STATEMENT OF AN CATHAOIRLEACH

It is a great privilege for me to introduce the Annual Report for 2020. This Annual Report details the wide variety of services provided by Kilkenny County Council to the people of Kilkenny City and County. We, the Council, play a key role in providing essential core services such as housing, roads, water, fire and emergency services and in supporting local communities through the arts, heritage, conservation, libraries and community and enterprise functions.

Little did we know at the start of the year 2020 how our lives would change in March 2020 with the onset of COVID 19. This virus has changed all our lives, how we work and socialise, how businesses operate and how we go about our daily life. It has severely impacted on people's businesses, children schooling, older peoples mixing with their families and everyone is feeling the strain of isolation. The Council has responded to many challenges in providing much needed services to the public during this time. The staff have responded to these challenges and have adapted to different ways of working. The Elected Members also have changed to respond to their constituents needs for a wide variety of services. We have moved to online meetings to protect ourselves and staff. This has been a whole change for how we work in the public arena but we have adapted for the safety of our communities and citizens.

I, sincerely congratulate and thank all our frontline staff who have responded to meet the very demanding challenges of dealing with the spread of this virus. The Council were forefront to establishing the Community Help Line to assist the elderly and vulnerable members of our communities. In particular I would like to thank the volunteers with Civil Defence who still continue to assist in helping with transport for medical appointments and other needs.

Despite the COVID pandemic, the Council continued to deliver all of our services to the public. In 2020, the provision of additional housing remained a priority for Kilkenny County Council to meet the growing demand for social housing. The Council continued to source much needed grant allocation to enable us to fund the many projects planned for the benefit of all our citizens.

The allocation of funding under various schemes greatly assists in the development of our towns and villages. Schemes such as CLAR, Town & Village Renewal, local funding from Kilkenny County Council gives communities a much needed boost. Funding was also provided for many "well being" projects to help people get through the pandemic. I note that many of our older citizens really appreciated their personal library service and all staff in the Library Service are to be commended for their commitment to continue with the delivery of the service albeit in a completely different format.

Our businesses were severely impacted with closures and loss of business. Many businesses moved online to keep some of their businesses going. All of us need to support our local businesses going forward to ensure that there are not closures in the future. LEO staff greatly assisted businesses in adapting to new ways of trading and this was greatly appreciated by all.

I would like to sincerely thank all the Council's staff for their work for the people of Kilkenny. I commend their commitment and dedication and we look forward to continued progress, working with all of the people of Kilkenny in making Kilkenny a better place to live in, work and visit.

Whilst we have come through very difficult times and many people are still experiencing the impacts of COVID and lockdowns, Kilkenny must look forward in hope to 2021 when we will see many important projects completed and new ones commence.

Finally, it has been my privilege as Cathaoirleach to lead my fellow Elected Members in meeting those challenging and sometimes controversial and often courageous decisions, as we work together with the Executive and staff for the betterment of Kilkenny and the communities that we all live in.

Cllr. Andrew McGuinness
Cathaoirleach

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S STATEMENT

I am pleased to be associated with this Draft Annual Report for 2020 which outlines the extensive range of services provided directly or indirectly by this Council. Within the main body of this report the various activities and delivery of services and infrastructure projects being progressed by Kilkenny County are outlined.

The year 2020 was very challenging for everyone with the COVID Pandemic. Despite many restrictions, we continued to deliver all our services and assist the businesses and communities to get through the year. Our income streams were greatly affected with businesses closed and people staying at home. 2020 was devastating from a tourism perspective with the season curtailed due to different levels of lockdown. In particular, the loss of rate income and parking charges affected our ability to deliver on discretionary budgets items. We incurred additional expenditure in meeting COVID requirements in order for staff to continue working safely. Application for compensation had been made to the Department for this loss of income. A decision is expected on our application during Quarter 1 of 2021. We adapted to new ways of working to ensure the continuity of the services. The members and staff rose to the challenges of providing additional services such as the Community Help Line and some staff assisted the HSE where required. We were able to continue to hold all our Council meetings which were facilitated with social distancing or virtually. Little did we think in March 2020 that we would still be hosting our Council meetings remotely at the end of 2020.

There was a high level of commitment across all Departments to delivering the 2020 Service Delivery Plan and achieve the Objectives of the Corporate Plan. Most areas met all of their stated objectives within the limitations placed on us by COVID 19 and where the level of achievement was less than 100% it will not have any impact on the Council meeting the objectives of its Corporate Plan. I am satisfied therefore that the Council substantially achieved the objectives as set out at the commencement of 2020 in the Service Delivery Plan and that it did so within the parameters set out in the 2020 budget and the COVID 19 restrictions. The Council also met the challenges of providing additional community services, one-way system and improvements to the public realm to assist safe movement of people in our towns when businesses reopened in the summer months. We will continue to do everything within our resources to support all our citizens as we get through the COVID restrictions and return to a somewhat normal live.

I wish to pay tribute to the work being done at Municipal District level and at SPC level. These committees are invaluable in assisting the Council in pursuing its objectives and getting through its business. The Commitment of the Councillors and external members is evident from the activities outlined in the report. I express my appreciation for the dedication and hard work of all the Elected Members, my colleagues on the Management Team and the staff of the Council. I am confident, given the abilities and spirit of cooperation that is consistently shown by the Elected Members and staff that we should be in a position to meet the challenges that lie ahead. We can look forward to a more positive 2021.

Finally, I would like to particularly thank the Cathaoirleach Cllr. Andrew McGuinness and his predecessor Cllr Peter Cleere, the Municipal District Cathaoirligh Cllr's Michael McCarthy and his predecessor Cllr John Brennan, Cllr Peter Cleere and his predecessor Cllr Pat O'Neill, Mayor John Coonan and his predecessor Mayor Martin Brett, and Cllr Eamon Aylward who have distinguished themselves in their respective roles.

I commend this Annual Report for adoption by the Elected Members.

I am confident that it will give an overview to the people of Kilkenny and beyond, of the broad range of activities undertaken and of the Council's achievements in this very challenging year of 2020.

Colette Byrne,
Chief Executive.

COVID 19 PANDEMIC

Business Continuity

The Council supported the Elected Members and Staff through an unprecedented period of change arising from the impact of the COVID 19 Pandemic. The Pandemic brought significant workplace and work life challenges that required new flexible innovative human resource supports to assist both the organisation, members and staff.

Public Health restrictions placed on the workplace whilst at the same time meeting business continuity requirements were addressed with new flexible work patterns and hours of work; the introduction of widescale remote working arrangements and new online system for meetings. All Council meetings went online once Level 5 restrictions were in place. IT support was vital during this changing landscape. Every effort was made to ensure that the Elected Members continued to represent their communities and to actively engage in Council meetings.

Supporting staff and members through these challenging times was a key concern and a more targeted Employee Assistance Programme was put in place. New training supports for Line Managers and staff to adapt to the new dimensions of remote working including mindfulness and wellbeing programmes. The Staff Training Plan 2021 will incorporate targeted training and development supports for both staff and Line Managers to adapt to new norms of remote working.

South East Regional Steering Group – Major Emergency Management

Kilkenny County Council operates within the SE Region with Counties Carlow, Tipperary, Waterford and Wexford for the management of Major Emergencies. A cross functional Group consists of representatives from the Local Authorities, HSE and Gardai Siochana. The Group is chaired by the HSE - Kate Killen White who are the lead authority for public health emergencies.

From the commencement of the pandemic, weekly meetings were held by all agencies in order to ensure a consistent co-ordinated approach within the region to ensure national public health guidelines were implemented. Ms Colette Byrne CE was chair of the group in the initial stages of the Pandemic tin order to ease the burden for the HSE staff.

Issues discussed and implemented:

- Numbers of COVID cases
- Hospitalisation, ICU numbers and deaths
- Social Distancing Measures
- Communications and use of Social media
- Enforcement by Gardai Siochana
- Support to the HSE with contact tracing and vaccinations centres
- Mass fatalities

HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2020

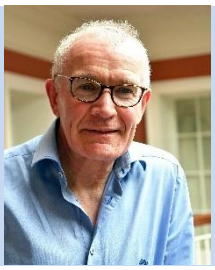
- Fifth successful Yulefest festival which was virtual due to COVID 19.
- First Kilkenny Day held in October with many events to celebrate all that is Kilkenny.
- 112 Press releases issued and supported many specific PR campaigns.
- Published and distributed Newsletter to over 18,000 households.
- Rebranded and launched new *kilkenny.ie*
- Progressed renovation of the Brew House building and Linear Park subject to COVID restrictions. Funding secured under the Urban Regeneration & Development Fund.
- Part 8 Planning for St Francis Park & Street in the Abbey Quarter.
- Official opening of the redeveloped Evans Home as a home for the Butler Gallery.
- Progressed development works on LIHAF funded projects in the Western Environs, Kilkenny City.
- 102 new housing units completed by Kilkenny County Council and Voluntary Bodies.
- 63 housing units purchased by Kilkenny County Council and Voluntary Bodies.
- 5,341 calls were made seeking housing repairs in 2020
- 20 housing loans paid out to a value of €2,901,700
- 202 housing grants paid for adaptation to houses to the value of €1,442,912
- Completed Resettlement of 25 Syrian families under the Irish Refugee Protection Programme.
- €29.44m spent on improving and maintaining our entire road network.
- Advanced design work for the 2 Flood Relief Schemes.
- Supplied 10.37 billion litres of water through the public water schemes.
- Complied 99.5% on microbiological & 99.6% on chemical parameters for water supply.
- Completed works on major improvement to the Inistioge Water Supply.
- Progressed work on the preparation of the 2021 -2027 City & County Development Plan.
- 935 planning applications received during 2020.
- 36 sites on the Vacant Sites Register at 31/12/2020.

- €280,824 in conservation grant funding awarded in 2020 to 16 projects.
- 4 Housing Developments taken in charge.
- Completed 4.7km Loop Walk and refurbished the Conservatory in Woodstock Gardens.
- Completed the Ferrybank Neighbourhood Park under LIHAF and local authority funding from Kilkenny and Waterford.
- Completed work on lifting rail sleepers on the South East Greenway.
- Planted 235 Trees to commemorate Special Anniversaries in 2020.
- Completed refurbishment of the Boardwalk in Silaire Wood, Graiguenmanagh.
- 30 public playgrounds are now open and maintained by the Council.
- 3 new playgrounds opened- Tullaroan, Johnstown and Ferrybank Neighbourhood Park.
- Fire Brigades responded to 824 incidents in 2020.
- Civil Defence provided 363 hours of assistance in respond to COVID Community Call, 11 Community Events and assisted in 2 Searches.
- Over 1,702 tonnes of recyclable material and over 2,822 tonnes of residual waste were collected throughout the County.
- 2,609 tonnes of glass, aluminium and steel were collected across the 46 Bring Centres.
- 1,317 environmental complaints were received.
- Dog licence increase – from 4,630 in 2018 to 5,872 in 2020.
- 26 Grants were awarded under the Graveyard Grant Scheme.
- Continued engagement with the City Centre Task Force.
- Established Tourism Recovery Task Force.
- Established Kilkenny welcome Team to support the reopening of the economy.
- Developed Audio Guide for top attractions in the City & County.
- Established a new Volunteer Centre for Kilkenny.
- Commenced review of Migrant Integration Strategy.
- Funding of €69,797 provided to communities under Community Call.
- €190,000 spent on community projects with funding from Creative Ireland.
- Funding of €574,826 provided to 5 towns under Town and Village Renewal Scheme.

- Funding of €461,200 provided to 16 Communities under Town and Village Accelerated Measures Scheme.
- Funding of €245,548 provided to Communities under Healthy Ireland.
- Allocation of €77,000 for 2 projects under the CLAR Programme 2020 *(CLAR -Ceantair Laga Árd-Riachtanais)*
- Allocated €232,020 under Community Enhancement Programmes through LCDC.
- RRDF funds enabled design work to proceed for the Sessions House, Thomastown and completed works in the Motte Field, Callan.
- 49% increase in use of eBooks & 45% increase in use of eAudiobooks due to COVID.
- Library Services developed and supported many Community and Well Being Programmes during COVID restrictions.
- Developed 48 podcasts and videos for younger library members.
- Delivered 4,839 Books to 1,109 Cocooners.
- 41 Projects developed for National Heritage week.
- 7 projects received funding under Decade of Centenaries Programme 2020.
- Distributed 1,200 copies of “Gardening for Biodiversity”.
- Over 19,550 people engaged with Arts Office programmes.
- Awarded 27 bursaries and mentoring opportunities to Artists.
- 10,000 “Bookville in a Book” was distributed to 90 primary schools.
- Increase in use of social media platforms.
- Continuous emphasis on improving collection rate across all of our income sources and reducing the arrears.
- €2.5m collected in development levies.
- Surplus of €16,635 achieved in the Revenue Budget in 2020.

ELECTORAL REPRESENTATIONS

Kilkenny County Council's membership consists of twenty-four Members, elected for a five-year term of office. The current Council was elected in May 2019 and membership at 31st December, 2020 is as follows:

CALLAN – THOMASTOWN		CASTLECOMER	
	Peter Cleere (FF) *Aughiletuan,* *Skeoughvosteen,* *Co. Kilkenny*		**John Brennan (FG)** *Crutt,* *Clogh,* *Castlecomer,* *Co. Kilkenny*
	Deirdre Cullen (FF) *Kilree,* *Bennettsbridge,* *Co. Kilkenny.*		**Mary Hilda Cavanagh (FG)** *Whiteswall,* *Crosspatrick,* *Via Thurles,* *Co Kilkenny*
	Matt Doran (FF) *Shrughawadda,* *Kilmoganny,* *Co. Kilkenny*		**Michael Delaney (FF)** *The Village Shop,* *Tullaroan,* *Co. Kilkenny*
	Michael Doyle (FG) *Ballinbarna,* *The Rower,* *Co. Kilkenny.*		**Pat Fitzpatrick (FF),** *Cloghpook,* *Ballyfoyle,* *Co. Kilkenny.*
	**Joe Lyons (FG)** *Bauntha,* *Callan,* *Co. Kilkenny*		**Denis Hynes (LAB)** *Ballyellen,* *Goresbridge,* *Co. Kilkenny.*
	Patrick O'Neill (FG) *Ballyreddin,* *Bennettsbridge,* *Co. Kilkenny.*		**Michael McCarthy (FF)** *Buncrusha Street,* *Freshford,* *Co. Kilkenny.*

KILKENNY CITY WEST

Martin Brett (FF)
Callan Road,
Kilkenny City

John Coonan (FF)
17 Willow Close,
Ardnore,
Kilkenny

Maria Dollard (GP)
Vianore,
Greenshill,
Kilkenny

David Fitzgerald (FG)
24 Patrick Street,
Kilkenny.

Joe Malone (FF)
11 Maiden Hill
Kells Road,
Kilkenny.

Andrew McGuinness (FF) *Constituency Office,*
O' Loughlin Road,
Kilkenny.

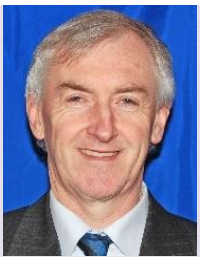
Eugene McGuinness (NP)
40 Bishop Birch Place,
Kilkenny

PILTOWN

Eamon Aylward (FF)
Ballynooney,
Mullinavat,
Co. Kilkenny.

Tomás Breathnach, (Lab)
Forge Road,
Narabane,
Kilmacow,
Co. Kilkenny.

Fidelis Doherty(FG)
Ballyfacey,
Glenmore,
Co. Kilkenny.



Pat Dunphy (FG),
Ballygorey,
Mooncoin,
Co Kilkenny

Ger Frisby (FF)
Treanaree,
Slieverue,
Co. Kilkenny.

Malcolm Noonan
38 Cedarwood Drive,
Loughboy, Kilkenny

Mr. Malcolm Noonan retired from Kilkenny County Council on 10th February, 2020 following his election to Dáil Éireann.

COMMITTEES & SUBSIDIARY BODIES

Corporate Policy Group

The Corporate Policy Group (CPG) is a committee of the Council consisting of the Cathaoirleach of the Council and the chairperson of each of the five Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs).

The CPG links the work of the different SPCs and provides a forum where proposed items for Council meeting agendas and policy matters are discussed. The CPG also monitors the performance of the local authority and plays a key role in the budgetary process.

The CPG met on 12 occasions in 2020.

A City Tack Force was established in 2020 with the purpose of providing an opportunity for all stakeholders to **collaborate** towards a **shared vision** that will enhance the quality of the City environment, further strengthen the offer of the City Core and encourage visitors/customers to remain in the City and transact business therein.

The Task Force consists of representatives from the different businesses throughout the City Centre chosen to represent their street along with representation from the Vintners, the Chamber of Commerce and the Gardaí. Each of the Municipal District Councillors are also members and the Task Force is supported by the Executive of the Council.

The initial phase included a workshop where members highlighted issues and concerns for the City Centre Businesses with a focus on selecting a shared vision and key actions required to make this a reality. While COVID impacted significantly on the operation of the Task Force, it did allow for positive engagement and a focus on a unified vision for the City Centre.

Items collaborated on and actioned during the year included:

- Rebranding of Kilkenny.ie and a restructured umbrella website to capture Kilkenny's offer for locals, visitors and businesses

- Measures to focus on the re-opening of the City when restrictions lifted in June and December, 2020 to include:

    - Social distancing for customers facilitated by making Rose Inn Street and High Street one-way
    - Pedestrianisation of James St and Kieran St (extended)
    - Outdoor seating

- Facilitating business needs for training and financial supports through the Council's Local Enterprise Office

- Support to business to facilitate on-line presence.

Committees & Subsidiary Bodies

There is a legal obligation on Local Authorities to establish certain Committees such as Strategic Policy Committees. Local Authorities have discretionary authority to establish other Committees to assist them in performing their roles as Elected Members.

Strategic Policy Committees

Kilkenny County Council adopted a Strategic Policy Committee Scheme on 16th September, 2019 for the newly elected Council 2019 to 2024. The role of the Strategic Policy Committees [SPC's] is to assist the Council in the formulation, development and review of policy. Their composition reflect the major functions of the Council within the broader context, are tailored to the size, membership and administrative resources of the Council and have one third of their membership drawn from sectors relevant to the committees' work.

The SPC's bring together both Elected Members and people actively working with social, economic, cultural and environmental bodies to develop and review policies related to Council's services. The SPC's provide Elected Members with external views as they discharge their strategic role in the development of the local authority, including their policy development and oversight roles within the local authority.

The overall configuration and membership of the Kilkenny County Council's Strategic Policy Committees is as follows at the 31st December, 2020:

SPC 1: Economic Development, Enterprise Support & Tourism, Planning & Development Policy

Elected Members [8]	**Members from External Sectors [7]**	
John Coonan	Agriculture/Farming:	Bill O'Keeffe *[IFA]*
Michael Doyle	Development/Construction:	Marion Acreman *[Chambers Ireland]*
Pat Fitzpatrick	Business/Commercial:	Deirdre Shine *[Chambers Ireland]*
Ger Frisby	Trade Union:	Eileen Moyles *[ICTU]*
Michael McCarthy	Social Inclusion:	Fiona O'Neill *[PPN]*
Eugene McGuinness	Environment/Conservation	Brian Hamilton *[PPN]*
Maria Dollard	Community & Voluntary	Paul Brophy *[PPN]*
Patrick O'Neill		

SPC 2: Transportational Policy/Mobility Management & Water Services

Elected Members [8]	**Members from External Sectors [7]**	
Tomás Breathnach	Agriculture/Farming:	Paul O'Brien *[IFA]*
Peter Cleere	Business/Commercial	Gary Graham *[Chambers Ireland]*
Deirdre Cullen	Development/Construction	Barry Lynch *[Chambers Ireland]*
Michael Delaney	Trade Union	Ger Mooney *[ICTU]*
Fidelis Doherty	Community/Voluntary	Gerard Ferris *[PPN]*
Matt Doran	Social Inclusion	Eileen Ryan *[PPN]*
Pat Dunphy	Environment/Conservation	Alan Sullivan *[PPN]*
Patrick O'Neill		

SPC 3: Housing

Elected Members [8]	**Members from External Sectors [6]**	
Eamon Aylward	Development/Construction:	Brian Dunlop *[Chambers Ireland]*
Martin Brett	Environment/Conservation	Mags Morrissey *[PPN]*
Pat Fitzpatrick	Community/Voluntary	John Bourke *[PPN]*
Denis Hynes	Social Inclusion:	Lisa Morris *[PPN]*
Joe Lyons	Trade Union:	Yvonne Moriarty *[ICTU]*
Andrew McGuinness		
Eugene McGuinness		
Joe Malone		

SPC 4: Environment Protection, Climate Action & Energy

Elected Members [6]	**Members from External Sectors [5]**	
Mary Hilda Cavanagh	Agriculture/Farming	James Murphy *[IFA]*
Deirdre Cullen	Development/Construction	John Hurley *[Chambers Ireland]*
David Fitzgerald	Business/Commercial:	Laurence Conroy *[Chambers Ireland]*
Denis Hynes	Community/Voluntary:	Noel O'Donoghue *[PPN]*
Joe Lyons	Environment/Conservation:	Shem Caulfield *[PPN]*
Maria Dollard		

SPC 5: Community, Cultural & Fire Services

Elected Members [6]	**Members from External Sectors [5]**	
Tomás Breathnach	Agriculture/Farming:	Michael Rice *[IFA]*
John Brennan	Business/Commercial:	Kathy Purcell *[Chambers Ireland]*
Martin Brett	Community/Voluntary:	Denis Brophy *[PPN]*
Peter Cleere	Social Inclusion:	Martin Brennan *[PPN]*
John Coonan	Trade Union:	Fergal Canton *[ICTU*
Pat Dunphy		

MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL

The Council holds Ordinary meetings on a monthly basis. It also holds special meetings to consider and adopt its annual budget. The Council may hold as many meetings as it considers necessary to discharge its functions**.** Due to COVID restrictions a number of Statutory meetings were held remotely once the necessary legislation was in place to enable decisions to be made by the Elected Members.

PLENARY MEETINGS OF KILKENNY COUNTY COUNCIL
Number of Meetings held in 2020: 20
Ordinary Monthly Meetings - 11, Workshops - 7 & Special Meetings - 3

- Adoption of Budget
- Abbey Quarter and St. Francis Park & Street
- Amendment to Standing Orders
- Amenity Grants
- Animal Welfare Charter Committee & Appointment of Members
- Annual Financial Statement 2019
- Annual Report 2019
- Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy
- Appointments of Members to Committees and other Boards
- Arts Grants 2020
- Audit Committee Annual Report 2019
- Bank Overdraft Facility for 2021
- Chief Executive's Monthly Report
- Commercial Rates Payment Incentive Grant 2020
- Community Event Grants
- COVID Updates
- Creative Ireland Grant Scheme 2020
- Draft Development Plan for City & County 2021 – 2027
- Election of Cathaoirleach & Leas Cathaoirleach
- Events Grant Scheme
- Festival Grants 2020
- Filling of Vacancy on Kilkenny County Council, SPC, Committees and other Boards
- Finance Update
- Graveyard Grant Scheme 2020
- LCDC Annual Report 2019
- Local Property Tax
- Material Contravention
- Music Generation Video Programme Outline
- N77 Ballyragget to Ballinaslea Improvement Works Part 10 Application
- Overdraft of €20 million for 2020
- Part 8 Reports on Various Projects
- Polling Scheme 2020
- Public Lighting Energy Efficiency Project
- Raising of Loan of €5 million from Housing Finance Agency
- Road Works Programme 2020
- Scheme of Letting Priorities
- Section 85 Agreements with other Local Authorities
- Service Delivery Plan 2020
- Standing Orders for SPC's
- Statutory Audit Report
- Taking in Charge
- Update on Covid Pandemic Impacts
- Winter Services Maintenance Plan 2020-2021

MUNICIPAL DISTRICT OF CALLAN - THOMASTOWN

Number of Meetings held in 2020: 13
Number of Joint Meetings: 1 Number of Deputations Received: 2

- Active Travel & Climate Change Pprojects
- Amenities Grants – Monuments & Memorials
- Bus Shelters
- Capital Enhancement Programme
- Christmas lights & Christmas tree drop off locations
- CLÁR Projects
- Community Involvement in Roadworks Schemes & Local Improvement Schemes
- Covid-19: financial impact/completion Roadwork Programme/Restrictions
- Dog Fouling
- Draft Callan Mobility Management Plan
- Draft City & County Development Plan 2021 - 2027
- Election of Cathaoirleach & Leas Cathaoirleach
- Extinguishment Right of Way
- Footpaths
- Friary Complex, Callan
- General Municipal Allocation / Adoption of Municipal Budget Plan
- Graiguenamanagh-Tinnahinch Local Area Plan
- Graiguenamanagh/Tinnahinch Tourism and Recreational Project Concept Study
- Historic Towns Initiative Fund – St Marys, Callan
- Illegal Dumping
- Illegal Parking
- Kings River, Callan
- Low Cost Safety Improvement Schemes
- Mobility Management Plans *(Thomastown, Callan and Graiguenamanagh)*
- Presentation on Drainage work
- Public Lighting
- River swimming areas
- Road Signage & Road Safety
- Roadworks Programme Updates & Roads Related Issues
- RRDF & ORIS funded projects (Fair Green, Moate Field & Abbey Meadow in Callan; Community Hall, Sessions House, Logan/Lowe Streets, quayside carpark & Maudlin Street regeneration in Thomastown) updates
- "Shop Kilkenny" campaign
- Speed Limit issues
- South-East/Kilkenny Greenway
- South Kilkenny Cardiac First Responders
- Town & Village Renewal Schemes & Covid 19 Accelerated Measures
- Traffic / Speed Surveys
- Winter Maintenance Plan/Salting Operations

ORIS Abbey Meadows

New Footpath Kilmoganny

Moate Field, Callan

Inistioge T&V conservation work at The Square, riverside new paving works and new seating

MUNICIPAL DISTRICT OF CASTLECOMER MEETINGS

Number of Meetings held in 2020: 12 & Number of Deputations Received: 3

- Active Travel Measures
- Ballyragget Landfill Remediation Project
- Business Re-Start & Re-Start Plus Grants
- Castlecomer Discovery Park
- Castlecomer Pedestrian Bridge
- CLÁR funding
- Climate Change Adaptation Measures
- Community Involvement in Roadworks
- Declaration of Public Road – Coolnaleen, Clogh
- Derelict Sites
- Draft County Development Plan 2021 – 2027
- Election of Cathaoirleach & Leas Cathaoirleach
- Eir – Customer Service & Disused & Dangerous Poles
- Electric Charge Points
- Foróige – Youth Centre, Castlecomer
- General Municipal Allocation & Adoption of Municipal Budget Plan
- HD15 Programme
- Hedge Cutting
- High Speed Broadband Delivery & National Broadband Plan Rollout
- Housing Developments & Unfinished Estates
- Housing Maintenance issues
- Housing – Update on Service Delivery during COVID 19 Pandemic
- Illegal Dumping at Bring Banks
- Local Improvement Scheme
- Low Cost Accident Scheme – Pedestrian Crossing, Kilkenny Street, Freshford
- Monuments & Memorials
- Outdoor Recreation Funding
- Public Lighting
- Replacement of Street Bins
- Road Safety – Ardaloo Junction to Georges Tree
- Road Works Programme & Roads Issues
- Rural Development Funding
- Shop Kilkenny
- Thatched Houses – Clogh
- Traffic Calming – Castlecomer
- Urban & Village Renewal Schemes
- Vacant Sites
- Weed Control
- Winter Maintenance Programme & Review of the P3 Route

Active Travel Measures, Gowran

LCAS & Resurfacing Junction to Abbey Grove

Footpaths at Maryville, Castlecomer

Footpath & Drainage, Clogh Road, Castlecomer

MUNICIPAL DISTRICT OF KILKENNY MEETINGS
(including Annual Meeting, Budget Meeting & Special Meeting)
Number of Meetings held in 2020: 12

- Adoption of Draft Schedule of Municipal Works including Draft Road Works Scheme
- Adopted amended Standing Orders
- Adopted Municipal Budget plan for 2021
- Animal Welfare Committee
- Anti-social behaviour measures
- Casual Trading Bye-Laws
- Changes to Wolfe Tone Street Car Park
- City Centre Task Force
- City and County Development Plan 2021 – 2027
- Co-option Ms. Maria Dollard following Cllr. Malcolm Noonan election to the Dáil
- Creating and developing a strong cycling culture in Kilkenny City
- Election of Mayor and Deputy Mayor
- Extended Casual Trading times.
- Footpaths - 5-year funded programme
- Footpath completion and upgrade around the City
- Housing and Planning updates
- IBAL Awards – Kilkenny City
- Improvements on the Mayor's Walk.
- Kilkenny Orientation Study
- LIHAF Project
- Official launch of the Kilkenny City Bus Service
- One-way System in Kilkenny City - Social distancing
- Opening of Butler Gallery
- Outdoor Seating Area.
- Part 8 Planning Vicar Street and Ormond Road.
- Pedestrianisation of James Street.
- Roads – Monthly updates
- Road Safety at key Junctions
- Road Works Scheme 2020
- Strategic Housing Development on Sion Road
- Street Lighting review
- Street Performance & Busking Bye-Laws
- Traffic calming in residential estates
- Traffic report on Upper Patrick Street
- Virtual Yulefest

