

# BDA | Irish Building & Design Awards | 2025



**Comhairle Chontae Chill Chainnigh**  
**Kilkenny County Council**

**Heritage/Conservation Project of the Year 2025**  
**Piltown Garda Station and Remote Working Hub**



## **Summary**

Piltown Garda Station is located on Main Street, Piltown, Co. Kilkenny and is a key historic building within the fabric of Piltown. The detached three-bay two storey Market House, was constructed circa 1825, and it was later used as a courthouse circa 1903. The building was renovated in 1926 to accommodate use as a Garda Barracks and Sergeants residence.

The building has been vacant since 2011, with the exception of the ground floor room to the front left (East) of the building, which is being used sporadically as an unmanned post by Moincoin Garda Station to serve the people of Piltown.

In 2020 Piltown Community Enterprise CLG contacted Kilkenny County Council to explore if there was any avenue to repurpose the unoccupied building into a community asset for economic growth through the creation of a remote working hub, that would attract both established and new businesses to the area and provide a professional work environment.

The project has saved an unoccupied building that otherwise would have deteriorated into further disrepair and detracted from the main street. The original features in the building have been saved and preserved and it has provided remote office space for local businesses with hotdesking opportunities for remote workers. Overall the project has rejuvenated business and community interest in the building. The added bonus for the community of Piltown and An Garda Síochána is that there will again, be a presence of an usable Garda space in the town.

## **Project Outline**

The Garda Barracks is a key historic building within the fabric of Piltown. Currently only one room of the building is in use by An Garda Síochána, with the remainder of the Station and Sergeants Residence vacant. The project outline was to renovate and remodel the building to modern standards, to facilitate its use as a remote working hub and working Garda Station, ensuring that it continues to serve the community and preserve its historic fabric for the future.

Kilkenny County Council in conjunction with the OPW (Building owners), An Garda Síochána Estate Management and Piltown Community Enterprise CLG came to an agreement on how a restructuring and renovation project for the building would benefit all parties, whilst also preserving and protecting such an important structure in the village.

Works on the pre-planning and feasibility phases of project commenced in early 2021, planning approval was obtained in May, 2022. Tendering and award of the design team took place during Summer of 2022, and Construction works commenced in October 2023 and were completed in November 2024.

## **Design Features**

The existing Garda station and Sergeants dwelling is an existing prominent building located on Main Street, Piltown. From a conservation perspective the aim was to minimize the impact of any new alterations to the building with any new additions being required to be easily reversible without damage to the existing structure.

A new prefabricated steel ramped access was provided to the main entrance as a temporary accessibility measure with a more permanent solution expected as part of public realm works scheduled in the next 12-18 months, new prefabricated steel stepped exits were provided to the rear of the garda station and side of the digital hub.

Internally a minimal intervention approach was taken with the existing layout being utilised and repurposed in as far as it was possible. The stairs within the garda station was required to be removed to accommodate the new building use and subdivision. Care was taken to ensure that minimal alterations were made to the remaining stairs to preserve it in its original state.

## **Innovative use of materials and Equipment**

The selection of the internal wall finishes and colours was challenging as we had an early 19th century building with solid masonry external walls which had been altered and extended in the early 1900s and mostly finished with sand/cement plaster. This cement plaster was removed and a new breathable lime plaster was applied.

The existing internal walls consisted of a lime-based mortar which had failed in places, this was hacked off where necessary. A new Calcium silicate board and insulated lime render system was applied to improve the thermal insulation of the envelope and control moisture within the walls. This system also included a breathable paint to maximise moisture breathability.

Coupled with this work a new air to water heat pump system was installed in the building which will supply a constant low heat in the building.

## **Health & Safety**

As no works involving the construction of new extensions was required, health and safety management was limited to refurbishment works involving the existing building only. Working from height and preventing unauthorised access to the public identified as risks at an early stage this was managed on site with secure hoarding and appropriate scaffolding.

The building adjoins an existing playground to the rear and sides and care had to be taken with regard to deliveries. It was decided to remove a section of the garden wall to accommodate access from Piltown main street without the need to access via the playground at any stage. Nevertheless, larger deliveries were co-ordinated with the local community group where any risk associated with encroaching on the playground was envisaged.

