

CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT

APRIL 2024 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

Affordable Purchase Scheme

Application Portal will open on Wednesday 24th April and close on Wednesday 22nd May at 12 noon.

Increased Cost of Business Grant Scheme

The closing date for applications under this scheme is 1st May 2024.

Commercial Premises Paint Scheme 2024

The closing date for receipt of applications for the above scheme is Friday 3rd May, 2024.

Green Schools

Green School Awards will take place on the 7th of May in Kilkenny.

CCFCS 2024

The 2024 Community and Cultural Facilities Capital Scheme is now open, with a closing date of Friday 10th May 2024.

Biodiversity Week 2024

Takes place from 17th to 26th May, 2024

Anti-Litter and Anti-Graffiti Grant 2024

Deadline for applications is the 24th of May, 2024.

Active Land Management

The second submission period for landowners to make requests regarding a rezoning of their land, is still open until the 31st May.

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CIVIC RECEPTION FOR THE THOMASTOWN AND TULLOGHER ROSBERCON GAA CLUBS



St. Patricks Day Post Parade Reception

ROADS

MAJOR PROJECTS

(Included in NDP- Funded by TII)

N24 Waterford to Cahir Scheme

- The Display of Preferred Transport Solution was completed in January 2024.
- All Public Display Material including Brochure is available to view online at the top of the front page on the Project Website at <https://n24waterford2cahir.ie/>.
- Details of the Public Display of the Preferred Transport Solution and key findings will be recorded within the Phase 2 Option Selection Report.
- Date for Publication of the Option Selection Report is Q2 2024.
- No funding has been provided in 2024 to extend the project beyond Phase 2. A letter has been sent to Minister outlining the safety and regional benefits of the scheme and to reconsider his position and allow the scheme to complete Phase's 3 & 4 (Planning).

MINOR PROJECTS

(Not included in NDP-Funded by TII)

N24 Tower Road (Safety Scheme)

The project is substantially completed and open to traffic. Landscaping and snagging works are continuing on the project.



Overhead drone footage of the compacted grade separated junction.

N77 Ballyragget to Ballynaslee

Construction of the scheme commenced on Tuesday 6th February 2024 with an expected 12-month time frame. The completion of this project will realise an improvement scheme objective identified within the City & County Development Plan 2021-2027.



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. Kilkenny Council has received formal notification that An Bord Pleanála has approved the 177AE Planning application subject to conditions and has confirmed the CPO without modifications as of the 20th March 2024. An eight-week period now applies to allow applications for leave to apply for judicial review. Should no applications issue a notice of the making of a confirmation order will be published within 12 weeks of the making of the Order.

OTHER

Pavement Schemes.

The design work is ongoing in respect of the N76 Callan By Pass Pavement Scheme. The PAAR report was approved by TII in December 2023. Design work and the preparation of tender documentation are on-going with a view to issuing a tender for the works during 2024.

The overall cost of the scheme is expected to be in excess of €4m with varying sources of TII funding necessary to deliver the scheme.

ENVIRONMENT

CLIMATE ACTION

Taking Stock of our Buildings

The Climate Action Office has completed a new register of the Council's buildings to help us plan how best to reduce their energy consumption and emissions. All public bodies are now required to develop a "Building Stock Register". This will inform how to decarbonise building *portfolio* (i.e. *move away from fossil fuels*) through a combination of new buildings construction, retrofit of existing buildings, and the management of leased properties.

The Register will also help us to prepare for the EU Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD), soon to be implemented. The EPBD requires all public sector bodies to implement Minimum Energy Performance Standards and also achieve a zero-emission building stock by 2050.

The Register includes information on floor area, heating type, BER rating, details of retrofits etc. From 2024 we are obliged to report on this annually to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). There are currently 61 buildings on the Council's Building Register, and the top five energy using buildings are the Watershed, County Hall, the Machinery Yard, Kilkenny Fire Station and the Watergate Theatre.



County Hall is one of the Council's top five energy using buildings in its portfolio

Kilkenny County Council, in partnership with the other Local Authorities in the South East, are collaborating on the establishment of a Regional Energy Unit. Through this Unit Kilkenny County Council will apply for funding to the SEAI's Pathfinder Programme to support us to decarbonise our building stock.

Climate Action themed Grants Booklet

The Climate Action Office, working with the Community Section, developed the 2024 grants booklet with a visible Climate Action theme throughout the booklet. https://kilkennycoco.ie/eng/your_council/online-services/download-it/17921-2024-grants-booklet-a5-interactive.pdf



Reduce Your Use Campaign

The Reduce Your Use campaign is now complete and results from the campaign are presently being compiled and will be available towards the end of April 2024. The Kilkenny County Council Reduce Your Use campaign ran from October 2023 to March 2024, the campaign consisted of promoting energy efficiency within the organisation with a focus on the Thomastown and Callan Area Offices. The results from this campaign will be presented through a video and interactive document showcasing actions taken.

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Litter Management Plan (LMP)

The public consultation process for the Litter Management Plan 2024-2026 closed on 15th March 2024.

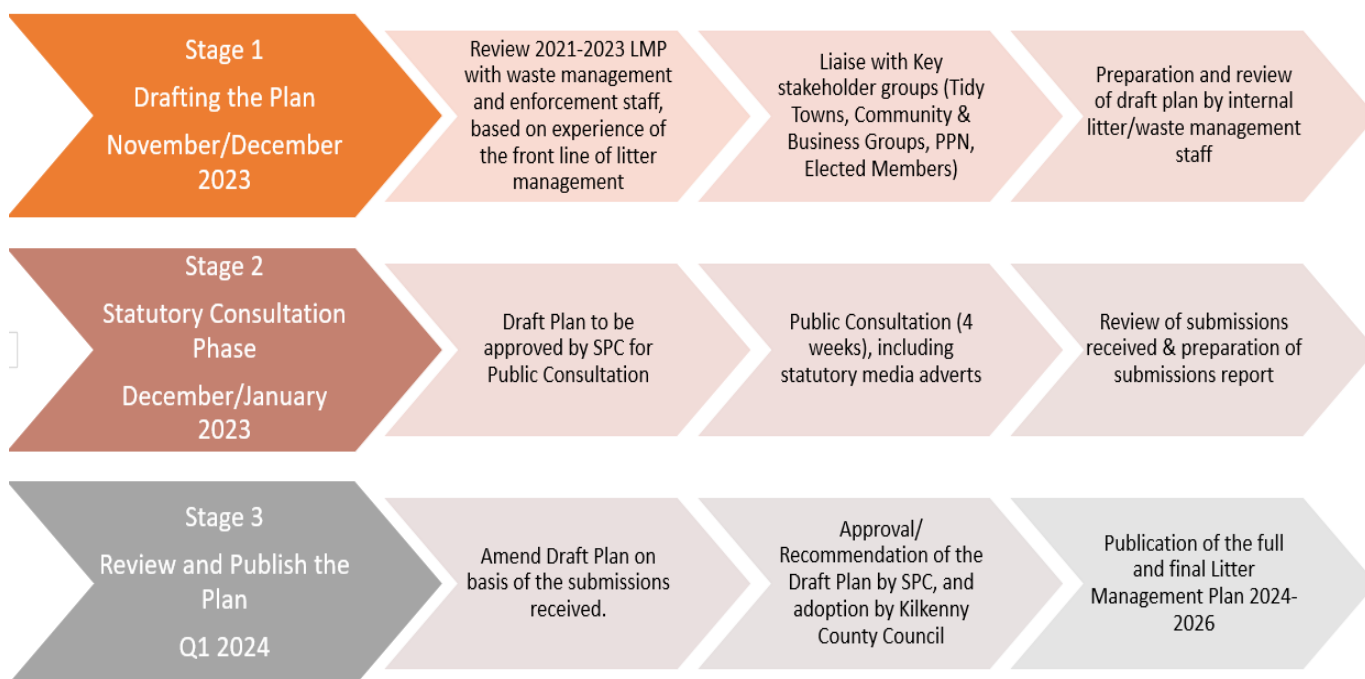
Three submissions were received:

- Kilkenny Access Group
- Keep Kilkenny Beautiful
- Mullinavat Matters

The LMP 2024-2026 is set out in seven sections, as outlined below:

- Introduction
- Litter and the Law
- Progress of LMP 2021-2023
- Challenges and Future Solutions
- Services and Facilities provided by Kilkenny County Council
- Objectives and Actions of LMP 2024-2026
- Conclusions and Appendices

The final draft of the Litter Management Plan 2024-2026 will go before the full Council Plenary on the 22nd of April 2024.



Green Schools

The Environmental Awareness Officer (EAO) has assessed 17 schools within the County for their respective Green flag up to the 15th of March 2024. The Green School Awards will take place on the 7th of May in Kilkenny.

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

Green schools is an international environmental education programme, offering a well-defined, controllable way for schools to take environmental issues into the curriculum and apply them to the day-to-day running of the school. Green schools is a holistic, long-term programme and has a two-year cycle in relation to preparation, assessment and attainment of a particular flag.





