



Kilkenny County Council
Comhairle Chontae Chill Chainnigh

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

January 2022 Edition



***Happy New Year to all from
Kilkenny County Council***



To: Each Member of Kilkenny County Council

Monthly Management Report to Members of Kilkenny County Council for consideration at the January Monthly Meeting.

**COME SEE
COME DO**

Since being recognised by the Restaurants Association of Ireland (RAI) as Ireland's top foodie destination, Kilkenny has continued to enhance its position as an unmissable part of Ireland's food culture.

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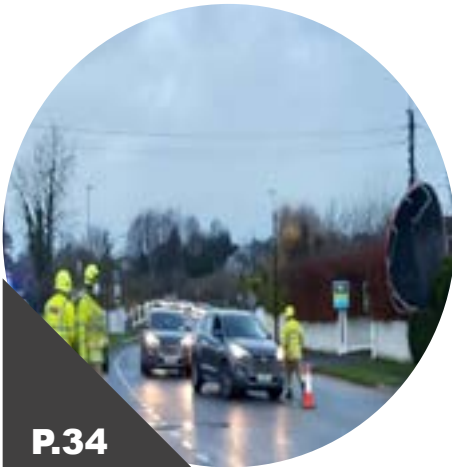
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EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS

A list of Orders made in the last month will be available in the Council Chamber for inspection by the Elected Members.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

City & County Development Plan

Draft Direction Plan on display from 29th October to 12th November 2021

11th & 25th November

History Talks

Before 10th December 2021

Submissions / Observations on the Draft Casual Trading Bye-Laws 2021 available for public inspection

28th December 2021

#CareersKilkenny is back on the 28th of December at the Medieval Mile Museum

Historic Structures Fund

Closing date for receipt of applications is 26th January 2022

CORPORATE YULEFEST KILKENNY

Yulefest Kilkenny began at the end of November 2021 and ran through to January, 2022.

After a mainly virtual festival in 2020, Yulefest Kilkenny 2021 mostly took place outdoors in a COVID safe environment. The programme was built with something for all ages including:

- Outdoor movie nights with Oscar nominated Cartoon Saloon films. Ticket proceeds going to Amber Women's Refuge.
- Live music on the Yulefest Bandstand.
- Christmas Market on the Parade as well as several more locations across the County.
- Santa Hat Elves Workshops, Snowglobe photobooths, Santa visits and the Butler House Christmas Garden.
- Pop-up Pocket Parks let you feel festive anytime, but particularly on Friday's evenings with DJs on site.
- Medieval Mile Run with Kilkenny City Harriers and Santa Run in aid of St. Vincent De Paul.
- Lots more outdoor and COVID safe events took place across the City and County.

Yulefest began with Santa arriving into the City at the end of November with a message to sustainability as he boated

on the River Nore, under a Civil Defence and Dragon Paddlers escort, and then joined nearly 300 children on a cycle around the City before turning on the Christmas lights to the backdrop of Kilkenny Castle.

RTE's Nationwide Programme aired a full programme from Yulefest Kilkenny on Friday, 17th December which showcased Christmas in Kilkenny with over 300,000 viewers tuning in on the night.

Local Live Performance Programming Scheme (LLPPS)

Yulefest Bandstand Live music was made the centre of the Yulefest Programme. As part of the Local Live Performance Programming Scheme funded by the

Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports

and Media, the Yulefest Bandstand featured over 50 local musicians and performers. Located in the heart of the festivities beside the Christmas Markets, the packed programme was free for the public to enjoy every Thursday, Saturday and Sunday and all of Christmas week.

December Sounds December Sounds also funded by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports and Media, was a three-night concert series in one of Kilkenny's finest venues, St. Canice's Cathedral with ticket proceeds going to local charities including the Ciara Lawlor Memorial Fund, Cois Nore, the Aislínn Centre, Chernobyl Children Kilkenny Outreach Group, Amber Women's Refuge and the O'Neill Centre. A total of €4,800 was raised for these charities.



ROADS

Major Projects (Included in NDP- Funded by TII)

N24 Waterford to Cahir Scheme

Unfortunately, no funding was allocated to Kilkenny to progress the above scheme in 2022. Kilkenny County Council has written to the TII looking for guidance on what the next steps are for the scheme. In light of the above, the public consultation planned for January has been cancelled. Notification of same has been posted on the project website N24waterford2cahir.ie.

N25 Glenmore (New Ross bypass) to Waterford Scheme

Unfortunately, no funding

Pavement Improvements 2022

Kilkenny Ring Road - Roundabouts Works to the value of €2m will start in the coming weeks on re-surfacing the roundabouts on the N10 Kilkenny Ring Road.

Other projects that are listed for pavement improvements in 2022

- N10 Dundaryark to Danesfort €405k
- N77 Georges Tree to Dunmore West €806k
- N78 Webbsborough Pavement Scheme €688k

was allocated to Kilkenny to progress the above scheme in 2022. Kilkenny County Council has written to the TII looking for guidance on what the next steps are for the scheme.

Minor Projects (Not included in NDP-Funded by TII)

N24 Tower Road (Safety Scheme)

It is envisaged that the scheme will go out to tender towards the end of Q1 2022 with a view to construction commencing towards the end of Q2 2022. An allocation of €3m was received for 2022 to allow the scheme proceed to construction. The overall outturn cost for the project is expected to be in the region of €10m.

Castlecomer Footbridge:

The footbridge and associated works are nearly complete. The bridge was lifted into position over the night of Tuesday 23rd November. Subject to progress over the coming weeks the footbridge is intended to be open by the end of January 2022. The construction costs for the project is in the region of €1m.



Drone view of new Footbridge and existing Road Bridge.

N77 Ballyragget to Ballynaslee

Statutory approvals have been secured for this scheme. An allocation of €500K was received for 2022 which will fund progression to preparation of contract documents and potentially provide for some land acquisition. The overall outturn cost for the project is expected to be circa €10m.

N24 Carrick Road:

An allocation of €150K was received for 2022 which will fund progression to statutory approvals stage which is likely to be submitted Q1 2022. The overall outturn cost for the project is expected to be circa €10m.

PLANNING

Development Management

Planning Summary	TOTAL (December 2020)	TOTAL (December 2021)
Planning Applications Received	109	88
Planning Applications Granted	62	58
Planning Applications Refused	5	5
Complaints Received	104	119
Warning Letters Issued	89	100
Enforcements Notices Issued	16	23
Cases Closed	65	105

The Planning Department is open for business subject to Covid-19 recommendations for social distancing and other safety measures for the protection of customers and staff. Visits to the Planning Office are by pre-booked appointment. Appointment can be made by telephoning the planning office at 056 7794010 or by email to planning@kilkennycoco.ie

Forward Planning

City & County Development Plan

The City and County Development Plan was adopted on the 3rd September 2021, and came into effect on the 15th October. The Minister for Planning, Local Government and Heritage issued a Draft Direction to Kilkenny County Council to amend section 11.4 and 11.5.1 and fig 11.4 of the Adopted Plan by replacing those sections with section 11.4 and 11.5.1 of the Draft Plan and an amended fig 11.4. The Draft Direction was placed on display for a period of two weeks from the 29th of October 2021 to the 12th of November 2021. Written submissions or observations in respect of the Draft Direction were accepted by the Planning Authority during this consultation period. A Chief Executive's report which

- Summarised the views of persons who made submissions or observations
- Summarised the views of and recommendations (if any) made by the Elected Members
- Summarised the views of and recommendations (if any) made by the Regional Assembly
- Made recommendations in relation to the best manner in which to give effect to the draft direction.

was submitted to the Office of the Planning Regulator and the Minister on the 10th December. The Office of the Planning Regulator makes a recommendation to the Minister on the matter on or before the 10th January. The Minister then decides on whether to issue the direction. There is no time limit on the Minister's decision.

Masterplans:

The Project Steering Committee for the St. Canice's Masterplan is to commence the drafting of a Masterplan for the HSE's St. Canice's Campus. Two steering Committee workshops took place before the Christmas. These will now feed into the drafting of the Plan and the environmental assessments. A draft plan is anticipated to be prepared in Q1 2022 and will be presented to the Council and HSE before it is put out for public consultation.

Work is continuing with the preparation of masterplan for Loughmacask. A draft Loughmacask Masterplan has been prepared and is currently undergoing environmental assessment. It will be presented to Members prior to public display of the draft.

Local Plans

In association with the Community Section work will now commence on the preparation of a planning exercise for Urlingford following on from the recent allocation of finance through Town Centre First funding.

