

CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT

NOVEMBER 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

The final Tidy Towns Forum for 2023 is scheduled for Saturday 25th of November from 10am-12pm in the Thomastown Community Centre.


Interpretation, Wayfinding & Orientation Plan

A public consultation event on the findings will take place on 22nd November at the Rhu Glenn Hotel, from 11am to 2pm and 3.30 p.m. to 7.00 p.m. at the Brandon House Hotel



REPORT AT A GLANCE

CORPORATE:.....	2
ROADS:	3
ENVIRONMENT:.....	4
PARKS/SPECIAL PROJECTS:	9
PLANNING:	13
COMMUNITY & CULTURE:.....	14
HERITAGE:	15
ARTS:.....	16
LEO/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	18
HOUSING:	20
UKRAINIAN RESPONSE UNIT	24
FIRE SERVICES	24
LIBRARY SERVICES:.....	26
FINANCE.....	28


FULL FORWARD KILKENNY 2030



Full Forward Kilkenny 2030, launched on 26th of October, 2023, outlines a new vision for Kilkenny City and County. It is the result of extensive consultation with the local community, businesses, citizens, and interest groups. This vision aims to shape the future of Kilkenny by the end of the decade, focusing on making it a great place to live, work, and enjoy.



Kilkenny County Council is committed to the ambitious goal of maintaining full employment in the region beyond 2030. Full Forward Kilkenny 2030 will play a crucial role in supporting this mission, aiming to create at least 2,600 new jobs in the coming years. In addition, the plan aligns with the City and County Development Plan, which seeks to address the housing demand. It aims to meet the projected need for 4,649 houses between 2016 and 2027, with an annual target of 422 houses.



Full Forward Kilkenny 2030 will support these aims across 7 key pillars: Climate, Community, Jobs, Heritage, Inclusion, Health, and Creativity.

ROADS

MAJOR PROJECTS

(Included in NDP- Funded by TII)

N24 Waterford to Cahir Scheme

The Display of Preferred Transport Solution is now scheduled for Q1 2024, with the actual dates to be confirmed subject to and following successful completion of the upcoming Phase 2 TII Project Peer Review process on the Option Selection Report. We are currently planning for a Public Display in January 2024.

Landowners within the Study Area will receive notifications on the Public Display of the Preferred Transport Solution in advance and notices will also be published in local newspapers, on local radio, on County Council social media platforms (Kilkenny & Tipperary County Council) and on the Project Website at: <https://n24waterford2cahir.ie/news/>.

A meeting will be held with Elected Members of both Kilkenny & Tipperary County Council in advance of the Public Display, to advise on the Phase 2 Preferred Transport Solution for the project. Date to be confirmed.

MINOR PROJECTS

(Not included in NDP-Funded by TII)

N24 Tower Road (Safety Scheme)

Works are continuing to progress well.

- Final bridge works on-going.
- Landscaping of earthworks on-going.
- Earthworks substantially complete site wide.
- Works at the tie ins of the Tower Road and the Ink Bottle substantially complete.
- Blacktop works are on-going on the mainline and expected to be completed by end of November 2023.
- Scheme Drainage substantially complete.
- Accommodation works are on-going.
- Substantial completion of the scheme is expected by early to mid-December, which is ahead of schedule despite the poor weather over recent months.



Pavement Works on-going on the Mainline and Link Road.



Overhead drone footage of the compacted grade separated junction under construction.

N77 Ballyragget to Ballynaslee

The award procedures for the construction of the N77 Scheme are on-going and subject to TII approval expected to be signed by early December 2023. Works are envisaged to commence in early Q1 2024 with a 12 month construction period envisaged. 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.

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 remains in discussion with the valuers representing objectors to the CPO to discuss their concerns. An oral hearing if called by An Bord Pleanála is expected to be in Q1 2024.

Pavement Schemes.

The construction works in respect of the N77 Knockroe to Littlefield Pavement Scheme was fully completed by Lagan Asphalt Ltd for a cost of in excess of €1.7m by early November.



New pavement on N77 near Clintstown

The design work is ongoing in respect of the N76 Callan By Pass Pavement Scheme is on-going. The required PAAR report is in preparation. Design work and the preparation of tender documentation will be on-going during 2024 with a view to issuing a tender for the works during 2024. The overall cost of the scheme is expected to be in excess of €4m with varying sources of TII funding necessary to deliver the scheme.

National Road Bridge Works.

The N10 Ossory Bridge Rehabilitation Scheme works are progressing with Cumnor Construction Ltd. Works are presently on-going on the western (*City side*) of the structure.

The works are scheduled to be substantially completed by the 4th December 2023 with full demobilization from the site scheduled for the 18th December 2023. Complex watermain installation requirements and adverse weather have impacted progress over recent weeks.

The overall outturn cost for the project is expected to be just under €2m.

ENVIRONMENT

CLIMATE ACTION

Climate Action Plan

The Draft Kilkenny County Council Climate Action Plan is currently being reviewed by environmental consultants, Fehiliy Timony, to determine if its implementation is likely to have significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites. The Consultants were appointed under a shared service agreement with the other local authorities in the South East region. They will prepare a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Report and Appropriate Assessment (AA) Report which will inform the Draft Plan. Once this SEA and AA stage has been undertaken the plan will go out for public consultation. This will be advertised widely, and will include public meetings to give the public an opportunity to engage.

A brief presentation was made by the Climate Action Coordinator to the Council Plenary Meeting on 16th October to formally record that the Draft Plan will be going out public consultation shortly.

Reduce your Use Energy Campaign

Kilkenny County Council have signed up for the 2023/24 [Reduce Your Use campaign](#). This is a voluntary initiative for the public sector as part of

a whole-of-government national campaign to reduce energy use through the winter months. Running from October 2023 to March 2024, the campaign consists of a programme of themed activities being rolled out to promote energy efficiency. As part of the campaign, Kilkenny County Council will focus on the Callan and Thomastown Area Offices. The campaign is expected to deliver a reduction of between 5% and 10% in energy use overall across the public sector. There is also a reduction target for up to 15% of energy use in public sector buildings. The Climate Action Team will work with the Area Office to document and disseminate the learnings from this campaign.

Every Service Area and office is being encouraged to take simple measures to reduce energy use over the winter months. Below are some simple tips:

Did you know?

- Every time you turn the heating up by 1°C the heating costs increase by approximately 8%.
- Lighting can account for up to 40% of a building's energy use. Turn off the lights when you leave the office.
- Using the power-saving mode on a photocopier can save up to 92% of its typical energy use.
- Turning off all non-essential equipment out of business hours can save up to 60% of office equipment energy costs.

For further information on reducing energy in the office and at home visit

<https://www.seai.ie/home-energy/>

Community Climate Action Programme (CCAP)

The Community Climate Action grant scheme is currently waiting on the Dept. of Environment, Climate and Communications to open the scheme nationally. The Kilkenny Climate Action Office will advertise it widely as soon as it does. In the meantime, communities are encouraged to plan ahead for how it would benefit their area and what projects would support and help them to build low carbon communities. Contact Breda.Maher@kilkennycoco.ie

To help communities prepare for the programme the Community Climate Action Officer gave two presentations to the public during October - at Loughboy Library 6th October and Kilkenny City Library 18th October, and visited the following communities: Mullinavat Matters, Mooncoin Celtic Club and Kilnaspic Peoples Shed, Melody Makers, River Orchard Group and Community Development.

The Sandwich Project, Lisa Fingleton – John Street Kilkenny City

The Climate Team in partnership with the Arts Office, Kilkenny County Council held a food systems workshop on the 12th October with artist Lisa Fingleton. Through art and discussion, it illustrated the impact mass food production has on our health and environment and encouraged people to have a better appreciation of clean, healthy and local food.

