing date for applications is Friday, 23rd May, 2025.

WASTE

Bring Banks Usage

The Council provides and manages 47 Bring Centres across the City and County. A total of 505 tonnes of recyclables were collected from our Bring Centres to date in 2025. This represents a 2% decrease from the same period in 2024. Loughboy Shopping Centre (**14 tonnes collected**) Aldi - Kilkenny City (*13 tonnes collected*) and Lidl - Johnswell Road (*11 tonnes collected*) were the busiest locations in the City in March. Callan (*11 tonnes collected*) and Lidl, Thomastown (*6.2 tonnes collected*) were the busiest outside of the City in March. 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.

After a comprehensive review of bring bank locations, it was decided to remove the banks from Ferrybank in March due to ongoing issues with unlawful dumping at the site. This decision reflects Kilkenny County Councils ongoing commitment to keeping our communities tidy and promoting responsible waste disposal. The Council is exploring options for a more suitable location. In the meantime, residents are encouraged to utilize the bring banks in the nearby Civic Amenity Site in Granny or in neighbouring areas including Kilmacow, Glenmore and Slieverue.

Dunmore Civic Amenity Site (CAS)

March 2024 saw 132 tonnes of Municipal Solid Waste and 95 tonnes of Municipal Dry Waste. The various recycling streams deposited at the Dunmore facility during the month of March and their respective tonnages can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1.

Recycling Stream	Quantity (Tonnes)
Cardboard	5.8
Plastic	3.2
Paper	6.3
Glass Bottles & Cans	5.0
Food Waste.....	1.8
Mattresses.....	3.0
Metal	8.6
Timber.....	9.4
Tetra-pac.....	0.5
Waste Oil	1.1
WEEE	12.2



As part of the Landfill Aftercare the landfill gas flare continues to run 24hrs per day seven days per week extracting and burning approximately 35m³ of landfill gas per hour. The month of March also saw 57 tonnes of landfill Leachate tankered off site for treatment.

AIR NOISE WATER

Water Quality - Farm Inspections

Council staff continue to carry out farm inspections with 50+ completed to date. The target for 2025 is 308 inspections.

Septic Tank Inspections

Septic tank inspections have now commenced and the target for 2025 is 59 inspections to complete

Environmental Complaints

All Environmental complaints received are logged on the CRM (*Customer Relations Management*) System. The number of complaints that have been received and logged for the month of March 2025 is 108 compared to 74 complaints received in March 2024. The number of complaints received for January – March 2025 is 274 compared to 278 complaints for the same three-month period in 2024. The nature of these complaints included littering, illegal dumping, burning of waste and abandoned cars. The majority continue to be related to illegal dumping. Whilst every effort is made to bring unacceptable environmental practice into compliance, Environment Enforcement staff continue to manage significant enforcement cases progressing through prosecution cases.

Noise

A number of staff in the Environment Office have enrolled on upcoming Training days. This Training will enable staff to carry out monitoring on noise complaints.

Air

Two new air monitors have been installed – Butts area and City Centre. Staff will be monitoring the information received from these air monitors.

PARKS & SPECIAL PROJECTS

The Museum of Medieval Kilkenny

Works on the Tholsel building are progressing to programme. Contractors, Duggan Lynch Ltd., have completed their site mobilisation and the site compound is now fully in place within the grounds of St. Mary's Church. The clearing out and stripping back on the third and fourth floors is now well advanced. Works in the basement is also ongoing with the main focus on the vaulted ceiling. The works include cleaning, repairs and repointing of brickwork and the swapping out of decayed timber lintels with galvanized steel lintels. On completion of each segment a series of coats of traditional limewash is being applied to both walls and ceilings, see image. Excavation works have also commenced at the rear of the building to accommodate the new lift and stair well down into the basement.



Limewash ongoing in basement

To facilitate the above works, the arcade within the Tholsel along the High Street and a section of St. Mary's Lane to the rear of the building have now been closed to the public. The Medieval Mile Museum, within St. Mary's Church, remains open to visitors and the contractor will continue to work in a manner that minimises disruption to the operation of same.

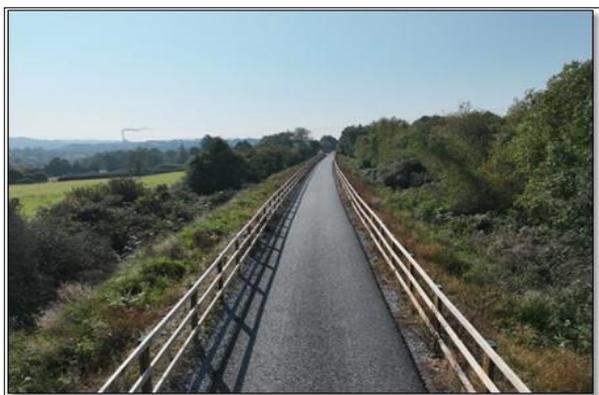
Works to the Tholsel forms part of the wider "Museum of Medieval Kilkenny" project which



Removing plaster slab and fibreglass insulation on fourth floor

will see a total investment of over €8 million and the unification of the Tholsel and the Medieval Mile Museum as one single visitor experience. The overall objective of this project is to develop an offering that will become one of Ireland's top visitor attractions, while also securing the future of the Tholsel to continue in its role to act as the seat of local Government in the City.

South East Greenway and Related Projects



Works continue to progress of the delivery of the 24km greenway from New Ross to Waterford. Of the 24km some 14km's are now completed or substantially completed and the second section of greenway, from Curraghmore to Ferrybank, is due to open in the coming months. In tandem, with readying this next section for opening, works on the detail design of the remaining sections of the greenway continues.

Greenway to Glenmore Connectivity Link

Last year, The Department of Rural and Community Development announced that our funding application under the Rural Regeneration Development Fund (RRDF) to progress this project was successful. This funding will now allow us to proceed to the detail design, land acquisition and construction stage of the project.

This project also incorporates the provision of a new Pink Rock Cycle Loop which will offer greenway users, travelling from the New Ross end, the option of cycling back along an alternative route beside the scene River Barrow.

A tender to engage the services of a multi-disciplinary engineer led design team to the advance the project was published in January and 5 tenders were received before the submission deadline of 28th February, 2025. Following a tender assessment a Letter of Intent was issued to the most economically advantageous tenderer in early April and it is expected that the contract will be awarded, after the standstill period, towards the end of April with design works commencing shortly thereafter.

Woodstock to South East Greenway Link (Nore Valley Greenway)

This Greenway Project is currently in Phase 1 (*Concept and Feasibility Stage*) and the following recent up-dates are provided hereunder:

- Public Consultation 1 expired on 14th March and we are currently compiling a report the on submissions received and findings.
- A Constraints and Opportunity Report along with an Agronomy Report is currently with Transport Infrastructure Ireland for their review and comment.
- A Feasibility Report, investigating possible route options, is also currently being prepared.