PLANNING

Taking in Charge

Works continue on the following estates:

- The Fairways & Greenoaks, Ferrybank [developer carrying out works]
- The Greens, Thomastown [developer carrying out works]
- Whitehall, Paulstown [developer carrying out works]
- Abbeygate, Ferrybank [developer carrying out works]
- Seville Rise, Callan Road [developer progressing with works]

Vacant sites

- Two sites were cancelled in December 2021 due to site activation, this leaves 29 sites on the Vacant Sites Register, two of which are under appeal to An Bord Pleanála.
 - The number of cancelled entries due to site activation or improvement now stands at 18 sites.
 - Payment demands were issued on May 10th for a total of 23 sites, with total outstanding levies amounting to €1,453,131.
 - Owners had an opportunity to appeal the payment demands to An Bord Pleanála and we have received notice of 9 appeals.
- For 2022, the emphasis will be on the activation of sites currently on the Register and ongoing monitoring.

Conservation

Protected structures are recognised for the following special interest: Architectural, Historical, Archaeological, Artistic, Cultural, Scientific, Technical, Social.

An advisory service on conservation matters is delivered for the public and colleagues by the Conservation Office. Applications are being received for two conservation grants: Historic Structures Fund and the Built Heritage Investment Scheme.

1. The Historic Structures fund notes the success of the Pilot Shopfront and Vernacular Schemes from 2021 by including these elements again for 2022, while Stream 1 and Stream 2 funding are also continued. Further details will be available on the Kilkenny County Council website. Owners will be able to submit applications up to the 26th January 2021. The national budget for the fund has increased from €3 million in 2021 to €4million in 2022.

2. The Built Heritage Investment Scheme encourages applications for repairs to historic fabric of protected structures and proposed protected structures. Further details will be available on the Kilkenny County Council website. Owners will be able to submit applications up to the 26th January 2021.

Funding has increased for Kilkenny under the Built Heritage Investment Scheme from €98,000 in 2020, €117,600 in 2021 to €156,800 in 2022.

Survey work has commenced on the Old Ennisnag Bridge, the survey will accompany a grant application for much need conservation repair works in 2022.

PLANNING

Building Control

The numbers of Commencement Notices and Inspections of New Buildings have increased year on year.

<u>Commencement Notices</u> <u>New Buildings & Inspections</u>	<u>TOTAL</u> <u>(December 2021)</u>	<u>TOTAL</u> <u>(December 2020)</u>	<u>TOTAL</u> <u>(December 2019)</u>
No. of Valid Commencement Notices	434	319	291
<i>percentage on previous year</i>	136%	110%	
No. of New Buildings	498	328	478
<i>percentage on previous year</i>	152%	69%	
No. of New Buildings Inspected	113	69	86
<i>percentage on previous year</i>	164%	80%	
Percentage of all New Buildings Inspected	23%	21%	18%

In 2021 Disability Access Applications have reverted back to 2019's level.

<u>No. Valid Disability Access</u> <u>Applications</u> <u>received quarterly</u>	<u>TOTAL</u> <u>(December 2021)</u>	<u>TOTAL</u> <u>(December 2020)</u>	<u>TOTAL</u> <u>(December 2019)</u>
No. of Valid Disability Access Applications	56	86	60
<i>percentage on previous year</i>	65%	143%	

ENVIRONMENT

Dunmore Civic Amenity Site

2021 proved to be another busy year for the Dunmore facility with a 9% increase in customer numbers to the site compared to 2020. Tonnages of recycling streams such as cardboard, newsprint and plastic were all up 3%, 36% and 1% respectively. Quantities of household food waste for composting were up 10% on the previous year which is a welcome increase as we aim to reduce food waste from landfill.

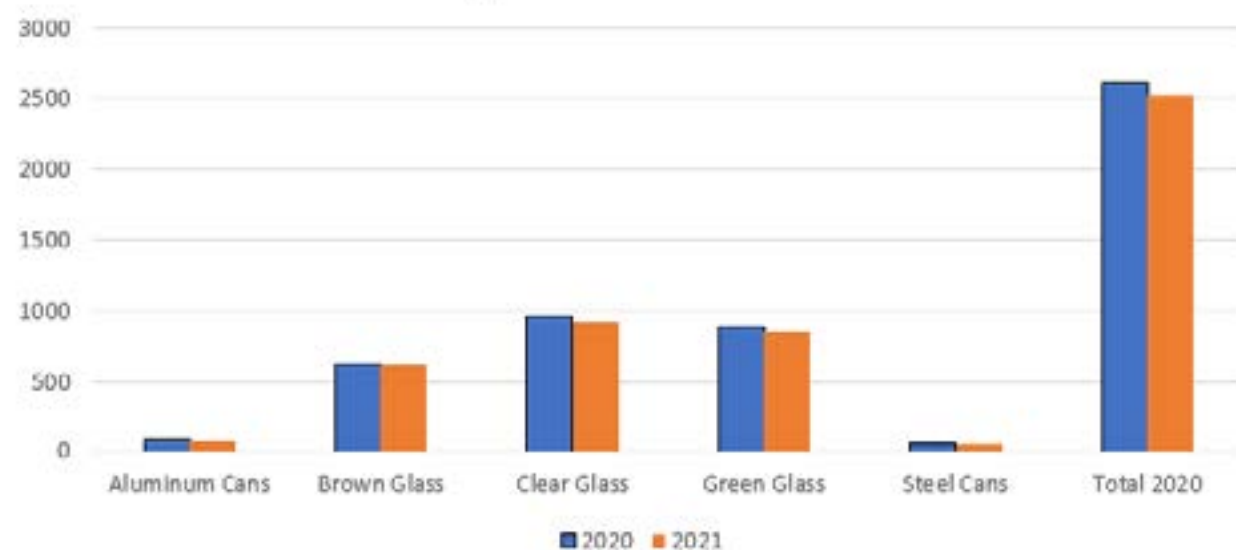


Bring Banks

The Council provides and manages 46 Bring Banks across the City and County. It is clear to see from the tonnages collected that the increased usage with the introduction of Covid 19 restrictions has been largely maintained in 2021. A total of 2,516 tonnes were collected in 2021 compared with 2,609 tonnes during 2020, representing a slight decrease of 3.5% since last year. Over the period our Enforcement staff continued to work very closely with our service provider to ensure the level of service was in keeping with demand. This was particularly challenging as the main service provider is also contracted to a number of other Local Authorities who are also experienced a similar trend.

The Council will look to install new bring banks at additional locations county wide in 2022 and make collection points more localised in some areas of the County.

Tonnages Collected 2020 v 2021



ENVIRONMENT

Christmas Trees Collections 2022

Plans are in place to accommodate Christmas tree drop off locations for householders. This allows trees to be chipped and composted after the festival season.

CHRISTMAS TREE COLLECTIONS 2022		
The collection period runs between the 4th of Jan. and -17th of Jan. 2022 at the following locations:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fair Green Car Park, Oraiguanamagh Adjacent to the Bottle Banks in Bennettsbridge Quay Car Park, Thomastown Supervato Car Park, Callan Pittown Pound Car Park, Pittown (During Normal Opening Hours Only) Entrance to Assumption Place, Uringford The Square, Freshford Fair Green, Ballyragget Castlecomer Council Yard, Donagule Adjacent to the Bottle Banks in Goresbridge 		
Civic Amenity Sites <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dunmore Waste Disposal and Recycling Centre (During Normal Opening Hours Only) Granny Recycling Centre, Grannagh (During Normal Opening Hours Only) This service is provided by Kilkenny County Council to facilitate Christmas tree disposal from households only.		
Categories	2020	2021
Illegal Dumping/Litter	737	794
Graffiti	1	2
Dog Fouling	29	44
Bring Banks	14	10
WEEE	3	9
Green Waste	3	3
Hazardous Waste	2	4
Waste Collection	4	3
Waste Management	8	6
Burning of Waste	55	28
Abandoned Cars/ELV	76	42
Tyres	7	15
Election Posters	12	0
Unauthorised Signage	48	18
Total	999	978

Environmental Complaints

The number of complaints logged and investigated during 2021 was 1,204 compared with 1,307 complaints logged for 2020. Of the complaints received in 2021, a total of 978 related to litter and waste management issues compared with 999 complaints in 2020 under the same headings. The following table provides a broad breakdown of the complaint categories relating to litter and waste.

Litter Management Plan 2021-2023

The Litter Management Plan 2021-2023 was formerly adopted in June 2021 and a number of actions have already been completed including;

- The launch and continued promotion of the Bag It, Bin It, anti-dog fouling campaign.
- The drawdown of €74,576 from the National Litter Infrastructure Support Grant Scheme which provided County Kilkenny with 3 new solar compacting bins, replacement of 24 street litter bins, an additional 13 solar bins in Kilkenny City and community support funding to keep riverside amenity areas free of litter throughout the summer.
- The commencement of Picker Pals Programme, engaging over 1,000 families to participate in family orientated litter picks with activity reports reported back to their classroom on their findings throughout the current academic year.
- The completion of an illegal dumping advertising campaign in Q4.

