

CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT

FEBRUARY 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

Saturday, 25th February

Ireland Reads a national day of reading takes place to celebrate reading and all the benefits it can have for wellbeing and enjoyment.

Monday 27th February

The annual Kilkenny County Council Community Awards night is scheduled to take place in the Parade Tower at 7.00 p.m.

6th to 10th March

Local Enterprise Week will take place with a full line up of local events to be announced.

Wednesday 8th March

The Student Enterprise Programme County Final will take place in Lyrath Hotel.

Monday 13th March

Closing date for receipt of completed applications for Kilkenny Creative Ireland Grant Scheme

Monday, 13th March

Closing date for receipt of applications for Creative Ireland and Cruinniú na nÓg grants.

Friday, 24th March

Closing date for applications to be submitted to An Taisce.

Friday, 24th March

Let's Team Up to Clean Up, Together for Kilkenny" to commence.

Friday 31st March

Closing date for applications for Amenity Grants

Heritage Week 12th - 20th August 2023

The theme for this year is 'Intangible Cultural Heritage'

REPORT AT A GLANCE

ROADS:	2
ENVIRONMENT:.....	2
PARKS/SPECIAL PROJECTS:	4
PLANNING:	6
COMMUNITY:.....	8
ARTS:.....	8
HERITAGE	9
LEO/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	10
HOUSING:	12
LIBRARY SERVICES:.....	15
FINANCE.....	17

ROADS

MAJOR PROJECTS

(included in NDP- Funded by TII)

N24 Waterford to Cahir Scheme

The public consultation No 2 on Alternatives & Options is complete and the Design Team is working on corridor options. Some site investigations/studies have taken place with more to commence in Q1 2023 which will feed into the selection of the preferred corridor.

MINOR PROJECTS

(Not included in NDP-Funded by TII)

N24 Tower Road (Safety Scheme)

The tender in respect of construction of the scheme was awarded to Wills Bros Ltd, Co. Mayo on the 1st December 2022. Construction has started with a 12 month build period. A sod turning ceremony took place on Thursday 9th February by Cathaoirleach Cllr Pat Fitzpatrick.



N77 Ballyragget to Ballynaslee

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

N24 Carrick Road

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

Pavement Schemes

The N10 Danesfort Pavement Improvement Scheme commenced construction during

November. Weather conditions halted the works. Works to be completed in Q1 2023.

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

ENVIRONMENT

CLIMATE ACTION

First Climate Action Steering Committee Meeting

The first meeting of the Kilkenny County Council Climate Action Steering Committee was held on 31st January and was opened by Sean McKeown, A/Chief Executive and chaired by Denis Malone, A/Director of Services. It comprised of presentations on the Local Authority Climate Action Plan, Baseline Emissions for County Kilkenny and the role of the Climate Action Regional Offices in supporting local authorities.

The committee will provide leadership within Kilkenny County Council to help deliver on the targets in the National Climate Action Plan and support the preparation and implementation of the Kilkenny Climate Action Plan by undertaking appropriate measures within their service areas. The Climate Action Steering Committee will be supported by the Climate Action Team and meetings will be held monthly.

NEW! Kilkenny Creative Ireland Grant Scheme welcomes Creative Climate Projects

Projects which improve climate literacy and/or active engagement on climate action in the community through creativity are welcomed in this year's Kilkenny County Council Creative Ireland Grant Scheme. The grant scheme provides financial support to local cultural and community groups, individuals, artistic and creative practitioners. This is the first time that climate themed projects have been specifically encouraged in the scheme and it shows the Council-wide support for climate action. It is funded under the National Creative Ireland programme and administered by the Community and Culture Section. Closing date is 5.00 p.m. Monday 13th March, 2023.

Community Climate Action Fund - Due Soon!

Advance notice that the Community Climate Action Fund which supports communities to build low-carbon sustainable communities will be rolled out in Kilkenny County Council in the coming months. If your community has a project

which addresses any of the 5 themes (home/energy; travel; food & water; shopping & recycling; local climate & environmental action) then keep an eye out for further details in the next few months. The scheme is funded by the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications.

RECOMMENDED MINIMUM CRITERIA FOR ENVIRONMENTAL INSPECTIONS (RMCEI)

Environment Complaints

All Environment complaints received are logged on the CRM (*Customer Relations Management*) System. The number of complaints being received and logged by Environment staff for investigation for the month of January 2023 was 100 compared with 115 for the same period last year (*i.e. down circa 13%*). The nature of these complaints ranges from littering, illegal dumping, water quality and abandoned cars. The vast majority continue to be related to littering and illegal dumping.

WASTE, RECYCLING & COLLECTION

Bring Banks Usage

The Council provides and manages 46 Bring Centres across the City and County. A total of 187 tonnes of recyclables were collected from our Bring Centres in January 2023. This represents an 21% decrease on the same period last year. New Park Shopping Centre (13.14 tonnes collected YTD), LIDL Johnswell (12.47 tonnes collected YTD) and Loughboy Shopping Centre (12.32 tonnes collected YTD) are the busiest locations in the City and Graiguenamanagh (8.51 tonnes collected YTD) 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.

