

CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT

SEPTEMBER 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 Sandwich Story Exhibition Part of Bookville Festival

Workshops for 4th-6th class pupils with a half day Saturday workshop for ÓIDE Teachers on the 14th October. A community workshop with an emphasis on climate action will also be held on the evening of the 12th October.

2023 Call for new applications under ORIS

Applications for Measures 2 and 3 will be prepared over the next number of weeks and the submission deadline for same is the 27th October 2023.

Excellence in Local Government Awards

Awards will be presented on Thursday, 23rd November.

National Age Friendly Achievement Awards

National Age Friendly Achievement Awards takes place on Thursday, 30th November, 2023.

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CORPORATE

The Corporate Franchise Team is diligently working on updating Kilkenny's electoral register following the commencement of the new Rolling Register and in anticipation of the local and European Elections scheduled for next year. This essential task is aimed at enhancing the accuracy of our electoral register.

However, we cannot accomplish this crucial task without the active participation of the citizens of Kilkenny. Whether you are already registered or not, each and everyone plays a vital role in this process. We are requesting people's assistance in verifying and, if necessary, updating their voter information. By including details such as your date of birth and PPSN, this contributes to the verification process, enhancing the integrity of our electoral system.

Furthermore, we encourage people to inform us of any necessary changes, such as the removal of deceased family members from the register. We understand how distressing it can be to receive a polling card for a loved one who is no longer with us.

To boost public awareness and participation, we have organised a leaflet drop campaign in collaboration with An Post. In the coming weeks, residents of Kilkenny will receive informational leaflets encouraging them to register for the first time or update their existing voter details.

The Elected Members' assistance in raising awareness about this initiative is greatly appreciated.

checktheregister.ie

UPDATE NOW TO SECURE YOUR VOTE

Visit www.checktheregister.ie to confirm your details by adding your:

- PPSN
- Date of Birth
- Eircode

If you cannot access this information online, please email franchise@kilkennycoco.ie, phone 056 7794070 or use the QR code.

Comhairle Chontae Chill Chainnigh Kilkenny County Council Rialtas na hÉireann Government of Ireland

YOUR VOTE IS YOUR VOICE

Democracy and voting matter and your say is important

The registration process has changed. What's different?

- **Updating the register will help to ensure that entries are accurate and up to date as well as enabling the identification of entries on the register that require follow up.**
- **Registering to vote for the first time is now possible online at www.checktheregister.ie**
Use of PPSNs facilitates identity checking meaning that now, most people won't have to visit a Garda station to have forms witnessed.
- **16- and 17-year-olds will be able to pre-register to vote**
Introduction of a pending electors list enables those 16 and 17 to pre-register and be automatically registered when they turn 18.
- **You must be living full time in the State to be eligible to vote**
We will ask you your nationality in your application as this may affect which elections you can vote in.

An Irish citizen	You are eligible to vote in all elections and referendums
An EU citizen	You are eligible to vote in European and local elections
A British citizen	You are eligible to vote in Dáil and local elections
All other	You are eligible to vote in local elections

Hard copy forms available from:

Franchise Section, Kilkenny County Council, County Hall, John Street, Kilkenny.
Phone: 056 7794070. Email: franchise@kilkennycoco.ie

ROADS

MAJOR PROJECTS

(Included in NDP- Funded by TII)

N24 Waterford to Cahir Scheme

The design team is working on corridor options. Preliminary Ground Investigation Work has been completed. The findings of these investigations will input into The Preferred Transport Solution. This is scheduled to be put on public display at the end of Q4 2023.

Newsletter No. 11 has recently been published on the Project Website.

See <https://n24waterford2cahir.ie/news/>.

MINOR PROJECTS

(Not included in NDP-Funded by TII)

N24 Tower Road (Safety Scheme)

Works are continuing to progress well.

- Bridge Works On-Going.
- Earthworks ongoing, with top soiling work continuing in verges and on embankments.
- Works at the tie ins of the Tower Road and the Ink Bottle are on-going.
- Blacktop works have commenced and are on-going site wide.
- Scheme Drainage installation is ongoing.
- Accommodation works are on-going.



Landscaping works on Link Road



Basecourse works on N24 Main-line

Construction remains on schedule with substantial completion expected by the end of 2023.

N77 Ballyragget to Ballynaslee

The tender for the construction of the N77 Scheme issued via Etenders and the OEJU in early August with a tender return date of 22nd September 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 remains in discussion with the Valuers representing landowners to the CPO to discuss their concerns.

Pavement Schemes

The N77 Suttonsrath Pavement Scheme is substantially complete by Priority Construction Ltd. Accommodation works and final snagging are on-going.



Final Pavement Works N77 Suttonsrath Scheme

The construction works in respect of the N77 Knockroe to Littlefield Pavement Scheme are on-going by Lagan Asphalt Ltd with substantial completion expected by early October 2023.

The design work is ongoing in respect of the N76 Callan Bypass Pavement Scheme. It has been decided to proceed to complete one full scheme in 2024 rather than sub-divide the scheme and space it over 2 or more years. The Callan Bypass scheme in particular is complex given its semi urban location, the presence of a major bridge structure and addressing active travel requirements.

National Road Bridge Works

The N10 Ossory Bridge Rehabilitation Scheme works are progressing with Cumnor Construction Ltd. The works are scheduled to be substantially completed by the end of November. Works are presently underway on the eastern (countryside) of the structure. There is planned to be a switch over to works on the western (*City side*) at the end of September. The overall outturn cost for the project is expected to be just under €2m.

ENVIRONMENT

Climate Workshops with all Service Areas

The Climate Action Team ran 22 individual workshops with every section in the Council to brief them on the Climate Action Plan and to identify climate actions which each service area will deliver for the Kilkenny County Council Climate Action Plan (2024-2029). All service areas engaged very positively with the workshops, and many strong actions were identified which will support the Council to meet our energy and emissions by 2030.

SERVICE AREA	SERVICE AREA
Environment - 11 th July	Corporate & HR - 17 th August
LEO & Tourism - 12 th July	Library Service - 18 th August
Heritage, Conservation, Biodiversity - 19 th July	Parks - 23 rd August
Procurement - 26 th July	Healthy Ireland - 23 rd August
Planning - 31 st July	Local Authorities Water Programme - 24 th August
Fire Service & Civil Defence - 1 st August	Finance - 29 th August
Public Lighting & Facilities - 2 nd August	Active Travel - 30 th August
IT - 2 nd August	Community - 31 st August
Arts - 9 th August	Flood Risk Capital Projects - 1 st September
Area Offices - 10 th August	Town Regeneration - 5 th September
Roads & Water Services - 10 th August	Health & Safety - 6 th September
Housing - 15 th August	

The Climate Team are collating all of the actions identified by each service area and drafting the Local Authority Climate Action Plan. The Team will brief the Elected Members at a workshop on 11th September, and present the draft actions to the Council plenary meeting on 18th September. After this the draft plan will go out for public consultation.

Decarbonisation Zone Plan

KPMG have been appointed by the Council to develop a Decarbonisation Zone (DZ) Plan for Kilkenny City. A DZ is a test bed for innovative solutions to reduce emissions and energy use. As part of the preparation of the plan meetings have been held with the Elected Members from Kilkenny City MD, Kilkenny Chamber of Commerce, Kilkenny Tourism, the PPN and other stakeholders. The DZ Plan, which will be part of the Local Authority Climate Action Plan, will identify potential climate actions for Kilkenny City to meet energy and emissions reductions by 2030.

Sustainable Energy Communities

Kilkenny County Council is providing bridge-funding to three Sustainable Energy Communities (SEC's), to fund Energy Master Plans (EMP's) for their local areas. The SEC's are Kilkenny City, Thomastown and Graigueenamanagh. The EMP's will assess the energy use of the community and provide a list of potential projects to help reduce energy use. The SEC programme is administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) and co-ordinated locally by the South East Energy Agency.

