



TO: THE CATHAOIRLEACH AND EACH COUNCIL MEMBER

RE: DRAFT 2024-2029 CAPITAL BUDGET- KILKENNY COUNTY COUNCIL

Section 135 of the Local Government Act 2001 requires a report on capital projects to be prepared by the Chief Executive and presented to the elected council annually. Accordingly, this report gives details of the Council’s proposed capital projects for the next six years. It has been agreed to extend the timeframe beyond three years to provide greater visibility on the funding requirements given the longer duration of many the larger projects undertaken by the Council.

A summary of the draft Capital Budget for the period 2024 – 2029 is set out on Table 1 below. The total estimated expenditure over that period is €832m and the estimated match funding required is €70m.

KILKENNY COUNTY COUNCIL CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2024-2029

Table 1

Service Division	2024	2025	2026	2027-2029	Programme Total	Grant Funding	Balance to be Funded
	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000
Housing & Building Total	78,354	78,533	85,965	240,080	482,933	478,579	4,354
Roads & Transportation Total	12,380	17,362	26,773	64,758	121,273	101,490	19,784
Flood Relief Total	450	1,500	6,950	8,400	17,300	17,300	-
Economic Development and Promotion Total	6,551	16,883	14,125	21,100	58,659	41,082	17,577
Corporate Buildings	-	2,700	6,500	4,800	14,000	9,750	4,250
Environmental Services Total	1,600	5,000	4,400	-	11,000	8,200	2,800
Recreation & Amenity Total	12,502	16,332	13,694	48,050	90,578	77,196	13,382
Community - Total	6,899	5,815	4,280	11,750	28,744	24,388	4,356
Tourism Total	700	6,210	1,486	-	8,396	4,702	3,695
Grand Total	119,436	150,335	164,174	398,938	832,883	762,686	70,197

In addition to the estimated spend of €832m a further €827m is estimated for roads projects which are 100% grant funded by TII as set out in Table 2.

Roads - 100% Grant Funded		Table 2
	Funded By	Cost
		€m
N24 Waterford to Cahir	TII	680.00
N25 Glenmore to Waterford	TII	112.00
N24 Tower Road	TII	12.00
N24 Carrick Road Mooncoin	TII	12.70
N77 Ballyragget Village to Ballynaslee	TII	10.00
Total		826.70

Delivering on Social Housing targets and driving economic development through the delivery of the Capital Programme continues to be a key strategic objective for this Council. Significant projects have been delivered in the last five years throughout the City and the County.

The Housing team are projecting delivery of in excess of 1,600 units over the next six years from all streams including construction, turnkey and acquisition.

In addition, it is planned to have 500 units retrofitted over this period.

The total estimated expenditure on roads projects over the next six years is €121m with a match funding requirement of just under €20m. Significant funding is available annually under Active Travel for projects in the City and County. The Roads team are continuing to progress the Northern Ring road extension. The URDF funded projects in the South of the County are also being progressed. Additional grant funding will be sought to complete these projects. Significant investment is also planned to link the Freshford Road to the Kilmanagh Road during this period.

The contract to upgrade public lighting across the County and it is expected to be completed by the end of 2024.

Six flood relief schemes were announced for Kilkenny by the OPW in 2018. A planning application and CPO application were submitted to An Bord Pleanala in May 2023 for Ballyhale. Works are progressing on the preferred option for the Graiguenamanagh Scheme.

Under Economic Development further investment is required in the Abbey Quarter project. Additional cash equity is required for the Abbey Quarter Development Partnership. The tenders for the construction of the urban street and park will be issued in the coming months. This project is the final public realm project on the scheme to be completed by the Council.

Council are currently in discussions with Diageo to acquire a building known as the Engineers Block. The intention is to refurbish this building to provide 'Landing Space' for new companies coming to Kilkenny.

Following the completion of the review of the Abbey Quarter Masterplan a portion of the Sweeney's Orchard site has been identified to provide car parking to serve new developments within the Abbey Quarter. It is intended to apply for funding for this development under the next URDF Call.

The Economic Development Budget also provides for funding to acquire and resell residential buildings that are not in use and are not for sale in Kilkenny. A total of €6m has been allocated under URDF Call 3 for this purpose. A cashflow facility of €3m will also be required to fund acquisition in towns and villages.

The Programme provides for funding to refurbish and extend the Meubles building on John Street subject to grant funding being available. Provision has also been made to retrofit key Council buildings under the Climate Action Plan.

A total of €90.5m is estimated to be spent on recreation and amenity facilities throughout the City and County.

The largest single project is the South East Greenway with estimated expenditure to completion of €24.6m. This project is 100% grant funded by TII.