LITTER AWARENESS

Green Schools

The Environment Section corresponded with all schools due to renew their green flag programme. There are approximately 70% of schools due to renew their flag this year with many schools currently re-establishing their committee's and restarting the programme after the Covid disruption. It is anticipated that the majority will be in a position to renew next year.

For schools in a position to renew, their renewal applications should be submitted to An Taisce by

the 24th March, 2023. Prior to submitting their application, the Environmental Awareness Officer will visit the school. During the month of January, there were 5 school visits completed and a further 7 more are scheduled to be completed before the end of March.

For schools restarting the programme, the Environmental Awareness Officer is providing advice to green school co-ordinators and completing talks to support schools working on litter and waste themes. Other supports are available from external stakeholders including the SEAI and Voice Ireland.

Biodiversity school support continues this term through the scheme organised between the Heritage Officer and the Environment Section. There are six schools working on the biodiversity theme receiving specialised workshops from "Biodiversity in Schools" facilitators who aim to increase the awareness of biodiversity and to assist increasing the pollinator potential on their school grounds.



Departments across the Council are assisting the Environment Section to increase the awareness and encourage groups to register early to participate in this year's "Let's Team Up to Clean Up, Together for Kilkenny" which is due to commence on the 24th of March. A collaborative approach between the Parks Department, Community Department, Area Offices, the Library Service and the PPN have all reached out to their networks and has yielded a high number of registrations. A target of 200 groups has been set. By the end of January there were over 180 groups registered and promotions will continue leading up to the event.

The Health and Safety guidance stipulates that all litter picks are restricted to speed zones less than 60km p/h in order for our volunteers to stay safe. Any groups outside of these zones will be consulted and provided with supports through the National Spring Clean campaign which takes place in April.

All groups who registered before the 10th of February, who complete the Health and Safety training and complete a litter pick over the

weekend of the 24th/25th/26th of March will be entered into a draw for €250. All groups who complete a litter pick will receive a Certificate of Participation after the event.

ANIMAL WELFARE



During the month of January there were 44 dogs handled by the Carlow/Kilkenny dog shelter. The shelter has re-homed 29 dogs assisted by charities. There were 7 dogs reclaimed by their owners.

Calls in relation to dog control have increased from the public who are now more active in reporting incidences of loose dogs and in particular restricted breeds.

BURIAL GROUNDS

Columbarium Wall Garden St. Kieran's Cemetery

The construction of the Columbarium Wall and all associated site works is almost completed at St. Kieran's Cemetery. A total of 100 niches will be available within the Columbarium wall units in the garden, with the option to add more units subject to future demand. The niches have been lifted into place recently on site with paving due to be installed in the coming weeks. Lights will be installed at three locations surrounding the columbarium wall to try and reduce anti-social behaviour along with a CCTV camera.



Progress to date on Columbarium Wall Garden St. Kieran's Cemetery

Community Monuments Fund

Kilkenny County Council have submitted three projects for capital funding under the Community Monument Fund for 2023:

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

- Thomple historic church and graveyard
- Further funding is currently being applied for projects at Tubrid and Rathpatrick historic churches and graveyards for proposed conservation works and repairs.



Rathpatrick Church and Graveyard

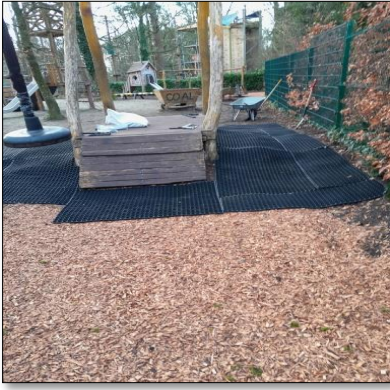


Tubrid Church and Graveyard

PARKS / SPECIAL PROJECTS

Playgrounds

The findings of the annual independent playground inspection, undertaken by Play Services Ireland, for all playgrounds under our care was returned in January. On foot of same we are now preparing a programme of works in response to the recommendations made. However, it is noted that that the number of playgrounds under our charge continues to increase and that over a third of our playgrounds are between 10 - 15 years old. With respect to the latter, it is coming to a stage where components will have to be replaced as opposed to repaired which will require additional funding provision.



The images show a sample of the maintenance works undertaken during the month of January, which included re-mulching, re-sanding and the installation of new soft rubber matting at Castlecomer Playground and the re-mulching of the play areas within Urlingford Playground

Amenity Grants

The 2023 amenity grants scheme is now open to receive applications and same has been advertised in the Kilkenny People, on Kilkenny County Council’s website and will also be included in the Council’s Grant Booklet to be published shortly. The drawdown of amenity grants for 2022 funding is now also completed. In total €137,406 was allocated to 177 groups across the County. The range of works that can be funded under this scheme include tree planting, grass cutting, flower and shrub planting, the erection of signage as well as many other amenity type projects. Preference will be given to those projects which are considered to offer the most benefit to the local community and support biodiversity. The closing date for applications is 5.00 p.m. on Friday 31st March, 2023.

Tree Management

Since mid-autumn significant works has been undertaken in the management of trees within the public realm across the County. The type of works undertaken include crown reduction and the removal of dead or diseased trees or boughs that pose a potential safety risk. This work is now coming to an end as we approach the bird nesting season which runs from the 1st March to 31st August. During this period only trees that pose an immediate safety risk to the public will be worked upon.

