

CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT

MAY 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

CLÁR 2023 Scheme

Completed applications to be sent to Kilkenny County Council's Community Department, John's Green House, Kilkenny by 4.00 p.m. on Wednesday, 24th May, 2023.

Community & Cultural Facilities Capital Scheme (CCFCS)

The closing date for receipt of valid applications is 12 noon on Friday, 19th May, 2023

Heritage Council Tidy Towns Heritage Award

Closing date for receipt of applications is Friday 2nd June 2023.

SELF HELP SCHEME

Closing date for receipt of applications is 31st May, 2023.

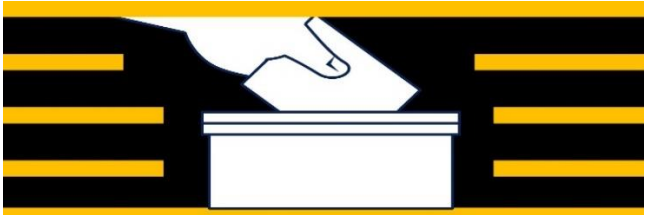
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CIVIC RECEPTIONS
APRIL 2023





ONE DECISION CAN CHANGE THE
FUTURE

REGISTER TO
VOTE

Have an impact on our community.
Be a registered voter!

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ISTER_OF_ELECTORS/ARE-YOU-REGISTERED-TO-
VOTE-/ARE-YOU-REGISTERED-TO-VOTE-.HTML](https://kilkennycoco.ie/eng/your_council/register_of_electors/are-you-registered-to-vote/are-you-registered-to-vote.html)

ROADS

MAJOR PROJECTS

(Included in NDP- Funded by TII)

N24 Waterford to Cahir Scheme

The design team is working on corridor options. The Project Liaison Officer (PLO) is continuing to work with landowners to agree access to facilitate the completion of the preliminary ground investigation works. Although investigation works commenced in November 2022, the works were suspended in December 2022 due to saturated ground conditions, as a result of consistently poor weather. The works recommenced in March 2023 and are due to be completed in June 2023. The findings of these investigations will input into The Preferred Transport Solution. This was scheduled to be put on public display at the end of Q2 2023, however this is now scheduled to take place in Q4 of 2023.

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 commenced on the 16th January and due to generally positive weather conditions from the start of the year construction is marginally ahead of schedule. Substantial completion is expected by the end of 2023.

N77 Ballyragget to Ballynaslee

The preparation of contract documents is on-going and it is expected that the tender will be issued in early Q3 2023. The overall outturn cost for the project is expected to be in excess of €10m.

N24 Carrick Road

Simultaneous applications to An Bord Pleanála for 177AE Planning Approval and Compulsory Purchase Order Approval was made on the 25th November 2022. The public consultation period for both ran until the 20th January 2023.

There were 5 objections to the Compulsory Purchase Order Approval application. There were also 5 objections to the 177ae planning application.

It is a matter for An Bord Pleanála to determine if there is a requirement for oral hearings for both applications. Kilkenny County Council is in

discussion with the valuers representing objectors to the CPO to discuss their concerns.

A final decision with or in the absence of an oral hearing is not expected until Q3 2023.

Pavement Schemes

The N10 Danesfort Pavement Improvement Scheme commenced construction during November 2022 and substantial completion was achieved in March 2023. Final snagging of the completed scheme is on-going.

The N77 Georges Tree to Dunmore West (*Phase 1 Ardloo Junction North*) Pavement Improvement Works has been awarded to Priority Construction Ltd. The works are scheduled to commence on the 8th May 2023 with an expected 8-week construction period.

The preparation of tender documents is ongoing in respect of the N77 Suttonsrath Pavement Schemes is on-going. This will link directly with the N77 Georges Tree to Dunmore West (*Phase 1 Ardloo Junction North*) Pavement Improvement referred to above. It is intended to have this project out to tender by June 2023 with a view to construction commencing during Q3 2023.

The design work in respect of the N76 Callan By Pass Pavement Scheme is on-going. It remains a target to have awarded construction in 2023. The Callan By Pass scheme in particular is complex given its semi urban location.

National Road Bridge Works.

The N10 Ossory Bridge Rehabilitation Scheme has been awarded to Cumnor Construction Ltd. The works are scheduled to commence on the 15th May 2023 with an expected 22-week construction period. The overall outturn cost for the project is expected to be just under €2m.

Kildare County Council are project managing N10 Ossory Bridge Rehabilitation Scheme under a Section 85 agreement on behalf of Kilkenny County Council. The works will entail significant works to the approaches and parapets of the bridge structure and will provide a significant enhancement of the existing substandard shared surface facilities across the structure.

Ballyhale Flood Relief Scheme

Kilkenny County Council have progressed the Ballyhale Flood Relief Scheme and have lodged an application in May 2023 with An Bord Pleanála for approval to construct and maintain the preferred option for a Flood Scheme to protect

residential & commercial properties in the village of Ballyhale. The application to ABP includes a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) and an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR).

Kilkenny County Council have also lodged a Compulsorily Purchase Order with an Bord Pleanála for acquisition of lands, wayleaves and Rights of Way over lands required to construct and maintain the Flood Relief Scheme.

Graiguenamanagh Tinnahinch Flood Relief Scheme

Site Investigation works have commenced in Graiguenamanagh to determine existing ground conditions to enable the Design determine the most suitable construction methods for the proposed defences. Simultaneously works for the completion of the NIS and EIAR are ongoing. Stage 1 is due to be completed by the end of 2023.

Piltown and Freshford FRS

Kilkenny County Council welcomed the announcement by Minister O'Donovan on Tuesday the 2nd May 2023 that Freshford and Piltown Flood Relief Schemes are to commence through funding by the Office of Public Works under a new Pilot programme for Tranche 2 Schemes in collaboration with Kilkenny County Council, Donegal County Council and the OPW. Pre-planning works on the progression of these necessary schemes is now due to commence by the Capital Flood Team in co-operation with the OPW.

ENVIRONMENT

CLIMATE ACTION

Have Your Say on Kilkenny County Council's Climate Action Plan - Pre-Draft Consultation



The Environment Section has launched the pre draft Consultation on its Climate Action Plan. Views are being sought on what the stakeholders would like to see addressed in the first Kilkenny County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029.

Submissions will be accepted during the month of May 2023.

- We would like to hear any comments or observations you have at this pre-draft stage.
- Tell us how you think Kilkenny should address climate action and transition to a low carbon county.
- Let us know what you or your community/business is doing to support climate action so that we can highlight good case studies.

Submissions may be made as follows:

- Through Kilkenny County Council's public consultation portal (consult.kilkenny.ie)
- By email to climate@kilkennycoco.ie (Subject line: CAP Pre-Draft Consultation)
- In writing to:
Kilkenny County Council Climate Action Plan Pre-Draft Consultation
Climate Action Co-ordinator
Kilkenny County Council
County Hall, John Street, Kilkenny. For further information see (consult.kilkenny.ie)

Economic Opportunities from Climate Action

Staff from the Local Enterprise Office, Planning and Climate Action Departments of Kilkenny County Council, along with Elected Representatives attended a conference on the Economic Opportunities from Climate Action organised by the CCMA and Climate Action Regional Offices (CARO) in Tullamore on 26th April. The Climate Action Team will co-ordinate a follow up meeting with relevant staff to explore how Kilkenny County Council can provide strategic support for climate related enterprises through the Planning and LEO Offices. For more on the work of the joint CCMA and CARO committee on enterprise and climate action see <https://www.caro.ie/projects-research/collaborations/economic-and-enterprise-opportunities-from-climate>

Community Climate Action Grants

The 2nd member of the Kilkenny Climate Action Team, Breda Maher, joined Kilkenny County Council on 11th April as Community Climate Action Officer. Breda's main role is to coordinate the Community Climate Action Programme, a grant scheme for communities to undertake climate action projects, funded by the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications. The grant scheme will be launched shortly.