2024-2025 Call for new applications under the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS)

In October the Department of Rural & Community Development announced a call for new applications under the ORIS. The scheme was open to all Local Authorities and a number of other State Agencies, and funding will again be allocated via a competitive process based on the quality of the applications put forward. To this end, we endeavored to ensure that the highest quality applications were put forward for Kilkenny.

Similar to previous calls the funding applications were divided into the following four categories:

- *Project Development* – grant available €50,000 and Local Authorities can submit a maximum of 2 applications.
- *Measure 1* - grant available €40,000 and Local Authorities can submit a maximum of 6 applications. (*Representing a €10,000 uplift per application on previous yeas*);
- *Measure 2* -grant available €200,000 and Local Authorities can submit a maximum of 3 applications;
- *Measure 3* - grant available €500,000 and Local Authorities can submit a maximum of 1 application;

A minimum of 10% Match funding must be provided by the Local Authority.

Prior to the March submission deadlines the following ORIS applications were submitted on behalf of Kilkenny County Council:

Measure	Project Name	Description	Grant Sought	Estimated Total Cost
Project Dev.	Collaborative project to develop and Economic, Sustainable Tourism & Recreation Strategy for the development of Waterford Estuary 2025-2034.	Collaborative project to develop and Economic, Sustainable Tourism & Recreation Strategy for the development of Waterford Estuary 2025-2034.	€49,500	€55,000
Project Dev.	Goresbridge Riverside Amenity Masterplan	Preparation of a masterplan for Goresbridge Riverside Amenity Area, incorporating Cois Bearbha Park and the Quay, that sets out a roadmap to develop tourism in the area based around outdoor recreational activities.	€49,500	€55,000
M1	Dunmore Trailhead Link	Development of a new footpath link between the existing Dunmore Community Hall Car Park and the Mass Path leading to Kilkenny Countryside Park.	€37,800	€42,000
M1	Installation of a floating pontoon & disabled kayak launch pad on the River Barrow at the Boat House Graiguenamanagh	Installation of a floating pontoon & disabled kayak launch pad on the River Barrow, the installation of 2no. age-friendly benches and hard & soft landscaping at the picnic area along the Wood Road Trail Link.	€39,600	€44,000
M1	Freshford Loop Walk - Trail Improvement Works	This trail is c.6km in length, it's proposed to upgrade 1km of same to include drainage and surface repairs along with the installation of a steel footbridge. The works will also include an upgrade of the existing signage to afford users a more informative and immersive experience. The proposals also include enhancement works at the picnic area.	€40,000	€44,444
M1	The Kilfane Wood Walking Trail Development Scheme	Development of a new 2.5km woodland walking trail. Works will include the upgrading of trail path surface, directional, information and interpretive signage and age friendly seating along the trail walk.	€40,000	€44,444
M1	Bearna Breac Loop Walk Windgap Trail Enhancement Scheme	Upgrading of an existing 9.5km walking trail including the trail surface repairs, the provision of a small carpark, information and interpretive signage and seating along the trail walk.	€40,000	€44,444

Measure	Project Name	Description	Grant Sought	Estimated Total Cost
M1	Knockadrinna Wood Walking Trail Development Scheme	A new 4.5km walking trail offering spectacular views of the surrounding countryside of South Kilkenny. Works include the provision of a small carpark, information and interpretive signage and seating.	€40,000	€44,444
M2	Kilmacow Community Complex - Outdoor Recreational Enhancement Scheme	Refurbishment of existing footbridge over River Blackwater, enhancements to Kilmacow Loop Walk within Kilmacow Community Complex including new connectivity link, upgrades to existing gravel trails, new trail signage including distance markers and age friendly seating and parking provision.	€200,000	€222,222
M2	Newpark Marsh Walking Trail - Accessibility and Inclusivity Enhancement Scheme	Resurfacing of existing trail with a bound material to improve accessibility and allow year-round use. The installation of age friendly seating, bike parking, interpretative signage, improvements to the outdoor classroom including the introduction of communication, mood and sensory boards.	€186,660	€207,400
M2	Mountain Grove Loop Trail Walk Redevelopment Scheme	Rehabilitation of existing 2.5km woodland trail, to include entrance, trail pathways, drainage, footbridge, signage, seating and car parking enhancement works.	€200,000	€223,000
M3	Brandon Hill Trail Enhancement and Upland Protection Scheme	To undertake enhancement works along Brandon Hill summit trails to protect upland habitat, address erosion scar and develop clear delineated walking trails that are fit for purpose and resilient to effects of climate change.	€439,425	€488,250

The Clover Centre Ferrybank

Earlier this year the Council appointed Digby Brady Landscaping Architects to assist with the preparation of a Masterplan for a 9.5 acre site in Christendom, Ferrybank. These lands, previously held by Clover Meats trustee's transferred into the ownership of the Council in late 2023.

It is intended this Masterplan will be developed through a collaborative approach with the local community through extensive public consultation in order to identify local community needs, priorities and desires. The overall objective of this initiative is to develop a high quality, community centred, multifunctional local park that creates a space that offers quality of life improvements in terms of physical and mental health wellbeing, returning this area once again to a hub for social interaction.



Since the appointment of the Consultants extensive engagement has taken place with many stakeholders and the first public consultation open evening is scheduled for Thursday 1st May, 2025 at 7.00 p.m. in the Ferrybank Primary Care Centre.

Amenity Grants



A budget of €140,000 was provided for the 2025 Amenity Grant Scheme. The closing date for the submission of amenity grant applications was the 28th March. In total 183 applications were received which sees an increase of 8 applications on last year. The applications were assessed and a recommendation will go before Council at the April meeting for the consideration of the Elected Members. The scope of works that can be applied for under the scheme include tree planting, grass cutting, shrub

and flower planting, erecting signage and many other amenity type projects that enhance local areas. Again this year it was evident and welcomed that the number of groups making efforts to manage their areas in a more sustainable way to encourage biodiversity was increasing.

Grass Maintenance

Our annual grass maintenance programme is now fully operational. The contract to undertake this work was awarded to Beckett Landscaping . In recent years the Parks Dept. has made significant changes to the grass cutting regime and where possible traditional fortnightly cycles of mowing grass short is replaced with longer mowing cycles to encourage pollinators. This is particularly important at this time of year as some of our pollinators are emerging from hibernation and the Dandelion is a key source of food for same. These pollinator areas are mainly on embankments, wide road verges and in bigger residential areas with large green spaces, the latter is achievable with buy-in and support from local resident committees and Tidy Towns etc.