Reporting on the Kilkenny County Council Climate Adaptation Plan (2019-2024)

The climate team is compiling the annual progress report on the Council's Climate Adaptation Plan (2019-2024). Reminders have been sent to all sections to provide an update of all actions by mid-Sept. A report will be issued to the Management Team and the SPC 4 (*Environmental Protection, Climate Action & Energy*). This is the last reporting period for the Adaptation Plan, as it will be replaced by the Local Authority Climate Action Plan (2024-2029) currently in preparation.

Community Climate Action Programme (CCAP)

Our Community Climate Action Officer (CCAO) has been reaching out and meeting with Kilkenny Communities re the Community Climate Action Programme to support and encourage them to start looking at potential projects that would have a direct climate action impact and benefit their community.

The CCAP has not yet been launched. However successful applicants under this scheme will deliver a variety of projects that would support them and help to build low carbon communities. Kilkenny County Council has €511,000 grant funding to go towards these projects.

All communities are welcome and to date the CCAO has met with the communities listed in Table below. More community visits are planned in the near future. If any community would like to find out more about the grant, please contact Breda Maher, Community Climate Action Officer breda.maher@kilkennycoco.ie

Windgap	GAA & Camogie Club, Tidy Towns, Community Development
Tullahought	Tidy Towns, Community Development
Johnstown	Community Development, Sports Recreational Hub
Freshford	Heritage Group, Tidy Towns, Community Development
Urlingford	Community Development
Inistioge	Tidy Towns, Community Development
Piltown	Community Development/Hall
Callan	FRC, Men's Shed, CSA (<i>Community Supported Agriculture</i>), Callan Community Energy
Castlecomer	Tidy Towns, Discovery Park
Thomastown	Town Regeneration, Community Hall, Thomastown Allotments
Ferrybank	KLP, Men's Sheds, Ferrybank Allotments, Residents Associations, Community Development
Tullaroan	GAA & Camogie, Cemetary, Community Development, Tidy Towns
Dicksboro GAA	GAA & Camogie Club
Coolagh	Community Development Group
O'Loughlin Gaels GAA	GAA Club
James Stephens GAA	GAA Club
Glenmore	Community Development Group, Men's Shed
The Clish	KKB, Residents of Walkin Street
Newpark FRC	FRC
Kilkenny Aqua & Canoe Club	Aqua & Canoe Club

Bring Banks Usage

The Council provides and manages 46 Bring Centres across the City and County. A total of 1399 tonnes of recyclables were collected from our Bring Centres so far in 2023. This represents the same volume that was collected in the prior year during the same period. Loughboy Shopping Centre (*12 tonnes collected*), Aldi Kilkenny City (*12 tonnes collected*) and Lidl Johnswell Road (*10 tonnes collected*) are the busiest locations in the City and Lidl-Thomastown (*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.

Environment Complaints

All Environment complaints received are logged on the CRM (*Customer Relations Management*) System. The number of complaints being received and logged by Environment staff for investigation for the eight months to the end of August 2023 was 625 compared with 659 for the same period last year (*i.e. down circa 5% for the year to date*). The nature of these complaints ranged from littering, illegal dumping, burning of waste and abandoned cars. The vast 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.

Public Electrical Recycling Day Events

Kilkenny County Council Environment section, in conjunction with both WEEE Ireland and KMK Metals Recycling Ltd. held a number of Free WEEE collection days and Wagon days during July and August. There were three full day collections at Piltown, Thomastown and Johnstown. These were followed by 4 'Wagon Days' - half day collections at 8 sites in South Kilkenny namely Kilmacow/Mooncoin, Mullinavat/Ballyhale, Stoneyford/Callan, Glenmore/Graiguenamanagh. Of the Wagon Days, Callan was particularly successful. Our waste enforcement team is particularly welcoming of the collection days, as it

makes it easy for households to dispose of their household electrical appliances and lessens the chances of electrical waste being dumped by the roadside.

The Environment section would like to thank all involved, including Community Centres, GAA & Soccer Clubs, Parish Priests, Supermarket Managers and Local Area Offices.

PARKS & SPECIAL PROJECTS

South East Greenway

On the 25th July last, a big crowd turned out, in beautiful sunshine, for the opening of Phase 1 (*New Ross to Glenmore*) of the South East Greenway. This first phase of the project was officially opened by Minister Jack Chambers T.D. in the presence of Cllr. Michael Doyle, Cathaoirleach of Kilkenny County Council & Cllr John Fleming, Cathaoirleach of Wexford County Council. Since opening and despite the poor weather, crowds have been enjoying this wonderful new amenity, which takes in spectacular views of the Pink Rock area and the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Bridge.

Lot 5A, Ferrybank to Curraghmore will be next to advance to construction stage. The tender assessment for this 5km's of Greenway is now completed and will be submitted to Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) for approval shortly. It is anticipated that this works contract will be awarded later this year.

In tandem with the above a mini competition using the TII framework was held to procure technical consultancy services to undertake the administration of the Lot 5 construction contract. This tender process is also now complete and TII approval will be sought for appointment.

Wexford County Council (WCC), as lead authority under the Section 85 Agreement appointed Malachy Walsh and Partners (MWP) as overall project consultants for the Southeast Greenway in January 2019. Their appointment was procured via a Multi-Party Framework, originally advertised in the OJEU and subject to the provisions of the EU Procurement Directive. At that time, The Department of Transport (DoT) was the funding authority. During the time since MWP's appointment, the scope of required services changed considerably. In addition, Transport Infrastructure Ireland replaced the DoT as Funding Authority in late 2021. This has resulted in the requirement to comply with the new and evolving TII project management guidelines and procedures for Greenways. The Code of Best Practice for National and Regional Greenways introduced in December 2021 has also resulted in a change of scope.

It is therefore intended that WCC will now seek to appoint a multi-disciplinary engineering consultancy to undertake the necessary services required for the remainder of The South East Greenway. The successful tenderer will be appointed, subject to TII approval, to complete all phases from their current status to completion.

Other Greenway related items:-

We are currently exploring the option of including the preliminary design and planning for the Ferrybank Trailhead Car Park within the scope of the North – South Link Road brief. It is expected the latter will be advertised under Part 10 later this year.

The planning consultation process, under Part 8, for the South East Greenway Link to Glenmore, commenced in early August. Plans and particulars of the proposed development were available for inspection from Wednesday the 2nd of August, 2023 to Tuesday the 5th of September 2023 inclusive, on the consult website: <https://consult.kilkenny.ie/> and at the Planning Department, County Hall, Ferrybank Library and Ferrybank Area Office. An open information day will also be held in Glenmore Community Hall on Wednesday 13th September from 2pm to 5pm and submissions on the scheme will be accepted up to Tuesday the 19th of September, 2023.

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 endeavoring to ensure the highest quality applications are put forward for Kilkenny.

