

CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT

JANUARY 2023 ISSUE

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS

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

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

30th January, 2023

Deadline for applications for the Arts Act Grants & Tyrone Guthrie Residency is 4.00 p.m. Monday 30th January 2023.

31st January, 2023

Closing date for receipt of applications for the 2023 Emerging Curator Development Programme is 4.00 p.m. Tuesday, 31st January.

1st February, 2023

Applications by private owners or community groups for funding under the CMF must be made to Kilkenny County Council by 1st February 2023.

15th February, 2023

Closing date for receipt of applications for Festival Grants.

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CORPORATE

YULEFEST KILKENNY



ROADS

MAJOR PROJECTS

(Included in NDP- Funded by TII)

N24 Waterford to Cahir Scheme

The public consultation No 2 on Alternatives & Options is complete and the Design Team is working on corridor options. Some site investigations/studies have taken place with more to commence in February 2022 which will feed into the selection of the preferred corridor.

MINOR PROJECTS

(Not included in NDP-Funded by TII)

N24 Tower Road (Safety Scheme)

The tender in respect of construction of the scheme was awarded to Wills Bros Ltd, Co. Mayo on the 1st December, 2022. Construction is scheduled to commence on the 16th January, 2023 with a 12 month time period envisaged. The overall outturn cost for the project will be in excess of €10m.

N77 Ballyragget to Ballynaslee

The formal Notice to Treat under CPO procedures issued to all affected landowners and occupiers in mid-September 2022 and responses to same continue to be received and evaluated. A reminder to those who have not responded in respect of the notice to treat was issued on the 2nd December 2022. The preparation of contract documents is on-going. The overall outturn cost for the project is expected to be in excess of €10m.

N24 Carrick Road

Applications for approval to An Bord Pleanála for 177AE Planning application and Compulsory Purchase Order Approval was made on the 25th November, 2022. The public consultation period runs until the 20th January 2023. A decision is not expected until Q3 2023.

OTHER

Pavement Schemes

The N10 Danesfort Pavement Improvement Scheme commenced construction during November. Weather conditions halted the works. Works to be completed in Q1 2023.

The N77 Georges Tree to Dunmore West (*Phase 1 Ardloo Junction North*) Pavement Improvement Works has been awarded. The works will start in Q1 2023 and are weather dependent.

ENVIRONMENT

Climate Action

Highlights in 2022

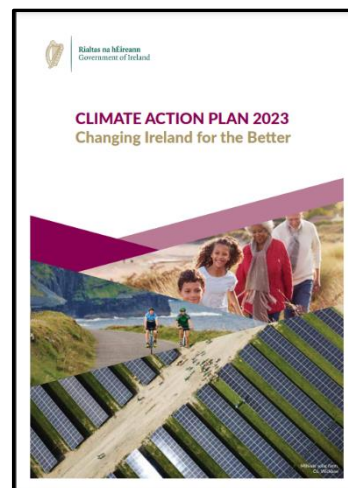
- New Climate Action Team established in September
- Climate Action Coordinator appointed
- Process to appoint a Community Climate Action Officer commenced.
- Sanction from the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications for appointment of additional Climate Action Officer.
- Advanced Planning Phase of Kilkenny Climate Action Plan commenced. The 12-month statutory plan period will commence in March 2023.
- Preparation of "Kilkenny Climate Change Risk Assessment" commenced. Final report due Q1 2023.
- Preparation of "Kilkenny Baseline Emissions Inventory" commenced. Final report due Q1 2023.
- Governance: agreement that Climate Action is a standing item at key meetings including; Council, Corporate Policy Group, Management Team, SPC 2 and SPC 4.
- The Kilkenny Baseline Emissions Audit will gather emissions data for Co. Kilkenny from energy industry, residential, manufacturing, commercial, industry, agriculture, transport, land use, forestry, waste and F-gases.

New National Climate Action Plan

The National Climate Action Plan 2023 launched by Government on 21st December, 2022 sets out a roadmap for taking decisive action to halve Ireland's emissions by 2030 and reach net zero no later than 2050. It identifies that Local Authorities have a key leadership role in the delivery of climate mitigation, adaptation and citizen engagement and includes specific actions for the public sector:

- 51% reduction in GHG emissions by 2023
- 50% improvement in energy efficiency by 2023
- Delivery of Local Authority Climate Action Plans
- Climate related training and upskilling for public sector employees
- Full implementation of green public procurement

All sectors in the Council will work to achieve these targets, guided and supported by the Climate Action Team.



How can you help meet our Climate Action targets?

In order to meet our climate targets, everyone in County Kilkenny will need to play an active role. Many people want to help, but do not know what to do or where to start. Below are suggestions for actions that can be taken which will help to reduce our carbon footprint at home, work and in your community:



- Establish or join a Sustainable Energy Community and avail of a FREE support programme to learn how to make energy improvements and secure funding for your community <https://southeastenergy.ie/sectors/community-groups/>



- Encourage your GAA club to join the GAA Green Clubs programme. Closing date for Phase 2 (2023-2024) is 29th Jan. See [Green Clubs Get Involved \(gaa.ie\)](https://www.gaa.ie/green-clubs)



- Reduce your carbon footprint by using public transport, walking, and cycling as much as possible.

- Participate in developing a new Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan for Kilkenny City. See https://kilkennycoco.ie/eng/services/community_culture/kilkenny-travel-and-transport/



- Home Energy Upgrade grants available, for more information see <https://www.seai.ie/grants/home-energy-grants>
- Reduce your energy use and improve energy efficiency in your home. <https://www.seai.ie/publications/SEAI-ReduceYourUse-Booklet.pdf>
- Reduce food waste in your home. <https://stopfoodwaste.ie/>



- Use your money and purchasing power to buy sustainable products and services where possible. This helps to support the circular economy and avoids producing unnecessary waste and energy.
- Avail of grants to reduce the carbon footprint of your home, community or business (see “Grants for Climate Action” below for details).



- Support nature by planting trees, hedges and pollinator-friendly plants in your garden or community. Healthy habitats will absorb carbon and provide green-solutions to the climate crisis.
- Avoid using pesticides where possible

Grants for Climate Action

Many grants are available to help individuals and communities to reduce their carbon footprint and address climate change. The Climate Office has collated information on the range of grants available and it will be published shortly in the Kilkenny County Council Grants Booklet 2023 produced by the Community and Culture Section of Kilkenny County Council.

Recommended Minimum Criteria for Environmental Inspections (RMCEI)

Environment Complaints

All Environment complaints received are logged on the CRM (Customer Relations Management) System. The number of complaints being received and logged by Environment staff for investigation at year end 2022 was 983 compared with 1,204 at year end 2021. The nature of these complaints ranges from littering, illegal dumping, water quality and abandoned cars. The vast majority continue to be related to littering and illegal dumping.

