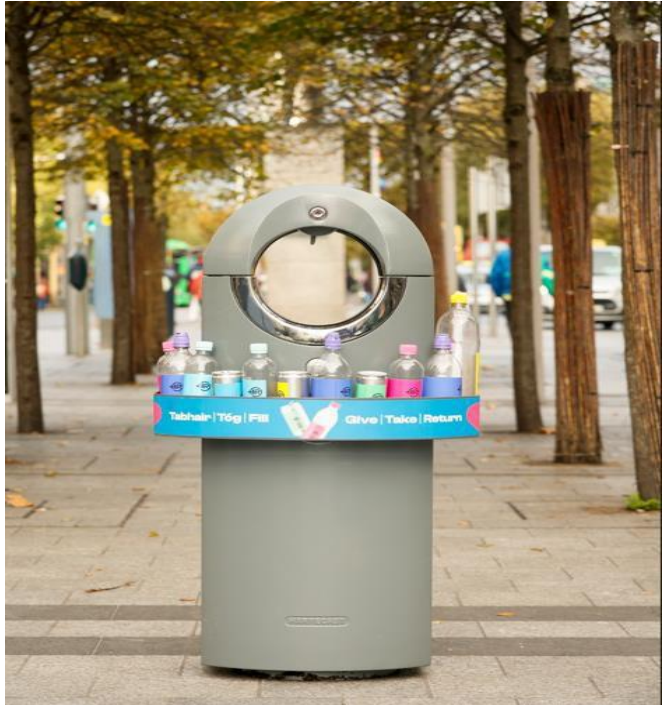




Comhairle Chontae Chill Chainnigh
Kilkenny County Council

CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT

JANUARY 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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PLANNING

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

Planning Summary	Total January to December 2023	Total January to December 2024
Planning Applications Received	880	820
Planning Applications Granted	613	644
Planning Applications Refused	113	57
Complaints Received	96	130
Warning Letters Issued	93	80
Enforcements Notices Issued	41	33
Cases Closed	124	71

Planning Applications have decreased by 6.8% from 2023 to 2024 but there has been an increase of 17.2% in Commencement Notices year on year indicating continued construction activity.

FORWARD PLANNING

Variation 3 to the City & County Development Plan 2021

This Variation seeks to rezone a small portion of green space in Loughboy to residential, for the purpose of a small number of Age Friendly and Disability Accessible houses. The proposed variation along with associated environmental documents are on public display until Friday, 17th January, 2025. Following completion of the public display a Chief Executive's Report will be brought forward for consideration by the Members at the February Plenary Council Meeting.

MASTERPLANS

Ballyragget/Paulstown/Kilmacow

All 3 masterplans are now approved by the relevant Municipal Districts. Work has commenced to give formal recognition to the Masterplans in the City & County Development Plan through a variation, identifying appropriate objectives from all above Plans including the Urlingford Masterplan. This to be brought forward in Q1 of 2025.

LOCAL AREA PLANS

Ferrybank / Belview Local Area Plan

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

Castlecomer Plan Review Process

The Plan preparation process continues, with ongoing collaboration between the Community and Planning sections. The Director's Report on the pre-draft consultation stage has been published on the Consult website. This outlines the engagement to date on the Plan. The Draft Settlement Plan will be accompanied by various assessments, including an Infrastructural Assessment and Environmental Assessments. Public display of the Plan will take place in Q1 2025.

Taking in Charge

The following is a list of developments which were taken in charge by Kilkenny County Council in 2024:

- Ladyswell, Thomastown, Kilkenny
- Orchard Close, New Orchard Road, Kilkenny
- Weir View Gardens
- Beechwood, Richview, Castlecomer Road
- Village Gardens, Smithlands North, Waterford Road, Kilkenny (Raggetts)
- Clonkill, Callan
- Harrowville, Leggettsrath West, Kilkenny
- Tobair Brid, Graiguenamanagh, Co Kilkenny
- Sycamore Drive, Larchfield, Kilkenny
- Ayrfield, Kilkenny
- Greenoaks, Ferrybank
- Ogenty, Gowran
- Jerpoint West, Thomastown (The Greens)

Active Land Management

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 Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT) later this year, but any outstanding VSL's will remain due to the Council. A further €21,000 was received in December 2024, bringing the total for 2024 to €163,200. The last outstanding appeal for vacant sites has now been determined by An Bord Pleanála, upholding the Council's demand for payment on site ref. VSR18-23 in Ferrybank.

Draft Maps of land in scope for the new RZLT were published in January 2024. Submissions were received on the Draft maps, and determinations on these submissions were notified to the landowners. Four landowners made appeals to An Bord Pleanála, and all 4 appeals have been determined, upholding the Council's determinations.

The Final 2025 Map of lands in scope for the new RZLT is being prepared and will be published on the 31st January, 2025. This will form the basis for the levying of the tax by Revenue. The settlements currently liable are Kilkenny City, Rosbercon, Callan and Thomastown. The Draft Annual 2026 Map is also being prepared, and submissions will be invited on this map from 1st February 2025. The recent Budget announced a further opportunity for farmers to seek to have their land rezoned.

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: The funding allocated for Kilkenny City and County is €198,611. Thirty seven BHIS applications were received by the Conservation Office. These applications have been assessed, and eleven projects have been offered provisional funding. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage will assess these eleven projects and confirm acceptance in early 2025.

Historic Structures Fund and the Historic Thatch Building 2025: The Conservation Office continues to receive funding for these two funding schemes. The deadline for receipt of applications is the 17th January 2025.

Architectural Conservation Area Trails 2024: A Consultant was appointed to work with the Kilkenny County Council's Conservation Officer, the National Built Heritage Service, and local communities to design walking trails for two Architectural Conservation Areas in County Kilkenny: Castlecomer and Freshford. The purpose of these trails is to use local knowledge to educate and inform communities and visitors about the rich built heritage surrounding them.

Built Heritage Stocktake 2024: A Consultant was appointed to work with Kilkenny County Council's Conservation Officer and the National Built Heritage Service to deliver a stocktake for the following settlements: Callan, Gowran, Inistioge, Johnstown, Thomastown. The stocktake will focus on the structures listed on the RPS and NIAH.

Conservation Grants 2024: Successful 2024 Conservation Grant funded projects are now complete. Fifteen projects, over three Conservation Grants: Built Heritage Investment Scheme, Historic Thatched Buildings and the Historic Structures Fund are complete. These grants supported masonry, window, ironwork, and joinery repairs, re-thatching, lime plastering and re-pointing of Kilkenny's architectural heritage structures, culminating in a total project spend over the three schemes of €673,105.

These projects provided 1,345 employment days for local crafts people and conservation professionals. The projects highlight the circular economy approach involved in conservation works, while they also have a local economic benefit by supporting local craft professionals and conserving Kilkenny's architectural heritage. The grants, and their management, are essential for keeping historic buildings of architectural significance in use.

Further information is presented in the Table below:

Grant	Department Funding	Privately Leveraged	Total Project Costs	Number of Projects	Employment Days
Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS)	€151,471	€211,589	€363,061	11	800
Historic Thatched Buildings (HTB)	€10,957	€17,307	€28,264	2	93
Historic Structures Fund (HSF)	€196,918	€84,862	€281,780	2	452
Total	€359,346	€313,758	€673,105	15	1,345

Architectural Conservation Officer reports for 2024 are detailed below:

- Planning Referrals95
- Further Information requests.....34
- Clarification of Further Information requests4
- Section 57 Declarations16
- Post planning11
- Part VIII.....2

For the month of December, the Conservation Officer has completed Reports on the following:

▪ Planning Referrals	14
▪ Further Information requests.....	5
▪ Clarification of Further Information requests	0
▪ Section 57 Declarations	5
▪ Post planning	2
▪ Part VIII.....	0

Building Control

Valid Commencement Notices submitted during 2024 was 360 which is an increase of 17.2% year on year. Nearly a third (204) of the notices received were accompanied by an “*Opt-Out Declaration*”, this type of notice may be used for a single standalone dwelling or a domestic extension. 60 notices lodged by registered Construction Professionals accounted for just under 1,000 dwelling units. 31 notices lodged by registered Construction Professionals accounted for non-domestic projects such as educational, community, commercial and industrial projects.