Similar to last year the funding applications are divided into the 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)

The deadline for the submission of Project Development Applications was the 28th July last, while the Measure 1 Applications had to be submitted by the 5th September. The following applications were submitted on behalf of Kilkenny County Council:

Project Development Applications - Submitted

Project Name	Description	Grant Sought	Estimated Total Cost
Kings River Boardwalk and Pedestrian Bridge, Kells, Co. Kilkenny.	Engage technical consultants to deliver a service requirement brief to assess / update the existing Feasibility Study for the new Kings River Boardwalk and Pedestrian Bridge and to progress same through the statutory planning process.	€49,500	€55,000
Brandon Hill Summit Walk - Upland Trail Enhancement Scheme	Engage specialist technical consultants to deliver a service brief for the restoration of the upland section of the Brandon Hill Summit Walk, which has suffered from erosion. The proposal put forward will utilise natural stone steps along key sections of the slope.	€49,500	€55,000
Totals		€99,000	€110,000

Measure 1 Applications - Submitted

Project Name	Description	Grant Sought	Estimated Total Cost
Abbey Meadow Trail Enhancement Scheme	Improvement works to the existing Abbey Meadow Trail, incorporating a new footpath ramp circumventing the stepped section of the trail, this will make the trail fully accessible to all users. The erection of new signage and repairs to the steel bridge parapet over watercourse that links the trail back to the Town Centre. Finally, the works also include landscaping with a focus on pollinators and education	€29,700	€33,000

Development of 3 Community Loop Walks	The establishment of three community walks in Graiguenamanagh, Kilmacow and Paulstown. The walks will be generally on-road and in the main along existing footpaths. The distance of each walk will range from 3km to 4km in length	€29,700	€33,000
King's River Trail Phase II Trail Rehabilitation in Kells	Enhancement works to the King's River Trail in Kells. Works to include trail rehabilitation, the erection of trailhead and directional signage along with the installation of age friendly seating along the King's River	€29,700	€33,000
The Islands Walk, Urlingford, Co. Kilkenny	Enhancement of The Islands Walk in Urlingford Co. Kilkenny. Objective to bring an existing 6.5km walking route up to Sport Ireland standard, to allow the walk to be registered as a national loop walk. Which will allow the promotion of same by Sport Ireland, Trail Kilkenny and Kilkenny Tourism in a bid to increase usage of this walk.	€29,700	€33,000
Glencoum Wood Walking Trails Development Scheme	The development of two separate walking trails, graded easy to moderate. The shorter trail will be 2km in length while the longer trail will extend to a distance of 5km. Both trails will transverse mixed woodland following forestry roads and tracks that offer spectacular views across the surrounding countryside of Kilkenny and Carlow.	€29,700	€33,000
Woodstock Estate Marketing and Communications Plan	The further development and continuation of the promotion and marketing campaign for Woodstock Estate. The Estate encompasses 50 acres of Gardens and Arboretum along with riverside and woodland Victorian walkways within the wider 1000 acres of forestry.	€27,000	€30,000
Outdoor Kilkenny Digital/Social Media, Marketing and PR Campaign 2023	Outdoor Kilkenny Digital/Social Media, Marketing and PR Campaign 2024	€18,000	€20,000
Totals		€193,500	€215,000

Applications for Measures 2 and 3 will be prepared over the next number of weeks and the submission deadline for same is the 27th October 2023.

Announcement of Sports Capital and Equipment Programme 2023 (SCEP)

In July, The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media announced a call for new applications under SCEP.

(A minimum of 30% Match funding must be provided by the Local Authority)

The closing date for the submission of applications was the 8th September and the following applications were submitted on behalf of Kilkenny County Council.

2023 Applications Submitted

Project Name	Description	Grant Sought	Estimated Total Cost
Kilkenny Countryside Park - Dunmore, Co. Kilkenny	Provision of spectator fencing and access gates to the perimeter of ball wall area. Install portable container and compound area to store maintenance equipment for upkeep of Park.	€31,280	€44,686
Garringreen Recreational Amenity Area Refurbishment - Garringreen, Kilkenny City	The upgrade of the existing Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) to include playing surface replacement and upgrades to fencing and lighting. Enhancement to grass soccer pitch to include drainage, goal mouth re-sodding and goal post replacement.	€33,769	€48,242
Ballyragget Recreational Amenity Area - The Green, Ballyragget, Co. Kilkenny	Enhancement to grass soccer pitch to include drainage, goal mouth re-sodding and goal post replacement. Installation of a 1.8m wide footpath to perimeter of playing pitch / open space	€28,052	€40,076
Waterbarracks Basketball area in Kilkenny City.	Installation of new coloured surface to basketball court along with new basketball hoops and court markings. Upgrades to existing lighting, boules area and fencing.	€49,600	€70,858
Totals		€142,701	€203,862

Progress Report on Sports Capital and Equipment Programme 2020(SCEP)

Newpark MUGA Refurbishment – The replacement of the Playing surface and perimeter fencing upgrade was completed in June 2023 by PST Sports, the project cost was €34,728 and a claim was submitted to the Department in August.

Dunmore Activity Recreation Centre – The ball wall and playing surface was installed in April 2023. A part claim is to be submitted to the Department in September, the fitness equipment element of the project is to be tendered in September with planned delivery by year end. The total project cost is €107,629

Ferrybank MUGA – Tender documents for new the MUGA in Ferrybank Park will be completed shortly and in it anticipated that works will commence on site in Q4 2023, the total project cost is estimated at €88,650.

Parks and Playgrounds

The summer season traditionally results with increased activity within our playgrounds with this summer being no different. Increased activity, naturally results in additional maintenance and repair, where in the recent weeks there was a requirement to carry out necessary repairs in Ballyragget, Urlingford, Tullaron, Kells and Newpark Close. These repairs, identified in a timely manner by our parks staff as part of our weekly inspection programme, both limits further significant repairs whilst ensuring our playgrounds remain safe and operational for the public.

In recent weeks repainting has taken place in both Graiguenamanagh and Stoneyford with the primary colours being the source of the painting palette. This provides a visual interest alongside the fact that it helps to ensure the longevity of these play features.

Woodstock

In the earlier part of this year O' Connell Marketing (OCM) were engaged to assist in the promotion and marketing of Woodstock Gardens and Arboretum. Their primary focus to-date included regular posts including video content encouraging users to the Woodstock website to learn more about the gardens.

Through this campaign we have seen over the summer months an 18.3% increase in visitors to our webpage with the expectation that this will lead to physical visitors to the Gardens into the future.

The initial part of the summer season proved very promising with the particularly fine weather in June, however, July and August were quite poor weather wise. The net result was that we only experienced a slight pick up in visitor numbers in July and a moderately higher increase in August, which are traditionally the Gardens peak two months.

PLANNING

Development Management

Planning Summary	Total as at end of August	
	2022	2023
Planning Applications Received	578	595
Planning Applications Granted	448	396
Planning Applications Refused	65	86
Complaints Received	55	71
Warning Letters Issued	60	64
Enforcements Notices Issued	20	35
Cases Closed	63	64

FORWARD PLANNING

Masterplans:

Abbey Quarter

The Council has, following considerable fieldwork and consultation, prepared a draft Masterplan User Guide for an extended Abbey Quarter Area (*to include Vicar Street & Greensbridge Street*) along with a review of policy and the Urban Design Code (2018).

The Draft Masterplan User Guide was on public display from Friday June 2nd to Friday June 30th June (*both dates inclusive*) and two in-person information sessions were held during this period along with an online information session on June 21st at 7.00 p.m. on the ZOOM platform.

A total of 18 submissions were received on this Masterplan with the Interim Chief Executive's report now prepared for the September Council meeting at which the Elected Members will be asked to consider adopting this User Guide.

St. Canice's Campus

A Masterplan is nearing completion and the necessary environmental reports are currently

being prepared. The draft Masterplan will be presented to the Municipal District Members in October and then it will be placed on display for a round of public consultation. It is anticipated that the Plan and environmental documents will be completed over the coming weeks, which will allow public consultation to proceed.

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 will go before the Elected Members at a Council meeting to incorporate the Loughmacask Masterplan into the City and County Development Plan.

Urlingford

The draft Urlingford Town Centre Masterplan is currently on public display until Friday 1st September 2023. There was a public information session held in Urlingford Library on Tuesday 15th August with over 50 people attending. A Chief Executive's report will be completed following the closure of the public display period and the Masterplan will be placed before the Municipal District Members for consideration at their September meeting seeking its adoption.