Slieverue Linear Park

Works on Phase 2 of the Slieverue Linear Park progressed over the month of January. Phase 2 of the project has been divided into five separate contracts, which include civil works, fencing, play and exercise equipment, landscaping and signage. The tendering progress for all five contracts is completed and all contracts have been awarded. The civils works tender is now nearing completion, the fencing contract is due on site mid-February, the landscaping contractor and play equipment installer are due on site in March. Thereafter, the signage contractor will finish out the last element of the contract.



New Pathway to Access Park



New Raised Uncontrolled Crossing Point to Park

The above is being delivered in partnership with the local community and KLP.

Woodstock Gardens & Arboretum

In recent weeks staff have carried out planting of Bluebells within the recently cleared vista’s between the Monkey Puzzle and Noble Fir Avenues. These Bluebells are native to Ireland and are one of the most beautiful sights of our woodlands to be seen from April into May each year.

The flowers attract a host of insect pollinators, which makes them particularly valuable to a wide range of wildlife. Some 9,000 bulbs have been planted, which will also be over seeded and it's anticipated that in May these efforts will be rewarded and that over the coming years visitors to the gardens will be treated to a carpet of bluebells that will improve year on year.

Under the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme works associated with improving accessibility to the gardens continued over the month. The carpark now provides for 7 Age Friendly and 3 Disabled dedicated parking bays located at the main access points to the gardens and toilet block. Accessibility and enhancement works to the toilet block are also nearing completion and the new accessible play-tower and see-saw is due to be installed towards the end of February. In addition to the above, funding secured under the Disability Participation and Awareness Fund 2021 allowed the Council to purchase a fully electric wheel-chair accessible buggy which is due to arrive of site in March. The culmination of the above and other recent enhancement works to the trails/pathways will make for a much more inclusive amenity offering for those with reduced mobility.



Recently installed Age Friendly & Disabled Parking Bays

PLANNING

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

Planning Summary	Total January	
	2022	2023
Planning Applications Received	52	50
Planning Applications Granted	75	41
Planning Applications Refused	7	10
Complaints Received	4	6
Warning Letters Issued	3	2
Enforcements Notices Issued	9	2
Cases Closed	9	6

FORWARD PLANNING

Masterplans: Abbey Quarter

The process of reviewing the Abbey Quarter Masterplan commenced in October 2022. A public survey on the Abbey Quarter went live for 4 weeks and closed on 16th December, 2022.

A further online public consultation event took place on the 18th of January, 2022 to inform the public of the survey results and of the review process. The meeting was well attended and some valuable inputs were received.

The consultants are currently working on the draft plan and it will be published for public comment in February. It is anticipated that the process will be completed in the second quarter of 2023.

St. Canices Campus

The preparation of the Masterplan for the HSE's St. Canice's Campus is ongoing. Loci consultants are assisting the Project Steering Committee in the drafting of the Masterplan. Meetings with the HSE are ongoing but it is envisaged that a draft will be agreed during the first quarter of 2023. Once agreed, the draft plan will be presented to Senior Management in both the HSE and the Council for consideration before being brought to the Municipal District Members and before being placed on public display.

Loughmacask

The draft Loughmacask Masterplan was placed on display from the 26th of August 2022 to the 28th of October 2022. Three public information sessions on the draft were held in September and October and a total of 182 submissions were received during the consultation timeframe. The

Chief Executive's report is currently being drafted and a Workshop was held with the Elected Members on the 10th February, 2023. The Chief Executive's report will be presented to the Municipal District Members at the March Municipal District meeting. The amendments to the draft plan will again be placed on public display for a further round of public consultation.

Urlingford

The Council's consultants have completed drafting the Urlingford Town Centre Masterplan and the draft plan is currently awaited. The draft plan will be presented to the Municipal District Members before being placed on public display. A public workshop on this draft plan is planned once the draft plan is on display.

Ballyragget/Paulstown/Kilmacow

Work has commenced on the preparation of Masterplans for the settlements of Ballyragget, Paulstown and Kilmacow. Public meetings took place as follows:

- Paulstown on 18th January 2023,
- Ballyragget on 19th January 2023
- Kilmacow on 20th January 2023

With due consideration of inputs from these meetings the consultants are currently drafting the three Masterplans. The draft plans will be presented to the respective Municipal Districts prior to them going on public display.

White Hill Windfarm- Strategic Infrastructure Development

The Council have agreed to convene a Special Meeting on 27th February, 2023 to consider the Whitehill Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) Windfarm Application. The scale of the proposed wind farm meets the 50MW threshold for an SID application under the Strategic Infrastructure Development Act and as such therefore the planning application is made directly to An Board Pleanala (ABP). The promoters of the proposed windfarm are Galetech Energy Developments Limited and the project straddles both County Kilkenny and County Carlow in the townlands Coolcullen, Cloneen, and Coan East, Co. Kilkenny and of Ridge, Knockabranagh and Knockbaun, Baunreagh, and Agharue, Co. Carlow.

The project comprises a total of 7 turbines with a tip height of 180 metres and a combined output of just over 50 MW (*i.e. sufficient electricity generation to power around 40,000 households*). Three of the

turbines will be located in County Kilkenny and 4 in County Carlow. Section 37 of the SID Act provides that all submissions on the project must be made directly to ABP.