LEO/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Summary of 2025 Awards to Businesses (Q1 2025)

- €68,560 in direct financial assistance was approved for 3 manufacture /export service businesses in located in throughout the County.
- €38,560 in Business Expansion Grant assistance
- €30,000 awarded in Business Priming Grant Assistance
- 6 Businesses have commenced LEAN one to one consultancy programmes to investigate possible resource efficiencies and process improvements their businesses with an additional 4 businesses participating in the build better business Lean programme.
- 16 businesses have availed of the Digital for Business programme to prepare and implement a plan for the adoption of digital tools and techniques across the enterprise.
- 6 businesses have availed of the Energy Efficiency Grant totalling €35,708 to support investment in technologies and equipment of enterprises
- 17 business have availed of the green for business consultancy support scheme. This scheme supports businesses to become greener and environmentally friendly.
- 2 applicants have been supported to make loan applications to the Micro Finance Ireland loan fund.
- 253 people participated on focused small business training, including 21 people participating on the Starting Your Business programme
- 116 businesses have availed of specialised business specific mentoring on a variety of topics including finance, marketing, social media marketing and HR.

National Enterprise Awards

Hi-Tec Medicare Ltd based in Clogh, Castlecomer has been selected to represent Kilkenny at the National Enterprise Awards 2025. The National Enterprise Awards celebrate the achievements of Ireland's micro-enterprise sector and recognise the achievements of companies supported by the LEOs. The final will take place on Thursday 22nd May in the Mansion House, Dublin.

Hi-Tec Medicare manufacture bespoke Orthopaedic Chairs and is highly regarded in the healthcare sector. This family run business has become well established and today has a workforce of 12, including fulltime and part-time staff.



Student Enterprise Programme

During Enterprise Week 2025 LEO Kilkenny ran the final of the Student Enterprise Programme. Young entrepreneurs from Presentation Secondary School, St. Kieran's College and Coláiste Abhainn Rí will represent Kilkenny at this year's Student Enterprise Programme National Finals on Thursday, 8th May at the Mullingar Park Hotel. 950 students from 12 schools took part in the annual programme locally with 120 students making it to the County Final which took place on 5th March at the Lyrath Hotel.



START / Exit 4 Competition 2025



Kilkenny County Council, Local Enterprise Office Kilkenny, South East Technological University (SETU), and the Urlingford Town team have announced the START Exit 4 Competition 2025.

START Exit 4 is open to anyone with an innovative business idea in the early stages of trading (*within the first 18 months of trading or pre-trading*).

The initiative will involve availing of LEO Kilkenny and SETU training and mentoring where appropriate, and will culminate in a final comprising of an investor ready pitch for an investment fund worth €6,000. The prize fund will include access to office space to the value of €1,500 at the newly opened Exit 4, conferencing and remote working hub located in Urlingford.

Broadband Digital Update

Kilkenny County Council has prepared a three-year Digital Strategy for the County covering the period 2025 – 2027 which focuses on supporting local government, businesses and citizens in harnessing digital innovation and digital transformation. The strategy and implementation plan include supporting the delivery of actions under four key pillars:

- **Pillar 1:** Digital Infrastructure,
- **Pillar 2:** Digital Skills,
- **Pillar 3:** Digital Transformation of Business and
- **Pillar 4:** Digitalisation of Public Services.

The draft Digital Strategy was presented to Members of the SPC 1 and adopted at the Meeting on 27th March, 2025.

The Broadband Officer is working in partnership with the KCETB to provide opportunities to rural communities to engage in basic IT training at their local Broadband Connection Point (BCP). Muckalee Community Centre has signed up to a six-week training block which will commence in May 2025.

Night Time Economy



Café Lates

A new funding scheme was launched to encourage local cafes in the City to extend their opening hours by offering innovative and cultural events after 6pm. Kilkenny County Council invited local cafes in Kilkenny City to apply for funding to introduce engaging cultural programming after 6pm for the evenings of Thursday 17th April and Thursday 29th May. Six applicants were successful with their funding applications.

The full list of events taking place on Thursday 17th April are:

- Tapas & Music @ Tower & Castle (6pm-9pm)
- Brazilian classical music @ The Book and Coffee Shop (6pm – 8pm)
- Frankenstein Bolts @ Wild Flower Café (Butler Gallery) (6pm – 8pm)
- Chocolate Making at The Chocolate Garden Café (6.30pm – 8.30pm) (Booking required)
- Beats & Board Games @ The Cookie Co-Op (7pm – 9pm)
- Pottery Painting @ Wild Tails (Booking required) (7pm – 9pm)

TOURISM

Tourism Kiosk

Kilkenny County Council Tourism team has partnered with key heritage attractions in the City to encourage visitors to wander through its medieval streets and laneways, visit its multiple historic landmarks and explore all the vibrant, walkable experiences the destination has to offer.

By providing a dedicated space for attraction operators to engage with visitors, the kiosk will promote the movement of guests throughout the City. By encouraging exploration from the Castle to the many other heritage attractions in the City, visitors will stay longer and have a hugely enhanced visit.

The new kiosk will be managed by the attractions involved and will open at least four days a week. The kiosk will operate on a trial basis from March to October 17, 2025, with varying hours throughout the season.



Kilkenny Tourism and visitkilkenny.ie



Kilkenny Tourism CLG, supported by the Council hosted two networking and collaboration evenings in Graiguenamanagh and Castlecomer in March. “Tourism Connects” provided a unique opportunity for local businesses to explore opportunities to collaborate and develop opportunities to work together to enhance their tourism offering for visitors to Kilkenny. Runda Tourism and Hospitality facilitated the events with c. 20 small/medium sized local businesses attending each evening.

Kilkenny's Digital and on-line marketing and PR campaigns remain strong and compared to last year our audience reach grew by 5,500.

The coming months will feature upcoming festivals and events throughout the City and County including Kilkenny Roots Festival, together with itineraries for trips to Kilkenny over the Easter and summer breaks whilst also targeting conference and event organisers to "Meet in Kilkenny" and boost business tourism to the City.



Taste Kilkenny

Taste Kilkenny working with our partners in Kilkenny Tourism and Savour Food festival will deliver County and City-wide food tourism initiatives in 2025 whilst also incorporating, celebrating and promoting everything that is food tourism related to Kilkenny's wider tourism product. Kilkenny County Council have been successful in its funding application to the department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine to support this development work and look forward to delivering supports for both our local food producers and our food and beverage sector County wide.



Museum of the Moon

Kilkenny County Council were happy to support St Canice's Cathedral in unveiling "The Museum of the Moon", a large-scale installation, that dominated the cathedral, dramatically suspended three metres from the ground above head height for a three-week period in March.



HOUSING

HOUSING CAPITAL DELIVERY

The first tenants have been given keys to the houses in Croker's Hill Housing Development.



The following Re-use and Regeneration Projects are being progressed currently:



Conversion of a dwelling into a 4 Person Group Home in Scart, Dunbell is due to start on site in Q2



11 Tilbury Place is starting on site in April 2025. This derelict former 3-bedroom dwelling will be redeveloped as two one-bedroom houses.



The former Health Centre in Kells has gone to Part 8 Planning, redesigned as a wheelchair accessible 3-bedroom dwelling



Numbers 18 & 20 Upper Bridge Street, Callan, are due to go to Part 8 Planning this month. These 2 protected structures will incorporate social housing apartments over commercial units at ground level.