It was a great success and had a fantastic turnout with members of the public and local Kilkenny businesses keen to learn more about food.



WASTE

Waste Enforcement

As at the end of October 2023 – Kilkenny County Council had 57 enforcement files opened year to date in 2023. Three cases have been before the District Court, with another case in the High Court for the recovery of the landfill levy, following a successful prosecution under the Waste Management Act.

Bring Banks Usage

The Council provides and manages 46 Bring Centres across the City and County. A total of 1,710 tonnes of recyclables were collected from our Bring Centres so far in 2023. This represents the same proportion that was collected for the prior year during the same period. Loughboy Shopping Centre (16 tonnes collected), Aldi Kilkenny City (14 tonnes collected) and Lidl, Johnswell Road (9 tonnes collected) are the busiest locations in the City and Graiguenamanagh (6 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

Dunmore Civic Amenity Site

Approximately 5,500 customers visited Dunmore during the month of October.

- 6.1 tonnes of Cardboard,
- 5.3 tonnes of Plastic,
- 6.9 tonnes of Paper and
- 13.2 tonnes of WEEE (Waste Electrical & Electronic Equipment) being sent from the site for recycling.

With gardens being made winter ready, the site received 54.86 tonnes of green waste which was sent for composting and 1.36 tonnes of food waste sent of anaerobic digestion.

The repurposing of the capped Landfill into a Countryside Park has taken a step closer to opening as the Parks Department continue to invest in and shape what will be an amazing amenity in Kilkenny. Each month this process has been helped greatly by the cooperation and expertise of the staff at Dunmore and the Environment Section.

Granny Recycling and Waste Disposal

Kilkenny County Council is delighted to announce the renewal of its contract with Granny Recycling and Waste Disposal Unit. The renewed partnership, extending over the next four years, underscores the commitment of both organizations to safeguarding the environment and promoting efficient waste disposal practices in South Kilkenny.



Sean McKeown, Director of Services, Kilkenny County Council and Richard Murphy, CHI

Granny Recycling recognizes the responsibility entrusted to them through this contract renewal and affirms their dedication to addressing the waste management challenges faced by South Kilkenny. By employing state-of-the-art technologies and collaborating with local stakeholders, they strive to foster a cleaner, healthier, and more sustainable environment for all.

Septic Tank Grant

The Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage Darragh O'Brien recently announced that grants for Septic Tanks will be increased from €5000 to €12,000. The Minister also announced that the qualifying condition that the septic tank must be registered with the local authority prior to 1st February 2023, will be removed. Further information will issue to local authorities in due course.

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Tidy Towns

It was another successful year for the Tidy Towns groups in Kilkenny. The Annual Awards nationally took place on Friday 6th of October. It was the 60th year of entry by Inistioge Tidy Towns. The exceptional dedication and hard work of local community groups in Kilkenny have been recognized once again this year. The annual awards, which celebrate and honour communities shaping their local environment, highlighted the extraordinary efforts of several groups across the County.

<i>Listerlin Tidy Towns</i>	National Leave No Trace Award, Endeavour Award
<i>Tullahought Tidy Towns</i>	Small Town Regional Award under the Pollinator Programme, Silver Medal, 3rd Place in County Awards
<i>Inistioge Tidy Towns</i>	Gold Medal, 2nd Place County Awards
<i>Keep Kilkenny Beautiful</i>	Winner of the Regional Award, Gold Medal, 1st in County

The final Tidy Towns Forum for 2023 is scheduled for Saturday 25th of November from 10am-12pm in the Thomastown Community Centre. Representatives from new and existing Tidy Towns are invited to attend. Bernadette Moloney, Biodiversity Officer and Dr. Mary Tubridy, Ecologist and former Tidy Towns adjudicator will be presenting. Dr Tubridy recently undertook three Biodiversity Surveys of Piltown, Ballyragget and Johnstown and will provide a presentation on the basic principles of biodiversity. She will also outline her findings on the recent work completed in Kilkenny, highlighting some common themes which is likely impacting many urban towns and villages throughout the County. This will be an opportunity to ask Dr Tubridy to seek advice regarding the competition and specifically, on actions to improve biodiversity locally. In the tidy towns competition, the "Nature and Biodiversity in your Local Area" category carries 55 marks, and can be of great benefits to wildlife and the look of local villages and towns across the County.

Keep Kilkenny Beautiful (KKB) in collaboration with Kilkenny County Council has devised a new school programme to celebrate their recent achievements in the National Tidy Towns competition. Kilkenny City improved their score by twelve marks and were only two marks behind the national winners. A biodiversity subgroup was established to work on specific projects to nurture nature in the City, partnering with the Environmental Awareness Officer and the Council's Heritage Officer to bring a special opportunity to primary schools across Kilkenny City and we would also welcome any after-schools group to get involved as well. Schools and after school facilities are being encouraged to take part in the programme to pledge to complete three actions for biodiversity over the next 6 months. This programme was launched on Monday 23rd in the River Court Hotel, Kilkenny.

Litter Management Plan

The Environmental Awareness Officer (EAO) is currently reviewing the Litter Management Plan 2021-2023 with a view to developing a new 3-year Plan for Kilkenny County Council. All sections of the Environment will feed into this process. A draft plan will go before the Municipal Districts in the months of November and December for input prior to public consultation.

Anti Litter and Graffiti Fund

As part of the Anti Litter and Graffiti fund, a biodiversity and environmental themed mural has been commissioned for Stoneyford. This will be a way to engage broad audiences to appreciate the problems facing our biodiversity habitats.

The MyWaste “Always On” campaign took place throughout October highlighting #CircularLiving which replaced “Reuse Month”. The social and digital campaign featured assets on Repair and Maintenance, Upcycling and Repurposing, Renting and Borrowing, Swapping and Trading, Circular Fashion & Community Engagement in addition to the inclusion of updated videos and tutorials produced over the last number of years.

All information can be accessed via Circular Living - mywaste My Waste.

Green Schools

The EAO is continuing to assist schools around the County to renew their membership as part of the Green Schools programme under their respective themes- Litter and Waste, Energy, Water, Travel, Biodiversity and Global Citizenship. School assessments will take place upon request.

WEEE Ireland Recycling

WEEE Ireland are undertaking a Halloween Battery & E-Waste Recycling campaign and have asked all local authorities to support and publicize this initiative. When the tricks and treats are over, they’re calling on the public to be on the lookout for any dead batteries and decorations that should be recycled this Halloween. If a decoration, device, or costume lights up, moves or talks – it’s an electrical product and it may also have a battery or bulb lurking inside ...all of which can be recycled for FREE! Some of these items include Halloween Costumes, Halloween Masks, Battery Operated Candles, String/Fairy Lights, Indoor/Outdoor battery or electric decorations, Talking Teddies/Dolls, Battery Operated Board Games, Musical Greeting Cards, and/or Remote Controls.



ENVIRONMENT

Environment Complaints

All Environmental complaints received are logged on the CRM (*Customer Relations Management*) System. The number of complaints that have been received and logged by Environment Staff for investigation to the end of October 2023 was 752 compared with 756 for the same period last year. The nature of these complaints ranged from littering, illegal dumping, burning of waste and abandoned cars. The majority continue to be related to littering and illegal dumping. Whilst every effort is made to bring unacceptable environmental practice into compliance, Environment Enforcement Staff continue to manage significant enforcement cases progressing through prosecution cases.

Community Monuments Fund



Ongoing site works at Grangefertagh

Domestic Waste Water Treatment System Inspections 2023

Under the National Inspection Plan for Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems 2022-2026 the Environment Section of Kilkenny County Council must complete 51 inspections by year end. The Environment Section along with other sections of the Council are currently arranging random Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems Inspections throughout the County in order to carry out this statutory requirement.