National Spring Clean

National Spring Clean is Ireland's most popular, well recognized and successful anti-litter initiative. Taking place during the whole month of April and now in its 25th year, the campaign encourages every sector of society to actively participate and take responsibility for litter by actually conducting clean ups in their own local environment. National Spring Clean traditionally takes place throughout the month of April.

National Spring Clean has been operated by An Taisce since 1999 in partnership with the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government and Local Authorities.

All community and voluntary groups are being encouraged to participate and register with An Taisce via [About National Spring Clean - National Spring Clean](#). Groups can request additional supplies from the EAO via the Environmental Section.

Air Quality Campaign

In conjunction with the Enforcement Team in Environment, the EAO is coordinating a targeted campaign throughout the City and County on air quality and the continued use of smoky coals. The campaign seeks to raise awareness amongst the wider public, stakeholders, businesses and schools about the health and environmental impacts of poor air quality and the ways individuals can help reduce pollution. This will be a 4-6 week campaign commencing the week of the 15th of April 2024.



Anti-Litter and Anti-Graffiti Grant 2024

Kilkenny County Council is offering community groups an opportunity this year to promote anti-litter and anti-graffiti awareness in their local community. The grant is to mobilize community groups to care for their local environment by decreasing the impact of litter by its removal and to promote a social message locally to encourage everyone to put litter in its rightful place – in a bin.

As funding comes directly from the Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment there are funding restrictions which must be adhered to.

This grant **cannot cover:**

- the purchase of structural items such as street furniture
- the purchase of litter bins
- the purchase of dog bag dispensers
- the purchase of signage
- the purchase or rental of CCTV cameras

The grant **can** cover expenses such as:

- The purchase of bags for dog bag dispensers if dispensers are already installed at are under the care of the group.
- The expense of litter disposal resulting from litter picks and the expense of disposal of rubbish from public street bins which are under the guardianship of the community group.
- Awareness events highlighting the issue of litter and dog fouling in your local community.

The application process will open on **Monday 8th of April** and applications can be accessed via our website: [Environment - Kilkenny County Council \(kilkennycoco.ie\)](https://www.kilkennycoco.ie) or by contacting Deirdre.traid@kilkennycoco.ie

Deadline for applications is the 24th of May, 2024.

WASTE

Enforcement – Waste

In Q1 2024, 130 households were written to, to provide information about their household waste management in particular their use of the “3 bin system”. The focus from our Regional Enforcement Office will be on the provision of the 3 bin system to all householders and commercial premises in the county in 2024. This project will also emphasise the importance of good separation of the various waste streams of recycling, food waste and municipal non-recyclable materials.

Kilkenny County Council continues its commitment in 2024 to ensuring compliance with all environmental regulations and has several active cases before the courts.

Bring Banks Usage

The Council provides and manages 46 Bring Centers across the City and County. A total of 517 tonnes of recyclables were collected from our Bring Centers so far in 2024. This represents a 2% decrease to the prior year during the same period. Aldi, Kilkenny City (13 tonnes collected), Loughboy Shopping Centre, Kilkenny City (11 tonnes collected), and Lidl Johnswell, Kilkenny City (11 tonnes collected) are the busiest locations in the City. Aldi, Ferrybank (12 tonnes collected) and Callan (8 tonnes collected) are the busiest outside of the City. Environment staff are continuing to work very closely with our service providers to ensure the collection service is in keeping with demand, especially around long weekends and holiday periods.

Dunmore Civic Amenity Site

In March 2024 148 tonnes of Municipal Solid Waste and 66 tonnes of Municipal Dry Waste collected. The various recycling streams deposited at the Dunmore facility during the month of March and their respective tonnages can be seen in the below table.

Recycling Stream	Quantity (Tonnes)
Cardboard	5.8
Plastic	4.6
Paper	7.0
Glass Bottles & Cans	4.9
Food Waste.....	1.2
Mattresses.....	4.3
Metal	11.2
Timber.....	8.2
Textiles.....	1.3
Tetra-pac.....	0.3
Waste Oil.....	0.6
WEEE	14.2



The Dunmore Site continues to provide an excellent and essential service to the greater Kilkenny community and has cemented its place as one of Kilkenny County Council’s leading service providers with the addition of the Kilkenny Countryside Park on the closed Landfill site. This combined amenity has seen many recycling conscious people combine their trip to the Dunmore CAS with a healthy walk in the Countryside Park during March 2024.

AIR NOISE WATER

Water

Inspections are ongoing with regards to Agricultural & Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems in the County in order to reach our RMCEI targets for 2024. We will also be conducting call backs in the coming months on inspections carried out in 2023 to ensure issues around non compliances have been rectified.

Air Quality

The Environment Section will start a media campaign with regards to air quality in the County and how we can improve it. The burning of fossil fuels releases particulate matter emitting an array of pollutants that reduce air quality and harm life, especially Sulphur Dioxide, Nitrogen Oxides, and airborne particles such as soot.

Air pollution harms our health



Air pollution increases the risk of cardiovascular and heart disease, stroke, asthma, lung cancer and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and many more.

It leads to hundreds of thousands of premature deaths in Europe, and billions of Euros in health costs.

In conjunction with the Enforcement Team in Environment, the EAO is coordinating a targeted campaign throughout the City and County on air quality and the continued use of smoky coals. The campaign seeks to raise awareness amongst the wider public, stakeholders, businesses and schools about the health and environmental impacts of poor air quality and the ways individuals can help reduce pollution. This will be a 4-6 week campaign commencing the week of the 15th of April 2024.

Noise Action Plan Round 4

The Environment Section is currently in consultation with other sections in the Council on selecting priority sites for inclusion in Round 4 of the Noise Action Plan. Links to EPA Noise Mapping in County Kilkenny can be located using the following link <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/>.

Environment Complaints

All Environmental complaints received are logged on the CRM (Customer Relations Management) System. The number of complaints that have been received and logged for March 2024 is 74 compared to 79 for the same period last year. The nature of these complaints ranged from littering, illegal dumping, burning of waste and abandoned cars. The majority continue to be related to littering and illegal dumping. Whilst every effort is made to bring unacceptable environmental practice into compliance, Environment Enforcement staff continue to manage significant enforcement cases progressing through prosecution cases.

Burial Grounds

The closing date for the Graveyard Grants Scheme 2024 was Friday 1st March, 2024. There have been 57 applications received. Each application will be assessed by the Environment Section in the coming weeks.

The grant may contribute towards the cost of:

- Graveyard maintenance, including appropriate works to help pollinators.
- Graveyard recording schemes.
- Heritage studies of graveyards.
- Costs associated with providing Public Liability Insurance.

Community Monuments Fund (CMF)

The Environment Section of have submitted Community Monument Fund Applications for Stream 1,2 & 3 projects in 2024.

The Community Monuments Fund has 3 Streams:

Stream 1 will offer grants up to €100,000 aimed at essential repairs and capital works for the conservation and repair of archaeological monuments.

Stream 2 will offer grants of up to €30,000 for development of Conservation Management Plans/Reports that are aimed at identifying measures for conservation of archaeological monuments and improving public access.

Stream 3 will offer grants of up to €30,000 for enhancement of access infrastructure and interpretation (including virtual/online) at archaeological monuments.

Stream 1 CMF application are as follows:

- Grangefertagh Historic Church and Graveyard (Stage 2)
- Tubrid Historic Church and Graveyard
- Rathpatrick Church & Graveyard

Stream 2 CMF application are as follows:

- Kellymount Historic Church and Graveyard
- Clara Historic Church and Graveyard
- Castleinch Historic Church and Graveyard

Stream 3 CMF application are as follows:

- Garryduff Graveyard
- Cloghabrody Graveyard

Animal Welfare

Kilkenny County Council recently held its fourteenth meeting of the Animal Welfare Standards Committee. This Committee meets on a quarterly basis. The role of the Committee is to promote responsible animal ownership, improve animal welfare, reduce the number of horses and dogs to sustainable levels and change behaviour.

JJ Tobin Veterinary Officer continues to carry out monthly inspections at the Dog Shelter to ensure the site is operating efficiently and effectively. Four horses have been impounded to date this year.

PARKS & SPECIAL PROJECTS

Outdoor Recreational Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) - Funding Announcement

In addition to the 2 Project Development applications allocated funding under the 2023 ORIS Call, the following five applications were also successful under our Measure 1 submission:

Measure	Project Name	Description of Works	Grant	Match Fund	Total
Measure 1	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 the 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	€3,300	€33,000
Measure 1	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	€3,300	€33,000
Measure 1	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	€3,300	€33,000
Measure 1	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	€3,300	€33,000
Measure 1	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	€3,300	€33,000

South East Greenway

Lot 5a Ferrybank to Curraghmore

Glas Civil Engineering Ltd. commenced works on Lot 5A (c.5.5km section from Ferrybank to Curraghmore) last November and works continue to advance to schedule. Works have now also recommenced at Glenmore Carpark and fencing has also started along this section. Works at a number of agricultural crossing locations are also underway and the anticipated contract completion date remains the end of this year.