## **Universal Design**

The adaptation of a historic building to accommodate a wider spectrum of people with different abilities than perhaps had been accommodated in the past can be difficult. Care was taken to work within the existing building constraints to provide, level entry by means of a prefabricated demountable sloped access route to the entryway. The floor level in the garda station was dropped to accommodate a level entry doorway to the public reception and back of house access. The digital hub posed more difficulty with an existing stairs preventing the reduction of floor level – a gently sloped entry (1-50) was provided to accommodate level access at this doorway.

A fully accessible kitchenette and universal access WC was also provided within the digital hub and an accessible office which can double as a meeting room was provided at ground floor level. It is hoped that this affords full accessibility to a person who may require the use of a wheelchair.

Efforts were made to preserve the existing stairs in its original state as far as was possible with alterations made for further accessibility including new stair treads and nosings and an additional handrail to be fitted. It is hoped this will afford easier access to the first-floor level for persons with a wider range of abilities.

## **Sustainability**

The conversion of the existing sergeants dwelling building element to a digital working hub is hugely beneficial to the local area. The working hub can be utilised by individual workers or small start-up businesses on a day to day basis. The opportunity to work remotely from the bigger urban centres has the benefit of reduction of car journeys. The increase in the use of local amenities by local workers whom otherwise would have commuted elsewhere benefits the local economy and tackles vacancy in our smaller towns and villages.

It is the policy of Kilkenny County Council that its properties be weaned off dependency on fossil fuels. In both elements of the building, the heating and hot water are now generated through use of high efficiency air-to-water heat pumps rather than from the oil-fired boilers in the rear yards, as hitherto.

## **Fire Safety Compliance Evidence**

The integration of fire safety into an existing historic protected structure has its challenges in particular as material alterations need to be minimised and the character of the structure be retained and enhanced. The fire safety strategy used guidance as set out in TGD B and BS5588.

Being a small single stair building the escape stairs was required to be protected, each door leading to the escape stair at ground floor level (except bathrooms) is of FD30s fire resistance standard. At first floor a new door and screen was fitted at the head of the stairs to protect the escape route and this door and screen are of FD30s standard with 30/30 glazing.

The ground floor ceiling was upgraded to 30 mins fire resistance and the first-floor ceiling also was upgraded to 30 mins fire resistance (to protect the escape stairs).

As well as means of escape measures, appropriate fire stopping measures were completed to all penetrations in the stair enclosure walls and in the ground floor and first floor ceilings and a new L3x fire detection & alarm system and an emergency lighting system was fitted.

### **Impact on the Community**

The restoration of the historic Garda Station building in Piltown has brought numerous benefits to the community. This project, strategically located in an area identified as suitable for developing a village centre, has addressed a long-standing need in the community for quality office space. The once derelict area now boasts beautifully restored old buildings, adding to the aesthetic and historical value of the locality. The project has encouraged the village regeneration scheme, which has been approved for funding to the tune of €1.74 million, which will further the positive impact on the local community.

The renovation and occupation of the Garda Station ensure that the Garda Síochána maintain a visible and active presence in the village centre, enhancing community safety and engagement. This project has also prevented the building from becoming derelict, preserving its historical significance and ensuring it remains a valuable asset to the community.

The establishment of a remote working hub within the restored building offers significant benefits to the community. It provides flexible working facilities, allowing residents to choose their working arrangements. The hub also serves as a community space where like-minded individuals can create, share resources, and network, fostering a sense of community and collaboration. This initiative extends the work of Piltown Community Enterprise and creates awareness for other derelict premises in the area, promoting further development and revitalization.

Prior to the renovation of the Garda Station, PCE have restored The Old Creamery building into a thriving Enterprise Centre, and the development of a playground beside the River Pil, have reinvigorated an area of the village that was previously approaching dereliction.

Overall, these initiatives collectively contribute to the social, economic, and cultural enhancement of Piltown, making it a more vibrant and thriving community.