In the meantime, communities can start planning projects under the 5 programme themes:

1. Home/Energy
2. Travel
3. Food & Waste
4. Shopping & Recycling
5. Local Climate & Environmental Action

Breda will be meeting with Communities and hosting workshop(s) about the upcoming Community Climate Action Programme in the coming weeks (date TBC). All communities are welcome, from those who are starting their green journey to those with more experience. For further information breda.maher@kilkennycoco.ie

National Climate Engagement Workshops

The Climate Action Regional Office (CARO) organised a series of workshops (April-May) to promote engagement with relevant national and local stakeholders in the preparation of local authority climate action plans. Dearbhla Ledwidge, Climate Action Coordinator, attended the first of the workshops, held in Portlaoise on 25th April and gave a presentation on Local Authority Climate Action Plans and Heritage. Four more workshops addressing the following sectors: Transport; The Built Environment; Community & Enterprise; Land Use Planning and Agriculture will be held during May.



Representatives from CARO, local authorities and the Heritage Council at the climate action plans sectoral engagement workshop in Portlaoise, 25th April.

Earth Day (Saturday 22nd April)

The Kilkenny Earth Day event in Mac Donagh Junction Shopping Centre was a great success. The event was an initiative of the Kilkenny [Sustainable Energy Communities](#) programme coordinated by CKLP and the South East Energy Agency and supported by Kilkenny County Council and Keep Kilkenny Beautiful. There were a wide range of talks and topics, including presentations from Breda Maher (Community Climate Action Officer) and Caitriona Corr (Cycling Officer) Kilkenny County Council.

Climate Hero Challenge

The launch of the [Climate Hero Challenge](#) coincided with Earth Day. The aim of this 2-week online challenge is to show how each person can use simple and effective measures to reduce their own climate footprint on a daily basis – at home, work or in their free time. There has been a great take up in Co. Kilkenny with 20 individual teams and 129 people (*out of a total 482 participants in Ireland*), taking part. In one week Kilkenny has saved almost 2,500kg in CO2 emissions already!

There is plenty more to do and a big push for the final week to ensure Kilkenny place well on the overall leader board and Kilkenny County Council's 2 teams (the Climate Champions, & Kilkenny Fire & Rescue Service) also do well.

Kilkenny Earth Day
Mac Donagh Junction
Carlow Road, Kilkenny, R95 AWY
22nd April

12:00 TD Malcom Noonan Kilkenny Climate Hero Challenge
12:10 Nicky Brennan Kilkenny Age Friendly Tips from the older generation
12:20 Cllr David Fitzgerald Mayor of Kilkenny City the Path to being first Carbon Neutral City

12:30 Break
12:40 Patrick Jackson – Picker Pals
12:50 Paddy Phelan South East Energy Agency Grants & Supports
13:00 John Carley South East Energy Agency Circular Economy
13:10 Liam O'Brien Bagenalstown SEC Journey to Energy Master Plan
13:20 Seamus Nugent KRSP Environment & Mental Health
13:30 Fergus Horgan KLP Food Waste to Compost

13:40 Break
13:50 Pat Boyd Keep Kilkenny Beautiful Special Project Officer Bio Bliz
14:00 Caitriona Corr Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan
14:10 Marina DeCosta Sustainable Energy Communities SEC

14:20 Break
14:30 Maria Dollard Keep Kilkenny Beautiful – Tidy Towns and SEC's - complementary synergy towards SDG's
14:40 Break
14:50 Mijke Jansen Barrow Valley Hub SEC Solar Panel EV Charger Project
15:00 Breda Maher KCC Climate Action Fund

Children Entertainment on the day

Logos: KLP, CKLP, KRSP, seai, SOUTH EAST ENERGY AGENCY

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Kilkenny Community Composting Training Programme



Kilkenny LEADER Partnership in conjunction with Southeast Energy Agency and Kilkenny County Council invite interested community groups to join an action packed training programme to teach people how to reduce food waste and compost within their community. Training consists of 1 evening in-person, 3 evening online sessions and 1 half-day hands-on workshop (weekend) to learn how to prevent food waste and compost both garden and food waste using a variety of composting systems. The in person sessions will take place in Freshford, Thomastown and Piltown.

The training is offered free of charge. Volunteers are expected to attend all training sessions to avail of the funding and technical assistance being offered by Kilkenny County Council to develop Tidy Town and community composting projects once the training has been completed. Kilkenny County Council has committed funding of €6,000 to the community support element of the project through the Council's Waste Prevention Programme. Details of the training programme was circulated to each Elected Members.

National Spring Clean

There were 95 National Spring Clean registrations recorded for the County. While this is down by 30% on previous years, a reduction in participation was expected this year with the introduction of Kilkenny's unique clean up weekend "Let's Team Up to Clean Up, Together for Kilkenny" which aimed to activate different groups to participate.

As the new Kilkenny campaign could only cater for groups operating within a 60km/p/h speed zones, the National Spring Clean was a back up for groups who couldn't participate in the unique county initiative. As over 200 groups registered to participate in "Let's Team Up to Clean Up" and taking into account the 20% drop off rate, i.e. groups who registered but didn't collect the clean up supplies from their community hub, overall, the number of collective participation between the two community clean up schemes is approximately 255 groups. This reflects an overall increase of 70% in litter picking activity across the months of March and April when compared to previous years.

Green Schools

The An Tásice Green Schools programme is supported by Kilkenny County Council by the work completed by the Environmental Awareness Officer. Schools are now re-joining the programme as many would have taken a break during Covid. 8 schools will be awarded a renewal flag in May and 3 schools will be receiving their first green flag award, which includes 2 secondary schools (*Coláiste Cois Siúire, Mooncoin and Coláiste Mhuire, Johnstown*). Having more secondary schools joining, strengthens the county programme and it's a huge achievement for the schools involved, as it takes more effort to achieve the award in a secondary school setting, due to the size of the student population when compared to most primary schools.

Bring Banks Usage

The Council provides and manages 46 Bring Centres across the City and County. A total of 697 tonnes of recyclables were collected from our Bring Centres so far in 2023. This represents a 1% increase on the same period last year. Loughboy Shopping Centre (*13 tonnes collected*), Lidl Johnswell Road (*12 tonnes collected*) and Aldi Kilkenny City (*11 tonnes collected*) are the busiest locations in the City and Thomastown Lidl (*11 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.

Anti-Dumping Initiative

The Anti-Dumping Initiative 2023 was launched on the 14th March 2023. Applications were invited under this initiative with a closing date of the 14th April, 2023.

Following assessment of the applications submitted, the projects outlined below have been approved for funding.

Project No.	Project Title	Total Amount Requested	Total Amount Approved
1	Bulky Furniture Amnesty	€ 27,800	€ 27,800
2	Media/Public Awareness	€ 18,000	€ 18,000
3	Clean up of Various road verges around the County	€ 16,000	€ 16,000
4	Clean up Litter Blackspots	€ 24,500	€ 24,500
5	Bottle Bank Sensors	€ 7,500	€ 3,700
	Total	€ 93,800	€ 90,000

BURIAL GROUNDS

Columbarium Wall Garden St. Kieran's Cemetery

The construction of the Columbarium Wall and all associated site works is almost completed at St. Kieran's Cemetery. A total of 100 niches will be available within the Columbarium wall units in the Garden, with the option to add more units subject to future demand. We are now waiting on ESB to connect up street lighting at three locations surrounding the Columbarium Wall in order to reduce anti-social behaviour.



Recently constructed Columbarium Wall Garden St. Kieran's Cemetery

Community Monuments Fund

6 projects have been approved for community monument funding by the Department for 2023.

Funding for Capital Projects (Stream 1) are listed below

- Butler Gallery complex/garden medieval wall
- Grangefertagh historic church and graveyard
- Thomple historic church and graveyard

Requests for tenders will be sent out in the next few weeks to contractors for prices in order to carry out the conservation works on all three projects.