Rose Inn Street One-Way from Johns Bridge to The Parade

Footpath Works – College Road

Outdoor Seating Market Yard

Gaol Road Junction Improvement

MUNICIPAL DISTRICT OF PILTOWN MEETINGS

Number of Meetings held in 2019: 15

(including Joint Meeting with WCCC)

- Election of Cathaoirleach & Leas Cathaoirleach
- General Municipal Allocation / Adoption of Municipal Budget Plan
- Adoption of Road Works Scheme
- Roadworks Programme Updates & Roads Related Issues
- Winter Maintenance Programme / Salting Operations
- N24 Piltown Bypass – Tower Road Junction Improvements
- Low Cost Safety Improvement Schemes
- N25 New Ross Bypass
- N25 Safety at Junctions
- N25 Waterford to Glenmore Scheme
- Piltown Village Traffic Calming / Management Scheme
- Tower Road Footpath, Piltown
- Mill Road Footpath, Mullinavat
- Kiln Road, Slieverue
- Provision of Footpaths Piltown Municipal District
- Community Involvement in Roadworks Schemes & Local Improvement Schemes
- CLÁR funding & Submissions
- Speeding issues in the Piltown Municipal District
- Traffic / Speed Surveys
- Hedge Cutting
- Flood Investigation Works
- Dunkitt Flood Relief Scheme
- Bus Stops / Shelters – Piltown Municipal District
- Glenmore Bus Stop & Weighbridge
- Meetings with TII
- Engineering Areas – Changes to Municipal Districts
- Kilkenny Greenway
- Tourism
- Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy & Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan
- North Quays Strategic Development Zone
- 24/7 Cardiac Service for Waterford
- Ferrybank District Centre
- Newfoundland Ireland Festival
- Town & Village Renewal Schemes – Hugginstown & Kilmacow
- Ferrybank Neighbourhood Park & Playground
- Taking in Charge Process / Unfinished Estates
- Poulanassy Waterfall
- Public Participation Network
- Litter Management Plan 2018-2020
- Plastic Litter in River Barrow
- All Ireland Pollinator Plan
- Policing Issues *(Gardai in Attendance)*
- Launch of the Local Policing Partnership

Newrath Cul-de-Sac – September 2020

Newrath Cul-de-Sac- October 2020

Shanbogh – September 2020

Shanbogh – October 2020

KILKENNY JOINT POLICING COMMITTEE

Kilkenny County Council has established a Joint Policing Committee in accordance with the Garda Síochána Act 2005

MEMBERS OF JOINT POLICING COMMITTEE

Chairperson: Cllr. Patrick Fitzpatrick, Cloopook, Ballyfoyle, Co. Kilkenny

Cllr. Martin Brett, Callan Road, Kilkenny.
Cllr. Deirdre Cullen, Kilree, Bennettsbridge, Co. Kilkenny.
Cllr. Pat Dunphy, Ballygorey, Mooncoin, Co. Kilkenny.
Cllr. Michael Delaney, Tullaroan, Co. Kilkenny.
Cllr. Tomas Breathnach, Forge Road, Narabane, Kilmacow, Co. Kilkenny.
Cllr. Denis Hayes, Ballyellen, Goresbridge, Co Kilkenny
Cllr. Joe Lyons, Bauntha, Callan, Co. Kilkenny.
Cllr. Patrick O'Neill, Hillview, Bennettsbridge, Co. Kilkenny.
Cllr. Michael Doyle, Ballinbarna, The Rower, Co. Kilkenny.
Cllr. Mick McCarthy, Buncrusha Street, Freshford, Co. Kilkenny.
Cllr. Joe Malone, 11 Maiden Hill, Kells Road, Kilkenny.
Cllr. Andrew McGuinness, O'Loughlin Rd., Kilkenny.
Chief Superintendent Padraig Dunne, Waterford Garda Station.
Superintendent Derek Hughes, Kilkenny Garda Station.
Superintendent Sean O'Meara, Thomastown Garda Station.
Deputy Jennifer Murnane O'Connor, Graigue, Co. Carlow.
Deputy Kathleen Funchion, 3rd Floor, Lower New Street, Kilkenny
Deputy John McGuinness, O'Loughlin Rd, Kilkenny
Deputy John Paul Phelan, 25 Market St., Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny.
Deputy Malcolm Noonan, Cedarwood Drive, Loughboy, Kilkenny.
Samual Morgan, PPN, Kilkenny.
Helena Power, PPN, Kilkenny.
Gerard Ferris, PPN, Kilkenny.
Collette Murphy, PPN, Kilkenny.
Marion Chamber, Chambers of Kilkenny.
Anthony Morrisson, Vintners Association.

Number of Meetings: 5 Committee Meetings *(3 held remotely)*
Public Meeting: None held due to COVID restrictions

Summary of issues discussed in 2020:

- Annual Report 2019
- Anti- Social Behaviour Strategy 2020-2025
- CCTV camera in Town Centre – Endorse installation of additional cameras
- Community CCTV in Urlingford
- Crime Statistics, Gardai Stewardship, Traffic and Road Safety
- Data Controller
- Draft Works Programme 2020
- Drug Awareness Steering Group – New Sub Committee set up
- Kilkenny Integration Strategy 2021-2023
- Local Policing Partnership

MEMBERS TRAINING 2020

DATE	CONFERENCE	LOCATION	COUNCILLOR	FEES	EXPENSES	TOTAL
10th - 12th January	Celtic Conference - The Finance Act 2019	Louth	Gerard Frisby, Eamon Aylward, Peter Cleere, Pat Fitzpatrick, Michael McCarthy, Andrew McGuinness	€600.00	€3,066.66	€3,666.66
15th February	AILG Training - Development Plan	Waterford	Peter Cleere, Pat Dunphy, Fidelis Doherty, Martin Brett, Michael McCarthy	€330.00	€311.66	€641.66
21st - 23rd February	Celtic Confrence - Health & Safety in the work place	Cork	Mary Hilda Cavanagh	€100.00	€314.96	€414.96
4th - 5th March	AILG - Annual Training Conference	Longford	John Brennan, John Coonan, Gerard Frisby, Eamon Aylward, Andrew McGuinness, Peter Cleere, Pat Dunphy, Deirdre Cullen, Denis Hynes, Mary Hilda Cavanagh, Michael Doyle, Patrick O'Neill, Michael McCarthy, Eugene McGuinness, Pat Fitzpatrick, Matt Doran, Michael Delaney	€2,380.00	€6,979.24	€9,359.24
6th August	AILG Module 3 Training - Moorhead Report	Tipperary	Fidelis Doherty	€55.00	€112.70	€167.70
8th August	AILG Module 3 Training - Moorhead Report	Sligo	Michael McCarthy, Ger Frisby	€110.00	€864.78	€974.78
13th August	AILG Module 3 Training - Moorhead Report	Cork	Eamon Aylward, Pat Fitzpatrick, Peter Cleere, Joe Malone,Pat Dunphy, Andrew McGuinness, John Brennan, Pat O'Neill, John Coonan, Deirdre Cullen.	€550.00	€2,392.97	€2,942.97
			TOTAL	€4,125.00	€14,042.97	€18,167.97

MEMBERS REPRESENTATIONAL PAYMENT & EXPENSES

Councillor	No Meetings Attended	Salaries (Taxable)	Allowance	Vouched Expenses	Cathaoirleach	Leas-Cathaoirleach	Municipal District Chair	SPC Chair Allowance	Mobile Phone	TOTAL
Cllr. John Brennan	38 out of 40	18,378.66	5,011.92				2,759.76	6,000.00	292.08	32,442.42
Cllr. Mary Hilda Cavanagh	38 out of 38	18,378.66	5,764.68					6,000.00	205.69	30,349.03
Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick	31 out of 33	18,378.66	4,341.24						127.96	22,847.86
Cllr. Michael McCarthy	33 out of 35	18,378.66	4,341.24				3,219.72		254.68	26,194.30
Cllr. Michael Delaney	29 out of 33	18,378.66	4,341.24						113.58	22,833.48
Cllr. Denis Hynes	25 out of 32	18,378.66	4,506.84						82.25	22,967.75
Cllr. Peter 'Chap' Cleere	30 out of 38	18,378.66		7,367.84	9,199.20		3,265.72		66.34	38,277.76
Cllr. Matt Doran	35 out of 41	18,378.66	5,549.64					6,000.00	0.00	29,928.30
Cllr. Michael Doyle	29 out of 33	18,378.66	5,442.12						125.88	23,946.66
Cllr. Patrick O'Neill	28 out of 35	18,378.66	4,341.24				2,713.76		84.39	25,518.05
Cllr. Deirdre Cullen	31 out of 34	18,378.66	4,341.24						0.00	22,719.90
Cllr. Joe Lyons	31 out of 36	18,378.66	4,507.68						0.00	22,886.34
Cllr. David Fitzgerald	22 out of 27	18,378.66	4,341.24						156.36	22,876.26
Cllr. Joe Malone	38 out of 43	18,378.66	4,341.24					6,000.00	0.00	28,719.90
Cllr. Andrew McGuinness	40 out of 43	18,378.66	3,979.47		10,732.40	1,839.84			0.00	34,930.37
Cllr. Malcolm Noonan	1 out of 2	2,181.47	361.77						0.00	2,543.24
Cllr. Martin Brett	38 out of 41	18,378.66	4,341.24			2,146.48	4,599.60		146.14	29,612.12
Cllr. John Coonan	33 out of 34	18,378.66	4,341.24				5,366.20		59.77	28,145.87
Cllr. Eugene McGuinness	29 out of 29	18,378.66	4,341.24						0.00	22,719.90
Cllr. Eamon Aylward	24 out of 28	18,378.66	5,764.68				5,979.48		0.00	30,122.82
Cllr. Tomás Breathnach	44 out of 46	18,378.66	6,194.88						179.62	24,753.16
Cllr. Fidelis Doherty	28 out of 33	18,378.66	6,194.88						158.18	24,731.72
Cllr. Pat Dunphy	35 out of 35	18,378.66	6,947.64						254.74	25,581.04
Cllr. Ger Frisby	38 out of 42	18,378.66	6,732.60					6,000.00	265.42	31,376.68
Cllr. Maria Dollard	22 out of 26	15,493.49	3,617.70						37.35	19,148.54
TOTALS		**440,384.14**	**113,988.90**	**7,367.84**	**19,931.60**	**3,986.32**	**27,904.24**	**30,000.00**	**2,610.43**	**646,173.47**

CIVIC OCCASIONS & EVENTS 2020

ST. PATRICK'S FESTIVAL KILKENNY

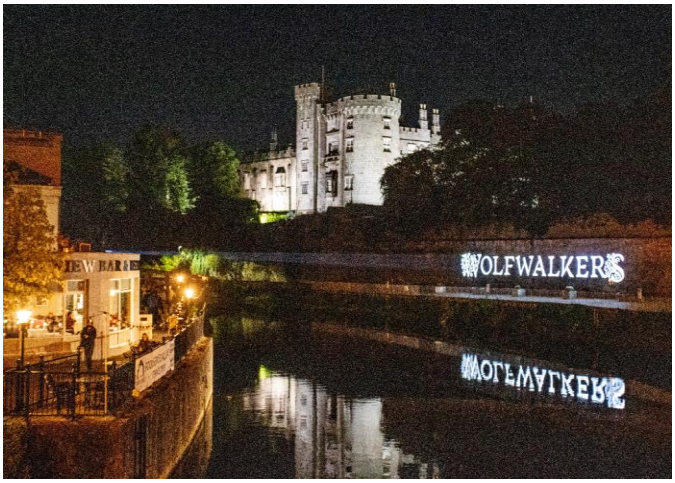
The St. Patrick's Day Parade is a Civic Event in Kilkenny and the Council had a comprehensive programme of events planned for St. Patrick's Festival 2020 before the COVID-19 pandemic hit and the Country went into lockdown on 13th March, 2020. As a result, all St. Patrick's Day Parades around the Country were cancelled including Kilkenny's

Kilkenny's ace hurling star, turned twinkle-toes and heart-throb on RTÉ's Dancing with the Stars programme was due to step it out at the front of Kilkenny City's St. Patrick's Day Parade for 2020. The Urlingford eight time All Ireland winner had accepted the honour bestowed by the St. Patrick's Day committee as Grand Marshall and would have followed many other sporting and community figures to step it out on the route from the Market Yard through High Street, Rose Inn Street and finishing once again in the Market Yard.

KILKENNY DAY

With so many of Kilkenny's vital and vibrant festivals falling to COVID19 cancellation, Kilkenny County Council launched this innovative day of celebration of all things Kilkenny on Sunday, 11th October, 2020, and managed to host over 40 events with just a few weeks' notice.

The Kilkenny business community came on board with great enthusiasm and spirit. The city-centre shops were decorated in the black and amber, communities embraced their county origin and were out and about to support the great variety of events organised, from a river walk and clean-up with Nore Vision to a sculpture walk with the National Crafts Council and an artistic cat hunt in the grounds of Woodstock Gardens. The street markets on the Parade, Kilkenny City and at Kells Mill, showcased the best of Kilkenny artisan food and local craft producers and proved hugely popular. The fabulous animations from the Cartoon Saloon's new blockbuster hit, Wolfwalkers, projected onto the walls of Kilkenny Castle was an amazing addition to the Day.



YULEFEST KILKENNY

Even though our streets in Kilkenny City and Council were quiet and the Christmas 2020 season was slightly different, Christmas lights still lit up Kilkenny and the virtual launch of the festival took place online. Kilkenny Council staff members and a crew of electricians installed 2km of lights throughout the City as well as 10 beautiful Christmas trees.

The Council invested significant funding the new lanterns and festoon lighting on the Parade and Mayor's Walk.

- The reindeers were seen around the City.
- A socially distanced Santa's Christmas Village took place in the grounds of Medieval Mile Museum in partnership with Nore Valley Park.
- Creative Ireland's "Festival in a Van" initiative brought Christmas Spirit to our Nursing Homes.

The Council provided support to our local towns and villages to help in lighting up the County for 2020.

Fantastic new lighting on the Parade illuminating the trees brought cheer to the weekend Markets in December. The Farmers Market ran every weekend for the festive season.

The Design and Craft Council in collaboration with Kilkenny County Council opened the Garden of light, created to reflect and the Made in Kilkenny Craft Exhibition at the Castle Yard, Kilkenny Design Centre for the Christmas period.

The exhibition ran from 1st December to 10th January, 2021.

Combined with our immediate responses to the COVID 19 pandemic, the Tourism team continued to deliver and progress the strategic objectives outlined in our Service Delivery Plan in 2020.

Cathaoirleach Election

Launch of Kilkenny City Bus Service

National Day of Commemoration

National Day of Commemoration

Official Opening of Butler Gallery

Opening of New Ross by-Pass

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

Kilkenny County Council's Management Structure is:

Colette Byrne
Chief Executive

Tim Butler
Director of Services

Corporate, Human Resources, Roads & Transportation, Water Services, Communication, Health & Safety

Municipal District of Kilkenny City

Sean McKeown
Director of Services

Planning, Environment, Building Control, Parks, LEO/Economic Development, Tourism Marketing & Veterinary Services

Municipal District of Piltown

Mary J. Mulholland
Director of Services

Housing, Community, Library, Arts, Heritage, Fire Service

Municipal District of Callan - Thomastown

Martin Prendiville
Head of Finance
Finance, Information Technology, Facilities Management, Procurement & Special Projects

Municipal District of Castlecomer

DIRECTORATE OF CORPORATE & INFRASTRUCTURE

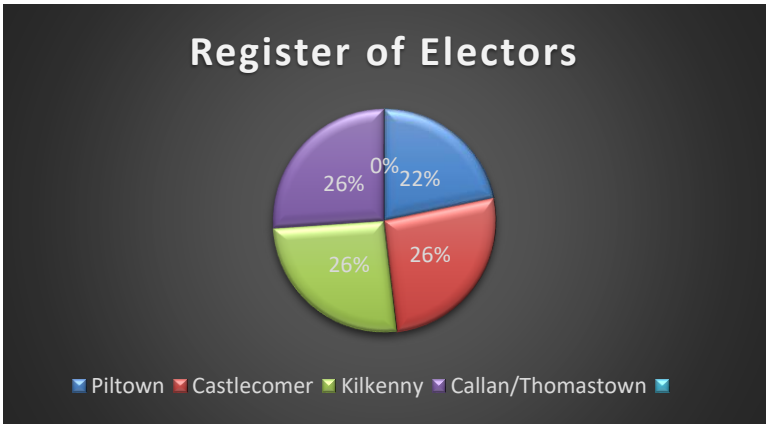
Director of Services: Mr. Tim Butler

REGISTER OF ELECTORS

The Annual Register is published on the 15th February each year. It is a list of all persons aged 18 years or over, resident in the State, who are entitled to vote in the following elections:

- Local Elections *(County Council),*
- General Elections *(Dail),*
- European Elections *(EU Parliament),*
- Presidential,
- Referenda.

The total number on the Register on the 31st of December, 2020 is 73,640.



Any member of the public can check if they are on the register on the following website: www.checktheregister.ie. or can contact the Corporate Services Department in the Council.

The Register is available in Libraries, Post Offices and Garda Stations.

CUSTOMER CARE

The Council is committed to providing a quality service to all its customers. Kilkenny County Council's Customer Charter sets out the way in which the Council endeavours to deal with its customers. The document is available on our website at www.kilkennycoco.ie.

This Charter includes a commitment to equality in service provision and a recognition of the diverse nature of the community we serve. The Charter also includes a Customer Complaints Procedure which may be availed of by any person not satisfied with the quality of service received. The Senior Executive Officer in Corporate investigates all complaints/comments received. A person not satisfied with the response provided by the Senior Executive Officer can request to have their case reviewed again by the Director of Services, Corporate Services.

In 2020, Kilkenny County Council dealt with 24 formal complaints from customers.

OMBUDSMAN

The Office of the Ombudsman was established under the Ombudsman Act 1980. The role of the Office is to investigate complaints about administrative actions, delays or inactions adversely affecting persons or bodies in their dealings with state bodies including Local Authorities.

The Office of the Ombudsman dealt with 6 Customer complaints in 2020. Reports on each complaint was provided by Kilkenny County Council to the Office of the Ombudsman.

OMBUDSMAN FOR CHILDREN

In 2020, no complaint was made to the Ombudsman for Children.

IRISH LANGUAGE SCHEME

Kilkenny County Council's Irish Language Scheme 2019-2022 was confirmed by the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and came into effect on 8th April 2019. The scheme is available to view on our website - www.kilkennycoco.ie.

Kilkenny County Council recognise that our customers have the right to choose to do business with us in their preferred language and they are facilitated in their dealings with us as far as practicable, whether that is through Irish or through English.
If you wish to contact the Council in Irish, please send an e-mail to *gaeilge@kilkennycoco.ie*

During 2020, Kilkenny County Council dealt with 5 formal Irish complaints.

PROTECTED DISCLOSURES

The Protected Disclosures Act 2014 became operational on 15th July 2014. The Act is intended to provide a statutory framework within which workers can raise concerns regarding a potential wrongdoing that has come to their attention in the workplace in the knowledge that they can avail of significant employment and other protections if they are penalised by their employer or suffer any detriment for doing so.

In accordance with Section 22 of that Act, Kilkenny County Council has an obligation to report on the number of protected disclosures made to the Council in the preceding year.
No disclosure was received by the Designated Officer for Protected Disclosures for the period 1st July, 2019 to 30th June, 2020.

DATA PROTECTION (GDPR)

Kilkenny County Council processes all personal information in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 and the Data Protection Acts, 1988 to 2018.
The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) applies from 25th May 2018. It has general application to the processing of personal data in the EU, setting out more extensive obligations on data controllers and processors, and providing strengthened protections and rights for data subjects.

Privacy Statement

At Kilkenny County Council we are committed to protecting and respecting your privacy. The Privacy Statement lets you know how we look after your personal data. It also informs you as to our obligations and your rights under data protection law. Kilkenny County Council's privacy statement can be found at: www.kilkennycoco.ie/privacy-statement

In 2020, Kilkenny County Council dealt with 17 data subject access requests.

1 request was appealed to the Data Protection Commissioner (DPC). A decision on this appeal was not received from the DPC by the 31st December, 2020. The Data Protection Officer (DPO) was notified of 11 data breaches of which 2 were notified to the DPC. Kilkenny County Council was invited to take part in a Cookie Survey by the DPC which is currently been reviewed. The DPO has activity engaged with service departments in carrying out Data Privacy Impact Assessments and addressing any risks identified.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Section 126(c) of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 sets out the functions of the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) which includes examination of the performance of local government bodies against thirty-nine indicators.

The report in respect of 2019 was published by NOAC in December, 2020.
Kilkenny County Council's performance in each area in 2019 compared to other local authorities is available for viewing on www.noac.ie

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUESTS

The Freedom of Information Act 2014 was enacted on 14 October 2014. It introduced significant changes to the Freedom of Information regime repealing and replacing the Freedom of Information Acts 1997 and 2003 and expanding the scope of FOI to a number of further bodies. It also consolidated, modernised and updated the legislation generally.

It is the policy of Kilkenny County Council to give members of the public access to information held by the Authority in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2014. Further information is available on the Council's website www.kilkennycoco.ie

The Freedom of Information Unit deals with requests for records held by Kilkenny County Council from members of the public, journalists and organisations. Kilkenny County Council is a public body which is subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, 2014, which allows for access to certain records held by the local authority subject to a number of exemptions.

Kilkenny County Council received 115 Freedom of Information requests in 2020.

2020	Journalists	Business/Interest Groups	Oireachtas/Public Reps	Staff	Clients	Others	Total
Total	24	4	0	0	2	85	**115**

A total of 121 decisions were made by the Freedom of Information Officer in 2020.

	FOI DECISIONS MADE 2020				TOTAL
	Requests Granted	Requests Part-Granted	Requests Refused	Requests Withdrawn	
Total	**44**	**19**	**52**	**6**	**121**

Three applications for Internal Reviews were received following the decisions of the FOI Officer and one application for Appeal to the Office of the Information Commissioner was made. To date, no decision has been received from the Office of the Information Commissioner on this appeal.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON THE ENVIRONMENT

You are entitled to request access to information on the environment that is held by Kilkenny County Council. This right comes from Directive 2003/4/EC of the European Parliament, the European Communities (Access to Information on the Environment) Regulations 2007 to 2014 (hereafter referred to as the AIE Regulations).

Under these regulations, information relating to the environment held by, or for, a public authority must be made available on request, subject to certain exceptions. The AIE regulations also oblige public authorities to be proactive in disseminating environmental information to the public.

In 2020 Kilkenny County Council received 15 requests. 9 requests were granted, 5 requests were refused and 1 request was withdrawn.

There is no initial fee for making an application under the AIE Regulations. However, the Regulations do allow a public authority to charge a reasonable fee for the cost of supplying environmental information, and Kilkenny County Council has set the following charges:-

- Search, retrieval and copying of records: €20 per hour
- Photocopy: €0.04 per sheet
- CD Rom: €10.00
- Radiograph: €6.00

COMMUNICATIONS & SOCIAL MEDIA 2020

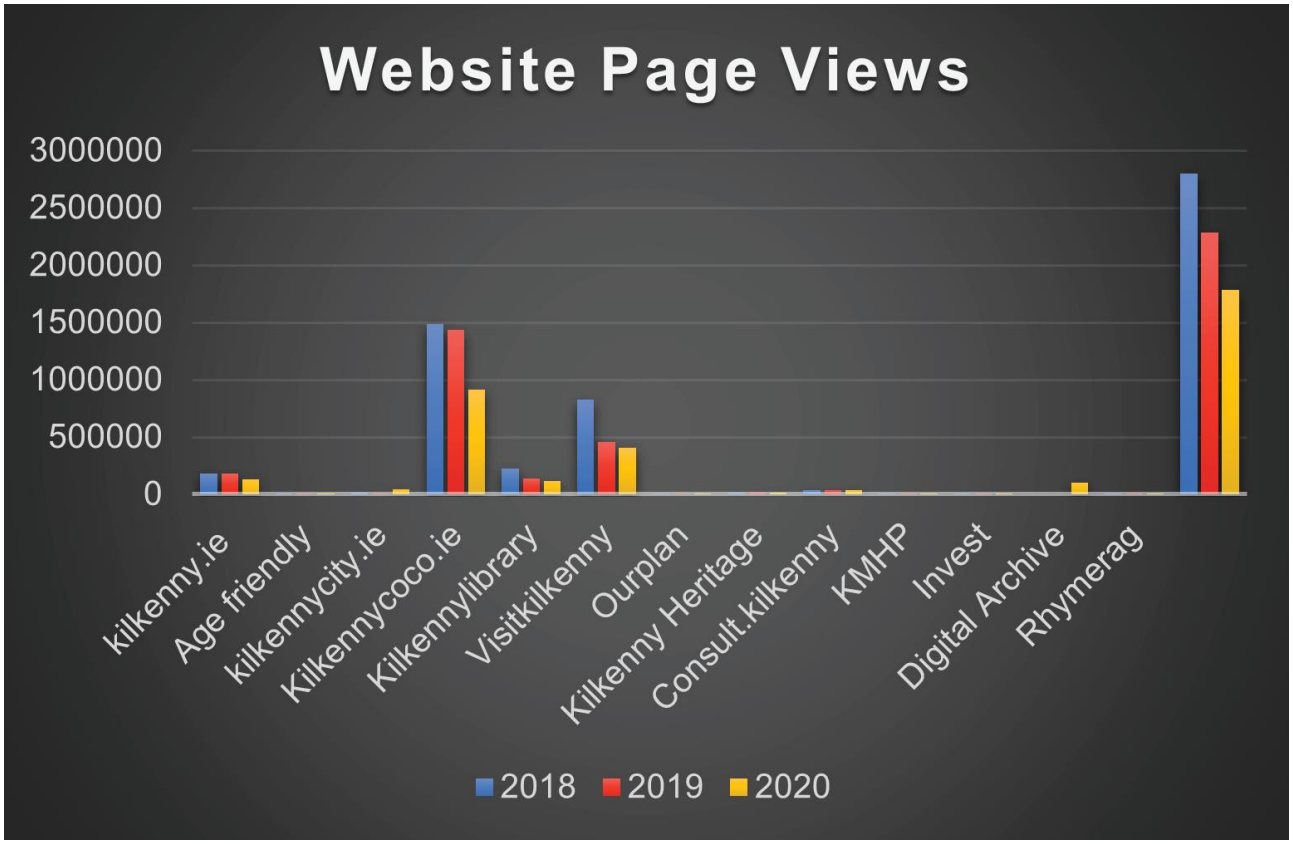
The Communications Team oversees corporate and internal communications for the Council. It is responsible for all internal and external communications, public relations, crisis management and marketing on behalf of the Council extending across all Council services.