The programme also makes provision for investment in Woodstock, Graiguenamanagh, Carneige Plaza, Watergate Park, Market Yard, Watergate Theatre, The Watershed and the Cover Centre Recreational Amenity.

A suitable site has been identified for the new City Fire Station and detailed design is underway. It is also planned to co-locate a building for the Civil Defence on this site.

Under Community, provision is made for the refurbishment of the old City Library building, the new Library in Thomastown, the Callan Friary Complex and The Watersports Hub in the City.

Under Tourism additional grant funding has been secured for the Museum of Medieval Kilkenny following the receipt of the construction tenders. This project is now ready to proceed in the coming weeks.

The total estimated match funding required is €70.2m. The total funding identified is €40.8m leaving a shortfall of €29.4m. Opportunities for additional grant funding will be explored. All of the projects identified may not be completed within the six year time-frame. Additional loan finance will also be required. The total loan balance currently being serviced is €18.5m. An additional €8.5m has been approved by Council but not drawn down. When these loans are drawn down the total loans being serviced will amount to €27m. Additional loan finance will be needed over the six year term of the Programme. This issue will have to be reviewed when the budgets for 2025 are being prepared later this year.

This Capital Budget will be reviewed on an annual basis should the budgeted funding not meet projections. The Programme will need to be adjusted accordingly and Members will be advised.

Lar Power
Chief Executive
21st March, 2024

1. Housing

Housing Capital Delivery

Kilkenny County Council continue to delivery housing units in accordance with the Kilkenny Housing Delivery Action Plan published in January 2022 and “Housing For All’ the Government’s plan for housing in Ireland published in September 2021. The Housing Capital team has been significantly strengthened and is now a multi-disciplinary team working on the various strands of housing delivery at an ever-increasing scale.

Maintaining an in-house Capital Team with the appropriate range of skills and experience will always be critical to the successful delivery of housing projects. It is envisaged that the current team of 18 will need to be expanded further over the coming years as new legislative requirements and increased delivery targets arise.

LA Social Housing Construction - Direct Build and Turnkey

The added capacity in the Housing Capital Section has enabled the delivery of social housing by Kilkenny County Council managed under different streams i.e.

- a) Direct Building Housing using full external design teams – Employer Designed. This delivery stream is expected to be used for sites where the scale or type of development may not lend itself to a design build approach. Design teams are generally procured using the OGP Design Team Framework.
- b) Direct Building Housing using full external design teams – Contractor Designed. KCC are currently setting up a Design Build contractor framework for the South East counties. This procurement strategy enables the use of Modern Methods of construction in housing delivery i.e. timber frame, ICT or steel frame. It is most likely to be used on the larger projects.
- c) Direct Build using in-house Architect: - backyard sites, town and village center sites, smaller brownfield sites, special needs housing, one-off housing are expected to be developed in house, if capacity allows. These types of developments generally require a more hands on approach and a higher level of project management so KCC staff are best placed to do that.
- d) Small Capital Works:- i.e. significant extensions, refurbishment of derelict / long term vacant houses / town and village center properties that have been acquired under CPO. A contractor’s framework has been set up to manage the procurement of works for these projects that will streamline delivery.
- e) Part V i.e. provision of units in private developments as required under Part V of the Planning and Development Acts. It is hoped that private housing development will increase across the county in the coming years, delivering Part V units in more areas.

f) Turnkey Housing. This delivery stream involves the purchase of multiple units in a 'turnkey' condition from a developer, procured from an Expressions of Interest Advertisement.

AHB Social Housing Construction - CAS

The Capital Assistance Scheme [CAS] is a source of funding for Approved Housing Bodies to assist with the delivery of housing units for disability, older persons, homeless, disabled people, and a range of other priority categories including care leavers, domestic violence refugees etc. Kilkenny County Council Housing Capital Section provides advice and support to AHB's delivering units under the CAS scheme and administers the funding process through the capital budget.

AHB General Social Housing Construction [CALF]

Capital Advanced Leasing Facility [CALF] funding supports AHB's in delivering general needs social housing. and the associated administration of Payment and Availability Agreements is administered through Kilkenny County Council and is therefore reflected in the capital budget.

LA Acquisitions

The purchase of single second hand units on the private market is generally undertaken to solve a particular housing need that cannot be met by the other housing delivery streams. It is not envisaged that this approach will change significantly in the coming years and this is reflected in the capital budget.

AHB Acquisitions

The acquisition of properties by AHB's is generally undertaken under the CAS scheme, outlined above. Kilkenny County Council supports this process and administers grant funding to the AHB's so this activity is reflected in the capital budget.