Funding for Conservation Reports (Stream 2) are listed below

- Tubbrid Medieval Church
- Rathpatrick Medieval Church

Our consultant is now in the process of getting specialists consultants on site to carry out various assessments with regards to ecology & archaeology in order to submit a conservation report which will form part of a capital project community monument application (Stream 1) for next year



Vegetation recently removed from Tubrid Church and Graveyard

PARKS & SPECIAL PROJECTS

Kilkenny Countryside Park

Works continued to progress on Phase 1 of the new Kilkenny Countryside Park at Dunmore over the month of April. Significant progress was made on the construction of the viewing area and the various trails which traverse the remediated landfill.

The road widening along the Bleach Road access to the new parking area and the parking area itself, which can accommodate 17 cars and 60 bicycles, is now completed.



Parking Area – Countryside Park

The installation of the ball/hurling wall on the eastern side of the Park is completed and fitness equipment will also be installed under this funding stream as part of Phase 1 of the Park. This element of the Park, funded under the Sports Capital Programme, sees an investment of €107,624, which includes match funding of €33,360 from the Council's.

The dog friendly park is also substantially completed. Across the site the trail construction, which is finished in compacted limestone, is also nearing completion and top soiling and seeding either side of the newly formed pathways will continue over the month of May. Works at Dunmore Community Carpark are also complete apart from some landscaping and the installation of road markings. This Phase of the project is being funded under Measure 3 of the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme and Sports Capital & Equipment Funding.

In conjunction with the above, a funding application has been submitted under the Community Recognition Fund to deliver Phase 2 of the project which will include the installation of play and exercise equipment, fun elements within break-out amenity spaces, additional trail development and interpretation signage telling the story of the site from waste landfill to a biodiversity rich amenity, it is expected that a decision on this application will be announced shortly.



Ball/Hurling Wall



Trails

Freshford Playground & Amenity Area

Works are nearing completion on Freshford Playground and Amenity Area. The Council are working with the local community to deliver this project. The civil works element of the project was undertaken by the Castlecomer Area Office, which included site clearance, the construction of a new access road and 12 bay parking area. The fencing works, which provided for the installation of a noise containment barrier, ball-stop netting and playground perimeter fencing is now also complete. Over the month of April, play components, which include, a zip-wire, swings, slides, play tower, basket swing and woodland play equipment, were installed.



The final stage of the project involves the landscaping of the site which will be carried out over the month of May. These works include the planting of a wildflower meadow, top soiling and seeding, the planting of pollinator friendly trees, the installation of new pathways within the playground and the erection of a restored old wrought iron gate that was original to the site. It is anticipated that this new amenity will be opened to the public in early June.

The works are being funded through a combination of Town & Village Renewal, CCFCs grant, Council's own funds and community funding

Amenity Grants

A budget of €140,000 was provided for the 2023 Amenity Grant Scheme. The closing date for the submission of amenity grant applications was the 31st of March. In total 180 applications were received and assessed and a recommendation will go before Council at the May meeting for the consideration of the Elected Members.

Sports Capital & Equipment Grant

Works are progressing on the three Council projects allocated funding under the Sports Capital & Equipment Grant.

Newpark Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA)

Over the past two months the playing surface of the Newpark MUGA has been replaced. The perimeter fencing was painted and the goal surrounds, kicker boards and basketball hoops have been replacement. In total €37,724 was invested in the upgrade of this amenity.



Ferrybank Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA)

Tender documents for the installation of a new MUGA in the Ferrybank Neighborhood Park are currently being prepared and will be advertised on e-tenders in May. The budget for this project is €88.650 which includes €27,482 match funding from the Council's owner funds.

South East Greenway

Works continued over April to ready the section of the Greenway between New Ross and Glenmore for opening to the public in June. These works include public light duct installation, fencing, preparation of the temporary carparks at Rosbercon and Glenmore, the installation of 2 controlled crossings, signage installation and the completion of final snagging items.

The works tender for Lot 5A, a 5km section from Abbey Park to Curraghmore, was advertised on the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) in March. The closing date for tender submissions was extended to the 5th May, following requests from potential tenderers. It is anticipated, subject to the necessary TII approvals, that the successful contractor will be appointed and works will commence on this Lot in July/August. The construction period for this section of the Greenway is estimated to be 12 months. Included under this contract is the installation of the public lighting within Lot 3 and the construction of the permanent carpark at Glenmore.

Staff are finalising Part 8 documentation for the South East Greenway Links to the villages of Slieverue and Glenmore. Each Link will be the subject of a separate Part 8 Application and its anticipated that the consultation process for same will commence in mid-summer.

PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS

Playgrounds

On foot of the 2022 end of year playground condition report, upgrades, general maintenance and repairs have been completed across a number of playgrounds including Talbot Court, Bennettsbridge, Mooncoin, Balyhale, Fairgreen Callan, Castlecomer Discovery Park, Coan, Garringreen, Graiguenamanagh, Newpark, Paulstown and Stoneyford. This work is critical to ensure that our playgrounds are safe and maintained to a high standard.



Mooncoin Playground

Grass Cutting

Our annual grass maintenance programme is now fully operational. The contract to undertake this work was awarded to Tom Beckett Landscaping and Fairybush Landscaping Ltd.

In addition to the above, the grass maintenance programme will be supplemented by our Parks staff.

PLANNING

Development Management

Planning Summary	Total April	
	2022	2023
Planning Applications Received	279	274
Planning Applications Granted	254	168
Planning Applications Refused	27	40
Complaints Received	27	30
Warning Letters Issued	26	29
Enforcements Notices Issued	15	19
Cases Closed	34	21

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, 2022.

A further online public consultation event took place on the 18th of January to inform the public of the survey results and of the review process. The meeting was well attended and some valuable inputs were received.

The Consultants are currently working on the draft plan and it is anticipated. It will be published in May for a series of public consultation events. It is anticipated that the process will be completed in the second quarter of 2023.

St. Canices Campus

A final meeting took place with the HSE project working group on the draft spatial framework. This framework is now being considered by the HSE and once approved will go to the Council's Management Team before being brought to the Municipal District Members. It will then be placed on public display for public consultation.

Loughmacask

The material amendments to the Loughmacask Masterplan and Environmental screenings reports are on public display for the period from Friday 21st April 2023 to Friday May 26th 2023. A drop in public information session will also be held in St. Canice's Neighbourhood Hall on Monday 8th May 2023 from 7pm to 9pm. The submission deadline is Friday May 26th at 5pm, after which the plan will then revert back to the Council for final consideration and adoption.

Urlingford

A first draft of the Urlingford Town Centre Masterplan has now been received from the appointed Consultants and is currently being reviewed. Once reviewed and proofed, the draft plan will be presented to the Municipal District Members 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. Three public meetings, one for each town, took place 18th the 19th and 20th of January 2023. With due consideration of inputs from these meetings the Consultants are currently drafting the three Masterplans, which are expected in June 2023. The draft plans will be presented to the respective Municipal Districts prior to them going on public display.

Taking in Charge

Initiation to have the following estates taken in charge were recently advertised in the Kilkenny People:

- Lakeside Housing Estate and Walkway/Cycleway. Closing date for receipt of submissions Tuesday 6th June 2023.
- Ogenty Housing Estate, Gowran advertised in Kilkenny People. Closing date for receipt of submissions Monday 22nd May 2023.

Works are continuing at The Greens, Thomastown; Rioch Court Kilkenny, Internal Road to Retail Park, Kilkenny and Abbeygate, Ferrybank. These works should be completed by the end of May.

Initial inspections have been carried out at Friarshill, Graiguenamanagh and schedule of works and costs have now to be collated.

E-Planning

Applications through e-planning continue to increase.

Users must register on the e-planning portal at: <https://planning.localgov.ie/en/local-government-ireland-planning-system>, where after 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.

Active Land Management

The Draft Maps of land in scope for the Residential Zoned Land Tax were published on the 1st November. A total of 25 submissions were made to the process. Determinations were made on each of these submissions, and landowners were notified of the determinations. Landowners now have an opportunity of appeal to An Bord Pleanála. **It should be noted that along with several other Local Authorities, Kilkenny is not publishing a Supplemental Map, as there are no additions to the maps of land in scope for the tax.** A Final Map of lands in scope for the tax will be published by December 2023.