Waste, Recycling & Collection

Bring Banks Usage

The Council provides and manages 46 Bring Centres across the City and County. A total of 2,153 tonnes of recyclables were collected from our Bring Centres in 2022. This represents a 17% decrease on the same period last year and is mainly down due to the lifting of all Covid restrictions. Loughboy Shopping Centre (145 tonnes collected), Newpark Shopping Centre (128 tonnes collected) and Lidl Johnswell Road (117 tonnes collected) are the busiest locations in the City and Graiguenamanagh (97 tonnes collected) is 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.

All bottle and textile recycling receptacles were removed from Lidl Loughboy in August 2022 due to development works involving the demolition of the existing store and replacing with a much larger new store at the same location. The new store is due to re-open on the 23rd of February 2023 and will have the capacity to accommodate the new deposit return scheme for bottles and cans which is likely in turn affect the tonnages collected at our own bring bank sites throughout the county.

Litter Awareness

Savour Kilkenny Food Festival

The Environment Section had great involvement in the 2022 Savour Kilkenny Food Festival. It supported the festivals greening initiatives including the supply of litter picking equipment to St Brigid's Camogie Club, Kilmanagh who kept the Parade litter free throughout the festival.



There was a two-day promotion on the management of household food waste as every tonne of food waste recycled instead of ending up in landfill can prevent about half a tonne of carbon dioxide entering the atmosphere. The stand was in association with www.mywaste.ie. There was a total of 1,000 food waste caddies distributed to the public.

On the last day of the festival, Madra Monday, the Environment Section promoted it's *"Bag It, Bin It"* anti-dog fouling campaign. Dog hi vis vests were given away to dog owners who pledged to clean up after their pooch.

Tidy Towns

There were 25 entrants from County Kilkenny in the Tidy Towns Competition, which was an increase in participation from previous years.

- Kilkenny City retained its gold medal and won the County Award.
- Inistioge retained its gold medal and came 2nd in the County Awards.
- Tullahought retained its silver medal and came 3rd in the County Awards.
- Kilmoganny Tidy Towns won the Endeavour Award.
- Castlecomer Tidy Towns was the national winner of the Agent Brite Litter Awareness Award
- Tullahought Tidy Towns won the SE category of the All Ireland Pollinator Plan Award.

The Environment Section continues to provide support to active Tidy Town Groups. In 2022, two tidy town forum meetings were held: one in Kells (April) the other in Ballyragget (August) and provided both communities an opportunity to showcase their community projects.

Let's Team Up to Clean Up, Together for Kilkenny



"Let's Team Up to Clean Up, Together for Kilkenny" was launched in June 2022 and the first event in October saw over 50 groups registered to participate in the 1st environmental day of action in Kilkenny City.

There were 600 litter pickers distributed along with 6,000 flowering bulbs to neighbourhoods across Kilkenny City. It helped the Council to gain logistical experience in advance of running the much larger event in 2023. Thanks, and gratitude goes to our sponsors PRL, Dawn Meats, John O Shea Trust and Glanbia PLC/Glanbia Co-op together with our waste management sponsor Panda.



Photo; Group Photo of Volunteers participating in "Let's Team Up to Clean Up, Together for Kilkenny."

Green Schools

The Green Schools online information session had a strong attendance in September, as schools began to re-join the programme after Covid disrupted many green school committees. Three secondary schools have registered in 2022 to participate and two of these schools are participating in the An Taisce support programme “Neat Streets”. There are 59 schools due to renew their flag by the end of this academic year which is 72% of all participating schools in the Green Schools Programme.

All biodiversity schools which are due to renew their flag in 2023 were offered a programme in collaboration with the Council’s Heritage Office and is co-funded by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage under the Local Biodiversity Action Fund. Participating schools will receive three workshops over the course of the year to support their work on nurturing biodiversity in their local areas.

Sustainable Development Goals Week 2022

Ireland’s Second National Implementation Plan for the Sustainable Development Goals 2022-2024 was brought to Government in September. The draft Plan recognises local authorities as key stakeholders of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. It also emphasises the important role that Local Authorities can play in raising awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at local and community level and the potential Local Authorities have to contribute to concrete actions and change.

**SEACHTAIN
FORBARTHA
INBHUANAITHE
NA hEORPA
20-26 MEÁN FÓMHAIR**

Ireland’s first annual Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Week took place this year from 20 – 26 September and formed part of the wider European Sustainable Development Week (ESDW). The Environment Section collaborated with the Library Service to complete a number of initiatives to highlight Ireland’s first Sustainable Development Goal Week.

Gum Litter Taskforce Summer Campaign

The Gum Litter Taskforce - a national campaign promoting the proper disposal of chewing gum. Its roadshow visited Kilkenny City in July and contributes to the actions set out in the Litter Management Plan 2021-2023.

Mayor supporting the GLT Campaign



Household Electrical Collections

WEEE Ireland completed 5 Saturday collections in April and May. The 5 collection events resulted in over 55,000 kg of electrical household waste being collected for appropriate recycling.

The Environment Section in collaboration with WEEE Ireland and the Council’s Communication Team ran a promotion throughout the year highlighting the opportunities to recycle household electrical waste through Council and privately-operated recycling centres and the opportunity to bring back household electrical waste back to large electrical retailers. These activities complemented the actions under the Litter Management Plan 2021-2023.



Voice Ireland Visited Kilkenny

The Return for Change campaign visited Kilkenny City during the month of May. Its aim was to raise awareness of the national Deposit and Return Scheme for beverage bottles and aluminium cans. The scheme will see an additional charge on the item at the point of purchase with the charge redeemable when returned to a reverse vending machine. The scheme will be introduced nationally in 2024. Supporting this initiative complemented the actions under the Litter Management Plan 2021-2023 as this scheme has great potential to eliminate a huge volume roadside litter on its commencement.

Return for Change Campaign on the Parade



Re-cycle Your Bicycle Waste Prevention Programme

Under the Council's Waste Prevention programme, the Environment Section undertook two bicycle repair projects in 2022. The Council's Cycling Officer, Kilkenny Leader Partnership and the Kilkenny City Men's Shed came together to repair and service donated adult bicycles, to enable them to be passed on to new Ukrainian residents. The collaboration period was over 6 months and saw in excess of 100 bicycles being distributed to the Ukrainian community.



A waste prevention project was also undertaken in collaboration with the Cycling Officer, providing junior bicycles for sprocket rocket primary school cycle training. Junior bicycles were donated by workplaces and collected from the Dunmore Waste and Recycling Centre and repaired and serviced before being presented to a number of primary schools in Kilkenny City.

Christmas Trees Collections 2023

Plans are in place to accommodate Christmas tree drop off locations for householders. This allows trees to be chipped and composted after the festive season. The collection period will run between the 4th and 16th of January, 2023.

Christmas Tree Recycling

Householders can drop off their Christmas trees for recycling at the following locations between the 4th Jan. – 16th Jan. 2023

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

Recycling Centres (Normal Opening Hours)
Dunmore Waste Disposal and Recycling Centre, Castlecomer Rd. KK City
Granny Recycling Centre, Grannagh.