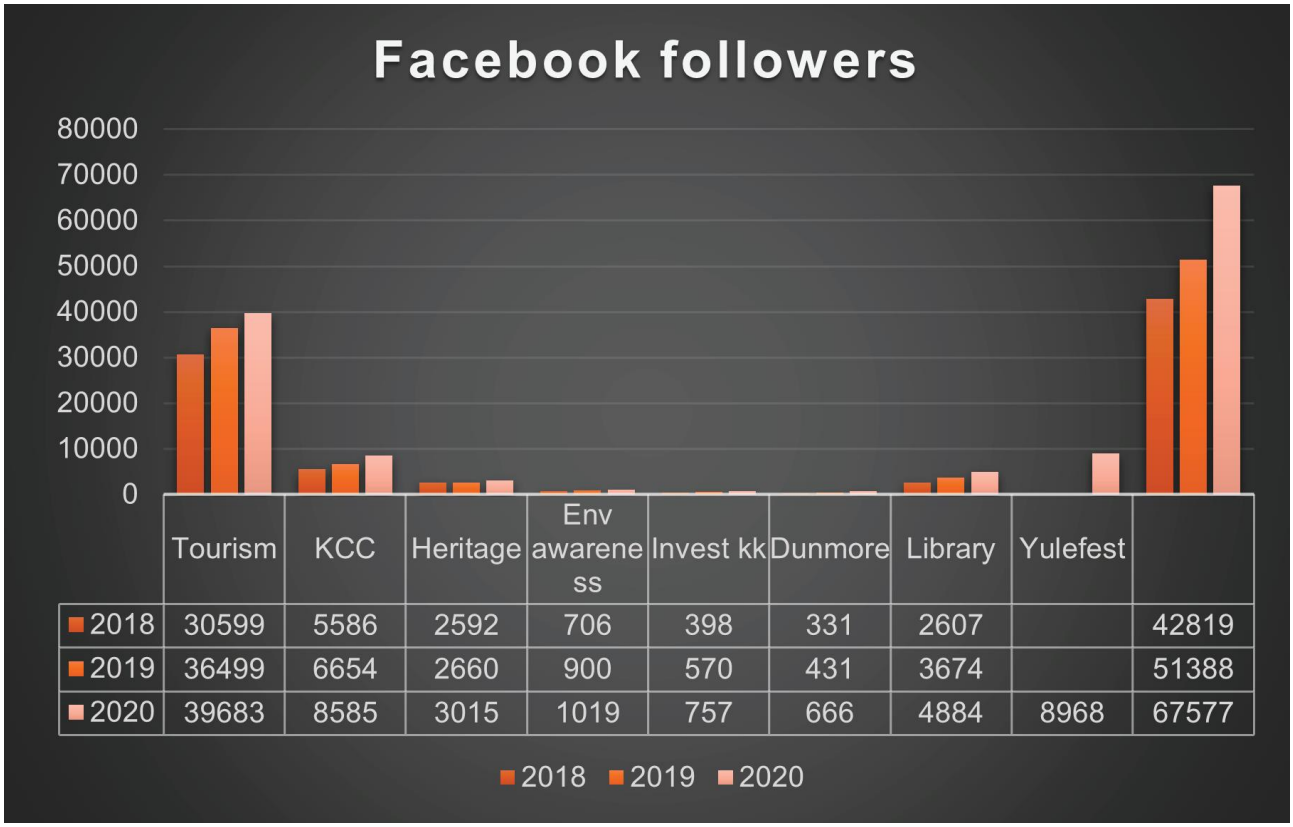
The Team provides full support to An Cathaoirleach and Elected Members regarding:

- Advice on Event Management.
- Organising of Civic Events e.g. issue and management of Invitations.
- Advise on Protocol and Event Management.
- Preparation of Speeches.
- Circulation of Press Release post events.

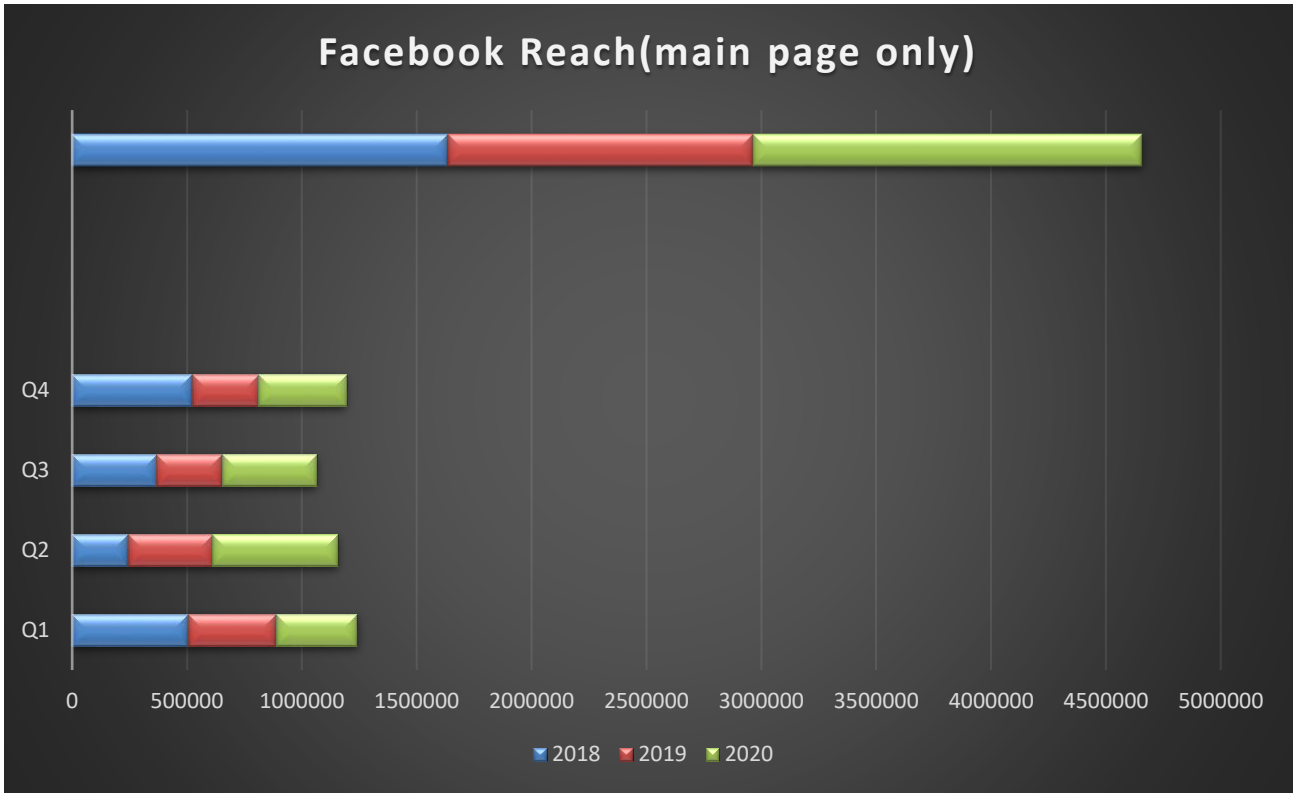
Achievements in 2020:

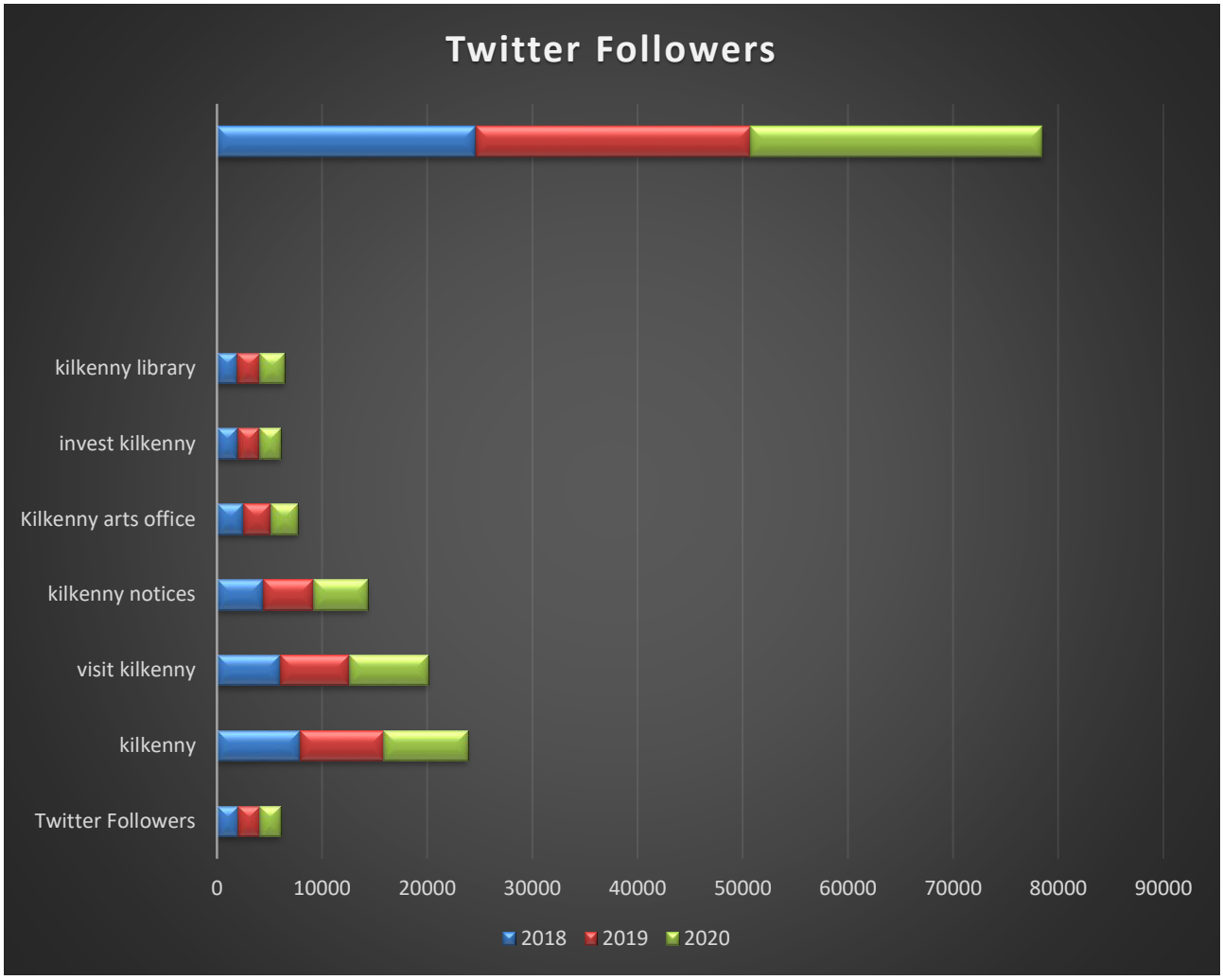
- 112 Press Releases issued in 2020 *(16 related to Community Resilience and COVID-19)*.
- Promotion and management of Council Events and activities.
- Publication of first Council newsletter “Kilkenny County Council Working for You”.
- Publication of Annual Report 2019.
- Management of Council’s social media accounts.
- Management of Council’s websites.
- Provided support to the promotion of the Kilkenny Community Wellbeing Campaign during COVID-19 restrictions.
- Co-Ordinated content for Kilkenny People Local Authority Page.
- Participated in Regional Network of Communications Officers in South East for regional campaigns.
- Promoting the newly developed County Brand kilkenny.ie
- Promoted various national campaigns through social media campaigns which included:
    - Your Council Day.
    - Be Winter Ready.
    - Virtual Waste Week.
    - National Bike Week.
    - ToBeIrish at Christmas.

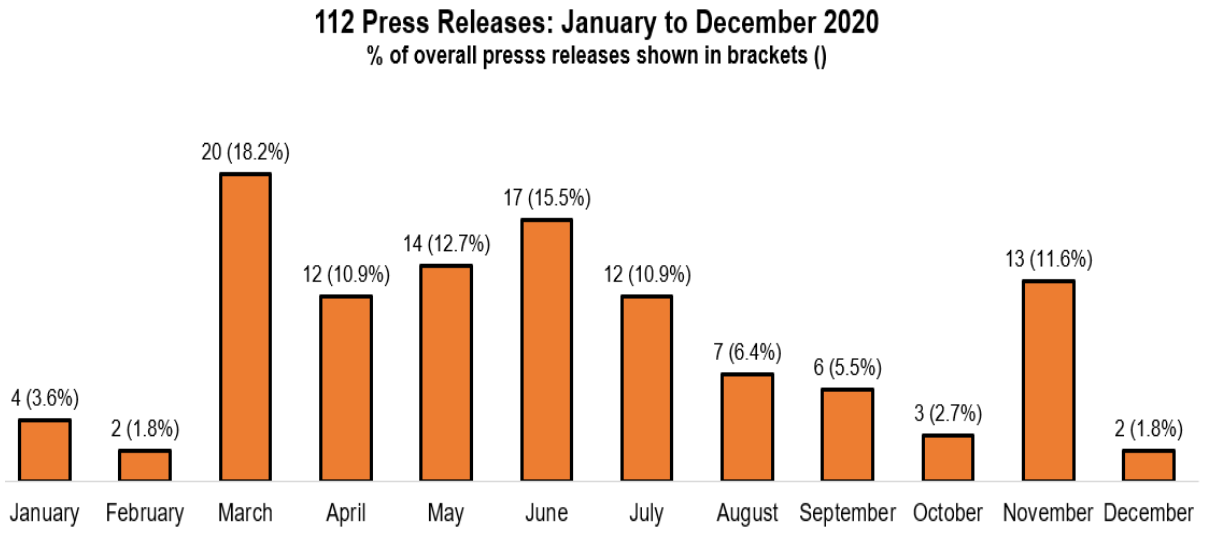


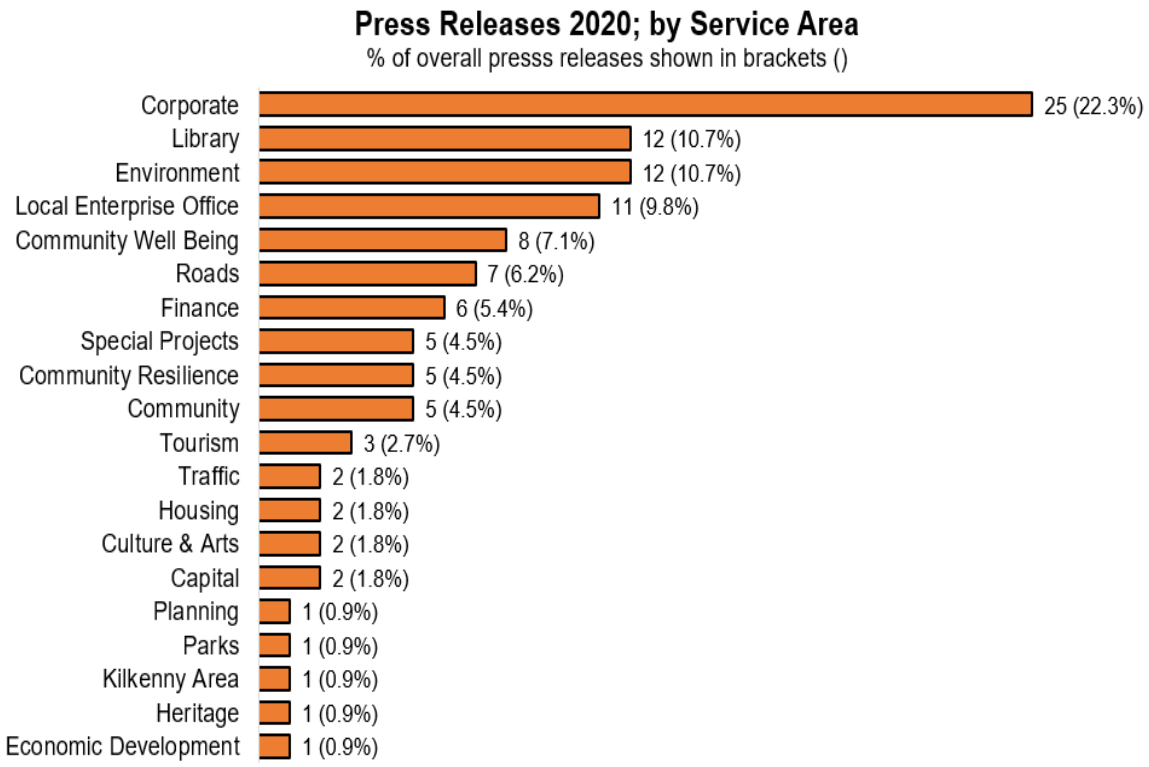


	Tourism	KCC	Heritage	Env awarenes ss	Invest kk	Dunmore	Library	Yulefest	
2018	30599	5586	2592	706	398	331	2607		42819
2019	36499	6654	2660	900	570	431	3674		51388
2020	39683	8585	3015	1019	757	666	4884	8968	67577


Facebook Reach(main page only)
Q4
Q3
Q2
Q1
0
500000
1000000
1500000
2000000
2500000
3000000
3500000
4000000
4500000
5000000
2018
2019
2020


Twitter Followers
kilkenny library
invest kilkenny
Kilkenny arts office
kilkenny notices
visit kilkenny
kilkenny
Twitter Followers
0
10000
20000
30000
40000
50000
60000
70000
80000
90000
2018
2019
2020


112 Press Releases: January to December 2020
% of overall presss releases shown in brackets ()
4 (3.6%)
2 (1.8%)
20 (18.2%)
12 (10.9%)
14 (12.7%)
17 (15.5%)
12 (10.9%)
7 (6.4%)
6 (5.5%)
3 (2.7%)
13 (11.6%)
2 (1.8%)
January
February
March
April
May
June
July
August
September
October
November
December


Press Releases 2020; by Service Area
% of overall presss releases shown in brackets ()
Corporate 25 (22.3%)
Library 12 (10.7%)
Environment 12 (10.7%)
Local Enterprise Office 11 (9.8%)
Community Well Being 8 (7.1%)
Roads 7 (6.2%)
Finance 6 (5.4%)
Special Projects 5 (4.5%)
Community Resilience 5 (4.5%)
Community 5 (4.5%)
Tourism 3 (2.7%)
Traffic 2 (1.8%)
Housing 2 (1.8%)
Culture & Arts 2 (1.8%)
Capital 2 (1.8%)
Planning 1 (0.9%)
Parks 1 (0.9%)
Kilkenny Area 1 (0.9%)
Heritage 1 (0.9%)
Economic Development 1 (0.9%)

HUMAN RESOURCES

The objective of the Human Resources Department is "to ensure that there is an appropriately resourced, skilled and motivated workforce to meet the priorities and objectives of the Organisation and to ensure as reasonably practical the safety, health and wellbeing of all our staff".

The Human Resources Department vision is to provide effective strategic and operational support as a business partner to service delivery units of the Authority.

The Human Resources Department deals with the following areas:

- Human Resource Strategy
- Workforce Planning
- Recruitment and Selection
- Payroll and Superannuation
- Employee Training and Development
- Performance Management
- Leadership Development
- Equality
- Diversity Management
- Work-Life Balance
- Industrial Relations
- Data Analytics
- Employee Health, Safety and Welfare

The Human Resource Service in 2020 was impacted significantly by the Covid 19 pandemic and the public health restrictions imposed during the year. The impact ranged from a temporary cessation of service to radical changes to the service delivery model – affecting both the scope and nature of service delivery. The restrictions required services to quickly adapt to facilitate business continuity whilst observing public health protocols. Our Recruitment service quickly moved to video interview format whilst the proportion of online delivered training modules also increased significantly. Increased emphasis was place on employee welfare to support staff facing the challenges of the pandemic both in work and home life.

Staffing Levels
The number of staff employed at 31st December, 2020 was 668 *(Headcount)* or 565.84 *(Whole-Time-Equivalent)*. The Human Resource Department coordinates the ongoing management of the work force plans; managing new entrants, staff transfers and staff departures with line management colleagues.

Recruitment
There was a total of 22 competitions held during the year which resulted in 31 new staff *(indoor & outdoor)* being employed in the organisation.

Summer Student & Lifeguard Programme
The Council employed 6 students during the summer months of 2020 to cover the area of Litter Cleaning, Gardening and other seasonal work under this programme. This number was down on previous years due to the COVID Pandemic.

There were also 19 Lifeguards employed throughout the County during the summer period of 2020.

Shared Payroll & Superannuation Service
This service is delivered by My Pay the Local Government Shared Services Provider from its offices in Portlaoise Co Laois with support from Kilkenny Human Resources Department. Kilkenny County Council successfully completed the transition of the Superannuation function for the Council to the Shared Service Centre in January 2019.

Attendance Management
The Local Government Sectors Attendance Management Policy was revised in 2013 and revised sick pay schemes were introduced for the Sector. Absenteeism levels continue to be managed in accordance with these policies with particular attention to Covid 19 related absences. The Authority has seen improved reduced levels of absences year on year.

In response to the pandemic, the Human Resource Department supported the Authority's implementation of significant and widescale changes to work attendance practices to ensure business continuity and to support staff. This included implementation of widescale remote working patterns, the temporary assignment scheme to the HSE and the Community Call initiative.

Training & Development
Kilkenny County Council is committed to ensuring the professional and personal development of all employees. Training and development is aimed at helping employees to become more effective in their jobs and developing their potential, while also meeting the goals and objectives of the Council. A comprehensive training programme was delivered in 2020 which incorporated mandatory training, work related and personal development programmes. This included Health & Safety training, Third level Learning Programmes and various other in-house training workshops. A sample of the training programmes provided in 2020 is as follows:

- Manual Handling
- Safe Pass
- Abrasive Wheels
- Confined Spaces
- Banksman
- Safety Representative Training
- Child Protection training
- Driver CPC
- Location of Underground Services
- CSCS Signing, Lighting & Guarding Training
- Mobile Elevated Work Platform Training
- Dealing with Difficult Violent & Aggression
- First Aid Response Refresher
- Customer Care Training
- Leadership Training
- Supervisory Management Training
- Library Services Training
- Local Government Studies

Kilkenny County Council endeavours, subject to available resources, to facilitate and support staff personal development wishing to pursue Third Level Courses that are relevant to and contribute to their role and the business need of the Council.

Equality & Supporting Diversity
Kilkenny County Council is an equal opportunity employer and is committed to a broad range of policies, practices and procedures which aim to recognise individual contribution and performance, develop each individual's capability and give everyone an equal opportunity to use his/her talent and realise his/her potential.

Kilkenny County Council supports the employment of people with disabilities and meets the target as set out by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

Data Analytics
Kilkenny County Council Human Resources commenced a new human resource data analytics sub programme in 2020. The objective of the programme is to use people data to solve business problems and to provide insight into our workforce, HR policies and practices. Ultimately the programme will support evidenced based decision making in human resource strategic and operations management.

Industrial Relations
Kilkenny County Council Human Resources engages positively with staff union representatives to address issues in a proactive positive manner.

INTERNAL AUDIT

The Audit Committee is made up of three external members and two elected members. The current audit committee was established by resolution of the Council upon nomination by the Corporate Policy Group and following consultation with the Chief Executive. The term of the committee is concurrent with that of the current Council which commenced on 1st June 2019 and will terminate on 31st May 2024. Its role is:

- To review the Council's financial reporting practices and procedures
- To foster the development of best practice in the local authority internal audit function
- To review the Council's financial reports and to report on its findings
- To assess and promote efficiency and value for money
- To review systems that are operated by the local authority for the management of risks.

There were four Audit Committee meetings held in 2020. Three of these meetings were held remotely due to COVID-19 restrictions. During the year the Committee met with the Local Government Auditor and various line managers to discuss a broad range of issues. Areas of priority included:

- Annual Budget 2021
- Annual Financial Statement 2019
- Financial Implications of Covid-19
- Impact of COVID-19 on Kilkenny County Council Services
- Internal Audit Reports
- Key Capital Projects
- Local Government Audit Service Statutory Report 2019
- NOAC Reports
- Tourism and Economic Development

Each year a new plan of work for Internal Audit is designed and prepared based on risk evaluation and on consultation with management of the Council and the Audit Committee. Covid-19 had an impact on the completion of the Internal Audit Plan in 2020. Internal Audit staff were redeployed to cover essential services in other areas of the council during the first lockdown period. The list of Internal Audit Assignments carried out in 2020 included as follows:

- Public Spending Code – In Depth Review of Capital and Revenue Projects.
- Housing Development at Crokershill
- Housing Loans
- HR Exit Process
- Social Housing Acquisitions
- Amenity Grants
- Payroll Process

ROADS & TRANSPORTATION

Road Maintenance
2020 Roadwork's Scheme for County Kilkenny was adopted by the Elected Members adopted in March 2020 amounting to € 29.44m for all works to our county roads.

Kilkenny was successful in securing funds in 2020 under the CLÁR Programme/Town and Village Renewal and accelerated Covid measures. Allocations amounting to €77,000 /€574,826 and €461,200 were allocated respectively. Funding under these initiatives allows for social distancing measures, investment in enhancement, permeability and safety improvement works in towns, villages and the rural areas within the County.

€264k was allocated under the Local Improvement Scheme (LIS) scheme for works on non-public roads.

Roads Capital Projects & Improvements
The past decade has seen continued significant capital expenditure invested in road schemes in County Kilkenny. In 2020, Kilkenny received grant aid of €11.4m for the advancement of projects and maintenance of National Roads.

MAJOR PROJECTS

N25 New Ross By-Pass
TII awarded the PPP Contract to a BAM Iridium consortium in January 2016. The PPP Council's contractor for the works was BAM Civil Ltd and Dragados Ireland Limited joint venture. Works commenced on site in February 2016, were substantially complete by Q4 2019. The scheme opened to traffic in January 2020.

N25 Glenmore to Waterford Major Scheme
An allocation of €750,000 was provided in 2020 to advance this Scheme. The planning and design of this scheme is in the final stages of Phase 2 (Option Selection) and expected to move to Phase 3 (Design and Environmental Evaluation) in late Q1 2021. The selection of the Preferred Route Corridor (Phase 2 - Option Selection) is expected to be announced during Q1 2021.

N24 Waterford to Cahir Major Scheme
In Q3 of 2020, TII gave approval to Kilkenny County Council to advance the planning and design stage of this scheme for an engineering consultant contract to Arups. Kilkenny County Council is the lead authority on the project through a Section 85 agreement with Tipperary County Council. The scheme is presently within Phase 1 (Concept & Feasibility) which is expected to conclude in 2021.

MINOR WORKS PROGRAMME
Under the Minor Works Programme, financed by TII, Kilkenny County Council has made significant progress with respect to the following:

N24 Carrick Road Minor Improvement Scheme
An allocation of €250,000 was provided in 2020 to advance the design stage of this Scheme and the preparation of documentation for the statutory approvals stage. It is expected that the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Order application will be made to An Bord Pleanála during Q2 2021.

N24 Tower Road Junction Improvement Scheme
An allocation of €1,750,000 was provided in 2020 to advance this scheme. Part 8 Planning Approval for the scheme was secured in April 2019. The application to An Bord Pleanála for approval of the Compulsory Order Stage was submitted on the 25th October 2019. Following objections, an Oral Hearing was held in March 2020. CPO approval was received in August 2020. The necessary steps to give effect to that decision are continuing with construction expected to start in Q3 2021.

N77 Ballyragget to Ballynaslee Improvement Scheme
An allocation of €250,000 was provided in 2020 to advance the design stage of this Scheme and the preparation of documentation for the statutory approvals stage. Two concurrent applications to An Bord Pleanála under Section 177AE and Compulsory Purchase Order Approval was made in December 2020. A decision is expected in Q3 2021.

N78 Castlecomer Pedestrian Bridge
The Bridge Management Office in the Kildare Regional Design Office is advancing the planning and design of the bridge through a Section 85 agreement with Kilkenny County Council. The application for planning approval was submitted to An Bord Pleanála on the 4th October 2019. Following objections, an Oral Hearing was held in March 2020. CPO approval was received in May 2020. The conditions attached to the approval require the main works as they affect the river to be undertaken only during the summer months. The tender for construction was issued in December 2020 with a closing date in February 2021. The funding for the new pedestrian bridge is being provided by TII with construction commencement during late Q2 2021 through to late 2021.

National Pavement Improvement Programme
Under the Pavement Improvement and Minor Works Programme, financed by TII, Kilkenny County Council has made significant progress with respect to the following:

N76 Ballymack to Castletobin/Brownstown to Ballybur/Cuffesgrange:
This project consisted of approximately 4.8km pavement improvement overlay and other associated works. The project was completed during 2020 by Priority Construction Ltd for a contract value of €2,217,817 ex VAT.

N77 Oldtown to Ballyragget:
The design and tender documentation preparation for this scheme progressed during 2020. It is expected that the tender documentation will issue during the latter end of Q1 2021.

N76 Riversfield to Ahanure North:
The design and tender documentation preparation for this scheme progressed during 2020. It is expected that the tender documentation will issue during the latter end of Q1 2021.

NATIONAL ROAD MAINTENANCE WORKS

Kilkenny County Council undertook both mechanical abrasion and surface course replacement works to address surface pavement issues across the national road network:

N25 Curraghmore.
The works at this location were a combined pavement/safety scheme. The pavement element of this project consisted of approximately 1.3 km pavement improvement overlay and other associated works. The project was completed during 2020 by Priority Construction Ltd for a total contract value of €600,000 ex VAT.

N77 Baun to Hennebrys Cross
A contract was tendered and awarded towards the end of 2020 for the N77 Baun to Hennebrys Cross for a contract value of approximately €740,000. Works are expected to commence towards in Q1 2021.

N25, N77 National Roads
Mechanical Abrasion works to the value of €65,000 were undertaken at various locations on the national road network including N25 Shed Factory, N25 Ballyrahan and N77 Castlecomer Road Roundabout.

National Road Capital Maintenance Works
Works to the value of just under €400,000 were completed on two schemes on the N77 Ballyragget to Ballynaslee during 2020.

HD15 Safety Improvement Works on the National Road Network
Funding of €285,000 was spent during 2020 as part of a joint safety/pavement scheme on the N25 in the vicinity of Curraghmore to facilitate the provision of dedicated right turning lanes at specific junctions.

The progression of other HD15 schemes was also advanced during 2020.