Fig.1 – Front Elevation 2023



Fig.2 – Front Elevation 2024 – Existing colour scheme maintained





Fig. 3 – Rear Elevation 2023

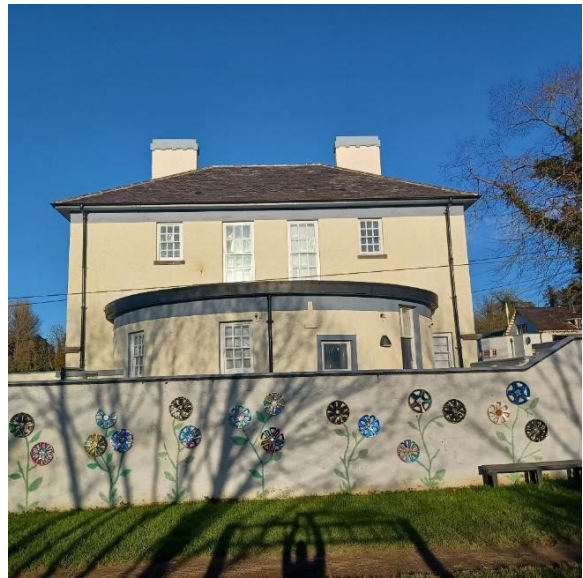


Fig. 4 – Rear Elevation 2024



Fig.5 – Garda Station Back Office 2023



Fig.6 – Garda Station Back Office 2023 – Underfloor insulation and heating



Fig.7 – Garda Station Back Office 2024 – Calsitherm Insulation



Fig.8 – Garda Station Office 2024



Fig.9 - Garda Station Entrance Hall 2023

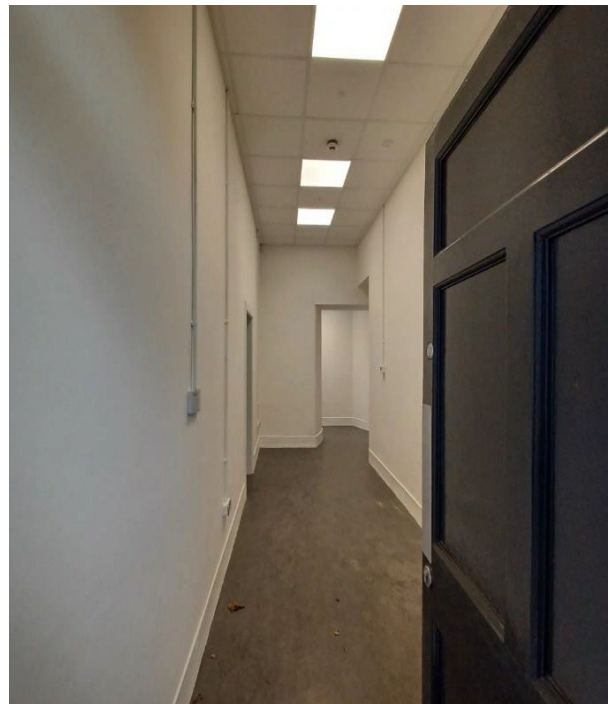


Fig.10 – Garda Station Entrance Hall 2024





Fig.11 - Garda Station Public Office 2023



Fig.12 – Garda Station Reception Desk Accessibility 2024

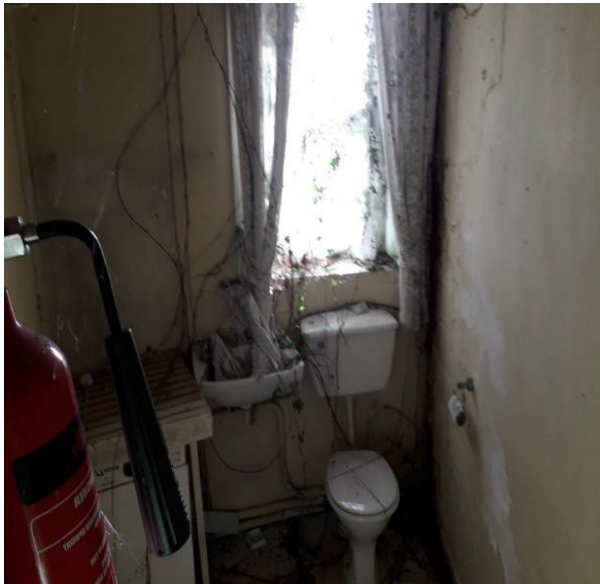


Fig.13 Remote Hub Kitchen Area 2023



Fig.14 – Remote Hub Kitchen Area 2023



Fig.15 – Remote Hub Kitchen 2023 - Diathonite



Fig.16 – Remote Hub Kitchen Accessibility 2024