The Project Landowner Liaison Officer is continuing to engage with landowners adjoining the Greenway in relation to boundary treatment and crossing points. The parameters for these discussions are set out within the Charter for South East Greenway Accommodation Works.



Technical Consultants

The tender for the provision of Technical Services for a multi-disciplinary engineering consultancy team has been reissued using the Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) Framework and the return date for tenders was 8th April. It is expected to have a technical advisor appointed in late May.

Land Acquisition from Córas Iompair Éireann (CIÉ)

Legal contracts are now finalised and signed by the Local Authority and returned to CIE to conclude the acquisition of the lands along the abandoned rail corridor.

Woodstock (Inistioge) to South East Greenway Link

The appointment of RPS Consulting Engineers (RPS) as lead consultant for the delivery of the Inistioge to South East Greenway Link was marked in Woodstock Gardens on the 27th March. In attendance at the event were the Cathaoirleach of Kilkenny County Council, Cllr. Michael Doyle, RPS Senior Management, Officials from Transport Infrastructure Ireland, TII and the Council's Capital Delivery Office. On the day, Cathaoirleach Cllr. Michael Doyle, expressed his delight that this project was progressing into the next phase, noting that same would be transformative in terms of the tourist offering for not just Woodstock and Inistioge but the whole of Kilkenny and the wider South East region. The Cathaoirleach added that the realisation of this project would really add scale to the impressive recreational infrastructure currently being delivered under the South East Greenway and he thanked TII for their support for both projects.

The Technical Consultancy Services Contract awarded to RPS provides for feasibility, route selection and the progression of the preferred option through planning. The contract period to deliver the prescribed services is 49 months and regular updates will be provided to Council through the Chief Executive's Report.



Callan Heritage Trail

A new heritage trail was recently completed in Callan that provides a coherent, informative and attractive experience for both locals and visitors alike. It showcases the rich heritage of the town and its many historical sites some of which date back to the 13th Century. The project was progressed in partnership with Kilkenny LEADER Partnership and Callan Macra na Feirme. The trail commences at the Fairgreen, thereafter taking in 12 points of interest across the town, with information provided across 10 interpretive panels. This project was conceived locally and the information provided by the Callan Heritage Society was really appreciated as it added so much richness to the story of Callan told through this new trail.



Callan Heritage



Trail

Playgrounds



New multi-use play-tower Graiguenamanagh

Enhancement works and repairs were carried out in a number of playgrounds across the City and County during the month of March. Some of the works included the replacement of old seating in Mooncoin with age -friendly benches, the replacement of zip-wire components in Ferrybank, in Graiguenamanagh an old timber unit was replaced with a new multi-play tower along with associated tiger mulch soft surfacing, upgrades to the sand pit area and the installation of new signage including an autism friendly communication board were also carried out, a new bridge was installed within the large multi-play tower unit in Callan and a new footpath was installed to improve the access into the playground in Kells.

Works to construct the new all-weather Multi-use Games Area in Ferrybank Neighbourhood Park are nearing completion. This new amenity is expected to be open in early May. This project is being funded through a combination of Sports Capital specific development contributions and the Council’s own funds.



New MUGA Ferrybank Park

Amenity Grants



A budget of €140,000 was provided for the 2024 Amenity Grant Scheme. The closing date for applications was the 31st of March. In total 176 applications were received and assessed and recommendations will go before the Council at the April plenary meeting for the consideration of the Elected Members. The scope of works that can be applied for under the scheme include tree planting, grass cutting, shrub and flower planting, erecting signage and many other amenity projects that enhance local areas. Again this year it is evident and welcomed that the number of groups making efforts to manage their areas in a more sustainable way to encourage biodiversity is increasing.

Grass Maintenance

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

In recent years the Parks Department has made significant changes to the grass cutting regime and where possible traditional fortnightly cycles of mowing grass short is replaced with longer mowing cycles to encourage pollinators. This is particularly important at this time of year as some of our pollinators are emerging from hibernation and the Dandelion is a key source of food for them. These pollinator areas are mainly on embankments, wide road verges and in bigger residential areas with large green spaces. The latter is achievable with buy-in and support from local resident committees and Tidy Town Groups etc.

PLANNING

Development Management

Planning Summary	Total at End March		
	2023	2024	Change
Planning Applications Received	82	68	-14
Planning Applications Granted	51	55	+4
Planning Applications Refused	10	8	-2
Complaints Received	22	38	+16
Warning Letters Issued	18	27	+9
Enforcements Notices Issued	11	11	
Cases Closed	14	27	+13

FORWARD PLANNING

Masterplans:

Abbey Quarter

A variation to the Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021 - 2027 (CDP) is required to incorporate the Abbey Quarter Masterplan User Guide into the CDP. The Variation will require approval by the elected members. The publication can be accessed at:

<https://www.kilkennycoco.ie/eng/services/planning/development-plans/abbey-quarter-brewery-site/review-of-abbey-quarter-masterplan-2023/>

St Canice's Campus

A draft masterplan has been completed and the necessary environmental reports are currently being prepared. It is anticipated that the draft masterplan and environmental documents will be presented to the Kilkenny City Municipal District members shortly, before being placed on public

display for a round of public consultation. The environmental documents are currently being finalised to allow publication.

Ballyragget/Paulstown/Kilmacow

Masterplans are also being prepared for the settlements of Ballyragget, Paulstown and Kilmacow. Three public meetings, one for each town, have taken place. The feedback / inputs from these meetings have been incorporated into the draft Masterplans. The draft masterplans for Ballyragget and Paulstown will be presented to elected members at the March Castlecomer MD meeting and the draft masterplan for Kilmacow will be presented at the April Piltown MD meeting, prior to the draft masterplans being placed on public display for a 4 week period. Walk in public meetings will also be scheduled for each settlement during the public display period.

Local Area Plans

Consultants have now been appointed and the new LAP is expected to be in place by Q1 2025. An issues paper will be prepared as part of the public consultation, along with the preparation of environmental reports in advance of publication of the draft plan.

Cluster Housing Design Guidelines for Co. Kilkenny

Consultants, Place +Urbanism Ltd, have been appointed to carry out Cluster Housing Design Guidelines for County Kilkenny. An induction meeting was held with the consultants and the council in February and currently they are at the initial stages of gathering data and drawing up a format for the document. A draft document for public consultation will be ready by the end of Q2 2024.

Taking in Charge

The following estates have been advertised for taking in charge:

- Harrowville, Leggettsrath, Kilkenny
- Hillview, Bennettsbridge, Co Kilkenny

Active Land Management

A Draft Annual Map of lands in scope for the new Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT) was published on the 31st January 2024. The first submission period has now closed, and 8 submissions were received on inclusions or exclusions to the land in scope for the tax. The second submission period, for landowners to make requests regarding a rezoning of their land, is still open until the 31st May.

There are 23 Vacant Sites on the Vacant Sites Register, and the number of cancelled entries due to site activation or improvement is 24. The Vacant site levy will be replaced by the Residential Zoned Land Tax from 2025, but any outstanding levies will remain due to the Council.

Conservation

The Conservation Office manages all protected structures in Kilkenny County and City. These structures are recognised for 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.

Built Heritage Investment Scheme: Confirmation from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage that the 16 projects submitted by Kilkenny County Council will be supported to the value of €179,750. These successful owners will now be engaged to commence the projects.

Historic Structures Fund: Four applications were forwarded to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage for consideration. Following the Department’s assessment, three of these four applications will be supported as follows:

- St. Aidan's Church, Kilmanagh.....€20,000
- Farmhouse, Gaulstown, Rathmoyle€10,000
- Woodstock House, Inistioge.....€178,890

These successful owners will now be engaged to commence the projects.

Building Control

Valid commencement notices (CNs) submitted so far this year: 116 CNs have been received in the first 3 months of 2024 compared to just 31 CNs for the same period last year, representing an almost fourfold increase.

Valid Commencement Notices Received:
 March 2024..... 116
 March 2023..... 62
 March 2022..... 105
 March 2021..... 77

Disability Access Applications Received:
 March 2024..... 14
 March 2023..... 7
 March 2022..... 21
 March 2021 11

Town Regeneration Office

Town Centre First

The Council nominated Castlecomer, Callan and Mooncoin for funding to the value of €10,000 in each case for Town Team Support under Town Centre First funding. A decision is awaited from the Department. This funding is to cover costs relating to capacity building training and health check process.

Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant

The Vacant Homes Officer has been reassigned to the Town Regeneration Office (TRO) since January this year. All new applications for the vacant property refurbishment grant since the end of January are now being managed in the Town Regeneration Office, while the Housing staff will continue to deal with the applications they had on hand. The following are the full statistics for the month of March:

Vacant Prop Refurbishment Grant as at March 31st 2024	
Number of Applications Submitted to date	133
Number of Approvals/ Approvals in Principle to date	93
Grant Drawdown to date	4
Number of Queries during the month of March	28

Derelict Sites

The TRO have progressed CPO’s at 3 locations to Vesting Order stage. Properties are located at:

- Chapel Street, Mooncoin
- Lower Bridge Street, Callan
- Market Street & Low Street, Thomastown

National Enterprise Awards



A Kilkenny City based software business, MindaClient will represent County Kilkenny at the National Enterprise Awards. This long established export business has been nominated to represent Kilkenny at the 24th National Enterprise Awards which will be held in the Round Room at the Mansion House, Dublin on May 23rd. The operation has grown from Directors Brian Kelly and Robert Downes to now having nine full time employees.