ENVIRONMENT

Recommended Minimum Criteria for Environmental Inspections (RMCEI)

Each year Kilkenny County Council submits a statistical return to the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) and a plan for the year ahead for our environmental inspections. Over 5,000 inspections were carried out in 2021 ranging from biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) analysis of water samples to enforcement actions on unauthorised sites. Despite the fact that COVID restrictions were in place to varying degrees throughout the year this level of activity is a remarkable achievement. During 2021 a number of successful prosecutions were also brought by Kilkenny County Council for offences under the Waste Management Act. Some of the more significant enforcement cases are being progressed through the courts, which necessitates substantial resources in terms of the Council's finances and staff time. Many of our inspections now are carried out remotely using MS Teams and making information available on line for persons to access, this has proven to be a very efficient and safe way of conducting our business. A summary of some of the inspections undertaken during 2021 is provided in the below:

Air, Noise, Water & Planning Inspections in 2021

Air Noise Water Incl. Planning (Planning Referrals)	Planned	Completed	End December 2021
Subtotal 6.4 Routine Water / Wastewater Inspections	1516	1543	102%
Subtotal 6.5 Non-Routine Water / Wastewater Inspections	48	49	102%
Subtotal 6.6 Routine Air / Noise Inspections	72	58	81%
Subtotal 6.7 Non-Routine Air / Noise Inspections	33	36	109%
Subtotal 6.9 Planning (Environmental) Inspections (Routine)	1082	1122	104%
Total >>	2751	2808	102%

Waste, Litter and Producer Responsibility Initiatives Inspections

		Planned	Completed	% Complete
Waste	Subtotal Routine Waste Inspections	628	998	159
	Subtotal Non-routine Waste Inspections	707	756	107
Litter	Subtotal Routine Litter Patrols/Investigations	510	539	106
PRI	Subtotal (Routine) Producer Responsibility Inspections	109	84	77
Total Routine Inspections end of year		1247	1621	130
Total Non-Routine Inspections end of year		707	756	107
Total Inspections end of year		1954	2377	122

ENVIRONMENT

Farm Surveys

Kilkenny County Council routinely undertakes targeted farm inspections as part of our wider role to protect watercourses from potential pollution. Farms are selected on the basis of catchment assessment, identification of significant pressures within a catchment such as impact on public and private water supplies and identification of watercourses at risk of deterioration of water quality. In addition, farm surveys may be carried out in response to a complaint alleging that agricultural pollution of waters is occurring. The total number of farm inspections completed for 2021 was 57, with the balance outstanding to be completed in January 2022.



Typical agricultural issues encountered include:

1. Inadequate slurry storage capacity including farm yard manure storage
2. Poor separation of soiled/ clean water
3. Structural integrity of farmyard infrastructure (including open tanks and silage bases associated conduits)

Where such issues are identified the farmer is asked to submit a Farmyard Management Plan (prepared by a suitably qualified Agriculturalist) which identifies issues to be addressed and sets out a time-frame for works to be carried out and completed and compliance with GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) requirements to be achieved. Issues are in general resolved utilising a co-operative approach with the farmer. However, where blatant breaches of the Regulations are encountered or continue without cooperation, issues are cross-reported to the Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Marine (e.g. Direct discharge to watercourses, Inappropriate slurry spreading). Cross-reporting of complaints received from members of the public, where investigation validates the complaint may also transpire.

Tidy Towns 2021

The National Tidy Town results were announced on the 12th of November. Kilkenny City and Inistioge received a gold medal. Tullahought retained its silver medal status. Listerlin village won the County Endeavour Award, as they achieved the highest % increase in marks from the previous year gaining 14 marks and they also scooped the South East Covid Community Award. There were 4 new groups to the competition this year (Mooncoin, Paulstown, Dunnamaggin and Kilmoganny) bringing the total

number of Kilkenny entrants to 25 this year.

Waste Awareness Activities

In line with the commitment in the Southern Waste Regional Plan, the Council continues to engage in activities to promote waste prevention and the circular economy. • Kilkenny County Council made a successful funding application to the EPA via their Local Authority Prevention Network funding stream and received €17,250 to support 5 community projects which will promote the circular economy in early 2022.

- The Conscious Cup Campaign, promoted by community leaders in association with the Council to encourage more businesses to accept reusable cups for hot beverages.
- Reuse Month was celebrated by the Council hosting 4 webinars each Tuesday in October discussing and providing tips on how to live more sustainably.



ENVIRONMENT

Environment Education Activities

• Green Schools

An Taisce's Green School Office has indicated to Kilkenny County Council that 61 schools are due to renew their green flag before the end of the academic year. The Environmental Awareness Officer will reach out to schools to determine how many assessment visits will be required. Assessments this year will take an online format with the Environmental Awareness Officer organising a short online meeting to touch base with the school to hear about how they have progressed through the 7-step environmental programme. An Taisce is being very understanding regarding the difficulties schools are facing due to Covid restrictions and the programme has adjusted accordingly.

• Active Travel Programme

The Environmental Awareness Officer is working with the Cycling Officer to progress some elements of a wider project called "Creative Connections". The project aim is to make the lanes and school routes more commuter friendly for pupils. The pilot and first route being explored is Cootes Lane in Kilkenny City. This initiative links in with the national Safe Routes to School Programme.

Energy Management - ISO50001

Kilkenny County Council received ISO 50001 Energy Management accreditation in May 2021. A robust energy management system is operating to manage energy consumption, assess the performance of significant energy users within the organisation and realise energy saving and carbon reduction targets up to 2030 and beyond.



The projects and initiatives implemented by the Council to achieve greater energy efficiency in recent years include the Public Lighting Energy Efficiency Project, upgrade of heating systems and the building fabric of the Council's buildings; installation of energy saving devices and occupancy sensors in offices and the introduction of eco-driver training and a transport management system for the Council's fleet of vehicles.

Kilkenny Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019 -2024

The Climate Action Team updated this year's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy report and a summary of the progress report was presented back to the Climate Action Team prior to it being forwarded for appraisal to the Department of Environment, Climate, and Communications. The Strategy lists a total of 96 actions with 235 associated sub actions. In 2021, 41% of the sub actions were completed, 38% of sub actions are ongoing and 21% of sub actions remained incomplete. Further examination of the incomplete sub actions (50 in total), reveals that 31 of the actions were not completed due to the lack of financial resources, while the other 19 actions were not completed due to Covid restrictions.

Members of the Council's Climate Action Team completed a Building Capacity training course delivered as part of the Local Authority Climate Action training programme. The training supports the work of the Climate Action Team in delivering local climate action measures across all local authority functions to align and meet national obligations on climate change. The Training will also assist the Climate Action Team to prepare for the forthcoming Climate Action Plan that the Council will be required to prepare in 2022. This Plan will have to set out how the Council intends to reduce the carbon emissions associated with the delivery of its services by 7% per annum by 2030 and by 51% overall.

Council staff were invited to participate in a climate change and forest bathing activity in November to promote the work being done by the organisation in terms of climate change action and to connect our goals to the benefits of nature and wellbeing.

ENVIRONMENT



In line with HSE/Government guidelines on essential services the Carlow/Kilkenny Dog Shelter and Dog Warden Service has remained open to the public but by appointment only.

Statistics	2019	2020	2021
No. of dogs entering shelter	400	261	185
PTS (put to sleep)	3	2 (following seizure due to sheep worrying)	

River Basin Management Planning (RBMP)

The draft RBMP is on public consultation until the end of March 2022. It sets out the proposed measures that are necessary to protect and restore water quality in over 4,000 water bodies throughout the country to good status. The consultation document can be viewed on <https://www.gov.ie/en/consultation/2bda0-public-consultation-on-the-draft-river-basin-management-plan-for-ireland-2022-2027/>

Veterinary Services

2021 remained a challenging year for our service. The service helped to keep safe food on the shelves and the food supply chains open. COVID 19 issues remained challenging in the meat industry in general throughout 2021.

Q1- Q3 2021 slaughter figures were as follows - 4,968 cattle and 19,793 sheep, and 97,348 chickens were slaughtered with a corresponding number of Ante Mortem and Post Mortem Inspections conducted by Veterinary Inspectors.