Under the Act, Kilkenny County Council as the Planning Authority must submit report to ABP setting out the views of the Council. In this regard, the Planning Department will prepare a Chief Executive's Report that must also include the views of the members on the project along with the minutes of the Special Meeting to be held on 27th February. The Council must submit the Chief Executive's report to ABP by 8th March next.

In the absence of a wind energy policy map, the Council must instead rely on the Ministerial Guidelines on Wind Energy first published in 2006 and as amended in 2017. The Council is still awaiting the outcome of the Draft Ministerial Direction issued in 2021 on the Council's wind energy strategy. Essentially the Draft Ministerial Direction dealt with 3 key issues, namely:

- (i) The Development Plan as made is inconsistent with Ministerial Guidelines issued under Section 28 of the Act, specifically item 2 of the Specific Planning Policy Requirement contained in the Interim Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Statutory Plans, Renewable Energy and Climate Change (*July 2017*), which sets out the requirement for the Planning Authority to comply with the aforementioned Specific Planning Policy Requirement under section 28(1C). In particular, the Development Plan fails to identify renewable energy targets (in megawatts) which Kilkenny can contribute in delivering its share of overall Government targets on renewable energy and climate change mitigation over the plan period;
- (ii) The Development Plan contains conflicting objectives on renewable energy sustainable development and climate action such that the adopted Plan, without providing sufficient compensatory measures, significantly reduced the extent of the areas indicated as 'acceptable in principle' that were identified in the draft Development Plan as being necessary to achieve the target of 201MW required to ensure that 100% of electricity demand for Kilkenny is met from renewable sources by 2030 and to ensure consistency with the climate action plan; and

- (iii) The Development Plan has therefore not been made in a manner consistent with the recommendations of the Office of the Planning Regulator under Section 31 AM and fails to set out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. Sections 11.4 and 11.5.1 of the City & County Development Plan that are subject to the Ministerial Direction have been suspended, including the wind energy strategy map.

As stated therefore, the Council must instead rely on the Ministerial Guidelines on Wind Energy first published in 2006 and as amended in 2017.

Taking in Charge

The following estates are scheduled to be taken in charge in 2023:

- Lakeside, Kilkenny
- Parc Na Gowan, Kilkenny
- Kilkenny Internal Road
- College Park, Callan Road
- Rioch Court
- Greenoaks, The Fairways
- Abbeygate, Ferrybank
- Ogenty, Gowran
- An Choill Rua, Paulstown
- The Greens, Thomastown
- Black Church Square, Inistioge

E-PLANNING

The Local Government Online Planning portal was designed to streamline the application for planning permission across all local authorities. E-Planning is now available in Kilkenny County Council. Prospective users must first register on the e-planning portal at: <https://planning.localgov.ie/en/local-government-ireland-planning-system>. They can then make a planning application, submit documentation online with the application and submit further information later if required. The status of applications can be viewed quickly and easily. Paper applications are still accepted and the same timelines apply to both an online application and a paper application.

A short video is available on Kilkenny County Council website demonstrating how to use the online planning system

<https://www.kilkennycoco.ie/eng/services/planning/>

Active Land Management

The Draft Maps of land in scope for the Residential Zoned Land Tax were published on the 1st November. A total of 25 submissions were

made to the process, 4 of which include re-zoning requests. These submissions are now being considered, and landowners will be notified of the determinations in due course. A Supplemental Map must be prepared by 1st May, 2023.

Eight sites were added to the Derelict Sites Register in January (*in Callan, Thomastown and Mullinavat*) bringing the total to 28 sites on the Register. Funding was announced in the third round of URDF specifically to address long term vacancy and dereliction and measures to utilise this funding are being examined.

A further three sites were cancelled from the Vacant Sites Register as a result of site activation since December, leaving 24 sites on the Register. The number of cancelled entries due to site activation or improvement now stands at 23 sites. Payment demands for 2022 are currently being prepared for issue. The Vacant site levy will be replaced by the Residential Zoned Land Tax in 2024, but any outstanding levies will remain due to the Council.

Conservation

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

An advisory service on conservation matters is provided to the public and colleagues, while the conservation grants and funding applications are also delivered.

The Built Heritage Investment Scheme and the Historic Structures Fund conservation grant schemes are now closed: 18 applications have been received for the Built Heritage Investment

Building Control

Valid Commencement Notices received from start of year to end of month:

2023:	14
2022:	38
2021:	15
2020:	30

Valid Disability Access Applications received start of year to end of month:

2023	3
2022	5
2021	4
2020	8

COMMUNITY

Community Awards Night

The annual Kilkenny County Council Community Awards night is scheduled for Monday 27th February in the Parade Tower at 7.00 p.m. At the event, the popular Kilkenny County Council 2023 Grants Booklet will be launched.

Pride of Place

Graiguenamanagh Barrow Valley Activities Hub won the National Pride of Place Award under the Community Tourism Category. Mullinavat were awarded the national runners up prize under the village category, a massive achievement for all involved. The IPB National Pride of Place Awards is an annual competition organised by Co-operation Ireland and sponsored by IPB Insurance. It promotes and celebrates the best in community development and recognises the selfless efforts of people in making their local area a better place to live, work and socialise. The awards were hosted by RTE's Marty Whelan on Saturday 21st January in the Clayton Burlington Hotel in Dublin.