There are 30 sites on the Derelict Sites Register; a site at Seanna Place in Kilmacow was added to the Register in March. Four notices of intent to add sites to the Derelict Sites Register were issued in April for sites in Graiguenamanagh. Funding was announced in the third round of URDF specifically to address long term vacancy and dereliction in Kilkenny City and measures to utilise this funding are being examined.

There are 24 Vacant Sites on the Vacant Sites Register and the number of cancelled entries due to site activation or improvement is 23. The Vacant Site Levy will be replaced by the Residential Zoned Land Tax in 2024. 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.

The Built Heritage Investment Scheme and the Historic Structures Fund conservation grant schemes have been assessed and forwarded to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH), with the following grants confirmed:

Built Heritage Investment Scheme: 16 grant applicants successfully acquired funding from a total of 18 applications (*see Table below*). The applicants have accepted the grant offer, and work will commence once methodologies are agreed with the Conservation Office.

PROJECT	FUNDING
St. Lachta's Church, <i>Freshford, Co. Kilkenny</i>	€13,600.00
St. Johns Church, <i>John Street, Kilkenny</i>	€9,500.00
Deerpark Mills,	€11,000.00

<i>Deerpark, Mullinavat, Co. Kilkenny</i>	
J&B Art Glass Studio, <i>The Glass Triangle, Knocktopher</i>	€3,585.00
3 Florence Terrace, <i>Kilkenny Street, Castlecomer</i>	€12,500.00
Thatch Cottage, <i>Cloneen, Crettyard, Co. Kilkenny</i>	€10,300.00
The Old Fever Hospital, <i>Clintstown, Freshford, Co. Kilkenny</i>	€11,000.00
Killinney Mill House, <i>Killinney, Kells, Co. Kilkenny</i>	€12,415.00
13 Banim Terrace, <i>Freshford Road, Kilkenny</i>	€12,300.00
14 Banim Terrace, <i>Freshford Road, Kilkenny</i>	€12,300.00
St. Kieran's College Trustees, <i>St. Kieran's College, College Road</i>	€13,000.00
16 Banim Terrace, <i>Freshford Road, Kilkenny</i>	€12,300.00
20 Parliament Street, <i>Kilkenny</i>	€12,500.00
Fictilius Ltd., <i>Racing Office, 4/5 St. Marys Lane</i>	€10,500.00
Ballybur Castle & Coach House, <i>Ballybur, Cuffesgrange,</i>	€9,310.08
6 Priors Orchard, <i>Johns Quay, Kilkenny</i>	€9,310.08
TOTAL	€175,420.16

Engagement with successful applicants for the **Built Heritage Investment Scheme** and the **Historic Structures Fund** conservation grant schemes are underway. Discussion will centre on agreeing appropriate specifications and methodologies for repair works.

Heritage Stewardship Funding 2023: The Conservation Office successfully acquired funding of €30,000 from the Heritage Council under this scheme. The project involves the laser scan, photogrammetry and building interpretation of two 16th century buildings in Parliament Street. The project will create a high-resolution record of these structures and increase awareness of Kilkenny's nationally significant 16th century townhouses, and in the long term will add to the offering of the Medieval Mile in Kilkenny City.

Building Control

Valid Commencement Notices Submitted Start of Year to End of Month

April 2023	90
April 2022	141
April 2021	132
April 2020	120

Valid Disability Access Applications Received Start of Year to End of Month

April 2023	15
April 2022	31
April 2021	20
April 2020	27

COMMUNITY

CLÁR 2023 Scheme

CLÁR (*Ceantair Laga Árd-Riachtanais*) is a targeted investment programme for rural areas that aims to provide funding for small infrastructural projects in areas that have experienced significant levels of depopulation.

The CLÁR 2023 programme will be delivered through 3 separate Measures as follows:

Measure 1: Developing Community Facilities & Amenities

Measure 2: Mobility, Cancer Care and Community First Responders Transport

Measure 3: 'Our Islands'

Measure 1 is administered through Kilkenny County Council and can be applied for by Kilkenny County Council in conjunction with groups in Local Communities.

Measure 2 and Measure 3 is being administered through the Department of Rural & Community Development.

Kilkenny County Council is pleased to announce that it is seeking applications for the CLÁR 2023 funding scheme from Community Groups. Measure 1 will support a variety of capital interventions that contribute to the enhancement of existing and/or the development of new accessible Community Recreation Facilities. The list below provides an indication of the types of interventions that may be supported, but is not exhaustive:

- Multi-Use Gaming Areas MUGAs/ Astro-Turf Facilities
- Skateboard Parks/Cycling Tracks
- Playgrounds
- Handball Alleys
- Tennis Courts
- Basketball Courts
- Community Gyms
- Community Cinemas
- Sensory Gardens
- Community Gardens

- Outdoor Bowling areas
- Walking/Running Tracks
- Outdoor Toilet Facilities
- Car Parking
- Public Lighting

For the first time under the CLÁR Programme, funding will be provided to carry out upgrades and improvements to spectator stands at local GAA and sports clubs.

Measure 1 applications can also include small scale renovation works to community facilities e.g. floors, windows, doors, heating upgrades, kitchen upgrades and in particular community centres that did not receive funding under the Communities Centres Investment Fund (CCIF). All community amenities funder under this programme must, in so far as practicable, be accessible to all abilities and ages.

Grant Aid

A minimum grant of €5,000 and a maximum grant of €50,000 for projects will be available. The maximum grant payable will be 90% of the project cost or a maximum of €50,000, whichever is the lesser. The remaining 10% or balance of the cost should be provided through local authority/community/other resources with a minimum of 5% cash contribution from the Community. Philanthropic contributions may be accepted as full or part of match funding costs.

CLÁR Eligible Electoral Districts

Coolaghmore	Kilmacar	Pleberstown
Killamery	Mothell	Ullard
Kilmaganny	Muckalee	Balleen
Kilmanagh	Brownsford	Ballyconra
Scotsborough	Dysartmoon	Baunmore
Boolyglass	Jerpoint West	Clomantagh
Muckalee	Listerlin	Galmoy
Tubbrid	Tiscoffin	Glashare
Tullahought	Castlebanny	Lisdowney
Attanagh	Castlegannon	
Clogharinka	Kilkeasy	

Application Forms and further particulars may be downloaded from www.kilkennycoco.ie or Cora Nolan, Community Section, Johns Green, Tel: 056-7794931.

Completed applications are to be sent to Kilkenny County Council's Community Department, John's Green House, Kilkenny by 4pm, 24th May, 2023.

All intended applicants should contact Catherine Byrne-Murphy 056-7794115, prior to the submission of their applications.

Kilkenny BikeFest, 13th & 14th May Bike Week 13th – 21st May, 2023.

BikeFest returns this year bigger than ever before on the 13th & 14th May, 2023. Growing to a multi-discipline festival, there are more things to experience; test bikes, leisure cycles, sustainability talks, films, food, music and so much more! Cycling Ireland and Kilkenny County Council have teamed up for this free, fun-fuelled programme of events and activities, for the passionate and casual pedlars of all abilities with the Sunday festival supplying activities that the whole family can enjoy together.

Saturday 13th kicks off with “leisure rides” exploring the Kilkenny countryside, departing from the main gates of Kilkenny Castle at 9.15am with our local cycle club, Marble City Cyclers and at 10am with Charlie Parsons, our local community bike ride leader (*age group: 18+*). That night, we have “Cycling the Change” in Billy Byrne’s. Mary Reynolds, a gold medal winner at Chelsea Flower Show and founder of the global movement “We Are The ARK” will talk on her experiences of rewilding and re-establishing biodiversity in gardens and public spaces. Ireland’s great travel writer, the late Dervla Murphy will be celebrated with a screening of the documentary of her worldwide travels by bike (*age group: 18+*). A great night’s entertainment and free event.