In 2021, there were 178 Official Control Inspections

/ Audits conducted of food businesses and 112 Official Control Samples were taken by the Veterinary Service consisting of the following - 18 for animal remedy residues, 10 for chemicals in food, 23 water samples, 30 carcass swabs for microbes, and 30 for microbes in food. All these samples were sent to designated Official Control Laboratories in accordance with Ireland's National Official Control Sampling Plan. The Veterinary Service enabled some food businesses to adopt to the changing trading circumstances of 2021 by facilitating them to change approved activities within the confines of European Food law. The challenge of Veterinary Certification for trade with GB for food of animal origin was postponed from 2021 to July 2022. The Veterinary Service attended BREXIT /TRACES training in 2021 on this subject to enable food businesses to do this trade into the future if required. In Q4 2021 there were inquiries from a new red meat slaughterhouse who wishes to become operational in 2022. It was visited by the Veterinary Service and a pathway to

approval was outlined. During 2021 there were 51 Dog Breeding Establishment Inspections completed in conjunction with the Dog Warden Service and the Dog Shelter was inspected monthly by the veterinary service. From conversations with Food Business Operators (especially those in rural areas), they are of the view that the Pandemic lockdowns allowed people time, to look at what was available to them in their own localities and some found these local food businesses for the first time and came to value their products and become valued customers. Thus, the Pandemic has illustrated the importance of maintaining local food supply chains to local retail outlets to service their local communities and as part of the circular economy. It is a sector that should be supported and maintained by society and all government agencies, as the value to communities far outweighs pure monetary parameters i.e. reduction in food miles, maintaining a traditional skills network, less stress on animals – benefiting animal welfare, enabling people to work and shop locally often in rural locations etc.

PARKS & SPECIAL PROJECTS

Parks and Playgrounds

Annual independent inspections of all playgrounds under the care of the Parks Department were completed in December 2021. In general, the playgrounds were found to be in good condition, however, some of the older amenities such as in Thomastown, Graiguenamanagh, Castlecomer and Mooncoin were identified as needing significant refurbishment. A targeted approach will be taken to direct funding towards those playgrounds in need of repair or upgrade to ensure we maintain our entire playground stock in a satisfactory condition. This will involve in certain instances the replacement of play equipment and other upgrades to safety surfacing, gates and ancillary items such as seating.

The Parks Team will undergo training in quarterly inspections in February 2022 which will allow the team to undertake their own inspections of all 31 playgrounds during the year. These inspections are required to satisfy the insurance requirements for playgrounds. Our thanks to community groups involved in assisting us with maintaining playgrounds to such a high standard. This local involvement is invaluable in maintaining playgrounds around the County and alerting us to anything of concern requiring attention.

Above Piltown Playground which opened in 2021



Amenity Grants

The drawdown of amenity grants for 2021 funding is now complete. A total of 181 groups across the County received support under the Amenity Grant Scheme. The range of works involved tree planting, grass cutting, planting flowers, erecting signage and many other amenity type projects. An increase in the number of groups making efforts to manage their areas in a more sustainable way has been observed and is being supported under the Amenity Grant. For example, many groups are reducing the frequency of grass mowing and allowing flowering plants to grow while others are planting pollinator friendly planting

schemes with flowering plants that provide food for our essential pollinators.

The amenity grant for 2022 will be advertised shortly with a closing date for applications being set at the 25th of March, 2022.

Woodstock Gardens and Wider Estate

Trail development works funded under the Outdoor Recreational Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS), are now substantially complete. The works included - the rehabilitation of some 2kms of old Victorian Pathways linking the Brownsford Stream Waterfall and nearby Swiss Cottage ruin, back towards

the main gardens. Sections of these pathways had been lost for decades under vegetation and in order to find and restore same extensive clearance of the invasive cherry laurel had to be undertaken. The clearance works in the vicinity of the Brownsford Stream has been quite dramatic with light now getting to the forest floor for the first time in decades which will allow for natural regeneration. Thankfully, some fine specimen trees exist in this valley which will be supplemented by the planting of Hazel, Oak, Guelder Rose and Beech saplings along with a number of redwoods to complement the original Victorian planting in the vicinity. This planting will take place in

PARKS & SPECIAL PROJECTS

mid-January.

This newly restored trail will complement the existing Ladies Loop (3.0km) and Woodstock Loop (4.5km) Walks. This new trail will extent southwards from the above trails to the Brownsford Stream Waterfall, where visitors are led over a bridge and back northwards up though the newly restored pathway and onwards through the Woodstock Garden Woodland Walk and Noble Fir Avenue. Trailheads will be provided at both the Woodstock carpark and Inistioge carpark beside the GAA grounds. The total length of this new section will be circa. 3.25km's. Visitors availing of this new trail will be afforded spectacular views of the waterfall from the bridge and overhead views of the wider watercourse as they meander up the hill away from the stream. Trail signage is currently being designed and once installed the new trail will be officially opened to the public.

In the gardens, staff will undertake a significant replanting of the herbaceous borders in the Walled Garden which are now over 15 years old and are in need of renewal.



The box hedging which is infested with box blight will also be removed and replaced with a more disease resistant evergreen hedge and the perennial planting will be refreshed with new planting of plants popular in the Victorian era. Also, in the gardens, the ruins of Woodstock House are being compromised by seedling trees which have taken root in the mortar in the walls and will cause problems to the structure of the building as they grow. An ambitious scheme of tree surgery and removal will take place in February by expert tree surgeons with previous experience in conservation of buildings. The top of Woodstock house will be accessed by means of a large crane to enable the tree surgeons reach the tree roots and remove them in a safe and careful manner.

In December 2021, Woodstock was awarded a grant of c.€56,000 under the Disability Participation Fund through the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. The grant is very welcome to support increasing access to those with disabilities in



the gardens. The grant will support the purchase of a mobility buggy which will accommodate wheelchairs and allow visitors with mobility impairment access parts of the garden they would not have been able to reach before. The buggy will be driven by Woodstock staff and will be available free of charge. The grant will also provide for the installation of an accessible play ship structure in the woodland playground, which will have a ramped access to the structure so children confined to wheelchairs can play alongside other children. The provision of the above will complement the works planned for later this year, funded under 2021 Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme to make the gardens more accessible to people of varying mobility.

PARKS & SPECIAL PROJECTS

South East Greenway

The construction of the South East Greenway over a length of 24km has been divided into a number of Lots, some of the progress to-date is provided hereunder:-

Construction: Construction of Lot 1(Mount Elliot to Rosbercon) and Lot 3 (New Ross Boatyard to Glenmore) are at an advanced stage and now have the final paved surface and fencing installed. The installation of the public lighting in the urban section has commenced and is expected to be completed by the end of January.

In Ferrybank (Lot 2) the final paved surfaced is scheduled for completion in February. The construction of the access ramp up on to the Abbey Road will also be completed in February. This ramp will be 90 metres in length and constructed at a 1:20 gradient to ensure a smooth transition over the level difference between the Greenway and the Abbey Road Bridge.



Detail Design: Landowner agreements on the accommodation works for Lots 4 – 7 continue to progress. The detailed design and tender documents for Lot 4 (New Ross to Mount Elliott) and Lot 5 (Ferrybank to Aylwardstown) will be finalised by the end of January and construction tenders will be advertised shortly thereafter. In preparation for the award of the Lot 5 contract a Part 8 Planning Application is being prepared for a temporary construction compound.

Railway Abandonment: Kilkenny Council's Road Section continue to prepare detailed mapping to facilitate the transfer of the railway lands from CIE to Kilkenny County Council.

Links to Slieverue and Glenmore: Roadplan Consulting are investigating the potential route options identified during the preliminary assessment and have commenced engagement with landowners.

The revised expected date for the full completion of the Greenway as advised to TII is now Autumn 2023.

Above images shows the construction of the ramped access to the Abbey Road Bridge



2021 Outdoor Recreational Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS)

Official funding agreement offers were received by the Council from the Department of Rural and Community Development for the 2021 ORIS applications in December. The Agreements cover the 7 projects funded under Measure 1, the 2 projects funded under Measure 2 and the Measure 3 and Project Development applications. The total allocation secured amounts to €1,063,865 and under the funding agreement the Council is required to provide an additional circa. €120,000 match funding.

Design and contract preparation works will commence shortly to advance the above and to ensure that each project is delivered in accordance with funding award criteria. These projects when complete will add significant value to the already impressive outdoor recreational offering within the County and help strengthen the outdoor Kilkenny brand.

PARKS & SPECIAL PROJECTS

KLP Partnership Projects

Abbey Hall Recreational Area – Graiguenamanagh

Works to rehabilitate and enhance the Abbey Hall recreational and amenity space is expected to be completed by the end of January and handed back to the local Abbey Hall Committee. The completion of this project will bring a much loved public amenity, in the heart of the town back into use for the public to enjoy free of charge. Works were undertaken over three levels which include the installation of a multi-games 3G Sports surface on the lower tier. The rehabilitation of retaining walls, hard and soft landscaping within the middle tier, the installation of ornate and safety railings, lighting, the restoration of the Hall clock and the installation of a replacement bell in the bell tower.