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, 19th and 20th of January 2023, respectively. With due consideration of inputs from these meetings the Consultants are nearing completion of drafting the three Masterplans and associated environmental reports, which are expected in September 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:

- The Belfry, Thomastown – schedule of works agreed with Area Office
- Patrick's Gate, Kilkenny- schedule of works agreed with Area Office
- Breagh Court - schedule of works agreed with Area Office

- Blackchurch Square, Inistioge – schedule of works agreed and ready for final signoff
- The Greens, Thomastown – works continuing awaiting snag list to be completed by developer
- Greenoaks/Fairways – works continuing awaiting snag list to be completed by developer
- Rathullord (phase 2) – works continuing awaiting snag list to be completed by developer
- Rathullord (phase 3) – works continuing awaiting snag list to be completed by developer
- Ardmillan, Thomastown – works continuing awaiting snag list to be completed by developer
- Farmlea Estate – works continuing awaiting snag list to be completed by developer

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>, whereafter 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

10 decisions were received from An Bord Pleanála during July and August, confirming the determinations of the Council to include land on the Draft Maps of land in scope for the Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT). This completes the appeal process, and the 12 determinations appealed were all confirmed by the Bord. Along with 14 other Local Authorities, Kilkenny did not publish a Supplemental Map, as there were 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 1st December 2023.

There are 32 sites on the Derelict Sites Register. The former railway station building at MacDonagh, the Bank House and Anchor Bar in Graiguenamanagh, a house on Chapel Street in Mooncoin were added to the Register during July and August and 8 sites were served notices of intent to be added to the Register.

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, but any outstanding levies will remain due to the Council. Two cases of non-payment of the levy are being pursued through the Courts at present, and a settlement was reached on one of those during August.

Conservation

The Conservation Office manages all protected structures in Kilkenny County and City. These structures are recognised for the following special interest: Architectural, Historical, Archaeological, Artistic, Cultural, Scientific, Technical, Social. An advisory service on conservation matters is provided to the public and colleagues, while the conservation grants and funding applications are also delivered.

Conservation Grants 2023: Successful conservation grant projects are underway and working towards completion in October.

Heritage Stewardship Programme 2023: Archaeological Management Solutions have been appointed to undertake a laser scan and photogrammetry survey of two 16th century buildings on Parliament Street.

Public Outreach for the Digital Recording of Medieval Kilkenny was as follows:

- Launch of digital 3 D Rendered Model for the Shee Alms House, Rose Inn Street for Heritage Week. All information is publicly accessible on the Kilkenny County Council's website.
- A public lecture, titled Title: 'Stone Houses in the Digital Age: A laser scan of sixteenth and seventeenth century buildings in Kilkenny' was held for Heritage Week in Carnegie Library, John's Quay.

Building Control

Valid commencement notices submitted: 222 for the first 8 months of 2023,

August 2023	222
August 2022	239
August 2021	321
August 2020	224

37 Disability Access Applications were received during the first 8 months of this year.

August 2023	43
August 2022	53
August 2021	40
August 2020	56

COMMUNITY & CULTURE

Community & Cultural Facilities Scheme 2023

The Community & Cultural Facilities Capital Grant Scheme (CCFCS) is funded from development contributions and an annual budget of €250,000 is provided.

Applications for the 2023 CCFCS were advertised with a closing date for receipt of applications of Friday 19th of May, 2023. The Council received a total of 18 applications and the overall amount being sought is €648,755. The number of applications received and the variety and nature of the projects illustrate significant local community commitment to community, rural and cultural development.

The following applications were approved for funding by Members at the July Council Meeting:

Applicant & Project	Amount
Urlingford Town Team <i>Community facility/remote working hub</i>	€45,000
Gowran on the Move <i>Completion of Gowran MUGA & Playground Project</i>	€45,000
The Rock Youth Centre (Kilkenny Christian Centre) <i>Upgrade of centre facilities</i>	€35,000
Ferrybank AFC <i>Installation of tarmac and concrete surface for disability access for pedestrians</i>	€30,000
Dunnamaggin GAA Club <i>Lighting of Dunnamaggin walkway</i>	€30,000
Kilfane Handball Club <i>Construction of Gym</i>	€25,000
Mooncoin Celtic AFC <i>LED floodlighting for extra training area</i>	€20,000
John Lockes GAA Club <i>Sensory activity outdoor wall panels, litter bins, walkway benches and security gate</i>	€11,000
Graiguenamanagh Hall <i>Installation of new stage lighting/screen & projector</i>	€9,000
Total	€250,000

Community Support Fund

The Communities Support Fund is supported through the Department of Rural and Community Development's Community Enhancement Programme. Kilkenny received €290,749 in grant funding with an allocation of €142,467 for use towards running and operating costs and

€145,375 capital funding with €2,907 ring fenced for Women's Sheds. The Community Support Fund provides grants to community groups to help with non-pay running costs such as utility bills, also necessary repairs and improvements to facilities and purchase of equipment. 101 applications were received by the Local Community Development Committee for funding. 85 applications were deemed eligible and approved for funding under the grant scheme. In July the Department of Rural and Community Development announced the allocation of funding to 85 Kilkenny groups. Funding agreements are now in place with community groups and the majority have received their allocation of funding.



Excellence in Local Government Awards



The 2023 Excellence in Local Government Awards, sponsored by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage are held to recognise and celebrate the outstanding work being carried out by Local Authorities all over Ireland. We are delighted that Kilkenny County Council has been shortlisted for the **Kilkenny Age Friendly Train Station Project** in the Age Friendly Initiative Category. The awards will be presented on Thursday, 23rd November next.

National Age Friendly Achievement Awards

Kilkenny County Council have also been shortlisted for recognition at the National Age Friendly Achievement Awards, which is taking place on the evening of Thursday, 30th November 2023. The National Age Friendly Achievement Awards are a great way to celebrate innovative and creative initiatives implemented across the country which have made a real difference to the lives of older people in Ireland.

Dementia Information and Awareness Session

Kilkenny County Council Age Friendly programme supported by Healthy Ireland and the Health and Safety Teams recently delivered an information and Awareness session on Dementia to over 70 Kilkenny County Council staff and

retired staff on Thursday, the 3rd of August in the Kilkenny Ormonde Hotel. The information session was delivered by two Advanced Nurse Practitioners for Kilkenny and Carlow; Mary Hickey and Liam Redmond.

With the rising life expectancy in Ireland, it is estimated that by the year 2050, there will be 25% of the Irish population over the age of 65 years and it is projected that the incidence of dementia will rise from 64,000 to 141,200. The training session covered informative topics such as; the Brain and Aging, what is dementia and the most common types of dementia, how the memory works, steps to a diagnosis and the type of supports available in the community and lifestyle factors that can help prevent dementia.

Dementia is an umbrella term used to describe a range of conditions which cause change and damage to the brain. One in ten people are diagnosed under the age of 65 years and Mary Hickey, Advanced Nurse Practitioner, highlighted *'Dementia is not caused by ageing, and is not part of the ageing process'*. There are over 400 types of dementia with Alzheimer's being the most common type, accounting for 50%-60% of all cases of dementia. Vascular dementia occurs in approximately 20% of all cases.

Early diagnosis of dementia is essential for the individual and also for family members, carers and friends. The Advanced Nurse Practitioners emphasised the important role communities have to play in creating a supportive and inclusive society for people living with dementia and their Carer's. Good practice examples and initiatives include, Dementia Cafes, Local Alliances, support groups, singing groups/memory choirs, carer support groups and training for local businesses and public sector staff.