AFFORDABLE HOMES

All Affordable Homes at the Nyne Park, Callan Road, Kilkenny, Cluain Glasan Granges Road, Kilkenny and Abbey Meadows Ferrybank are now sold/reserved and Application Portal for all schemes are closed.

Work is progressing with the team to deliver Affordable Homes across County Kilkenny. Over the coming months it is hoped to begin advertising and marketing of Schemes at

Church View, Kilmacow:

- 13 x 3 Bedroom Units
- Houses completion estimated Q3 2025



Abbeyhill, Thomastown:

- 22 units:
- 16 x 3 Bedroom Units
- 6 x 2 Bedroom Units
- Houses completion estimated Q4 2025



Information to follow and will be made available at <https://kilkennycoco.ie/affordable-homes>

At a national level the Department have revamped the Affordable Homes website where all Affordable Homes available for purchase around the country are listed. www.affordablehomes.ie

Affordable Homes supported through the Local Authority Affordable Purchase Scheme 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. Under the Affordable Purchase Scheme eligible buyers will be able to purchase their own new home by availing of this shared equity scheme. Kilkenny County Council will retain an equity share with successful applicants 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 maximum mortgage capacity. Under the Affordable Purchase Scheme successful applicants will be able to avail of a reduction on the full market price, of between up to 20% & 25%, depending on the price of the property and the applicant's own financial circumstances.

For any queries in relation to any of the above please contact the Affordable Housing Team at: Email: affordablehousing@kilkennycoco.ie Tel: 056-7794280

HOMELESS SERVICES

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

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

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

HOMELESS SERVICES SUMMARY MARCH 2025	
Homeless Presentations	63
Homeless Assessment Outcomes	
Prevention & Interventions	55
Emergency Service	4
Not eligible / Did not avail of service	4
HAP Place Finder Service	
Number of Homeless HAP tenancies @ 1 st day of month	158
Number of Homeless HAP tenancies created during month	1
Number of Homeless HAP tenancies in place @ last day of month	159
Number of Homeless HAP tenancy breakdowns	6
Other Social Housing Tenancies supported /created during month	5
Provision of Emergency Accommodation	
Households in Temporary Emergency Supported Accommodation @ March	44
Households in Temporary Emergency B&B accommodation	7
Households in Temporary Emergency B&B Accommodation that are families	7
Households (singles/couples) in Transition Emergency Accommodation	39
Households (Families) in Transition Emergency Accommodation (Own Front	16

SOCIAL HOUSING PROVISION

SOCIAL HOUSING SUPPORT APPLICATION SUMMARY MARCH 2025	
Number awaiting Social Housing Support at 31 st March (<i>Gross Need</i>)	1,410
Number awaiting Social Housing Support at 31 st March (<i>Net Need</i>)	672
Number of Social Housing Applications received in February	108
Number of applications incomplete/awaiting further information/clarification	64
Number of applications validated and ready for assessment during the month	35
Number of applications assessed during March	32
Number of applications awaiting assessment as at 31 st March	35

HOUSING ASSISTANCE PAYMENT (HAP) SUMMARY MARCH 2025	
Total active HAP tenancies	449
New HAP tenancies set up	13
HAP allocated Social Housing	12
Closed HAP tenancies	14
HAP Rent Reviews	73
HAP Other Tenancy Amendments	339

HOUSING ALLOCATIONS MARCH 2025	
LA/RAS/Leasing offers of allocations made in March	34
LA/RAS/Leasing offers of allocations made to date 2025	66

TENANCY MANAGEMENT

Complaints

The Tenancy Management Section of Kilkenny County Council deals with anti-social behaviour complaints in relation to our tenants as outlined in the Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy. The number of cases received in March was 55.

MAINTENANCE HOUSING STOCK

The Housing Operations team have commenced a pilot scheme for roll out of a new app for stock surveys to existing housing stock as agreed with the department. The completion of stock surveys will allow Kilkenny County Council to improve the delivery of our planned maintenance programme.

MAINTENANCE CALLS MARCH 2025	
Maintenance calls in March	639
Maintenance calls year to date	2,080

PRIVATE HOUSE GRANTS

The 2025 housing grants allocation has been received from the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage in the amount of **€1,920,000.00** comprised of €1,632,000.00 (85%) grant and €288,000.00 (15%) KCC contribution.

GRANTS APPROVED & COMMITTED MARCH 2025		
Scheme	Number	Amount
HGD - Housing Adaptation Grant	86	€868,428
MAG - Mobility Aid Grant	7	€20,783
HOP - Housing Aid for Older Persons	113	€639,334
Total	206	€1,528,545

GRANTS PAID OUT MARCH 2025		
Scheme	Number	Amount
HGD - Housing Adaptation Grant	16	€141,763
MAG - Mobility Aid Grant	1	€2,863
HOP - Housing Aid for Older Persons	33	€185,971
Total	50	€330,597

HOUSING LOANS

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

- **Minimum income requirements:** The minimum income required for an applicant to be eligible to apply under the scheme has been revised from €12,500 to €11,000 per annum. (*At least 50% of which must come from a reckonable primary source of income*).
- **Primary Sources of Income:** In addition to employment and the State Pension (*Contributory and Non-Contributory*) being considered as primary sources of income, the Widow's, Widower's, Surviving Civil Partner's (Contributory and Non-Contributory Pension), Blind Pension, Invalidity Pension and Disability Allowance are now also considered primary sources of income.
- **Time receiving social housing supports:** The period of time tenants will be required to be in receipt of social housing support to be considered eligible under the scheme remains at 10 consecutive years. However, in the case of joint tenancies only one tenant is now required to have been in receipt of social housing supports for 10 years.
- **Income included/not included as a secondary income for assessment**
 - Changes have been made to income that can be considered and not considered as secondary income when assessing for discount.

HOUSING LOAN ACTIVITY 2025					
Loan Type	Received	Approved	Amount Approved	Number Paid	Amount Paid
Local Authority Home Loan	8	0	€0	2	€168,250
Caravan Loan	0	0	€0.00	0	€0
Total	8	0	€0	2	€168,250