Animal Welfare

The Animal Welfare Standards Committee held its latest meeting on Thursday 15th December, 2022 in the Council Chamber, County Hall. This was the committee's 10th meeting since its establishment in 2020 and the first in-person meeting as the committee was established during Covid-19 restrictions. Items discussed were dog control, Carlow Kilkenny Dog Shelter and horse control. The next meeting is scheduled to take place on 30th March, 2023.

At the end of 2022 the total number of dogs dealt with at Carlow Kilkenny Dog Shelter was 364. This compares to 185 for 2021, which is a 97% increase.

Of the 364 dogs 310 were strays and 54 were surrenders. There were 129 dogs rehomed by the shelter and 146 were transferred to charities for rehoming along with 77 dogs being reclaimed by their owners. There were 11 dogs remaining on site at the end of 2022. This upward trend in dogs being dealt with in the shelter is nationwide.

In October 2022, the shelter remained operational, however it was unable to accept surrendered dogs for three days due to reaching full capacity at 22 dogs. After a combination of successfully reuniting dogs with their owners and finding homes for dogs that were not reclaimed, the shelter was once again able to accept surrendered dogs. It is expected that the dog shelter will reach capacity again in the near future due to this ongoing trend nationwide.

Calls in relation to dog control have increased from the public who are now more active in reporting incidences of loose dogs. A total of 4 horses were impounded in 2022.

Water Safety Highlights

The 2022 lifeguard season commenced on the June bank holiday weekend, with cover on weekends throughout June, daily cover was provided thereafter throughout July and August at The Weir, The Meadows, Thomastown, Inistioge and Graiguenamanagh.

A total of 18 lifeguards were engaged to cover the 5 swimming areas. The months of July and August proved very busy on the rivers with the particularly warm weather. The lifeguards recorded almost 5,000 bathers at the lifeguarded areas, they provided safety advice to in excess of 1,100 bathers, prevented 56 accidents, provided first aid and performed 3 rescues in July alone.

Upgrading Works at the Meadows amenity area are planned by The Parks Section in association with the Water Safety Development Officer in January 2023. The upgrading of the lifeguarded area is integral to the proposed works.

There have been several Lifebuoys reported missing along the River Nore in Kilkenny City throughout the year. Lifebuoys are checked weekly by Kilkenny City Area staff. Frequently, members of the public contact the Environment Section to report lifebuoys missing. Kilkenny Aqua Canoe Club members and landowners have kindly retrieved a large number of reusable lifebuoys from the banks of the river this summer and returned them to the Council for checking and reuse.

Kilkenny Water Safety Committee ran "Summer Swim Week" from the 18th to 22nd July at Graiguenamanagh and Thomastown Weir Pool lifeguarded areas. Swim week was facilitated by our lifeguards, the Water Safety Development Officer and promoted through Kilkenny County Council's social media channels. It was very well received in both communities with very positive feedback from swimmers and their parents. It was attended by over 200 children, all improving their swimming ability after missing out on swimming lessons through Covid lockdowns.



Thomastown Weir Pool



Lifeguards on duty during Thomastown Swim Week, the lifeguards wore blue face paint in support of world drowning prevention day.



The Weir, Bleach Road, Kilkenny with new platform and steps to assist users to access and exit the swimming area, these works were completed by the Kilkenny City Area Office and were very well received by users throughout the summer.

Kilkenny Water Safety Committee held their Annual Nore Swim event on the 6th August, 2022. The river was accessed at the Skate Park under St. Francis Bridge with the exit at the slipway on Canal Square. Registration took place at the Tea Rooms with the permission of the Property Section of Kilkenny County Council.

Irish Water Safety organised a widely publicised campaign - "Heed our Heroes", warning the public of the different hazards involved with fresh and sea water and the importance of swimming in safe places where experienced lifeguards shared their advice. Lucy Cleere, one of our river lifeguards in Kilkenny for the past four years was one of the six lifeguards selected for the national campaign.

PARKS/SPECIAL PROJECTS

Playgrounds

The annual independent inspection of all playgrounds under our care was concluded in December. This adds an additional layer of checks to compliment our own in house weekly and quarterly inspection regime. The importance of same is to highlight any issues which require attention to ensure continued safe play. The Parks staff also continued with general maintenance during the month.

In the playground at Assumption Place, Kilkenny City a new wheelchair accessible roundabout and associated soft surfacing was installed. The cost of same was funded under the *Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth's* under Play and Recreation Grant.



Slieverue Linear Park

The proposed site extends to 3 acres and is owned by the Council. It is located adjacent to the village looped walkway, to the northwest of the Slieverue Roundabout, and is just 500m from the centre of the village and just 150m from the National School. The proposals will build on the works already undertaken within the area under Town & Village Renewal Scheme in 2021. Under the current plan, it is proposed to develop different areas and levels of planting with the emphasis being on biodiversity along with grassy spaces for play, picnics, an outdoor classroom along with wild flower meadow areas. The proposed harder landscaping will provide for universally accessible pathways that incorporates age friendly seating and picnic benches. In terms of more active recreational opportunities it is proposed to install a basketball area, as this activity is very popular locally, along with woodland obstacle play equipment.

The works proposed also include entrance improvements and the erection of a noise containment screen fence along the N29 national roadside boundary coupled with extensive tree planting.



South East Greenway

Design & Construction: Lots 1 and 3, Glenmore and New Ross, is now substantially completed. The combined length of these two Lots is 8km. Lot 2, Ferrybank is also substantially completed and the ramp access to the Greenway from the Abbey Road is also complete. The Greenway Project Office are exploring the possibility of opening sections of the Greenway as they are completed. A mini-tender is currently advertised for carpark works at Rosbercon and Glenmore along with other associated works to facilitate the opening of Lot 1 & 3 in early Quarter 2.

It was decided to split Lot 5 into two sections of equal length comprising Lot 5a (Ferrybank to Luffany) and Lot 5b (Luffany to Aylwardstown South). In early October, Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) requested that a third party due diligence check be undertaken on the Lot 5a tender documents prior to the advertisement of same.

Tramore House Regional Design Office is nearing completion of this process and the tender will be advertised early in the New Year. The review of the design to rock cutting faces for Lot 5b in accordance with TII specifications is ongoing.

Jill Kelleher, new Business Development Officer for the Greenway attended the recent Callan - Thomastown and Piltown Municipal District Meetings to introduce herself to the Elected Members.



Works continued over the month of December to advance the planning and design of the potential connectivity links to the Greenway from Slieverue, Glenmore and Woodstock Estate. The Council also continued to engaged with Transport Infrastructure Ireland to determine if the latter could be considered within their current Greenway project portfolio as an extension to the South East Greenway.

Outdoor Recreational Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS)

During the month of December, the main focus was on submitting grant drawdown claims to the Department for works completed during 2022.