Energy Efficiency Retrofit Programme [EERP]

This programme funds works to increase the energy efficiency on KCC's own housing stock. The intention is to increase the level of activity under this programme, in accordance with National Policy and our own Climate Action Targets. As the level of funding available from the Dept of Housing for each property is capped and only applicable to certain elements of a retrofit, Kilkenny County Council are required to fund the balance of the works from their own resources. The figures presented in the budget reflect the intended increase in the level of activity and an expected increase in costs per unit going forward.

Affordable Housing - Developer Led

Kilkenny County Council is engaged in the delivery of affordable housing under the Affordable Housing Purchase Fund, with the first units to be delivered in 2024 under a developer led scheme. A subsidy payment (€50,000 to €75,000) is applied to the purchaser's own funds in order to allow those with a shortfall in funding to purchase their own homes. The Dept of Housing will fund 95% of this subsidy and the LA's are required to fund the remaining 5%. The subsidy is reflected in a shared equity on the

home. The level of funding required to support this 5% of the subsidy, based on an expectation of increased affordable housing targets is reflected in the Capital Budget.

Affordable Housing – LA Projects

Kilkenny County Council are working towards delivering affordable housing, most likely as part of mixed tenure projects, using the Affordable Housing Fund. Similar to the developer led affordable houses, the LA's are required to provide 5% of the subsidy from their own resources. The expected costs under this heading is reflected in the Capital Budget.

The extent of social housing delivery across county Kilkenny has increased dramatically in the last five years. During the period 2014 to 2019 434 housing units were provided compared to 1,101 during the period 2019 to 2023. The level of investment in the capital budget for the next six years reflects our commitment to continue and increase delivery of social and affordable housing for the county.

2. Roads/Transportation

Kilkenny Northern Ring Road Extension

This Scheme provides for the construction of approximately 1.5km of new road which will link the N77 Ring Road at the Castlecomer Road Roundabout, with the R693 Freshford Road, and the northwest of the City to the existing Ring Road. The Scheme will include a new crossing of the River Nore.

Kilkenny County Council is currently finalising a further information request from the Department of Transport following submission a SAR (Strategic Assessment Report) to secure funding to proceed to design/planning this essential project for the City.

Loughmacask Link Road

Kilkenny County Council is undertaking the construction of the Loughmacask Link Road from the existing R693 Kilkenny to Freshford Road at Talbotsinch, to west of the existing Dunningstown Road at Lousybush, approximately 400m in length, to include a new roundabout at the junction between the new road and the Freshford Road. This road connects directly with the Kilkenny CBS school access road. The construction of the school and both sections of road are currently under construction.

Loughmacask Sustainable Links R7

Previous Development Plans supported the development of the Inner Relief Road in Kilkenny City. Phase One of this transportation link from the Castlecomer Road to Waterbarrack Roundabout has been delivered, also under the LIHAF programme significant road infrastructure in the western Environs is now in place.

The proposed Loughmacask Master Plan now affords the opportunity to revisit the Road objective options extending from the Western Environs to Loughmacask and extending to the Freshford Road.

Breaghagh Valley Link Road to Waterbarrack Roundabout R5

This road is approximately 850m in length and is designed to connect the existing Waterbarrack roundabout at the western end of Dean Street, to the new roundabout at the junction of the Circular Road and the Kilmanagh Road.

Lousybush Lane connection to CBS Link Road

This proposal allows for access for the residents on the lane to new CBS Link road. This will then facilitate the closure of Lousybush lane to vehicular traffic and allow for active travel measures which will include access to the school.

Danville Link Road

This proposal will allow for an additional access from the expanding IDA Park on the ring road. The proposal would include a link from the IDA park to the roundabout at Springhill on the Waterford road and upgrade works to the Outrath road.

National Road Schemes:

Schemes on the National Road Network are funded 100% by Transport Infrastructure Ireland. Schemes currently at design stage under Transport Infrastructure Ireland's Programme include:-

N24 Waterford to Cahir Scheme

The N24 Waterford to Cahir Project forms part of the N24 national primary route, a strategic transport corridor between the cities of Limerick and Waterford. The route connects major ports as well as a number of urban centres between Limerick and Waterford dispersed along the N24 corridor. The section of the N24 being considered by this project is approximately 60km in length. It extends from the M8 Junction 10 Cahir North Roundabout, north of Cahir in Co. Tipperary, to the southern terminal of the M9 Dublin to Waterford motorway at the Quarry Roundabout, north of Waterford City in Co. Kilkenny.

N25 Glenmore to Waterford Scheme

The N25 Waterford to Glenmore Road Scheme is located between two major By-Pass schemes at Waterford City and New Ross. This proposed scheme will link the upgraded N25 New Ross By-Pass and the N25 Waterford By-Pass and is likely to consist of approximately 10km of dual carriageway national primary route linking these two existing upgraded sections of the N25. A route corridor has been selected for the scheme. The scheme is currently suspended due to lack of funding.