MindaClient is a Kilkenny based software platform that provides tailored solutions to businesses and organisations. Their key products are Scholarship

management, Counselling software systems, tailored CRM solutions.

Local Enterprise Week 2024

Local Enterprise Week is organised annually by the 31 Local Enterprise Offices across the country. This year Local Enterprise Week took place from Monday, 4th March to Friday, 8th March.

Kilkenny events included:

- one to one mentoring clinics on social media marketing and finance;
- seminars on business sustainability,
- exploring business opportunities outside of Ireland and
- running a business in inflationary times.

LEO also organised a LEAN in Action site visit to Adman Steel Sheds.

Broadband/ Digital Update

Digital Strategy Consultants Ltd. have completed an internal report on the digital audit of assets, services and processes within Kilkenny County Council which is the first step in preparing a 3-year Digital Strategy for Kilkenny. 'Digital Champions' from each service area within KCC have been engaging in the consultation process and their feedback forms a key part of the findings which will influence the customer focused, citizen centred approach on the digital transformation of public services. The interim report was presented to Members of the SPC 1 Committee. The final report will be completed mid -April.

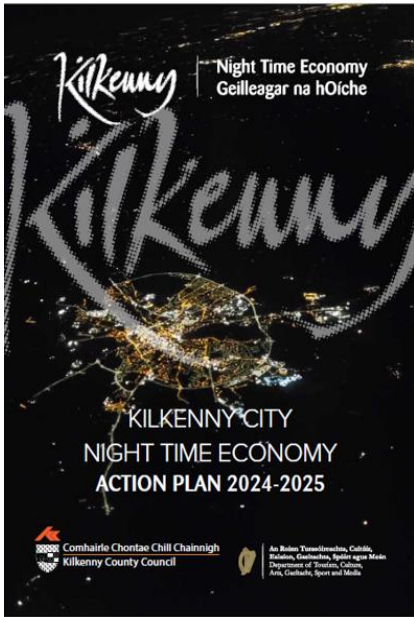
The second phase of the process in the development of a Digital Strategy for the citizens of County Kilkenny. A Consultant has been appointed and will carry out a stakeholder engagement process over the coming months with the final Digital Strategy due to be completed in July 2024.



Generative AI Skills for Job Initiative

The first 'Generative AI Skills for Job Initiative' took place in We Do Workspaces, Kilkenny on Wednesday 20th March (*one day certified training course*). This is a Microsoft Philanthropies Ireland funded initiative in partnership with LinkedIn and delivered by Fast Track into Technology (FIT). There were 12 participants who successfully completed this training course and received certification. The next course is planned for May 2024.

Night Time Economy (NTE)



The draft Night Time Economy Action Plan was finalised and presented to Members of the Economic Development, Enterprise Support, Tourism and Planning & Development SPC and was subsequently adopted. A formal launch of the Action Plan will take place in April and the implementation phase of the plan will commence.

The funding application made by the Tourism Officer and the Night Time Economy Advisor to the Rural Innovation & Development Fund for the establishment of a night market at this year's Savour Festival was successful and planning for the night market has commenced.

As Kilkenny is a pilot city for the night time economy, additional funding of €15,000 has also been allocated from the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media for additional night time events for Cruinniú na nOg in June and Culture Night Late in September. The NTE Advisor has met with the Creative Communities Engagement Officer and the Arts Officer in relation to planning for both of these.

Tourism



Kilkennys' Tourism Team are planning for Summer Seasons ahead and continue with plans to welcome visitors to Kilkenny to enjoy all the City and County has to offer.

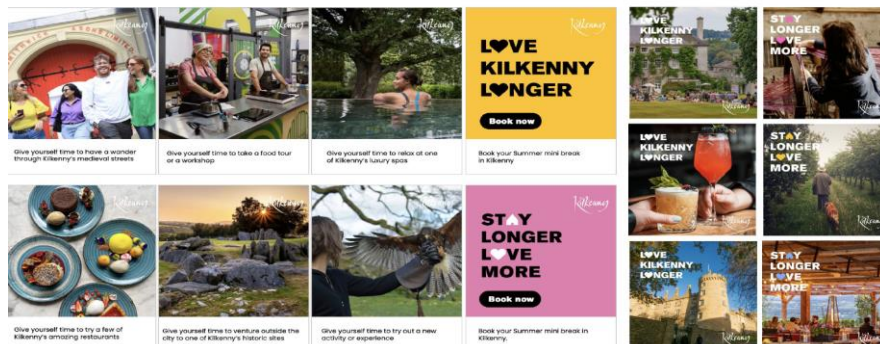
The events calendar for 2024 highlights all Kilkenny County Council supported festivals and at a glance shows our visitors that the County is a year-round destination with something to experience whenever they plan a visit.

All the festivals are supported through our festivals grant scheme with additional supports provided by the Council by way of marketing, PR and also safety and signage at festivals.

Kilkenny Tourism and visitkilkenny.ie

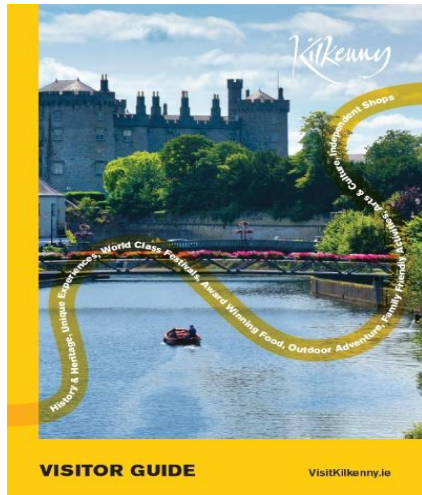
Kilkenny Tourism continued its work in preparing Kilkenny's marketing and PR plans for 2024. To support the destination in the run up to high season, the group switched on "Love Kilkenny Longer" campaign on 26th March to continue to support the sector to attract visitors to Kilkenny for their summer holidays with a key call to action to guests to stay longer in the City and County.

SUMMER CAMPAIGN VISUALS

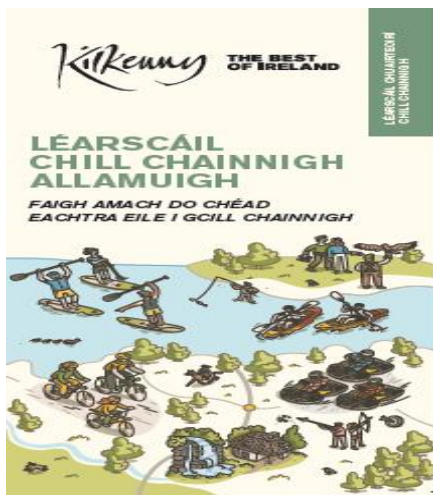


CAMPAIGN SLOGANS

- What's the rush?
- Stay A While
- Love for Longer
- Love Kilkenny Longer
- Stay Longer. Do More.
- Stay Longer. Love More.
- Give yourself time
- Stay for longer, delve a bit deeper.



Work will commence in the coming weeks on an “Outdoor Kilkenny” promotion with a new digital campaign and the now completed Outdoor Kilkenny map that features many Outdoor Recreational activities in the County.



Kilkenny's new Visitor Guide has also been designed and will be available for all businesses in the sector to use for promotional material throughout the season.

Failte Ireland Partnership

Kilkenny County Council continues to work closely with Failte Ireland to continue to develop and deliver exceptional visitor experiences and activity in Kilkenny as we move forward. Kilkenny's Destination Experience Development Plan for Kilkenny City and County will formally

launch on 30th April by Failte Ireland and will provide a roadmap for continued investment in our Tourism Sector development for the next 5 years.

COMMUNITY & CULTURE

Community and Cultural Facilities Capital Scheme (CCFCS) 2024

The 2024 Community and Cultural Facilities Capital Scheme is now open, with a closing date for receipt of valid applications by 12 noon on Friday 10th May 2024.

The objective of this scheme is to respond to the need for better community, recreational and cultural facilities for community groups through the provision of a capital grant.

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

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

Level of grant aid available is at a rate of 75% of the total eligible project costs up to a maximum of €45,000. The grant beneficiary will have to provide the remaining 25% match funding.



*Urlingford Remote Working Hub
Example of a project that has received CCFCS
funding*

Commercial Premises Paint Scheme 2024

The vision of this scheme is to assist with the cost of painting the front façade of buildings and traditional signage throughout the County. The scheme will offer a grant of €450 or 50% of the cost of the work – whichever is the lesser – to each commercial applicant who is successful in the application process. Applications are invited from owners and/or occupiers of Commercial Properties (or any person who with the written consent of the owner/s). The scheme was advertised in the Kilkenny People and is on Kilkenny County Council’s website. It is also on Page 36-37 of the Grants Booklet for 2024.