On Sunday the 14th from 12pm to 4pm, Kilkenny County Council County Hall will be transformed for Bikefest – Family Day, a celebration of cycling and sustainability for all the family. Arrive early for our Slow Roll, a fun, slow cycle through the City for all wheels, abilities and bikes, leaving County Hall at 12 noon. We would particularly love to see any upcycled, weird and wonderful bikes! For cyclists of all abilities, there are leisure rides, family cycles, balance bikes, learn to cycle, obstacle courses, mountain bikes and off-road zones. Workshops are planned for bike maintenance and the more technical build-a-bike workshops. Our well-being area offers free yoga sessions, drumming workshops, storytelling, sound journeys and workshops from our local food and craft producers. Kitty Scully, the renowned organic gardener, and Maura Brennan, founder of The Acorn Project, will join us for conversations on restoring biodiversity and organic growing. The weekend will be brought to a close with some lively tunes from our local traditional musicians! visitkilkenny.ie/bikefest.

An Cathaoirleach, Pat Fitzpatrick, a keen cyclist, is delighted to see Bike Fest return to County Hall. “This is a fun opportunity for everyone to try all types of cycling. Cycling is a great way to get around but it also brings a smile to people’s faces, young and old. The Active Travel investment programme will provide the infrastructure that is needed to ensure everyone can enjoy cycling in safety.”

Bike Fest is just one of the events scheduled in Kilkenny for Bike Week. The full listing is available [here](#). Bike Week is funded by the Department of Transport through the National Transport Authority.



Community Support Fund

Kilkenny received an allocation of €290,749 from the Community Support Fund under the Community Enhancement Programme for 2023. The total amount comprises of €142,467 for use towards running/operating costs and €145,375 capital funding along with €2,907 ring fenced for Women’s sheds. It was recommended that 30% of the overall funding be made available for small grants of €1,000 or less.

This fund supports groups, particularly in disadvantaged areas with their non-pay running costs such as utility bills e.g. electricity costs, refuse charges, heating charges or other non-pay operating costs for e.g. rental/lease costs, insurance bills.

Groups will also be able to use the funding to carry out necessary repairs and improvements to their facilities, purchase equipment such as tables and chairs, tools and signage, laptops, printers, lawnmowers, canopies and training equipment. Kilkenny LCDC received a total of 101 applications and the amount of funding requested was €820,520.

There were 34 community groups approved for funding for small grants up to €1000, 41 groups approved for medium grants up to €5,000 along with 7 groups approved for larger grants up to €20,000. There was also €4,000 of an allocation for Women's Sheds spread over 3 different groups. Details of the grants awarded will be sent out to successful community groups shortly.

Community & Cultural Facilities Capital Scheme (CCFCS)

Community & Cultural Facilities Capital Scheme is now open for 2023. The objective of this scheme is to respond to the need for better community recreational and cultural facilities for community groups through the provision of a capital grant.

The scheme is open to groups operating within the community sector who have a recognised legal structure, operate on a not-for-profit basis, demonstrate a policy of inclusion and demonstrate the capacity to manage and operate the proposed facilities.

Examples of projects eligible for support could include the development of open spaces, walks and parklands, play areas, broad based recreational facilities, community arts projects and projects that conserve the built and natural heritage of the County.

Funding is at rate of 75% of the total eligible project costs up to a maximum of €45,000. The grant beneficiary will have to provide the remaining 25% in match funding. The minimum grant available is €9,000 with a total eligible project cost of at least €12,000.

How to apply?

Terms conditions and guidelines are available for download from the link below or by contacting the Community Department on 056 779 4920.

[*Terms Conditions & Guidelines 2023.doc*](#) (size 136.7 KB)

Application Forms will only be issued once the interested group has met with the relevant member of the Community & Culture team.

The closing date for receipt of valid application is **12 noon on Friday 19th May 2023**

Commercial Premises Paint Scheme 2023

Kilkenny County Council is pleased to announce the Commercial Premises Paint Scheme 2023 whereby a fund has been allocated to assist with the cost of painting the front facade of commercial/business buildings and/or hand painted shop signage within Kilkenny County and City, subject to terms and conditions.

The scheme will offer a grant of €450 or 50% of the cost of the work - whichever is the lesser - to each applicant who is successful in the application process. Completed applications were due by Friday, 5th May, 2023.

National 2023 Pride of Place Awards

The IPB Pride of Place Gala Dinner & Gala Award Ceremony 2023 will take place on Friday 10th November in Armagh City Hotel hosted by Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council. Groups representing Kilkenny at the 2023 awards include Freshford, the Father McGrath Centre and the Callan Community Energy 2030.

Creative Ireland Strategy Launch

The Kilkenny Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023-2027 was launched on the 20th March, 2023. The vision of the Creative Ireland Programme 2023-2027 is to mainstream creativity in the life of the nation so that individually and collectively, in our personal lives and in our institutions, we can realise our full creative potential thereby promoting individual, community and national wellbeing. The Creative Ireland Programme will deliver through collaboration and partnership promoting understanding and appreciation of the value of creativity in all its forms – whether through the arts, culture, heritage, or technology.

The Creative Ireland Programme will prioritise its work around five aspects for the period 2023-2027:

1. Creative Youth
2. Creative Communities
3. Creative Industries
4. Creative Health and Wellbeing
5. Creative Climate Action & Sustainability



HERITAGE

Community Monuments Fund 2023 projects

Six Kilkenny projects have been awarded funding totalling €396,731 under the 2023 Community Monuments Fund. The projects awarded under Stream 1 funding (*i.e. Capital Conservation Works*) are:

- Grangefertagh Medieval Church and Graveyard;
- Thomple Medieval Church and Graveyard;
- Infirmary Wall at Duiske Abbey

Works on the west wall of the Augustinian Priory of St John the Evangelist, Kilkenny City.

The projects awarded under Stream 2 funding (*i.e. Conservation Management Report*) are:

- Tubbrid Medieval Church and Graveyard
- Rathpatrick Medieval Church and Graveyard.

This funding is administered by the Heritage Officer of Kilkenny County Council in partnership with the Environment Section of Kilkenny County Council. Work will begin on these projects in June 2023.



Thomple Medieval Church and Graveyard, Thomastown

New Biodiversity Officer Programme

Kilkenny, Offaly, Cork City and Wicklow are the first counties to welcome Biodiversity Officers under the new programme. The Heritage Council and the County and City Management Association (CCMA), with support from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the National Parks and Wildlife Service have announced the appointment of the first Biodiversity Officers in the country under a new initiative announced last year. The programme will see a Biodiversity Officer appointed to every local authority in the country by the end of 2024. We are delighted to welcome Bernadette Maloney who started in the role in Kilkenny this week. Bernadette brings extensive

experience having served as the Environmental Awareness Officer in Kilkenny County Council for a number of years. We wish Bernadette every success in this exciting new role.

Heritage Council Tidy Towns Heritage Award

The Heritage Council has been involved with the Tidy Towns competition since 1997 and seeks to recognise those who work at community level to nurture, promote and inspire new connections with natural, cultural or built heritage. Closing date for receipt of applications is Friday 2nd June 2023. Further details, criteria and application forms available at <https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/projects/tidy-towns-heritage-award>.

No Mow May - Join the buzz to save the bees

The National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) in partnership with An Post invite everyone to take part in No Mow May. Our native plants like the Dandelions provide the best nutrition for our wild bees. They will pop up naturally if we give them a chance. Lock away your lawnmower for the month of May, wait and see what appears. To find out more about this campaign go to <https://pollinators.ie/no-mow-may/>



ARTS

LITERATURE

Poetry Broadsheet submissions & workshop

A total of 105 poems from 58 poets were submitted for our 2023 Broadsheet and they are currently with our editor Afric McGlinchey for selection. Afric also facilitated a very successful day long Poetry Workshop.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ArtLinks Bursaries 2023

This year we received the highest ever number of applications for funding. Eleven bursaries, totalling €14,400 were awarded in music, film, literature, visual arts and multidisciplinary artforms.

Mentoring Bursaries 2023

There were eight mentoring bursaries awarded totalling €8,300 in literature, theatre, visual arts and community engaged arts practice.