This project is being progressed under the LEADER Programme 2014-2020 with match funding from the Council and Community. As part of the arrangement the Council has taken charge of the project design and contract administration.

Before and After Images of Multi-games area – Lower Tier



Image of enhanced amenity space–Middle Tier

The Graiguenamanagh Men's Shed

Works to retro-fit and refurbish the disused toilet block on the Convent Road to facilitate a new workshop for the Graiguenamanagh Men's Shed are entering the final phase and it is expected the building will be completed by the end of February.

Works continued on the internal fit-out over December and when complete will include a work area, kitchenette, universal accessible toilet and storage area. The external cladding, railings, paving along with the installation of green living roof will be undertaken over the coming weeks. The amenity space to the rear within the Library / Health Centre courtyard is now completed. The completed project, whilst small in scale will provide the Men's Shed with a very comfortable workable space that allows for the pursuit of multiple craft activities.



This project is also being progressed under the LEADER Programme 2014-2020 with match funding from the Council. As part of the arrangement the Council has taken charge of the project design and contract administration. The Graiguenamanagh Men's Shed are currently finalising a long-term lease agreement with Kilkenny Council County for the use of this building.

COMMUNITY

Kilkenny LCDC

Community Activity Fund

Kilkenny LCDC have been allocated €272,638. This fund will be administered as part of the Community Enhancement Programme. The Scheme was advertised on 5th January with grants of up to €1,000, €5,000 and €20,000. The closing date for receipt of applications is Friday, 2nd February, 2022. Application form and guidelines are available on the Council website. https://www.kilkennycoco.ie/eng/services/community_culture/grants/community-activities-fund-2022.html

Rural Regeneration Development Fund

The Kilkenny County Council application for funding towards the pre planning/development of Callan Friary Complex/Upper Bridge St Regeneration was successful with €861,867 approved under the RRDF fund. The plan is focused on the regeneration of the historic core of Callan Town and will re-develop existing historical buildings to provide a library, youth, community, arts space and a remote working hub.

Town Centre Masterplan Initiative

Kilkenny secured funding of €100,000 for the preparation of a town centre masterplan for Urlingford. This funding was received from the Department of Rural & Community Development as part of the Town Centre First Policy.

Disability Participation and Awareness Fund 2021

Kilkenny County Council were approved a grant for €28,771 for an Access Loo Service for Kilkenny.

Pride of Place

The Pride of Place National Awards has once again been cancelled. The awards night was due to take place in Kerry in February 2022.

2022 Kilkenny County Council Grants Booklet

The 2022 Kilkenny County Council grants booklet will go live in early February 2022, hard copies of the popular grants booklet will also be available.

Decade of Centenaries: What happened in 2021 and what's planned for 2022

Kilkenny County Council has received an allocation of €50,000 for the Decade of Centenaries Programme 2022, from the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media. The Heritage Office will be inviting applications for this programme in January. To find out about the 13 projects funded in 2021 (commemorations, films, podcasts, radio programmes, drama, commemorative garden, archives, lectures, and brochures) see <https://kilkennyheritage.ie/2022/01/kilkenny-county-council-decade-of-centenaries-programme-2021-3/>

HERITAGE

199 Swift nest sites found in Kilkenny

An audit of swifts commissioned by the Heritage Office in 2021 identified 199 swift nest sites in 51 buildings across 13 towns in the County. The survey findings and recommendations will be shared with the Planning Department and relevant property owners in order to help protect this bird whose numbers are in sharp decline globally. A number of swift boxes will also be installed in 2022. The audit was undertaken by Birdwatch Ireland with the help of the public and local volunteers and was co-funded by NPWS under the National Biodiversity Action Plan.



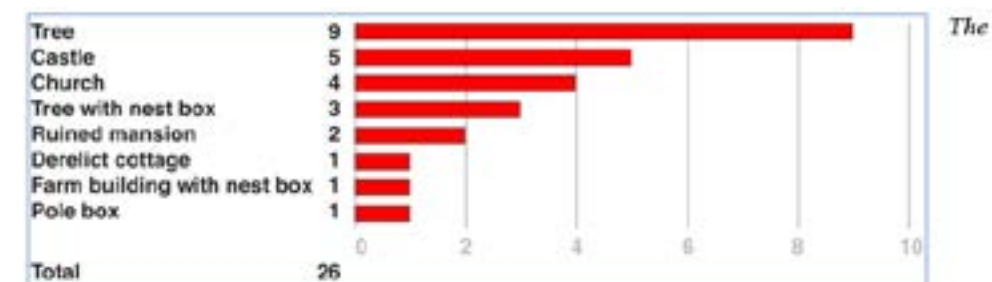
Total no. nest sites	Kilkenny City	Thomastown	Graigie	Callan	Gowran	Bennettsbridge
199	76	26	21	19	17	13

Towns with the highest no. of swift nest sites in Kilkenny



Barn Owls faring well in Kilkenny

A county wide survey of barn owls commissioned by the Heritage Office in 2021 shows the first evidence of Barn Owl population increases in the County in the last fifty years. Barn Owls (a protected species of high conservation concern) were recorded in 68% of the 10km squares in the county, and their geographic distribution has increased significantly (666%) in Kilkenny over the past ten years. The project included a successful awareness campaign and citizen science element managed by the Heritage Office, e.g. of the 26 nest sites identified, 12 were reported to the project by the public. The audit was undertaken by Birdwatch Ireland and co-funded by NPWS under the National Biodiversity Action Plan. The findings and recommendations of the report will help inform policies and actions for the long-term survival of these threatened birds.



types of nest sites used by barn owls in Kilkenny 2021. This information helps inform future policy for the protection of barn owls.

Film: Farming with Barn Owls in Kilkenny

A short film featuring Kilkenny farmer Nicky Murphy was produced for the Heritage Office by Birdwatch Ireland in 2021. It shows how Nicky and his family have welcomed barn owls to their farm and no longer use rat poison to control rats, preferring to let the barn owls do the job. The film was aired on RTE's "Ear to the Ground" in Dec 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WWhV0Bt-Bqog>

HERITAGE

30 wetlands surveyed

30 wetland sites throughout Kilkenny were surveyed in 2021, including bogs, wet woodland, lakes and wet grassland. The survey assessed the conservation value, threats, damage, and management of the sites. This is Phase 2 of a county wetland audit which commenced in 2020 and identified approx. 250 areas of wetland in the County. The conservation of wetlands is vital to meet our biodiversity and climate action commitments. The findings and recommendations will inform future biodiversity and climate action. The project was commissioned by the Heritage Office, undertaken by Wetland Surveys Ireland, and co-funded by the Heritage Council.