Valid Commencement Notices Received:

2024.....	360
2023.....	307
2022.....	336
2021.....	434
2020.....	319

67 Disability Access Applications were received in 2024 compared to 67 during 2023, which is slightly below the average for the last 5 years, of 68.6 per annum. During 2024 applications included the following ranges of use; hospitals & healthcare; secondary and primary schools, housing in the form of apartments & duplex buildings; community centres and other community buildings; and commercial buildings ranging from hotels, restaurants, shops, gyms, short term lets, multiple occupancy buildings [Ukrainian/Refugee use], to offices, warehousing, and industrial. All Disability Access Applications are now made online via the online Building Control Management System, BCMS.

Disability Access Applications Received:

2024.....	60
2023.....	67
2022.....	72
2021.....	54
2020.....	85

TOWN REGENERATION OFFICE

Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant

The following are the full statistics up to end of December, 2024:

Number of Applications Submitted to-date:.....	248
Number of Approvals / Approvals in Principle to-date:.....	165
Grant Drawdown to-date:.....	22
Number of Queries during the month of October :	39

THRIVE

The Southern Regional Assembly approved John’s Quay/John Street Urban Design Strategy which enabled us to proceed with a Part 8 for Carnegie. The proposal is available for inspection up to 28th January, 2025 in the Planning Department and on consultkilkenny.ie. Submissions can be made up to 5 p.m. on 11th February, 2025.

ENVIRONMENT

CLIMATE ACTION

Council Renews Commitment to EU Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy

Kilkenny County Council agreed to renew its commitment to the EU Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, a voluntary initiative of Local Governments in Europe, at the Council meeting in December. In doing so the Council has committed, alongside other EU Local Authorities, to implement EU climate and energy objectives, and secure a better future for their citizens. The main objectives of the Covenant are to reduce greenhouse gas emission, strengthen resilience to climate change and address energy poverty.



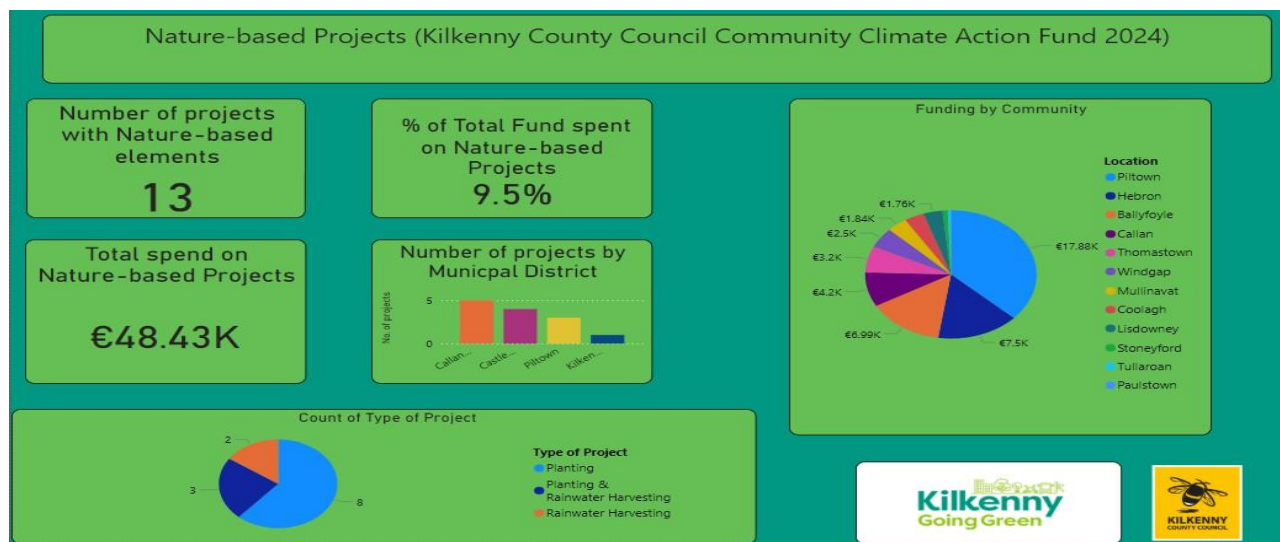
Kilkenny County Council originally signed the Covenant in 2015. It is timely to renew the commitment, given the election of a new Council in June, the adoption of the inaugural Kilkenny County Council Climate Action Plan earlier this year, and the fact that the EU updated the Covenant in the last few years.

The EU Covenant aligns closely with the Kilkenny County Council Climate Action Plan. The Climate Action Office will continue to support and promote the Council's delivery of both in the coming years.

Working with Nature to address Climate Change

Nature-based Solutions involve working with nature to address the challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss, whilst supporting human well-being. Nature based projects are a very effective and achievable way of taking climate action locally. Kilkenny County Council Climate Action Office and the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications are currently working with and funding 22 Kilkenny communities to deliver on local climate action projects.

Of the 22 communities, 13 are delivering projects with nature-based elements such as rainwater harvesting, and planting native and pollinator friendly plants. These projects account for €48,430 (9.5%) of the total €511,000 allocated under the Kilkenny County Council Community Climate Action Fund.



ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Christmas Tree Recycling

Householders can drop off their Christmas Trees for Recycling at the following locations between the 6th and 20th of January 2024.

- Fairgreen Car Park, Graiguenamanagh
- Adjacent to the Bottle Banks in Bennettsbridge
- Quay Car Park, Thomastown
- Supervalu Car Park, Callan
- Pound Car Park, Piltown (Normal Opening Hrs)
- Entrance to Assumption Place, Urlingford
- The Square, Freshford
- Fairgreen, Ballyragget
- Castlecomer Council Yard, Donaguile
- Adjacent to the Bottle Banks, Goresbridge

Recycling Centres (Normal Opening Hours)
Dunmore Waste Disposal & Recycling, Castlecomer Rd, Kilkenny

Granny Recycling Centre, Grannagh

Kilkenny County Council

Comhairle Chontae Chill Chainnigh

Agriculture Map Alerter

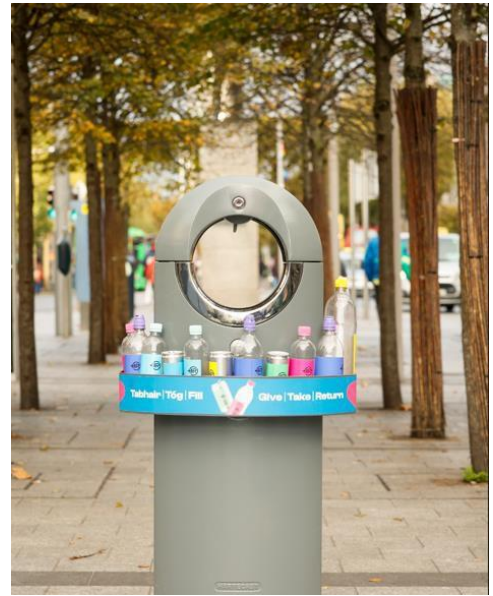
A new Agricultural Map Alerter has been set up on Kilkenny County Council Alerts Portal. The purpose of the alert system is to notify registered farmers. An active campaign to encourage registrations is currently being undertaken.