All homeowners will be given the statutory notice period before an inspection will be carried out. All homeowners who registered their Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems before the 1st of February 2013 will be eligible for an 85% grant up to €5,000 for the repair, upgrade or replacement of their existing waste water treatment system.

Farm Inspections

The Environment Section has recently carried out follow up inspections with regards to farm inspection carried out between 2020 – 2022. While most farms have carried out remedial works to improve compliance rates with the Good Agricultural Practice Regulations a small number have been cross reported to the Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine and will receive a deduction in their single farm payment. Under the Environment Section RMCEI Plan for 2023 we planned to carry 80 agricultural inspections. Due to challenges in staff recruitment in the Environment Section we currently have no inspections carried out to date in 2023.

Air Quality

The Environment Section of Kilkenny County Council are making plans to install an additional air quality monitor in Kilkenny City. The monitor was funded by the Department Environment, Climate & Communications & will give additional readings for air pollutions levels in the City.

The Environment Section recently held a meeting with representatives of Solid Fuel Merchants Ireland (SFMI) to discuss the new solid fuel regulations. The Primary Focus on these regulations is on improving the air quality along with the aim to improve people's health chances and outcomes. SFMI highlighted the issue of some unregistered fuel merchants not complying with current regulations and openly selling bituminous coal and turf throughout the County. The new Solid Fuel Regulations state it is illegal to sell or transport bituminous coal in the Republic of Ireland. The Environment Section will be working on enforcing the Solid Fuel Regulations in the coming months within the County.

PARKS & SPECIAL PROJECTS

South East Greenway

- Lot 5a (Ferrybank to Curraghmore) is the next Lot, of the South East Greenway, to advance to construction. The tender process is now completed and the contract has been awarded to Glas Civil Engineering Ltd. Works are due to commence on this 5.5km section in mid-November.
- Technical consultants to assist with the contract supervision and administration of Lot 5a have also been awarded to Roughan & O'Donovan Consultants.
- Wexford County Council, as lead authority, are continuing to prepare a Technical Services Tender, for a multi-disciplinary engineering consultancy team, to complete all remaining Lots of the Greenway. Subject to Transport Infrastructure Ireland approval this tender will issue this month.
- In October, Gillian Power was appointed Project Manager for the scheme, taking over from Fintan Ryan. Eoin Atkinson is the Resident Engineer on site and he can be contacted at 087 188 4342.

Interpretation, Wayfinding & Orientation Plan

Fáilte Ireland have engaged The Paul Hogarth Company (TPHC) to conduct an Interpretation, Wayfinding and Orientation Plan for the Greenway. The Plan can then be used to apply for funding for the animation of the Greenway. The following progress has been on the Plan:

- Inception meetings took place involving all 3 local authorities and TII last July.
- A site visit was undertaken by TPHC in August.
- A public consultation event on the findings will take place on 22nd November at the Rhu Glenn Hotel, from 11am to 2pm and 3.30 p.m. to 7.00 p.m. at the Brandon House Hotel.



Greenway Link to Glenmore: The Part 8 planning consultation period has now concluded. In total, 15 submissions were received. The Chief Executive's report will be presented to Council at the November Meeting.

Greenway Link to Slieverue: The Feasibility and Route Selection Report is now completed. Consultation is ongoing with the TII Structures Section and it is likely that further additional design works with respect to the proposed N29 over bridge will be required prior to commencing the planning process.

Woodstock (Inistioge) to South East Greenway Link: In 2022, Kilkenny County Council, in partnership with Trail Kilkenny, commissioned Punch Consulting Engineers to prepare a preliminary Feasibility Study and Route Selection Report for a recreational connectivity link between Woodstock Estate and the South East Greenway. In conjunction with the preparation of this study, the Council commenced discussions with TII. The net result of these discussions is that TII agree the project has merit and subsequently allocated funding to progress the scheme in line with TII's Project Manager's Manual for Greenway Projects. In July, utilising TII's Technical Services Framework Agreement, tenders were sought for a multi-disciplinary engineering team. In total three tenders were received, the tender assessment process is now nearing completion and it is anticipated that a tender recommendation report will be issued to TII for approval in November.

The scope of the service requirements includes Phases 0-4 of the (TII) Project Managers Manual (PMM) for Greenway Projects and TII's Project Management Guidelines. The estimated duration to complete this element of the project is 49 months and additional details on the various Phases is provided hereunder:

- Phase 0 Strategic Assessment
- Phase 1 Concept & Feasibility
- Phase 2 Option Selection
- Phase 3 Design & Environmental Evaluation
- Phase 4 Statutory Processes

2023 Call for new applications under the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS)

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

Similar to last year the funding applications are divided into following four categories: -

- **Measure 1** - grant available €30,000 and Local Authorities can submit a maximum of 7 applications.
- **Measure 2** - grant available €200,000 and Local Authorities can submit a maximum of 3 applications.
- **Measure 3** - grant available €500,000 and Local Authorities can submit a maximum of 1 application.
- **Project Development** - grant available €50,000 and Local Authorities can submit a maximum of 2 applications.

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

Prior to the submission deadline under Project Development and Measure 1 applications 9 applications were submitted over the summer, the maximum permissible. More recently the following Measure 2 and 3 applications were submitted to the Department, in advance of the 27th October deadline on behalf of Kilkenny County Council:

Measure	Project Name	Description	Grant Sought	Estimated Total Cost
M2	Woodstock Gardens & Arboretum – Accessibility and Inclusivity Enhancement Scheme	To create an environment that is easily accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible regardless of the users age, size, ability or disability.	€200,000	€224,000
M2	The Ennisnag Loop Walk – Walking Trail and Amenity Area – New Amenity	The development of a new 2.3km way-marked loop walking trail from the village of Stoneyford out into the townlands of Lawcus, Ennisnag and Cotterelsbooly. The proposed trail will commence at a new trailhead within the Community Centre grounds in Stoneyford. The proposal includes upgrades to the Orchard riverside amenity area and interpretative signage on the rich local history and surrounding flora and fauna	€198,630	€220,700
M2	Newpark Marsh Walking Trail – Accessibility and Inclusivity Enhancement Scheme	Works proposed include the resurfacing of the existing trail with a bound material to improve accessibility and allow year-round use. The installation of age friendly seating, bike parking, interpretative signage, improvements to the outdoor classroom area including the introduction of communication mood and sensory boards.	€173,410	€192,678
M3	Castlecomer Discovery Park Bike Trail – <i>(Phase One of Two)</i>	To construct Phase One of an 8.5km long bike trail within the confines of the Castlecomer Discovery Park. Under Phase One 6.9km's will be delivered and works will include trail construction, signage, seating, bike parking and all other associated works.	€500,000	€555,093

Parks and Playgrounds

Ongoing maintenance continues around the County in our playgrounds and parks to maintain them to a high standard. This month the focus was on the replacement of parts of old or worn play equipment, tree planting and re-mulching.

Services are also currently being procured for the annual independent inspection of all playgrounds under our care. It is expected that inspections will commence early in December. This provides an additional layer of scrutiny on the condition of our playgrounds and compliments our own in house weekly and quarterly inspections. The findings of this report will be used to inform our 2024 works programme.

2023 Local Biodiversity Action Fund

Funding was secured under the Local Biodiversity Action Fund to help control invasive species in both Silaire Wood and Woodstock Gardens again this year. The main focus of this year's work in Woodstock was on the control of Cherry Laurel between the Noble Fir and Monkey Puzzle Avenues. The works were completed over the month of October and early November. These new cleared areas will be planted over the winter with c.10,000 native bluebell bulbs, which will add to our 2022 works. These measures will not only create a visually attractive space in the spring but will also greatly help our early emerging pollinators.