Works also continued in Woodstock Gardens under the current ORIS funding provision to improve the appearance and accessibility of the toilet block. The Area Office also undertook resurfacing works at the entrance barrier and new parking areas to accommodate dedicated age friendly and disabled parking.

Following the conclusion of the tendering process for the Kilkenny Countryside Park the Council entered into discussions with a local civil engineering firm with a view to entering into an negotiated tender. Good progress was made over the month and it is anticipated, subject to Department approval that a contract will be signed early in the new year to commence the works.

PLANNING

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

Planning Summary	Total January to December		
	2021	2022	Difference
Planning Applications Received	1,054	831	↓ 21%
Planning Applications Granted	871	643	↓ 26%
Planning Applications Refused	77	98	↑ 27%
Complaints Received	119	91	↓ 24%
Warning Letters Issued	100	82	↓ 18%
Enforcements Notices Issued	23	40	↑ 74%
Cases Closed	105	82	↓ 22%

FORWARD PLANNING

Masterplans:

Abbey Quarter

The process of reviewing the Abbey Quarter Masterplan commenced in October 2022. A public survey on the Abbey Quarter went live for 4 weeks and closed on 16th December. This survey was accessible on both the Council's website and on the Consult.Kilkenny.ie website. It was also circulated to all Council staff and Elected Members. The survey was also advertised in the local newspaper and on the Council's social media platforms. The findings of the survey will assist in the preparation of the Draft Plan.

An online public consultation event is planned for mid -January to inform the public of the review process. The workshop date will be publicised in early January. Further workshops and public consultation events are planned once a Draft Masterplan is published. It is anticipated that the process will be completed in the second quarter of 2023.

St. Canice's Campus

The preparation of the Masterplan for the HSE's St. Canice's Campus is ongoing. Loci Consultants are assisting the Project Steering Committee in the drafting of the Masterplan. Draft concepts were presented to the HSE in October and they are still considering the proposals against their needs for the next 30 years. Further meetings with the HSE were held at the end of November and again in mid-December 2022. A Draft Plan is still subject to agreement with the HSE, but when available will be presented to Senior Management in both the HSE and the Council for consideration before being brought to the Municipal District Members before it is placed on public display.

Loughmacask

The draft Loughmacask Masterplan was placed on display from the 26th of August 2022 to the 28th of October 2022. Three public information sessions on the draft were held in September and October and a total of 182 submissions were received during the consultation timeframe. These submissions will be summarised as part of the Chief Executive's Report which is currently being prepared. Following the presentation of the Chief Executive's recommendations to the Municipal District Members in the coming weeks and following their consideration, the amendments to the Draft Plan will be put out on public display again for a further round of public consultation.

Urlingford

The Council's Consultants have completed drafting the Urlingford Town Centre Masterplan. The draft plan will be presented to the Municipal District members early in 2023 before being placed on public display. A public workshop on this draft plan is planned once the draft plan is on display.

Ballyragget/Paulstown/Kilmacow

Work has commenced on the preparation of masterplans for the settlements of Ballyragget, Paulstown and Kilmacow. The appointed Consultants are currently undertaking a review and updating of Health Checks for each settlement along with various other surveys.

Stakeholders meetings are scheduled as follows:

- Paulstown 18th January (local Community Hall),
- Ballyraggett 19th January (Ballyraggett Comm. Hall)
- Kilmacow 20th January (local Community Hall)

Following these meetings the Consultants will commence drafting the three Masterplans.

Taking in Charge

The following estates were taken in charge in 2022:

- The Paddocks, Gowran
- Filbuckstown, Mooncoin
- Arbourmount, Ferrybank
- Margaretsfield, Callan Road
- Kiln Lane, Callan

E-PLANNING

The Local Government Online Planning portal was designed to streamline the application for planning permission across all Local Authorities. E-Planning is now available in Kilkenny County Council. Prospective users must however register on the e-planning portal at:

<https://planning.localgov.ie/en/local-government-ireland-planning-system>. They can then make a planning application, submit documentation online with the application and submit further information later if required. The status of applications can be viewed quickly and easily. Paper applications are still accepted and the same timelines apply to both an online application and a paper application. A short video is available on the Council's website demonstrating how to use the online planning system <https://www.kilkennycoco.ie/eng/services/planning/>.

Active Land Management

The Draft Maps of land in scope for the Residential Zoned Land Tax were published on the 1st November and submissions are being made at present by landowners and interested parties. All submissions will be considered early in the New Year.

There are 20 sites on the Derelict Sites Register at present; one site in Mullinavat was removed from the Register in December as a result of improvement. Notices of valuations will be issued to landowners later this month.

There are 27 sites on the Vacant Sites Register, and the number of cancelled entries due to site activation or improvement now stands at 20 sites. The Vacant site levy will be replaced by the Residential Zoned Land Tax in 2024, but any outstanding levies will remain due to the Council.

Conservation

The Conservation Office manages all protected structures in Kilkenny County and City. These structures are recognised for the following special interest: Architectural, Historical, Archaeological, Artistic, Cultural, Scientific, Technical, Social.

An advisory service on conservation matters is provided to the public and colleagues, while the conservation grants and funding applications are also delivered. In 2022, the Conservation Office of Kilkenny County Council delivered the following grant funded projects:

Grants	No. of Projects	Combined Funding Delivered	Combined Projects Costs	Combined Days
Built Heritage Investment Scheme	12	€153,947.55	€338,325.55	526
Historic Structures Fund	4	€254,969.61	€487,501.72	920
Historic Town's Initiative	1	€19,000	€24,231.00	20
Heritage Stewardship Fund	1	€4,125.00	€5,500.00	21.25
Total	18	€432,042.16	€855,558.27	1,487.25

In 2022, the Conservation Office continued to respond to planning permissions, Section 57 and Section 5 declarations, Part VIII applications and post planning compliance culminating in the following:

- Planning Referrals:65
- Further Information Requests:.....11
- Section 57 Declarations11
- Part 8 Planning:.....3

Building Control

The number of New Buildings has increased for the second consecutive year.

The numbers of Commencement Notices and Inspections of New Buildings have decreased.

Commencement Notices	TOTAL DECEMBER			
New Buildings & Inspections	2022	2021	2020	2019
No. of Valid Commncement Notices	336	434	319	291
<i>percentage on previous year</i>	77%	136%	110%	
No. of New Buildings	541	498	328	478
<i>percentage on previous year</i>	109%	152%	69%	
No. of New Buildings Inspected	99	113	69	86
<i>percentage on previous year</i>	88%	164%	80%	
Percentage of all New Buildings Inspected	18%	23%	21%	18%

In 2022 Disability Access Applications at 72, were the second highest since records began in 2010. 2019 had the highest number of applications.