For more information & resources and Supports for Living Well with Dementia please see the following:

Dementia Understand Together:

<https://www.understandtogether.ie/>

Alzheimer's Society of Ireland: <https://alzheimer.ie/>

FreeDem Films: <http://freedemliving.com/>

FreeDem Films aim to increase public and professional awareness around the important issues of memory loss and brain health while at the same time tackle the stigma and fear that can accompany a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease and dementia in later life.

As part of the Kilkenny Age Friendly Programme, the Dementia Information and Awareness session will be delivered again later in the year for the general public. The Kilkenny Age Friendly Programme Manager, Anne Marie Shortall, highlighted *'the importance of getting awareness out into the communities as part of the first steps in creating a dementia friendly society.'*



Michael Delahunty, Kilkenny Older Persons Council;
Janette Boran, Healthy County Coordinator; Mary Hickey & Liam Redmond, Advanced Nurse Practitioners in Dementia Kilkenny/Carlow; Anne Marie Shortall, Age Friendly Programme Manager, Kilkenny County Council

HERITAGE

National Heritage Week 2023

National Heritage Week took place from the 12th – 20th August last. The week saw a colourful range of events and projects celebrating all aspects of our heritage. Close to 60 events took place to great success across Kilkenny City and County as communities, families, holiday makers and people of all ages and backgrounds were encouraged to get out and explore their heritage. Local media were very supportive with excellent coverage in the Kilkenny People and Kilkenny Observer and a morning slot on Kilkenny Live each morning during Heritage week. Record attendances were achieved during the events of the week despite some inclement weather.

Members of the public are encouraged to vote in the Heritage Week awards at:

<https://www.heritageweek.ie/about/heritage-awards>



City Walls Guided Tour led by C  il  n    Drisceoil organised by Kilkenny County Council Heritage Office as part of our 2023 Irish Walled Towns programme.



Holy Wells Story Sharing Event, Johns Well organised by Kilkenny County Council Heritage Office as part of the County Kilkenny Holy Wells Survey

Community Monuments Fund

Conservation works are now complete at the Thomple Medieval Church and Graveyard, Thomastown. This was one of six projects awarded funding under the Community Monuments Fund 2023 through the Heritage Office. The works were showcased during Heritage Week with a talk on the History of the Thomple given by Thomastown Community Network on site.

Works are still underway on the projects listed below and are expected to be completed in November, 2023.

- Grangefertagh Medieval Church and Graveyard;
- Boundary wall at the Butler Gallery;
- Infirmary Wall at Duiske Abbey;
- Rathpatrick Medieval Church and Graveyard
- Tubbrid Medieval Church and Graveyard

Decade of Centenaries Oral History Project

The Decade of Centenaries programme has explored a complex and sensitive period in our history. The Government's objective throughout has been to promote an inclusive, respectful, authentic, measured and consultative approach to commemorations that encourages a deeper understanding of the context of the time while recognising the differing perspectives on our shared history.

As part of our programme this year, the Heritage Office is undertaking an oral history project to gather new perspectives and previously unheard stories relating to the Revolutionary Period in Kilkenny and to create awareness of Kilkenny's shared and diverse history. Oral Historian Tomas Mac Conmara has been commissioned to carry out interviews with individuals across the County on the theme of the significance of the events of the revolutionary years to themselves, their parents and grandparents and the effects these events had on their lives in subsequent years and in their own lifetime. If you would like to recommend any relatives of those involved in the events of 1912-1923 in Kilkenny to be interviewed, please contact the Heritage Office at heritage@kilkennycoco.ie



Free State soldiers shake hands with anti-treaty prisoners after the battle of Kilkenny in 1922. Image credit: Kilmainham Gaol Museum

ARTS

Emerging Curator Development Programme

Our Emerging Curator programme continued this summer with emerging curator Shannon Carroll holding a packed-out seminar during Kilkenny Arts Festival, titled Returning to Earth/ Ag Filleadh ar an Talamh. Guest speakers included visual artist Deirdre O'Mahony, and author of *Irish and Ecology / An Ghaeilge agus*

Éiceolaíocht Michael Cronin. The event was hosted by Rothe House and culminated in a guided tour of Rothe House Gardens. More information about the event can be found at: [Returning to the Earth / Ag Filleadh ar an Talamh - Kilkenny County Council Arts Office \(kilkennyartsoffice.ie\)](https://www.kilkennyartsoffice.ie/Returning-to-the-Earth-Ag-Filleadh-ar-an-Talamh-Kilkenny-County-Council-Arts-Office)

Kilkenny Poetry Broadsheet



The Broadsheet was successfully launched to a full house at the Parade Tower on the 18th August as part of Kilkenny Arts Festival. The Broadsheet was officially launched by Kilkenny Arts

Festival Poet In residence Kwame Dawes, Broadsheet editor Afric Mc Glinchey and Arts Officer Mary Butler.

Twelve poems by twelve poets were published in our twenty third edition of this very popular publication. Copies of the Broadsheet are available from all library branches across the County and the Arts Office.

Editor Afric Mc Glinchey said: *'It was a gift to be entrusted with the responsibility of recognising and celebrating the talent and creativity of Kilkenny poets. Congratulations to those whose poems appear here. I hope readers of the Broadsheet enjoy them as much as I did.'*



Attendees of the Kilkenny Poetry Broadsheet

Poetry Phone

A new selection of poems have been uploaded on the Arts Office Poetry Phone. This selection is the published poems from the Poetry Broadsheet 2023. To listen to the beautiful selection of poems, freephone 1800 272 994 and pick a number between 0 and 9 to listen to one of twelve poems written by Kilkenny poets. The poems are beautifully recited by Kilkenny actors; Susie Lamb, Ger Cody and Amy Dunne.

Kilkenny Arts Office & Creative Futures Academy Bursaries

The Arts Office joined forces with Creative Futures Academy (CFA) to offer bursaries this Autumn to Kilkenny based artists seeking to gain accredited qualifications and skills to expand and progress their practice. CFA offers a range of flexible, short, part and full-time postgraduate courses at NCAD, UCD and IADT. A webinar was organised for applicants to learn more about the courses and the application process. The applications have been assessed and four applicants were awarded bursaries of a total amount of €1,800 to attend courses including NCAD's Professional Certificate in Art and Ecology.

Artist in Residence - Youth Art

Building upon the success of last year's Artist in Residence-Youth programme, the Arts Office have once again partnered with Ossory Youth and Fóroige. The residency callout was advertised on July 17th with a submission deadline of August 7th. The response was very positive with double the number of applicants this year providing eight strong applications from a diverse range of artists. Five of these were selected for interview with artist Carrie Lynam securing the position. The initial planning session with the Youth Workers has occurred with the first sessions due to start the week of September 11th and running for eight weeks. Each youth group will receive a minimum of sixteen contact hours with the artist with the provision of additional hours should they wish as the programme progresses.

The Sandwich Story Exhibition - part of Bookville Festival.

Highly regarded visual artist, writer, filmmaker and social farmer Lisa Fingleton will exhibit her witty and thought-provoking illustrations as part of the 2023 Bookville Festival. Lisa's work makes us think about the food we eat and where it comes from. Workshops for 4th-6th class pupils will run on the 12th & 13th of October with a half day Saturday workshop for ÓIDE Teachers on the 14th October. A community workshop with an emphasis on climate action will also be held on the evening of the 12th of October.

ArtEd

Preparations are well underway for ArtEd a multi-disciplinary artist in primary school's residency programme specifically aimed at Kilkenny TAP trained artists. The initiative is in

its second year and aims to respond to the local needs of artists who are dedicated to developing their skills in child participation and engagement, delivering high quality work for and with children. Partnering with Kilkenny Education Centre, the Arts Office will invite artists to apply in September and together with KEC will pair them with an appropriate school. Five weeks of workshops will run until early December culminating in a showcase of work and an evaluation session with both teachers and artists.