The map of Kilkenny is broken down into Townlands and Electoral Divisions (DEDs) with run off times for the spreading of slurry broken into two categories of 48 hours or 96 hours. If a Level Yellow/Orange/Red rainfall warning is issued for County Kilkenny then it will trigger an SMS message to agricultural alert subscribers, an SMS will go out to the farmer highlighting the pollution impact and notifying them not to spread slurry for a period of 48 or 96 hours. The Agriculture Alert can be accessed via the following link- <https://alerts.kilkennycoco.ie/>

Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) Bin Wrap Pilot

Re-Turn recently undertook a pilot “Bin Wrap Around” campaign in Dublin to encourage the use of the DRS amongst members of the public who are “on-the-go”. This has proven very successful in Dublin and Re-Turn want to undertake a further pilot in Kilkenny.

This entails installing surrounds on public bins in the City and County. The surround/shelf works for 'on-the-go' drinks, and the purpose is to see a steady reduction in public litter as a result with members of the public returning the bottles and cans to Re-turn reverse vending machines (RVM). The bin surrounds are a shelf that circles the entire circumference of the bin.



We are hoping these bin surrounds will ensure more plastic bottles and cans are being put back into the circular system, supporting EU recycling targets for 2030. Work is currently being undertaken with the Area Offices to commence same.

Green Schools Programme

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

The EAO is continuing to assist schools around the County to renew their membership as part of the Green Schools programme under their respective themes- Litter and Waste, Energy, Water, Travel, Biodiversity and Global Citizenship. The EAO will be undertaking assessments of Green Schools over the next 3 months. Deadline for the applications for School Flags is 28th March, 2025.

WASTE

Bring Banks Usage

The Council provides and manages 47 Bring Centers across the City and County. A total of 2045 tonnes of recyclables were collected from our Bring Centers to date in 2024. This represents a 1% increase from the same period in 2023. Loughboy Shopping Centre (20 tonnes collected), Aldi - Kilkenny City (16 tonnes collected), Lidl - Johnswell and New Park Shopping Centre, Kilkenny City (12 tonnes collected) are the busiest locations in the City. Lidl - Thomastown (11 tonnes collected), Aldi - Ferrybank (10 tonnes collected), and Graiguenamanagh and Supervalu - Thomastown (9 tonnes collected) are the busiest outside of the City. Environment staff are continuing to work very closely with our service providers to ensure the collection service is in keeping with demand, especially around long weekends and holiday periods.

Dunmore Civic Amenity Site (CAS)

The month of December saw an increase in waste stream tonnages compared to November as the people prepared for Christmas 146 tonnes of Municipal Solid Waste, 60 tonnes of Municipal Dry Waste and 58 tonnes of Green Garden Waste.



The various other recycling streams deposited at the Dunmore facility during the month of November and their respective tonnages can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Recycling Stream	Quantity (Tonnes)
Cardboard.....	9.6
Plastic	5.4
Paper.....	9.9
Green Waste	58
Food Waste.....	0.8
Mattresses	3.3
Metal.....	7.9
Timber	8.7
Textiles	1.3
Tetra-pac	0.6
Waste Oil.....	0.0
WEEE.....	8.5

As part of the Landfill Aftercare the landfill gas flare continues to run 24 hours per day seven days per week extracting and burning approximately 35m³ of landfill gas per hour. 65 tonnes of Leachate waste was tankered off site for waste water treatment.

AIR NOISE WATER

Water Quality – Farm Inspections

Farm inspections for 2024 are now completed reaching our inspection target for 2024. Reporting will commence in January and February with submission of findings to the EPA in February.

Septic Tank Inspections

Kilkenny County Council have been liaising with LAWPRO in relation to septic tank inspections. LAWPRO have shared a register of households which have been referred by them for a grant. We will assess these as householders get in contact. RMCEI reporting will include the good news that all inspection for 2024 have been achieved with regards to septic tanks.

Section 4 Discharge Licenses

Following sampling carried out in December, results will now be analysed and establishments contact regarding the same.

Misconnections

All misconnections will be reported in the RMCEI return in February 2025.

Environment Complaints

All Environmental complaints received are logged on the CRM (*Customer Relations Management*) System. The number of complaints that have been received and logged for the month of December 2024 is 43 compared to 70 complaints received in December 2023. The number of complaints received in the twelve months to the end of December 2024 (965 complaints) is up 3% when compared to the same twelve-month period in 2023 (938 complaints). The nature of these complaints included littering, illegal dumping, burning of waste and abandoned cars. The majority continue to be related to littering and illegal dumping. Whilst every effort is made to bring unacceptable environmental practice into compliance, Environment Enforcement staff continue to manage significant enforcement cases progressing through prosecution cases.

Noise

The final Noise Action Plan was completed prior to the Christmas Break and is awaiting to be published on our website. The plan and reporting were submitted to the EPA in December. Once the final plan is made the report will be updated with the EPA for their submission to the EU on 18th January, 2025.

Air

Kilkenny County Council have completed over 100 inspections in relation to solid fuels. Two inspection reports will be presented to our legal team to determine if prosecution action can be taken.

Over 30 inspections have taken place in relation to stage 1B Petroleum Vapours with follow-up letters to be sent to petrol stations prior to the Christmas Break.

Inspections have commenced in decorative paints and solvents and again follow-up letters will be sent out to operators prior to the Christmas Break.

Kilkenny now has 3 air monitors back up and running in Thomastown, Castlecomer and on the Callan Road. The Castlecomer Monitor had been offline for some time and so it has been replaced by a new monitor. Two new monitors have been purchased. One will be placed in The Butts and the other in the City Centre.

PARKS & SPECIAL PROJECTS

SOUTH EAST GREENWAY

Mainline Works Contract - Ferrybank to Curraghmore

Works on the 5.5km section of Greenway from Ferrybank to Curraghmore, which commenced in November 2023, are now substantially completed. Once all outstanding minor work items are completed a Safety Audit will be conducted, thereafter, any recommendations arising out of same will be assessed and, along with any minor finishing out works outside of the contract, will be completed to facilitate the opening of this section of the Greenway towards the end of Q1 2025.



Various images along Lot 5a

Remaining Lots: Works are continuing to be advanced to detail design stage on the remaining sections of the Greenway.

RELATED SCHEMES

South – North Access Road, Ferrybank: A Planning Application under Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations, which includes for the proposed South East Greenway Trailhead carpark at Ferrybank, was approved by Council at the December meeting. Works will now progress to detail design.

Woodstock to South East Greenway Connectivity Link: This Greenway Project is currently in Phase 1 (*Concept and Feasibility*) stage. In accordance with the TII's Project Management Guidelines, certain deliverables are required at this stage.

- A project outline was presented to the Callan - Thomastown Municipal District Members on the 8th January, 2025.
- The project website also went live on the 8th January and can be accessed via: <https://www.woodstocktosegreenway.ie>
- Public Consultation No.1 will commence in early February. Notices will be advertised in local newspapers, a letter drop (*via An Post*) will also be undertaken within the project study area along with posters erected at public building etc.
- There will be two Open Public Consultation events held from 24th to 27th February, 2025 at Inistioge and New Ross Golf Club (TBC) and details will be advertised in advance of same.

South East Greenway to Glenmore Connectivity Link: Tender documentation is currently being finalised and will be advertised shortly for a competition to engage the services of a multi-disciplinary Engineer led Design Team to advance this project through detail design, tender award and construction stage. This tender competition will be advertised shortly.

South East Greenway to Slieverue Southern Connectivity Link: A Planning Application under Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations was advertised in September for the Southern Connectivity Link. The public consultation period under this process has concluded and the final date for submissions was the 25th October, 2024. After considering the comments/observations received a number of modifications are proposed to the scheme and a Planning Report & Recommendation, incorporating said modifications, will go before Council for consideration at the January Council Meeting.