VOIDS

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

COMMUNITY

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

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

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

Community & Cultural Facilities Capital Scheme			
Community Group/ Year Approved	Project Description	Grant	Status
Johnstown Sports Field 2022	Contribution to development of walk way around complex	€40,000	Project ready to commence. Awaiting start date
1 st Kilkenny Scout Group 2022	Upgrade of lighting to LED lighting, improve installation in attic, upgrade boiler and installation of solar panels	€15,000	Not yet commenced
Ballyhale Shamrocks GAA 2022	Walking track & flood lighting	€40,000	90% complete
Mooncoin Celtic AFC 2023	LED Floodlighting for extra training area	€20,000	Not yet commenced
John Lockes GAA Club 2023	Walkway improvements, CCTV, Sensory activity outdoor wall panels/litter bins/walkway benches & security gate	€11,000	Waiting on club to finalise their paperwork for claim to be paid
Bigwood Playground 2023	New playground	€35,000	In progress
Cois Nore 2024	Develop and Refurbishment of Community Space	€40,000	Work commenced
Piltown AFC 2024	Walkway, Lighting and Security Fencing	€36,000	Work partially complete
Callan United AFC 2024	Upgrade of Dressing Rooms and Storage facilities	€35,000	Work in progress
Inistioge Community Council 2024	Bi folding doors to increase space for large functions	€14,000	Work in progress
Danesfort GAA Club 2024	Extension of floodlit walkway	€15,000	Work in progress
Mullinavat Community Group 2024	Installation of CCTV and fob entry system	€9,000	Work commenced
Ballyhale Shamrocks 2024	Upgrade of toilets / disability access	€9,000	Works not commenced
Gowran Community Complex 2024	Contribution towards the refurbishment of a community hub	€27,000	Tender documents being prepared
Conahy Shamrocks GAA 2024	Upgrade to lighting around walk way	€25,000	Works complete. Claim to be submitted

CLÁR			
Community Group	Project Description	Grant	Status
Tullagher Rosbercon GAA Club	Provision of tarmacadam car park, passing bay and emergency access road to new playing field	€50,000	90% of works completed
Kilkenny County Council Supported by Coolagh Community Group	Upgrade works outside community hall	€45,000	Works completed.
Kilkenny County Council Muckalee Public Lighting (Phase 2)	Upgrade of public lighting	€24,750	Works completed.
Galmoy Community Hall	Provision of a MUGA	€30,015	Not yet commenced
Skeoughvosteen Community Centre & GAA	Provision of outdoor public and wheelchair accessible public toilets	€50,000	Procurement in progress

Community and Cultural Facilities Capital Scheme 2025

The Community and Cultural Facilities Capital Scheme (CCFCS) scheme has been advertised and is open until Wednesday 30th April, 2025. The objective of this scheme is to respond to the need for better community, recreational and cultural facilities for community groups through the provision of a capital grant. The scheme is open to groups operating within the Community Sector who have a recognised legal structure, operate on a 'not for profit' basis, demonstrate a policy of inclusion and demonstrate the capacity to manage and operate the proposed facilities. Examples of projects eligible for support could include the development of open spaces, walks and parklands; play areas, broad based recreational and community facilities, community arts projects and projects that conserve the built and natural heritage of the County. The minimum grant is €10,000 and the maximum grant is €50,000. Further information regarding applying for the scheme can be found on the Kilkenny County Council website: www.kilkennycoco.ie/eng/services/community_culture/grants/



Multi-use games area and play park (MUGA) in Gowran was part funded under CCFCS and the Town & Village Scheme

Town and Village Renewal Scheme

The Town and Village Renewal Scheme has been recently advertised and is open for Expressions of Interest until Friday 16th May 2025. The scheme is designed to support the revitalisation of rural Ireland by focusing on stimulating town centre economic and social regeneration. This will be achieved through projects which support sustainable employment creation, town centre resilience and regeneration, enhancing our streetscapes and bringing vacant and derelict buildings and lands back into use as community multi-purpose spaces. The 2025 Scheme will prioritise tackling town centre regeneration, town centre/village centre plaza development, develop green spaces, enhance streetscapes, farmers/artisan markets, provision of infrastructure (*public realm works, service provisions, canopies*), upgrade and refurbish community centres, bring vacant and derelict buildings back into use as multi-purpose community spaces. Further information and Expression of Interests for the scheme can be found on the Kilkenny County Council website: www.kilkennycoco.ie/eng/services/community_culture/grants/



Piltown Garda Station and Remote Working Hub Project was funded under Town and Village Renewal Scheme.

Community Awards

The Kilkenny County Council Community Awards Night were held in the Parade Tower in Kilkenny Castle on the 6th March, 2025. Kilkenny County Council presented a number of groups awards on the night. The IPB Pride of Place is a national competition and Kilkenny nominated three communities for these awards. The groups representing Kilkenny for the 2024 competition were:

- Ferrybank Community (*Welcoming New Communities Category*)
- Inistioge (*Population Category 0-500*)
- Johnstown (*Creative Category*)

Kilkenny County Council presented a special prize for their contribution in the competition. Both Ferrybank and Inistioge won runners up prizes in the national competition.



Katie Power, Ferrybank Community Group receiving Pride of Place prize



Frank Sullivan, Inistioge Community, Cathaoirleach Michael McCarthy, Kilkenny County Council & Tony Noble, Inistioge Community receiving Pride of Place prize



Bernie Fitzpatrick, Johnstown Community & Cathaoirleach Michael McCarthy, Kilkenny County Council receiving Pride of Place prize

Four groups were recognised for their continued valuable contribution in the Tidy Towns competition. The four groups were presented with a cheque for their outstanding achievements throughout the year. The groups were Keep Kilkenny Beautiful, Inistioge, Tullahought and Coon, Castlecomer.



Keep Kilkenny Beautiful receiving Tidy Towns award. Pictured Cllr. Maria Dollard, Kilkenny County Council, Cathaoirleach Michael McCarthy, Kilkenny County Council and Regina Byrne



Inistioge receiving Tidy Towns award. Pictured Tony Noble, Frank Sullivan, Cathaoirleach Michael McCarthy, Kilkenny County Council, Joan Sullivan, Marion Noble and Carmel Cummins



Tullahought receiving Tidy Towns award. Pictured Jimmy Walsh, Aiden Lavelle, Cathaoirleach Michael McCarthy, Kilkenny County Council, Kathleen Duggan and Richard Walsh.



Coon, Castlecomer receiving Tidy Towns award. Pictured Cllr Pat Fitzpatrick, Colette Kelly, Pat O'Donovan, Chris Lockwood, Ger Flynn, Joanne Holt, Dermot O'Doherty and Joe Dowling.

The final awards of the night were presented to the winners of the Kilkenny County Council Tidy Estates Competition. This competition aims to encourage residents to take an active role in improving the physical appearance of their housing estates. The winners of the 2024 competition under the Large, Medium and Small Estate Categories are listed below.

Large Estate Winners:

- 1st Belfield Estate Ferrybank
- 2nd Glenvale Ballyragget
- 3rd Newpark Estate Kilkenny City

Medium Estate Winners

- 1st The Belfry Thomastown
- 2nd Mill Road, Inistioge
- 3rd Mount Finn Drive, Urlingford

Small Estate Winners

- 1st Shamrock Grove, Kilmacow
- 2nd Old School Crescent, Moneenroe
- 3rd St. Patricks Close, Mullinavat



Kilkenny County Council Community Awards Night at Parade Tower

Healthy Ireland

The Healthy Ireland Fund in Kilkenny County Council collaborated with the Social Health & Education Project CLG (SHEP) to provide a Facilitation Skills Programme for thirteen community and voluntary workers in Kilkenny. The programme incorporated 60 hours of personal development, facilitating group development, communication skills and reflective practice. The group recently finished their course for 2024/2025.