Graiguenamanagh Barrow Valley Activities Hub won the National Pride of Place Award under the Community Tourism Category



Mullinavat were awarded the runners up in the Village Category

ARTS

Arts Office Grants

Arts Act Grants & Tyrone Guthrie Bursaries were advertised in December 2022 with a closing date of 30th January, 2023. We received thirty-six applications across a wide range of artforms and seventeen applications for the Tyrone Guthrie Residency Bursary 2023.

Professional and Emerging ArtLinks Bursary Award 2023

Applications have opened for the ArtLinks bursary awards for Professional and Emerging artists. All applicants for this bursary must be registered members of ArtLinks and currently living in Kilkenny, Carlow, Waterford or Wexford.

Critical Response Process for Kilkenny writers

Kilkenny County Council Arts Office is running a pilot Critical Response Process session for Kilkenny writers this March. Depending on the success of this first iteration we will run further CRP sessions in the future. The session will be facilitated by Alice Bennett. Alice is a writer, researcher, and experienced facilitator. Her poetry has featured in the Kilkenny Poetry Broadsheet and broadcast on the Poetry Phone, a Kilkenny Arts Office project. She was shortlisted for the Patrick Kavanagh Poetry prize in 2022.

Alice is completing her doctoral dissertation in Arts Liberation Education with Maynooth Adult and Community Education Department. She is passionate about encouraging and facilitating artists to gain knowledge, confidence, and authenticity in their own writing.

Creative Ireland

Preparations are underway for the Creative Ireland and Cruinniú na nÓg grants. A survey has been distributed County wide to investigate children's preferences for creative activity prior to advertising the grants. The survey has been distributed via Kilkenny Education Centre, Healthy Ireland, the County Library service & Arts Office databases. The general Creative Ireland grants scheme has been advertised. Closing date for receipt of applications is 13th March.

Wednesday Weeklies

Following the success of our Wednesday Weeklies over the last three years we are currently planning another series of online & in person

meetings and supports for writers for 2023 Informal sessions but will be led by experienced practitioners and professionals in the field of literature who can support and advise our writers.

Kilkenny Poetry Broadsheet

An Open Call was published inviting Kilkenny poets to submit their poems for publication in the annual Kilkenny Poetry Broadsheet, the deadline for applications is the 31st March.

ECDP

The Emerging Curator Development Programme was initiated in 2019, to support emerging curators/exhibition organisers in developing and progressing their skills, experience and ultimately their careers. A call for applications was put out in December with a deadline of the 31st January. A total of seven applications were received from emerging curators across the country. Application assessments and interviews will take place in February with the new curator commencing their programme in March.

Haumea Ecoversity Online Course

Four Kilkenny based artists were awarded a bursary to study with the Haumea Ecoversity and they had their first session online on 17th January. The Ecoversity was established by eco-artist Dr Cathy Fitzgerald and educates people in the creative sector on how to bring eco issues into their work.

Visual Artists Ireland Webinar Generating Sales

Kilkenny Arts Office partnered with the Visual Artists Ireland to deliver an information webinar on how to generate sales from your artwork with tutor Claudia Kennaugh. A total of seventeen Kilkenny artists attended the webinar. This was followed by one to one advisory sessions with Claudia and eight Kilkenny based artists where she gave more in-depth feedback to each artist.

HERITAGE

Decade of Centenaries 2023

The Heritage Office manages the Kilkenny Decade of Centenaries Programme and grant scheme. An allocation of €50,000 has been received from the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media. This grant scheme is now open and grant applications are invited from groups and individuals to commemorate events/people/life in County Kilkenny in 1923 reflecting on the whole Decade

1912-1923. The deadline for applications is 6th March, 2023. Details of the grant scheme can be found here:

<https://kilkennyheritage.ie/2023/02/kilkenny-county-council-decade-of-centenaries-grant-scheme-2023/>

Applications Submitted to County Heritage Plan Grant 2023

Two applications were submitted to the Heritage Council under the County Heritage Plan Grant seeking funding for a Heritage Awareness and Engagement Campaign to support the priorities of the Heritage Office and a Data Collection Programme to conduct surveys of holy wells, mass paths and/or thatched structures in Kilkenny. The outcome of these applications will be announced in April.