The closing date for receipt of applications for the above scheme is Friday 3rd May, 2024.

Kilkenny Women in Politics

The Community Department hosted an event in the Council Chamber on 7th March 2024 to celebrate and promote Kilkenny Women in Politics, highlighting the gender imbalance for female politicians. This event aimed to highlight some of the challenges of increasing the number of women in local politics. The panel discussions were informative and aimed to encourage more women and people from diverse backgrounds to participate in Local Government. This event was hosted in association with See Her Elected to mark International Women’s Day 2024. Dr Michelle Maher, Programme Manager with See Her Elected, the award-winning Government funded project which supports women in rural constituencies to become County Councillors noted that there was a much lower percentage of female Councillors in rural counties compared to more urban centres around Dublin.

Cllr Mary Hilda Cavanagh, the country’s longest serving continuously elected female County Councillor celebrates 50 years as a public representative this year and she was one of the chosen guest speakers for the event. Cllr. Deirdre Cullen, Cllr. Fidelis Doherty, Cllr. Maria Dollard along with Deputy Kathleen Funchion TD were also guest speakers.

A second panel discussion also took place on diverse pathways into politics with a panel of women from a range of communities in County Kilkenny including Helena Power, a representative of the Traveller Community, Pearl Jensen of Comhairle na nÓg, Nicoleta Choiran, Chairperson of the Intercultural group, Twilight

Community Group and Mary Fennelly a member of the Kilkenny Access Group.



Attendees of the Women in Politics event





are bonding over shared experiences, finding strength and support in one another.

The first pilot programme will conclude in May 2024.



Participants of the UcanACT European cancer



BIODIVERSITY

Biodiversity Discussion Paper

The Biodiversity Officer prepared a Discussion Paper on Biodiversity and presented the plan for the formulation of a County Biodiversity Action Plan at the Municipal District Meetings throughout the month of March. In tandem with this, the Biodiversity Officer is identifying different stakeholders and devising a methodology to set up a Biodiversity Working Group, a non-statutory advisory group to provide observations on the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the County's Biodiversity Action Plan.

The Discussion Paper on Biodiversity is now available on <https://consult.kilkenny.ie/> for comment and it's the first stage of the plan preparation process.

Biodiversity Week 2024

Plans are underway to prepare an exciting schedule of events for National Biodiversity Week. It takes place from May 17th - 26th aiming to spark people's curiosity, inspire action for biodiversity and foster a connection with our natural heritage. Co-ordinated by the Irish Environmental Network, with funding from National Parks and Wildlife Service Kilkenny County Council in collaboration with the Heritage Council is delighted to be able to support the week by organising a series of events county wide to tie in with the County's Citizen Science Programme titled "Bugs, Bats and Bee's" which is running throughout the year thanks to the funding provided under the Local Biodiversity Action Fund by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Events will include gardening and composting talks; family friendly nature walks, a

UcanACT European Cancer Prevention Exercise Program

The UcanACT European cancer prevention exercise program for over 50's in Kilkenny started its first pilot programme in March. The programme is being managed through the Healthy Ireland coordinator and the Community Section of Kilkenny County Council. A team of four skilled physiotherapists lead a comprehensive exercise regimen aimed at assisting in cancer prevention, supporting treatment and facilitating recovery.

Twice a week, participants gather at two locations in the City, James Green Square and Newpark Marsh Park, each session offering a unique blend of outdoor activities under the expert guidance of the physiotherapists, attendees engaged in a diverse array of exercises tailored to their individual needs and capabilities.

The programme's impact extends beyond physical exercise, fostering a sense of community and camaraderie among participants. Individuals

moth identification mini-workshop and bat walks in a number of locations throughout the county.

HERITAGE

Funding awarded for County Heritage Plan Grant 2024

Kilkenny County Council has been awarded €37,500 under the Heritage Council County Heritage Plan grant. This will fund a Heritage Awareness and Engagement Campaign to support the priorities of the Heritage Office and a Data Collection Programme to conduct Phase 2 of the Kilkenny Holy Wells Survey and Phase 2 of the Kilkenny Mass Paths Survey.



Kenny's Well

Public Commemoration Fund 2024

Kilkenny County Council received an allocation of €15,000 from the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media under the new Public Commemoration Programme. This programme follows on from the highly successful Decade of Centenaries Programme.

Irish Walled Towns Network Strategy 2024-2028

The Irish Walled Towns Network annual general meeting was held in Trim recently and the new Irish Walled Towns Network Strategy 2024-2028 was launched. The new strategy is available on The Heritage Council website - <https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/content/files/IWTN-Strategy-2024-2028.pdf>

National Heritage Week Training & Networking events

National Heritage Week 2024 will take place from 17th - 25th August 2024. This year celebrates the theme of "Connections, Routes & Networks". Training & Networking events are taking place in Dublin, Sligo and Limerick. These events are designed to provide valuable insights, knowledge and tips to create successful Heritage Week events. To learn more and register on the Heritage

Week website: <https://www.heritageweek.ie/get-involved/training-days-for-organisers>



The poster for National Heritage Week Training & Networking Days features a purple and white color scheme. It includes the National Heritage Week logo (a stylized 'H' with three swirls) and the text 'National Heritage Week A Heritage Council programme'. The poster lists three events: '26th April | Dublin The Dublin Royal Convention Centre', '9th May | Sligo Sligo Park Hotel', and '16th May | Limerick Absolute Hotel'. A central image shows a group of people in a meeting room. A purple button in the bottom right corner says 'Register on heritageweek.ie'.

ARTS

Poetry Broadsheet

A poetry workshop took place on the 16th March, 2024 in Butler House facilitated by Broadsheet Editor James Harpur. A total of twelve poets participated in the workshop. There was very positive feedback received from participants in their evaluations.

The deadline for Kilkenny poets to submit their poems for consideration to be published in the Broadsheet was Friday 29th March, 2024. A total of 58 poets submitted 107 poems. Editor James Harpur is in the process of making his selection to be included in this year's publication.

Creative Futures Academy Bursaries

The Arts Office joined forces with Creative Futures Academy (CFA) to offer bursaries this Spring to Kilkenny based artists seeking to gain new qualifications and skills to expand and develop 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 five applicants were awarded bursaries of a total amount of €5,100.

Performing Arts / Theatre Bursaries

The Arts Office put out an open call to Kilkenny based professional and amateur theatre practitioners to avail of two different bursaries; Drama League of Ireland Summer School and Theatre Forum's, 'The Gathering'. Drama League of Ireland Summer School supports an artist to attend a one-week course with the bursary covering course fees, including tuition, single

room en-suite accommodation, meals and social programme. A total of seven applications were received and are currently being assessed.

Theatre Forum's 'The Gathering' bursary supports an artist to attend the Theatre Forum's 'Gathering'; a landmark event in the performing arts 2024 calendar. The event will take place in Sligo on the 28th and 29th of May. The sessions are a mix of inspirational and practical and the event will provide significant networking opportunities. Coffee breaks, lunches, dinner, artistic programme and sessions are included in the bursary. A total of four applications were received and they are currently being assessed.

Professional Development Opportunities for Artists.

Music

A series of Professional development sessions will be hosted for new and emerging musicians giving them the opportunities to gain valuable insights from experienced musicians and industry professionals, practiced at navigating the challenging journey of music production, touring, and career development.



The poster features a blue background with a white treble clef on the left and a microphone icon on the right. A green banner with the word 'DEVELOPMENT' is prominent. The text lists four sessions: 'TUES 9TH APRIL - RICHIE EGAN TALK: THE CREATIVE PROCESS', 'WEDS 17TH APRIL - BRIAN BRADLEY OF MCD PRODUCTIONS TALK: A GUIDE TO FESTIVALS & TOURING', 'WEDS 24TH APRIL - MATTHEW NOLAN TALK: MARKETING & AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT', and 'WED 1ST MAY - NICK ROTH OF DIATRIBE TALK: RECORDED MUSIC IN THE DIGITAL AGE'. It also includes the venue 'CLEERE'S BAR, KILKENNY 6:00PM - 7:30PM', ticket prices 'TICKETS €7 | 2 FOR €10 OR 4 FOR €20', and the booking email 'EMAILKATHY.CONLAN@KILKENNYCOCO.IE'.

All Art Forms

Workshops for artists working with children and young people has been finalised. For artists of all artforms this series of workshops will allow them to learn from others, gain valuable skills and connect with like-minded artists.

Expert facilitator and life coach, Anne Tannam will run a series of practical and interactive workshops that will give artists the skills, knowledge, and confidence needed to deliver excellent creative workshops.

In collaboration with PRAXIS The artists Union of Ireland an online webinar ran on March 5th 2024 which covered the following topics; What is an artist's union, how does a union effect change in the Arts? What does collective power look like? How can artists lift themselves and each other out of poverty? Why do artists need a union now more than ever? A total of 12 people attended the webinar.

Literature

The Your Voice Matters programme has been launched and will include a combination of online and in-person activities across 2024.