Age Friendly Programme

Older Peoples Council (OPC) South East Region Training event was held recently. Representatives from all the OPC's in the region were present. The group was made up of a mix of recently appointed Chairs, Vice Chairs and long serving OPC Members. Kilkenny County Council was represented by the Mary O'Hanlon, OPC Chair and Alison McGrath, Kilkenny Age Friendly Programme. The event had a lot of engagement and sharing of experiences and ideas from all present. All Members are very committed to the vision and ethos of a more Age Friendly environment. It was agreed that the value of a strong Age Friendly Alliance is critical to the success of the programme.



South East Regional Older People's Council Meeting

Age Friendly Ireland hosted an in person regional Age Friendly Programme Managers South East Region meeting. It afforded an opportunity to share good practice and programme updates at a regional level. Age Friendly Ireland National Programme Manager Emer Coveney presented the recent national updates and current campaigns.

Kilkenny LCDC

The Local and Economic Community Plan 2023 - 2028

The Local Economic & Community Plan was adopted in June 2023 and included the first of three implementation plans. A review of the Implementation plan has taken place and a new Implementation Plan prepared for the period 2025 - 2026.

Following evaluation of the first implementation plan, all information gathered from lead agencies was compiled and a draft LECP Implementation Plan 2025-2026 was developed. Eight new actions were added to the new Plan to support the agreed goals and objectives of the LECP. This reflects the importance of the flexible framework of the LECP Plan to allow stakeholders to react to any issues or opportunities which arise from change. The LECP Implementation Plan 2025 - 2026 contains a total of 119 actions and was adopted by the LCDC Members on the 28th March, 2025.

Local Enhancement Programme 2025

This Scheme is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development and administered by the Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) in each Local Authority area. It provides funding to communities across Ireland to enhance facilities targeted towards disadvantaged areas as identified in the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP).

Kilkenny were awarded funding of €170,519. This amount comprises of €146,159 capital funding towards carrying out necessary repairs and improvements to facilities, energy efficiency type projects and purchase of equipment and €24,360 current funding to use towards operational costs, such as insurance and electricity costs.

The grant applications were assessed by a sub-group of the LCDC and recommendations approved by LCDC Members for a total of 124 applications at LCDC meeting held on Friday, 28th March, 2025.



Under the Local Enhancement Programme 2024 Tullahought Community Development Ltd. was awarded the sum of €3,000 to power wash and paint exterior of the Parish Hall.

INTEGRATION

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

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

Currently there are 471 Ukrainians in 12 commercial properties under contracts with the Department of Children Equality Disability Integration and Youth (DCEDIY), 210 Ukrainians living in Offer A Home and Irish Red Cross pledged properties who avail of the Accommodation Recognition Payment. There are 193 International Protection Applicants (IPA's) in 4 commercial properties under contract with the DCEDIY. 69% of Ukrainians and 60% of IPAs are registered as employed.

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

- 84 Ukrainians with 145 interventions including queries relating to their status and the immigration process and many initial assessments carried out also
- 51 IPAs with 118 interventions including queries around the immigration process, signposting to health services and enquiries relating to work permits among other topics

Events

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

- On St. Patrick's Day the LAIT organised a multi-cultural group which took part in the Kilkenny St. Patrick's Festival Parade. This group comprised of local migrants who are in the International Protection process. They carried a banner which read 'Ní neart go cur le chéile – There is no strength without unity'.
- On 27th March, the LAIT held a talk at the Mayfair Library for local migrants on the topic of Housing. This was in collaboration with the Kilkenny County Council Housing Dept
- The LAIT are planning a talk on Revenue and Taxation in collaboration Revenue for their service users – hopefully to take place before the end of April.
- Together with Creative Ireland the LAIT are facilitating a photography workshop for some members of the local migrant community which will culminate in an exhibition at the Butler Gallery entitled 'I am Me, Before I was a Refugee'. These workshops will begin in late April and run until the end of May with the exhibition taking place during Refugee Week (mid-June).
- The LAIT continues to facilitate weekly drop-in clinics in collaboration with Kilkenny Leader Partnership, held at the Fr. McGrath Centre Neighbourhood Hall every Tuesday morning.



Offer of a Home and IRC Pledged Properties on 31st March 2025:

March 2025	Number of Pledged Properties	Number of Residents
Offer a Home Scheme	56	187
Pledged Properties (<i>shared and not shared</i>)	6	23
Total	62	210

The 'Offer a Home' Scheme is managed by Local Authorities on behalf of the Government. A Government tax-free Accommodation Recognition Payment (ARP) of €800 per month is available to property owners offering accommodation to Ukrainians with Temporary Protection status. Minister Foley recently announced her intention to seek Oireachtas approval to extend the ARP scheme for a further year to the end of March next year. Subsequent to this, a draft order will be advanced proposing a reduction in the monthly ARP payment from €800 to €600, from June 2025. This reduction seeks to mitigate any unintended impact on the private rental sector. It also reflects recent policy changes which aim to ensure that such temporary and timebound supports for people who are Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection are proportionate and equitable. As the payment is payable monthly in arrears, the first payment at the reduced rate will be received by hosts on 8th July 2025.

Further details are available on www.offerahome.ie or you can contact the Kilkenny County Council Ukrainian Response Team. Currently 56 properties have been pledged under the Offer of a Home Scheme in Kilkenny, providing accommodation for 184 Ukrainians.

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

Community Recognition Fund

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

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

FIRE SERVICES

Fire Safety Certificate Applications

Kilkenny Fire and Rescue Service Fire Senior Fire Officers advise on current Building Regulations in relation to the Fire Safety Standards required for proposed developments. In addition, Kilkenny Fire and Rescue Service Fire Prevention Officers hold Fire Safety Certificate/Fire Prevention Clinics under Section 18(5) of the Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003. These are predominantly held on a weekly basis and/or upon request in Fire Station HQ.

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

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

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

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

Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003

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

Fire Brigade Operations

The existence of a professional Fire and Rescue Service is fundamental to public and personal safety. The Fire Service plays a crucial role in making our communities safer, whether it be preventing and protecting people from fire and other risks or responding swiftly and effectively to the incidents and emergencies that occur 24 hours per day/7 days per week/365 days per year. 278 callouts were received to-date. These incidents included a number of road traffic collisions, house fires, ambulance assists, gorse fires, chimney fires and automatic fire alarm activations.

Recruitment of Retained Firefighters

Our second recruitment campaign is well underway to recruit Fire Fighters in Castlecomer, Freshford, Urlingford, Thomastown and Graiguenamanagh. Three recruit Firefighters have successfully completed their training in Galway Fire Station and have commenced their employment with Thomastown (2) and Castlecomer (1). As well as responding to emergency calls and undertaking community fire safety initiatives, Retained Firefighters attend weekly training nights to maintain competency levels and undertake routine checks on their equipment.