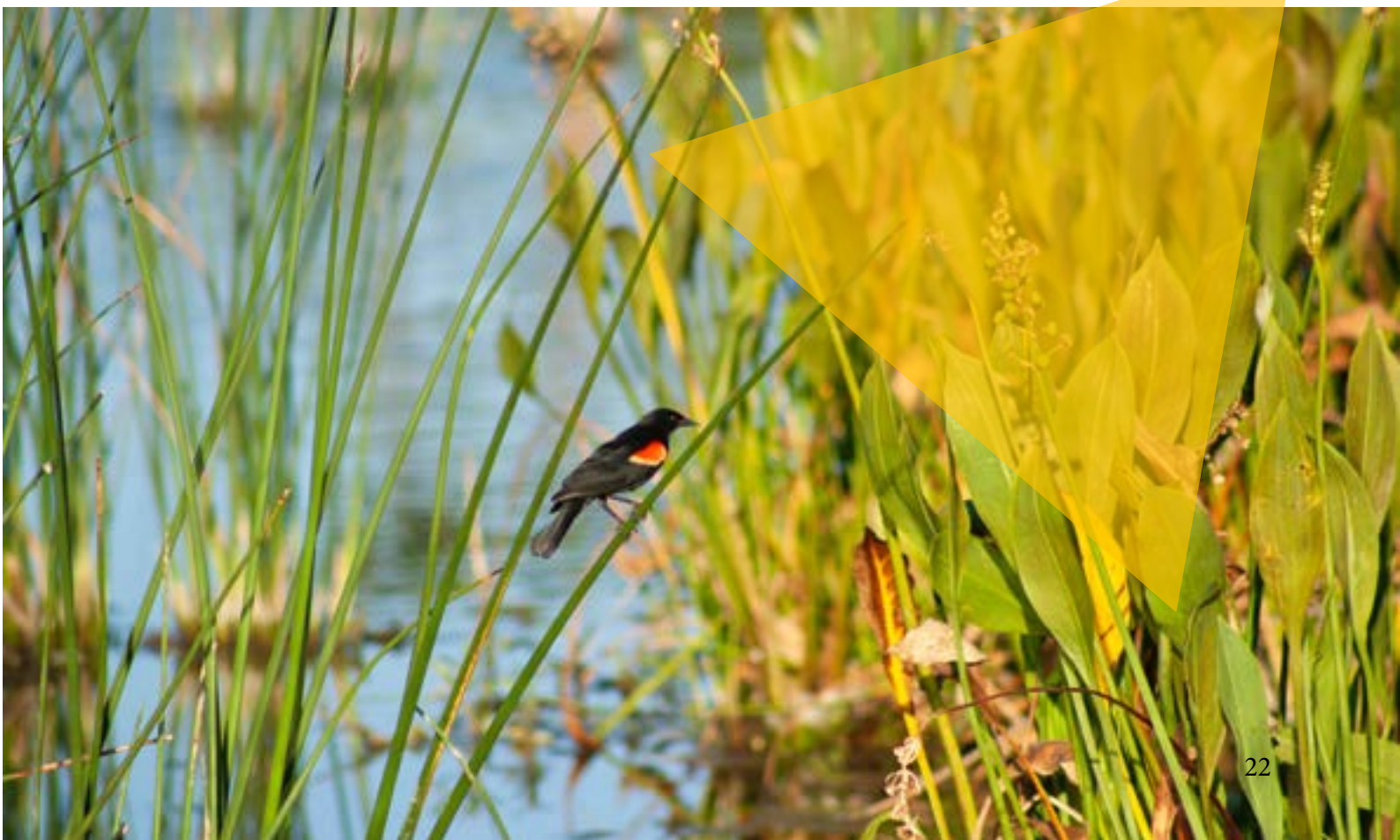
Total no. of sites surveyed in 2021	Sites of national conservation value	Sites of county conservation value	Sites high local conservation value	Sites of local conservation value	Sites of no conservation value
30	1	2	5	21	1

World Wetlands Day 2022

World Wetlands Day is on Wed 2nd February, 2022. Why not organise an event (subject to COVID) or a project about wetlands in your area? Register your project with the hundreds of others taking place around the world. Projects can take place on 2nd Feb, or the weekend before/after. Details at <https://www.worldwetlandsday.org/>

A snapshot of local authority actions to help pollinators in 2021

The breadth of work that Local Authorities across Ireland have undertaken in 2021 to help pollinators and support the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan is contained in a recent report by the National Biodiversity Data Centre. It gives a snapshot of 5 actions carried out by each local authority, including Kilkenny County Council, and enables knowledge exchange between Councils. https://pollinators.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/All-Ireland-Pollinator-Plan-2021_Councils-Partners-Annual-Review.pdf












LEO / ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Oifig Fiontair Áitiúil
Local Enterprise Office









2021 Key Outcomes #MakingItHappen

 1,069 Employed in LEO portfolio of businesses in Kilkenny	 81 New jobs created in LEO supported businesses in 2021	 €247,785 Business Expansion Grants approved to 14 businesses Forecasted job creation 40 over three years
 €264,470 Priming Grants approved to 4 businesses Forecasted job creation 91 over three years	 €56,111 Feasibility/Innovation Grants approved to 4 businesses	 €90,000 Grad Start Funding approved to 3 businesses
 €190,329 Approved to 86 businesses in Trading Online Vouchers	 €670,234 In direct financial assistance approved to 30 businesses	 €17,712 Approved to 8 businesses in Green for Micro Vouchers

LEO / ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



2021 Key Outcomes #MakingItHappen

 <p>4 LEO supported businesses transferred to Enterprise Ireland</p>	 <p>€11,868 Approved to 6 businesses in Technical Assistance for Micro Exporter Grants</p>	 <p>706 clients availed of one-to-one Mentoring to assist them with issues within their business</p>
 <p>797 Clients participated in 74 Training & Management Development Programmes</p>	 <p>48 Businesses received strategic mentoring under the Local Enterprise Office Covid-19 Client Stimulus Fund</p>	 <p>175 Clients participated in 14 Start Your Own Business Courses</p>
 <p>525 Students from 15 schools participated in the Student Enterprise Programme</p>	 <p>12 Businesses participated on Lean for Micro to assist them with their competitiveness & innovation</p>	 <p>12 Clients submitted Micro Finance Loan Applications</p>

LEO / ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SPRING TRAINING PROGRAMME

Lunch & Learn Webinar – ‘Local Enterprise Office Services’

Local Enterprise Office has a range of supports available for local businesses and in order to promote same we have organised a Lunch & Learn Webinar which will take place on Wednesday the 19th January. The aim of our Lunch & Learn webinar is to provide local entrepreneurs with information about Local Enterprise Office services to ensure that Kilkenny businesses can avail of the range supports and opportunities for their small business.

Lunch and Learn topics will include:

- Business Expansion Grant
- Priming Grant
- Feasibility Grant
- TAME Grant
- Green for Micro
- Lean for Micro
- Trading Online Voucher
- Grad Start
- Mentoring
- Training Courses

To book a place on our Lunch and Learn webinar, please visit

<https://www.localenterprise.ie/Kilkenny/Training-Events/Online-Bookings/Lunch-Learn-Webinar-Local-Enterprise-Office-Services.html>.



‘Starting a Business’ Programme Spring 2022

This 10-day training programme will commence on Tuesday, February 1st. The aim of this course is to help aspiring entrepreneurs become 'start-up' ready, focusing on how to prepare business plans, what market research and marketing tools are available, how to manage cash flow and making the most from technology. This is a practical course which will provide an understanding of all the requirements and challenges you are likely to encounter. For further information or to book a place, visit <https://www.localenterprise.ie/Kilkenny/Training-Events/Online-Bookings/Starting-a-Business-Programme-Spring-2022.html>.

Funding for Innovation, R&D for your Business - Webinar

This webinar will take place on Thursday January 27th January.

The aim of this event is to provide attendees with an understanding of the Agile Innovation Fund and how it can be utilised to support businesses seeking to undertake innovation and research activities. For further details, please visit <https://www.localenterprise.ie/Kilkenny/Training-Events/Online-Bookings/Funding-for-Innovation-R-D-for-your-Business-Webinar.html>.



Public Procurement and Tendering Advisory Clinic

This Clinic will be delivered by Mike McGrath, Managing Director of Arvo, a Procurement Consultancy which helps organisations to achieve procurement objectives, business efficiencies and public procurement compliance. In the past, Mike was employed by the European Commission eTEG Group, where the e-tendering Expert Group (eTEG) defined a blueprint for public procurement within the EU to ensure wide accessibility including cross-border,

LEO / ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SME inclusiveness, wide interoperability, transparency, traceability and accountability. For many years, Arvo have worked with buyers and suppliers supporting their public tender activities. In the planned clinic on Public Procurement and Tendering, Mike will be available for 1 hour to discuss;

- Types of Procurement Procedures available
- Contract + Tender Templates
- Advice on defining a Specification and Award Criteria.
- Basics of publishing a Tender.
- All related queries on Public Procurement and Tendering

To book a place, please visit <https://www.localenterprise.ie/Kilkenny/Training-Events/Online-Bookings/Public-Procurement-and-Tendering-Advisory-Clinic-One-to-One-Appointments.html>.

Marketing Advisory Clinics

The Local Enterprise Office will provide Marketing Clinics to Kilkenny businesses in order to gain valuable information on how to promote and market your business. Appointments are one to one, 45-minute telephone meetings. To book a clinic, please visit <https://www.localenterprise.ie/Kilkenny/Training-Events/Online-Bookings/Marketing-Mentoring-Clinic-One-to-One-Appointments.html>.

TOURISM

While 2021 was certainly a better year for tourism than 2020, it has been a far more difficult year than we all expected it to be. All of our partners and stakeholders in the tourism sector can be proud of how we pulled together in Kilkenny to fight for sector survival and to do everything we could to support our local tourism and hospitality sector.

Kilkenny Welcome Team

December saw the work of our 'Welcome Team' acknowledged by the Public Participation Network at its Annual Kilkenny Community and Voluntary Awards 2021.



Kilkenny Volunteer Centre announced 8 category winners but due to public health advice, the Awards Ceremony took place virtually and a video was produced featuring the work

of all the category winners. We are delighted to say that the Kilkenny Welcome Team were runners up under the 'Arts Culture and Heritage Category'. This dedicated team of volunteers are worthy recipients of their award.

Kilkenny Tourism

Kilkenny Tourism worked with Kilkenny's best food producers and top restaurants to launch a third 'festive' cookbook.