Community Heritage Grant Scheme 2023

The Heritage Council have an open call for the 2023 Community Heritage Grant Scheme (*allocation of €1.5m*) which is open to voluntary and community groups, NGO's and Adopt a Monument participants. Closing date for receipt of online applications is 5pm Monday 20th February. Further details, grant criteria and a recording of the grant information webinar are available at:

<https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/funding/community-heritage-grant-scheme-2023>

Irish Georgian Society 2023 Conservation Grants Programme

The Irish Georgian Society have opened for applications for their 2023 Conservation Grants Programme. Structures of architectural interest from across the country are eligible for funding from IGS London. Closing date for receipt of applications is 5.00 p.m. Monday 20th February. Application forms and grant criteria available at <https://www.igs.ie/updates/article/irish-georgian-society-conservation-grants-programme-2023>

Heritage Week: 12th to 20th August 2023

National Heritage Week 2023 will take place from Sat 12th to Sun 20th August with in-person and digital events. The theme for this year is 'Intangible Cultural Heritage'. You can start uploading your events/projects to the Heritage Week website from 15th June and all events etc must be uploaded by 23rd August. If you want some tips for getting started with your heritage project this year go to:

<https://www.heritageweek.ie/news/tips-for-getting-started-with-your-heritage-project-2>

Local Biodiversity Action Fund

Minister of State for Heritage and Electoral Reform, Malcolm Noonan has launched the 2023 Local Biodiversity Action Fund for applications, with €3 million in funding available to local authorities. The fund administered by the National Parks and Wildlife Service aims to provide funding to assist biodiversity officers, and heritage officers in local authorities without a biodiversity officer, with the implementation of projects that promote actions contained in the National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021. Funding has been secured to continue this scheme for projects into 2023. An indicative budget of €100k per local authority is available with a 15% co-funding requirement. This fund will be administered by the incoming Biodiversity Officer at Kilkenny County Council. <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/24e9c-funding-for-locally-led-biodiversity-projects-doubled-to-3m/#:~:text=First%20launched%20in%202018%2C%20the,in%20addressing%20the%20biodiversity%20emergency>.

LEO/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

LEO Kilkenny Jobs Announcement 2023

During January, Minister Simon Coveney T.D., announced the annual results of the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) for 2022 which showed that Local Enterprise Office Kilkenny supported companies that created 103 jobs in 2022. The 2022 data shows that the LEO Kilkenny financially supported 182 small businesses in their portfolio across the County and these companies in turn employ 1,077 people.

Local Enterprise Showcase



Some of Kilkenny's best up and coming craft and design businesses participated in the Local Enterprise Showcase at the 2023 Showcase event in the RDS which took place from the 22-24th January.

An initiative of the Local Enterprise Offices. "Local Enterprise Showcase" is a special area at Showcase that houses a range of Ireland's newest design talent. Participating for the first time were Geraldine Walsh, Geraldine Walsh Art displaying her original oil paintings, fine art prints and cards; Anne Healy, promoter of Biddy's Good Luck Horse Shoes, a business creating good luck gifts for all occasions from genuine horseshoes and Kristina Belejova, Amalka. Design - a linen brand with elegant clothing for everyday wear and for special occasions. Cait Mackey Maher with her award winning, greeting card business Yellow Deer Designs took part in this initiative for the second year in row.

Other participants from County Kilkenny at Showcase 2023 included Nicholas Mosse, Dominka Stoppa, Kilkenny Silver and DFM Clothing along with Jerpoint Glass who were awarded the Showcase Best Product in the HOME Category.

LEO Kilkenny Start Up Showcase

Kilkenny County Council through the Local Enterprise Office is staging an extensive seminar event showcasing the supports and funding opportunities for start-up businesses in Kilkenny at Newpark Hotel, Kilkenny on Thursday, 9th February from 9.30 a.m. to 12 noon.

This event has been specifically designed to help entrepreneurs and start-up businesses to understand and find out more about the services provided by organisations with a remit for enterprise development. Representatives from a range of state agencies and funding organisations such as the Intreo, Southeast BIC, Kilkenny Leader Partnership, Enterprise Ireland, AIB, BOI, HSA and more will be present.

A discussion panel with local entrepreneurs will also take place hosted by Kieran Cuddihy of Newstalk to discuss their real-life experiences.

Local Enterprise Week

Planning is underway for Local Enterprise Week which takes place from the 6th to 10th March with a full line up of local events to be announced soon.

LEO Kilkenny have been nominated to host one of the national spotlight events taking place on Friday the 10th March: Innovate for Business Success - A key factor to any successful business,

regardless of size is innovation. This event is suitable for people at all stages of their business.

The Student Enterprise Programme County Final will take place on 8th March in Lyrath Hotel.

Kilkenny County Council Festival Grant Scheme – Open for Applications

Kilkenny County Council is providing funding for festival organisers to aid with the development and promotion of festivals with a significant tourism impact.

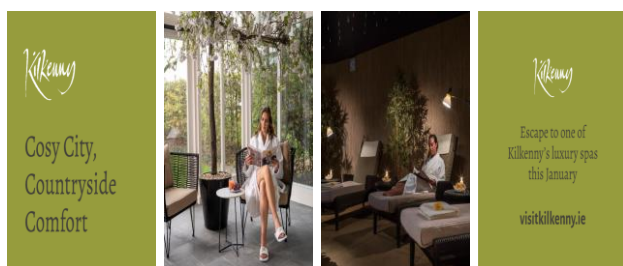
The main purpose of the Festival Support Grants scheme is to support festivals which drive tourism in Kilkenny, underpinning Kilkenny County Council’s Tourism strategy and improving the visitor experience in Kilkenny City and County.

Application deadline for festival grants was 15th February, 2023. The applications received have been assessed and a recommendation for award of grants and approval by Elected Members will be placed on the Agenda for the February meeting.