Your Voice Matters

Our *Your Voice Matters* programme for writers will be rolled out over a nine-month period this year. An online introduction to the programme was held on 19th April and participants have been invited to apply for this project.

Successful writers will receive both online and in-person support by way of workshops and groups and one-to-one coaching.

The programme Aims and Objectives are to:

- Build capacity in Kilkenny's writing community
- Strengthen the local writing community and develop a mutually supportive community of writers across the county
- Encourage collaborative activity
- Empower local writers to support each other's development & progression
- Prepare writers at all levels to deliver work to a wider public audience and build confidence
- Provide writers with the skills to build and sustain flourishing writing practices

Young People and The Arts

Phase two of our Artists in residence programme has now been completed with artists Aoife Doherty working with young people in the Drum and Ossory Youth. The project Aims and Objectives were to:

- create a safe space for young people to explore their creativity
- enhance existing learning that they have received both in school and outside of the school setting
- To encourage young people to focus on the process of making and to be less focussed on outcomes
- expose young people to different materials & ways of making and creating art
- encourage them to experiment & work innovatively
- deepen and enrich the young people's experiences of the arts by ensuring that all activities are rich, fun, challenging and rewarding
- ensure that the young people's voices clearly feature in the decision-making processes throughout the residency.

The residency was hugely successful for both the artist and young people and they are keen for further engagement.

This was the Artists first residency programme and they received plenty of support from the Arts Office and Youth workers. Aoife has since been successful in receiving the Shinnors Scholarship with Limerick City Gallery of Art.

Art in the Contemporary World

Due to the change in the secondary school art curriculum the Arts Office has designed a pilot programme providing secondary school teachers with effective teaching and learning resources to support them in their implementation of this new curriculum for the Junior & Senior Cycle.

We have partnered with JCT, (*the dedicated CPD support service from the Department of Education*) in order to execute this programme. This pilot series is covering the Art of Curating, Art & the Environment & Art as Social Commentary.

Our second workshop offered teachers an opportunity to:

- Consider how artists use their own local environment as a source of inspiration to address ecological and social issues.
- Discuss and reflect on the connections between art, food, and farming.
- Engage in a range of drawing activities to support reflection.
- Share ideas and gain insights into eco-social art practices.

The Workshop was very well attended with over thirty teachers in attendance.

LEO

Building Better Business

4 Kilkenny based businesses have commenced the LEO Building Better Business LEAN programme which is being run jointly by the Local Enterprise Offices in Carlow and Kilkenny.

Building Better Business program is about building a stable, secure and sustainable business that is agile enough to face economic challenges. It is about finding ways to do things faster, better and together as a team.

LEO In your Community Initiative

The Local Enterprise Office Kilkenny in conjunction with the County Library Services have launched a new initiative LEO In your

Community whereby the LEO will be holding free business advisory clinics in the library branch locations throughout the County during the month of May.

Our confidential advisory service is open to anyone either considering a new business start-up or those currently operating a small business in County Kilkenny.

Appointments can be book by phone 056-7752662 or via the website

www.localenterprise.ie/kilkenny

Green for Micro – Support for Small Business

Applications are open for the Local Enterprise Office Green for Micro programme . The Green for Micro programme is designed to help prepare small businesses for the low carbon, more resource efficient economy of the future. This is a FREE programme, offering two days business specific advice and technical support and is available to businesses with up to ten employees. With climate change, changing regulations, rising resource costs and changing customer expectations, adopting an eco-friendlier approach is the best way forward for business and this green for micro programme can assist businesses to get started on their green journey.

Summary of 2023 Awards to Businesses

- €32,185 in direct financial assistance was approved for 4 manufacture /export service businesses in located in throughout the County.

- €13,875 in Business Expansion Grant assistance.
- €15,000 awarded in a feasibility study grant.
- 3 Technical Assistance for Micro Exporter grant awarded to support them in exploring new export market opportunities.
- 5 Businesses have commenced LEAN one to one consultancy programmes to investigate possible resource efficiencies and process improvements their businesses.
- 1 Business is availing of the Digital Start programme to prepare and implement a plan for the adoption of digital tools and techniques across the enterprise.
- 6 business have been approved a Trading Online Voucher totalling €12,980 to support the enhancement of their online trading capacity.
- Am Intellectual Property (IP) Start Grant has been approved to support a client company in obtaining expert IP advisory and support services in relation to Trademarks
- 2 Green for Micro Grant awarded. This scheme supports businesses to becoming greener and environmentally friendly.
- 2 applicants have been supported to make loan applications to the Micro Finance Ireland loan fund.
- 457 people participated on focused small business training, including 72 people participating on the Starting Your Business programme.
- 161 businesses have availed of specialised business specific mentoring on a variety of topics including finance, marketing, social media marketing and HR.

TOURISM

Destination Experience Development Planning Continues

April saw the first draft of Kilkenny's Destination Experience Development Plan (DEDP) presented to Kilkenny County Council for review. The plan focuses on improving and increasing the tourism experiences available to visitors to Kilkenny both City and County, emphasising Kilkenny's rich cultural and creative design history, its vibrant city vibes and the wonderful outdoor and adventure activities it has to offer. Failte Ireland will establish a local implementation group in May and the plan will be launched over the summer months.



This DEDP will be a five-year sustainable tourism destination development plan for Kilkenny City and County and will form the basis of Kilkenny County Council's own Tourism Development Strategy 2023-2028 which will be launched later in the year.

Kilkenny Tourism and visitkilkenny.ie

Kilkenny Tourism continues its work in delivering Kilkenny's marketing and PR plan for 2023. The Summer 2023 campaign continues to keep Kilkenny to the forefront of the domestic visitors' mind for a summer break this year with lots to see and do for visitors. April's marketing efforts showcased and promoted arts, crafts, history and the outdoors here in Kilkenny with a bright, fun twist on the campaign.



April activity also included the development of:

- **Experience Packages** – a new landing page for two new Kilkenny Experiences.
- **B&Bs/Guesthouses Promo** - A B&Bs and Guesthouses guide went live in April and was pushed out across socials throughout the month.

- **Radio** - Today FM promotion and a weeklong giveaway on 2FM ran in April with prizes offered for breaks in Kilkenny.
- **Members Event** is being arranged for all Kilkenny Tourism members for early summer with Pól Ó Conghaile confirmed as our guest speaker. This will be the first networking event since 2019 and should be a great night for the sector to connect and engage as well as to hear from an engaging expert on the night.

At the request of board members on behalf of their sectors, Visit Kilkenny also arranged the creation of a promotional video that could be used by all Members to promote County Kilkenny at networking events, pitches to tour operators and other key business-to-business meetings. This video is available for download on the Member's Site and should be particularly useful for members attending events similar to Meitheal.



Festivals & Events



April saw the launch of the ever popular Smithwicks Roots Festival, with a fantastic launch night held in the Smithwicks Experience outdoor performance space. The 25th anniversary festival ran from April 28th to May 7th.

Since 1998 the festival has attracted some of the finest names in the American/Roots canon. There's a mix of old and new acts this year with all styles catered for, from swing to bluegrass, rockabilly to Cajun, folk, blues and beyond.

Roots has been supported by Kilkenny County Council's Festivals Grant Scheme again for 2023.

HOUSING

The Directorate of Housing incorporates a wide range of services for applicants and tenants to facilitate and support the provision of independent and supported accommodation. The following information gives the up to date progress for 2023 under the various support services.