Fencing Retrofit on the National Road Network
Kilkenny County Council spent just under €127,950 (Including VAT) during 2020 having received an initial allocation of €25,000 at the beginning of 2020. This provides for the replacement of old concrete post and rail fencing with passively safe fencing. The funding provided for the completion of works on the N25, N77 and N78.

Kilkenny LED Replacement Programme National Roads
Kilkenny County Council completed works during 2020 to the value of just under €36,000 to undertake retro fits of public lights as part of energy efficiency improvements on the National Road network. The locations addressed included N29 Port Road, N77/78 Henneby's Cross, N77 Dunmore and N24 Granny.

NON- NATIONAL ROAD NETWORK

Restoration Improvement and Restoration Maintenance Programme 2020
The main road improvements on the Non-National road network are funded from the Road Restoration Improvement and Maintenance Grant Scheme. The Council received a grant allocation of €14.9m in 2020. Works under this funding Scheme are prioritised on a basis of providing for enhancements to the road condition rating, skid resistance and impermeability. In 2020, 70Km were improved under this Scheme, with 104 km improved under the Restoration Maintenance Programme *(Surface dressing)*. Significant progress has been made on the Non-National road network over the years since the Restoration Grant was introduced and the condition rating of the roads in County Kilkenny compares favourably with that of other Counties.

Non- National Low Cost Safety Programme
The Non- National Low Cost Safety Programme is targeted at locations along the non-national road network which have been identified as collision prone zones. The works carried out under this programme include improved junction delineation and visibility splays, traffic calming, enhanced roadside delineation and pedestrian crossing facilitates within urban areas. 17 schemes were completed under this programme at a cost of €368,000 in 2020.

KEY INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES

Kilkenny Northern Ring Road Extension
A Judicial Review of the 2014 decision by An Bord Pleanala to approve the EIS and CPO for this scheme was sought by 3 local landowners affected by the project. In May 2017 the High Court referred the case to the European Court of Justice. On foot of the European Court of Justice decision, the High Court with the agreement of An Bord Pleanala quashed the decision to approve the EIS and CPO. The Council has now recommenced the planning and design process in order to advance the project. In the time since the original Bord's decision in 2014, the planning and design process has changed. Kilkenny County Council will now be required to prepare an EIAR (Environmental Impact Assessment Report) and to re-do the route selection process (which may likely lead to the need for a revised CPO).

The first element of the planning and design process for this scheme *(Submission of Preliminary Appraisal Form)* was forwarded to the Department of Transport, Tourism, and Sport by Kilkenny County Council in December 2019. Discussions between Kilkenny County Council and the Department to progress this scheme are ongoing.

Kilkenny Western Environs Phase 1 Infrastructure
Construction of the scheme commenced on March 4th 2019. The main contractor appointed for the scheme is SIAC Construction Limited. The scheme completion date has been delayed due to the imposition of COVID -19 restrictions resulting in the closure of construction sites for specified periods. The Circular Road which had been closed to facilitate construction of a new bridge over the River Breagagh, re-opened to traffic in December 2020. The projected completion date of the full scheme is now June 2021.

Kilkenny Western Environs Phase 1 Infrastructure

Kilkenny Western Environs Phase 1 Infrastructure

Additional Safety/Improvements

Kilkenny LED Replacement Programme Non National Roads
Kilkenny County Council is the lead Local Authority for the Public Lighting Energy Enhancement Project for the Eastern Region (PLEEP-ER). The project is currently in the tendering phase and Works Contractor is to be appointed in Q4 of 2021. The installation of the new lanterns in Kilkenny will be completed in Q3 2022.

Public Lighting
Kilkenny County Council maintains approximately 11,000 public lights throughout the County. Following a tendering process Kilkenny and Carlow Local Authorities entered into a new contract with SSE Airtricity in April 2017 for the maintenance of public lighting. The initial period of this contract was set at two years with the possibility of further two- one year extensions. A new tender process will be issued in early Q1 2021 and following tender assessment a contractor is expected to be appointed during Q2 2021.

Road Safety
The Council continues to fund this important function through road safety awareness, the school warden system and the support of community focused road safety campaigns.

The Kilkenny Road Safety Plan 2015 to 2020 was adopted by the Elected Members in July 2015. This Plan sets out a clear blueprint for progress in the area of road safety up to the end of 2020. The Plan is underpinned by a series of defined projects and actions across the core areas of intervention namely, Engineering, Education, Enforcement and Engagement. The plan sets out 45 individual projects with 54 Actions /Targets for the period up to 2020 and the relevant lead agencies are working to deliver same. Kilkenny County Council and An Garda Síochána will continue to cooperate to ensure improvements in road safety in the county.

Cycle Kilkenny 2020
In late 2019, a research partnership was formed with WIT and Kilkenny County Council to cultivate a cycling culture in Kilkenny. In 2020, some of the early findings identified cycling trends and patterns in Kilkenny.

Historically, Kilkenny had much greater levels of cycling then the national average and nearby towns. In 1996, 13.7% of the population cycled for commuter journeys. In 2016, this had dropped to 3.1%, still greater than nearby towns and slightly higher than the national average but a sharp decline compared to 10 years previously. The sharp decline in cycling for commuter journeys is primarily accounted for by the replacement of secondary school journeys with car travel. This increased car dependency is a major concerns in light of rising emissions, decreasing activity levels and a rising population.

Commuter data only relates to journeys to work and school, accounting for less than 1/3 of all journeys. Other journey purposes not captured, include retail, recreation and companion journeys.

A community survey and focus groups were conducted to collate experiences of mobility in Kilkenny of those not represented in the data to date. From the workshops, the three main identified needs were consistent cycle infrastructure throughout the City, safe cycling initiatives for targeted groups and access to bike schemes.

Main Activities for 2020

Mobility Management Planning began in July 2020 with Loreto Secondary School and St. Canice's Primary School in July 2020, in anticipation of the return to school. Agreement was reached with the Agricultural Society on the establishment of a temporary Park and Stride Facility at James' Park. Light segregation of cycle lanes was provided in October to deter illegal parking and cycle to school campaigns were run in conjunction with Kilkenny Day.

Bike Week was postponed until September of 2020 and then run in conjunction with European Mobility Week. Training was delivered to over 200 school children on road cycle, a video of Kilkenny's off-road cycling routes was created, bike maintenance workshops were held on The Parade and a "Get to School on your own Fuel" campaign ran for the month of September.

Throughout the year, work continued with CKLP and the Cycle Kilkenny Group, resulting in an audit of cycling facilities in Kilkenny, the establishment of a brand for Cycle Kilkenny and the procurement of cycle counters for Kilkenny City.

Re-opening our City & County safely and in line with COVID 19 Restrictions

A One-Way System in **K**ilkenny City Centre was introduced
to aid physical distancing on Friday, 19th June, 2020.

August saw the introduction of the first of a number of Outdoor Seated Areas in the Market Yard. The space provides the restaurants and cafes in the area with further seating for their customers where indoor seating does not allow for social distancing.

Additional outdoor seating was also provided on the Mayors Walk in September 2020.

Seating was also provided in the scheduled towns.

Operation & Maintenance
Under Service Level Agreement with Irish Water, Kilkenny County Council manages:

- 22 public drinking water supplies
- 36 public waste water treatment schemes
- 10.37 billion litres of water (27.5 million litres/day) provided to approximately 67,500 customers.

In 2019, Kilkenny's Public Water Schemes achieved:

- 99.5% microbiological compliance.
- 99.6% compliance was achieved for chemical parameters

Note: 2019 is the latest year for which the EPA has published its Drinking Water Quality Report. Tthe 2020 report will be published in 2021.

In line with recent years, the level of environmental compliance achieved at Kilkenny's Waste Water Treatment plants continues to improve. This overall trend is illustrated by the improvement in results recorded in the EPA's Annual Urban Waste Water Reports.

Kilkenny Sludge Management project wins at UK Water Industry Awards
During the year, Irish Water's Kilkenny Sludge Project was recognised at the prestigious Water Industry Awards. The Water Industry Awards recognise excellence in innovation, best practice and customer service across UK and Irish Water companies and their supply chain. While the awards are in their fourteenth year, the Kilkenny Sludge Management project is the first winner of the Asset Optimisation Initiative of the Year category.

The Kilkenny Sludge Project involved taking a combined approach to sludge management across the Troyswood Water Treatment Plant and the Purcellsinch Wastewater Treatment Plant. The project has resulted in financial savings of over €140,000 per annum, as well as significantly reducing energy consumption, chemical use and the amount of sludge going to landfill. The project was a result of collaboration between Kilkenny County Council and Irish Water's Process Optimisation and Regional Operations teams.

Sludge is a natural by-product of the water treatment process which is typically sent to landfill. Under the new approach, the sludge is transferred from Troyswood Water Treatment plant to the Purcellsinch Wastewater Treatment plant, where it can be used as part of the wastewater treatment process.

Irish Water and Kilkenny County Council were delighted with the outcome of this project. As well as improving the cost-effectiveness and sustainability of the services provided in Kilkenny, it is also very valuable as a proof-of-concept and proof-of-benefit pilot project. It provides a clear template which Irish Water can apply to other facilities around the country. The Water Industry Awards judges described the project as a great example of resource recovery to produce operational benefits.

Capital Projects
The following is an overview of the major improvements being undertaken in County Kilkenny. Progression of the project to tender is contingent on budget availability and budgetary approvals.

Inistioge Water Supply Scheme
This €12m water supply scheme involved the construction of 18.7 Km of new water mains, 2 new reservoirs, 2 new borewells and a new booster pumping station along with upgrades to existing infrastructure. Works commenced on site in August 2017 and are now complete. The scheme was brought into operation in January 2020.

Upgraded water treatment facility at Grennan, Thomastown to facilitate the Inistioge WSS

Kilkenny City Regional Water Supply Scheme
This scheme involves upgrading the existing Troyswood Water Treatment Plant and ancillary works to facilitate the decommissioning of the existing water treatment plant in Radestown. Planning permission and the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) for the required wayleaves was granted, without modification by An Bord Pleanala in late 2019. The CPO (under the PDA 2000) was confirmed by Irish Water in 2020. The tendering process for the construction contract is expected to be completed in early 2021. Works are due to start subject to funding, in mid-2021.

Gowran Regional Water Supply Scheme
This scheme involves the construction of a new water treatment plant, reservoir, rising mains, development of two abstraction boreholes and decommissioning of an existing plant. The project will increase the water supply capacity to Gowran, Goresbridge & Paulstown and will enable growth and development in the local area. Planning for the scheme was granted in September 2019. Preparation of tender documents are at an advanced stage.

Mullinavat Waste Water Treatment Plant
This scheme involves the construction of a new wastewater treatment plant on a greenfield site, a new outfall to the River Blackwater, a new pumping station and some network improvements. Planning permission has been granted for this project. Negotiations are ongoing with respect to land and it is likely a CPO will be required to complete the required land acquisitions. The detailed design of the scheme is ongoing and will be completed once all land issues are resolved.

Inistioge Waste Water Treatment Plant
This scheme involves the construction of a new wastewater treatment plant, upgrading of the existing pumping station and some network improvements. Planning Permission has been granted for the project and all land and wayleave acquisitions are complete as are the site investigation works. Detailed design of the scheme is ongoing.

Kilkenny City Drainage Area Plan
This project involves the mapping and modelling of the existing sewer network in the City and will allow an assessment of the capacity, condition and performance level of the sewer network. Once complete this plan will help to improve the performance of the wastewater networks, protect the environment and facilitate social and economic development over the coming years. An advanced survey of the 'Breagagh Valley Sewer & Branches' was completed in February 2019 with subsequent hydraulic modelling carried out. The main survey works commenced in April 2019 and is expected to be completed in early 2021.

Kilkenny City Control Valves
Two pressure reducing valves (PRV's) were installed in November 2020 on the primary trunk mains feeding Kilkenny City from Troyswood and Radestown treatment plants. These remotely controlled hydraulically actuated PRV's will replace existing throttled valves which currently reduce pressures in the network in proportion to the flow through the valves, resulting in high pressures at night and reduced pressures at peak demand periods. The new valves will allow a constant downstream pressure into the system.

The installation of the new PRVs has substantial operational control benefits and will generate more stable network pressures, which in turn will reduce stresses on the network which is likely to reduce the number of bursts and improve asset life.

The generation of more stable pressures within the Kilkenny City network will allow for increased pressure management applications and have a direct affect on levels of leakage. It is predicted that leakage savings in the range of 0.5 Ml per day (500m3/day) can be expected on completion of the works.

Hydraulic modelling carried out by Irish Water has concluded that the replacement of the existing throttled valves with the new PRV's would enable the existing network to service the proposed Western Environs development through the existing infrastructure plus laying of local connecting mains to the developments.

Rural Water Programme
The EPA is the Supervising Authority for public water supplies. Kilkenny County Council is the Supervising Authority for private water supplies in County Kilkenny, which fall under the Drinking Water Regulations. There are 144 small Private Supplies (SPS), which typically include schools, food premises and rural housing estates.

The Council manages and allocates Government Grants approved under the Rural Water Programme for group water and waste water schemes, in addition to private wells grants.

- 195 Group Water Schemes in County Kilkenny
- 125 are served from own sources
- 70 are served from public mains
- 52 Group Schemes were paid €433,566 Group Subsidies towards the operational running costs of Water Schemes
- 187 grant applications were approved for the provision of wells to private houses
- €257,510 was paid out in well grants.
- Ashglen, Ballydonnel, & Legan GWS were taken in Charge by Irish Water

In this challenging year (due to Covid 19) some of the planned projects under the Rural Water Programme for 2020 did not commence but works to the value of €341,799 was paid by the Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government to Kilkenny County Council.

This work includes

- € 66,802 for Source Protection
- €106,211 for Treatment Upgrades and Rationalisation/ Amalgamation Projects
- €163,215 for mains replacements, water conservation and metering
- € 5,571 on TIC of GWS by Irish Water

Kilree\Stoneyford GWS -Source Protection Works

Flood Relief Schemes

The first two (2) Flood Relief Schemes advanced in 2020 out of the total six (6) for the entire County:

Ballyhale Flood Relief Scheme - €430,000
Kilkenny County Council signed a contract with DBFL Consulting Engineers in March 2020 to advance the Ballyhale Flood Relief Scheme in partnership with our funding authority, the OPW.
Each project will go through the following 5 Stages:

Stage 1: Option Assessment and Scheme Development and Design
Stage 2: Planning/ Public Exhibition
Stage 3: Detailed Design and Tender
Stage 4: Construction
Stage 5: Handover of Works

Stage 1 of the project commenced in March 2020 and is due for completion in July 2021 with a complete Hydrology & Hydraulic assessment of the Ballyhale River. A full topographical survey and a number of Environmental Surveys were completed in Q3 of 2020. An EIAR will also be completed for Stage 1.
A public consultation was held online via the ***consult.kilkenny*** portal in May 2020 where the public were asked to submit their views and comments.

Graiguenamanagh Flood Relief Scheme - €9.06 Million
Kilkenny County Council as the lead authority in partnership with Carlow County Council and the OPW signed the contract with Byrne Looby & Partners to advance and implement a Flood Relief Scheme for Graiguenamanagh and Tinnahinch in March 2020.

The project entails five (5) Stages and the Graiguenamanagh Flood Relief Scheme is currently in Stage 1. Stage 1 commenced in March 2020 and is due to be completed in November 2021. This involves the completion of the Hydrology & Hydraulic Assessment of both the Barrow and Duiske Rivers. An Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) will form part of Stage 1. A dedicated website for the project went live in Q2 of 2020. The public have access to view all documents relating to this project.

Signing of the Contract with Byrne Looby & Partners
March 2020

DIRECTORATE OF HOUSING, SOCIAL, COMMUNITY & CULTURAL SERVICES

Director of Services: Ms. Mary J. Mulholland

HOUSING & ACCOMMODATION

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. This is achieved by offering a variety of social housing supports by the Housing Authority, Voluntary Groups and Private Sector. The delivery of housing support is a client based service and requires close engagement with families and individuals. During 2020 the restrictions imposed by the Covid 19 Pandemic presented serious challenges to service delivery. With the support of the public and the dedication of our housing staff all essential services were maintained throughout 2020.

Housing Capital Programme 2020

2020 saw the delivery of 102 newly constructed homes throughout Kilkenny, with 30 of these homes located in Kilkenny City and 72 around the County at locations including Callan, Piltown and Ferrybank. These homes were provided under the Rebuilding Ireland housing delivery programme. Under this programme Kilkenny County Council aims to provide 600 homes through construction, leasing and acquisition during the period 2018 to 2021. While the delivery of housing was less than anticipated during 2020, due to the closure of construction sites, where possible local authority and Approved Housing Body sites were designated as essential works maintaining construction to achieve delivery as early as possible in 2021.

Kilkenny County Council Social Housing Delivery Output 2020			
Build	LA New Build	63	95
	AHB New Build	28	
	Part V -New Build	4	
Acquisition	LA Acquisitions	21	63
	AHB / CALF Acquisition	42	
Leasing	Leasing	25	25
		Total Build / Acquisition / Leasing	183

Capital Delivery Programme
Mix of 1, 2, 3 and 4 bed houses

38 Units at Hoban Park, Bolton, Callan

One of the first Nearly Zero Energy Building residential schemes built in Ireland
A2 and A3 BER rating

17 Units at Breagagh Place, Piltown

Handover at Breagagh Place Piltown

Group home at Cloghabrody, Thomastown under the Decongregation Programme for St Patrick's.

Group Home at Garraun, Windgap, Co.Kilkenny Good Shepherd AHB in conjunction with Kilkenny County Council

28 Units at Nuncio Road, Kilkenny
Respond Housing AHB in conjunction with Kilkenny County Council

Buy & Renew Scheme

Conversion of Windgap Health Centre to Housing Unit

Refurbishment of 47 Barrack St, Castlecomer

Schemes under Construction as at 31st December, 2020
More than 8 sites with 163 new houses were under construction by Kilkenny County Council at a total contract value of €38m at 31st December, 2020. These homes are being provided at Castlecomer, Ballyragget, Mooncoin, Kilkenny, Kilmacow and other locations. A further 54 homes at Kilkenny City and Graiguenamanagh were completed at year end and will be allocated to families in early 2021.

Schemes in the Delivery Pipeline as at 31st December, 2020
More than 222 additional homes across 15 sites are at various stages of design, planning and procurement at the end of year 2020. These include projects for delivery by both Kilkenny County Council and Approved Housing Bodies at Thomastown, Kilkenny City, Ferrybank, Freshford, Johnstown and Urllingford. The estimated contract value of these sites is in excess of €50m and represents an ambitious housing delivery programme for our county over the next five years. We continue to add to this delivery pipeline on a weekly basis working closely with developers, Approved Housing Bodies and individual property owners to develop more sites for social housing delivery. A further six locations are being considered for possible development.

Traveller Accommodation Programme
The current Traveller Accommodation Programme for the period 1st July 2019 – 30th June 2024 adopted by the Elected Members on 16th September, 2019 includes a target to deliver 66 housing solutions for traveller families up to June 2024. These housing solutions will be delivered through construction, acquisition and leasing. The majority of housing solutions required will be delivered as part of our standard housing delivery programme with a lesser amount provided as part of Traveller Specific delivery projects. During 2020 24 offers of accommodation were made to Traveller families in Kilkenny with one newly constructed Traveller Specific housing unit completed.

Vacant Homes
During 2020, our Vacant Homes Officer continued to investigate vacant homes around Kilkenny City and County and commenced more than 15 projects under the Repair to Lease and Buy & Renew Schemes as a direct result of contact with the property owner. In identifying vacant homes and available sites with those homes, projects are being developed to provide viable housing sites within existing towns and villages. The work of the Vacant Homes Team in Johnstown has resulted in a housing development of more than 10 homes. Increased support to property owners has resulted in an increase in applications to repair and lease underutilised town centre properties and this work is critical to town centre regeneration.

During 2020, more than 10 Compulsory Purchase Orders were issued in respect of vacant or underutilised residential properties and this work will be increased during 2021 to further support the regeneration of existing communities and revitalise streets and town centres where feasible. Many of these sites are complex and protected and the Vacant Homes Officer offers support to owners to identify pathways to residential reuse.

Rental Accommodation Scheme [RAS] & Housing Assistance Payment [HAP]
The Council continues to support families in securing affordable private rented properties under the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Scheme. 2020 saw a marked increase in requests for support under this scheme as household incomes became directly impacted by Covid 19. Housing staff assisted 854 HAP tenancies during 2020 to ensure that tenancies were maintained.

Under the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) 466 households were assisted in securing and maintaining tenancies working directly with landlords under this scheme.

Homeless Services 2019
The Homeless Services Team have increased the emphasis on Homeless Placefinder and Homeless Prevention and Support Services. During 2020, we received 252 homeless presentations. Of these cases 121 were prevented from becoming homeless with an intervention form the Homeless Services Team.

A further 88 cases were provided with emergency accommodation and 43 were either not provided with emergency accommodation or did not avail of services offered. The increasing role of prevention and intervention in homeless services has significantly reduced the numbers requiring emergency services leading to better outcomes for those finding themselves in crisis situations.

Our Homeless Placefinder service secured 48 new tenancies for those in homelessness or at risk of homelessness during 2020. While individuals and families continue to encounter homelessness our housing service is succeeding to provide real alternatives to emergency accommodation. The reduction in numbers in emergency services is not as a result in a reduction in those presenting as homeless but is a result of improved prevention and support services.

Disability Strategy
The Housing & Disability Steering Group met on 4 occasions during 2020.

Issues discussed:

- De-Congregation of St. Patrick's.
- Mental Health Transfer Project
- Housing Delivery/Capital Schemes
- Support for Tenancy and Recovering Targets (S.T.A.R.T)
- National Disability Strategy Review
- Allocations & Assessments
- Revised Medical Application Form
- Independent Living

The de-congregation of St Patrick's progressed well during 2020 with all residents relocated back into community type accommodation. This programme of decongregation from St. Patrick's involved the relocation of more than 85 clients across 36 properties provided by Kilkenny County Council, Approved Housing Bodies and private rented units. As a collaborative, interagency project it has been delivered successfully within a very short timeframe and has been a huge achievement during 2019 and 2020.

Assessment of Needs
The Housing Needs Assessment Summary Report was completed and the number of approved applicants **(Net Need)** on our Housing Waiting List at 30th November, 2020 was 836. *(The Net Need figure excludes transfers, RAS and HAP)*. 2020 saw a marked increase in applications for housing support with 331 applications assessed during the year.

Housing List
The gross Housing Demand at 31st December 2020 was 1899 and a comparative analysis with previous years is outlined below:

Year	Number on Housing List
December 2020	1,899
December 2019	1,988
December 2018	2,070
December 2017	2,180
December 2016	2,059
December 2015	2,744

Year	Number on Housing List
December 2014	2,456
December 2013	2,144
December 2012	3,688
December 2011	3,118
December 2010	2,876

Housing Allocations
As a result of Covid 19 restrictions, new housing allocations were delayed for a period in 2020 and in many cases delayed as families experienced difficulties in securing household items for their new homes.

409 tenancies were offers to approved Social Housing Applicants in 2020

	Kilkenny County Council	%	Approved Housing Body	%
Allocations Offered	201		208	
Offers Accepted	134	67%	110	53%
Offers Refused	48	24%	45	22%
Decisions Pending	19	9%	53	25%

It is proposed to introduce Choice Based Letting during 2021 to streamline the allocation of housing.

Anti-Social Behaviour
There was a marked increase in reports of anti-social behaviour during 2020 with many households experiencing the stresses of lockdown situations. Our Tenant Liaison Team deal with all reports of anti-social behaviour. An Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy was adopted by the Elected Members of Kilkenny County Council in December 2020. This strategy is a proactive framework to prevent and address anti-social behaviour where it occurs.

The framework involves interagency actions to combat serious issues arising and will see the Elected Members of the Local Authority take an active role in monitoring anti-social behaviour and ensuring that the appropriate actions are taken. 658 complaints were received in 2020 which is 230 more than 2019. This has created huge challenges for our staff in dealing with matters under Covid-19 restrictions. All complaints are investigated fully and fairly with a commitment to enforcement action where improvements are not made.

Maintaining Housing Stock
Due to Covid 19 restrictions, housing maintenance works were limited to essential repairs. 5,341 calls were received requesting 6,612 repairs. Where possible and appropriate our staff carried out repairs including 4,305 items representing 76% of all repair calls made. The safety of both tenants and staff during the year was paramount and where maintenance issues have been deferred they will be reviewed post Covid 19 restrictions.

In 2020, 4 properties were extended at a cost of €153,185 with an allocation received from the Department of €131,867.

Voids
An allocation in the amount of €725,366 was made to Kilkenny County Council during 2020 to carry out works to vacant or void properties to bring them back into use as quickly as possible. 74 properties were refurbished under the voids programme.

Energy Efficiency Retrofitting Programme
12 units were upgraded under the Energy Efficiency Retrofitting Programme at a cost of €266,197. An allocation of €227,828 was made available to Kilkenny County Council for these insulation and energy upgrade works.

Housing Loans & Tenant Purchase Scheme
During 2020 Affordable Homes were made available for purchase in Callan under the Incremental Purchase Scheme. Three properties were sold under this scheme. A further seven homes were sold under the Tenant Purchase Scheme.

57 .....Loan Applications Received

17 .....Loans Approved *[Value €2.4m]*

20 .....Loans Paid *[Value €2.9m]*

€145K.....Average Loan Paid

Mortgage To Rent
The Mortgage to Rent Scheme is a government scheme to help homeowners who are at risk of losing their homes due to mortgage arrears. The scheme lets homeowners in mortgage difficulty switch from owning their home to renting their home as a social housing tenant. The scheme is administered by the local authority and is a real option to help families in financial distress to retain their family homes. In 2020 our housing team assisted 22 families to stay in their family homes under this scheme.

Housing Private Grants

Grants Paid out up to 31st December 2020		
Scheme	**No.**	**Amount**
HGD - Housing Adaptation Grant	81	€862,879
MAG - Mobility Aid Grant	34	€127,169
HOP - Housing Aid for Older Persons	87	€452,864
Total	**202**	**€1,442,912**

The following are some of the Covid-19 related challenges in relation to Housing Grants in 2020:

- Majority of grants applicants are elderly or very ill and have been advised to cocoon.
- Contractors unable to carry out works, source materials or provide quotations during restrictions.
- Contractors had to delay starting works as they were unable to access applicant's home.
- Occupational Therapists were unable to carry out assessments during earlier restrictions. They did resume work but need to follow restrictions/guidelines from HSE.
- Housing Department continued to process applications. Desktop assessments have been carried out by Housing Technical staff where possible as site inspections could not be carried out.

AGE FRIENDLY

Kilkenny Age Friendly Alliance is a multi-agency voluntary partnership that works closely with older people in Kilkenny. The Alliance meets regularly throughout the year and is responsible for the development and implementation of Kilkenny's Age Friendly Strategy 2017-2022.

The Alliance is currently chaired by the chief Executive of Kilkenny County Council, Ms. Colette Byrne. Membership of the Alliance represents a number of organisations such as HSE, Garda Siochana, Age Friendly Ireland, Leader Partnership, Chamber of Commerce, Kilkenny Sports partnership and Kilkenny Seniors Council.

Kilkenny County Council

- Published online and circulated Annual Age Friendly Report.
- New website developed by National Age Friendly Group, Kilkenny County Council populated the Kilkenny portal with local information.
- Walking routes, suitable lighting, age friendly seating and outdoor gyms provided in towns/villages.
- Grant applications for town & village renewal grants for age friendly initiatives submitted by the Council.
- Progressing McDonagh as an Age Friendly Train Station.
- Grant funding received for the purchase of tablets for use in Nursing Homes.
- Funding received under the Keep Well Campaign spent on age friendly collaborative activities - radio programme, digital support for older people in Nursing Homes and age friendly promotional material.
- Design and Craft Council under the National Creative Initiative put in place a national programme for everyone to participate in various craft projects.
- Creative Ireland organising concerts for Care Homes/Hospitals in the County.

Kilkenny County Library Service

- Bealtaine programme spread throughout the year.
- Door to door library service established, the book and browse service put in place.
- Community Wellbeing initiatives launched– including a series of Mindfulness Videos, Virtual Radio book clubs and online audio talks/podcast on local history

Kilkenny Recreation and Sports Partnership

- Activities classes organised throughout the County - Aqua Aerobics, Older Adult Swimming Lessons, Pilates and Chair Based Exercises, Older Adults Activity Classes, ExWell exercise programme, etc depending on COVID restrictions.
- Series of programmes provided - Monday Night walks, Cycling Without Age., Gym & New Programme Active for Life, Go for Life Games & Bike Week, & Men on the move pilot programme.
- Resource and exercise booklet distributed to help the elderly/disabled during lockdown.
- Organised activity bags for Nursing Homes, stencils for School Yards and rolled out work place programmes.
- An Intergenerational project developed with support from the OPC and KLP.