Public Art

Isabel Nolan's sculpture 'Double Down,' has been installed in the grounds of the Butler Gallery. The sculpture will happily cohabit with the building and the landscaping of the Butler.

Gallery site. This sculpture is not a metaphor or symbol, though it will of course be read that way. The public will always adopt and shape the nature of how a work is understood. It's abstract, Generous and as such it will physically activate and interrupt this space in unexpected and odd ways; drawing people in and adding a new dimension to the site by being unfamiliar, beautiful, complex, and uplifting. (Isabel Nolan, Artist)



Double Down Sculpture by Isabel Nolan



*Barn Owl Survey Attendees,
River Court Hotel, Kilkenny*

BIODIVERSITY

Kilkenny Barn Owl Study

Over the summer John Lusby from BirdWatch Ireland has been assessing Barn Owl nest sites throughout the County. He presented the findings of the Kilkenny Barn Owl Survey to an audience of 130 in the River Court Hotel as part of a Heritage Week event. There were over 40 active nest sites identified in the County this summer. The public interest in this species was astounding and Kilkenny County Council is committed to continuing the Barn Owl Study into the future.

Callan Meadows Seed Saving Event

For Heritage Week, Monica Fleming led a seed saving walk and talk in the Abbey Meadows, Callan. Monica led attendees around the meadows and pointed out the variety of native plants present and the method of seed saving. The Abbey Meadows is a flood plain and from assessing the types of plant present and underfoot conditions, attendees were able to assess previous flood water levels.



Attendees at Callan Seed Saving Event

Biodiversity Outreach

The Biodiversity Officer was busy over the summer meeting with different stakeholders and introducing the role to the wider community. Promotion of the All Ireland Pollinator Plan was completed with 15 primary teachers and a presentation was made to the GAA County Board Members with every Club in the County receiving a copy of the National Biodiversity Data Centre "Pollinator Friendly Management of Sports Clubs".

LEO

Summary of 2023 Awards to Businesses

- €112,253 in direct financial assistance was approved for 7 manufacture /export service businesses in located in throughout the County.

- €41,313 in Business Expansion Grant assistance and €43,940 in Priming assistance.
- €27,000 awarded in a feasibility study grant
- 5 Technical Assistance for Micro Exporter grant awarded to support them 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.
- 2 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
- 27 business have been approved a Trading Online Voucher totalling €55,640 to support the enhancement of their online trading capacity.
- 1 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
- 1 Agile Digital Process Innovation Grant award of €138,782
- 5 Green for Micro Grant 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 loan fund.
- 503 people participated on focused small business training, including 72 people participating on the Starting Your Business programme.
- 234 businesses have availed of specialised business specific mentoring on a variety of topics including finance, marketing, social media marketing and HR.

Ministerial Visit

Minister of State for Business, Employment and Retail, Neale Richmond TD visited the Local Enterprise Office Kilkenny (LEO) on Friday, July 7th where he met with Council Officials, LEO team as well as some of their client Businesses. The Minister was greeted at County Hall by Councillor Michael Doyle, Cathaoirleach of Kilkenny County Council, Sean, McKeown, Interim Chief Executive, Denis Malone, Acting Director of Services and Aileen McGrath, Acting Head of Enterprise as well as other officials and was briefed about developments in the County as well as future plans. Minister Richmond then heard from the Kilkenny Local Enterprise Office

team, members of the Evaluation Committee and Local Authority Members.



Made in Kilkenny/Made Local Exhibition

Kilkenny County Council, Local Enterprise Office sponsored and collaborated with the Made in Kilkenny Group and Design Crafts Council of Ireland on the Made in Kilkenny Made Local Exhibition which is taking place at the National Design and Craft Gallery.

The exhibition was launched during Kilkenny Arts Festival and is a celebration of excellence in Craft and showcases Kilkenny as a world craft city and region.



Launch of Autumn Training and Events Programme 2023

Local Enterprise Office Kilkenny has launched their online and in-person training and events programme for Autumn 2023. This programme schedule provides potential new entrepreneurs and small business currently operating in the County the opportunity to develop new skills and adapt to the ever-changing economic environment. All events are now available to book on www.localenterprise.ie/kilkenny.



Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF):

In July 2023, it was announced that €6 million is being allocated to Kilkenny County Council in Call Three of the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF), to tackle vacancy and dereliction in Kilkenny City. It forms part of the Government's Vacant Homes Action Plan. The Council's Town Regeneration Officer (TRO), Annette Fitzpatrick is preparing a Work Programme with the agreement of the Department to put the URDF funding received to good use.

TOURISM

Kilkenny Tourism and visitkilkenny.ie

Kilkenny Tourism continued its digital marketing campaign throughout the summer. "Summer in Kilkenny" is buzzing, was aimed at visitors whilst they are here throughout the City and County. Planning also commenced on the Autumn campaign and kicked off with a shopping spree competition in August to attract visitors and support the retail sector into the shoulder season.



Key Messages we will move forward into Autumn and the off-season are; Kilkenny is a year-round destination with something to see & do whenever you visit. - Kilkenny is a culturally

vibrant destination with world-renowned festivals & events. - Kilkenny is a family fun destination with exciting outdoor activities & family fun throughout the City & County - Kilkenny has a top-class accommodation offering & boasts wonderful dining options.

CAMPAIGN VISUALS

AUTUMN IN KILKENNY IS BUZZING



Kilkenny Tourism CLG AGM will take place on 12th September at the Parade Tower, Kilkenny.

Festivals & Events



Kilkenny County Council continues to support our year-round calendar of events with August hosting our oldest and most internationally renowned Arts Festival. From outdoor theatre to contemporary dance, the Festival is dedicated to staging events of the highest calibre, thrilling audiences of all kinds. In recent years the Festival has enriched its programme with major new initiatives like The Marble City Sessions, a cross-genre series of unique musical collaborations, hosted and co-curated by the great Irish fiddle-player and artist-in-residence Martin Hayes.

Also supported in 2023 was AKA, Alternative Kilkenny Arts, a wonderful Kilkenny Arts fringe festival. AKA was back for its ninth year and this year's programme was full of amazing artists, crafts and performances which had something to suit everyone's interests.

HOUSING

HOMELESS SERVICES SUMMARY 2023

Homeless Presentations	32
Homeless Assessment Outcomes	
▪ Prevention & Interventions	26
▪ Emergency Service	6
▪ Not eligible / Did not avail of service	0
HAP Place Finder Service	
▪ No of Homeless HAP tenancies @ 1 st day of month	119
▪ No of Homeless HAP tenancies created during month	1
▪ No of Homeless HAP tenancies in place @ last day of month	120
▪ Number of Homeless HAP tenancy breakdowns	
▪ Other Social Housing Tenancies supported /created during month	5
Households in Temporary Emergency Supported Accommodation @ August 31st	39
Households in Temporary Emergency B&B accommodation	7
Households in Temporary Emergency B&B Accommodation that are families	6
Households (<i>singles/couples</i>) in Transition Emergency Accommodation (<i>Own Front Door</i>)	32
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 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.

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. The detail and guidance regarding the modified scheme have 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 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 31st August 2023	
No of Applications Submitted to date	84
No of Approvals / Approvals in Principle to date	30
No of Queries during the month of June	139

SOCIAL HOUSING ASSESSMENT

SOCIAL HOUSING SUPPORT APPLICATION SUMMARY AUGUST 2023	
Number awaiting Social Housing Support at August 31 st (<i>Gross Need</i>)	1,664
Number awaiting Social Housing Support at August 31 st (<i>Net Need</i>)	834
No. of Social Housing Applications received in August	86
No. of applications incomplete/awaiting further information/clarification	76
No. of applications validated and ready for assessment during the month	18
No. of applications assessed during August	18
No. of applications awaiting assessment as @ August 31 st	75

HAP Summary Year to date 2023	
Total active HAP tenancies	628
New HAP tenancies set up	37
HAP allocated Social Housing	50
Closed HAP tenancies	101
HAP Rent Reviews	220
Other tenancy amendments	566
HAP calls received	2,400

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 Plan 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. The Council cannot process any applications to proceed under this scheme at present until we received the details of the scheme. There are also many concerns around the implementation of this scheme which need to be addressed before it can proceed.