Entitled 'Kilkenny Christmas Traditions' The on-line book was a huge success with 4,355 page visits and a reach of 70,500 guests through social media. Kilkenny Tourism promoted cookbook recipes and all Yulefest events on its social media platforms throughout December. 'Kilkenny Christmas Traditions' is available online at <https://visitkilkenny.ie/christmas-cookbook/>



TOURISM

As we look forward to next year, we face continued challenges but we can look ahead to recovery with cautious optimism. We are seeing encouraging signs such as an uplift in repeat bookings from Springtime as positive signals for the second half of 2022. The Tourism team will continue to support the sector to meet the challenges facing it head on so that tourism can recover and get back to growth. We will focus our efforts in 2022 on the development of Kilkenny's Destination Experience Development Plan led by Failte Ireland.

While there is no doubt, we still have another very tough year ahead of us, we do have reasons to be hopeful. Tourism will recover and it will come back stronger. Our priority remains the same – supporting the survival of tourism businesses and driving the recovery of the sector here in Kilkenny.



HOUSING

Housing Capital – December 2021

151 units delivered in 2021 as follows:

Glebeside, Donaguile, Castlecomer

33 units completed June 2021 – KCC Direct Build

Designed by McGarry NiEanaigh Architects

Contractor:- Cleary Doyle Construction Ltd



Pairc Nua [The Broguemaker], Castlecomer Road, Kilkenny City

18 units completed June 2021 – KCC Direct Build

Designed by CJ Falconer and Associates

Contractor:- Nevin Construction



HOUSING

22 units completed June 2021 – KCC Direct Build

Designed by CJ Falconer and Associates

Contractor:- Thos. Kelly & Sons



Blackwater Grove, Lower Kilmacow, Co. Kilkenny

16 units completed April 2021 – KCC Turnkey

David Flynn Construction



Seville Rise, Margaret's Field, Callan Road, Kilkenny City

40 units completed January 2021 – AHB Turnkey – Respond Housing



HOUSING

Ayrfield, Kilkenny City
8 apartments, completed May and December 2021
Kilkenny County Council Direct Upgrade/Refurbishment

Cois Na Bearu, Graignamanagh
14 units completed January 2021 – AHB Turnkey – Co-operative Housing



Due for completion in January 2022

- 8 units at Pennefeather Court, Hebron Road, Kilkenny (Turnkey)



- 17 Units at Limegrove, Belmont, Ferrybank [Turnkey]



- 58 units at Pennefeather Green, Hebron Road, Kilkenny (Turnkey)



- 2 Units at Shanganny, Jenkinstown (KCC Direct Build)



- 25 Units at Ladywell, Thomastown (KCC direct build)



- 23 Units at New Orchard, Kilkenny City [AHB Calf Turnkey – Cluid]
- 12 Units Brother Thomas Place, Church Lane, Kilkenny GSC

KCC Projects due to start in January 2022 [10 Units]

- 6 units at Golf Links Road, (Mulhalls Shop) Kilkenny (KCC direct build)
- 2 Units at Inchacarron, Mullinavat (KCC direct build)
- 2 Units at Old Fire Station, Graignamanagh (KCC direct build)

Tender Stage [90 units]

- 88 units (houses/apartments) and community facility at Crokers Hill, Kennyswell Road, Kilkenny (KCC direct build)
- 1 Accessible bungalow, Circular Road, Kilkenny (KCC direct build)
- 1 Accessible bungalow, Haggardsgreen, Callan (KCC direct build)

Other Units 'Under Construction' as at 31st December 2021 – 139 units

Monthly Statistics

December 2021

LA/RAS/Leasing allocations up to end of December (offers made):	14
Number of LA tenancies surrendered in:	3
Tenant Liaison Officer cases in December:	37
Maintenance Calls for December:	620
Maintenance Calls year to date	5,744

HOMELESS SERVICES SUMMARY DECEMBER 2021

Homeless Presentations	13
Homeless Assessment Outcomes	
Prevention & Interventions	4
Emergency Service	6
Not eligible / Did not avail of service	3
HAP Place Finder Service	
No of Homeless HAP tenancies @ 1 st day of month	97
No of Homeless HAP tenancies created during month	3
No of Homeless HAP tenancies in place @ last day of month	100
Number of Homeless HAP tenancy breakdowns	0
Other Social Housing Tenancies supported /created during month	2
Households in Temporary Emergency B&B accommodation	0
Households in Temporary Emergency B&B accommodation with families	0
Households (singles / couples) in Transition Emergency Accommodation (Own Front Door)	15
Households (Families) in Transition Emergency Accommodation (OFD)	7

SOCIAL HOUSING SUPPORT APPLICATION SUMMARY DECEMBER 2021

Number awaiting Social Housing Support at Dec 31 st (Gross Need)	1,619
Number awaiting Social Housing Support at Dec 31 st (Net Need)	686
No. of Social Housing Applications received in Dec 31 st	59
No. of applications incomplete / awaiting further information / clarification	42
No. of applications validated and ready for assessment during the month	20
No. of applications assessed during December	14
No. of applications awaiting assessment as at Dec 31 st	46

HOUSING ASSISTANCE PAYMENT SUMMARY UP TO DECEMBER 31st 2021

Number of active HAP tenancies to December 31 st	774
New HAP tenancies set up	151
HAP tenants allocated Social Housing	138
Closed HAP Tenancies	87
HAP Rent Reviews	205
Other tenancy amendments	599
HAP Calls Received 2021 year to date	3,715
HAP Calls Received December	283

Housing Loan Activity 1st January 2021 to 31st December, 2021					
Loan Type	No. Received	No. Approved	Amt approved	No. Paid	Amt Paid
Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan	61	22	€2,841,652	21	€2,696,352
Reconstruction Loan	0	0	€0	0	€0
Caravan Loan	0	0	€0	0	€0
Total	61	22	€2,841,652	21	€2,696,352

Grants Approved & Committed up to 31st December 2021		
Scheme	No.	Amount
HGD - Housing Adaptation Grant	142	€1,263,925
MAG - Mobility Aid Grant	32	€128,688
HOP - Housing Aid for Older Persons	165	€980,094
Total	339	€2,443,405

Grants Paid out up to 31st December, 2021		
Scheme	No.	Amount
HGD - Housing Adaptation Grant	85	€687,073
MAG - Mobility Aid Grant	25	€108,548
HOP - Housing Aid for Older Persons	124	€705,480
Total	234	€1,509,081

FIRE SERVICES

Capital Projects

Assessment of the tenders for the construction of a new fire station for Urlingford is underway. Construction of the new fire station is planned to commence in Q1 2022

Fire Safety Certificates

- 96 applications for fire safety certificates were received in 2021. 122 were received for the same period last year.

Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003

- Fire Prevention staff made targeted inspections of premises both to provide advice and to enforce legislation.
- 76 Licence Applications were processed under Section 24 of the Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003.
- 7 Dangerous Substance licence applications were received and assessed to date
- 70 Fire safety inspections of premises have been carried in 2021 during the pandemic.

Community Fire Safety

A number of Home Fire Safety Visits were carried out by Kilkenny City Fire Brigade personnel in December. Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSVs) are a significant element of our Community Fire Safety Strategy. Fire service personnel call to houses by appointment and gives fire safety advice to the occupants. A HFSV is usually carried out by two uniformed operational fire service personnel. They use a checklist to ask questions, try to identify the fire safety hazards in the house and recommend solutions. Fire safety advice is given, fire safety leaflets handed out and smoke detectors may be provided and fitted, where necessary. They also discuss the occupant's response should a fire occur in their home. The fire fighters leave the occupier with further advice and information, to also make available to other members of the household. The primary aim of these HFSVs is to reduce the numbers of fires, deaths and injuries in the home by firstly preventing fires occurring and to ensure that when fires do occur, the occupiers are given early warning, and they know how to react quickly and safely.

The fire service received a donation from Bishops Meadows Residents Association for Kilkenny Helping the Homeless CLG Charity, to express thanks to Kilkenny Fire Service for installing free smoke alarms under the HFSV programme. (see picture below)



FIRE SERVICES

Operations

Fire Brigades responded to 725 turnouts up to the 18th December 2021. The same period last year we responded to 770 turnouts. Graiguenamanagh and Thomastown fire brigades carried out a risk premises familiarisation visit to the new HSE Primary Care Centre in Thomastown, County Kilkenny. Firefighter John O'Neill, Callan Fire Brigade saved a member of the public's life on Friday evening 10th December 2021 on William Street, Kilkenny. Whilst off duty, John performed key live saving CPR skills on a man to keep him alive prior to the arrival of the Ambulance Service.