Homeless Services

HOMELESS SERVICES SUMMARY APRIL 2023	
Homeless Presentations	48
Homeless Assessment Outcomes	
Prevention & Interventions	29
Emergency Service	6
Not eligible / Did not avail of service	13
HAP Place Finder Service	
No of Homeless HAP tenancies @ 1 st day of month	117
No of Homeless HAP tenancies created during month	0
No of Homeless HAP tenancies in place @ last day of month	117
Number of Homeless HAP tenancy breakdowns	0
Other Social Housing Tenancies supported / created during month	4
Households in Temporary Emergency Supported Accommodation @ April 30th	37
Households in Temporary Emergency B&B accommodation	5
Households in Temporary Emergency B&B Accommodation that are families	4
Households (singles/couples) in Transition Emergency Accommodation (Own Front Door)	31
Households (Families) in Transition Emergency Accommodation (OFD)	12

Homeless Prevention Measures

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

We are currently providing advice and directing Tenants to the appropriate services required to prevent homelessness. Where a household is in receipt of a valid notice to quit and requires assistance in establishing what options are available to them to avoid potential homelessness they are advised to contact the Housing Office at its dedicated email address, NTQEnquiries@kilkennycoco.ie. Further details are available on www.kilkennycoco.ie. Any tenants who may have received a notice of termination or a landlord who has issued a notice of termination to their tenants and who may wish to in the coming months should direct any queries to the dedicated email provided and all queries will be responded to in a timely manner.

VACANT HOMES

The Vacant Properties Refurbishment Grant, Croí Cónaithe is among the suite of measures under the pathway to addressing vacancy and efficient use of existing stock in Housing for All. The grant is aimed at bringing vacant and derelict properties back into residential use. The scheme was originally for people who were refurbishing vacant properties for use as their principal private residence. The Government has recently announced that as of 1st May 2023, there will be a number of changes to this scheme including that the scheme will be expanded to property owners who wish to refurbish their vacant property for rental purposes.

The detail and guidance regarding the modified scheme has not yet been issued by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. There has been a substantial increase in the number of calls to the Housing Department regarding this scheme and a register of all inquiries to the Council is kept for follow up when details and application forms are provided.

All queries in relation to this grant should be submitted by email to Vacanthomes@Kilkennycoco.ie and will be responded to in a timely manner.

Social Housing Assessment

SOCIAL HOUSING SUPPORT APPLICATION SUMMARY APRIL 2023	
Number awaiting Social Housing Support at April 30 th (<i>Gross Need</i>)	1,584
Number awaiting Social Housing Support at April 30 th (<i>Net Need</i>)	789
Number of Social Housing Applications received in April	63
Number of applications incomplete/awaiting further information/clarification	48
Number of applications validated and ready for assessment during the month	23
Number of applications assessed during April	28
Number of applications awaiting assessment as @ April 30 th	89

Tenancy Management

Rent-A-Room Scheme

Announcements have been made in the media that the Rent -a- Room scheme will be extended to local authority social housing tenancies. This action is included in Housing For All and seeks to secure additional accommodation due to growing pressures in the private rental sector.

The Rent -a- Room Scheme currently allows a householder to earn up to €14,000 per year tax-free by renting out a room (or rooms) in their home to “private tenants”.

Recent announcements indicate the Governments intention to extend this scheme to local authority tenants but no details are yet in place. We are not in a position therefore to process any applications to proceed under this scheme at present. There are many concerns around the implementation of this scheme which need to be addressed before it can proceed.

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

- LA/RAS/Leasing allocations in April (offers made):..... 14
- LA/RAS/Leasing allocations to date (offers made):..... 68
- Tenant Liaison Officer cases in April:..... 23
- Maintenance Calls for April: 459
- Maintenance Calls year to date..... 2,137

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

VOIDS

At the end of March 2023 [end Q1] there were 44 vacant units of local authority accommodation awaiting refurbishment or remediation works. Under the 2023 Voids Maintenance Programme, Kilkenny County Council have recently received Department funding in the amount of €528,000 for renovations to 48 units. Works are ongoing on this voids maintenance programme and it is envisaged that a minimum of 75 units will be complete under this programme during 2023.

SELF HELP SCHEME

The Self-Help Scheme is a new scheme available to Council tenants in 2023. The objective of this scheme is to assist Local Authority tenants to carry out improvement works to their home which are deemed to be the tenant responsibility. Kilkenny County Council will pay 50% of the cost of the works up to a maximum contribution of €1,250 with a budget of €50,000. Closing date for receipt of applications is May 31st 2023.

Housing Grants

The 2023 housing grants allocation has been received from the Department of Housing, in the amount of €1,991,076, comprised of €1,592,861 (80%) grant and €398,215 (20%) KCC contribution.

This allocation exceeds the amount included in the budget for 2023 and reflects the Departments confidence in the grants section to meet and exceed its targets for 2023. The funding approval also confirms that the local authority can not exceed the maximum grant amounts under legislation and that these maximum amounts have not been revised.

Grants Approved & Committed up to 30 th April 2023		
Scheme	No.	Amount
HGD - Housing Adaptation Grant	88	€960,211
MAG - Mobility Aid Grant	8	€34,947
HOP - Housing Aid for Older Persons	125	€639,905
Total	221	€1,635,063

Grants Paid out up to 30 th April 2023		
Scheme	No.	Amount
HGD - Housing Adaptation Grant	17	€176,866
MAG - Mobility Aid Grant	2	€8,349
HOP - Housing Aid for Older Persons	58	€285,047
Total	77	€470,262

Housing Loans

Housing Loan Activity 1st January - 30 th April, 2023					
Loan Type	Received	Approved	Amount Approved	Number Paid	Amount Paid
Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan	0	0	€0	1	€62,500
Local Authority Home Loan	21	4	€413,900	6	€658,900
Caravan Loan	0	0	€0.00	0	€0
Total	21	4	€413,900	7	€721,400

Housing Capital

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.

The current Kilkenny County Council Housing Construction Programme includes:

- On Site – total of 186 units
 - 2023 delivery = 98 units
 - 2024 delivery = 88 units
- In Pipeline (funding approved, not yet on site)
 - 2024 delivery = 90 units
 - 2025 delivery = 94 units

Housing Capital have a busy few months ahead as the following schemes are due to be complete and ready for allocation this summer:-

- 9 units at Old Creamery, Kilmacow – mix of 2 and 3 bed houses
- 6 units at Golf Links Road, 4 x age friendly bungalows and 2 x 2 bed townhouses
- 25 units at Legan Grange, Thomastown – 10 x 1 bed, 10 x 2 bed and 5 x 3 bed
- 4 x 3 bed houses at Main St, Piltown
- 5 units at Village Gardens, Waterford Road, Kilkenny City



Development at Golf Links Roads.

Discussions are ongoing with Developers regarding the delivery of further Part V and Turnkey housing in 2024 and 2025. Land purchases are underway and under consideration as outlined in the Housing Delivery Action Plan 2022 – 2026.

Kilkenny County Council are commencing the Vacant Homes Data Survey this month, based on the existing geodirectory with a view to updating the information and identifying suitable properties for reuse.

UKRAINIAN RESPONSE UNIT

OFFER A HOME

The 'Offer a Home' programme is managed by Kilkenny County Council on behalf of Government. This call is for offers of houses, apartments or holiday homes. We are looking for properties that are currently unoccupied and could provide accommodation to those fleeing war in Ukraine. We need stand-alone properties with the main facilities required for independent living. A Government tax-free recognition payment of €800 per month is available to property owners offering accommodation to those fleeing the Ukraine. Further details are available on the 'Offer a Home' programme on www.offerahome.ie

'Offer a Home' Programme Statistics May 2023	May 2023
Number of Properties Offered	63
Number of Properties Assessed as suitable	38
Number of Allocated Properties	31
Number of Registered Tenants in Occupied Properties	109
Number of Properties that require Minor Works	11
Number of Properties – unsuitable/require Major Works	9
Number of Properties Withdrawn	9

UKRAINIAN INTER AGENCY & COMMUNITY FORUM

The Inter Agency & Community Forum was established to bring together all the stakeholders to support the Ukrainian Response in Kilkenny. The Forum is chaired by the Interim Chief Executive of Kilkenny County Council and consists of the following members:

- Kilkenny County Council
- Kilkenny Leader Partnership
- HSE
- Kilkenny Education & Training Board
- Kilkenny Civil Defence
- TUSLA
- An Gardaí Síochána
- The Defence Forces
- Kilkenny County Childcare Committee
- Kilkenny Volunteer Centre
- Kilkenny Age Friendly
- Kilkenny Recreational Sports Partnership
- KCLR96FM
- Kilkenny Community Radio
- Kilkenny GAA
- Irish Farmers Association
- Local Link

- Public Participation Network
- Disability Federation
- Immigration Council
- Citizen's Information
- Kilkenny Chamber
- Religious: Roman Catholic, Church Ireland, Islamic Centre, Presbyterian
- Irish Red Cross

Over the coming months, we will provide you with a selection of the activities being provided to the Ukrainian community by the various stakeholders of the Forum. The focus this month is on the work of Kilkenny Leader Partnership (KLP), who provide the soft supports to Ukrainian arrivals in Kilkenny. Below is a sample of activities provided by KLP, in conjunction with the Ukrainian Response Unit of Kilkenny County Council.