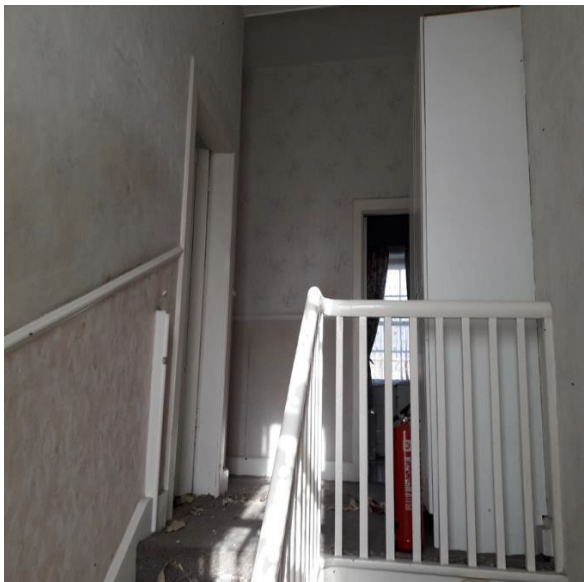


Fig.17 – Remote Hub Stairwell 2023



Fig.18 – Remote Hub Stairwell 2024



Fig.19 – Remote Hub 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Landing 2023



Fig.20 – Remote Hub 1st Floor Landing 2024



Fig.21 – Remote Hub 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Office 2023



Fig.22 – Remote Hub 1st Floor Office 2024



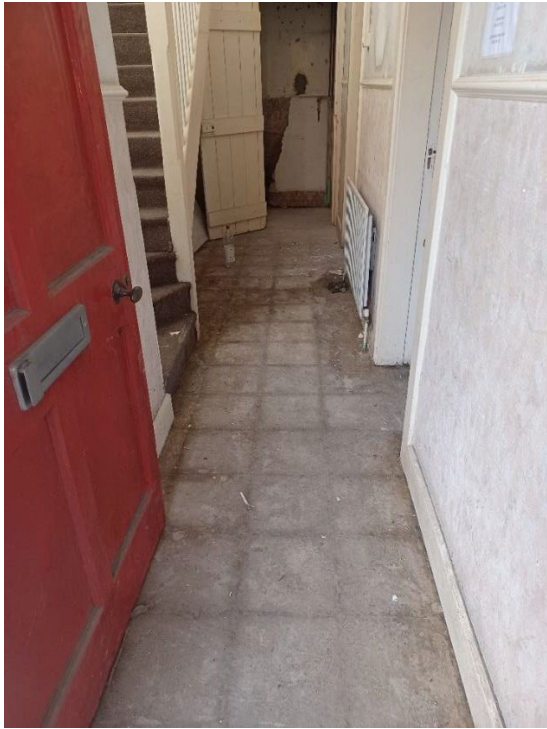


Fig.23 – Remote Hub Entrance Hall 2023

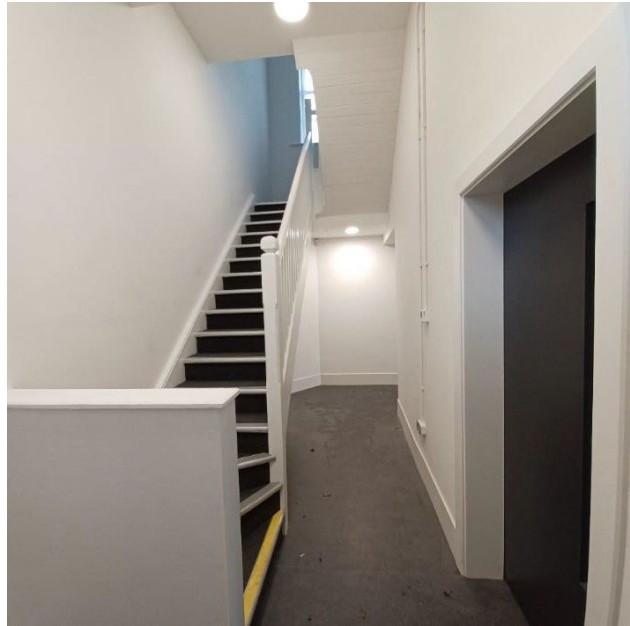


Fig.24 – Remote Hub Entrance Hall 2024



Fig.25 – Roof Works 2023



Fig.26 – Roof Works 2023





Fig.27 – Roof Works 2023



Fig.28 – Roof Works 2024



Fig.29 – Existing Window Repairs



Fig.30 – First floor overlay -fire upgrade



Fig.31 – Fire door and screen to stair enclosure



Fig.32 - Fire alarm panel



Fig. 33 - Fire rated access hatch



Fig 34. Fire stopping to escape routes