Sports Capital and Equipment Programme

Engagement with Stakeholders and Contractors is nearing conclusion with respect to finalising updated quotations for works pertaining to the enhancement proposals associated with the Waterbarrack Basketball Court and surrounding open space. The proposals include for the following:

- Upgrading the outdoor Basketball Court including the upgrade of the surface and the installation of two Basketball Posts.
- Installation of park lighting and fencing.
- Installing a Boules Court on the site



It is envisaged, subject to final approval of recommendations by the Sports Capital Unit, that this project will be completed and open to the public in late Q2 2025.

Works will also commence on the other three funded projects in the coming months.

Playgrounds



The annual independent inspections of the playgrounds was completed in December, with no major red-line issues reported. Routine inspections were conducted by the Parks Department throughout the Christmas period.



In December significant upgrades were carried out at Coan Playground, including the installation of a new seesaw rocker and a wheelchair assessable roundabout with a tiger mulch rubber surface. Additionally, new seating was installed to match the existing design, along with a communication board to enhance the playground's accessibility and functionality, see images.

The Council is also assisting the local community in Bigwood to deliver a new playground close to the national school, and works are expected to commence later this month.

Woodstock Gardens & Arboretum

We regret to announce that Storm Darragh has had a significant impact on Woodstock Gardens & Arboretum, resulting in the loss of several of our most iconic and historic trees:

- The magnificent Monterey Pine (planted in 1845)
- A towering Monterey Cypress from the mid-1800s
- A stately Noble Fir, also from the mid-1800s

These trees, which have stood for over 175 years, were more than just part of our landscape; they were a cherished part of our heritage and a testament to history.



While this loss is deeply felt, it is a part of the natural cycle in a heritage tree garden. Unfortunately, Woodstock was not the only significant garden in the country to suffer the loss of iconic trees due to the storm. We have already begun the process of replacing these trees. Our head gardener has initiated a propagation program, taking cuttings from the fallen trees to replant and

continue their legacy.

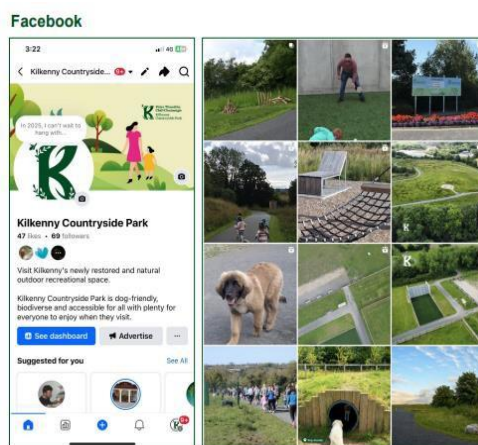
As a consequence of the above, major storm clean-up efforts began in December and are still ongoing. Additionally, other works are taking place throughout the gardens. The terrace gardens have been enhanced with winter planting, including pansies and violas, to provide vibrant colour throughout the winter and into the summer months.

Over the Christmas period, the Reindeer Trail was a highlight, delighting visitors as they explored the Noble Fir and Monkey Puzzle Avenue.

Season tickets were promoted as festive gifts during the Christmas season. These tickets remain available and offer excellent value, allowing visitors to enjoy the gardens throughout the year.

Kilkenny Countryside Park and Woodstock Gardens and Arboretum Marketing

The Parks Department has engaged the services of O'Connell Marketing to build on previous promotion campaigns for Woodstock but also to promote a new social media platform for Kilkenny Countryside Park. These platforms are the perfect place to showcase the latter's wonderful amenities which cater to a wide variety of visitors from families with young children, dog walkers, fitness enthusiasts, and wildlife spotters alike. Since launching these platforms, we've seen increased footfall within the Park.



LEO/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Summary of 2024 Awards to Businesses

- €565,656 in direct financial assistance has been approved for 23 manufacture/export service businesses in located throughout the County.
- €357,014 awarded in Business Expansion Grant assistance and €60,000 in GradStart assistance.
- €107,480 awarded in start-up/priming assistance.
- €41,162 awarded in a feasibility study grant assistance.
- 10 Technical Assistance for Micro Exporter grants awarded to support businesses in exploring new export market opportunities.
- 22 businesses have commenced LEAN one to one consultancy programmes to investigate possible resource efficiencies and process improvements their businesses.
- 13 Businesses are availing of the Digital Start programme to prepare and implement a plan for the adoption of digital tools and techniques across the enterprise.
- 63 business have been approved a Trading Online Voucher totalling €128,926 to support the enhancement of their online trading capacity.
- 22 Green for Business supports awarded with 7 businesses awarded an Energy Efficiency Grant. These schemes support businesses to become greener and more environmentally friendly.
- 10 applicants have been supported to make loan applications to the Micro Finance Ireland loan fund.
- 1,175 people participated on focused small business training, including 94 people participating on the Starting Your Business Programme
- 466 businesses have availed of specialised business specific mentoring on a variety of topics including finance, marketing, social media marketing and HR.

Broadband/ Digital Update

Kilkenny County Council is developing a three-year Digital Strategy for the County covering the period 2025 – 2027. Work is on-going with a first draft now under review. The Broadband Officer is also awaiting the launch of the DRCD National Hub Strategy 2024 – 2027 in early 2025.



Launch of Kilkenny Photobook

The new photobook, “Kilkenny – Live, Work, Enjoy,” was launched at the Parade Tower on 13th December. The event saw a large turnout of photographers and poets who contributed to the project, excited to see their work in print and on screen. Kilkenny County Council expressed gratitude to everyone involved in contributing to the book and celebrating the County’s rich history, heritage, and scenic charm.

In May 2024, Kilkenny County Council invited amateur and professional photographers from across the County to submit photographs capturing the spirit and essence of Kilkenny and its citizens. The resulting collection of images showcases the natural beauty and vibrant culture of Kilkenny City and County.



Night Time Economy Forum

The Night Time Economy Stakeholder Forum met for the fourth time on the 4th December. Chaired by Ignacio Peregrina, the Forum members were provided with an update on the progress of the pilot to date. The Forum agreed on the key priority areas to focus on for the remainder of the pilot in 2025

Yulefest

LEO Kilkenny, Shop Kilkenny and the Night Time Economy supported Yulefest with the launch of Festive Fridays during December. This initiative was designed to encourage later evening and night time shopping and entertainment in the City. The Battle of the Buskers saw 12 buskers entertain the streets of Kilkenny for the chance to win a €500 cash prize, together with recording time in studio and airplay on KCLR 96FM.



A Reindeer Trail saw all 9 of Santa's reindeers popping up in shop windows around Kilkenny and encouraged families to follow the trail around the City. The Yulefest Christmas Trail was also an experience that invited visitors to explore Kilkenny's historic streets, uncover hidden gems, and participate in an exciting interactive quiz. There was also a host of live musical performance in the Yulefest Yurt and the night market remained open for all visitors each Saturday evening until 8.00 p.m.

Night Time Transport

In collaboration with the National Transport Authority and TFI Local Link, TFI Local Link Carlow Kilkenny Wicklow, the 897 bus route has been enhanced to include a new evening return service from Thursday to Saturday between [Kilkenny City](#) and Moneenroe. The bus service leaves Ormonde Road in the City at 10.30 p.m. and returns from Moneenroe at 11.25 p.m. to the City.

Kilkenny Tourism

Kilkenny Tourism's marketing activity focused on promoting all things Yulefest for December to encourage visitors and locals to come and experience Christmas in Kilkenny.

Visitors to the festival experienced festive treats, creative crafts, live music and family entertainment each weekend in December, along with the Yulefest Christmas trail.