Faílte Ireland Festival Grant Scheme

Faílte Ireland confirmed that their Faílte Irelands festival grant will return for 2023. Kilkenny County Council have been awarded €8,000 from Faílte Ireland’s Regional Festivals fund and it will be used to enhance its’ grant awards to festival organisers locally.

Kilkenny Tourism and visitkilkenny.ie



Kilkenny Tourism continues their work in preparing Kilkenny’s marketing and PR plans for 2023.

Spring 2023 campaign will aim to keep Kilkenny to the forefront of the domestic visitor’s mind for booking breaks for St. Valentine’s Day, mid-term and St. Patricks Day. “Cosy City, Countryside Comfort” showcases the wonderful food and accommodation offering alongside all that the City and County has to offer for the season.

Taste Kilkenny Restaurant Week

Taste Kilkenny in collaboration with Kilkenny Tourism hosted the wonderful #tastekilkenny Restaurant Week from the 27th January to 5th February.

An initiative of Kilkenny County Council and supported by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Taste Kilkenny Restaurant Week offered visitors and local foodies alike a meaningful opportunity to experience some of the County’s most sought-after restaurants and a flavour of local produce on local menus.

For 10 ‘dining- packed’ days, over 20 participating establishments showcased some of their best loved and most popular dishes at discounted prices.



South East Technological University (SETU)

The Council made a submission late last year for consideration by the Board of Governors of SETU in their 5-year Strategic Plan currently under development. The President of SETU has agreed to set up a scoping group to examine the Council’s submission and to prepare the ground for more formal engagement.

HOUSING

Homeless Services

HOMELESS SERVICES SUMMARY JANUARY 2023	
Homeless Presentations	52
Homeless Assessment Outcomes	
Prevention & Interventions	33
Emergency Service	8
Not eligible / Did not avail of service	11
HAP Place Finder Service	
No of Homeless HAP tenancies @ 1 st day of month	115
No of Homeless HAP tenancies created during month	2
No of Homeless HAP tenancies in place @ last day of month	117
Number of Homeless HAP tenancy breakdowns	0
Other Social Housing Tenancies supported / created during month	1
Households in Temporary Emergency Supported Accommodation at January 31st	36
Households in Temporary Emergency B&B accommodation	6
Households in Temporary Emergency B&B Accommodation that are families	4
Households (singles/couples) in Transition Emergency Accom. (Own Front Door)	28
Households (Families) in Transition Emergency Accommodation (OFD)	12

Social Housing Assessment

SOCIAL HOUSING SUPPORT APPLICATION SUMMARY JANUARY 2023	
Number awaiting Social Housing Support at January 31 st (Gross Need)	1,579
Number awaiting Social Housing Support at January 31 st (Net Need)	751
No. of Social Housing Applications received in January	71
No. of applications incomplete / awaiting further information / clarification	46
No. of applications validated and ready for assessment during the month	28
No. of applications assessed during January	34
No. of applications awaiting assessment as @ January 31 st	69

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

The new thresholds are outlined below:

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

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

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

The number of tenancies under the Housing Assistance Programme (HAP) continues to fall with 686 properties currently supported in the HAP scheme compared to 888 in 2021. We continue to seek new tenancies at every opportunity.

HOUSING ASSISTANCE PAYMENT SUMMARY UP TO JANUARY 31 st 2023	
Number of active HAP tenancies to January 31 st 2023	686
New HAP tenancies set up	7
HAP tenants allocated Social Housing	1
Closed HAP Tenancies	5
HAP Rent Reviews	25
Other tenancy amendments	30
HAP Calls Received 2023 year to date	300
HAP Calls Received January	300

Tenancy Management

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

LA/RAS/Leasing allocations in January (<i>offers made</i>):.....	18
LA/RAS/Leasing allocations to date (<i>offers made</i>):.....	18
Tenant Liaison Officer cases in January:.....	79
Maintenance Calls for January:	656
Maintenance Calls year to date:	656

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

Housing Grants

Grants Approved & Committed up to 31 st January 2023		
Scheme	No.	Amount
HGD - Housing Adaptation Grant	42	€452,365
MAG - Mobility Aid Grant	3	€5,814
HOP - Housing Aid for Older Persons	63	€335,524
Total	108	€793,703

Grants Paid out up to 31 st January 2023		
Scheme	No.	Amount
HGD - Housing Adaptation Grant	4	€39,893
MAG - Mobility Aid Grant	1	€2,349
HOP - Housing Aid for Older Persons	14	€60,674
Total	19	€102,916

Housing Loans

Changes to the Local Authority Home Loan Scheme were announced on 7th February. There will be an increase in house prices and income limits for all local authority areas under the Local Authority Home Loan in the coming weeks.

The house price limit will increase from €250,000 to €300,000

New Income Limits

- Single Applicants.....€70,000
- Joint Applicants€85,000

These changes will take effect from 1st March, 2023.

Housing Loan Activity 1 st January - 31 st January 2023					
Loan Type	Received	Approved	Amount Approved	Number Paid	Amount Paid
Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan	0	0	€0	0	€0
Local Authority Home Loan	5	0	€0	0	€0
Caravan Loan	0	0	€0	0	€0
Total	5	0	€0	0	€0

Housing Capital Delivery

There are a number of developments on site with a delivery date in 2023. The Housing Capital Delivery Team continues to source new projects and sites for capital delivery during 2024, 2025 and 2026.