Along the River Barrow riverbank within Silaire Wood, Himalayan Balsam, a non-native and destructive plant species is very prevalent. With the assistance of Graiguenamanagh Canoe Club 'Balsam Bashing' took place on two separate occasions during the summer. This is the second year we have collaborated successfully with this local club to tackle this invasive species. This work is very important in protecting this precious amenity as Balsam, although having pretty pink flowers in the summer, erodes river banks, impacts flooding and smothers our native flora over time.

Tree Maintenance Programme

The Parks staff are currently assessing the condition of trees around the City and County. The trees initially listed for assessment include those identified by staff as having a particular issue along with trees that would have been the subject of a representation or public query. In conjunction with the above we are running a mini-competition for the service of tree surgeons.

Once appointed, the Tree Surgeon will work, over the coming months, to an agreed tree management programme based on the findings of the current assessment.

Woodstock

Over the October bank holiday weekend Woodstock hosted an event to celebrate all things Halloween. The event, themed the 'Ghoulish Gardens', provided enchantment and eerie excitement for all the family. It provided a great opportunity for kids of all ages to enjoy Woodstock Gardens at this seasonal time of the year. The event was a collaboration between O'Connell Marketing, who have been engaged to assist with the promotion and marketing of the gardens, and Parks staff.



Entry was ticket only and tickets were sold out well in advance of the event. On the day some 260 people, of all ages, attended the event where they engaged with the Happy Potter pot painting workshops, a Samhain walking tour of the gardens; while Rathnure Pantomime Society provided a themed performance. Photographer Dylan Vaughan captured the day's proceedings, which will be used for ongoing promotional works. Catering was provided by Muse alongside our Woodstock Coffee Truck and Tea Room offering. The day was a great success and marked the closure of the Tea Rooms for 2023.

Finally, it was with great sadness that we learned of the passing of Matt Drea on 3rd November. Matt had been part of the Woodstock garden staff since the garden restoration project began in 1999. Matt, an exceptional staff member of Woodstock, will be remembered fondly by his work colleagues, especially for his contribution to the gardens and he will be missed by the many visitors he willingly interacted with over the years. *Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam*

PLANNING

Development Management

Planning Summary	Total as at end of October	
	2022	2023
Planning Applications Received	705	724
Planning Applications Granted	542	509
Planning Applications Refused	82	101
Complaints Received	92	76
Warning Letters Issued	82	75
Enforcements Notices Issued	40	36
Cases Closed	85	111

FORWARD PLANNING

Masterplans:

Abbey Quarter

The Abbey Quarter Masterplan User Guide along with a review of policy and the Urban Design Code (2018) is now being finalised for publication in the coming weeks.

In the coming months, a variation to the Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 (CDP) will go before the elected members in the near future - to incorporate the Abbey Quarter Masterplan User Guide and the Urban Design Code into the CDP.

St. Canice's Campus

A draft Masterplan has been completed and the necessary environmental reports are currently being prepared. It is anticipated that the draft Masterplan and environmental documents will be presented to the Kilkenny City Municipal District Members in early 2024, before being placed on public display for a round of public consultation.

Loughmacask

This plan was adopted at the June Council Meeting and the adopted plan is also now published. In the coming months, a variation to the Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 (CDP) will go before the Elected Members to incorporate the Loughmacask Masterplan into the CDP.

Ballyragget/Paulstown/Kilmacow

Masterplans are being prepared for the settlements of Ballyragget, Paulstown and Kilmacow. Three public meetings, one for each town, have taken place. The feedback / inputs

from these meetings have been incorporated into the draft Masterplans, which are currently being assessed. The assessment will be completed in the coming weeks and the three associated environmental reports are also nearing completion. The draft Masterplans will be presented to the respective Municipal Districts at their December meetings, prior to them going on public display.

Taking in Charge

Works on The Greens, Thomastown and Ardmillian Thomastown are nearing completion.

Greenoaks/The Fairways - A schedule of works has been drawn up by the Ferrybank Area office. These works have now to be agreed with the Developer.

The taking in charge of steps at Talbotts Inch was initiated at the September Council meeting. No submissions have been received.

E-Planning

Applications through e-planning continue to increase. Approximately 75% of all planning applications received are now through the e-planning portal. 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

There are now 39 sites on the Derelict Sites Register. Three sites in the City, a house in Callan and a mobile home in Graiguenamanagh were added to the Register during October. In addition, five sites in Kilkenny City were served notice of intent to be added to the Register.

A Final Map of lands in scope for the new Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT) will be published by 1st December 2023. The Minister for Finance has deferred the introduction of the RZLT until 2025. A proposed Variation to the Development Plan was published in October, proposing two minor changes to zoning in the City, to ensure appropriate application of the tax.

Eight submissions were received to this Variation and the Chief Executive's report on submissions will be placed on the November Council meeting agenda for decision.

There are 24 Vacant Sites on the Vacant Sites Register and the number of cancelled entries due to site activation or improvement is now 23. The Vacant site levy will be replaced by the Residential Zoned Land Tax from 2025, 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 their Architectural, Historical, Archaeological, Artistic, Cultural, Scientific, Technical and Social special interest.

Conservation Grants 2023: Successful conservation grant projects approved funding this year are now complete for 15 projects. These included masonry repairs, joinery repairs, water wheel installation, re-thatching, roof repairs, lime plastering and re-pointing in Kilkenny's architectural heritage structures, culminating in a total project spend of €465,161. These projects provided 828 employment days for joiners, roofers, masons, thatchers and lime plasterers. Further information is presented in the table below.

Grant & Department Funding	Privately Leveraged	Total Project Costs	No. of Projects	Employment Days
BHIS €177,910	€250,149	€416,059	14	603
HSF €37,000	€12,102	€49,102	1	225
€214,910	€262,251	€465,161	15	828

Heritage Stewardship Programme 2023: The recording of two 16th century buildings on Parliament Street, Kilkenny City is ongoing.

Kilkenny's Built Heritage Stocktake 2023: The Conservation Officer continues to collaborate with the Department of Housing, Heritage and Local Government to undertake a stocktake of protected structures and National Inventory of Architectural Heritage structures in Graiguenamanagh and Castlecomer. The stocktake will include commentary on vacancy and defective elements visible on the exterior of these buildings within both towns.

Building Control

Valid commencement notices submitted: 245 for the first 9 months of 2023

October 2023	272
October 2022	298
October 2021	391
October 2020	289

50 Disability Access Applications were received during the first 9 months of this year

October 2023	54
October 2022	62
October 2021	47
October 2020	71

COMMUNITY & CULTURE

Biodiversity Council Staff Training

Under the Local Biodiversity Action Fund, the Biodiversity Officer organised training for Council staff associated with the Area Offices focusing on three work areas; tree management, hedgerow management and grass verge maintenance.

The first workshop dealt with best practice within the three subject areas and the second workshop was discussion led, to determine how internal operations and supports could provide better outcomes for biodiversity net gain through work practices.

The second workshop included a visit to the Castle Park to meet the OPW Gardening Managers and they showcased their biodiversity projects including their wild flower meadows and the additional of natural bee hive habitats.



Kilkenny County Council staff pictured with the OPW Gardening Managers

Biodiversity Challenge for City Primary Schools and After School Groups

Kilkenny County Council is collaborating with Keep Kilkenny Beautiful (KKB) to invite City based primary schools and after-school facilities to pledge three actions for biodiversity over the next six months.

Simple actions include taking the pupils on a nature walk per season, feeding the birds over the winter period, installing a bird bath, creating a new habitat on the school grounds or taking part in the upcoming BirdWatch Ireland Garden Bird Survey, <https://birdwatchireland.ie/our-work/surveys-research/research-surveys/irish-garden-bird-survey/> starting on the 27th of November.

Participating school and after school groups will receive;

- Support resources to decide which biodiversity actions are appropriate for their setting
- A class set of Biodiversity Colouring Books and pencils
- Pollinator friendly plants, grown locally by SOS Kilkenny for KKB.