The tourism team supported Bo Media productions to produce a Christmas special for RTÉ One that aired on Christmas Eve, featuring the Nativity story. This new production was a fantastic opportunity to showcase Kilkenny's attractions and local culture during the festive season and will potentially be aired for the next number of years on RTE. [Watch The Kilkenny Nativity on YouTube](#)

HOUSING

The Directorate of Housing incorporates a wide range of services for applicants and tenants to facilitate and support the provision of independent and supported accommodation. The following information gives the up to date progress for 2024 under the various support services.

HOMELESS SERVICES

Homeless Prevention Measures

The Government have put in place a number of measures to prevent homelessness arising from the reactivation of notices of termination of tenancies in June 2023. We are currently providing advice and directing tenants to the appropriate services required to prevent homelessness. Where a household is in receipt of a valid notice to quit and requires assistance in establishing what options are available to them to avoid potential homelessness they are advised to contact the Housing Office at its dedicated email address NTQEnquiries@kilkennycoco.ie Further details are available on www.kilkennycoco.ie.

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

HOMELESS SERVICES SUMMARY DECEMBER 2024	
Homeless Presentations	32
Homeless Assessment Outcomes	
Prevention & Interventions	18
Emergency Service	9
Not eligible / Did not avail of service	5
HAP Place Finder Service	
Number of Homeless HAP tenancies @ 1 st day of month	154
Number of Homeless HAP tenancies created during month	2
Number of Homeless HAP tenancies in place @ last day of month	156
Number of Homeless HAP tenancy breakdowns	0
Other Social Housing Tenancies supported / created during month	3
Households in Temporary Emergency Supported Accommodation at 31st December	34
Households in Temporary Emergency B&B Accommodation	5
Households in Temporary Emergency B&B Accommodation that are families	4
Households (<i>singles/couples</i>) in Transition Emergency Accommodation (<i>Own Front Door</i>)	10
Households (<i>Families</i>) in Transition Emergency Accommodation (<i>OFD</i>)	6

SOCIAL HOUSING ASSESSMENT

SOCIAL HOUSING SUPPORT APPLICATION SUMMARY DECEMBER 2024	
Number awaiting Social Housing Support at 31 st December 31 st (<i>Gross Need</i>)	1,408
Number awaiting Social Housing Support at 31 st December (<i>Net Need</i>)	641
Number of Social Housing Applications received in December	87
Number of applications incomplete/awaiting further information/clarification	41
Number of applications validated and ready for assessment during the month	20
Number of applications assessed during December	28
Number of applications awaiting assessment as at 31 st December	30

HAP SUMMARY TO 31 ST DECEMBER 2024	
Total active HAP tenancies	463
New HAP tenancies set up	63
HAP allocated Social Housing	119
Closed HAP tenancies	128
HAP Rent Reviews	258
HAP Other tenancy amendments	238

TENANCY MANAGEMENT

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

LA/RAS/Leasing allocations in December (<i>offers made</i>).....	19
LA/RAS/Leasing allocations to December (<i>offers made</i>).....	123
Tenant Liaison Officer cases in December	36
Maintenance Calls for December	539
Maintenance Calls year to date:	6,899

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

PRIVATE HOUSE GRANTS

The 2024 housing grants allocation has been received from the Department of Housing, in the amount of €2,161,278 comprised of €1,729,023 (80%) grant and €432,256 (20%) Kilkenny County Council contribution.

This allocation exceeds the amount included in the budget for 2024 and reflects the departments confidence in the grants section to meet and exceed its targets for 2024.

GRANTS APPROVED & COMMITTED TO 31 ST DECEMBER 2024		
Scheme	Number	Amount
HGD - Housing Adaptation Grant	173	€1,754,579
MAG - Mobility Aid Grant	11	€35,505
HOP - Housing Aid for Older Persons	298	€1,505,141
Total	482	€3,295,225

GRANTS PAID TO 31 ST DECEMBER 2024		
Scheme	Number	Amount
HGD - Housing Adaptation Grant	90	€908,342
MAG - Mobility Aid Grant	7	€25,085
HOP - Housing Aid for Older Persons	221	€1,066,273
Total	318	€1,99,700

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 - 1 ST JANUARY TO 31 ST DECEMBER, 2024					
Loan Type	Received	Approved	Amount Approved	Number Paid	Amount Paid
Local Authority Home Loan	41	10	€1,270,950	12	€1,754,326
Caravan Loan	0	0	€0.00	0	€0
Total	41	10	€1,270,950	12	€1,754,326

VOIDS

At the end of December 2024 there were **33 vacant units** of Local Authority accommodation awaiting refurbishment or remediation works. A total of 88 units was completed under the Void's Maintenance Programme in 2024.

Housing Capital Delivery

Old Health Centre, Kilmacow
conversion to 1 x 1 bed house by KCC



Cluain Glasson, Granges Road, Kilkenny City

10 nr social housing units, 25 nr cost rental and 10 nr affordable – Cluid AHB – Glenveagh Homes



**HS 168 - Cloghscregg,
Thomastown**
renovation and extension of
house for special needs by KCC



**Fox Meadow, Loughmacask,
Kilkenny – 8 nr Part V apts
with Clancy Homes**



**Nyne Park, Callan Road,
Kilkenny City**
12 more social housing units
with Cluid Housing, 20
affordable homes offered by
KCC – Cairn Homes Developers



**HS 110 Crokers Hill,
Kennyswell Road, Kilkenny –
88 social housing units +
community centre by Ormonde
Construction for KCC**



**HS 214 College Park Crecent,
Nyne Park, Callan Road,
Kilkenny City – 10 Part V
houses by Cairn Homes for
KCC**



Barrack St, Goresbridge –
conversion of derelict
building to 4 apartments for
Circle Housing



**Friary Walk, Callan, Co
Kilkenny – 3 x Part V houses by
Andrew Glennon developments
for Cluid Housing**



**HS 133 - Old Fire Station,
Thomastown – conversion of
disused firestation to 1-
bedroom house by Richie Reade
Construction for KCC**



**HS 196 Castleoaks Kilkenny
City – 30 apartments by
Ormonde Homes as a turnkey
project for KCC**



**Abbeymeadows, Ferrybank –
14 affordable purchase homes
offered for sale by KCC in
partnership with Whitebox
Developments**



- 168 Social Housing Units delivered.
- 25 Cost Rental Units delivered.
- 44 Affordable Homes offered for sale, of these 41 sold or sale agreed in 2024.

COMMUNITY

Community Projects

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

Town & Village Scheme			
Community Group	Project Description	Grant	Status
Glenmore CLG Project Development Measure 2022	Develop plans for a building purchased under Building Acquisition Measure. The building will be used as a community shop/café and meeting facility	€49,950	A number of surveys are underway. Planning permission granted
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	Planning of project commenced, consultant appointed
Dunnamaggin Local Community Group 2023	The Transformation of a community green space into and events amenity for all the community knows as Madge's Garden	€247,500	Planning permission granted. Design brief commenced
Urlingford Town Team 2023	Refurbishment of Community Hall. Phase 2	€500,000	Tender process commenced
Callan Project Development Measure 2024	Develop plans to establish an outdoor classroom community space in Abbey Field and examine the re-development of a derelict cottage in Moate Field and complete biodiversity studies on both sites	€49,950	Brief for consultant being prepared in consultation with Callan Town Team
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	Brief to be prepared

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	Tender assessment complete. Consultants appointed
Glenmore	Develop the South East Greenway Connectivity Link and Pink Rock Cycle Loop & Amenity Trail	€2,356,423	Part 8 approved. Detail design due to commence
Thomastown	Thomastown Library and upgrade to Community Centre	€4,013,115	Work in progress
Community & Cultural Facilities Capital Scheme			