The aims of the programme are to:

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

Rhyme Rag

Thirty-two poems were received following very successful school-based workshops. These poems have been submitted to Rhyme Rag editor Colm Keegan for selection. Publishing of poems will begin in mid-April.



The poster features a yellow and blue background with the 'Rhyme Rag' logo in a stylized font. Below the logo, it says 'COLM KEEGAN' and 'Rhyme Rag 2024 Editor'. A photo of Colm Keegan is shown with his arms crossed. Text below the photo states 'Colm Keegan will be selecting poems to be published on Rhyme Rag in April'. The Arts Office Kilkenny County Council logo is at the bottom left.

The Art of Change

An exciting programme of Climate Action based workshops have been finalised for young people

which will begin on April 9th 2024. The aim of the programme is to empower young people in exploring environmental and climate action topics through different artforms. By igniting and fueling young people's interest in environmental and climate issues, the project hopes to provide them with another way of approaching big issues while also giving them an understanding of the impact art can have. The project will offer young people a chance to be part of a supportive community in which they can explore a variety of art practices together with professional artists.



Community Arts Programme

The first phase of the Waste Not Want Not Climate Action Programme has been completed and planning for phase two is afoot. The programme aims to support individuals and local communities to understand and appreciate the personal power they have to undertake actions that will help to alleviate and the support the Climate crisis. The project is focussed on ensuring that activities encourage discussion, the sharing of ideas, peer learning and practical and creative solutions to over consumption.

The feedback from phase one has been immensely positive and it is very evident that there is a huge appetite for this knowledge in the community.

Creative Ireland

During March, letters of offers were sent to successful applicants for the Creative Ireland and Cruinniú na nÓg applications for 2024. Two webinars were held on the 13th of March to support these groups. These were well attended, with 35 groups in attendance. Creative Kilkenny was successful in the application for additional funding from Creative Ireland for the 'Live Music in Retirement Homes grant'. A consultation

process will take place with 5 Retirement Homes participating, which will inform the planning of the programme which will be led by Gerald Peregrine. The proposed visits will run between April and November 2024 and feature 4 separate well known soloists on each visit. Within the proposed budget the Mobile Music Machine will be able to provide four visits to five different care homes.

Gerald is an Irish cellist, having pioneered the original concept has the appropriate capacity and skills to provide an exceptional programme. He was responsible for establishing the 'Care Concerts' (formerly known as Covid Care Concerts), which was established in May 2020, in response to the pandemic. The project delivered over 2,000 live musical performances in residential care homes, hospitals, day care centres and mental health settings throughout the country.

SPC 5 - Community, Culture & Fire Services

On the 14th March 2024, the SPC 5 - Community, Culture & Fire Services visited and received a tour of the new Mayfair Library.



Majella Keating, Anne Marie Shortall, John Collins, Julie Kavanagh, Cllr. John Brennan, Cllr. Pat Dunphy, Aisling Kelly, Cllr. John Coonan & Ashling Slattery



Cllr. Pat Dunphy, Josephine Coyne, Anne Marie Shortall, Cllr. John Brennan, Julie Kavanagh, Cllr. John Coonan, Majella Keating, John Collins and Ashling Slattery

HOUSING

The Directorate of Housing incorporates a wide range of services for applicants and tenants to facilitate and support the provision of independent and supported accommodation.

Affordable Homes:

Applications to open for 45 new Affordable Homes in Kilkenny:

- 35 at Nyne Park, Callan Road
- 10 at Cluain Glasan, Granges Road

Kilkenny County Council working in partnership with Developers Cairn & Glenveagh Homes Ltd. and the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage is delighted to launch the first two schemes of Affordable Homes in Kilkenny City under the Local Authority Affordable Purchase Scheme.

The Cairn development comprising a mix of A-rated 3-bedroom homes is located at Nyne Park, Callan Road. Homes will become available on a phased basis from Q2 to Q4 of this year. Successful applicants will be able to avail of up to €90,000 reduction on the full market price, depending on the price of the property and the applicant's own financial circumstances.



House Type	Number of Houses	Floor Area Sqm	Market Value	Minimum Affordable Purchase Price	Maximum Affordable Purchase Price	Gross Income Threshold*
3 Bed Mid Terrace	17	117.25	€345,000	€255,000	€327,750	€73,744
3 Bed End Terrace	16	117	€360,000	€270,000	€342,000	€76,950
3 Bed End Terrace Side Entrance	1	118.5	€365,000	€270,000	€346,750	€78,019
3 Bed Semi-Detached	1	115	€345,000	€255,000	€327,750	€73,744
	35					



The Glenveagh development comprising a mix of A-rated 3-bedroom homes is located at Cluain Glasan, Granges Road. These homes are ready to go. Successful applicants will be able to avail of up to €75,000 reduction on the full market price, depending on the price of the property and the applicant's own financial circumstances.

House Type	Number of Houses	Floor Area Sqm	Market Value	Minimum Affordable Purchase Price	Maximum Affordable Purchase Price	Gross Income Threshold*
3 Bed Mid Terrace	1	95.90	€330,000	€255,000	€313,500	€70,538
3 Bed End Terrace	1	95.90	€345,000	€270,000	€327,750	€73,744
3 Bed Semi-Detached	8	96.40	€365,000	€290,000	€346,750	€78,019
	10					

The houses in both Schemes are generally targeted at first-time buyers (exceptions apply) who need assistance bridging the gap between their own available funds (including the Help to Buy scheme), the mortgage that they can obtain and the cost of the new home.

Making these homes available for sale at discounted prices has been facilitated through the Affordable Housing Fund (AHF) which is a subsidy provided by the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage to Local Authorities as a direct subvention on housing development costs.

Under the Affordable Purchase Scheme managed by Kilkenny County Council eligible buyers will be able to purchase their own new home by availing of this shared equity scheme. Under the Scheme, Kilkenny County Council will retain an equity share and successful applicants have the option of buying out this share over time. Equity shares are calculated on an individual basis and are linked to an applicant's income, their savings and their mortgage capacity.

Applications can only be made online via the dedicated application portal accessible via the Council's Website. There is an Individual online application portal for each scheme as follows:

Nyne Park: <https://kilkennycoco.ie/nyne-park>

Cluain Glasan <https://kilkennycoco.ie/cluain-glasan>

The application portal will open for both schemes on Wednesday 24th April at 12 noon and close on Wednesday 22nd May at 12 noon.

Potential applicants are being advised to familiarise themselves with the eligibility criteria and to compile the requisite documents to complete their applications subject to them meeting the qualifying criteria. Full information is available at <https://www.kilkennycoco.ie>

It is expected that demand will be high for these homes. It is strongly recommended applicants have Mortgage Approval in Principle prior to applying for this scheme, as applicants will be required to demonstrate their capacity to purchase. Only valid applications (i.e. applications with all required documentation submitted) will go forward for assessment. Applications which are incomplete or those not accompanied by the required documentation will be deemed invalid.

The Council is organising a number of clinics over the coming weeks where interested individuals can meet with the Affordable Housing Team to discuss any queries they may have in relation to this scheme.

The clinics will take place at Hoban Hotel from 4pm to 8pm on the following dates:



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

- Thursday 11th April; Monday 15th April.
- Tuesday 16th April; Monday 22nd April.

The team will also be available on Thursday April 18th from 2.00 p.m. to 4.30 p.m. at the Council Housing Offices at John's Green, Kilkenny.

It is expected that there will be high demand for these clinics so it is important that interested individuals book a time slot in advance to avoid disappointment. Interested parties are asked to email affordablehousing@kilkennycoco.ie to secure their preferred date & time.

If there is any queries in relation to any of the above please email affordablehousing@kilkennycoco.ie and a member of the team will revert back.

HOMELESS SERVICES SUMMARY Feb 2024	
Homeless Presentations	53
Homeless Assessment Outcomes	
Prevention & Interventions	39
Emergency Service	11
Not eligible / Did not avail of service	3
HAP Place Finder Service	
No of Homeless HAP tenancies @ 1 st day of month	128
No of Homeless HAP tenancies created during month	0

No of Homeless HAP tenancies in place @ last day of month	0
Number of Homeless HAP tenancy breakdowns	128
Other Social Housing Tenancies supported/created during month	20
Households in Temporary Emergency Supported Accommodation @ 31st March	35
Households in Temporary Emergency B&B accommodation	5
Households in Temporary Emergency B&B Accommodation that are families	3
Households (<i>singles/couples</i>) in Transition Emergency Accommodation (<i>Own Front Door</i>)	31
Households (Families) in Transition Emergency Accommodation (OFD)	11

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.