	TOTAL DECEMBER			
No. Valid Disability Access Applications Received Annually	2022	2021	2020	2019
No. of Valid Disability Access Applications	72	56	86	60
<i>percentage on previous year</i>	129%	65%	143%	

COMMUNITY

Town & Village Renewal Funding/Street Enhancement Scheme

It was announced in December 2022 that four Kilkenny County Council applications were successful in securing funding under the Department of Rural and Community Developments 2022 Town & Village Renewal Scheme, Street Enhancement Scheme and the new Project Development Measure.

Funding for Kilkenny includes:

- €56,000 towards the new Thomastown Recreational Amenity which will further develop the existing outdoor park/amenity located in the centre of Thomastown.
- €100,000 for Callan Town as part of the 2022 Streetscape Enhancement Measure.
- €49,950 for Glenmore towards the development of a Community Shop under the Project Development Measure. €146,000 was also recently secured for the purchase of this building in the village under the Building Acquisition Scheme.
- €49,950 design brief funding for building in Thomastown under the Project Development Measure.

Community Monuments Fund 2023

The Community Monuments Fund (cmf) is now open for applications for 2023. This grant scheme is for the conservation, maintenance, protection and promotion of archaeological monuments and is funded by the Department of Housing, Heritage and Local Government. Funding is available under three streams:

- Stream 1:** Essential repairs and capital works for the conservation and repair of archaeological monuments.
- Stream 2:** Development of Conservation Management Plans/Reports that are aimed at identifying measures for conservation of archaeological monuments and improving public access.
- Stream 3:** Enhancement of access infrastructure and interpretation (*including virtual*) at archaeological monuments.

Applications by private owners or community groups for funding under the CMF must be made to Kilkenny County Council by 1st February 2023.

Applications and queries to heritage@kilkennycoco.ie. Application Forms and funding criteria available at <https://kilkennycoco.ie/eng/services/heritage/community-monuments-fund-2023.html>

Summary of Direct Supports to Businesses Via Local Enterprise Office 2022

A total of **€607,111** in direct financial assistance has been approved for **35** manufacture /export service businesses located throughout the county. This assistance is linked to the projected creation of **57** jobs over the next three years.





Successful Event for #CareersKilkenny

Kilkenny County Council, through its Local Enterprise Office staged the extensive careers event on 30th December. A range of local businesses in the Life Sciences and Financial Services sectors attended, including Tirlán, State Street, CluneTech, Loanitt, VHI, Bank of Ireland, UPMC, Asgard Cleanroom Solutions and CF Pharma. Companies were seeking to fill in the region of hundreds of positions across the life sciences and financial services sectors.



South East Technological University (SETU)

The President of the new SETU must set out her vision for over the next 5 years for the University in the form of a 5-year Strategic Plan, which she must present to her Board of Governors in the coming months. This process is still ongoing and SETU held a public consultation process recently to feed into the preparation of the Strategic Plan. Accordingly, Kilkenny County Council made a robust submission setting out how we consider a campus of SETU can be delivered within the period of the Strategic Plan. The Council's submission has been well received by SETU and we await a formal response on next steps.

Tourism in 2022

Kilkenny County Council's Tourism Team has worked in collaboration and partnership with its partners to deliver on its key objectives in supporting the tourism and hospitality sector to welcome visitors to Kilkenny this year. The key priorities and areas of work identified at the start of the year were progressed, some include:

Festivals and Events

Supports to Festivals and Events throughout the County continued in 2022 as we welcomed back most of our renowned events. Financial supports in the amount of €112,000 were provided to events such as Tradfest, Cat Laughs, Kilkenomics and Kilkenny Arts Festival as we saw festival goers return to Kilkenny throughout the year. Alongside our financial support we were also able to provide additional marketing and cross promotion of events through the visit kilkenny platform. We will continue to work with our festival partners to elevate Kilkenny to become the "festivals capital of Ireland" with a year-round calendar of events and something to see and do whenever a visitor comes to town.

Kilkenny in the Evening

We worked this year to focus and develop a series of new evening time experiences in Kilkenny through activities and attractions partners and with the support of the retail sector to create a vibrant evening time experience for visitors. Kilkenny County Council were successful in their application to the LGMA to become one of eight pilot sites to engage in a "Night Time Economy" pilot project that will be progressed into 2023.



Public Spaces

The delivery of public realm investment projects in new and interesting public spaces to communicate Kilkenny as an 'always on' destination continued throughout the year. 2022 saw three of the five Urban Animation projects delivered in the City.

Taste Kilkenny Promotion

Kilkenny County Council applied for funding under the Department of Agriculture's Food Tourism Grant in 2022 for further marketing and PR of our local food tourism brand #tastekilkenny. €10,780 was secured for the project to promote the brand both locally and nationally. #tastekilkenny supported Kilkenny in its tourism promotion throughout 2022.

Core activities delivered throughout the year;

Videography/Photography for social media content – throughout the year the Taste Team welcomed new members to our social media campaign and ensured new and relevant content was shared to support new members. To maximise audience reach, Taste ran competitions online to align with our annual festivals and events throughout the year. This ensured that all visitors to Kilkenny for festivals and events were encouraged to sample, see and taste the great local produce available here in our local eateries.

Photography – Taste has increased its image bank with new and updated assets now available to be both showcased on taste social media platforms and also to be made available to taste members for their own marketing and PR efforts.

Q4 2022 saw #taste Kilkenny widen its audience reach and boost its media campaign in the run up to Christmas by heavily supporting and cross promoting all the great events running throughout Yulefest season. #visitkilkenny have also supported the Yulefest festival showcasing all activity on its events page and with regular social media posts.

Savour Collaboration – #tastekilkenny further developed its work with Savour Kilkenny, Kilkenny's most recognisable annual food event. In 2022, the Savour Festival returned to Kilkenny's streets. Savour took place over the October bank holiday weekend.



The event celebrates the produce, food and culture of Kilkenny and the surrounding rich pasturelands. Savour reconnected with our producers, visitors and partners to showcase the very best of Kilkenny and Irish products, chefs and culinary ideas. Taste Kilkenny showcased over the weekend, highlighting our wonderful local producers.

#taste Kilkenny Restaurant Week will be held in January 2023 to immediately kickstart the new year, hosting events throughout the City and County. All graphic design has been created for the event. A small working group is working and engaging with local producers and eateries with local produce on menus, a Kilkenny cocktail and special discount/speciality rates for the week.

Visit Kilkenny Marketing

Kilkenny County Council continued in its supports of Kilkenny Tourism in 2022 with its robust marketing and PR efforts to engage and attract both a national and international audience to Kilkenny.

Over the course of the year the social media campaign has seen:

- 8.7m impressions on the visit kilkenny marketing campaigns.
- 207k visits to the visit kilkenny website.
- 35k clicks to member pages directly from the website.

Also arranged was:

- 8 hosted influencer stays
- National media coverage with Virgin Media & RTÉ 2FM.
- Hosted media stays including Barra Best from BBC NI, Deric Hartigan from Ireland AM and Domhnall O'Donoghue from Ireland of the Welcomes magazine.