Community Group	Project Description	Grant	Status
Johnstown Sports Field 2022	Contribution to development of walk way around complex	€40,000	Group have received Sports Capital funding for other elements of the walkway. Plans for combined funding underway
1st Kilkenny Scout Group 2022	Upgrade of lighting to LED lighting, improve installation in attic, upgrade boiler and installation of solar panels	€15,000	Work in progress
Mooncoin Celtic AFC 2023	LED Floodlighting for extra training area	€20,000	Work in progress
John Lockes GAA Club 2023	Walkway improvements, CCTV, Sensory activity outdoor wall panels/litter bins/walkway benches & security gate	€11,000	Partially completed
Cois Nore 2024	Develop and Refurbishment of Community Space	€40,000	Tender process commenced
Piltown AFC 2024	Walkway, Lighting and Security Fencing	€36,000	Tender process commenced
Callan United AFC 2024	Upgrade of Dressing Rooms and Storage facilities	€35,000	Section 5 granted, works to commence in November
Inistioge Community Council 2024	Bi folding doors to increase space for large functions	€14,000	Awaiting contractor to commence
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	Tender process commenced
Ballyhale Shamrocks 2024	Upgrade of toilets / disability access	€9,000	Due to commence
Gowran Community Complex 2024	Contribution towards the refurbishment of a community hub	€27,000	Tender process commenced
Johnstown Community Hall 2024	Refurbishment of balcony area	€15,000	In progress, 40% complete
Conahy Shamrocks GAA 2024	Upgrade to lighting around walk way	€25,000	Tender awarded project due to commence. Weather dependant

CLÁR 2023			
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	Project 50% complete
Kilmoganny GAA	Upgrade car park and walkway	€30,150	Work in progress
St. Martins GAA	Lighting, nets, railing and gates	€44,766	Project 50% complete
Kilkenny County Council Supported by Coolagh Community Group	Upgrade works outside Community Hall	€45,000	Works commenced
Kilkenny County Council Muckalee Public Lighting (Phase 2)	Upgrade of public lighting	€24,750	Works due to commence
Galmoy Community Hall	Provision of a MUGA	€30,015	Procurement in progress
Windgap Tidy Towns	Provide tarmac surface at Windgap Lake car park.	€20,788	Works completed
Skeoughvosteen Community Centre & GAA	Provision of outdoor public and wheelchair accessible public toilets	€50,000	Procurement in progress

Age Friendly Creative Christmas Connections

As part of Kilkenny Age Friendly Programme and in collaboration and supported by Creative Ireland, a number of free events were organised throughout the month of December. The 'Creative Christmas Connections 2024' programme of events were targeted for older people to enhance community connections by engaging in creative workshops and events.

The workshops included 'Festive Flower Arranging' workshops held in Thomastown, Ballyragget and Kilkenny City where each participant to create a beautiful flower arrangement. There were also 'Christmas Crafts' workshops held in Stoneyford and Mullinavat where participants painted and created crafts. Locals in Kilmanagh created Christmas decorations through crocheting. The 'Festive Storytelling' in Urlingford, Stoneyford and Mullinavat was an enjoyable event of listening and telling stories with an illustrator capturing the event. There was an afternoon of comedy sketches, poetry and sing along with musicians for the 'Rambling House Christmas Show' at St.Canices Neighbourhood Hall, Kilkenny. In collaboration with Kilkenny Arts Office there were drop in Embroidery sessions. All the events were well attended and there was positive feedback.



Festive Flower Arranging Workshop



Christmas Craft Workshop

Healthy Kilkenny - Kilkenny One Parent Community

Kilkenny One Parent Community (KOPC) is a community of individuals who are parenting alone, sharing parenting, or parenting following bereavement, with a vision that Kilkenny is a place where the unique experiences of One Parent Families are recognised, respected and supported. This network is supported by the Kilkenny LCDC Healthy Ireland Fund in collaboration with the Social Inclusion programme in Kilkenny Leader Partnership. KOPC aims to improve the health and wellbeing of one-parent families by providing opportunities for one parent families to connect, and participate in family activities and wellbeing initiatives.

Kilkenny One Parent Community since its establishment in 2020, have offered parents opportunity to engage in cultural, health and wellbeing and parenting programmes, personal development courses, and provided a space for single parents to connect and engage with each other to reduce loneliness and isolation. In December 2024, KOPC held several activities designed for parents and families.

Families attended a Christmas tree decorations workshop in the Mayfair Library and KOPC showcased their Christmas Tree in St. Canice's Cathedral for the Christmas Tree Festival. Families also attended mandala craft workshops at the Mayfair Library. Over the festive period, one-parent families will also have the opportunity to attend the Christmas Pantomime in the Watergate Theatre. For more information, please visit the KOPC website: www.kilkennyoneparentcommunity.ie



KOPC Christmas Workshops and St Canice's Christmas Tree Showcase 2024

INTEGRATION

The Local Authority Integration Team (LAIT) continues to provide on-going integration supports to people categorised in any of the following groups living in the City and County of Kilkenny:

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

Currently there are 173 International Protection Applicants (92% Male, 6% female), and 633 BOTP's in County Kilkenny. 65% IP's and 45% BOTP's are employed.

December was an exciting month for the LAITs with a very successful Intercultural event on 8th December with Mayor Andrew McGuinness opening the event, in the Ossory Youth Centre. A mix of music, dance and food from all over the world including Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Somalia, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Pakistan, Afghanistan, El Salvador, Bangladesh and Ireland. This event was an opportunity to showcase the Irish Boxhats that a group of Ukrainian and Irish women had made in October and also the Ukrainian women showcasing their Ukrainian headwear – an intercultural mix. Dancing and music from all over the world including an Irish set dance piece. Over 80 people attended the event and was a fantastic cultural exchange.

The LAITs continued their work with providing information, advice and advocacy for 28 International Protection Applicants, in December, with 53 queries ranging from legal/immigration, health access, education including English language, traineeships, employment access, DSP supports, accommodation and transport to bank account setup.

They also worked with 17 BOTPs with 30 interventions including:

- health access;
- legal/immigration;
- education;
- evictions;
- employment;
- DSP;
- independent living;
- accommodation;
- transport.



FIRE SERVICES

Fire Safety Certificate Applications

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

Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003

- Fire Prevention staff made targeted inspections of premises both to provide advice and to enforce legislation during 2023.
- 68 Licence Applications were processed under Section 24 of the Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003.
- 12 Licence Applications under the Dangerous Substances legislation were assessed to date.
- 99 Fire Safety Inspections of premises have taken place in 2024.

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.

The Brigades have attended 847 incidents in 2024. These incidents included a number of road traffic collisions, house fires, ambulance assists, car fires, chimney fires and automatic fire alarm activations. All Fire Brigades were busy on the 7th December, 2024 during Storm Darragh attending fallen trees, structural damage to properties and making numerous scenes safe.

Recruitment of Retained Firefighters

Our second recruitment campaign has commenced to recruit Fire Fighters in Castlecomer, Freshford, Urlingford, Thomastown and Graiguenamanagh. Interviews have been carried out. All new recruits will undergo extensive initial training to equip them with the skills to be a Retained Firefighter. As well as responding to emergency calls and undertaking community fire safety initiatives, Retained Firefighters attend weekly training nights to maintain competency levels and undertake routine checks on their equipment.

Fire Appliances

Kilkenny County Council's Fire and Rescue Service maintain fire appliances in all seven Fire Stations throughout the County. Kilkenny County Council Fire and Rescue Service have a Command and Control vehicle, 2 seater electrical fire vehicle and a Class B Fire Engine being built at present. These should be delivered in early Q3 2025.

Community Fire Safety Programme

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

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.