The aim of this initiative is to plant the seed to nurture nature by completing small actions in an educational setting. It supports the Green School Programme and raises awareness of biodiversity locally. It will assist KKB in collating biodiversity actions undertaken for their tidy towns submission in 2024. Partnering up with SOS Kilkenny has enabled KKB to provide pollinator plants to a host of new sites across the City, which in turn will provide food for a range of pollinator species next year. Kilkenny County Councils contribution is the provision of the classroom resources funded under the Local Biodiversity Action Fund provided by NPWS.

HERITAGE

The Adopt a Monument Scheme

Kilkenny's Tyndall Mountain Club has received an award under The Heritage Council's 'Adopt a Monument' scheme in recognition of their work. The scheme aims to empower local communities to become involved in the care and conservation of a much-loved local monument and offers communities expertise, mentoring and support to help them to care for their local heritage. The

Heritage Office is currently working with this group to plan the next steps in progressing our understanding of the heritage of Brandon Hill. Applications for the Adopt a Monument Scheme are managed by Abarta Heritage on behalf of The Heritage Council. If you are interested in this scheme further information about the scheme and the application process can be found at <https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/projects>. Closing date for applications 13th November 2023.



Ian Doyle (Head of Conservation, Heritage Council), Kevin Higgins (Tyndall Mountain Club), Tomás Turley (Tyndall Mountain Club), Róisín Burke (Managing Director, Abarta Heritage)

Launch of New Audio Guides at St Canice's Cathedral

The Heritage Officer was invited to give one of St Canice's Cathedral's 2023 October Talks on 20th October. This was to mark the launch of the new Audio Guides at St Canice's Cathedral which were created in consultation with the Heritage Office and funded under the Heritage Council's Community Heritage Grant Scheme. The guides bring to life the history of the Cathedral through the voices of those who work and worship there. The theme of the talk on the day was Heritage: Memory and Place. More information on the audio guides can be found at <https://www.stcanicescathedral.ie/visit>.



Community Monuments Fund

The Heritage Office was delighted to welcome National Monuments Service Archaeologist, Chris Corlett to Kilkenny to see the excellent progress made on the four conservation projects funded under the Community Monuments Fund. The Thomple Medieval Church project has been completed. Works are continuing at Grangefertagh Medieval Church and Graveyard, the boundary wall at the Evan's Home and the Infirmary Wall at Duiske Abbey. There is lots of new information on these important sites coming to light through the works.



Chris Corlett, National Monuments Service getting a closer look at the 16th Century stone work of the O'Tuneys at Grangefertagh Medieval Church

The Song of the Scythe wins the Kilkenny County Award for National Heritage Week

Congratulations to Maura Brennan and all at the Acorn Project on winning the Heritage Council's County Award for National Heritage Week. This wonderful event which took place in Rathbeagh involved a day of scything with Chris Hayes and a farmland pollinator walk with Dr Fiona MacGowan. The workshop covered how to set up the scythe and the mowing technique; sharpening and maintenance of the scythe and a special workshop on sharpening and peening. Haymaking and wildflower meadow management was also discussed.



The Song of the Scythe, Rathbeagh.

ARTS

Your Voice Matters

As part of the Kilkenny Arts Office's Your Voice Matters Coaching & Workshop Programme 2023 for writers, a workshop took place in Butler House on the 25th October called Finding Your North Star. This interactive workshop gave writers the space, resources and tools needed to map their unique purpose as a writer and develop a strategy and plan to stay on course with their writing goals. A total of 8 writers attended the full day workshop and a great response was received from them:

Haumea Ecovercity

Three Kilkenny based artists were awarded a bursary to study with the Haumea Ecovercity. There were two courses to choose from; Essential Ecoliteracy course and Earth Charter course. The courses are over 7 weeks and are self-paced and online. The Haumea Ecovercity was established by eco-artist Dr Cathy Fitzgerald and educates people in the creative sector on how to bring eco issues into their work.

Emerging Curator Development Programme

Our 2023 Emerging Curator Development Programme (ECDP) has ended. Our 2023 Emerging Curator Shannon Carroll curated three very successful projects; Returning to the Earth, Horizon and never miss the water until the well runs dry over the last eight months, working with eight artists from across the country and attracting local and national audiences.

The successful applicant has:

- gained experience and professional development in curating and managing exhibitions / projects
- developed and expanded their networks and relationships across the arts and culture sector
- participated in the artistic programming of the city and county of Kilkenny showcasing the works of contemporary artists
- further enhanced the arts and cultural offer in Kilkenny to local and national audiences alike
- The Arts Office initiated this programme in 2019, to support emerging curators in developing and progressing their skills, experience and ultimately their careers.



Returning to the Earth / Ag Filleadh ar an Talamh Talk



Horizon | Ag Bun na Spéire Exhibition



Bookville is a festival for families and children age 0 to 12 years, across the county. This is the seventh consecutive Bookville Festival managed by Kilkenny Library Service and Arts Office. It is a multi-disciplinary festival featuring 34 of the best contemporary children's authors & illustrators from Ireland and the UK. Events include reading, writing, storytelling, comedy, illustration, drama, music, visual arts and Irish, Ukrainian, Polish and Irish Sign Languages events.

Bookville 2023 included, the Bookville Festival book where 13,000 Bookville activity books were distributed to every primary school child in Kilkenny County and across all library branches. Fifty live workshops for primary school groups and the general public took place this year reaching 1,167 participants. There were five pre-recorded online video workshops in Polish, Ukrainian, Gaeilge and the Irish Sign Language. These events reached out to new audiences and increased the diversity of our participants and audience base.

Five Virtual Workshops were also hosted with over 2,000 participants, removing the barrier for many schools of accessing activities because of lack of transport.



Bookville Exhibition - the Sandwich Story

The exhibition ran from the 5th to 18th October with 336 people attending, 259 children and 77 adults. The three days of workshops were facilitated by artist Lisa Fingleton. These workshops comprised of four schools' workshops, one teachers' workshop in collaboration with Oíde and one adult workshop in collaboration with the Climate Action Team. Seventeen people from local businesses and the County Council attended this workshop that saw participants tease out ways and ideas Kilkenny businesses and residents could reduce their impact on the environment.



Attendees at the Adult work in collaboration with the Climate Action Team

ArtEd

Eight artist applications were received for ArtEd-Learning through Art - School / Artist Residency. Five schools applied through the Kilkenny Education Centre and five artists were offered the role and paired with a school. Both teachers and artist attended a planning session on 25th October hosted in Kilkenny Education Centre. This session gave artists and teachers a chance to discuss needs, approaches and agree a structure that works for all parties going forward. The

workshops in the schools take place in November and December.

Artists Get-togethers

Four artist get-togethers ran once a week over the month of October. These sessions were a balance of networking, discussion and hands-on activities. The facilitators engaged to run the sessions were Bernadette Larkin, Helen Barry and Claire Halpin. Eight artists engaged in the programme. A survey was sent to all appropriate artists to gauge their interest in such events, to determine their needs and required supports.



Visual Thinking Strategies workshop with artist Claire Halpin this week as part of Kilkenny Arts Office ArtEd Artist Get-togethers

Artist in Residence- Youth Art

Fourteen young people from Foróige and Ossory Youth are taking part in the Youth Arts, Artist Residency programme. They have been meeting weekly with Artist Carrie Lynam exploring themes of personal identity and self-portraiture. They have visited the Butler Gallery.