An Garda Siochána

- Crime spot/ Community assist on Kilkenny Community Radio, ½ hour every week.
- Local Policing Participation, Operation Home Safe & Victim & Community Engagement Office in place at the start of the year.
- Hospital Watch started in February
- Multi visit programme for areas with no garda station began in January but had to be curtailed because of Covid.

- List of vulnerable people complied for emergency response with the help of the HSE.
- Gardai assisted the community during the pandemic with delivering groceries, collecting prescriptions and providing assistance where needed.
- Community and Business engagement ongoing as places reopened and closed during the pandemic.

Kilkenny Seniors Forum

- AGM held on 5th February with over 50 attendees.
- The OPC worked with Alone to provide a telephone befriending service in Kilkenny.
- Overview of Alone activities in Kilkenny - 78 Volunteers, 420 calls each week to older people.
- The OPC contributed to the Positive ageing strategy and the ICPOP - integrated care for older people.
- Annual Report included the achievements for the year.
- Launch programmes for Acorn Tablets to help with social isolation during the pandemic, training given and engaged with ICA and AR to promote resource.
- OPC moved to offices in MacDonagh Junction and are sharing with the PPN.
- Healthy Ireland Coordinator Kilkenny asked OPC to take part in transport survey.
- OPC participated in the sub group of the Keep Well Campaign (staying active and staying connected). Engaged with KCLR to run a light-hearted/uplifting radio show for older people for 12 weeks with funding from Kilkenny County Council.

Kilkenny Leader Partnership

- Housing Aid Programmed continued but slowed down during pandemic.
- Purchasing of RTI (Real Time information) Bus Shelters was advanced.
- Funding to develop cycling in Kilkenny was sought.
- Leader funded a community care home study to look at funding and support provided.
- Launch of the Crisis Café feasibility study in March and committee put in place.
- 10 staff members were redeployed to Alone to assist with the helpline during crisis
- Worked with the Men's Sheds on new building in Newpark, Kilkenny.
- Continued to support a number of Community Groups/Social Enterprises - Community Radio, Kilkenny Civic Trust, Festival lighting on Parade and Urlingford, Projectors for Kilkenny Animation/Watergate Theatre, recreation & amenity projects and online cooking classes.

Health Service Executive

- HIQA inspections carried out on residential homes.
- Success in reducing the age profile for GEMS team to 70. Keep fighting to get it reduced to 65.
- Medical Officer recruited for residential homes for St. Columbas and Scared Heart
- Bus Route to Hospital working well and not used as a set down area.
- Developed extra seating and extra wheelchairs in the Hospital.
- 2 Age Friendly car parking spaces provided at the north entrance of Hospital.
- National Patient Passport – for elderly and people with disabilities.
- Visual information posters proving helpful for the elderly and people with literacy issues.
- Providing virtual clinics for low risk people.
- Positive Ageing Week held 28th September - 4th October. Talks on health
- & wellbeing, information on culture and diversity, films on Fair Deal, Mindfulness, Healthy Ireland, safety and security, dementia awareness, social prescribing, storytelling, 21-day
- walking challenge.
- Extra staff employed in home support in October/November and December.

Kilkenny Chamber of Commerce

- Age friendly business initiatives.
- Supported larger print, older persons seating etc.
- Promoted Kilkenny as an age friendly destination.
- Attended Age Friendly Business Workshop organised by AF Ireland.
- Thomastown Age Friendly Town Plan 2019 received recommendation in Excellence in Local Government Awards run by Chambers Ireland.

Kilkenny Carlow Education Training Board

- Provided courses and classes during the year going online in September. ETB provided courses to older people on the use of technology - computers, laptops and mobile phones and he Libraries carried out the training via zoom.

Kilkenny Public Participation Network (PPN)

- Annual Plenary of PPN held on 26th November, 2020 online.
- Funding application submitted for the tablet project under the Keep Well Campaign.
- PPN handbook launched on 19th November, 2020 by the Department.

COMMUNITY

COVID-19

Community Call

With the onset of COVID-19 in early 2020, the Council were tasked with setting up the "Community Call". This consisted of setting up a helpdesk and Community Forum. The helpdesk was operational from 27th March and manned by staff from across the organisation with opening hours from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., seven days a week. The call centre offered supports in relation to collection and delivery of fuel, medical prescriptions, delivery of meals, other medical needs, and social isolation supports and engagement. At it's busiest, the call centre received approximately 350 to 400 queries per week, with the majority of calls around food, fuel and prescriptions. The helpline staff also made direct contact with Council pensioners and all local authority housing tenants aged over 70. The helpline was supported by the many voluntary groups who registered with the Council, which enabled the delivery of many services to the elderly and vulnerable in our County. The Council received a fund of €69,797 to assist these groups involved in the Community Call and money was distributed by way of grant applications.

The Community Forum

At the end of March 2020, all Chief Executives were asked to form a Community Forum as part of the Government's response to COVID-19. The purpose of the forum was to ensure a co-ordinated community response and to enable all voluntary and statutory agencies to collaborate in support of the community and it's most vulnerable members, including ensuring delivery of targeted social care supports, ensuring the resilience of existing community services, harnessing offers of assistance from enterprises/businesses generally and collecting and mapping information on services and voluntary groups across the county to help direct requests for assistance and identify gaps in service. The Forum is made up of 24 representatives from across a number of state agencies, such as the HSE, An Garda Siochana and other groups such as ALONE, Citizens Information, religious groups, etc. The Kilkenny Community Forum first met on 2nd April, 2020 with meetings initially every fortnight and then on a monthly basis.

Keep Well Campaign

"Keep Well" was launched in October 2020 as part of the Government's Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021 Plan for Living with COVID-19. The Council submitted their plan under the Keep Well Campaign. Under this campaign Kilkenny was allocated €67,225 to be spent across three themes of the campaign, namely, "Your County", "Switching Off and Being Creative" and "Staying Connected". Some of the initiatives outlined in the plan included a radio show entitled "The Tonic" aimed at the elderly population, purchase of tablets to promote digital support for older people in nursing homes, "rewarding reads" campaign by the library service, creative writing workshops and Dial a Story. All actions under the Plan must be completed by March 2021. Kilkenny also benefited from a national allocation to Age Friendly Ireland for the provision of COVID care concerts which would take place in 2021. This initiative was developed by Mobile Music Machine and Kilkenny had already supported a number of these concerts in nursing homes in County Kilkenny in 2020.

Creative Ireland

Kilkenny County Council received €190,000 funding under Creative Ireland in 2020 to support the government response to COVID-19. The Council focused their support on actions contained in the Community Well Being Action Plan, such as "Phone a Poem", "One Million Stars", Knitting/crochet project. Other projects were carried out in line with the July stimulus package, i.e.COVID care concerts, Wolfwalker mural.

Volunteer Centre for Kilkenny
The Department of Rural and Community Development made provision for the establishment of a Volunteer Centre in Kilkenny and a new Volunteer Centre has opened in McDonagh Junction (PPN Office), Kilkenny to cover the County Kilkenny area. Kilkenny Volunteer Centre is a registered charity, forming part of a network of 29 Volunteer Centres from across the country and affiliated to Volunteer Ireland. The service is a one stop shop for all the volunteering needs of the county.

For people who wish to volunteer or for organisations and groups who are seeking the help of volunteers, Kilkenny Volunteer Centre can help them find a suitable volunteering opportunity in their locality by providing a free matching service between volunteers and organisations. The Manager will be in place from January 2021.

Kilkenny Public Participation Network (PPN)
The Council continues to support and resource the Kilkenny PPN. By providing funds to employ staff and office accommodation. In 2020, the PPN moved from its premises in Parliament Street to Unit 1 Hebron House MacDonagh Junction, Kilkenny.

Town & Village Renewal Scheme 2020
Kilkenny County Council received funding of €461,200 for 16 applications under the Town and Village Accelerated Measures Scheme for projects in Castlecomer, Inistioge, Callan, Graiguenamanagh, Kilmacow, Mooncoin, Mullinavat, Ballyhale, Freshford, Piltown, Kilkenny, District Towns and county wide. A further 10 applications were submitted under the standard Town & Village Scheme of which five were approved early 2021 (to the value of €574,826), for projects at Stoneyford, Thomastown, Freshford, Hugginstown and Kilmacow. The Council completed projects at Inistioge and Ballyhale to Knocktopher.

Carpark at Turfmarket, Graiguenamanagh [Before & After]
carried out under Town & Village Accelerated Measures

Community and Cultural Facilites Capital Scheme (CCFCS) 2020 Fencing and hedging around the perimiter of the new grounds at Mooncoin Celtic Soccer Club were completed in 2020. No grants were awarded in 2020

Kilkenny Migrant Integration Strategy/Kilkenny Integration Forum
In March 2020, Kilkenny County Council, in partnership with Kilkenny LEADER Partnership and Kilkenny Public Participation Network commenced with a review of the Kilkenny Integration Strategy 2013-2017 and the development of a new Strategy for 2021-2023. The outcome of the review and consultation process had 23 recommendations actions and the development of a Kilkenny Intercultural Forum to engage with ethnic minority and cultural groups in the county.

Kilkenny Interagency Resettlement Committee (KRIC)
The Council has coordinated a local resettlement programme in collaboration with statutory agencies since 2017. The programme finishes in January 2021 after sucessfully resettling 25 Syrian families in rural towns and villages across the county.

Kilkenny Local Community Development Committee
Kilkenny County Council continues to support the LCDC. A new Chief Officer was appointed in 2020 and there was a change in membership. The LCDC met the challenges of the Covid-19 restrictions and held virtual meetings. The LCDC successfully administered the Community Enhancement Programme Grants, The Healthy Ireland Programme and maintained its oversight role of the Kilkenny SICAP Programme. The LCDC administers and monitors a variety of funding streams for communities that experience social exclusion or disadvantage.

Community Enhancement Programme Funding:
LCDC's allocation under the Community Enhancement Programme (CEP) for 2020 was €232,020. This was allocated under three separate schemes over the course of 2020.

€58,000 was provided in June to 64 local community groups for the re-opening of crucial community facilities for hygiene, signage and some equipment for COVID 19 related safety measures.

€127,249 was announced in August. Grants of €3,000 were given to 18 groups and grants of €20,000 to 8 groups to support community centres and building with essential capital works.

Funding was announced in December 2020 for a second round of COVID 19 related funding for essential work to keep local people connected throughout the COVID 19 Government restrictions. This scheme will be allocated in the first quarter of 2021.

Healthy Ireland
LCDC was awarded €245,548 to fund Healthy Ireland Actions. The cross-cutting themes and priority areas included physical activity, healthy eating, tobacco, spaces and places for health and wellbeing and mental health. The community engagement actions responded to the COVID 19 pandemic and provided essential support and information for vulnerable people in our communities.

Kilkenny Recreational Sports Partnership progressed the Healthy Inclusive Communities' action and are rolling out online physical activity programmes in Castlecomer, Urlingford and Kilkenny.

The Community Engagement Facilitator has developed a Peer Support Network for Lone Parents across the County. A website and social media platforms were developed to form a support & information hub for Lone Parents.

The Regional Actions have been progressing with some programmes moving online e.g. Healthy Food Made Easy. A Positive Ageing Seminar was delivered virtually in September. The tobacco action will be progressed in 2021.

The Social Prescribing pilot started in August in 2020 will run until June 2021. The service has been progressing and has been an essential service in supporting individuals of all ages through these challenging times.

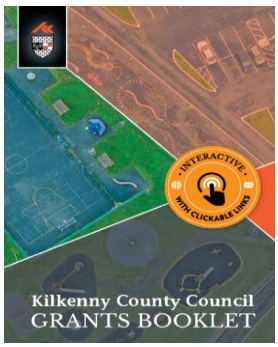
8 small grants approved under Community Mental Health to Lifelink, Foroige, South East Regional Family Support Network, Mill FRC Urlingford, Social Farming, Amber Refuge, Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI) & Open Circle. These projects will progress in 2021.

Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP)
LCDC continues its management of the contract for the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) valued at €650,090. The 2020 Plan supported over 37 community groups in areas of disadvantage in the county. The SICAP programme also supported 498 individuals into education, employment or enterprises.

Kilkenny Traveller Interagency Group (KTIG)
KTIG was reconvened after a short hiatus. The membership has worked together to review and agree a Terms of Reference and membership of the group. The KTIG plan to review the Needs Analysis and Profile of the Traveller Community in Kilkenny and develop a 2 year action plan in early 2021.

Callan Town Improvement Plan
50% of projects/actions have been completed from the Callan Town Improvement Plan in 2020. A review of the plan is scheduled for the first quarter of 2021.

Community Grants Booklet
A third Community Grant information booklet was produced by the Council and launched in 2020. This booklet is available online.



Phase 3 - ONE STOP SHOP
Phase 3 of the online ONE STOP SHOP for funding was developed. This online portal is designed to make the Kilkenny Grants Booklet more accessible to the general public.

Community CCTV Scheme
Urlingford were awarded €15,000 in 2020 under the Department of Justice Community based CCTV Scheme.

Kilkenny Recreation & Sports Partnership (Strategic Plan)
Work was completed on the development of a 12 month KRSP Interim Strategy.

Community Awards
In January, Cathoirleach Cllr. Peter Cleere hosted the Kilkenny County Council Community Awards to acknowledge, congratulate and thank community groups for their dedication and hard work within their respective communities. Cathoirleach Cllr. Peter Cleere highlighted that Community Organisations play a key role in driving the overall prosperity and wellbeing in every cities, towns and villages across the country. County Kilkenny has a strong tradition of community cooperation and collaboration, and it is important to recognise and reward those communities who come together to work with the County Council and State Agencies to contribute to this prosperity.

Awards were presented to the Pride of Place participants, Tidy Estate and Tidy Towns winners and Bank of Ireland National Enterprise Town Awards winners.

Pride of Place 2020

Castlecomer Discovery Park, Clogh Village, Callan Town Team and Kilkenny County Council were honoured at the virtual All-Ireland Pride of Place community awards on the 21st of November 2020. The Castlecomer Discovery Park took top spot in the Community Tourism category with Judges praising them for delivering a "tourism enterprise par excellence". Callan Town Team were runners up in the Areas with a population between 2,000 and 5,000. Clogh Community Group were runners up in the population between 300 and 1000 category.

Kilkenny County Council was awarded the Council Community Engagement Award for their ongoing work on community engagement.

Community Information e-newsletter

6 Community information newsletters were published in 2020. These e-newsletters inform the public on community related information, including, funding, project updates and general Council information. In 2020, a specific focus was on Covid-19 supports and information.

Community Events Grants Scheme

Due to COVID 19 the majority of events due to take place in 2020 did not go ahead. A number of events did manage to take place. 10 community groups received funding amounting €8,950 under this scheme in 2020.

Comhairle na nÓg
Comhairle na nÓg prioritised climate change as their key issue facing young people in Kilkenny. This was the focus for their work programme in 2020. The work resulted in developing a proposal for a reverse recycling vending machine.

The 2020 AGM was held virtually and was very successful. 50 second level students attended on the day from 8 secondary schools across Kilkenny. They received an ICT grant to support members attending meetings virtually through the use of tablets and conferencing equipment.

Children and Young Persons Services Committee (CYPSC)
The inter-agency committee launched its first strategy in 2020. The strategy is being implemented by sub-groups by staff in front line service such as mental health, physical activity, learning and development, safety from harm etc.

CYPSC – Healthy Ireland Funding
The Committee received funding for a 2 year programme of €96,000 to support Healthy Streets Projects in Kilkenny City, Graiguenamanagh and Castlecomer. An additional €18,000 has also been awarded under the Keep Well initiative.

CLÁR
Kilkenny received € 77,000 funding for two projects under this national funding stream:
Muckalee: €50,000 to complete the community carpark service the primary school and community creche.

Coolagh: €27,000 to improve the junction serving the church and community hall.

Rural Regeneration Development Fund [RRDF]
Thomastown **-** Works have been ongoing in 2020 on public realm works on Logan / Low Street. Design work progressed for the Sessions House (Former Court House), Library and Community Hall. Works to the Quayside carpark were completed. A further application has been made for the construction phase of the Community Hall / Library, with decision due in 2021.

Callan – Works were completed at the Fair Green and Motte Field in Callan in 2020.

Motte Field, Callan

Capital Play & Recreation Grants
Funding was awarded by Department of Children and Youth Affairs towards the renovation works for playground equipment in Thomastown, Graiguenamanagh and Castlecomer.

Bike Week
Bike week was held in 2020, despite restrictions. A series of smaller events were held allowing small groups to hold cycling events. Cycling resources were developed such as cycle routes, mapping and video content to ensure safe and healthy cycling.

National Play Day
€2,500 funding was allocated for a National Play Day. Due to the restrictions and in consultation with CYPSC, sensory gift bags were assembled with suitable sensory toys and distributed to 65 families (throughout the county) for their children with disabilities. Special thanks to the Civil Defence who distributed the gift bags. There was no national recreation week in 2020.

Youth Work and Support
Kilkenny County Council continues to support the work of youth development throughout the county through:

- Young Social Innovator Programmes for 15-18 years old, focusing on innovation around social issues affecting young people

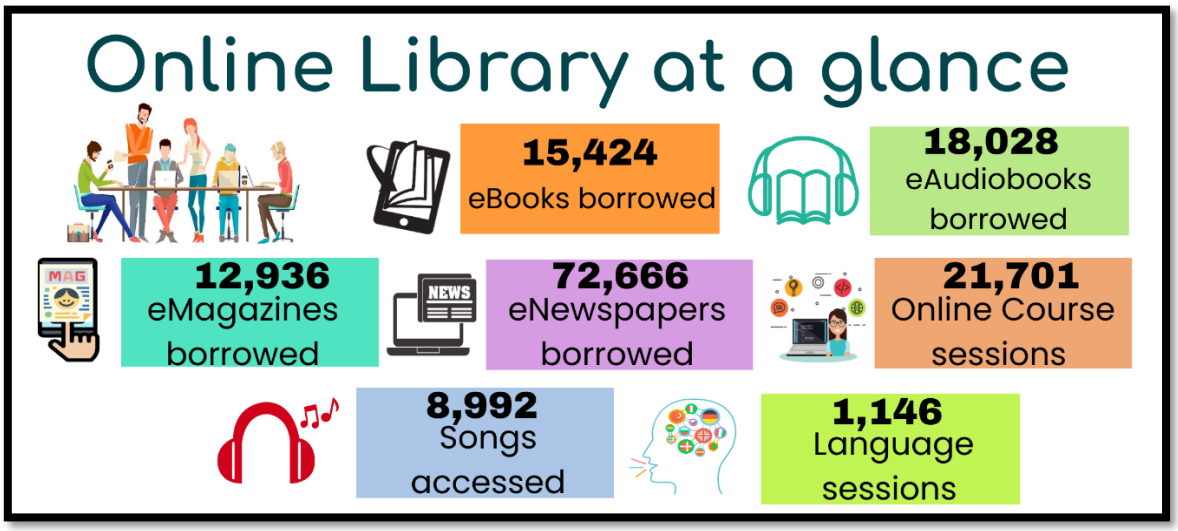
- Ossory Youth – Support for delivery of programmes

- DRUM Youth Café – Joint funding partner with TUSLA for the DRUM youth café based at McDonagh Junction.

LIBRARY SERVICES

Notable Achievements

- Door to Door delivery service: 4,839 books delivered to 1,109 Cocooners across the county.
- Increased use of our online services: 49% increase in use of eBooks, 45% increase in use of eAudiobooks.
- 10,000 Bookville Activity Books distributed to 90 primary schools across Kilkenny.
- 47,254 books were borrowed through Book and Browse & Contact and Collect.
- Right to Read Literacy Initiative: Staff recorded 270 Storytime's which had 66,661 views on Facebook.



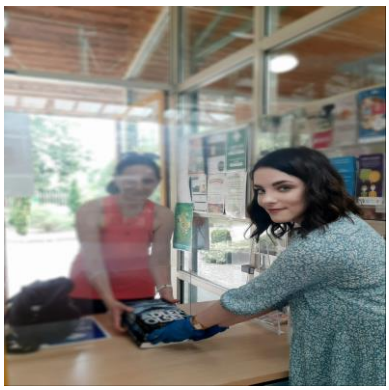
Responding to Needs: A Hybrid Library Service

In response to the challenging circumstances, the library service had to respond and adapt rapidly to ensure services were delivered to the individuals and communities we serve. Throughout the year, all public health guidelines were implemented allowing us to provide services in a safe and controlled manner transforming our traditional service into a flexible hybrid model.

Staying Connected

- **Door to Door:** Each library contacted their local cocooning members by phone to offer a personalised service. Staff then carefully selected suitable books and packed books and other small gifts. These were then delivered directly to the door of members' homes and nursing homes across the County. The service helps the most vulnerable in our communities by keeping their minds active and engaged.

- **Contact and Collect/Book and Browse:** We tailored two new service delivery models to suit our customer's needs, introduced under different phases of the COVID restrictions. Book and Browse allowed members to pre-book 30-minute slots to access the library in limited numbers. Contact and Collect was offered as a pre-booked pick up service at the library door.



- **Community Call:** Library staff supported the Community Call helpline throughout the year and the Contact Tracing Service with the HSE.

Programmes

- From mid-March, we transitioned our programmes from physical to online, and the library service took a pivotal role in developing and supporting programmes and initiatives as part of the Governments Community Wellbeing Campaign.

Community Wellbeing Campaign

- **A Time to Relax:** Mindfulness series with strands for both adults and children, offering people practical tools and simple ideas to improve overall wellbeing. Over 480 people engaged with these.

- **A Time to Remember:** A project designed to gather memories of this time for a special collection on Kilkenny Digital Archive.

- **Age Friendly Programme:** Events were adapted for our online programme and ran throughout the year, in line with our commitments under the Age Friendly Kilkenny Strategy. We held 37 events, including Flower Arranging, Chair Exercises, Walking workshops and Christmas Crafts.

- **Healthy Ireland:** Over 180 people attended Healthy Ireland events in February which included walking groups, Grow it Yourself workshops, Mindfulness for exams and a musical memory singalong. Additional physical and digital resources on topics such as healthy eating, wellbeing and mental health, physical activities and parenting were purchased for each of our Libraries in Kilkenny.

- **Virtual Book Club:** Following the success of our involvement in KCLR Radio Book club over the summer, a virtual book club for adults has been developed and there are currently 85 members participating.

Door to Door deliveries May 2020

Chair Exercises with Bridget

Children's activities
With Denis & Polly

Keep Well Campaign

Dial A Story: freephone service offered people an opportunity to listen to a collection of locally written stories reading by Library staff.

Light Up Your Nights Campaign ran through Winter, with a Winter reading challenge, series of online workshops for all ages, and Christmas Craft Packs being delivered through our Door to Door service.

Encouraging Reads Literacy Campaign offered Music Therapy for ASD Units, ASD Resource packs for all ASD units, and a collection of short video guides for our online services.

Majella reads online storytime for schools

Zoe Wong provided online craft workshops

Dial a Story Freephone line

Information & Communication

We utilised our website and social media platforms to maintain communication and engagement with people. This allowed us to promote and market the library's offering in the online environment. For example, our staff created, recorded, edited and posted 270 videos of story times and book recommendations, which were viewed 66,661 times in our Facebook platform.

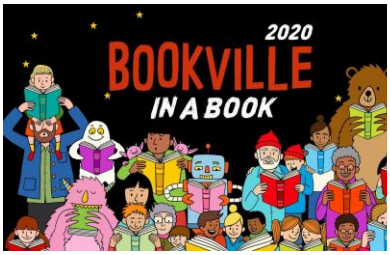
Engaging out: 4, 286 posts 42,848 engagements

@kilkennylibrary

	Posts	engagements
Facebook	1,817	30,407
Twitter	1,341	3,465
Instagram	1,128	8,976

Community & Culture

Creative Ireland 2020 programme: We delivered a very successful Bookville Festival to 90 schools with 10,000 copies of our Bookville Activity Book distributed.



Library Decade of Centenaries: Library staff researched and developed content of local interest which was made available via podcasts, commissioned photographs of decade themed sites and developed decade themed learning materials for children.

Hear our Story Project: Staff developed a series of online podcasts to give people confined to home a taste of Kilkenny City and County's rich history and heritage. Themes included - Woodstock House and Estate, the Cuffes of Desart, and The Spanish Flu in Kilkenny.

Reading & Literacy

- Kilkenny Library Service is at the forefront of supporting and developing literacy skills, reading, creativity, innovation and helping people realise their full potential. We delivered events and activities in digital format to promote reading and creativity.

- National Spring into Storytime Campaign took place over April and May in a digital format, continuing to bring story times to children and families to keep literacy levels from declining. Staff developed **48** podcasts and videos to share with our younger library members. These had over **4,419** views and **1,658** engagements throughout the campaign.

- National Summer Reading campaign ran throughout July and August. We tailored this years' challenge by increasing access to more eBooks and eAudiobooks for children, and ran a programme of story times and quizzes online.

Roibeárd MacKenzie winner of a new bicycle

Children at St. Canice's N.S. with their Bookville Activity book as part of our Summer Stars Reading Challenge.

- Our mobile library has commenced service to over 20 primary schools across the county, delivering over 3,000 books in November. Significant investment has been made in reading resources and literacy stock suitable for all ages.

- We continued to support our Work Matters initiative across the network.

- We continued to work in partnership with both current and new partners, including The Design and Crafts Council, Carlow Kilkenny ETB, Kilkenny County Childcare Committee, Kilkenny Education Centre, Healthy Kilkenny, HSE, Music Generation, Calmast WIT.

Moneenroe NS receiving Class novels

- The service continues to participate and engage with national and local festivals and programmes including: Heritage Week, Science Week, Bealtaine, Savour Kilkenny, Seachtain na Gaeilge, Yulefest, Culture Night, Kilkenny Day, National Poetry Day, Decade of Centenaries.

Service Development and Infrastructure

- To ensure public health guidelines were adhered to in a safe and controlled manner, our buildings were assessed and adaptions made where required.

- Progression of capital projects in Kilkenny City and Thomastown.

- Investment in new technologies to innovate and make accessible services both in branch and digitally.

- Invested resources to expand our digital offering in new platforms, e. gFreegal music, PressReader, and Comics Plus.

- Home Energy Saving Kits were rolled out to all libraries in Kilkenny in partnership with Kilkenny County Council Environmental Department.

- Our 3D printer was lent to local company, Print, Copy and Go to serve the community by making much needed PPE face shields.

Workforce

Kilkenny Library Service works to contribute to the vitality and success of its public libraries and the diverse community they serve by positioning the library staff to be proactive and customer focused. 256 training and development courses were undertaken this year in response to emerging need and to plan for future service delivery.

ARTS

The Arts Office develops, co-ordinates, motivates, inspires and empower artistic activity throughout the City and County, promoting the arts as a worthwhile activity for all and to further strengthen Kilkenny's position as a centre of excellence for the arts and ensure a successful and prosperous arts environment within the region. The Arts Officer facilitates and coordinates Creative Ireland Kilkenny Programme.

Notable Achievements in 2020

- Over 19,550 people engaged in Arts Programmes in 2020.
- 27 bursaries and mentoring opportunities awarded in 2020.
- Rhyme Rag Ensemble took part in the national review of the Laurate na nÓg programme, an exciting project recognising the role and importance of literature for children in Ireland.

New Developments

- Knitted Together project: Community project with 180 volunteers knitting and crocheting squares that were then made into blankets for the Elkana Charity in South Africa. Blankets were also distributed to five Kilkenny charitable organisations.
- WE'VE GOT THIS: Community Wellness programme – mural completed by Vanessa Power on the Abbey Quarter hoarding on Bateman Quay and Audrey Dowling's beautiful posters on the Ring Road, St. Luke's Hospital Campus, Thomastown and Castlecomer Graiguenamanagh and Woodstock Gardens, Inistioge were a welcome relief from the stark COVID posters.
- One Million Stars project: initiated by Amber Women's Refuge, led by Siobhan McQuillan (Art Therapist), included star weavers from across the country including but not exclusive to Kilkenny, Mayo, Carlow, Louth, Offaly and Drogheda. This is a global project that was initiated in Australia in 2012 as a response to the rape and murder of Irish woman Jill Meagher. Kilkenny County Council partnered with Amber to support this hugely worthwhile project.
- COVID Care Concerts: facilitated by Mobile Music Machine in locations outside various nursing homes in the county which were well received by the residents and offered a different type of entertainment and engagement for the residents during the lockdown.