2023 will focus our efforts on the development and implementation of Kilkenny's Destination Experience Development Plan led by Fáilte Ireland. An implementation team will be a key driver locally in supporting our sector in delivering on the actions identified in the Plan and in developing goals for Kilkenny's Tourism offering for the next 5 years.

UKRAINIAN CRISIS UNIT



Members of the Ukrainian Community and Members of the Ukrainian Crisis Community Forum attending a Thank You Event organised by the Cathaoirleach in James Stephens Barrack's

UKRAINIAN MONITOR

- Over 1,300 Ukrainians now living in County Kilkenny;
- 130 Ukrainians living in 2 Council managed rest centres at St. John of God Convent in the City and The Friary in Knocktopher;
- 150 Ukrainians living in 45 pledged shared and vacant accommodation and Offer A Home properties;
- Over 950 Ukrainians living in 17 commercial properties throughout the County;
- Approximately 110 living in private arrangements with families in Kilkenny;
- 63% female: 37% male;
- 76% adults: 24% children;
- 425 attended English as a Second Language (ESOL) classes ;
- 160 attended the Adult Guidance Service ;
- 545 participated on various training programmes to enable them to develop their skills to access the workforce;
- 208 registered as employed with Kilkenny businesses;
- Over 100 medical appointments and clinics arranged weekly;
- 155 children attending Primary schools throughout the County;
- 110 children attending Secondary schools throughout the County;
- 40 children enrolled in pre-school and afterschool services;
- 93 registered as volunteers with Kilkenny Volunteer Centre.

HOUSING

Homeless Services

The Housing Office continues to see an increase in the number of homeless presentations with 478 new homeless presentations in 2022 compared to 370 for the full year in 2021 and 252 for the year 2020.

The cases presenting are increasing in complexity and the options to provide emergency accommodation are diminishing making the provision of effective homeless services extremely challenging.

In line with the South East Regions Severe Weather arrangements additional emergency beds have been provided at the Good Shepherd Centre on a nightly basis to ensure that rough sleepers at risk from severe weather events can be provided with shelter if required.

We continue to focus on the prevention of homelessness and offer emergency accommodation as a last resort only.

HOMELESS SERVICES SUMMARY DECEMBER 2022	
Homeless Presentations	33
Homeless Assessment Outcomes	
Prevention & Interventions	18
Emergency Service	4
Not eligible / Did not avail of service	11
HAP Place Finder Service	
No of Homeless HAP tenancies @ 1 st day of month	115
No of Homeless HAP tenancies created during month	0
No of Homeless HAP tenancies in place @ last day of month	115
Number of Homeless HAP tenancy breakdowns	0
Other Social Housing Tenancies supported /created during month	2
Households in Temporary Emergency Supported Accommodation @ December 31 st	34
Households in Temporary Emergency B&B accommodation	4
Households in Temporary Emergency B&B Accommodation that are families	4
Households (singles/couples) in Transition Emergency Accommodation (Own Front Door)	28
Households (Families) in Transition Emergency Accommodation (OFD)	12

Homeless Presentations	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2022	34	34	51	25	44	40	32	54	56	34	41	33	478
2021	18	34	26	24	42	37	34	24	41	42	35	13	370
2020	23	27	24	19	14	11	20	22	26	26	23	17	252
2019	28	13	16	19	21	16	24	32	23	26	18	17	253

Social Housing Assessment

SOCIAL HOUSING SUPPORT APPLICATION SUMMARY DECEMBER 2022	
Number awaiting Social Housing Support at December 31 st (Gross Need)	1,588
Number awaiting Social Housing Support at December 31 st (Net Need)	754
No. of Social Housing Applications received in December	50
No. of applications incomplete / awaiting further information / clarification	43
No. of applications validated and ready for assessment during the month	16
No. of applications assessed during December	21
No. of applications awaiting assessment as @ December 31 st	70

Income thresholds for eligibility for social housing supports have remained largely unchanged since 2011. Changes to the income eligibility thresholds have been recently announced to come into effect from January 3rd 2023. An increase on the baseline income threshold by €5,000 has been agreed.

The new thresholds are outlined below:

Band	Counties	Revised Threshold
1	Cork City, Dublin City, Dun Laoghaire – Rathdown, Fingal, Galway City, Meath, South Dublin, Kildare, Wicklow	€40,000
2	Carlow, Claire, Cork County, Galway County, Kerry, Kilkenny, Laois, Limerick, Louth, Waterford, Westmeath, Wexford	€35,000
3	Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Longford, Mayo, Monaghan, Offaly, Roscommon, Sligo, Tipperary	€30,000

The revised thresholds for different household compositions are detailed in the table below:

Band	Single Adult	2 Adults	1 Adults 1 Child	1 Adult 2 Children	2 Adults 1 Child	2 Adults 3 Children	2 Adults 4 Children
1	€40,000	€42,000	€41,000	€42,000	€43,000	€45,000	€48,000
2	€35,000	€36,750	€35,875	€36,750	€37,625	€39,375	€42,000
3	€30,000	€31,500	€30,750	€31,500	€32,250	€33,750	€36,000

The number of tenancies under the Housing Assistance Programme (HAP) continues to fall with 698 properties currently supported in the HAP scheme compared to 888 in 2021. We continue to seek new tenancies at every opportunity.

HOUSING ASSISTANCE PAYMENT SUMMARY UP TO DECEMBER 31 st 2022	
Number of active HAP tenancies to December 31 st 2022	694
New HAP tenancies set up	90
HAP tenants allocated Social Housing	90
Closed HAP Tenancies	157
HAP Rent Reviews	273
Other tenancy amendments	543
HAP Calls Received 2022 year to date	3,800
HAP Calls Received December	350

Tenancy Management

The Tenancy Management Section deals with allocations, maintenance and anti-social behaviour complaints in relation to our tenants.

LA/RAS/Leasing allocations in December (offers made):.....	6
LA/RAS/Leasing allocations to date (offers made):	195
Tenant Liaison Officer cases in December:.....	60
Maintenance Calls for December:.....	623
Maintenance Calls year to date	6,369

The Tenancy Management Section has also commenced legal proceedings in respect of four tenancies where repossession orders have been sought. Where anti-social behaviour if ongoing tenancy notifications and warning notices continue to be served.

Housing Grants

Kilkenny County Council administers a number of grant options to assist older people and people with a disability in carrying out works which are necessary for the purposes of rendering a house more suitable for their accommodation needs. The annual budget is €1,977,000. An increase in works under the various grant schemes has resulted in an increase in expenditure in the current year with a projected spend in the region of €2,057,389 for the year 2022. An application for additional funding was made to the Department of Housing during November 2022 with approval received to increase the 2022 budget allocation for Housing Grants by €64,000 to meet increased demand.