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



Golf Links Road Kilkenny



Berkely Drive Ferrybank 5 Units

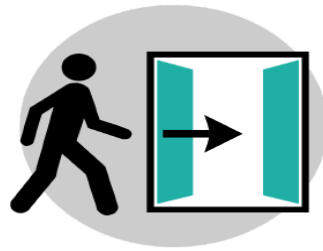
Vacant Homes

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

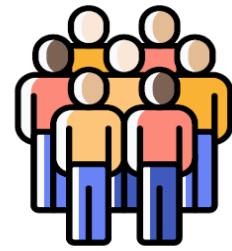
LIBRARY



27,233 Items borrowed



14,442 Visitors



1,478 Members

Increased Opening Hours



We are delighted to have increased our opening hours for the public by 15 hours across our service this month. We are now open in Thomastown Library on Thursdays, in Castlecomer Library on Friday afternoons and Loughboy Library is now open throughout the day with no lunchtime closures.

Library Staff Meeting

In late January, we held our first full staff meeting in many years. This half day meeting allowed all staff to be briefed on and to discuss the new National Library Strategy and Developments in the Library Service that will shape our work going forward.

Library Activities

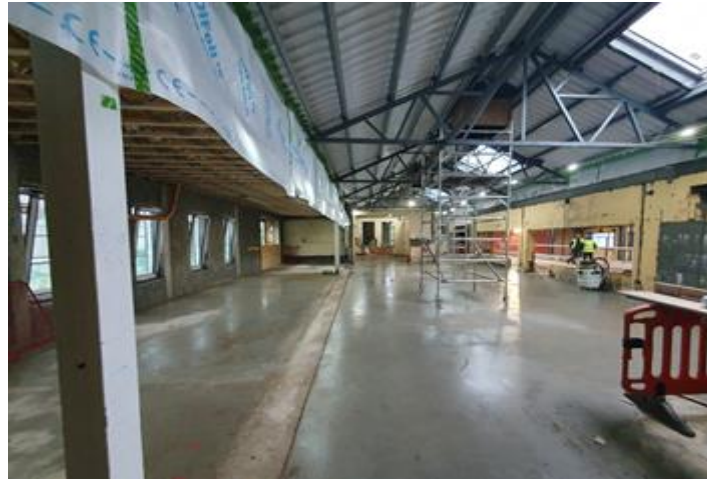
Events	In Branch	Online
74	74	1
Live	Numbers	
44	964	

This month we had lots of activities and events across our libraries. These included a Physiotherapy Talk from Paul Bolger as part of Healthy Ireland at Your Library, Board game and Lego play days, and we had sewing classes and chess classes this month in Urlingford Library.



We hosted 22 class visits in our libraries across the County, bringing 512 school children through our doors, and our mobile van drove the length and breadth of the County, visiting communities, schools and creches.

Mayfair Library Update



- Reinforced Concrete stairs installed.
- Roof is substantially completed including the installation of the wind catchers.
- Underfloor heating system installed.
- Mechanical and Electrical first fix commenced

Online Services Usage



2,600 eAudiobooks borrowed



221 Class sessions



863 eMagazines borrowed



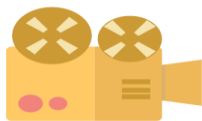
1,094 eBooks borrowed



130 Online Courses sessions



698 Songs accessed



**Digital
Engagement**

Our staff have prepared, recorded, edited and published 378 posts on our social media platforms in January. Our video views for were 4,299.

UPCOMING EVENTS



Ireland Reads is a national day of reading taking place on 25th February to celebrate reading and all the benefits it can have for wellbeing and enjoyment.

Go to www.irelandreads.ie to pledge reading time, sign up for reading reminders and see how much time has been pledged by the Irish public so far.

FINANCE

The expenditure by service division to the end of January is set out in Table 1. Total Expenditure for the period was €6.68m compared with the annual budget of €98.75m.

Table 1	Actual YTD January 2023	Budget Full Year 2023
	€'000's	€'000's
Housing & Building	1,301	22,698
Road Transport & Safety	2,297	27,560
Water Services	544	7,736
Development Management	690	11,754
Environmental Services	926	13,520
Recreation & Amenity	321	8,091
Agriculture, Education, Health, Welfare	55	692
Miscellaneous Services	550	6,698
OVERALL TOTAL	6,684	98,749

Finance Update

The bank overdraft facility was not utilised during the month of January 2023. The draft Financial Statement for 2022 will be finalised in the coming weeks and will be presented to Council at the March meeting. The annual rate demands for 2023 will be sent out to all rate customers on the week beginning 13th February, 2023.

Rates Revaluation

Further to Revaluation 2017, 197 customers with a total rate demand value of €4.5m appealed their new valuation to the Valuation Tribunal. To date 193 appeals have been completed.

The following is a breakdown of the appeal outcomes to date:

Decrease in Revaluation on Appeal	149 cases
Appeal Withdrawn	34 cases
Increase in Revaluation on Appeal.....	1 case
No change to Revaluation on Appeal	10 cases
Appeals outstanding.....	3 cases

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

Commercial Rates Vacancy

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