Literature

- Kilkenny Poetry Broadsheet 20 edited by Colm Keegan and illustrated by Ale Mercado.
- Phone a Poem - Freefone Poetry Phone set up for recorded poems. Accessed by over 600 people from Bandon to Carrick-on-Shannon and Gorey to Mullingar.
- Rhyme Rag online poetry journal published with poems from 17 young Kilkenny writers.
- 5 Annual Writing Workshops for adults (one face to face and four online). Programmes illustrated the Council's continuing commitment in tutoring writers across the County.
- Rhyme Rag Ensemble –Partnership with Ossory Youth. The members participated in several workshops (adhering to COVID restrictions) with acclaimed writers.

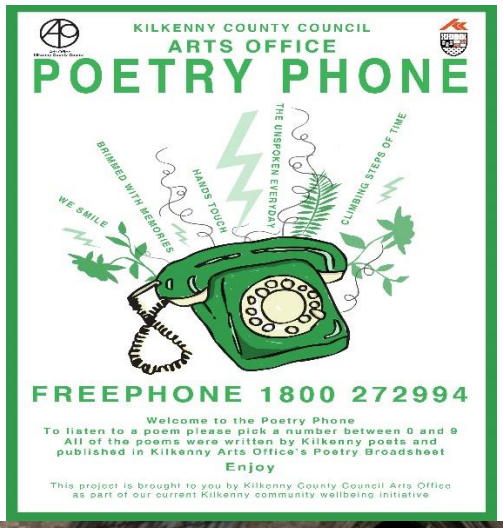
Community, Education and Inclusion

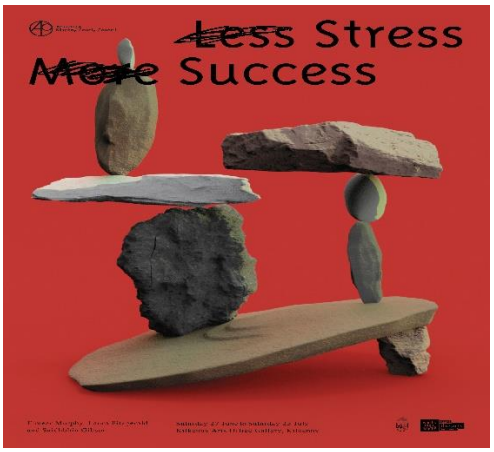
- Open Circle Community Arts Collective: Modules facilitated by 3 local artists, Caroline Schofield, Julie Moorhouse and Paul Bokslag in textiles, drawing and mark making. The programmes were re-designed and moved online.
- Siamsa Childrens programme: Engaged children in a variety of visual arts. "Weaving with The Colours of Your World" with Sandra McAllister, moved online with Create School's Brickflicks, your "Stop Motion with Lego" animation fin the Autumn.
- Bookville Children's Festival: A very different Bookville took place this year 'Bookville In A Book'. A special workbook was created based on the primary school curriculum and over 10,000 books were distributed to the 90 primary schools in Kilkenny City and County.

- 736 primary school children availed of school subsidies to attend a spring theatre production ‘Alice and the Wolf’ by Barnstorm Theatre.
- Culture Night: National event promoting culture in all its guises. Coordinated a very different Kilkenny Culture Night with seven venues rolling out face to face and online events. 1, 849 adults and children engaged with Kilkenny’s Culture Night.

Artists Supports

- Arts Act Grants 2020 – 10 grants awarded enabling a number of diverse projects.
- Tyrone Guthrie Bursary – 4 bursaries awarded to practitioners working in Theatre, Literature and Dance.
- The Moth – One bursary awarded to a writer to complete his novel.
- ArtLinks – CPD partnership programme including, Kilkenny, Carlow, Waterford and Wexford County Councils. Bursaries: 13 bursaries awarded enabling practitioners to develop their practice and artist’s careers.
- VAI and the Arts Office jointly hosted an online Artists Café and workshop. The programme will continue in Spring 2021.
- Wednesday Weeklies – Series of 12 online meetings aimed at artists and other creatives in Kilkenny to explore ideas around dealing with the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions which were having a major impact on artists.
- Emerging Curator in Residence enabling emerging curators to gain direct experience in their field and supporting emerging artists. Only one of the three scheduled exhibitions opened due to lockdowns but it is hoped to run the final two exhibitions during 2021.
- Kilkenny County Council Arts Office in collaboration with the thirty other local authorities and the Arts Council of Ireland announced PLATFORM 31 in November 2020. This nationwide artist development scheme offers the opportunity for artists to develop their practice and test new ideas of collaboration, research, audience development, place-making and sharing their work.





BUTLER GALLERY AT EVAN'S HOME

The new Butler Gallery at Evans' Home developed by Kilkenny County Council opened to the public in August 2020. The delivery of the Evans' Home project in collaboration with the Butler Gallery, is another fine example of the adaptive reuse of an historic building with the added bonus of a major new public space. The historic urban centre of Kilkenny City retains much of its early fabric which is a valuable economic & tourism resource.

By preserving characteristic features of the City, Kilkenny County Council seeks to maintain and nurture its environment and cultural heritage as part of its identity. Evans' Asylum/Home originated in a charitable bequest from Joseph Evans (d. 1818) and was built on the site of an infantry barracks & former 13th century Augustinian Priory. While very centrally located in the city, the building as an Architectural landmark was little known due to its enclosed nature. It was always important that the building be adapted for an appropriate use and in a sensitive manner.

The works have transformed the existing building, and its gardens into a destination for art, archaeology, history, education and leisure and brought a very significant building in the City's history back into public use.

Aerial view July 2020

Evans' Home, September 2016

Completed Project July 2020

Café terrace & sculpture garden with Johns Church in the background

Aerial view from the south with Johns Church in the foreground

Rear of the building looking west with Kilkenny Castle, St. Mary Church & The Tholsel on the horizon

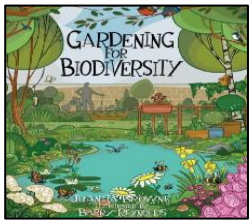
HERITAGE

The Heritage Office supported a comprehensive programme of community wellbeing projects to facilitate resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- 18 heritage podcasts, created by members of the public, were aired on KCLR as part of the "My Local Area" series. https://kclr96fm.com/documentary/my-local-area/

- The Heritage and Arts Offices, co-funded by Creative Ireland, commissioned a pilot project to explore the impacts of COVID-19 on the heritage and arts sectors in the county, and identify supports required by the sector. Participating groups were Clogh Writers Group, Eigse Sliabh Rua, the Medieval Mile Museum and Catalyst Arts.

- 1,200 copies of the "Gardening for Biodiversity" booklet and pollinator advice leaflets were purchased & distributed to the public, teachers, LA members and Council staff, to support the huge increase in interest in biodiversity and gardening during the 1st lockdown. Packs of pollinator friendly bulbs for people cocooning at home were provided.



Engaging with Heritage

- 4,697 children from 51 primary schools took part in a free "Heritage in Schools" pilot virtual programme organised by the Heritage Council.

- 278 primary students from Kilkenny City schools (Gaelscoil Osraí, St. Canice's NS, Kilkenny School Project) took part in the Acorn Project nature workshops, commissioned by the Heritage Office with funding from Creative Ireland.

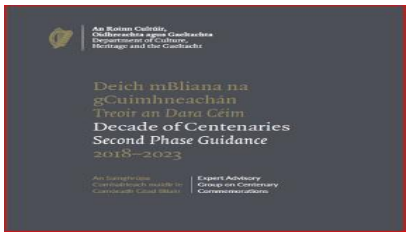
- 41 Kilkenny projects were developed for National Heritage Week 2020.

- 430 Heritage awareness adverts on local radio, encouraging people to engage with their local heritage and biodiversity were aired on BEAT FM and KCLR.

- 65 people attended the World Wetland Day event at Newpark Marsh (organised by Birdwatch Ireland.

- Children's singing workshop "The Robin Song", for Cruinniú na nÓg, funded by Creative Ireland. https://cruinniu.creativeireland.gov.ie/event/the-robin-song-online-traditional-song-workshop-for-children/

- 7 projects funded under the Decade of Centenaries Programme 2020. It comprised films, podcasts, postcards and an online workshop. The projects were undertaken by local historians and authors, historical societies and the Local Studies Section of Kilkenny County Council Library.



https://www.kilkennycoco.ie/eng/Services/Heritage/Kilkenny%20County%20Council%20Decade%20of%20Centenaries%20Programme%202020%20.html

- Funded the National Biodiversity Data Centre with the production of a national newsletter for Tidy Towns Groups, with advice and tips on supporting pollinators https://pollinators.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Tidy-Towns-Pollinator-Award-newsletter-2020-FINAL_compressed.pdf

- Devised a programme of cultural and creative activities - photographic competitions of shopfronts and heritage attractions, connecting with school children, the diaspora, and the community. The programme ran throughout December on KCLR LIVE and was funded by Creative Ireland. Yulefest Kilkenny and KCLR.

- Weekly/fortnightly Kilkenny Heritage News ezines disseminated via social media.

Recording & Protecting Heritage

- Conservation and repair works were carried out to the roof and interior walls of the medieval Talbots Tower, with co-funding from the Irish Walled Towns Network.

- 2 projects received funding from the Heritage Council under the Community Heritage Grants Scheme 2020:

- Kilkenny Civic Trust for monument & ecology surveys at St. Mary's Graveyard

- Rothe House Trust for repairs to the museum and garden.

- Civic Memorials & Naming Infrastructure Sub-Committee assessed and advised on names for 3 new local authority developments and 4 community memorials/plaques.

- 8 ogham stones were researched and digitally recorded with co-funding from the Heritage Council. The ogham stones are from Shankhill, Churchclara, Lamoge, Legan Castle, Fiddaun Upper and Cloghabrody.

  https://www.youtube.com/user/kilkennycoco/videos

Ogham Stone, Fiddaun Upper

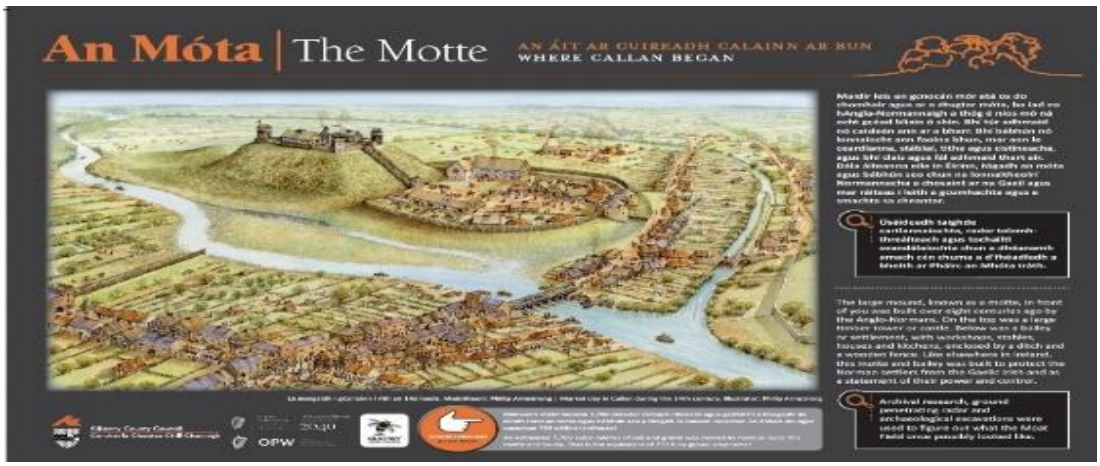
- Distributed brochures on Pollinator-friendly Management of Sites to 54 Group Water Schemes in Kilkenny to encourage them to undertake simple actions to support pollinators.

- 252 wetland sites were identified, mapped and recorded as part of a county wide audit of wetlands. The project was co-funded by the Heritage Council under the County Heritage Plan Programme.

Poulanassy Waterfall, one of the 252 wetland sites in Co.Kilkenny

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

4 new bi-lingual interpretive panels were created for the new Park at the Motte Field, Callan, telling the fascinating story of the site, its history and natural heritage.



Medieval Mile Museum (MMM) undertook a series of initiatives to develop COVID-19 compliant visitor services, updating the inventory of headstones in the graveyard, creating an online searchable headstone database, development of a new audio guide, new interpretive signage, design of a new self-guided tour, and an ecological survey of the graveyard with funding from Creative Ireland.

“Preliminary Audit of Archaeological Landscapes of Co. Kilkenny”, approved by SPC 5. The audit identified 18 potential landscapes, such as the Lingaun Valley and Tory Hill which are of cultural, economic, social and environmental value, and recommended a policy regarding Archaeological Landscapes be included in the new County Development Plan 2021-2027.

Tory Hill in South Kilkenny, site of prehistoric burials and a looped walk. The tradition of collecting bilberries on Fraochán Sunday in July is still practised by the local community

AWARDS/RECOGNITIONS

Tullahought Community Development won the County Kilkenny Heritage Week Award for their video “Back to the past, valuing water in the community” on water heritage which was scripted, filmed and produced by the community.
https://www.heritageweek.ie/projects/back-to-the-past-valuing-water-in-the-community

FIRE SERVICES & MAJOR EMERGENCY

Our focus is on protecting the communities we serve. The determination and dedication of our staff to protect life and property are second to none. Kilkenny County Council's Fire and Rescue Service provides a highly skilled response to a range of emergencies. Firefighting is hazardous, but we continue to improve our working practices to make responding to incidents as safe as possible. During the storms and in the current pandemic, the Fire and Rescue Service again showed to be very resilient and a useful resource to the Council in that Brigades (trained and equipped manpower) can be mobilised within minutes of an emergency in their area 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) - Corona Virus Pandemic
The Fire and Rescue Service is an essential public service and has operated and responded to calls all during the current pandemic.

During this public health crisis our focus is on:

- Protecting the communities that we serve and limiting the spread of COVID-19
- Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our staff in the pursuance of their duties
- Maintaining an effective Emergency Response - we continued to respond to all incidents in 2020

A temporary body holding unit for the COVID-19 response was sought and located in Kilkenny City Fire Station.

The Fire and Rescue Service demonstrated its strengths and drew on it's considerable, collective experience to maintain service delivery and fire safety during this difficult time. However, there is no room for complacency as we continue to adapt and improvise as we learn to live with COVID-19.

Capital Projects

Fire and Rescue Service took delivery of:

- ✓ 2 new jeeps for Callan and Freshford Stations
- ✓ 1 new fire engine for Callan Station
- ✓ 2 second hand fire engines for Urlingford Station to replace their existing vehicles.

Fire Safety Certificate Applications

- 132 applications for fire safety certificates were received in 2020. This was a 25% increase in 2019 applications.
- 2 of these were maximum application fee applications and 8 of these were Regularisation Fire Safety Certificate Applications (*the equivalent to Planning Retention Applications*).
- A number of large-scale fire safety certificate applications for the industrial development at Belview Port with the Joint Venture JHOK Ltd and Kilkenny Cheese were processed.

Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003

- Fire Officers made a number of fire prevention visits to premises both to provide advice and to enforce legislation.
- Fire Officers inspected 54 premises to provide advice and to enforce legislation.
- 87 Licence Applications were processed under Section 24 of the Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003.
- 1 Fire Safety Notice under the Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003 was served and revoked in 2020.

Community Fire Safety

- Ongoing public messaging campaigns were maintained through our social media channels to encourage members of the public to install smoke alarms and to test their smoke alarms once a week to ensure that they are working.
- Home fire safety visits (HFSV's) recommenced after Level-5 the initial lockdown. The aim of the home fire safety visits is to reduce the risk of fire by raising awareness to the dangers of fire, providing the appropriate advice and where necessary, fitting smoke alarms.
- Ran an awareness campaign during National Fire Safety Week in October 2020, to highlight the importance of fire safety in the home and also a campaign to business owners on their return to work after the initial lockdown.
- During the build up to Halloween 2020, public messaging campaigns were maintained through our social media channels (Twitter and Facebook) to highlight the dangers of fireworks and bonfires. Liaison with the Environment Section and An Garda Siochána took place to reduce the risks associated with bonfires. Responded to only 1 bonfire incident over Halloween 2020.
- During the Christmas period we had 'Smokey the Elf' tweeting Fire safety advice.
- Radio Interviews on fire safety were given and published Fire Safety Tips for Christmas.
- Fire and Rescue Service were unable to deliver the NDFEM Primary Schools Programme (PSP) throughout the City and County of Kilkenny as a result of the impact of COVID-19.
- Visits by various groups to the Fire Stations was also affected by the COVID-19 and subsequent protection measures. These visits assist the community to get to see some of the specialist equipment and learn more about fire safety in the home.

Training

The following training was provided:

- Aerial Ladder Platform
- Chainsaw
- Emergency First Responder
- Road Traffic Collision

Fire Fighters learned the skill of dealing with windblown trees, partially blocking roadways and public areas with emphasis on Health and Safety techniques

Most fire service personnel have been trained to Emergency First Responder.

Weekly training continued around the county following Induction training on Covid-19.

Operations

- Fire Brigades responded to 824 turnouts in 2020. The Fire Service is a very resilient and useful resource in that Brigades (trained and equipped manpower) can be mobilised within minutes of an emergency in their area, etc.

- The Road Safety Authority carried out a risk rating for Roadworthiness in relation to the safety of our vehicles and compliance with our legal obligations. Great work was done by our Brigade Mechanic in maintaining our fleet (over thirty vehicles) to such a high standard and also to all our personnel involved in the checking of appliances. We are currently ranked in the green 88th percentile risk rating percentile which is of a very high standard.

- The provision of fire service Drones in 2020 has been a huge benefit to the Brigades response to all types of incidents. Incident Commanders now have access to a bird's eye view of incidents together with thermal imaging camera to detect hot spots providing key information for safer management of incidents and the photographing for post incident debriefing.

Handing over the Drone by Cathaoirleach Peter Chap Cleere and Director of Services Mary Mulholland to our trained operators. (just before lockdown 1!)

Major Emergency Management

Plans were reviewed and updated during 2020.

- Major Emergency Management Plan & Appendices

- Flood Emergency Response Plan and the Severe Weather Plan *(excluding Flooding)*

- External Emergency Plan for Grassland Fertilisers (Kilkenny) Ltd. This was tested under the Seveso III Directive in 2020, comprising a test of the mobilisation procedures of the Principal Response Agencies (PRA's) and a (virtual) review and evaluation of the External Emergency by the PRA's, Site Operator and other statutory agencies.

CIVIL DEFENCE

Kilkenny Civil Defence is a volunteer-based organisation that supports the Principal Response Agencies both locally and Nationally It also assists local communities primarily with first aid at large and small events. There are currently 34 active volunteers in Kilkenny.

2020
Engaged in 11 sporting and charity events
In February, a missing person search involved:

- the boat unit
- land search team
- drones
- dog unit.

COVID-19:

Since March the unit has been involved in the response to the Corona Virus pandemic. 31 volunteers have been engaged for frontline medical transports to hospitals, test centers and COVID assessment hubs to supporting the Irish Blood Transfusion Service and at the COVID Test Centre.

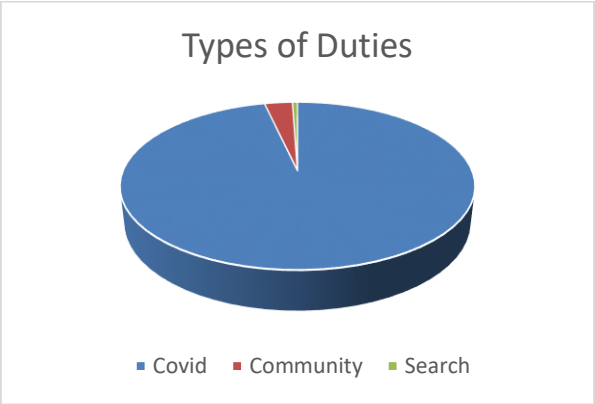
Hundreds of care packages were prepared and delivered to the elderly and vulnerable across the County, on behalf of 8 organisations. Individuals were supported with food shopping, medication collections, and the payment of bills. Over 2,000 hours of assistance has been given.

The unit have responded to requests from:

- Cancer Society
- Community Help Line
- COVID Test Centre
- CYPSC
- Gardai
- Healthy Ireland
- HSE
- Irish Blood Transfusion
- Kilkenny County Council
- Library Service
- Resettlement prog.
- TUSLA

Total Duties carried out in 2020

Duties	Number	Hours
COVID	350	2,112
Community Events	11	236
Search	2	310
Total	**363**	**2,668**

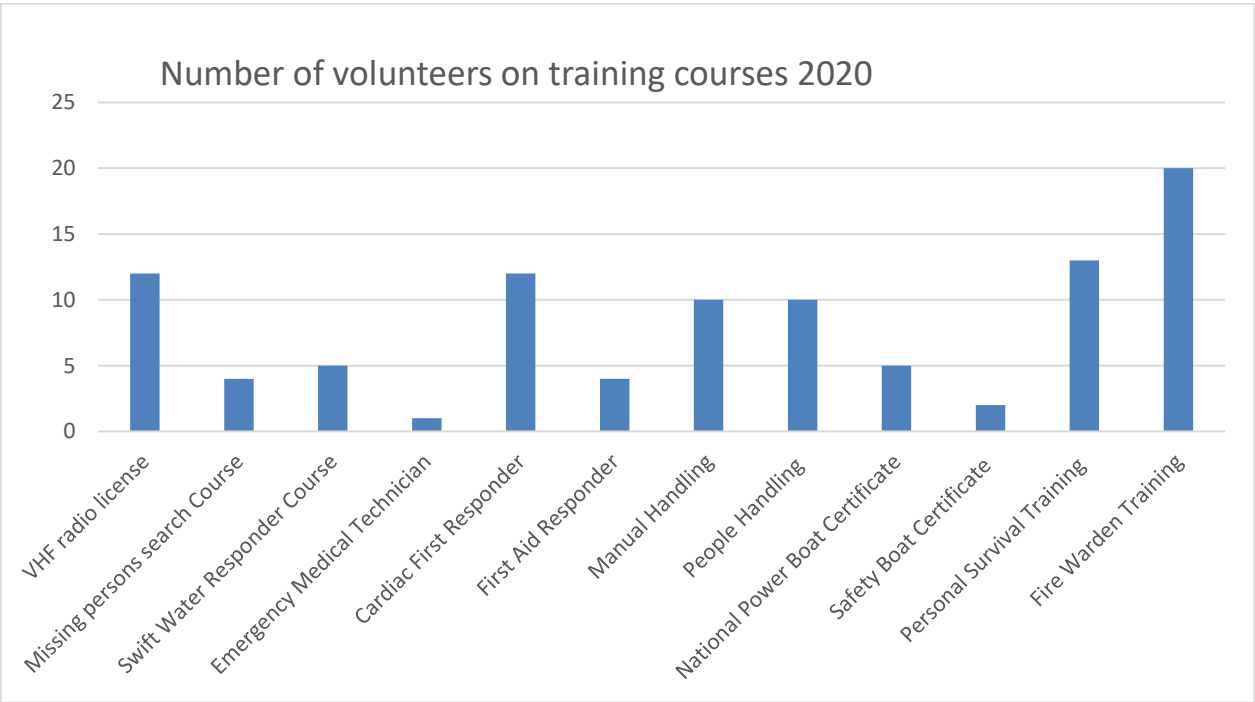


Note: A single duty can cover multiple days and involve large numbers of volunteers over an extended period.

Training

Despite the restrictions of the pandemic essential training has taken place under strict HSE guidance to maintain the skills of the volunteers and to uphold the capabilities of the unit.

3 volunteers qualified as instructors in the areas of Medical, Manual Handling and People Handling and many volunteers received certification in a variety of areas throughout the year.



DIRECTORATE OF PLANNING, ECONOMIC & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Director of Services: Mr. Sean McKeown

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

The public health restrictions introduced throughout the year to combat COVID–19 undoubtedly had an adverse impact on planning with a slight reduction (4%) in the overall number of applications received during the year compared to the previous year. That said there was a noticeable increase in the number of planning applications received in the last Quarter of 2020 compared to the previous year. Furthermore, there was an increase during the year in the number of applications received in respect of large housing schemes.

- **935 Planning Applications received during 2020 -** *decrease of 4% over 2019.*

Building Control

Year	2020	2019
Valid Commencement Notices applications received	319	291
Valid Disability Access Applications	86	60
Buildings inspected by the Council as a % of new buildings notified	21%	

Taking in Charge
There is a total of 42 estates at various stages of progress under the Council's Taking in Charge (TIC) statutory process. 1 no. new taking in charge application was received in 2020.

Taking in Charge works were completed on 4 additional Estates in 2020 as follows:

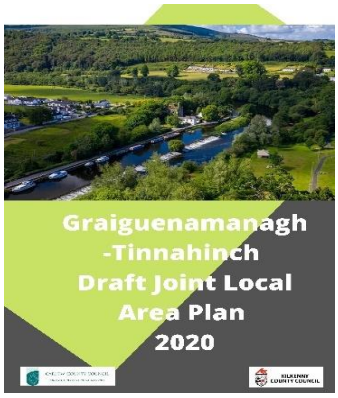
- Ard Glas, Ban Ard, Tuar Na mBlath, An Grianan, An Cuainin at Abbeylands Ferryback Kilkenny;
- Kingscourt, Callan
- Glenvale, Ballyragget
- Cois na Bearu, Graiguenamanagh

City & County Development Plan 2021-2027
The Draft City and County Development Plan was published on the 22nd of December 2020. The Draft Plan consists of two volumes and appendices.

Volume 1: Draft County Plan
Volume 2: Draft City Plan.
Appendices: Strategic Environmental Assessment, Appropriate Assessment Housing Strategy, City & County Retail Strategy, Wind Energy Strategy

It is out for public consultation until 12th March, 2021.

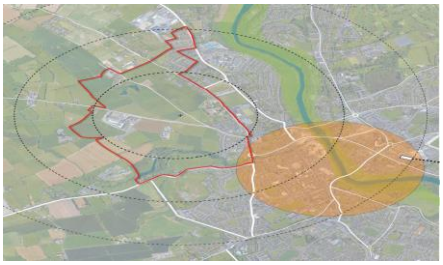
Graiguenamanagh/Tinnahinch local Area Plan (LAP)



The Draft Local Area Plan for Graiguenamanagh/ Tinnahinch is being prepared jointly with Carlow County Council and was published in November 2020 for its statutory public consultation which ended in January 2021. It is expected that the Draft LAP will be adopted in Q1 2021.

Kilkenny City Local Transport Plan
As part of the preparation of the City and County Development Plan, Consultants were appointed to assist the Council develop a Local Transport Plan for the City. A draft baseline conditions as well as a draft option reports were completed in 2020. Work is ongoing and traffic surveys will be completed shortly, with a draft Local Transport Plan expected in Q2 of 2021.

Loughmacask Masterplan
Consultants were appointed to assist in the development of the Loughmacask Masterplan and in excess of 60 people attended a public meeting held to discuss the Masterplan in January 2020. Substantial work has been completed to date but due to Covid-19 restrictions, the publication has been delayed but will go on public display in early 2021.



St. Canice's Masterplan
In conjunction with the HSE, preparations to commence a Framework Plan for the St. Canice's campus was made in 2020, including the preparation of an issues paper. A significant amount of survey work has been completed including a tree survey, and owing to public health restrictions on public meetings, the project was temporarily suspended during 2020 and will recommence in 2021.

Kilkenny County Council

Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Framework Plan for HSE's - St. Canice's Campus

Conservation
Grant funding of €280,824 was approved to 16 projects under the following schemes:

- Built Heritage Investment Scheme
- Historic Structures Fund
- Community Monument Fund

Works ranged from the rethatching of vernacular cottages, repairs to historic slate roofs, wrought iron railings repair and lime rendering, through to stabilisation works, window repairs and improved access.

Vital conservation works on Kilkenny County Council owned structures at St. Mary's graveyard boundary in Callan was funded under the Heritage Council's Historic Town Initiative.

Before and After images of works to 19th century wrought iron gates,
St. Mary's Church Callan.

Before and After images of 200-year-old thatch cottage in Lickettstown, County Kilkenny.

Vacant Sites

Following the annual review of vacant sites around the county, a further 7 sites were added to the Vacant Sites Register in 2020, bringing the total number of sites subject to the Vacant Sites Levy to 36. The number of cancelled entries due to site activation or improvement now stands at 16 sites, which demonstrates that the levy is having the desired effect.

Shopfronts Project

"*Kilkenny Shopfronts Through the Ages*"

Kilkenny County Council launched a new online resource in 2020, entitled "*Kilkenny Shopfronts Through the Ages*", available on the Library's Kilkenny Digital Archive https://digital-archive.kilkenny.ie/. This initiative was the result of collaboration between the Council's Planning Section, the Library Service, Information Systems and Heritage.

Kilkenny Shopfronts Through the Ages forms part of the Council's Strategy for Shopfronts and Signage, which includes awareness raising and promotion, policy and guidance, and enforcement.