All our fire brigades responded to Storm Barra as it brought

widespread severe and damaging winds and heavy rain across Ireland. Impacts were felt across the County, with fallen trees county wide including a trampoline being blown away, power outages to premises and travel disruption with several road closures. The Fire Service is a very resilient and useful resource to the Local Authority in that Brigades (trained and equipped manpower) can be mobilised within minutes of an emergency in their area and thus were able to alleviate any disruptions caused by Storm Barra in an effective and efficient manner.



The Gallery, Art Show on KCLR

In partnership with KCLR the Arts Office hosted three special episodes of The Gallery, which aired on Wednesday 8th, 15th & 22nd December. All three episodes were devoted to books and writing and the content was inspired by the Arts Offices Your Voice Matters project. This project saw the Arts Office work with Kilkenny writers to gather feedback on their needs and aspirations, ensuring that the voice of the writer remains at the core of future programmes. The show aired after the 6pm news until 7pm and can be listened back to on <https://kclr96fm.com/the-gallery-on-books-and-writing-22nd-dec/>

Kilkenny Writer shortlisted for the IWC Novel fair

Kilkenny writer Orla Mackey has been selected as a finalist in Irish Writers Centre 2022 Novel Fair. Orla is delighted and highlights that ‘the support of the Kilkenny Arts Office has meant that I've been afforded the space, time and motivation to keep writing. I've been lucky enough to benefit from a mentorship, a bursary and a residency, all of which have contributed massively to helping me complete the first draft of a novel and to my success in being selected for Novel Fair 2022’ The Irish Writers Centre Novel Fair 2022 marks the anniversary of Novel Fair. Described by the Irish Times as a 'Dragon's Den for writers,' the Novel Fair is an Irish Writers Centre initiative which annually selects twelve up-and-coming writers and introduces them to top publishers and literary agents.

Emerging Curator Development Programme

The Arts Office has invited applications from Emerging Curators for their 2022 Emerging Curator Development Programme (ECDP). The Arts Office initiated this programme in 2019, to support emerging curators in developing and progressing their skills, experience and ultimately their careers. Deadline for receipt of applications is January 31st 2022.

Arts Act Grants 2022

The annual call out for applications for the Arts Act Grants 2022 was advertised with a deadline for the 24th January, 2022. The 2003 Arts Act permits a local authority to provide financial assistance for the purposes of stimulating public interest in the arts, promoting the knowledge, appreciation and practices of the arts or improving standards in the arts.

Kilkenny Poetry Broadsheet – 22nd Edition

Irish writer Elaine Feeney will edit the 22nd edition of the Kilkenny Poetry Broadsheet. Elaine Feeney lectures at The National University of Ireland, Galway, where she is also a founding member of the Tuam Oral History Project. She has published three poetry collections including The Radio was Gospel & Rise. She will provide a workshop for Kilkenny writers looking to submit poems to the broadsheet where they will get the opportunity to refine their writing skills before submitting their poetry. The call out for submissions of poetry will go out in January.

Poetry Phone

We have selected a new range of poems for the poetry phone. This new selection was undertaken by writer Elaine Feeney. Scenographer, Bridget Ní Dhuinn Belcher created a beautiful exhibition relating to Breda Barrett’s poem. Anyone can ring the Poetry Phone by dialing 1800 272 994 and select a number between 0 and 9 to listen to the poems.

The expenditure by service division to the end of December is set out in table 1. Total Expenditure for the period was €101.46m compared with the annual budget of €89.9m.

Table 1	Actual YTD November 2021	Budget Full Year 2021
	€'000's	€'000's
Housing & Building	22,932	20,085
Road Transport & Safety	27,680	25,500
Water Services	7,713	7,115
Development Management	11,305	10,679
Environmental Services	12,152	11,748
Recreation & Amenity	7,447	6,647
Agriculture, Education, Health, Welfare	615	672
Miscellaneous Services	11,615	7,516
OVERALL TOTAL	101,459	89,962

Finance update

The Covid-19 restrictions in place for the first six months of 2021 had a serious impact on the Council’s income streams to date especially commercial rates and car parking income. A significant number of businesses had to close due to Covid. The Government announced an extension of the commercial rates waiver for the full year for businesses impacted. The quarter four waiver was more targeted than the waiver that applied for the nine-month period. The value of the waiver for the full year amounts to €6.0m and compensation has been provided by Government for 75% of this amount with the balance to be paid early in 2022. The cost of the waiver is included under Miscellaneous Services in the December Accounts. The full year waiver has now been applied to all eligible rate accounts and businesses have been notified accordingly.

Income from car parking is also significantly below budget with only 75% of the annual budget figure received to the end of December. The forecast shortfall for the full year is approximately €600k. A submission has been made by the Sector to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage seeking compensation for the shortfall. The Department has announced that funding will be provided for the Sector however the detailed allocation for each Local Authority has not yet been confirmed. The bank overdraft facility was not utilised in the twelve month period to the end of December 2021. The draft Financial Statements for 2021 will be prepared in the coming weeks and will be presented to Council at the March meeting.

Rates Revaluation

Following the full revaluation of all commercial properties

carried out by the Valuation office in 2017, 197 customers with a total rate demand value of €4.5m appealed their new valuation to the Valuation Tribunal. To date 187 appeals have been completed. 147 of the 187 appeals have resulted in a decrease in rates. The total income lost to date stands at €840k. If this trend continues the total loss of income may be in excess of €1m once all appeal decisions have been completed by the Tribunal.

LIBRARY

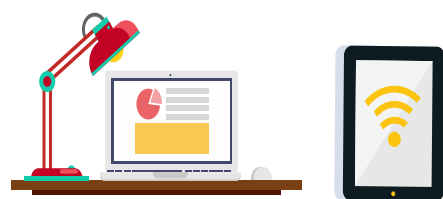
December 2021



17,428
Items borrowed



6,196
visitors



617
Internet and Wifi sessions

Those were the Days



As part of our Healthy Ireland at Your Library Programme, we are delighted to develop a recording of a special musical arrangement entitled "Those were the Days". The recording celebrates some classic songs and sing-along-tunes with a bit of fun and comedy thrown in too!

Starring Ann Moylan, Marie Moylan, David O'Rourke and Patricia Owens, this session was recorded in Castlecomer

Library, and features some popular songs like "Danny Boy", "Those were the Days" & "Show me the way to go home". This musical session was arranged and produced by Ann Moylan, a well-known music teacher, performer, music therapist and Choral Director of Cairdeas – Kilkenny Parkinson's Choir.

The recording has been sent to all nursing homes in County Kilkenny so that residents could enjoy watching it over the festive period. It is available to watch on Kilkenny Library's Facebook page/our website/and the Kilkenny County Council You Tube channel. This event was funded under the Healthy Ireland at Your Library programme for 2021.

>€85,000 in Grants 2021

Throughout 2021, we continued to research and apply for a variety of relevant grants. We drew down over €85,000 from a range of funds such as Dormant Accounts, ETB and Creative Ireland. These allowed us to continue to develop programmes such as OWLS Speech and Language Programme, Bookville Kilkenny, Sewing and Art workshops, and allowed us to invest in digital assistive technology for social inclusion.

We were delighted to be granted €7,000 funding under the Mitigation Against Educational Disadvantage ETB funding stream. The money has been used to purchase sewing machines and art equipment to help people develop new skills. Workshops and classes will be rolled out as soon as our in-person events restart.



LIBRARY



Our new Oral Language literacy programme focuses on developing the oral language skills of 0-3 year olds, by helping support parents, childcare practitioners and teachers to ensure a good oral language base from an early age, and reduce potential literacy problems in the future.

These short online workshops with Speech and Language Therapist Melissa Lanigan, Behavioural Specialist and Trainee Educational Psychologist Simone Coleman continue to run through December and January on Tuesday nights at 9pm, with Children's storytimes on Saturday mornings at 11.30am with Storyteller Neil Griffiths. Short tips are posted each night through December and January at 9pm. These are proving extremely popular amongst parents and childcare workers.

Online Services usage:



1,920
eAudiobooks borrowed
▲ 25% on 2020



5,236
eNewspapers borrowed
▼ 11% on 2020



1,172
eBooks borrowed
▼ 11% on 2020



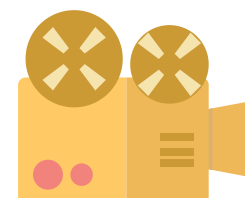
389
Online Course sessions
▼ 58% on 2020



955
eMagazines borrowed
▲ 24% on 2020



344
Songs accessed
▼ 77% on 2020



Digital Engagement

Our staff have prepared, recorded, edited and published **448** posts on our social media platforms in December. Our video views for the month were **9,033**.



Kilkenny County Council
Comhairle Chontae Chill Chainnigh