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

Training

Kilkenny County Council's Fire and Rescue Service are obliged under the Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003 and the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 to ensure that our 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.

Fire Fighters attended a number of 2 day Breathing Apparatus Refresher training in Hacketstown Fire Station. The aim of this 2-day course is to refresh all BA wearing personnel with the necessary skills, knowledge and competency to wear Breathing Apparatus.

Community Fire Safety



Cub Scouts from 1st Kilkenny came to visit Kilkenny City Fire Brigade to learn to key fire safety items in their journey towards their emergency services proficiency badge.

The scouts and scouters learned about the importance of Smoke Alarms, Test It Tuesday, Calling the Emergency Services - 112, What the Fire and Rescue Service does?

We had some 'show and tell' displays of equipment and vehicles culminating in a competitive skills challenge of target practice coupled with firefighting skills.



LEAF Literacy and Food Education Programme

The LEAF programme (*funded under the Community Climate Action Programme*) was launched in 5 of our library branches last summer and continues this Spring with free seeds (*peas, beans and salad leaves*) available when people register with a participating library.

Our libraries branches hosted a number of eco-friendly talks and workshops throughout March to support this programme.

Graiguenamanagh and Thomastown Libraries welcomed Kitty Scully from RTÉ's *Homegrown* to share tips and techniques for creating an abundant, low-impact food garden. Ferrybank Library hosted a "Rain Gardens Made Easy" talk, providing advice on how to create the perfect rain garden and help prevent flooding. This was followed by an Eco Soap Making workshop with Aoife Munn where participants learned how to make planet friendly bars of soap.

Castlecomer Library hosted horticulturist Monica Fleming for a seed-growing workshop where she discussed and demonstrated seed swapping, seed sowing, compost, seeds trays, watering, aftercare and potting.

Loughboy Library held a vegetable growing talk with Giedre Dunphy where she shared tips for growing and fermenting vegetables and discussed the health benefits of fermented foods.

We had 53 attendances at these events.



Thomastown Library Update

- Wall cladding cleats and rails are completed.
- Revised steel over the windows are completed and external wall cladding is now in place.
- M&E Containment has commenced on site.
- Stud Partitions are proceeding on both floors.



Fadó Fadó Winners Announced

An unprecedented **116** entries were received from primary school students all over the County for our first Fadó Fadó Young Researchers competition. Participants were asked to dig deep into history to learn about their local heritage including exploration of old buildings, ruins, local folk tales and stories or even their own family members. The entries showed great variety and originality with the children really embracing the project and engaging with the past.

This competition was a collaboration between Kilkenny Archaeological Society, Kilkenny County Council Library Service and Rothe House Trust and a prize-giving ceremony will be held in April to reward our well-deserved winners.



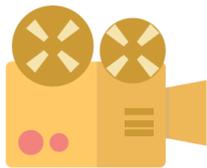
Library Activities

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

- A Taispeántas Filíocht agus Ceol in the Mayfair Library
- A mechanical hand workshop for Engineers Week in Loughboy Library
- A chair yoga course in Ferrybank Library
- A drop-in event from the Natural History Museum in Graig Library
- A first aid workshop for parents and guardians in Castlecomer Library
- St. Patrick's Day storytime and crafts in Thomastown Library
- A World Book Day quiz in Urlingford Library
- ETB adult art classes in Callan Library



Online Services Usage Mar 2025



Digital Engagement

Library staff prepared, recorded, edited and published **282** posts and videos on our social media platforms in March. Our engagements for the month were **4,075** and our videos and reels had **6,257** views. Our virtual newsletter was sent to **8,193** 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:

Castlecomer Library hosted an energy advice clinic where members of the public could book a one-on-one appointment with an energy expert from the South East Energy Agency.

Several of our branches hosted STEM workshops to celebrate Engineers Week and introduce primary and secondary school children to the diverse world of engineering. These included a wobble bot workshop in Thomastown Library and a mechanical hand workshop in Loughboy Library.

ARTS

Public Arts Programme

Following a highly competitive process for the Public Arts Programme with proposals arriving from the US, Europe, the UK and beyond, five exceptional projects have been chosen which will transform the County's community and artistic landscape over the next two years. Funded through the Percent for Art scheme and devised and managed by Kilkenny Arts Office these commissions represent a total investment of €450,000. Each project is designed to deeply engage with local communities and to ensure that people who live in and visit Kilkenny can experience captivating, challenging and innovative public art. The five projects span multiple disciplines of film, dance, theatre, visual arts, and literature and are ensuring a stimulating and diverse programme of public art experiences. Below are the selected projects.

Brown Mountain Diamond	€45,000	Brown Mountain Diamond proposes to commission a residency programme and exhibition of five artists who are known for their work in community engagement and social investigation. The project will be based in north Kilkenny and offers great potential -delivered by artists with an excellent track record.
Pauline O'Connell - From Hide to Heel	€111,000	Socially engaged public art project that seeks to explore and celebrate the intertwined histories of Kilkenny's industrial and agricultural sectors.
Fearghus Ó Conchúir - Extra Time	€113,000	The aim is to engage with hurling and Camogie communities across County Kilkenny to create a diverse team of performers for a new dance film.
Asylum Productions - The Alice Project	€75,000	A multi-part, inter-disciplinary theatrical work examining the place of art in our community, and how we access it. Offers an outstanding level of community engagement based around the story, myth and legend of Alice Kyteler and Petronella with a focus on the importance of that story.
Straymaker	€113,000	A County wide multi-disciplinary work, combining choral music, documentary, poetry, design and animation to create an immersive and evocative film.

Your Voice Matters

As part of Your Voice Matters literature programme, a 'Your Creative Brand' workshop for artists across artforms took place in March. The workshop covered aspects of the creative life such as: the artists brand and their audience relationship, helping artists to find and engage with each other and the story of the artist and their art and the values that guide them. Two strategy workshops were delivered by Anne Tannam with the Kilkenny Writers Anonymous group and the Alternative Kilkenny Arts (AKA) group to support their progression and development as voluntary led artists collections. The sessions supported the artists in clearly outlining their purpose, goals, values and internal group communication.

Kilkenny Poetry Broadsheet

Kilkenny Poetry Broadsheet editor Enda Wyley held a full day poetry workshop at Butler House on the 8th March for 13 Kilkenny writers. There was great feedback received from the writers and Enda noted the high standard of their poetry. The Open Call for submissions to the Broadsheet was the 28th of March. A total of 73 poets submitted 133 poems for consideration which is higher than in previous years.



Participants of the Kilkenny Poetry Broadsheet workshop with editor Enda Wyley

Theatre Forum the Gathering 2025

The Arts Office worked in collaboration with Performing Arts Forum Limerick to provide a bursary for one Kilkenny based theatre arts practitioner to attend 'The Gathering' event on the 27th and 28th May. The Gathering is a two-day event where hundreds of artists, arts workers and arts organisation people from arts centres and production companies, festivals and funders get together in Limerick for conversation, provocation and inspiration. The Bursary covers the cost of the ticket for the two-day event plus a stipend to cover accommodation, travel and food. A total of 5 applications were received and one bursary was awarded to Aideen Wylde.