ENVIRONMENT

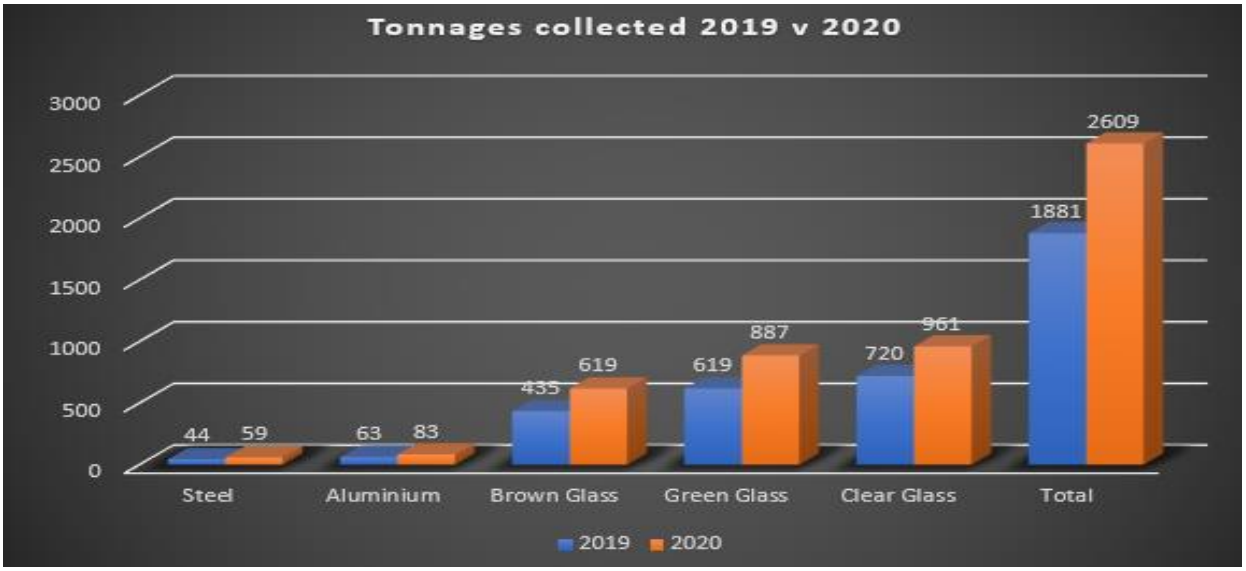
- RMCEI *(Recommended Minimum Criteria for Environmental Inspections)* **Plan** 2020 submitted to EPA by the Council received an overall score of **High** for 2020, retaining the score achieved in 2019. A total of c.5,000 planned inspections across Waste, Water, Noise and Air were identified and notwithstanding the impact and challenges around COVID-19 restrictions and public/staff safety approximately 85% of these inspections were completed by the Environment Team.

- 1,317 complaints were reported to the Environment Section in 2020, representing a significant increase on the previous year. All complaints are logged on the CRM System (Customer Relations Management), given a unique ID No., assigned to the appropriate staff member, investigated, action taken and once resolved closed on the system.

- Activity at Dunmore Civic Amenity Site increased during 2020 with over 2,822 tonnes of waste and 1,702 tonnes of recycling material collected, representing a c10% increase on 2019. 68,537 customers availed of the facility during 2020.

- Dunmore and Granny Civic Amenity Sites hosted a hugely successful Bulky Furniture Waste Collection Event resulting in a total of almost 56 tonnes of bulky waste collected under the Anti-Dumping Initiative.

- Significant increase in the usage of our 46 Bring Bank Centres across the City and County - 2,609 tonnes of glass, aluminum and steel collected in 2020 representing a 39% increase on the figure for 2019.



- Numerous media campaigns were run through local, regional, and national radio, print and social media platforms to stamp out littering, illegal dumping, dog fouling and to raise awareness about the added safety risks around waste as a resulted of COVID with support from the Southern Waste Management Office.

- 223 Fixed Penalty Notices were issued for offences under the Litter Pollution Act. These offences covered a broad spectrum from littering, to discharging rubbish from moving vehicles and erecting unauthorised posters and signs.

- 50 actions were taken in 2020 under the Waste Management Act including a number of cases that will go before the courts in 2021.

- The Council introduced a new initiative in 2020 – issuing postcards to encourage Householders across the County to complete an online questionnaire to inform the Council how they are managing their household waste, in compliance with the Waste Management Bye-laws.

- A number of Multi-Agency initiatives, including Operation Thor and inspections of unauthorised End of Life Vehicle (ELV) sites were undertaken.

- Other initiatives progressed under the Anti-Dumping Initiative, included undertaking clean-ups of litter black spots around the County and further development of the Bikes for Africa Scheme.

- Under the 2020 Local Authority Historic Landfill Assessment & Works Programme, the Sherman's Ballyragget site was remediated. Risk Assessment work was also advanced at the other 12 remaining Historic Landfill Sites within the County to determine if any further remediation is required.

  Subject to funding, Risk Assessment work at the 12 sites is expected to be completed in 2021 with Certificate of Authorisation applications submitted to the EPA.

Sherman's Ballyragget – March 2020
(Substantial Completion)

- 18 schools renewed their green flag award in March and a successful green schools on-line co-ordinators information session was held in October. A primary school newsletter was also issued in October that detailed online resources available to assist with environmental education, along with two environment themed books.

- An upcycled robot competition was completed during the summer aimed at primary school pupils and a competition aimed at secondary school groups was launched in November inviting students to construct a greenhouse from plastic bottles before the end of the academic year.

- 13 Community Anti-Litter and Graffiti grants were approved.

- 7 Waste Prevention Grants were awarded. A special Local Authority Prevention Network Paint Smarter Campaign was rolled out in association with Carlow and Waterford Local Authorities to encourage the public to paint smarter – waste less money, waste less paint.

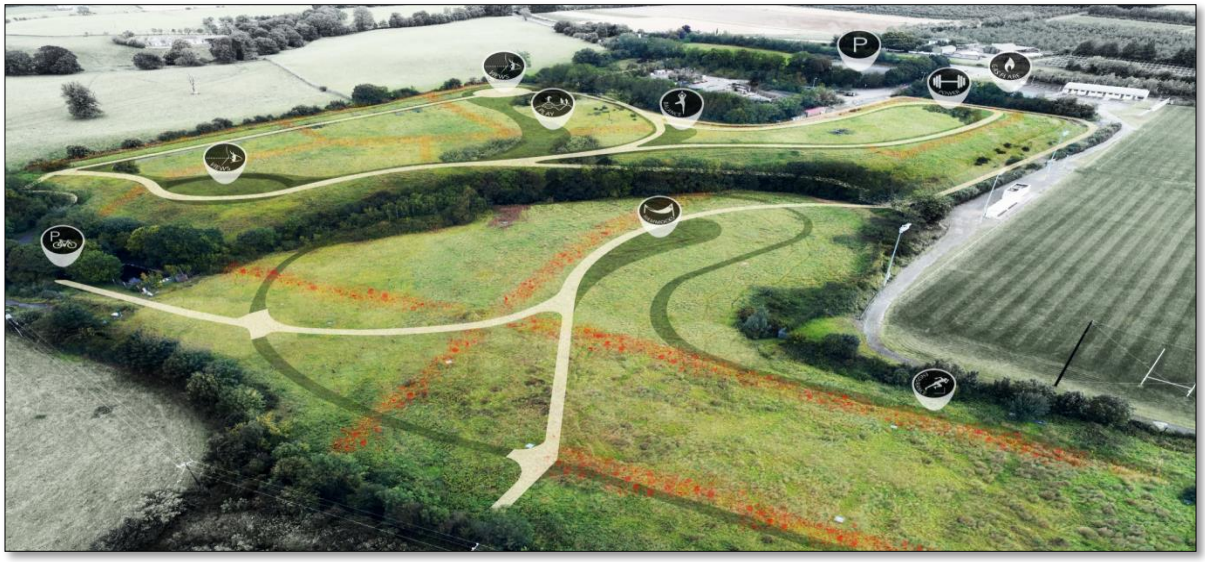
- 26 Grants were approved under the Graveyard Grant Scheme.

- Due to COVID restrictions group activities were not permitted and therefore a decrease in the annual spring cleans. However, 30 clean ups which were mostly individuals litter picking (while socially distancing) within their local area were assisted.

- "Waste Week" was celebrated in November to highlight the waste services provided by the Council and to promote information resources available to the public to assist them to manage their household waste. A promotional film of Dunmore Recycling & Waste Disposal Centre was launched on social media.

- Kilkenny City was once again deemed the cleanest of 40 towns and cities surveyed by business group Irish Business Against Litter (IBAL). Kilkenny topped the IBAL litter rankings for a record 4th time and was subsequently announced as the overall IBAL winner for 2020.

- Significant project milestones were met during the year to bring the proposed Dunmore Biodiversity and Recreational Countryside Park closer to reality. A funding application for €500,000 was submitted under the Outdoor Recreational Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) in November. Part 8 Planning process commenced in December.



Proposed layout of Dunmore Biodiversity & Recreational Countryside Park

Photomontage of Dunmore Biodiversity & Recreational Countryside Park

- Kilkenny and Tipperary County Councils continue to lead the national shared service "Local Authority Waters Programme" (LAWPRO) that supports and co-ordinates implementation of the River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018 – 2021 (RBMP). Nationally, the RBMP requires LAWPRO to focus on achieving water quality improvements in 189 priority areas for action. The focus areas in Kilkenny in 2020 were the Dinin River (Main channel, South channel and the Douglas River), the Nuenna, the Duiske and Powerstown Stream, the Erkina and the Breagagh.

- The Community Water Officer for Kilkenny continued to work with community groups in developing awareness of their local waters and supporting various local projects.

- Nationally, of the 189 priority areas for action, LAWPRO organised community information meetings in 26 areas, worked on 31 desk studies, commenced local catchment assessments in 35 areas and commenced reports on 26 areas.

- LAWPRO continued working with DHLGH and EPA to prepare for the next RBMP, which will cover the period from 2022 – 2027. Kilkenny County Council assisted LAWPRO in the development of the Draft RBMP. 14 Areas for Action have been identified in County Kilkenny. Public Consultation is expected to commence nationally on the draft Plan in 2021.

- During COVID lockdown, LAWPRO in association with Inland Fisheries Ireland, Waterways Ireland, The Heritage Council and the LA Heritage Officers Programme, ran a story competition seeking short stories about local waters. The best submissions were collated into a book called "Stories from the Waterside" and launched by Minister Noonan in August to mark Water Heritage Day on 23rd August.

Sean Keating, Ann Phelan, Minister Noonan, Fran Igoe, Colette Byrne at book launch

- Water Safety – 5 new Lifeguard Welfare Units were provided to accommodate the lifeguard service who supervise our five non-designated bathing areas. Lifeguards continued to be on duty, at specified times, during the months of June, July and August at The Meadows and The Weir in Kilkenny City, Graiguenamanagh, Inistioge and Thomastown. A summary of the assistance/interventions provided by our lifeguards can be seen hereunder:

Lifeguard Statistics Summer Season 2020				
Rescue	***First Aid***	***Advice Given***	***Accident Prevented***	***Other***
5	100	650	150	0

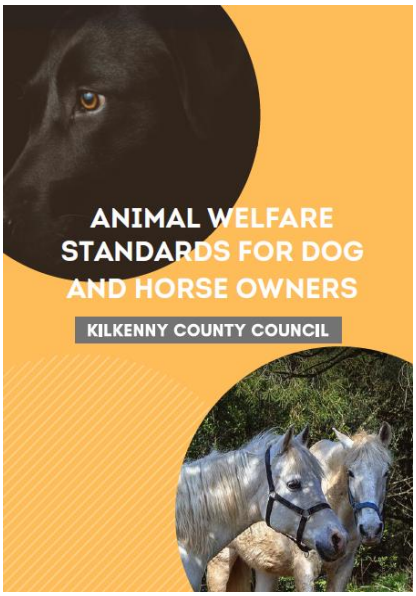
VETENINARY SERVICES

The Veterinary Service continued to fulfil the Food Safety Service Contract with the FSAI. This includes responsibility for the Carlow County Council Veterinary Service.

Works included:

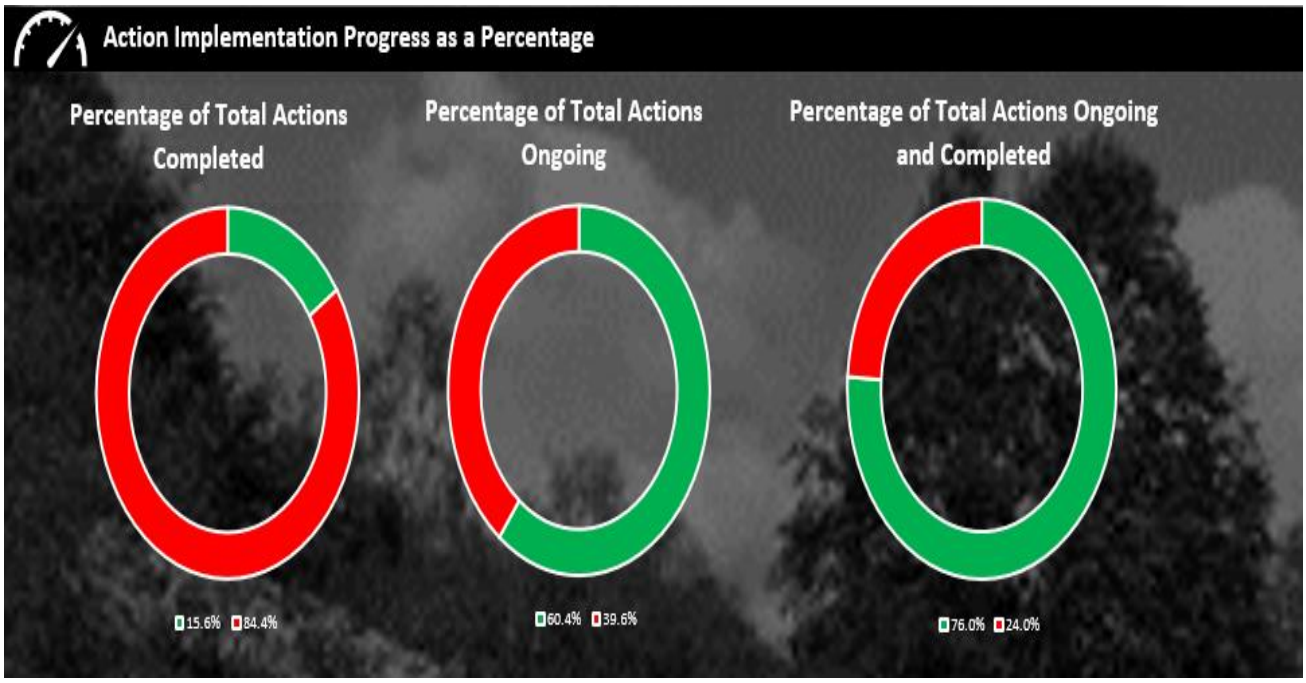
- Slaughterhouses (approved under the service's supervision) slaughtered 5,243 Cattle, 17,270 Sheep and 132,448 Poultry in 2020.
- 20 Food Businesses were under the supervision of the service in 2020.
- 27 Residue Samples were taken as part of the National Residue Control Plan.
- 63 Meat Swabs and Water Samples were taken as Official Controls.
- 134 Hygiene Inspections (other than AM/PM Inspections) were carried out in food premises.
- Continued consultations with new food business start-ups in addition to currently supervised food businesses on expansion plans.

Dogs and Horses



- Established a new Animal Welfare Standards Committee to provide monitoring and oversight in the operation of the Council's Animal Welfare Standards for dogs and horses.
- Revised Bye-Laws for the Control of Horses in the County of Kilkenny incorporating horse exclusion zones within the City core went out to public consultation in 2020.
- 60 horses were impounded under the Control of Horses Act in 2020, of which 14 were PTS, 8 reclaimed by their owners and 38 rehomed to either private citizens or Animal Welfare charities.
- 5,872 Dog licences were issued in 2020.
- 57 inspections of the 31 Dog Breeding Establishments were undertaken.
- 257 dogs were surrendered to the Carlow Kilkenny Dog Shelter in 2020 or picked up as strays by the Dog Wardens. Of these, 200 dogs were rehomed and 53 reclaimed. Unfortunately, 2 dogs were stolen and a further 2 dogs had to be put to sleep during the year due to sheep worrying.
- Enhancement works at the Carlow Kilkenny Dog Shelter were completed in 2020. These enhancements will provide a better experience for members of public visiting the shelter looking to adopt a dog.

- The first annual review of the Kilkenny Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (CCAS) 2019-2020 was completed in late 2020. The findings are provided hereunder which indicate that we remain on track to deliver on the 96 actions contained within the Plan.



Dashboard of Action Progress to-date
Kilkenny Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024

- A review was also undertaken of the CCAS Sub-action Plan, which includes 235 specific actions derived from the main actions in the CCAS. Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19, 185 *(or almost 80%)* of the 235 sub-actions were either commenced and/or were completed during the year.

- In December, a significant number of on-line staff meetings were held with team leaders and designated persons within the CCAS to agree a new CCAS Sub-action Plan for 2021. A total of 234 new sub-actions have been agreed, representing a very ambitious programme for 2021.

- Kilkenny County Council joined the European Climate Alliance in 2020, one of the first local authorities from Ireland to do so. The Alliance comprises of 1,700 local authorities across 25 European countries. Members of the Alliance commit to reducing CO2 emissions by 10% percent every 5-years. This target is consistent with the ambition the Council has agreed in the actions within the CCAS.

- SEAI confirmed in 2020 that Kilkenny County Council had exceeded the target having recorded an energy savings of 34% one year ahead of the target. Under the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (NEEAP) and the Public Sector Energy Efficiency Strategy, every local authority is required to achieve a 33% improvement on its energy efficiency by 2020 from a baseline year of 2009.

- The Council's Energy Team contined to pursue ISO 50001 Energy Management certification. This certification will put in place a robust energy management system to manage energy consumption and the performance of significant energy users. This in turn will greatly aid the organisation as it works towards achieving the necessary energy saving and carbon reduction targets up to 2030 and beyond. As part of this process, SEAI approved, independent auditors were engaged to assess the Council's energy management system.

  Stage 1 of the certification audit process took place in late November with stage 2, the final stage, scheduled for mid-January 2021. The feedback from the Auditor with respect to stage 1 was very positive and it is anticipated that accreditation will be awarded in Q1 2021.

- Six additional Home Energy Saving Kits were rolled out to the Kilkenny Library Service Network, ensuring that each branch now has a kit available to borrow. The kits contain practical tools to help households save on their energy bills.

Cathaoirleach Andrew McGuinness launched the roll out of the Home Energy Saving Kits across Kilkenny's Library Service Network

Parks & Playgrounds

Regular inspections of 30 playgrounds took place during 2020. Any repairs or cleaning necessary is undertaken immediately in the interest of maintaining the playgrounds in good order for safe play.

New playgrounds opened in 2020 - Tullaroan, Johnstown and Ferrybank Neighbourhood Park.

Piltown Municipal District	Castlecomer Municipal District	Kilkenny Municipal District	Callan – Thomastown Municipal District
Ferrybank Neighbourhood Park	Johnstown	Newpark	Ballyhale
Ferrybank, Blackthorn Hills	Ballyragget	Assumption Place, O'Loughlin Road	Windgap
Fiddown, Kylemore Walk	Castlecomer Demesne	Fr. McGrath Centre	Woodstock Gardens
Mooncoin	Clogh	Garringreen, Johnswell Road	Bennettsbridge
Mullinavat	Coon	Talbots Court Estate	Fair Green, Callan
	Paulstown	Rose Hill, Kells Road	Goresbridge
Kilmacow	Urlingford		Graiguenamanagh
Piltown *(works to commence in 2021)*	Tullaroan		Kells
Bigwood *(planning in place)*			Stoneyford
			Thomastown

New Seating & Hopscotch Area in Fair Green Callan

Pirate Ship in Ferrybank Playground

Thomastown & Clogh Playgrounds

Ferrybank Neighbourhood Park
Work was completed on the construction of the Ferrybank Neighbourhood Park during the year and the Park opened in October. The Park is part of a wider network of green spaces in the Ferrybank area with plans in the future to create linkages to the South East Greenway, which will commence construction shortly.

Playground in Ferrybank
with lavender bed in foreground

Terraced Seating Area.
Playground & Adult Exercise Area on upper level

River Nore Linear Park
The route covers approximately 7km of river bank and provides an attractive walkway and cycleway for outdoor exercise. The Parks Department continues to manage the large grassland meadows in both Bishopsmeadows and Dukesmeadows with sustainable mowing practices to protect and enhance biodiversity.

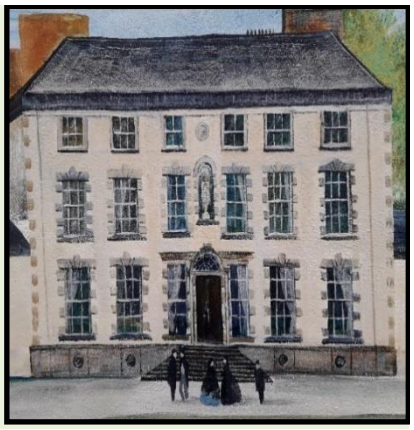
Tree Planting
A programme of tree planting in the city and county took place in early 2020 to commemorate a number of special anniversaries. The planting programme is part of our commitment to increase tree planting county wide, in supporting the objectives in the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy.

The anniversaries marked were as follows:

- 120 years of Local Government with 120 trees planted in sites at Ballyragget, Piltown, Callan and Kilkenny City.
- 40 years of the Rotary Club with 40 trees planted in Loughboy Neighbourhood Park.
- 30 years of the Kilkenny Civic Trust with 30 Trees planted in Loughboy Neighbourhood Park
- 20 years of Woodstock Gardens Restoration Project with 20 specimen trees planted in the arboretum to replace storm losses from previous years.
- 25 Years of the Kilkenny Cat Laughs with 25 trees planted in Lintown Hall to recreate the avenue of Lime trees which were previously vandalised.

Woodstock Gardens & Arboretum
- The Parks Department continued to attend to the day to day operations and planning of future restoration projects for Woodstock Gardens in Inistioge.
- The 4.7km Woodstock Loop Walk was completed early in the year and all funding was successfully drawn down under the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS).
- The Conservatory Tea Room was fully refurbished while it was closed during the Covid Restrictions. We look forward to opening a new and improved facility in 2021.

- Part of the refurbishment works included local artist Gillian Campden painting a mural of a Victorian scene on the wall of the conservatory.
- A new adventure play area was installed in October 2020, which was made of natural materials to encourage play in the outdoors under the Sports Capital Programme
- Planting of replacement specimen tree continued throughout 2020 and information plaques were installed for Champion trees or trees of a particular interest or size.
- Themed trails were hosted to celebration Kilkenny Day in October. While in December festive themed props were installed in the gardens to celebrate Yulefest which included a Christmas themed trail with elf images and festive reindeers were placed around the gardens along with painted large festive stars made by the primary school pupils from Thomastown.



South East Greenway

The South East Greenway (incorporating the Kilkenny Greenway) will be a spectacular 24 km off-road cycling and walking trail on the old railway line from the quays of Ireland's oldest city to the Norman town of New Ross along the banks of the river Barrow, through the scenic countryside of South Kilkenny. Kilkenny, Waterford and Wexford Local Authorities are collaborating to deliver the Greenway. It is estimated that the total cost to construct the Greenway will be €15.5m and funding for the full costs was secured from the Department of Tourism, Transport and Sport under the National Greenway Fund in 2020.

The Greenway will provide an attractive amenity for visitors to the area as well as providing an environmentally friendly alternative for commuters.

A Project Website has been launched www.southeastgreenway.net. The website will provide updates on progress in constructing the Greenway as well as information on the attractions that can be experienced along the Greenway. Some of the attractions along the Greenway include the 680 metres long Mountelliott tunnel, the Victorian Red Bridge over the River Barrow, view of the Rose Fitzgerald Bridge – the longest bridge in Ireland, Ballinlaw Castle once owned by the Earl of Ormond and taken by the infamous Oliver Cromwell in 1653 and the cross on the hill at Carriganurra erected in 1950 to celebrate Holy Year.

- Rail and sleeper lifting are now completed and tenders are currently being assessed for the construction of the first two sections of Greenway.
- Part 8 Planning approval was received for 2 car parks at the Boatyard, Raheen, New ross and Ballyverran, Glenmore.
- In December, an on-line public consultation was held to assist in identifying a suitable site for a public car park to access the Greenway in the Ferrybank area.
- The entire project is expected to take 18 months to complete construction.

View from the Greenway towards the recently opened New Ross By-Pass bridge

Lifting of old rails and sleepers along the route of the South East Greenway

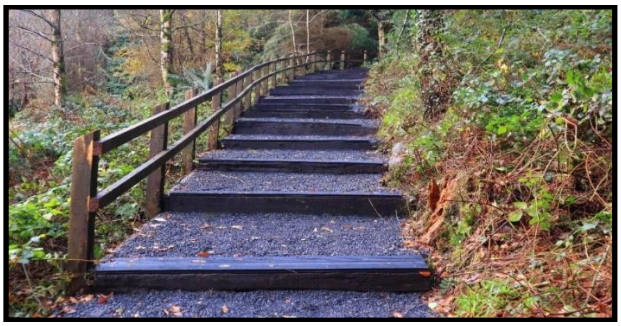
Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS)

- Funds from the ORIS enabled the further upgrade of the loop walk at Brownswood Freshford.
- Works took place on a similar but more uphill trail at Tory Hill, Mullinavat.

Browns Wood - Before and After Works to Trails

- Reconstruction of the 400m Silaire Wood, Graiguenamanagh boardwalk along the River Barrow and the rehabilitation of the existing woodland trails was completed and reopened to the public in November. With the exception of the nuts and bolts, the new boardwalk is made from 100% recycled plastic, made from a mixture of blended plastic from household items such as bottle caps, plastic film and margarine tubs.

Silaire Wood Boardwalk Replacement



Silaire Wood Trail Improvements

Amenity Grants

- 166 groups received grant assistance amounting to €127,000 in funding.
- The range of works funded included landscaping, grass and meadow maintenance and development of open spaces, the provision of street and outdoor furniture and small-scale improvement works.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The role of the Economic Development Department is to promote economic development and create a conducive environment for job creation. The Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021 (LECP) adopted by Kilkenny County Council is the strategic plan for aligning all economic development and community development activity over the life of the plan. The work of the Economic Development Department is guided by the economic actions of the LECP the overarching theme of which is job creation and fostering a high employment economy.

Whilst 2020 was a very challenging year for businesses due to COVID-19 and Brexit, the work of the Economic Development Department continued its focus on longer term strategic projects, which will enhance the economy of the County for the future of businesses and communities to ensure that Kilkenny is a great place to live, work and play. The Local Enterprise Office worked with businesses across the County in supporting them specifically in relation to trading through COVID and preparing for Brexit.

Kilkenny.ie Rebranding

New branding and website, kilkenny.ie was launched in the run up to Kilkenny Day in October under the banner of "The Best of Ireland". Following a study of the Kilkenny 'brand', the Council in conjunction with the City Centre Task Force took the decision that stakeholders would benefit from the roll out of an umbrella branding for Kilkenny which ultimately communicates all that Kilkenny has to offer. The aim of the initiative is to attract visitors and investors to the County by raising awareness of the many outstanding attributes that make Kilkenny an ideal place to visit, shop, work, locate a business, live and raise a family.

The new visual identity is conveyed in a modern modular 'K' shape. The familiar Kilkenny scripted logo is being retained along with the iconic Black & Amber colours. At the heart of the new identity is a blending of old and new, working in harmony with rich layers of history and modernity. A cultural blend of craft, design, food, business, festivals, shopping and more, Kilkenny is both the Medieval heart of Ireland and a progressive and ambitious entrepreneurial hub which fosters a vibrant living culture for its visitors, residents and investors alike.

Job Announcements for Kilkenny in 2020

UPMC, is a leading integrated healthcare provider and insurer. It announced in 2020 that it was establishing the UPMC Global Technology Operations Centre in Kilkenny to support the health system's continuing international expansion. The new centre located in McDonagh Junction is expected to employ up to 60 skilled technology workers and other support staff over the next three years, adding to more than 475 staff already employed in Ireland.

#shopkilkenny initiative

Kilkenny County Council, through funding provided under the Town & Village Renewal Scheme promoted a very successful #shopkilkenny campaign in the run up to Christmas 2020 targeting all areas of the County. The campaign encouraged in particular #shopkilkennyonline with local businesses especially those who availed of Trading Online Vouchers through the Local Enterprise Office as a result of COVID. The campaign was run over various platforms, including road signage coming into the City and County, radio and newspaper advertising and through the #shopkilkenny facebook and Instagram social media platforms.