TENANCY MANAGEMENT

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

LA/RAS/Leasing allocations in August (<i>offers made</i>):.....	9
LA/RAS/Leasing allocations to-date by year (<i>offers made</i>):.....	96
Tenant Liaison Officer cases in August:.....	41
Maintenance Calls for August:	510
Maintenance Calls year to date	4,016

The tenancy management section has commenced legal proceedings in respect of a number of 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.

VOIDS

At the end of August 2023, there were 54 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 completed under this programme during 2023.

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 Department's confidence in the grants section to meet and exceed its targets for 2023.

The funding approval also confirms that the local authority cannot exceed the maximum grant amounts under legislation and that these maximum amounts have not been revised.

Grants Approved & Committed up to 31 st August, 2023		
Scheme	No.	Amount
HGD - Housing Adaptation Grant	141	€1,535,054
MAG - Mobility Aid Grant	15	€58,684
HOP - Housing Aid for Older Persons	190	€978,864
Total	346	€2,572,602

Grants Paid out up to 31 st August 2023		
Scheme	No.	Amount
HGD - Housing Adaptation Grant	53	€576,100
MAG - Mobility Aid Grant	7	€31,117
HOP - Housing Aid for Older Persons	106	€538,931
Total	166	€1,146,148

HOUSING LOANS

Housing Loan Activity 1st January - 31st August, 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	35	7	€785,400	8	€921,400
Caravan Loan	1	0	€0.00	0	€0
Total	36	7	€785,400	9	€983,900

HOUSING CAPITAL

Sum of Total Units Expected	Column Labels			
Row Labels	2023	2024	2025	Grand Total [including acquisitions]
Acquisitions	18			18
CAS Acquisitions	10			10
LA Acquisitions	8			8
Build	180	196	200	576
AHB CALF Turnkey	92	4	23	119
CALF Part V	11	12	7	30
CAS CONSTRUCTION	12	3	36	51
CAS CONSTRUCTION TURNKEY		4		4
LA Part V	6	38	10	54
SHIP CONSTRUCTION	31	94	77	202
SHIP CONSTRUCTION SINGLE STAGE	2	5		7
SHIP CONSTRUCTION TURNKEY	24	35	47	106
SHIP SINGLE STAGE RENEWAL	2	1		3
Grand Total [including acquisitions]	198	196	200	594



The Crescent, Belmont, Ferrybank

UKRAINIAN RESPONSE UNIT

OFFER OF A HOME

The 'Offer a Home' programme is seeking property owners who have a house, apartment or holiday home that is not currently being used to offer it to people and families from Ukraine who need a safe place to stay.

The 'Offer a Home' programme is being managed by Local Authorities on behalf of Government.

A Government tax-free recognition payment of €800 per month is available to property owners offering accommodation to those fleeing the conflict in Ukraine.

Further details are available on the 'Offer a Home' programme on www.offerahome.ie or contact the Kilkenny County Council Ukrainian Response Team.

	July 2023
Number of Properties Offered	70
Number of Properties Assessed as suitable	46
Number of Allocated Properties	43
Number of Registered Tenants in Occupied Properties	146
Number of Properties that require Minor Works	9
Number of Properties – unsuitable/ require Major Works	4
Number of Properties Withdrawn	13

COMMUNITY FORUM MONTHLY FOCUS



Tusla in conjunction with their funded partners (Fr McGrath FRC, Newpark Close FRC, The Mill FRC Urlingford, Droichead FRC Callan, Foroige Kilkenny and Amber Women's Refuge) have offered ongoing support to the Ukrainian community since their arrival in Kilkenny. Members of the Ukrainian community can access support through any of these community services and information can be found on their websites.

Any person can access support from Tusla child protection service and through PPFS (leaflets already provided in Ukrainian), information on Tusla's services are available on the website (www.tusla.ie) and a booklet for parents who are newly arrived is also available at this link

https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Tusla_Short_guide_for_parents_who_are_newly_arrived_in_Ireland_1.pdf.

Parents can also contact the Kilkenny Parent hub (Ukrainian leaflets included) for information and support on parenting issues. Tusla have also supported a significant number of families from the Ukraine to access the National Childcare Scheme through sponsorship of childcare and early years placements.



The Fr McGrath Centre has offered and continues to offer many supports to the Ukrainian community and have been proactive in welcoming members of the Ukrainian community to Kilkenny and ensuring they have access to supports, they currently employ 2 part time Ukrainian support workers who support them in offering the following:

- Weekly connect cafe; local volunteers work with FRC staff to provide a drop-in cafe for Ukrainian community to practice English, make local connections/support integration and combat isolation. A range of craft/social/creative activities available.
- Weekly stay and play, merged with an established Cuidiu group, opportunities to connect with local parents and support social development in young children.
- Failte Isteach, conversational English language classes, 2 mornings per week
- Weekly Immigrant support clinic - advice and support in relation to accessing services
- FRC hosts the Ukrainian Cultural and Educational centre each Saturday
- Where necessary the Fr. McGrath Family Resource Centre provide outreach visits to accommodation centres and have run weekly information sessions also.
- Individual parenting/family support - responding to behaviours/supporting routines and transitions and family well-being.



Connect Cafe - Ukrainian Cultural Centre

Foroige Kilkenny (The Drum youth café) offer youth groups and support to young people from Ukraine. They have held coffee mornings and meet and greet sessions for the parents of young people. They offer language support for young Ukrainians every Friday and run school holiday programmes. The school holiday programmes are activity based including outdoor adventure, art, and digital skills.

They have a number of Ukrainian young people who access their universal services such as our drop in and evening groups. Foroige, through consultation with young people and parents from the Ukraine identified the need for therapeutic support with language support and are developing a support group / stress management with language support in partnership with a psychotherapist. They also plan to offer arts programmes for young people, family activities, access to cookery facilities, assistance with school placements. Parents and young people can access Foroige's facebook page for updates on what is on offer <https://www.facebook.com/DRUMYouthCentre/>

Summer Programmes July 2023

23 children and young people attended Summer Programmes in the Youth Programme and the Growing Patch Childcare Service.



Manual Handling

Newpark Close FRC has provided Manual Handling training with a translator provided by KLP for 43 people from Ukraine.

Teenage Programme

Newpark Close FRC in partnership with Ossory Youth, supported by a Translator from Ukraine ran a programme for 19 teenagers aged 14 to 18 from Ukraine. The 8 week programme included workshops on Sexual Health, Consent, Drug & Alcohol Awareness and Wellbeing.

Therapeutic Workshops for Parents

Newpark Close FRC ran a series of workshops for Parents from Ukraine, delivered by a qualified Child Therapist supported by a Translator from Ukraine. Topics included;

- Helping your child/children through the transition to life in a new country
- Recognising anxiety and Separation anxiety
- Providing support to your child/children with emotional struggles they may have adapting to change

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 the closing date is the 8th September 2023. The site for the new station is a 3-acre site at the Kilkenny Business and Retail Park, Waterford Road, Kilkenny.

Approval for the acceptance of a tender for the supply of a command and control vehicle has been sought.