Tea Houses

Three Funding Clubs sessions were hosted for local artists at the Tea Houses, Bateman Quay, Kilkenny. This was an opportunity for artists to work on their applications collectively, as well as receive advice and support in applying for local authority and Arts Council funding. These sessions have been running in the Tea Houses since 2024 and many of the artists who participate are in the sessions were successful in their grant applications. A Sharing Session with artist Mark Buckeridge, was hosted. This was an informal, artist-led workshop aimed at creating space for artists to gather, connect, and explore practice in a supportive and shared setting. To mark the end of Edwina Bracken's three-month artist residency in the studio the Tea House hosted an in-conversation event with curator Eamonn Maxwell.

Waste Not Want Not Community Arts

The Waste Not Want Not programme continued its community engagement with a series of skills-based embroidery workshops in Thomastown and in Kilkenny City at the Neighbourhood Hall and the Volunteer Centre. There were also six Community embroidery sessions at the Tea House, Bateman Quay, Kilkenny across three weekends in March.



Waste Not Want Not Community Embroidery Piece

Art of Change

The Art for Change programme has commenced which offers a series of art workshops for young people aged 13-18 years. These workshops provide a platform to explore environmental and climate change issues through art. The programme is in collaboration with Foróige, Ossory Youth and is funded by Creative Ireland. Each week 15 young people participate in the workshops led by artists Thomas Duffy, Sheila Jordan, Mairead Holohan, Aoife Lyons, Polly Minett and Paul Blokslag exploring different art techniques and processes. These workshops encouraged the youth to reflect on their values and how these connect to the broader environment and their responsibility to care for it.

The Art of Change Schools program has commenced, featuring sustainable fashion workshops at Presentation Secondary, Kilkenny led by sustainable fashion advocate and maker Miriam Keegan. Through a series of workshops, students are developing hand sewing skills and working on redesigning and altering their own pieces of clothing.



Young People participating in the Art of Change workshops

Rhyme Rag

Throughout March, poets Enda Coyle Greene and Alice Bennet conducted poetry workshops with three school groups at Loreto Secondary School, Kilkenny and Grennan College, Thomastown. By the end of the sessions, students completed their own poems, with several submitting their work to Rhyme Rag Editor Jessica Traynor for a chance to be featured in the online Rhyme Rag publication. All students who submit a poem will receive personalised feedback from Jessica. The selected poems will be published online in May.

Creative Ireland

During March, assessments for the Cruinniú na nÓg and Creative Ireland grant schemes were carried out. This year's programme highlights the levels of engagement with new groups and the broader impact on seldom heard communities throughout Kilkenny.

The Living Artfully project of singing for memory workshops takes place at Bishop's Birch Centre every Wednesday from 10:30 - 11:30am. Artists and participants have expressed positive feedback, highlighting the project's ability to foster creativity, community spirit, and personal growth. Each workshop is filled to capacity.

Preparations for the upcoming Cruinniú na nÓg festival taking place on 7th June 2025 at various venues throughout Kilkenny, are well underway. This year's festival promises an exciting array of free events for young people. The programme was developed through consultations with young people in late 2024. Extra funding was secured for evening events specifically for teenagers in collaboration with Kilkenny County Council Night Time Economy Officer and through an open call process. The Cruinniú na nÓg festival will be launched on the 9th of May 2025. To find a listing for Cruinniú na nÓg event, please visit <https://cruinniú.creativeireland.gov.ie/events/>



Cruinniú na nÓg Festival engaging young people across Kilkenny for a free day of Workshops

HERITAGE

Kilkenny County Heritage Strategy Consultation

The consultation process on the next Kilkenny County Heritage Strategy is on-going and a number of stakeholder consultation sessions were held in March. Public consultation meetings will take place in each of the municipal districts in April and May. This strategy will help to preserve, protect, and promote the rich heritage of our County within a local, regional and national context. All residents, local organisations and stakeholders in Kilkenny's heritage are invited to participate in the consultation process by sharing their views on the actions required to safeguard and promote the heritage of Kilkenny. All are welcome to attend one of the engaging and fun consultation workshops taking place throughout Kilkenny for the below dates and venues.

- Saturday, 26th April, 10:00 a.m. - 1.00 p.m. at Mayfair Library, Kilkenny City
- Tuesday 29th April, 6:00 p.m. - 8.00 p.m. at Castlecomer Library
- Wednesday 7th May, 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. at Ferrybank Library
- Saturday 17th May, 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. at Thomastown Concert Hall

Submissions to the County Heritage Strategy can also be made until 30th April 2025 via:

- The online consult portal, <https://consult.kilkenny.ie/>
- Email: heritage@kilkennycoco.ie
- Send a written submission to Heritage Office, Community and Culture Section, Kilkenny County Council, St Patrick's Court, Patrick Street, Kilkenny City, R95 N28F.

Heritage Officer Training and Development Programme

Heritage Officers from local authorities across the country met in Dún Laoghaire on 11th and 12th March as part of the Heritage Council's Training and Development Programme. The agenda included updates from the Heritage Council on national planning priorities; National Heritage Week; traditional skills training and archaeological priorities along with training on the new Heritage Council Traveller Heritage Strategy and managing digital heritage collections.



Heritage Officers at The Heritage Council's Training and Development Programme

Irish Walled Towns Network

An application has been made to the Heritage Council's Irish Walled Towns Network for funding to prepare an Interpretation strategy for Kilkenny's City Walls. This plan will ensure a coordinated, knowledge-based approach to the much-needed interpretation of the rich heritage of the City Walls. It will guide on-site and off-site interpretation and provide a roadmap of interpretive actions over the coming years that will build community and visitor engagement.

FINANCE

The expenditure by Service Division to the end of March is set out in Table 1. Total Expenditure for the period was €26m compared with the annual budget of €120m.

Table 1	Actual YTD March 2025	Budget Full Year 2025
	€'000's	€'000's
Housing & Building	7,514	30,784
Road Transport & Safety	3,702	31,383
Water Services	1,371	7,180
Development Management	2,916	15,417
Environmental Services	3,787	18,991
Recreation & Amenity	1,690	9,425
Agriculture, Education, Health, Welfare	87	354
Miscellaneous Services	1,913	6,938
Central Management Charges for Allocation	3,240	
OVERALL TOTAL	26,220	120,472

Rates Invoices 2025

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

Rates Revaluation

Further to Revaluation 2017, 197 customers with a total rate demand value of €4.5m appealed their new valuation to the Valuation Tribunal. To date 191 appeals have been completed. The following is a breakdown of the appeal outcomes to date:

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

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

Finance Update

The bank overdraft facility was not utilised during the three month period to the end March 2025.

The draft Unaudited Financial Statements for 2024 were finalised and presented to Council at the March Meeting.