SOCIAL HOUSING ASSESSMENT

SOCIAL HOUSING SUPPORT APPLICATION SUMMARY MARCH 2024	
Number awaiting Social Housing Support at March 31 st (<i>Gross Need</i>)	1,537
Number awaiting Social Housing Support at March 31 st (<i>Net Need</i>)	721
Number of Social Housing Applications received in March	66
Number of applications incomplete / awaiting further information / clarification	52
Number of applications validated and ready for assessment during the month	28
Number of applications assessed during March	42
Number of applications awaiting assessment as at March 31 st	59

HAP Summary Year to date 2024	
Total active HAP Tenancies	524
New HAP Tenancies Set Up	20
HAP allocated Social Housing	63
Closed HAP Tenancies	72
HAP Rent Review Amendments	69
HAP Other Tenancy Amendments	235
HAP Calls Received	524

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 March and to date this year:

- LA/RAS/Leasing allocations in March (*offers made*):..... 10
- LA/RAS/Leasing allocations to March (*offers made*):..... 32
- Tenant Liaison Officer cases in March:..... 27
- Maintenance Calls for March:..... 455
- Maintenance Calls year to date:..... 1839

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

PRIVATE HOUSE GRANTS

The amount of €1,991,076, comprising of €1,592,861 (80%) grant and €398,215 (20%) KCC contribution was allocated for 2023. We are awaiting notification of grant allocation for 2024.

Grants Approved & Committed up to 29 th March 2024		
Scheme	Number	Amount
HGD - Housing Adaptation Grant	122	€1,282,601
MAG - Mobility Aid Grant	7	€22,469
HOP - Housing Aid for Older Persons	132	€627,856
Total	261	€1,932,926

Grants Paid out up to 29 th March 2024		
Scheme	Number	Amount
HGD - Housing Adaptation Grant	19	€185,566
MAG - Mobility Aid Grant	1	€3,700
HOP - Housing Aid for Older Persons	35	€150,543
Total	55	€347,809

HOUSING LOANS

The Tenant (*Incremental*) Purchase Scheme 2016, allows local authority tenants to buy their homes has been revised since 29th January 2024. Changes to the scheme are as follows:

- **Minimum Income Requirements:** The minimum income required for an applicant to be eligible to apply under the scheme has been revised from €12,500 to €11,000 per annum. (At least 50% of which must come from a reckonable primary source of income).
- **Primary Sources of Income:** In addition to employment and the State Pension (*Contributory and Non-Contributory*) being considered as primary sources of income, the Widow's, Widower's, Surviving Civil Partner's (*Contributory and Non-Contributory Pension*), Blind Pension, Invalidity Pension and Disability Allowance are now also considered primary sources of income.
- **Time Receiving Social Housing Supports:** The period of time tenants will be required to be in receipt of social housing support to be considered eligible under the scheme remains at 10 consecutive years. However, in the case of joint tenancies only one tenant is now required to have been in receipt of social housing supports for 10 years.
- Income included / not included as a secondary income for assessment
- Changes have been made to income that can be considered and not considered as secondary income when assessing for discount.

Housing Loan Activity 1 st January – 31 st March, 2024					
Loan Type	Received	Approved	Amount Approved	Number Paid	Amount Paid
Local Authority Home Loan	11	4	€570,500	7	€1,053,926
Caravan Loan	0	0	€0.00	0	€0
Total	11	4	€570,500	7	€1,053,926

VOIDS

At the end of March 2024 there were 59 vacant units of local authority accommodation awaiting refurbishment or remediation works. Works are ongoing on this voids maintenance programme and its envisaged that a minimum of 75 units will be completed under this programme during 2024.

Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant as at 31st March, 2024	
Number of Applications Submitted to date	133
Number of Approvals / Approvals in Principle to date	93
Grant Drawdown to date	4
Number of Queries during the month of March	28

Housing Capital Delivery



17 houses under Construction at Ogenty Gowran, proposed turnkey housing project



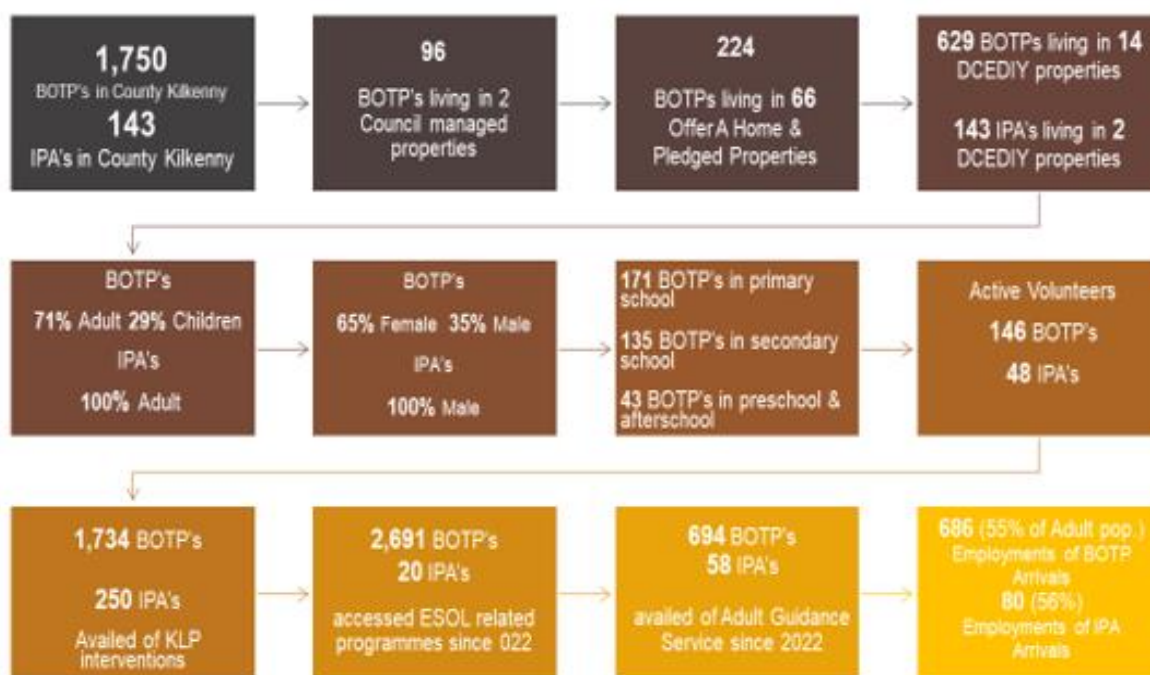
8 x 2 bed Part V apartments under construction at Fox Meadow, Kilkenny



Construction ongoing at Crokers Hill, Kennyswell Road. Due for completion this year.



Community Integration Monitor to 11.04.24



COMMUNITY INTEGRATION FORUM

The role of the Community Integration Forum is to coordinate and provide collaboration across the mainstream services, NGO, community and voluntary organisations for Ukrainian refugees, IP applicants and Those with Status, and where applicable, the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP).

The previous Ukrainian Community Response Forum has now been re-aligned with a new name and a new expanded remit.

The following changes have become effective:

- Name change - Community Response Forum (CRF) to the Community Integration Forum (CIF)
- Expanded remit - Covering not just Ukraine/BOTPs but also extending to International Protection, Those with Status (TwS) and IRPP.
- The Community Integration Forum meet every 6 weeks, is chaired by the Chief Executive of Kilkenny County Council. Its membership consists of a nominee from the key support providers locally, e.g. HSE, KCETB, Realt, KLP, Local Link, Kilkenny County Childcare Committee, Kilkenny Volunteer Centre.

Kilkenny LEADER Partnership (KLP) are a key stakeholder on the Community Integration and this month we are showcasing some of their current work.

Their key role is in the delivery of programmes for both Ukrainians and International Protection Applicants (IPAs) to integrate into the community as follows:

- Healthy Food made Easy (HFME) course - second course of the year. This is a 6-week HSE funded course running in the Involvement Centre
- Conversational basic and workplace English courses have commenced in Noreside Education Centre - 2 groups running twice a week for 10 week programme.
- Employability course running in Noreside finished in March - with others planned for later in the year.

- Employers contacting KLP to fill vacancies – recently filled positions with Total Highway Maintenance, Pembroke Hotel, CF Pharma to name a few.
- Weekly walk and talk group recommenced in March – a chance for people to practise their English while getting a bit of exercise. (photo's)
- Ukrainian Cultural Centre is going from strength to strength. Running every Saturday in Fr. McGrath Centre.
- KLP in collaboration with Failte Isteach organised Meet and Greet event in Neighbourhood Hall to give migrant community in Kilkenny an opportunity to meet the 20+ agencies and service providers in attendance. The event was also an opportunity to launch the Information booklet for migrants living in Kilkenny.
- Cartoon Saloon and The Watergate Theatre kindly screened the Ukrainian version of Puffin Rock and The New Friends on Saturday 16 March. It was a huge success and the first time many of the children had attended a cinema showing in Ireland, as usually there is the language barrier. KLP are working with Cartoon Saloon to link in with other Ukrainian communities around the country as they are kindly making this version available for educational and non-commercial use across Ireland.
- KLP staff have completed Irish Red Cross Psychological First Aid (PFA) and Ruhama 'Know Sex Trafficking' training.
- Community Kitchen being used regularly by those living in accommodation with no kitchen facilities.
- Several Ukrainians exploring starting their own business. Two ladies have a stall at Mountain View market selling their baked goods.
- Safe pass and manual handling (in English) for 20 clients (Ukrainian and IPA's).
- Manual handling in Ukrainian for 15 clients.
- Weekly Football session in Freebooters still proving very popular.
- The latest Global Kitchen Middle Eastern Café was held in the Home Rule Club on 2 March with both Ukrainians and IPA's helping back and front of house.