Belview Port Zone

Kilkenny County Council continues to support the Port of Belview as a strategic zone. Belview / Port of Waterford have formulated a Strategy to position itself within national, regional and local planning and economic policy. Kilkenny County Council will support elements of this Strategy including the upgrading of the N29 Port Road. This project has been included and approved under the Waterford URDF application for the North Quays.

Ports provide infrastructure to deliver operational capacity. This Strategy sets out the long-term plan for the provision of infrastructure to deliver the future capacity required by the economy and the framework to allow Port of Waterford bring forward essential infrastructural projects for planning and consent purposes as required. It clearly conveys the scope of the Port's potential to deliver for the broad range of stakeholders.

The short to medium term delivery performance will be monitored through a 5-year rolling Corporate Plan.

North Quays SDZ

The Government announced funding of €110m for the overall North Quays Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) project in November 2020. The scale of development planned for the North Quays is transformative and will unlock significant private sector investment and development. Kilkenny will benefit directly from the regeneration of the North Quays with 4 of the public realm projects funded under the URDF located in Ferrybank and Belview:

- ***Belmont Link Road:*** linking the Abbey Road to the Belmont Road, supporting the building of houses by opening up lands for development and facilitating the planned population growth for the Greater Waterford City area in a compact manner.
- ***Abbey Road:*** Greenway Connectivity: provide for additional connection points to the Kilkenny Greenway to allow for greater access to the Greenway in Ferrybank as a smarter travel option for people living and working in the area. It will also provide greater connectivity to schools in the area.
- ***Abbey Road & Belmont Road Improvement Works:*** enhance the approach roads to the North Quays to include provision of cycle lanes.
- ***Upgrade of N29 Port Road:*** open up additional lands for development to assist Belview Port to grow to its full potential.

Centre for Design C4D

The National Design Innovation Hub t/a Centre for Design (C4D) was established and took up temporary office accommodation in McDonagh Junction, Kilkenny. A Centre Manager and Technical Manager are employed and the Centre is actively developing programmes for the target sectors. C4D partners include Kilkenny County Council, Institute of Technology Carlow, Design & Crafts Council of Ireland, Kilkenny LEADER Partnership and Kilkenny Industrial & Development Company.

Precision Agriculture Centre of Excellence (PACE)

The Precision Agriculture Centre of Excellence (PACE) was launched in May 2019. PACE is an initiative of the Telecommunications Software and Systems Group (TSSG) at Waterford Institute of Technology and aims to provide Ireland's agri-tech companies with direct access to best-in-class technologies and research. TSSG has secured over €100 million in funding over the past five years under EU programmes, making it one of the most successful ICT research centres in Ireland. It currently consists of over 80 research scientists and engineers and manages an active international network in excess of 700 partners. PACE will scout for new technologies and provide an opportunity to commercialise those technologies that have potential for deployment in the agricultural sector and grow its presence not just in Kilkenny but across Europe. PACE is temporarily based in Burrell's Hall, Kilkenny.

Technological University of the South East (TUSEI)

The Minister for Further & Higher Education, Research, Innovation & Science, Simon Harris TD appointed Mr. Tom Boland, former HEA Chief Executive, as the new Programme Executive Director for the TUSEI consortium. The Presidents of Institute of Technology Carlow (IT Carlow) and Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) co-chaired the inaugural meeting of the TUSEI Regional Engagement Advisory Group. The Group has been established by the Presidents to support the development of the Technological University of South East Ireland (TUSEI). The need for a third-level university in the South-East is as strong now as ever. The TUSEI is to be a multi-campus university.

2020 Key Outcomes

#MakingItHappen

Oifig Fiontair Áitiúil
Local Enterprise Office

1,058
employed in 178 LEO portfolio of businesses in Kilkenny

€513,459
in direct financial assistance approved to 26 businesses

€334,128
Business Expansion Grants approved to 12 businesses - forecasted job creation 139

€89,560
Priming Grants approved to 3 businesses - forecasted job creation 15

€46,775
Feasibility/Innovation Grants approved to 6 businesses

€30,000
Grad Start Funding approved to 1 business

€694,643
approved to 302 businesses in Trading Online Vouchers

€12,996
approved to 6 businesses in Technical Assistance for Micro Exporter Grants

€608,320
paid to 267 businesses in Covid-19 Business Continuity Vouchers

In partnership with ENTERPRISE IRELAND

2020 Key Outcomes

#MakingItHappen

Oifig Fiontair Áitiúil
Local Enterprise Office

€274,889

paid to 56 businesses under the Local Enterprise Office Covid-19 Client Stimulus Fund

€7,861

approved to 8 businesses under the Covid-19 Micro Enterprise Assistance Scheme

7

businesses participated on Lean for Micro to assist them with their competitiveness and innovation

1,133

clients availed of one-to-one Mentoring to assist them with issues within their business

1,676

clients participated in 119 Training & Management Development Programmes

146

clients participated in 11 Start Your Own Business Courses

747

students from 13 schools participated in the Student Enterprise Programme

88

businesses availed of Brexit related training and mentoring

LoanITT Ltd

awarded County Winner of the National Enterprise Awards and also transferred to Enterprise Ireland

In partnership with

TOURISM INCLUDING FESTIVAL SUPPORT

The Core Objective is to support tourism development throughout County Kilkenny, working with key stakeholders – public, private, community and voluntary to implement Kilkenny's Statement of Tourism Strategy and Work Programme 2017-2022 as well as the Government's Tourism Recovery Plan 2020 2023.

The Tourism Industry has long since been recognised as an important economic driver for our local economy here in Kilkenny.

In 2019, the sector generated over €9 billion for the national economy from international tourism and related carrier receipts together with domestic tourism.

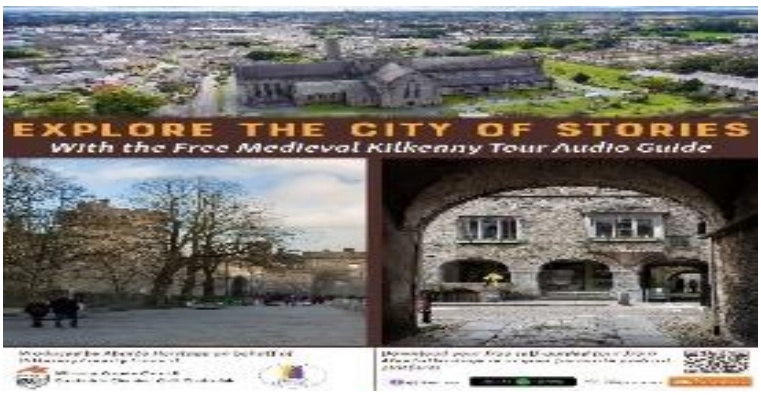
Tourism employs 260,000 people across Ireland and is the most important indigenous labour-intensive sector of our economy. It is of critical importance to the fabric of regional and rural economies. Every **€1m** of tourist expenditure helps to support **27** tourism jobs in local communities.

2020 has been a devastating year globally, nationally and locally for the Tourism and Hospitality Sector due to the COVID 19 pandemic. In response to the pandemic, Kilkenny County Council in partnership with Failte Ireland established Kilkenny's Tourism Recovery Taskforce and began an emergency response to support our local tourism sector.

Outdoor Kilkenny' is a joint initiative between Kilkenny Tourism and Kilkenny County Council funded through ORIS and launched in September 2020. It continues to promote and showcase all the wonderful outdoor and adventure activities available throughout the County.

We promoted and marketed Kilkenny as a top class "staycation" destination. Kilkenny featured prominently in Failte Ireland's *Ireland,Make a break for it* campaign in July 2020 in both digital and print media throughout the national campaign.

Kilkenny County Council engaged Abarta Heritage to develop an audio guide of our top visitor attractions in Kilkenny City.



The audio guide is also turned into a podcast format to make it accessible through Spotify, iTunes, Google Podcasts, SoundCloud and all the major podcast platforms.

Over 20 enthusiastic individuals answered the call to join Kilkenny County Council's Welcome Team and played their part in supporting Kilkenny's economic recovery in August.

The **Kilkenny Welcome Team** were strategically placed at high footfall locations around Kilkenny city to provide this welcome and will again if required in 2021.

Fáilte Ireland created a COVID-19 Safety Charter to stimulate demand and provide reassurance for consumers that they can book their domestic holiday with confidence.

October became Wolfwalker Month in Kilkenny

Kilkenny County Council was delighted to support this project in partnership with Failte Ireland however, unfortunately the change in the restrictions in October meant that our fantastic illuminations at the Castle and the dressing of the City to promote the Cartoon Saloon Wolfwalker film was not enjoyed by as many as we had hoped.

With the closure of Butler Gallery, the exhibition of the Wolfwalker Sketching for the film will hopefully be re-visited when their doors re-open in Spring 2021.

Notwithstanding the restrictions, the project was still able to deliver our beautiful Wolfwalker mural at St Mary's Lane and the nightly illumination of the Castle. This film's imagery has provided us with a bank of wonderful footage to showcase Kilkenny into the future.

Kilkenny County Council continue to recognise the important role festivals and events play in the overall tourism offering of Kilkenny as a top-class tourist destination.

In October 2020, Kilkenny County Council & Kilkenny Tourism in partnership with the Festivals sub group of our Tourism Recovery Taskforce were successful in receiving €20,000 LEADER Funding for a €40,000 marketing and PR campaign to showcase Kilkenny as the Number 1 destination in the country for Festivals into 2021.

Savour Kilkenny FOOD FESTIVAL

Kilkenny County Council & Kilkenny Tourism joined up with peninsula TV to make a 30 minute programme on all that is great about Kilkenny to air on US TV Stations throughout 2021. Filming took place in Kilkenny in November and went very well. We believe the series will assist in the attraction of Kilkenny to the international visitor next year when people think about travel again.

ORIS Projects: 11 applications were submitted under the 2020 ORIS funding call to further develop outdoor infrastructure throughout the County.

Some example of works completed under the scheme.

Improvement works at Siliare Woods, Graiguenamanagh & at Woodstock, Inistioge in 2020

Enhancing the Visitor Experience

Plans for the development of the Tholsel progressed during 2020.

Destination Towns

Funding has been secured by Kilkenny County Council to the value of €500,000 to improve and enhance the visitor experience here in the City. While Kilkenny is a key visitor destination within Ireland's Ancient East, visitors in the main only visit for a few hours on their way to other destinations rather than spending a day or two here. Visitors are not fully aware of what Kilkenny as a city has to offer, as some attractions are hidden or not on the Medieval Mile.

Kilkenny County Council has discovered through recent research (undertaken by Placemarque+) that there are **six main factors** that contribute to the visitor experience gap as follows: **Way finding Mapping**, **Improved crossings, Emphasising the new centre of gravity of the City, Defining visitor car parks and Improved public realm.** The €500,000 will address items 1 -3 of the issues affecting the visitor experience and will be implemented in 2021 and beyond.

DIRECTORATE OF FINANCE, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

Head of Finance: Mr. Martin Prendiville

FINANCE

The Finance Department is responsible for the overall control and management of the Council's finances. The main services being provided under this directorate are Financial Planning and Control, Income Collection, Treasury Management, Property Management, and Motor Taxation.

Income & Expenditure Account Statement
The Income and Expenditure Account summarises the expenditure on the day to day services provided by the Council and provides details of how this expenditure is funded. There was a surplus in the year of €16,635 which resulted in a cumulative surplus at 31st December, 2020 of €44,633. Strict budgetary controls were maintained on a total expenditure of €116.9 million.

Capital Project Funding Arrangements
The total cost of capital projects delivered under the Capital Programme in 2020 was €59.4m. Housing and Roads Projects accounted for 85% of the total expenditure. The outstanding commitments on completed capital projects amounted to €9.3m at 31st December, 2020. The annual budget provides for repayment of this commitment over a period of 8 years.

A total of €2,495,392 was collected in Development Levies in 2020.

The Council adopted a Capital Budget for the three-year period 2018 to 2020 in May 2018. This budget sets out the estimated cost of the capital projects under consideration and the related funding sources. An updated capital programme will be presented to Council in 2021.

The Council can only initiate capital projects that have an identified funding source.

Balance Sheet at 31st December, 2020
The Council has maintained a relatively strong balance sheet at 31st December, 2020. Additional non-mortgage loan finance of €5 million was drawn down during 2020.

The total bank loans *(excluding housing related loans)* outstanding at 31st December, 2020 were €15.9m.

The bank overdraft facility was utilised for 6 days during the year and the maximum overdrawn balance was €1m. The closing cash balance on hand at the end of December, 2020 was €18.1m.

Debt Collection
Covid-19 has had a significant impact on income arrears on commercial rates in 2020. The total collection rate fell from 94% for 2019 to 83% in 2020 with an increase in arrears to €1.956m thus reversing the trend of reducing income arrears achieved in recent years.

The collection performance on rents and housing loans remained similar to 2019 levels

	Percentage Collection						
	2014	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**
Commercial Rates	89	92	94	95	93	94	85
Rents & Annuities	92	92	93	92	93	95	96
Housing Loans	77	82	80	85	88	90	90

FINANCIAL TABLE

Expenditure By Division	Note	Gross Expenditure 2020 €	Income 2020 €	Net Expenditure 2020 €	Net Expenditure 2019 €
Housing and Building		20,967,890	22,350,469	(1,382,579)	(1,724,914)
Roads, Transportation & Safety		26,136,416	19,475,034	6,661,382	5,965,101
Water Services		7,293,099	7,209,138	83,961	119,083
Development Management		22,264,091	16,847,540	5,416,551	5,282,923
Environmental Services		11,737,421	3,421,972	8,315,448	8,354,953
Recreation & Amenity		6,736,420	283,974	6,452,446	5,823,615
Agriculture. Education, Health & Welfare		619,069	448,743	170,326	133,736
Miscellaneous Services		14,863,170	13,660,571	1,202,599	2,111,762
Total Expenditure/Income	15	110,617,575	83,697,441		
Net Cost of Division to be funded from Rates and Local Property Tax				26,920,134	26,066,261
Rates				20,992,880	19,655,130
Local Property Tax				11,799,822	10,673,913
Surplus/(Deficit) for Year before				5,872,568	4,262,783
Transfers from/(to) Reserves	14			(5,855,933)	(4,252,589)
Overall Surplus/(Deficit) for Year	16			16,635	10,193
General Reserve at 1st January				27,998	17,805
General Reserve at 31st December				44,633	27,998

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Due to COVID – 19, the year 2020 was very challenging for Information Systems Department who facilitated remote working for a large number of staff and moved all our meetings online for the Elected Members.

Key achievements for 2020:

- Deployment of VPN software for remote workers
- Developed and implemented GDPR compliant cookie pop up system across all websites.
- Development and roll out of Covid-19 Community Call Centre GIS system & dashboards
- Expansion of the use of mobile devices
- Facilitation of Remote Council Meeting via MS Teams
- Facilitated online public meetings using teams
- Implemented Business Restart Grant Forms and Scheme
- Implemented Dunmore amenity public appointment booking systems
- Implemented Library public appointment booking system
- Implemented various online surveys
- Installation of new iDocs, iHouse and iPlan systems.
- Installation and upgrade of new Citrix environment for remote working
- Migration of servers to new domain
- Migrations of users and applications to new domain
- MS Teams Deployment to staff and elected members
- Network upgrade to 1Gb fibre at city centre sites
- Ongoing additions, updates and security enhancements to the various local authority web sites
- Ongoing provision of Technical Support to Remote Workers
- Ongoing rollout of new PCs and laptops
- Ongoing rollout of surveying technologies to staff
- Ongoing updates to servers and PCs to maintain security of the network
- Rapid Rollout of Remote Working Laptops and Remote working solutions
- Rollout out of Two Factor Authentication
- Roll out of new public Geographical Information System viewers
- Roll out of internal GIS Portal to staff
- Rollout of new Traffic Fines System
- Supported communications department with multiple livestreaming events.
- Upgrade to Anti-Virus and endpoint management system
- Upgrade to File Archiving System
- Upgrade to File Backup System
- Upgrade of GIS Server

Broadband

Our Broadband Officer works closely with the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications to help to deliver the National Broadband Plan.

Key achievements for 2020:

- Attendance at Monthly Broadband Officers meetings
- Ongoing liaison with Broadband Service Operators
- Ongoing liaison with National Broadband Ireland
- Ongoing Digital Strategy Development
- Opening of six (6) Broadband Connection Points (BCP)
- Preparation of Tender for WIFI4EU
- Set up of dedicated contact point for queries from public.

PROCUREMENT

Kilkenny County Council's Procurement Unit have continued to facilitate the progress of an ongoing flow of contract opportunities in line with the organisation's public works programme despite the difficulties imposed by the restrictions arising from the COVID 19 Pandemic.

Key achievements for 2020:

- 34 Tenders advertised on the ***eTenders*** procurement portal
- 45 Mini tenders and Quotations advertised on the ***SupplyGov*** portal
- Further implementation of national frameworks
- Informed and updated user sections on transition to Brexit
- Participation in EPA approved training courses, with the purpose of incorporating Green Procurement policies into the tendering process
- Procurement of vital PPE during the pandemic
- Review of the Corporate Procurement Plan

Main Procurements per Service Area for 2020
(Please note RFT indicates Request for Tender)

Abbey Quarter

- ✓ RFT - Architect Led integrated Design Team services for Abbey Quarter – Plot 3
- ✓ RFT - Conservation Architect Led Conservation Team for the preparation of a conservation plan for the built heritage on the Abbey Quarter Site

Corporate

- ✓ RFT - Civil & Structural Engineer Led Design Team providing, Structural/Civil Engineering, Ecology, Landscape & Conservation Architect and PSDP Consultancy Services for a Pedestrian and Cycle Link River Nore
- ✓ RFT-Architect Led Design Team for Restructuring and Renovation of the Sessions House, Thomastown, Co Kilkenny
- ✓ RFT - Sessions House - Refurbishment, alterations and extensions
- ✓ RFT - Branding Consultants to create a unifying brand for the Tholsel/Medieval Mile Museum Kilkenny (tendered late 2019. Awarded 2020)

Environment

- ✓ RFT - Poulanassy Waterfall Trail and Visitor Car Park
- ✓ RFT - Tier 2 Risk Assessment & other related services for the Unregulated Waste Disposal Sites at Sheastown & Mallardstown Kilkenny
- ✓ RFT - Refurbishment and Repurposing of existing Public Toilets in Graiguenamanagh for use as Men's Shed
- ✓ RFT - Abbey Hall Recreational Area
- ✓ RFT - Silaire Woods Enhancement Scheme, Graiguenamanagh, Co. Kilkenny

Housing

- ✓ RFT - Prequalification of Contractors for Housing Construction at Crokers Hill, Kennyswell Road, Kilkenny City (Phases 1 and 2)
- ✓ RFT - Construction of 2 Number new Residential Dwellings at Shanganny, Jenkinstown, Co. Kilkenny
- ✓ Completion of Tendering process appointing contractors to commence works on the Broguemaker's site, Kilkenny
- ✓ RFT - Refurbishment Works to Vacant House at 14 Circular Road, Kilkenny

LEO and Community & Enterprise

- ✓ RFT - Request for Proposals for Management Development Programme
- ✓ RFT - Provision of Mentoring Services for The Local Enterprise Office Kilkenny
- ✓ RFT - Town & Village Renewal Scheme – Health Checks, establishment of Town Teams and Draft Town Plans

Machinery Yard

- ✓ RFT - Supply of New and Unused Paver-Finisher

Planning

- ✓ RFT - Consultancy Services for Kilkenny City Local Transport Plan

Public Lighting

- ✓ RFT - Multi-disciplinary Consulting Engineering Services to deliver stage (i) to(iii) inclusive of Public Lighting Energy Efficiency Project - Eastern Region

Road Design

- ✓ RFT - Remedial Works Callan Friary Pedestrian Bridge, Callan, Co. Kilkenny
- ✓ RFT - Call-Off Contract for Technical Consultancy Services PMG Phases 1 to 4 under Framework Agreement TII145 (Lot 1d) for the N24 Waterford to Cahir Project
- ✓ RFT - Mini competition for Technical Consultancy Service N24 Carrick Road Improvement Scheme
- ✓ RFT - Traffic Surveys for N24 Waterford to Cahir and N24 Cahir to Limerick Junction
- ✓ RFT - N25 Curraghmore Pavement Scheme
- ✓ RFT - N25 Waterford to Glenmore Ground Investigation
- ✓ RFT - N77 Lisdowney Junction to Ballyconcra CMS 2020
- ✓ RFT - N77 Baun to Hennebry's Cross HD 28 Scheme 2020
- ✓ RFT - HD28 National Routes Retexturing Schemes 2020
- ✓ RFT - N76 North of Callan Pavement Schemes 2019
- ✓ RFT - South East Framework for Pavement and Associated Minor Works

ABBEY QUARTER, KILKENNY CITY

Work on the implementation of the Abbey Quarter Masterplan has continued in 2020, with construction continuing on the redevelopment of the Brewhouse Building and the commencement of work on the development of the Riverside Garden.

Significant progress has also been made in 2020 on the planning, design and preparation of tender documents for a number of projects within the Masterplan area.

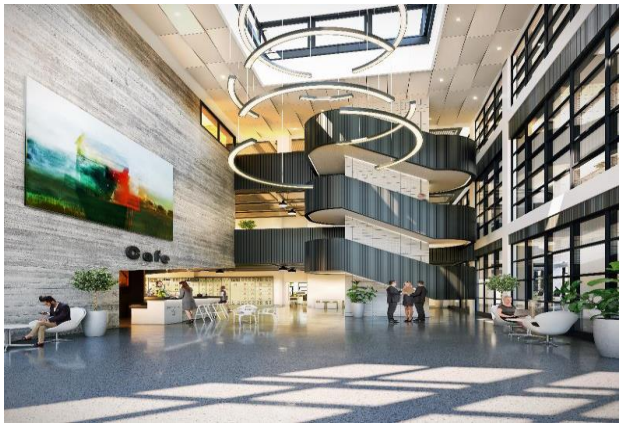
Kilkenny Abbey Quarter Development Ltd

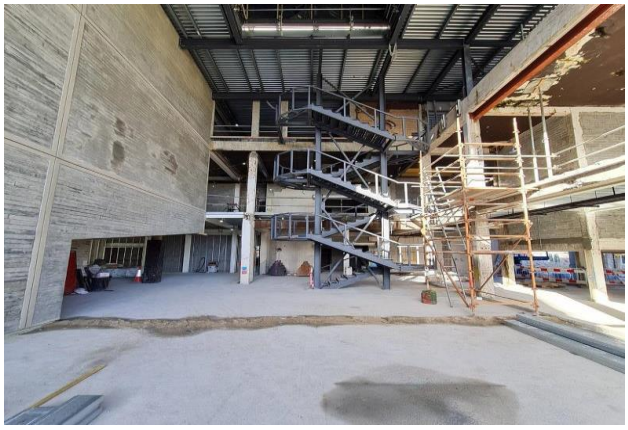
Development proposals for the proposed buildings on the Abbey Quarter Site have been progressed by Kilkenny Abbey Quarter Development Ltd (KAQD) in 2020. KAQD is the development company set up by the partnership between Kilkenny County Council and the National Treasury Management Agency through the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) for the development of the building blocks on the former Smithwicks Brewery Site. The first of these buildings to be developed is the Brewhouse Building.

Brewhouse Building

Work commenced on the construction of the Brewhouse Building in July 2019, with Mythen Construction appointed as main contractors for the project. Work has continued through 2020, although significant delays have been experienced due to the requirement to close the site for an 8 week period to comply with COVID 19 restrictions and subsequent delays due to staff absences arising from close contacts with COVID 19 cases. The project is now expected to be completed in summer 2021.

The development of the Brewhouse will provide 4,500m^2 of Grade A Office Space in the heart of the City Centre and will be ready for occupation from summer 2021.





Abbey Quarter - New Buildings
Work has also progressed in 2020 on the procurement of design teams to progress the development of some of the new buildings on the Abbey Quarter Site. A Framework of Architectural Design Teams is to set up, from which design teams will be selected for the design of the future new buildings on the site. New buildings on the Abbey Quarter will be for mixed uses as set out in the Abbey Quarter Urban Design Criteria / Development Code.

Kilkenny County Council
Kilkenny County Council is responsible for the redevelopment of the Mayfair Building and the extensive areas of public realm in the Abbey Quarter site.

Mayfair Library
The new Kilkenny City Library is to be located within the Mayfair Building on the Abbey Quarter site. The Mayfair Building is a very significant building in the social heritage of Kilkenny, having housed the Mayfair Ballroom from 1943 to 1973.

The detailed design and tender documents for the proposed development were completed in 2020. The project has been delayed going to tender due to the impact of COVID 19, but it is expected that the project will go to tender in early 2021.

The Mayfair Building is immediately adjoining the City Walls. An Advance Works contract was undertaken in 2020 to carry out conservation works to the walls in advance of the library works. These works were funded through the Community Monuments Fund (National Monuments Service) and involved the removal of a modern stepped structure and boiler house that had been constructed against the wall, the removal of vegetation and the repointing and repair of the wall including some below ground repairs.

Public Realm Areas
As per the partnership agreement with the NTMA through ISIF, Kilkenny County Council are responsible for the development of the public realm areas in the Abbey Quarter Site. The development of areas of High Quality Public Realm through the site is considered to be critical to the integration of the former Brewery site into the City Centre.

Funding for these works is being provided through the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) through the Designated Urban Centres Grant Scheme and Kilkenny County Council own funds.

Tionscadal Éireann Project Ireland 2040

Ireland's European Structural and Investment Funds Programmes 2014-2020
Co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Union

European Union
European Regional Development Fund

Significant progress has been made in 2020 on the development of these areas of public realm.

Horse Barrack Lane & Brewhouse Square
The contract with Mythen Construction for the redevelopment of the Brewhouse Building includes for the redevelopment of Horse Barrack Lane and Brewhouse Square. These projects have been delayed due to the impact of COVID 19 and they are now due to be completed in summer 2021.

Tea Houses at Bateman Quay
Conservation works to the two tea houses at Bateman Quay are to be undertaken on completion of the Riverside Garden project – the detailed design and tender documents for this project were advanced during the year and it is expected that the works will be undertaken in 2021.

Riverside Garden Project including Skate Park
Work on the Riverside Garden and skate park were substantially completed in 2020. Similar to the Brewhouse project, this project was delayed due to the closure of the site for an 8 week period in 2020 due to COVID 19 restrictions. The project is being constructed by Niall Barry & Co., with the skate park being constructed by specialist sub-contractor, Spraoi Linn. It is expected that the park will be open to the public in early 2021.

Urban Street and Park Project
A planning application for the development of the Urban Park & Street project through the Abbey Quarter was lodged with A Bord Pleanala in July 2020, with a planning decision expected in early 2021.

The urban park, centred around the National Monument of St Francis Abbey will be the central focus of the Abbey Quarter site and will be designed to accommodate outdoor events associated with the many festivals held in the City throughout the year. The development of the urban street, which will be of pedestrian and cyclist priority will facilitate the development of the proposed new buildings within the Abbey Quarter site.

THOMASTOWN PROJECTS

Sessions House

The Sessions House (former Courthouse) in Thomastown is to be redeveloped by Kilkenny County Council for reuse by the Design & Craft Council of Ireland with funding from the Rural Regeneration Fund, LEADER and Kilkenny County Council own funds. This development offers the opportunity to provide a sustainable new use for the building, whilst also promoting the vibrancy of Thomastown as a creative and artistic hub in the region.

Part VIII Planning consent for the project was approved in July 2020. The detailed design was also completed and tenders were received from contractors for the development. It is expected that a contractor will be appointed in early 2021, with the building due to be available for occupation in early 2022.

Bridewell – Conservation Works

Conservation works were undertaken in 2020 on the Bridewell building which is located to the rear of the Sessions House. Despite its historical significance, the building is little known by the residents of Thomastown as it is hidden from view by the Sessions House, with no access to the building other than through the Sessions House.

The works undertaken in 2020, funded through the Historic Structures Fund, consisted of the cleaning out of the building, removal of vegetation, the repointing, repair and flaunching of walls – essentially stabilising and protecting the building. With the upcoming development of the Sessions House, future access to the Bridewell for building repairs will be very limited and thus it was critical that these conservation works were undertaken to the building prior to the commencement of work on the Sessions House.

The Bridewell building was built in circa 1824 and was built as an early prison building. The building is an excellent example of early “functional” architecture; the materials chosen, and the construction detailed to provide an efficient solution to the requirements of the building: to contain human beings with the minimum of comfort and the maximum level of security.

Thomastown Library
Thomastown Library, which currently does not meet with the requirements of a modern day library is to be relocated a short distance from its current location on Marshes Street to the adjoining former Community Sports Hall. The project was advanced through planning in 2020 with Part VIII planning consent for the proposed development being approved in December 2020.

An application was made in late 2020 to the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund for funding for the proposed development with a decision on this funding application expected in early 2021.