Creative Ireland

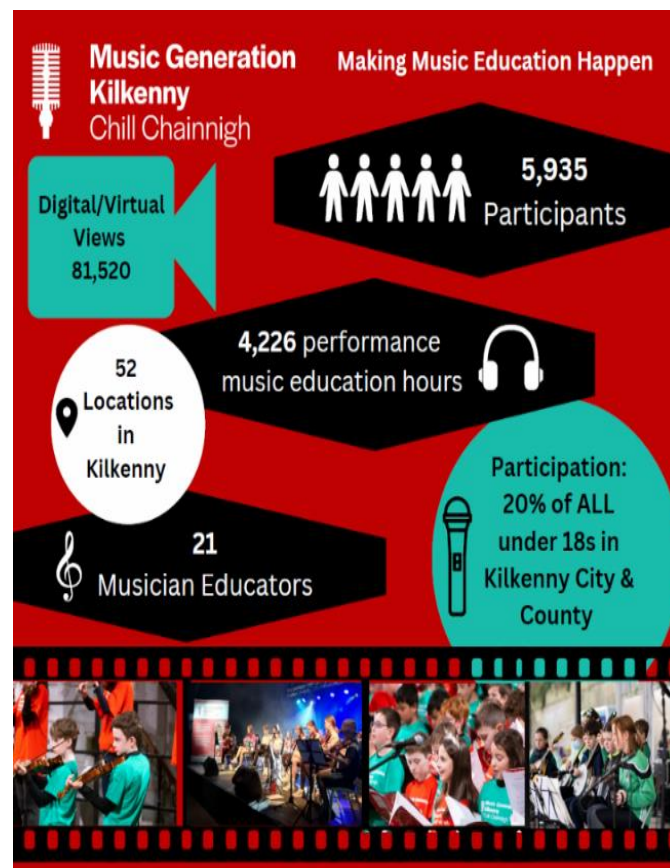
Reports are being submitted for all the projects funded under Creative Ireland for 2023 and can be viewed at [Kilkenny - Creative Ireland Programme](#). Stay tuned on Creative Kilkenny Facebook and Instagram for updates.

Music Generation Kilkenny

Music Generation Kilkenny is a partnership between Carlow Kilkenny ETB and Kilkenny County Council, which creates access to performance music education for children and young people in Ireland, from 0 to 18-year olds and is part of a National Programme.

Music Generation Kilkenny continues to grow in 2022-2023 with almost 6,000 children and young people participating in the programme. *One in*

five children of the total population of 18s and under across the whole County of Kilkenny took part in a Music Generation programme in 2022, with 4,226 hours of performance music education delivered to children and young people in the county (*see statistical data below*).



LEO

Summary of 2023 Awards to Businesses

- €267,417 in direct financial assistance has been approved (year to date) towards 14 manufacture /export service businesses located throughout the county. This includes €64,834 in Business Expansion Grant assistance, €148,190 in Priming Grant assistance and €54,393 awarded in feasibility study grants.
- 11 Technical Assistance for Micro Exporter grants have been awarded so far this year to support businesses in exploring new export market opportunities.
- 11 Businesses have commenced LEAN one to one consultancy programmes to investigate possible resource efficiencies and process improvements their businesses.
- 4 Businesses are availing of the Digital Start programme to prepare and implement a plan for the adoption of digital tools and techniques across the enterprise

- 34 businesses have been approved a Trading Online Voucher with awards totalling €69,425 to support the enhancement of their online trading capacity.
- 2 Intellectual Property (IP) Start Grants have been approved to support a client company in obtaining expert IP advisory and support services in relation to Trademarks
- 1 Agile Digital Process Innovation Grant award of €138,782 has been made.
- 7 Green for Micro Grants have been awarded. This scheme supports businesses to becoming greener and environmentally friendly.
- 10 applicants have been supported to make loan applications to the Micro Finance Ireland (MFI) loan fund.
- 871 people participated on focused small business training, including 107 people participating on the Starting Your Business programme.
- 454 businesses have availed of specialised business specific mentoring on a variety of topics including finance, marketing, social media marketing and HR.

National Women's Enterprise Day 2023

Over 60 female entrepreneurs took part in the Kilkenny National Women's Enterprise Day event which took place on Thursday 19th October in The Parade Tower, Kilkenny. Eimear Ni Braonain was the event MC and interviewed Leading Light, Janet Beck of Glass Eye Production and this was followed by a guest speaker, namely, Trisha Lewis of Trisha's Transformation. Both speakers shared their entrepreneurial journeys, their optimistic outlooks, and the business wisdom they have picked up along the way.



LEO Kilkenny Competition Winner Brian Walsh Cookie Co-Op - Google You're the Business Awards

'You're the Business' Programme is run in partnership involving Google, Enterprise Ireland

and the Local Enterprise Offices, focusing on supporting Irish businesses to upskill digitally and enhance their online capabilities was launched recently. Brian Walsh of Cooke Co Op was recently announced as competition winner for You're the Business winning €1000 google ads credit.



Night Time Economy

Kilkenny City has been selected as one of 9 pilot areas to develop an action plan to support the Night Time Economy. During October, Conor Sweeney took up the post as the Council's Night Time Economy Advisor as part of this pilot initiative funded by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media. Initial actions will include forming a night time economy forum and develop an Action Plan.

Kilkenny Tourism

Kilkenny Tourism, working in partnership with Kilkenny County Council continues in its marketing and PR campaign for Kilkenny throughout the Autumn season.

Focus of the campaign includes;

PR & Marketing Social Content - Showcasing members equally, promoting web content, highlighting media coverage & interacting with audiences to build.

Increasing video content & UGC - Building autumn/winter imagery into content plan.

Website Content - Continued website checks - Bi-monthly blogs on Visit Kilkenny - Event guide & members list regularly updated.

Planning PR visits for upcoming events & to highlight Kilkenny's year-round tourism offering

Releases & Newsletters - Press releases to key national & regional media on new campaigns, key tourism-related news, etc. - Quarterly industry & consumer newsletters to communicate news & updates, drive bookings from consumers database.

Festivals and Events

Kilkenny County Council continues to support our year-round calendar of events with October welcoming Savour back to the streets of Kilkenny.



Savour Kilkenny Food Festival returned from October 27th to 30th 2023.

One of Ireland's favourite food festivals, Savour Kilkenny took place over the October bank holiday weekend. The event celebrates the produce, food and culture of Kilkenny and the surrounding rich pasturelands. Savour connected with producers, visitors and partners to showcase the very best of Kilkenny and Irish products, chefs and culinary ideas.

Foodpreneurs Event - Promising Future for Kilkenny's Food Sector

The annual *Savour Kilkenny* Food Festival kicked-off with a special event aimed at food product development for food business. 'Foodpreneurs – Growing Your Food Business' ran on Saturday 28th October on the Savour Main Stage. This event, organized by Local Enterprise Office Kilkenny. Guest speakers on the day included Bart Pawlukojs and Nicole Server of multi-award-winning bakery and restaurant Arán, with MC Tracie Daly.



Taste Kilkenny

October saw Taste continue in its support of our local food producers and local hotels and restaurants and worked to cross promote all the wonderful Savour Activity through its social media platforms:

- The Taste Facebook page has reached 4,200 followers
- The Taste Instagram Page has passed 2,000 followers

Outdoor Kilkenny

Efforts continue to support Outdoor Kilkenny and October saw the finalisation of a new Outdoor Kilkenny map and visitor brochure.

HOUSING

The following information gives the up to date progress for 2023 under the various support services.

Homeless Prevention Measures

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

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

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

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.