OFFER A HOME

Kilkenny County Council's experience with the Offer of a Home Programme has been very positive in providing accommodation for Ukrainians with Temporary Protection status.

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 short-stay accommodation to those fleeing the Ukraine.

When owners commit to a pledge of their vacant property, suitability is determined by Kilkenny County Council. When Ukrainian residents commence residing at the property, a licence agreement is signed by both owner and residents for minimum period of six months.

For existing Licence Holders who have committed to the Offer of a Home Scheme, all licences can only be extended to March 2025 in line with the Temporary Directive as the Accommodation Recognition Payment is due to end in March 2025.

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

	April 2024
Number of Properties Offered	102
Number of Properties Assessed as suitable	59
Number of Allocated Properties	56
Number of Registered Ukrainians in Occupied Properties	186

FIRE SERVICES

Capital Projects

Urlingford Fire Brigade will host the official opening its new fire station on Wednesday 29th May 2024. The design of the new HQ Fire Station for Kilkenny City is progressing well. Submission for the Part 8 Planning is scheduled for July 2024 and to go before the full Council meeting in September 2024.

All major construction projects, including major refurbishment projects at Fire Stations require capital funding from the NDFEM. Ongoing day-to-day maintenance of Fire Stations is funded from the Fire Authorities own revenue budget.

Fire Safety Certificate Applications

- 22 applications for fire safety certificates were received to date.
- Ukrainian Response Unit - Fire Safety Certificate compliance
- The fire authority technical staff have been involved in the newly established Kilkenny County Council's Ukrainian Response Unit.
- A large number of risk premises throughout Kilkenny City and County have been subject to review and fire safety certification applications to ensure minimum standards.

Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003

- Fire Prevention staff made targeted inspections of premises both to provide advice and to enforce legislation during 2023.
- 7 Licence Applications were processed under Section 24 of the Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003.
- 7 licence applications under the Dangerous Substances legislation were assessed to date
- 21 Fire Safety Inspections of premises have taken place in 2024.

Fire Brigade Operations

The Brigades have attended 216 incidents to date in 2024. These incidents included a number of road traffic collisions, public road hazards during Storm Kathleen, domestic fires, ambulance assists, chimney fires and automatic fire alarm activations. Thomastown and Graiguenamanagh Firefighters carried out a successful rescue of 2 members of the public at a recent flooding event in Thomastown.

Recruitment of Retained Firefighters

A competition for the recruitment of Retained Firefighters is well underway for Kilkenny City,

Castlecomer, Freshford, Urlingford, Thomastown, Callan and Graiguenamanagh. Shortlisting and suitability tests have taken place to date. Interviews will be held shortly.

Fire Appliances

Fire and Rescue Service maintain fire appliances in all seven Fire Stations throughout the County.

There are a variety of different types of appliances in operation i.e. Standard Class B Pumping Fire Appliance (normal fire appliance), Emergency Tenders, Combined Aerial and Pumping Appliances, Water Tankers, Incident Command vehicle and 4-Wheel Drive Vehicles with off road capabilities.

Fire and Rescue Service have received Capital Grant Aid for the replacement of Graiguenamanagh 2nd Class B Fire Appliance. We will continue with a replacement programme and refurbishment programme as capital funding is made available.

Primary School Programme

Fire and Rescue Service continue to deliver the National Directorate Fire and Emergency Management Primary Schools Programme. It is targeted at all 3rd Class Primary School children. Over 20,000 pupils have participated in the Primary Schools Programme over the years. The fire authority has provided training and refresher training for a number of firefighters in each brigade to assist them to deliver this Programme to all school children in 3rd classes in Kilkenny City and County where the school management accept our invitation to visit their schools.

Training

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

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

throughout their careers, generally delivered either through on-station training or through specific refresher courses.

Fire and Rescue Service recently ran a Compressed Air Foam Training course in Castlecomer Fire Station.



This course is intended to develop the learners in the discharge of their roles as firefighters and to assist their Fire Brigades in its function as a fire and rescue service. This course provides practical training on the knowledge and skills that are required to enable Firefighters to safely work with CAFS.

LIBRARY



29,853 Items borrowed



17,818 Visitors



1,162 New Members

Seachtain na Gaeilge

Kilkenny County Council Library Service strives to promote the use of Gaeilge. As well as having dedicated Irish-language book stock for children and adults in all of our branches, Ferrybank, Graiguenamanagh and Loughboy Libraries host a weekly Ciorcal Comhrá Gaeilge all year round.

To celebrate Seachtain na Gaeilge, we also held a number of one-off events for schools and the public to showcase Irish language and culture. These included beginner Irish classes in Castlecomer Library, Celtic design lino printing in Thomastown Library and Bingo as Gaeilge in Loughboy Library.



Kilkenny Library Local Studies Department

As part of our efforts to increase local knowledge and build stronger partnerships with local organisations, Local Studies staff visited James Stephens Military Barracks where they were kindly given a tour by Larry Scallan and Jim O'Keeffe and had the opportunity to view their museum and collections.



Library Activities

Events	In Branch	Online
208	208	1
Offsite	Live	Numbers
9	162	2831


This month, we held lots of activities and events across our libraries. These events included Lego freeplay sessions in City Library, shamrock stained glass crafts in Loughboy Library, sock bunny crafts in Castlecomer Library, a scribblebot workshop in Thomastown Library, beginners art classes in Urlingford Library, a traditional music evening in Graiguenamanagh Library, pilates for menopause in Ferrybank Library and a number of community book clubs which were supported by library staff.


Throughout the month of March, our library branches hosted 208 events with a total of 2,831 attendees both in our branches and on visits to local creches, schools and community groups.


3,206 eAudiobooks borrowed

1,421 eBooks borrowed

73 eComics Borrowed


52 Language Learning Sessions

1,514 eMagazines borrowed

160 Movies Streamed

Digital Engagement

Our staff prepared, recorded, edited and published 260 posts and videos on our social media platforms in March. Our engagements for the month were 5,268 and our videos and reels had 3,812 views. Our virtual newsletter was sent to 6,210 email accounts.

Alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals

Here are 2 ways in which Kilkenny County Council Library Service helped to further the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in March:

SDG 3: Good Health & Wellbeing

Ferrybank Library hosted a parent and toddler yoga class as well as a pilates for menopause class.

SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities

Library staff met with and provided information and support to members of the migrant community at a meet and greet event organised by Kilkenny Leader Partnership and Kilkenny Immigrant Services.

FINANCE

The expenditure by service division to the end of March is set out in table 1. Total Expenditure for the period was €22m compared with the annual budget of €111m.

Table 1	Actual YTD March 2023	Budget Full Year 2024
	€'000's	€'000's
Housing & Building	5,608	26,258
Road Transport & Safety	3,142	29,958
Water Services	1,692	7,699
Development Management	2,380	14,720
Environmental Services	2,948	16,899
Recreation & Amenity	1,197	8,759
Agriculture, Education, Health, Welfare	115	690
Miscellaneous Services	1,807	6,331
CMC for distribution	3,610	
OVERALL TOTAL	22,499	111,134

Finance Update

The bank overdraft facility was not utilised during the three-month period to the end of March 2024. The draft unaudited financial statements for 2023 were finalised and presented to Council at the March meeting. The Local Government Auditor has commenced the Audit for 2023. The draft Capital Programme for 2024-2029 was presented to the Members at the March meeting.

The annual rate invoices for 2024 were sent to all rate payers in February. Heretofore, Commercial Rates are payable in two moieties, with the first 50% (plus any arrears due) being due on issue of the demand and the second 50% falling due on the 1st of July. Commercial Rates are now payable in full from 1st January 2024.

Rates Revaluation

Further to Revaluation 2017, 197 customers with a total rate demand value of €4.5m appealed their new valuation to the Valuation Tribunal. To date 192 appeals have been completed. The following is a breakdown of the appeal outcomes to date:-

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

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

Commercial Rates Vacancy

The commercial rates vacancy is 50% for 2024 as agreed at the Annual Budget Meeting. A 50% 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.

Increased Cost of Business (ICOB) Grant Scheme

As part of Budget 2024, the Government signed off on a package of €257m for the Increased Cost of Business (ICOB) Grant as a vital measure for small and medium Enterprises. This rollout will be managed through the Local Authorities and funded by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE). Eligible businesses will receive a once-off grant which will be based on the value of their Commercial Rates bill in 2023.

The milestones and timelines are as follows:

- Social Media Communications in relation to ICOB commenced in early March.
- A letter detailing how to apply for the grant was sent to ratepayers in the week starting **12th March**.
- It is estimated that approximately 2,500 small and medium rate accounts will be eligible for grant assistance.
- At the end of March, 489 applications had been made.
- The closing date for applications under this scheme is **1st May 2024**.
- The first tranche of payments is expected to be made by the end of May 2024.

Kilkenny County Council have set up a project team comprising of staff from the Finance and IS Departments and the Local Enterprise Office to promote and administer the scheme.