Ukrainian Culture Centre

The Ukrainian Cultural Centre is held every Saturday morning in the Fr. McGrath Centre and is run on a voluntary basis by teachers from Ukraine. Primarily for young Ukrainians to learn about their culture, it is also an opportunity for pre-schoolers to learn English but older Ukrainians are also benefitting from these lessons so it has become an intergenerational activity. As well as the educational piece in the centre, there is music, art and dancing.

Walk & Talk



Walk & Talk is an opportunity for Ukrainians to improve their English while meeting new people and taking in the beauty of our City. This event takes place every Wednesday at lunchtime for a 4km walk.

Men's Shed Bikes

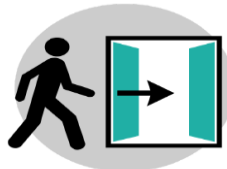
This very successful project is going from strength to strength and shows the benefits of strong collaboration of volunteers and agencies in the community. Donated bikes are repaired by Kilkenny Men's Shed and then given to Ukrainians around the County.

Huge shout out to Pat Glennon of the Men's Shed and Peter Dore who collect and deliver bikes. Cycling Officer with Kilkenny County Council Caitriona Corr organises bike maintenance classes in various accommodations and KLP organise the logistics.

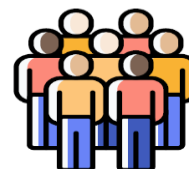
LIBRARY



24,908 Items borrowed



14,426 Visitors



1,080 Members



Throughout the month of April, Spring into Storytime part of the national Right to Read initiative hosted 33 storytimes sessions across our network of branches. 600 hundred children attended storytime sessions hosted by library staff and special sessions from visiting authors. Children in Castlecomer and Urlingford enjoyed a visit from the BFG and Ferrybank Children learned all about Queenie the Queen Bee.

Increased Usage

This quarter, in comparison to 2022, we have seen a sharp increase in usage of our libraries. There has been an increase in our members to 4057, an increase of 30%, as well as an increase in our issues to 83726, representing 33%. With extended opening hours now in Loughboy, Thomastown, and Ferrybank libraries, we are now open more hours than ever, offering our borrowers the chance to visit the library when it suits them.

Our PC and wi-fi sessions have also increased by 43% to 4159. We also offer the Eduroam service in Callan, Ferrybank and Thomastown libraries. Call into these branches and you will be able to access your institution's Eduroam network. Eduroam is a secure, reliable and easy to use Wi-Fi network for students, lecturers, and researchers



Library Activities

Events	In Branch	Online	Offsite
163	153	0	11
Live	Numbers		
107	2170		

This month we had lots of activities and events across our libraries. These included a Pokemon trading card event in Thomastown library, chess tournaments in Loughboy library, and LEGO workshops in Ferrybank and City libraries. We were delighted to welcome residents and staff from Tinnypark to Loughboy Library this month for some fun at the magic table!

Joanne Condon hosted an upcycling workshop in City Library full of great tips. There was an eco painting workshop for teens in Castlecomer with Claire Brennan, and a local history talk with Eoin Swithin Walsh on the history of Woodstock House. Also held was a talk on 'Zero Food Waste Workshop' with Denise Walsh in Loughboy library with an interesting demonstration and some tasty samples.

We had Healthy Ireland events take place around the county, with physio Paul Bolger having a great turnout for our talk 'Exercise and Aging' in Castlecomer, and Paddy McEvoy holding a class in chair-based exercise in City Library. There was also a talk from Dr. Ann-Marie Eustace Ryan in Graiguenamanagh library on Gut Health and the power of the microbiome. We hosted class visits in our libraries across the county, and our mobile van drove the length and breadth of the county, visiting communities, schools and creches.



Mayfair Library Update

Work is continuing to progress on the Mayfair library.



Online Services Usage



2,818 eAudiobooks borrowed



246 Class sessions



812 eMagazines borrowed



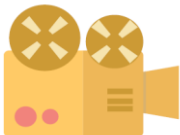
1,473 eBooks borrowed



100 Online Courses sessions



755 Songs accessed



**Digital
Engagement**

Our staff have prepared, recorded, edited and published **354** posts on our social media platforms in March. Our video views for were **8102**.

FINANCE

The expenditure by service division to the end of April is set out in table 1. Total Expenditure for the period was €27.7m compared with the annual budget of €98.75m.

Table 1	Actual YTD April 2023	Budget Full Year 2023
	€'000's	€'000's
Housing & Building	7,688	22,698
Road Transport & Safety	6,156	27,560
Water Services	2,380	7,736
Development Management	3,350	11,754
Environmental Services	3,408	13,520
Recreation & Amenity	2,061	8,091
Agriculture, Education, Health, Welfare	175	692
Miscellaneous Services	2,486	6,698
OVERALL TOTAL	27,704	98,749

Finance Update

The bank overdraft facility was not utilised during the four-month period to the end of April 2023. The draft unaudited financial statements for 2022 were finalised and presented to Council at the March meeting. The Local Government Auditor has given notice that he will commence the audit for 2022 on the 22nd of May 2023. The annual rate demands for 2023 were sent to all rate payers in February.

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..... 34 Cases
- Increase in Revaluation on Appeal 1 Case
- No change to Revaluation on Appeal..... 10 Cases
- Appeals outstanding 3 Cases

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

Commercial Rates Vacancy

The commercial rates vacancy remains at 90% for 2023. A 90% vacancy strike off will be applied to eligible commercial rate accounts for 2023 where the customer formally applies, provides proof of vacancy and clears any outstanding rate arrears, where applicable.

Rates Incentive Grant Scheme 2023

The 2023 "Rates Incentive Grants Scheme" is available to all Rate payers subject to certain terms and conditions. As approved at Kilkenny County Council's 2023 Budget Meeting, Rate payers can avail of a grant of 5.8% of the value of their 2023 Rate Demand (excluding arrears) to a maximum value of €250. The terms and conditions of the 2023 "Rates Incentive Grants Scheme" are as follows. There are two payment options:

Option 1: Pay in 2 Moieties

Pay your first moiety & arrears, plus any outstanding Property Entry Level (PEL), before the end of May 2023. Pay your second moiety before the end of October 2023 at the latest, and deduct 5.8% up to the maximum from your 2023 Demand.

Option 2: Monthly Payment Plan

Pay your Rates & Arrears plus any outstanding PEL, in full in equal consecutive monthly instalments by standing order/ direct debit or by other consecutive monthly arrangement before the end of October 2023 and deduct 5.8% up to the maximum from your 2023 Rate Demand. Your monthly payment plan must commence prior to 31st May, 2023.

NOTE:

Terms & conditions may vary subject to Rates Waiver 2023 eligibility. Please contact the Rates Office on 056-7794209 or e-mail rates@kilkennycoco.ie should you have any queries. Please quote your customer number and/or LAID number as detailed on your Rate Demand.

Working Capital Facility for Community projects co-funded with Kilkenny Leader Partnership

There are a number of community projects jointly funded by Kilkenny County Council (KCC) and Kilkenny Leader Partnership (KLP). These projects require a working capital facility from KCC until the KLP grants are paid out. KCC are seeking to provide a revolving working capital facility to the community groups subject to detailed terms and conditions. The maximum facility to be provided for all projects is €500k.