HOMELESS SERVICES

HOMELESS SERVICES SUMMARY OCTOBER 2023	
Homeless Presentations	50
Homeless Assessment Outcomes	
Prevention & Interventions	42
Emergency Service	8
Not eligible / Did not avail of service	0
HAP Place Finder Service	
No of Homeless HAP tenancies @ 1 st day of month	121
No of Homeless HAP tenancies created during month	1
No of Homeless HAP tenancies in place @ last day of month	122
Number of Homeless HAP tenancy breakdowns	
Other Social Housing Tenancies supported /created during month	10
Households in Temporary Emergency Supported Accommodation @ 31 st October	35
Households in Temporary Emergency B&B accommodation	6
Households in Temporary Emergency B&B Accommodation that are families	5
Households (<i>singles/couples</i>) in Transition Emergency Accommodation (<i>Own Front Door</i>)	31
Households (Families) in Transition Emergency Accommodation (OFD)	12

SOCIAL HOUSING ASSESSMENT

SOCIAL HOUSING SUPPORT APPLICATION SUMMARY OCTOBER 2023	
Number awaiting Social Housing Support at October 31 st (<i>Gross Need</i>)	1,638
Number awaiting Social Housing Support at October 31 st (<i>Net Need</i>)	796
No. of Social Housing Applications received in October	91
No. of applications incomplete/awaiting further information/clarification	56
No. of applications validated and ready for assessment during the month	18
No. of applications assessed during October	31
No. of applications awaiting assessment as @ October 31 st	82

HAP SUMMARY YEAR TO-DATE 2023	
Total active HAP tenancies	606
New HAP tenancies set up	52
HAP allocated Social Housing	70
Closed HAP tenancies	136
HAP Rent Reviews	289
Other tenancy amendments	642
HAP calls received	3,000

TENANCY MANAGEMENT

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

LA/RAS/Leasing allocations in October (<i>offers made</i>):	26
LA/RAS/Leasing allocations to October (<i>offers made</i>):	139
Tenant Liaison Officer cases in October:.....	29
Maintenance Calls for October:.....	770
Maintenance Calls year to date	5,479

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

behaviour relating to offences under the Misuse of Drugs Act or violence and intimidation resulting in criminal charges, the local authority will take enforcement action to terminate the tenancy and alternative social housing supports will not be provided.

PRIVATE HOUSE GRANTS

The 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.

Grants Approved & Committed up to 31 st October 2023		
Scheme	No.	Amount
HGD - Housing Adaptation Grant	171	€1,866,757
MAG - Mobility Aid Grant	17	€65,784
HOP - Housing Aid for Older Persons	221	€1,121,772
Total	409	€3,054,313

Grants Paid out up to 31 st October 2023		
Scheme	No.	Amount
HGD - Housing Adaptation Grant	63	€674,770
MAG - Mobility Aid Grant	8	€31,117
HOP - Housing Aid for Older Persons	130	€663,966
Total	201	€1,369,853

HOUSING LOANS

Housing Loan Activity 1 st January to 31 st October, 2023					
Loan Type	Received	Approved	Amount Approved	No. Paid	Amount Paid
Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan	0	0	€0	1	€62,500
Local Authority Home Loan	40	7	€785,400	9	€1,013,900
Caravan Loan	1	1	€40,000	1	€40,000
Total	41	8	€825,400	11	€1,116,400

VACANT HOMES

The Vacant Properties Refurbishment Grant, Croí Cónaithe is one of the measures in order to address 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. 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 will be kept for follow up when further details of the revised scheme are available.

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.

Vacant Homes Refurbishment Grant as at 31 st October 2023	
Number of Applications Submitted to date	110
Number of Approvals / Approvals in Principle to date	43
Number of Queries during the month of October	71

VOIDS

At the end of October 2023 there were 49 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 its envisaged that a minimum of 75 units will be complete under this programme during 2023.

HOUSING CAPITAL

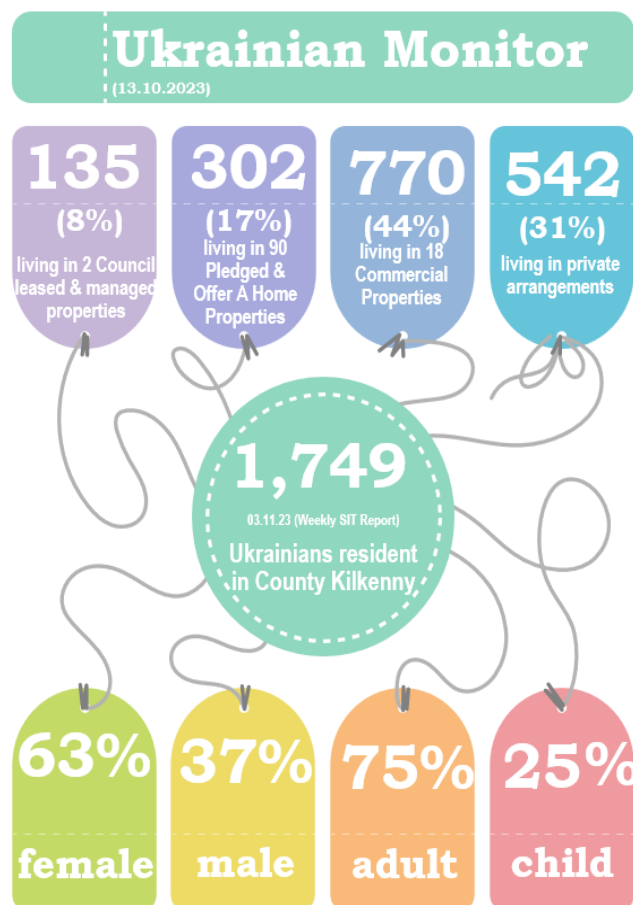
Expected 2023 Social Delivery for County Kilkenny

Scheme	Project Name	Approved Housing Body	Project Status	Nr Units
CAS CONSTRUCTION	19/21 Blackmill Street, Kilkenny	Good Shepherd Services Ltd	Completed	12
SHIP SINGLE STAGE RENEWAL	4 Loughboy Park Kilkenny City		Completed	1
SHIP CONSTRUCTION TURNKEY	Creamery Site Kilmacow Co Kilkenny		Completed	8
LA Part V	Creamery Site, Kilmacow, Co. Kilkenny		Completed	1
LA Part V	Village Gardens Waterford Road. Kilkenny City		Completed	4
SHIP CONSTRUCTION SINGLE STAGE	Haggardsgreen, Callan		Completed	1
SHIP CONSTRUCTION TURNKEY	Main Street, Piltown, Co. Kilkenny		Completed	4
SHIP CONSTRUCTION TURNKEY	Village Gardens, Waterford Road, Kilkenny City		Completed	1
LA Part V	The Crescent, Belmont, Ferrybank		Completed	1
SHIP CONSTRUCTION	Legan Grange & Legan Court, Ladywell, Thomastown, Co Kilkenny		Completed	25
SHIP CONSTRUCTION TURNKEY	The Crescent Belmont Ferrybank		Completed	11
SHIP CONSTRUCTION	Golf Links Close and Golf Links Road, Kilkenny		Completed	6
SHIP CONSTRUCTION SINGLE STAGE	18 Wolfe Tone Street, KK		Completed	1
SHIP SINGLE STAGE RENEWAL	Oldtown, Ballyragget		Completed	1
AHB CALF Turnkey	Nyne Park, College Road, Kilkenny City	Clúid	On-site	32
CALF Part V	Nyne Park, College Road, Kilkenny City	Clúid	On-site	8
AHB CALF Turnkey	Cluian Glasson, Granges Road, Kilkenny City	Clúid	On-site	34
CALF Part V	Cluian Glasson, Granges Road, Kilkenny City	Clúid	On-site	11
AHB CALF Turnkey	Nuncio Road, Kilkenny Phase 3	Respond	On-site	22
			Total	184

Houses under construction at Cluain Glasson, Granges Road, Kilkenny City. Kilkenny County Council are working in partnership with Cluid Housing and Glenveagh Homes to deliver 45 houses in this estate for social housing this year



UKRAINIAN RESPONSE UNIT



FIRE SERVICES

Capital Projects

The tender for the design consultancy services for the new fire station for Kilkenny City went for publication on the OJEU and has now being assessed. The successful tenderer and the unsuccessful tenderers have been informed of same. The site for the new station is a 3-acre site at the Kilkenny Business and Retail Park, Waterford Road, Kilkenny.