Grants Approved & Committed up to 31 st December 2022		
Scheme	No.	Amount
HGD - Housing Adaptation Grant	163	€1,646,042
MAG - Mobility Aid Grant	23	€87,359
HOP - Housing Aid for Older Persons	183	€992,880
Total	369	€2,726,281

Grants Paid out up to 31 st December 2022		
Scheme	No.	Amount
HGD - Housing Adaptation Grant	123	€1,212,925
MAG - Mobility Aid Grant	23	€86,289
HOP - Housing Aid for Older Persons	134	€716,044
Total	280	€2,015,258

Housing Loans

Housing Loan Activity 1 st January 2022 to 31 st December 2022					
Loan Type	Received	Approved	Amt approved	No. Paid	Amt Paid
Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan	0	5	€559,750	7	€1,030,250
Local Authority Home Loan	60	10	€1,215,025	7	€881,525
Caravan Loan	0	0	€0.00	0	€0
Total	60	15	€1,774,775	14	€1,911,775

Housing Capital Delivery

Kilkenny County Council is ambitious and innovative in the delivery of housing units and will utilise all available measures within the Housing For All Plan to meet and exceed the targets set for the County to 2026. While Kilkenny County Council have a strong delivery pipeline the target for delivery in 2022, target of 170 units will not be met.

Delivery for the year 2022 of substantially complete new build housing units will be 144. In addition to this delivery 14 acquisitions and 3 units under the Traveller Accommodation Plan will also be delivered giving an overall social housing delivery for the current year of 161.



58 UNITS AT PENNYFEATHER GREEN, KILKENNY CITY



17 UNITS AT LIMEGROVE, FERRYBANK



2 UNITS AT SHANGANNY, JENKINSTOWN



2 UNITS AT MULLINAVAT



4 UNITS, COMERAGH GRANGE, MOONCOIN



8 UNITS AT PENNYFEATHER COURT, KILKENNY CITY



2 UNITS, GRAIGUENAMANAGH



5 UNITS, BERKELEY DRIVE, FERRYBANK



2 UNITS AT CHAPEL VIEW, MOONCOIN



Kilkenny County Council

HOUSING CAPITAL DELIVERY 2022





THE CRESCENT, FERRYBANK



PENNYFEATHER GREEN



LEGANGRANGE, LADYWELL, THOMASTOWN



INCHCARRON, MULLINAVAT



ICF CONSTRUCTION, GRAIGUENAMANAGH



BERKELEY TERRACE, PILTOWN



GOLF LINKS ROAD, KILKENNY CITY



CIRCULAR ROAD, KILKENNY CITY



CROKERSHILL, KILKENNY CITY



Kilkenny County Council

HOUSING CAPITAL SITE 2022



HOUSING CAPITAL DELIVERY 2022	
New Build Housing Units Complete Dec 2022	129
New Build Housing Units Substantially Complete Nov 2022	15
Acquisitions Complete Nov 2022	14
Traveller Specific Acquisitions Complete Nov 2022	3
Total Capital Delivery 2022	161

HOUSING CAPITAL DELIVERY 2023	
New Build Housing Units On Site Nov 2022	63
New Build Housing Units To Commence On Site 2023	136
Acquisitions Underway to Complete in 2023	10
Total Capital Delivery Projected 2023	140

The Housing Capital Delivery Team continues to source new projects and sites for capital delivery during 2024, 2025 and 2026.

Vacant Homes

The vacant homes officer is currently processing applications under the Vacant Homes Refurbishment Grant, now extended for applications to rural applicants, for further details contact vacanthomes@kilkennycoco.ie New CPO procedures are to commence in respect of a further six properties around the county with five previous CPOs reaching conclusion.

FIRE SERVICES

Capital Projects

A site has been identified for a new Fire Station for Kilkenny City. Negotiations with the owners of the site are at an advanced stage at present.

The construction of a new Fire Station for Urlingford is well underway, however adverse weather conditions in Q4 of 2022 has had an impact on the overall construction programme.



Fire Safety Certificates

- 91 applications for Fire Safety Certificates were received to date.
- 95 applications 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.

- 65 Licence Applications were processed under Section 24 of the Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003.
- 73 Fire Safety Inspections of premises have taken place so far this year.

Community Fire Safety

Fire Service Personnel call to houses by appointment and give fire safety advice to the occupants. A HFSV is usually carried out by two uniformed operational fire service personnel. 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.



In conjunction with the National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management we ran an advertising campaign to highlight the Christmas fire safety message on a number of bus shelters in Kilkenny City. We also teamed up with our local community radio Kilkenny City station to have a quiz with fire safety spot prizes.

Fire Brigade Operations

The Brigades have attended 889 incidents in 2022. These incidents included a number of road traffic collisions, public road hazards, domestic fires, automatic fire alarm activations chimney fires and an increasing number of ambulance assists in recent weeks.

Fire Service Training

An assessment and selection process of Fire Service personnel for a suitable Emergency Medical Technician Trainer took place to provide in-house Emergency First Responder Training.

ARTS

Arts Act Grants & Tyrone Guthrie Residency

The Kilkenny Arts Office have sent the call out for the 2023 Arts Act Grants and Tyrone Guthrie Residency. The Arts Act Grants are open to groups and organisations promoting the arts in Kilkenny and individual artists in all art forms.

The aim of the Tyrone Guthrie Residency is to assist and encourage both established and emerging practitioners, to give them an opportunity to work intensively on a 'project' alongside others in a very unique environment. Deadline for applications: 4.00 p.m. Monday 30th January 2023.

Emerging Curator Development Programme

The Kilkenny County Council's Arts Office have invited applications from Emerging Curators for the 2023 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. Closing date for receipt of applications is 4pm Tuesday 31st January.

HAUMEA Ecoversity Courses

Kilkenny Arts Office held an information session regarding the Haumea Ecoversity with the founder, tutor and ecological artist Dr Cathy Fitzgerald on the 14th December at 7pm.

The session was designed to assess the interest in the Arts Community regarding the EcoLiteracy & Earth Charter courses with a view to offering a bursary for professionals to attend to support their practices going forward.

The courses - Essential Ecoliteracy & the Earth Charter vision and values courses are designed for mid-career artists, creatives and cultural Professionals. Attendance and interest was high so we have devised a bursary for artists and cultural professionals to study with the Haumea Ecovercity in January 2023. Closing date for receipt of applications: 4pm Tuesday 10th January.