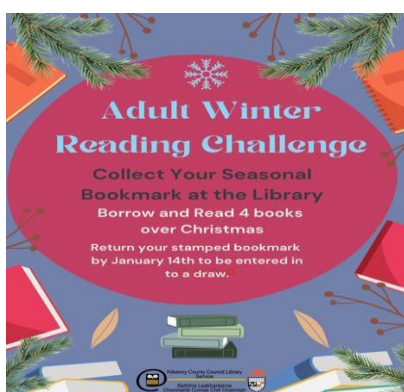
A water awareness course was held in Graiguenamanagh Fire Station. Instructors on the course are external. This course provided practical training on the knowledge and skills that are required to enable Firefighters to safely operate near water.

LIBRARY



Winter Reading Challenge for Adults

In December, Kilkenny County Council Library Service launched a new winter reading challenge to encourage adults to take time out and read 4 books over the Christmas period. The challenge ran until 14th January and adults who successfully received their 4 stamps will be entered into a draw to win a fabulous reading hamper. Borrowers can sign up for the challenge and collect a bookmark at their local library branch for free.



Upgrades to Public Access PCs and printing services

In the final quarter of 2024, considerable work was done to upgrade the public access PCs and printing services across our branch network. This has resulted in an enhanced user experience with uniformity across our branches, greater ease logging onto public PCs and the ability to book an adult PC session from home in advance.



Library users who wish to send their prints via email and collect at their local library can now do so via two centralised email addresses. This offers greater flexibility as users can now send their print to a dedicated email address for either black and white or colour prints and collect from any of the branches which offer this service. Surfbox printing is currently available in Castlecomer, Ferrybank, Loughboy, Graiguenamanagh and Mayfair libraries.

Black and White printing: print.bw@pcg.ie

Colour printing: print.colour@pcg.ie

Thomastown Library Update

- Roof guttering and roof cladding near completion.
- Front entrance floor poured.
- M&E containment has commenced.



Library Activities

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

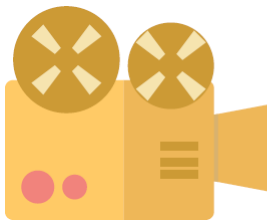
These events included:

- A performance by the Lady Desart Choir in the Mayfair Library
- A Christmas arts and crafts class for children in Loughboy Library
- A Christmas movie night in Ferrybank Library
- A talk on birds and their behaviour in Graig Library
- A toddler Christmas party in Castlecomer Library
- A lino printing workshop in Thomastown Library
- A chair yoga class in Urlingford Library
- A winter art exhibition in Callan Library





Online Services Usage



Digital Engagement

Library staff prepared, recorded, edited and published 193 posts and videos on our social media platforms in December. Our engagements for the month were 6,365 and our videos and reels had 10,830 views. Our virtual newsletter was sent to 7,989 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 December:

SDG 17: Partnership for the Goals

Staff in Loughboy Library teamed up with staff from Kilkenny Carlow ETB to deliver the Hug Your Book programme – a programme designed to equip parents with the necessary skills to make reading fun and promote language and literacy development in their children.

SDG 9: Industry innovation and infrastructure

Staff in the Mayfair Library welcomed students from Youthreach for an “Introduction to 3D printing” workshop in the makerspace.

ARTS

Community Arts

As part of Creative Kilkenny 'Creative Christmas Connections' programme individuals joined Kilkenny Arts Office to contribute their stitches to a large community embroidery sampler featuring beautiful motifs relating to textiles, mending, and the natural world. Three sessions were held in Vincent's Charity Shop Kilkenny and the Tea House, with thirty attendees in total. The Community Embroidery Sampler Project is part of the Waste Not Want Not Community Climate Action Programme.



Participants contributing to the Embroidery sampler

Poetry Broadsheet

Kilkenny Arts Office will celebrate the 25th Anniversary issue of the Kilkenny Poetry Broadsheet in 2025. The aim of the Kilkenny Poetry Broadsheet is to give local writers a platform for their work, whether they have been published previously or not. Enda Wyley is confirmed as the 2025 editor who is a poet, children's author and teacher and has published six collections of poetry. Enda has been poet-in-residence for many projects and institutions, including The Coombe Maternity Hospital, Dublin, The Bealtaine Poetry and Film Project and *The People's Acorn*, a sculpture project with sculptor Rachel Joynt for Áras an Uachtaráin, the Official Residence of the President of Ireland.

Artist Gathering Event

Kilkenny Arts Office delivered an evening of food, chat, music and networking for local artists of all artforms in Harry's Bar, Langton's on 4th December, 2024. This panel discussion 'Exploring Artist Supports' with artists Gillian Grattan, Thomas Duffy and Anne Tannam shared their journeys as recipients of Arts Office bursaries and supports, offering a glimpse into how these have influenced their careers and creative practices. The gathering was an opportunity for fellow artists to connect and gain insights into the impact of support, financial or otherwise. The aim for the event was that the audience would acquire a comprehensive understanding of the diverse range of supports provided by the Arts Office, acknowledging that there is more support available to them than merely financial assistance. The event was well attended with 33 people in attendance.



Local Artists at the Artist Gathering event

2025 Grants and Bursaries

Kilkenny Arts Office is delighted to announce their annual call out for applications for the Arts Act Grants, Artists' Residency Awards and ArtLinks Bursaries for 2025. The Arts Act Grant provides financial assistance for the purposes of stimulating public interest in the arts and is open to anyone who wishes to promote Arts in any artform. The Artists' Residency Awards aims to support both established and emerging artists by providing them with a residency at either Tyrone Guthrie Centre in Monaghan or Greywood Arts in Cork.

The ArtLinks Bursary is designed to support artists to develop their practice by providing artists with the time and resources to think, research, reflect and critically engage with their art.

The closing date for applications for the ArtLinks Bursaries is 4.00 pm, Monday 20th January, 2025. The closing date for applications for the Arts Act Grant and the Artists' Residency Awards is 4.00 pm, Monday 27th January 2025. For further information and application forms for all grants and bursaries, visit the Kilkenny Arts Office website - www.kilkennyartsoffice.ie.

Breaking the Patterns

Breaking the Patterns Programme offers a three-month artist residency and work placement programme for emerging visual artists in Lisbon, Portugal. This programme is a partnership between Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford, and Wexford Local Authority Arts Services and Capacity Ireland and as part of Invitation to Collaboration and Creative Europe. The programme is designed to target, support and engage with emerging Irish Visual Artists, who may not have the means to develop their artistic practice due to barriers such as financial, social or lack of support to do so. Sarah Jones Kelly is the successful artist from January to April 2025.

Artists Professional Development Programmes

The Arts Office have confirmed their first two Artists Professional Development Programmes for 2025. 'Performing Arts' in partnership with the Irish Theatre Institute programme will commence in January and will include Script Development Workshops, One-on-One Mentorship Sessions and In-Conversation Sessions. The second programme is 'Visual Arts' in partnership with Big Look Arts which will help meet the needs of visual artists in Kilkenny by providing funded participation in a structured learning programme which will focus on contemporary visual art practice. The programme is based on current international trends, studio practice, and how to attract opportunities in this field, with the chance for participants to learn both from mentors and each other through a lively exchange of ideas and work.

Creative Ireland

During December the Creative Ireland Programme in Kilkenny supported a variety of projects which included Christmas Miscellany at Rothe House. Collaborative projects demonstrate the increased levels of raising awareness and impacts of consolidated efforts. The collaborative efforts significantly strengthened relationships with internal departments and showcased the enthusiasm and contributions from individuals of all ages.