A command and control vehicle to replace the older vehicle in Castlecomer Fire Brigade has been successfully tendered.

Funding has recently been announced from the DHLG&H for the purchase of a new Class B Fire Engine for Freshford Fire Brigade. This is part of our vehicle replacement policy as outlined in our Fire and Emergency Operations Plan 2022-2026.

Funding has also been received for the provision of a pre-owned Class B appliance.

The construction of a new fire station for Urlingford is now completed and is scheduled to be officially opened in early 2024.

Fire Safety Certificate Applications

- 113 applications for fire safety certificates were received to date.
- 68 applications were received for the same period last year.
- These applications include a number of large-scale industrial developments and maximum fee applications such as:
 - o Abbott Ireland Ltd, multi-storey development with a floor area of 29,490m².
 - o St. Kieran's College, Secondary School, multi-storey development with a floor area of 10,520m².
 - o Kilkenny Cheese joint venture development at Belview IDA + Technology Park @ Gorteens, Slieverue, Co. Kilkenny, large scale industrial development with a floor area of 22,609m².

Ukrainian Response Unit - Fire Safety Certificate compliance

- The Fire Authority Technical Staff have been involved in the newly established Kilkenny County Council Ukrainian Response Unit.
- A large number of risk premises throughout Kilkenny City and County have been subject to review and Fire Safety Certification applications to ensure minimum standards.

Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003

- Fire Prevention staff made targeted inspections of premises both to provide advice and to enforce legislation and included the following:
 - 1 Fire Safety Assessment was ordered.
 - 2 Fire Safety Notices was served.
 - 43 Licence Applications were processed.
 - 5 Fire safety inspections of premises have taken place so far this year.

Fire Brigade Operations

The Brigades have attended 534 incidents to date in 2023. These incidents included a number of road traffic collisions, public road hazards, domestic fires, automatic fire alarm activations, fires and attended trees down during the recent Storm Babet.

Primary School Programme

Kilkenny Fire and Rescue Service continue to deliver the National Directorate Fire and Emergency Management Primary Schools Programme. It is targeted at all 3rd Class Primary School children. The Fire Authority has delivered this programme from inception in 2006 and every year subsequently (*except during the recent pandemic*). Over 20,000 pupils have participated in the Primary Schools Programme to date. The Fire Authority has provided training and refresher training for a number of firefighters in each brigade to assist them to deliver this Programme to all school children in Third Classes in Kilkenny City and County where the school management accept our invitation to visit their schools.

Training

Kilkenny County Council's Fire and Rescue Service are obliged under the Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003 and the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 to ensure that our Fire-fighters and Officers are adequately trained and competent to deal with tasks and varying roles they may encounter in the performance of their duties.

All personnel responding to Fire and Rescue Service incidents require a minimum level of training to meet core requirements. In addition, many personnel also require further training for specialist or supervisory roles. Furthermore, a number of Fire and Rescue Service personnel have completed Instructor courses in order that they in turn can instruct and direct delivery of training sessions / courses. Personnel also require appropriate refresher training in all of the above throughout their careers, generally delivered either through on-station training or through specific refresher courses.

Training has traditionally been delivered at varying levels (*e.g. local station, fire authority, region, national and international*) and through a variety of arrangements.

We delivered quality training to date in 2023 *e.g.* QQI Initial Firefighting skills, QQI BA, BA refresher, Emergency Services Driving Standard (ESDS), Emergency First Responder (EFR) and EFR recertification and Chainsaw initial and refresher training.



Chainsaw Training in Kilcooley Abbey, Urlingford



Height Training, Callan

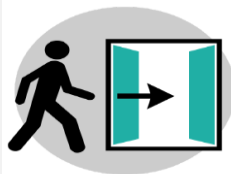


Breathing Apparatus Refresher Training, Freshford

LIBRARY



31,677 Items borrowed



19,297 Visitors



2,658 Members



Little Library Bedtime Story Books

From October to December, Kilkenny County Council Library Service are taking part in the First 5 Little Library Bedtime initiative. As part of this initiative, all children aged 0-4 are eligible to receive a FREE bedtime storybook (*in English or Irish*) to take home and keep.

Parents are encouraged to bring their children to their local library to register for a library membership, collect their free book and library card wallet, and also receive supporting information on the importance of reading to children and tips on how to get the most from this valuable experience.

Library staff have organised a number of bedtime story events to promote this initiative, including a teddy bear storytime and sleepover in Thomastown Library. To date, almost 2,800 books have been distributed in Kilkenny.



Library Activities

Events	In Branch	Online
258	233	6
Offsite	Live	Numbers
21	234	4733

This month we had lots of activities and events across our libraries. These events included toddler storytime and play sessions in City Library, a visit from bestselling Irish author, Catherine Kirwan to Loughboy Library, an activator pole information session in Castlecomer Library, an ETB felt toy making workshop in Urlingford Library, Halloween-themed STEM workshops in Thomastown Library, a children's Halloween costume swap in Graiguenamanagh Library, a clothes upcycling workshop in Ferrybank Library and a number of community book clubs which were facilitated by Mobile Library staff.








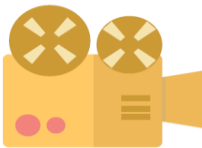
Throughout the month of October, our library branches hosted 258 events with a total of 4,733 attendees both in our branches and on visits to local creches, schools and community groups.

Mayfair Library Update



- Commissioning of electrical works ongoing
- Erecting of fencing for pedestrian access to Brewhouse commenced
- Installing of “acoustic leaves” Children’s Area commenced
- Painting Children’s Area ongoing
- Covering of flooring recommenced

	
2,904 eAudiobooks borrowed	
	
1,271 eBooks borrowed	
	
51 Class sessions	
	
1,122 Online Courses sessions	
	
1,961 eMagazines borrowed	



Digital Engagement

Our staff prepared, recorded, edited and published 352 posts and videos on our social media platforms in October.

Our engagements for the month were 2,449 and our videos had 11,105 views.

FINANCE

The expenditure by service division to the end of October is set out in Table 1. Total Expenditure for the period was €89m compared with the annual budget of €98.75m

Table 1	Actual YTD October 2023	Budget Full Year 2023
	€'000's	€'000's
Housing & Building	21,335	22,698
Road Transport & Safety	26,213	27,560
Water Services	6,599	7,736
Development Management	10,224	11,754
Environmental Services	10,275	13,520
Recreation & Amenity	6,502	8,091
Agriculture, Education, Health, Welfare	498	692
Miscellaneous Services	7,483	6,698
OVERALL TOTAL	89,129	98,749

Finance Update

The bank overdraft facility was not utilised in the ten-month period to the end of October 2023. The overdraft facility for 2024 has been approved by the Department at €20m. The 2022 Audit has been completed by the Local Government Auditor and the report has been issued.

Budget 2024

The Statutory budget meeting is scheduled for 3pm on Friday November 24th. A number of workshops have taken place with Elected Members over recent weeks to discuss the budget issues in detail. The draft Budget Book will issue to Elected Members on November 14th.

Rates

Reminders have been sent to all rate customers that have a balance outstanding on their account as at the end of September. A total of 76% of the rates available for collection have been collected to date. This leaves a balance remaining for collection of €4m between now and year end.

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 192 appeals have been completed. The following is a breakdown of the appeal outcomes to date:-

Decrease in Revaluation on Appeal	149 cases
Appeal Withdrawn	33 cases
Increase in Revaluation on Appeal	1 case
No change to Revaluation on Appeal	9 cases
Appeals outstanding	5 cases

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