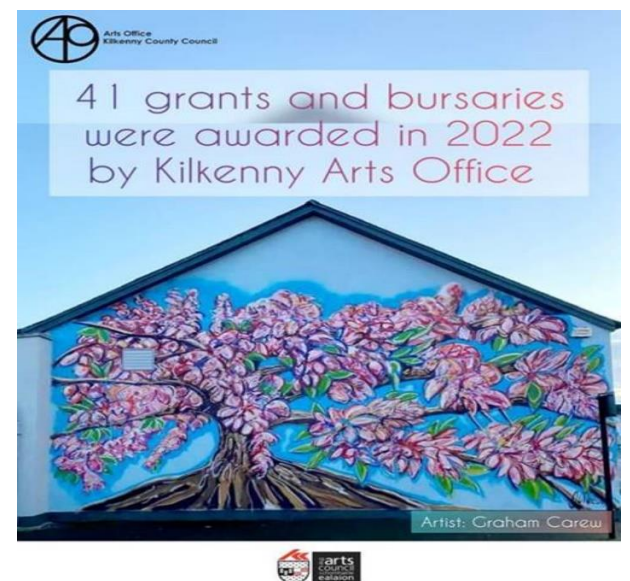
Music Development Plan

Phase One & Two of our Music Development Plan has now been completed. The process to date has included two online surveys and two series of Professional Development Sessions with Industry Professionals, covering topics such as:

- Approaching Irish Media,
- an Artist's Practice,
- Music and the Law,
- developing audiences,
- online marketing &
- exporting your music.

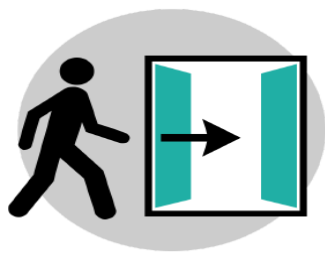
This programme is a partnership with First Music Contact (FMC) and the Local Authority Arts Offices of Carlow, Waterford & Wexford in order to diversify and broaden access to professional development opportunities for musicians across the region.

2022 STATS

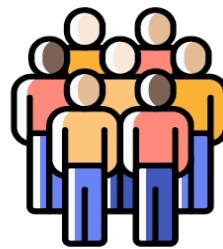




19,898 Items borrowed



11,519 Visitors



801 Members

Christmas at the Carnegie



We marked the last Christmas at the Carnegie in with a celebration on 13th December, when we welcomed over 450 people for a day of music, theatre, storytelling events and our special guest Author and Actress Pauline McLynn talking about books, reading, writing, knitting and so much more. Locals Mark McGrath, Jimmy Rhatigan and Gerry Moran took to the stage during the day along with Dr. Mary Muldowney and storyteller Liz Weir.

10 years of Ferrybank Library



Ferrybank Library celebrated its 10th anniversary with a celebratory coffee morning on Friday, December 2nd. The event featured live music by Local singer/musician Bobbie Carey and storytelling with Mrs. Claus for local junior infant classes. Attendees were treated to seasonal refreshments including mince pies and warm spiced apple punch.

Ferrybank Library has been an important part of the community for the past 10 years and we look forward to many more years of service to the Ferrybank Community.

Booked Off Library Podcast

This year we launched our podcast series 'Booked Off, with Kilkenny Libraries'. Taking on a different topic each month, James from HQ spoke with staff from around the County. We covered everything from Ireland Reads to the retirement of Dorothy O'Reilly, as well as providing a local studies talk and an author conversation from the launch of the Graigenamanagh Town of Books festival. We have already started recording for 2023 and it promises to be a blockbuster year!



Mobile Library



**2,200
books
borrowed**



**625
members came
onboard**



**34
Schools
visited**



**19 Early
Learning
Centres visited**

Library Activities

Events	In Branch	Online	Offsite	Numbers
102	89	12	2	2637

This month we had lots of activities in our libraries, from Ferrybank's 10th Birthday to Christmas at the Carnegie, Christmas Wreath making workshops, Family Time at Your Library storytime and crafts, Christmas coffee mornings, Christmas workshops for children and much more!

We hosted **30** class visits in our libraries across the County, bringing **678** school children through our doors and our mobile van drove the length and breadth of the County visiting communities, schools and creches. Our OWLS Programme 2022 culminated with a series of online workshops with The Reading Academy, featuring a series of talks on helping parents navigate dyslexia with lots of very practical tips, along with online Dyslexia friendly storytimes with Author Shane Casey.

Mayfair Library Update



Fixing of insulation and flashings to flat roof ongoing.



Installing frames of Roof lights commenced.



Pouring of floor screed GF Southwest Extension and GF Northeast Extension complete.

Online Services Usage



2,219 eAudiobooks borrowed



241 Class sessions



814 eMagazines borrowed



1,009 eBooks borrowed



761 Online Courses sessions



442 Songs accessed



**Digital
Engagement**

Our staff have prepared, recorded, edited and published **472** posts on our social media platforms in December. Our video views for were **5,782**.

FINANCE

The expenditure by service division to the end of December is set out in Table 1. Total Expenditure for the period was €100.88m compared with the annual budget of €93.87m.

Table 1	Actual YTD December 2022	Budget Full Year 2022
	€'000's	€'000's
Housing & Building	24,044	22,101
Road Transport & Safety	28,747	26,590
Water Services	7,357	7,255
Development Management	10,916	10,502
Environmental Services	12,553	12,178
Recreation & Amenity	7,661	7,175
Agriculture, Education, Health, Welfare	574	680
Miscellaneous Services	9,024	7,390
OVERALL TOTAL	100,876	93,871

Finance Update

Inflation has and is continuing to have a significant impact on the cost of delivering all services and on the delivery of the Capital Programme.

Energy costs for all Council buildings is expected to be €600k over budget for the year 2022 as a result of recent price increases. The impact of inflation on other goods and services is estimated to cost an additional €550k in 2022 which will have to be absorbed within existing budgets. The public sector pay agreement that was recently negotiated will result in additional payroll costs of €936k for 2022. Government provided compensation for 80% of the additional cost arising from the pay restoration in recent years. The sector has sought similar compensation for the additional cost arising from the latest agreement.

The issue of recoupment of salary and overheads from the Department for the RAS scheme has still not been resolved. This will result in a shortfall for the year of €650k.

Car parking income is 10% below budget level for the year. The budget income figure was based on pre covid-19 income levels. A 10% reduction will result in the income for the year being €230k lower than budget.

The completion of social housing voids is costing significantly more than the grant available. The estimated shortfall per unit is €13k. There was an additional unbudgeted cost incurred of €700k for accommodation and costs relating to the support for Ukrainian refugees in Kilkenny. These costs will be fully compensated for.

Commercial rates income is estimated to be €700k higher than budgeted which will partially offset the shortfalls outlined. Additional compensation of €460k is also being provided by Government to compensate for loss of income on the Global rate payers. The projected net deficit could be in the region of €1m in the absence of further support from Government to deal with the impact of spiralling inflation.

The draft Financial Statements for 2022 will be prepared in the coming weeks and will be presented to Council at the March meeting. The bank overdraft facility was not utilised in the year to 31st December, 2022.

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 193 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	10 cases
Appeals Outstanding.....	4 cases

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

Commercial Rates Vacancy

The commercial rates vacancy remains at 90% for 2022. A 90% vacancy strike off will be applied to eligible commercial rate accounts for 2022 where the customer formally applies, provides proof of vacancy and clears any outstanding rate arrears, where applicable.