Funding has been received from the Department for the purchase of an electric two seater fire vehicle. This is to provide a better response capability in Kilkenny City's medieval streets and to assist in the delivery of effective Climate Action 2030 in complying with Kilkenny County Council's Climate Action Plan in reducing our CO2 levels in our fleet of vehicles.

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

The construction of the new Fire Station for Urlingford is completed.

Fire Safety Certificate Applications

- 92 applications for fire safety certificates were received to date.
59 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 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.
- 1 Fire Safety Assessment was ordered under Section 18(6) of the Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003.
- 1 Fire Safety notice was served under Section 20 of the Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003, where the fire safety remedial works has been completed such notices can be subsequently withdrawn.
- 8 Licence Applications were processed under Section 24 of the Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003.
- 41 Fire safety inspections of premises have taken place so far this year.

Fire Brigade Operations

The Brigades have attended 373 incidents to date in 2023. These incidents included a number of road traffic collisions including a fatality, public road hazards, domestic fires, automatic fire alarm activations, fires and attended trees down during the recent Storm Betty.

Health and Safety

Kilkenny County Council is committed to safeguarding, as far as is reasonably practicable the Safety, Health and Welfare of all employees, Contractors and visitors. Health and Safety underpins all aspects of fire service response. Kilkenny Fire and Rescue Service operate in line with the Kilkenny County Council Safety Management System. Kilkenny Fire and Rescue Service have a current Safety Statement in place.

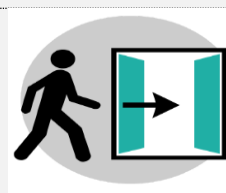
Kilkenny Fire and Rescue Service have adopted the Standard Operating Guidance produced by the NDFEM and has localised it as required. Risk Assessments are in place for all incident types. Risk Assessments are in place for all fixed workplaces, equipment, PPE and general activities. Exercise risk analysis are carried out for offsite exercises and training.

Health and Safety Representatives have been elected in all Fire Stations. A representative from this group also attends the Kilkenny County Council Joint Consultative Safety Management Committee.

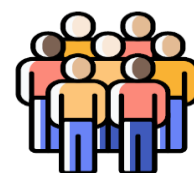
LIBRARY



29,239 Items borrowed



16,012 Visitors



1,552 Members

Summer Stars Reading Challenge

We were delighted with the success of this years' Summer Reading Challenge for children. 2,115 children took part in the challenge in Kilkenny - an increase of 156% on last years' initiative, collectively reading over 16,000 books.

The national summer reading challenge ran in Libraries across Ireland, with children challenged to read 8 books each over the holidays to help maintain and improve reading skills. We ran 130 events with storytelling sessions, arts/craft workshops, Lego clubs, Harry Potter quizzes, and

Fairy door workshops taking place throughout the summer, to encourage children to make return visits to our libraries, and help keep up momentum. Library staff want to say a huge thank you to all the children who took part in Summer Stars 2023.

This initiative is part of a national Right to Read Campaign, which actively supports & helps improve literacy.



Age Friendly

Kilkenny County Library Service was recently awarded an “Age Friendly” status for each branch. Each library identified and implemented three changes that could be made to improve their service to older adults in their local community. For example, an Age Friendly parking space was recently provided outside Callan Library which will be very beneficial for library members. Thanks to our colleagues in the Callan Area Office for organising this.



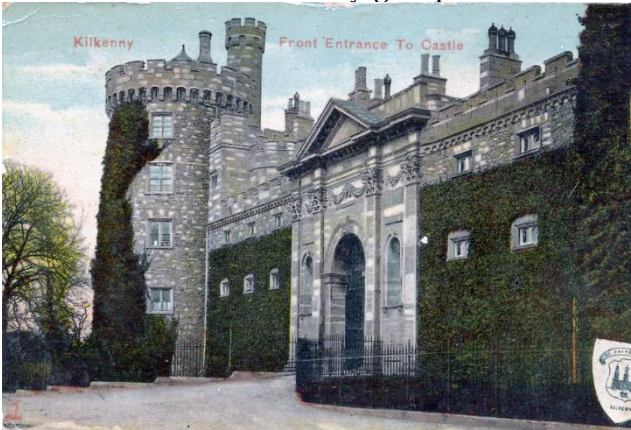
Library Activities

Events	In Branch	Online
130	126	0
Offsite	Live	Numbers
4	121	1553

This month we had lots of activities and events across our libraries. These events included a Summer Stars book quiz, memory game and Lego challenge in Loughboy Library, adult art classes in Urlingford Library, a fun-filled celebration of Harry Potter’s birthday in Graiguenamanagh Library, a fairy door craft workshop in Ferrybank Library, and a Where’s Wally scavenger hunt in Thomastown Library.

To celebrate Heritage Week, we posted a beautiful series of recoloured Kilkenny postcards on our social media channels. Historian Eoin Swithin Walsh hosted a fascinating podcast on The General Election of 1923 and our very own Damien Brett returned with his popular one-to-one genealogy workshops. Maura Brennan of Kilkenny Forest School conducted a wonderful exploration the biodiversity of Thomastown and Anne-Karoline Distel taught us about the history and mapping of milk churn stands in Castlecomer Library. Eoin Swithin Walsh joined us in Loughboy Library to give an overview of the events of 1912-1923 in Kilkenny while Arthur Joyce recalled the colourful history of the Brandon Cinema in Graiguenamanagh Library.

Throughout the month of August, our library branches hosted 130 events with a total of 1,553 attendees both in our branches and on visits to local creches and community groups.





Mayfair Library Update



- Foundations including piling completed.
- All blockwork completed.
- Underfloor heating system installed including children's area on ground floor.
- Mechanical and electrical first fix substantially completed.
- Fin façade to the southern elevation is complete.
- Painting has commenced.
- Tiling and installation of panelling to toilet areas has commenced.



3,096 eAudiobooks borrowed



1,331 eBooks borrowed



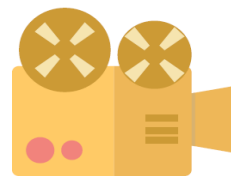
115 Class sessions



892 Online Courses sessions



769 eMagazines borrowed



Digital Engagement

Our staff have prepared, recorded, edited and published **342** posts and videos on our social media platforms this year. Our engagements were **2,218** and our videos had **14,591** views.

FINANCE

The expenditure by service division to the end of August is set out in Table 1. Total Expenditure for the period was €67.9m compared with the annual budget of €98.75m.

Table 1	Actual YTD August 2023	Budget Full Year 2023
	€'000's	€'000's
Housing & Building	16,580	22,698
Road Transport & Safety	20,037	27,560
Water Services	5,098	7,736
Development Management	7,414	11,754
Environmental Services	7,810	13,520
Recreation & Amenity	5,009	8,091
Agriculture, Education, Health, Welfare	399	692
Miscellaneous Services	5,544	6,698
OVERALL TOTAL	67,894	98,749

Finance Update

Inflation is having a significant impact on the cost of delivering all our services and on the delivery of the Capital Programme. This issue is being kept under review.

The bank overdraft facility was not utilised in the eight month period to the end of August.

The Audit by the Local Government Auditor for FY 2022 has now been completed and the Audit Report along with the final Annual Financial Statement for 2022 will be presented to Council at the September meeting.

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 194 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.

Budget 2024

The decision by the Elected Members on the base rate adjustment on Local Property Tax (LPT) has to be decided before October 16th next. This item is listed on the agenda for the September Council meeting. A separate report on the matter will be circulated to the Elected Members in advance of the meeting.

The consultation period on setting the local adjustment factor for the Local Property Tax for 2024 commenced on July 28th and closed on the 27th of August. No submissions were received. The ask from the Elected Members will be to maintain the same LPT base rate adjustment that has been in place for the years 2020 to 2023 inclusive.