Creative Kilkenny along with the Climate Action Office and the Biodiversity Office created 'Gaia: Goddess of the Earth' Christmas tree for the community display of Christmas trees at St Canice's Cathedral. The symbolism of the installation aimed to represent life and the interconnectedness of all living things. Crafted from foraged and upcycled materials, featured elements of nature. The white lights at her feet represented the mycorrhizal network. The tree was well received by the community and the festival itself was visited by 3,380 visitors. All the items included in the display were readily reintroduced back to nature after the event.



Gaia: Goddess of the Earth Christmas tree on display at St.Canice's Cathedral

Age Friendly 'Creative Christmas Connections' workshops was a collaboration with Age Friendly Kilkenny, the Arts Office Community and Creative Kilkenny. The workshops have greatly improved social inclusion among older adults. Participants felt more connected and encouraging others to join. Conversations sparked ideas for future workshops and broader community engagement through pop-up outreach. The workshops fostered a sense of belonging and reduced isolation, with participants providing honest feedback through evaluations. They also built meaningful relationships with Kilkenny County Council staff, and local service providers. The age-friendly programme engaged a diverse demographic with interactive activities, strengthening community connections. Overall, the initiative promoted a more inclusive and supportive environment, with qualitative data guiding 2025 programme planning.



Rambling House Christmas Show at St.Canice's Neighbourhood Hall as part of the Creative Christmas Connections programme

Creative Ireland	2023	2024	Increase %
Cruinniú na nÓg funding	€23, 466	€37, 968	62%
Creative Ireland Funding	€160, 913	€177, 349	10%
Additional funding	€4,385	€25,000	470%
Completed projects	52	151	190%
Creative Individuals funded	147	264	80%
Attendance Figures	31,457	62,975	100%
Funding Provided to Creatives/ Artists	€132,944	€211,590	59%

Creative Ireland comparative figures of 2023 and 2024

HERITAGE

Community Monuments Fund 2024

In Kilkenny twelve projects were awarded funding by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage under the 2024 Community Monuments Fund (CMF). The aim of this funding is to help owners and custodians of archaeological monuments to safeguard them into the future. This funding was administered by the Heritage Office in Kilkenny County Council in partnership with the Environment Section of Kilkenny County Council. The programme provides 100% project funding the total drawn down in 2024 was €509,580.

The details of each Project is as follows:

STREAM 1:

Essential Repairs & Capital Works for the conservation of Archaeological Monuments

Grangefertagh Medieval Church and Graveyard, Johnstown	Phase 2 of conservation works at this site and involving masonry repairs to the ruined church including removal of vegetation and consolidation of the surviving walls.	€35,926
Tubbrid Medieval Church and Graveyard, Clontubrid	Works to secure the church ruins and urgent stabilisation of the leaning monument inside the church.	€100,789
19 Parliament Street, Kilkenny City	Works to secure the repair and stabilisation of a seventeenth century historic structure.	€100,000
21 Parliament Street, Kilkenny City	Works to repair the historic masonry and replace existing end of life roof on this seventeenth century historic structure.	€116,064

STREAM 2:

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

Kellymount Medieval Graveyard, Paulstown	A comprehensive Conservation Management Plan was prepared for this site. This included specialist reports from an archaeologist, ecologist and conservation engineer who have made recommendations on the prioritisation of works.	€18,388
St David's Church, Castleinch, Ballycallan	A comprehensive Conservation Management Plan was prepared for this site. This included specialist reports from an archaeologist, ecologist and conservation engineer who have made recommendations on the prioritisation of works.	€18,265
St Coleman's Medieval Church and Graveyard, Churchclara, Clara	A comprehensive Conservation Management Plan was prepared for this site. This included specialist reports from an archaeologist, ecologist and conservation engineer who have made recommendations on the prioritisation of works.	€20,541
St Catherine's Church, Rathbeagh	A comprehensive Conservation Management Plan was prepared for this site. This included specialist reports from an archaeologist, ecologist and conservation engineer who have made recommendations on the prioritisation of works.	€15,375

STREAM 3:

Enhancement of access infrastructure, interpretation at archaeological monuments

Cloghabrody Medieval Graveyard, Thomastown	Emergency works to secure a collapse in the boundary wall of the graveyard.	€13,552
St Canice's Cathedral, Kilkenny City	Improved Interpretation for St. Canice's Round Tower and graveyard/cathedral close area, consisting of information panels.	€30,000
Kenny's Well, Kilkenny City	Preparation of a plan to enhance the Access and Interpretation for Kenny's Well.	€30,000
Garryduff Medieval Graveyard, Paulstown	Emergency works to secure a collapse in the boundary wall of the graveyard.	€10,680



Grangefertagh - Before works



Grangefertagh - After works

BIODIVERSITY

Kilkenny Swift Project

Swifts are a migratory bird who spend their summers in Ireland. They prefer to nest in cracks and crevices, unfortunately their numbers are in decline due to the loss of nesting sites. The Kilkenny's County Swift Report 2021 recommended additional nest boxes in the James Stephens Army Barracks to support their existing swift population. With the assistance of Kathryn Finney of BirdWatch Ireland and Lt O'Dwyer of the 3 Infantry Battalion, 12 triple cavity nest boxes were installed on site with four caller systems. Kilkenny County Council would like to acknowledge and thank Lt O'Dwyer for his assistance in getting the permissions to get this project over the line. This project was part funded by the Local Biodiversity Action Fund provided by the National Parks and Wildlife Service.



Swift Nest Boxes installation in progress at James Stephens Army Barracks

The Biodiversity Officer continues to collaborate with other agencies with suitable sites identified in Kilkenny's County Swift Report to encourage swift box installation as a positive biodiversity action to support swift populations.



The public consultation on Kilkenny's Draft Biodiversity Action Plan closed on Wednesday 18th December 2024. It received 8 submissions which will be processed and amendments made to the draft plan where deemed necessary. The final plan will be brought forward to the full Council for adoption and launched in 2025.

FINANCE

The expenditure by Service Division to the end of December is set out in Table 1. Total Expenditure for the period was €129.1m compared with the Annual Budget of €111m.

Table 1	Actual YTD December 2024	Budget Full Year 2024
	€'000's	€'000's
Housing & Building	30,863	26,258
Road Transport & Safety	32,169	29,958
Water Services	7,090	7,699
Development Management	20,794	14,720
Environmental Services	17,158	16,899
Recreation & Amenity	8,642	8,759
Agriculture, Education, Health, Welfare	628	690
Miscellaneous Services	9,754	6,331
Central Management Charges for Allocation	2,011	
OVERALL TOTAL	129,110	111,134

Increased Cost of Business (ICOB) Grant Scheme

As part of Budget 2024, the Government signed off on a package of €257m for the Increased Cost of Business (ICOB) Grant as a vital measure for small and medium Enterprises. This rollout was managed through the Local Authorities and funded by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE). Eligible businesses will receive a once-off grant which will be based on the value of their Commercial Rates Bill in 2023. A total of 2,450 grants were paid out up to 31st October, 2024 with a value of €4,394,000. The scheme closed on 27th September, 2024 and the online portal closed on 25th October, 2024.

Power Up Grant

As part of Budget 2025, the Government has announced a new €4,000 grant called Power Up, to assist businesses in hospitality, retail and beauty sectors. This rollout is being managed through the Local Authorities and funded by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE). The main eligibility criteria are the same as for the Increased Cost of Business Scheme: Kilkenny County Council has, to date, paid out €3,360,000 in Power Up Grants to 840 businesses. Businesses that were in operation in 2023, but did not qualify for ICOB because they were not valued, and now rated are now eligible for the grant. 40 businesses have been contacted with details on how to apply. There has been no decision from the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment on the treatment of businesses that were mis-classified and could not apply for Power Up.

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 draft Financial Statements for 2024 will be prepared in the coming weeks and will be presented to Council at the March meeting. The bank overdraft facility was not utilized in the twelve month period to the end of December.