N24 Tower Road Junction Improvement Scheme

This project is substantially complete.

N24 Carrick Road Improvement Scheme

The proposed N24 Carrick Road Improvement Scheme located near Mooncoin, Co. Kilkenny is approximately 2.2km (northwest - southeast) in length. The scheme involves both offline and online works, approximately 950m of the road scheme will

run along the existing N24 and the remaining 1.25km of the scheme requires realignment.

Applications for approval to An Bord Pleanála for 177AE Planning application and Compulsory Purchase Order Approval was made on the 25th November 2022. A decision is expected in Q2 2024.

N77 Ballyragget to Ballynaslee Improvement Scheme

The scheme is currently under construction. The works consist of the realignment of a 2.44km section of the N77 to remove a bend immediately to the north of the Glanbia Plant at Ballyragget, County Kilkenny. The proposed development will commence 250m south of the Glanbia Plant at Ballyragget and extend northwards to tie in to the completed N77 Ballynaslee Realignment Scheme. The works will consist of 1,740m of online realignment and 700m of offline realignment works, with associated drainage, including attenuation pond and swales, fencing, safety barriers, kerb line, signage, and all site development and landscaping works.

Ferrybank (North Quays SDZ Projects)

Belmont Link Road and Greenway Connectivity

A link road is proposed to connect the Abbey Road to the Belmont Road. The construction of this road will assist in developing the potential of the area for future housing and the growth of the City north of the Suir in accordance with the National Development Plan 2040. A planning application will be submitted in 2024.

The Kilkenny Greenway (from Waterford to New Ross) received Part 8 planning approval in March 2018. The provision of additional connection points to provide for greater access and to facilitate usage of the Greenway (within the environs of Waterford City) as an active travel option for those living in the suburban residential developments is an Objective of the Ferrybank-Belview LAP. A new carpark and access point to the Greenway will be facilitated as part of the above application.

Port Road (N29)

It is envisaged that there will be significant levels of growth at Belview Port in the Ro-Ro (*roll on roll off*) and Lo-Lo (*Lift on / Lift off*) sectors in the future. It is considered that the growth of warehousing and logistics service providers will also play a key role in growth of the port.

In recent years, a number of permissions have been secured by the Port of Waterford for wharf expansion and associated port services. However, road access to zoned lands at the present is extremely limited. The upgrade works of the N29 Port Road is an Objective of the Ferrybank-Belview LAP, namely: *Objective 5D To revise the speed limits on the N29 to allow for access to the zoned land south of the L3412; and 5E To provide a roundabout at the Rathculiheen/L3412 junction to enable the development of the land in the vicinity, and north of this junction.*

The delivery of the proposed roundabout at the junction of the N29 and L3412 will remove access restrictions to zoned lands, thus open the way for inward investment.

Abbey Road and Belmont road Sustainable Transport Improvements

The proposed improvement works on the Abbey Road & Belmont Road will enhance these approaches to the North Quays SDZ and will fulfil an objective of the Ferrybank-Belview LAP, namely: *Objective 10C: Provide cycle lanes on the following routes (in accordance with the National Cycle Manual (www.cyclemanual.ie): Abbey Road; and R711/Urban Village.*

Abbey Road & Belmont Road Improvement Works will visually improve two of the key approach roads servicing the North Quays SDZ. The works will provide enhanced active travel facilities to link residential, commercial, educational and services areas. This will demonstrate that active travel is a key priority in the area's urban design, and will deliver an attractive, lived in, active and vibrant urban setting.

3. Flood Relief

Flood Relief - KCC Contribution to Minor Works Scheme

The OPW published the Flood Risk Management Plans for Kilkenny for both the Nore and Barrow Rivers in 2018. A National €1 Billion Investment Programme for 118 Flood Relief Schemes was announced in May 2018. Six Flood Relief Schemes were announced for Kilkenny with a total of €29.8 million approved by the OPW. No Council funding is required from Kilkenny County Council. In 2019, an in-house Flood Relief Capital Office was established by Kilkenny County Council to deliver the schemes funded by the OPW.

The OPW fully funded flood relief schemes are as follows - Graiguenamanagh, Ballyhale, Thomastown, Inistioge, Freshford and Piltown. The Council commenced in 2020 with planning for the two schemes at Graiguenamanagh and Ballyhale.

Ballyhale

A Planning application and CPO application were submitted to An Bord Pleanála in May of 2023. A response is awaited to progress the scheme into Stage III, Design and Tender.

Graiguenamanagh

Works are progressing on the preferred option for the Graiguenamanagh Scheme with a view to completing Stage I of this Scheme in Q3 2024.

Minor works.

Investigative works were completed in both Callan and Ardaloo as part of the Minor works programme. Applications have now been made to complete the identified infrastructure works. Applications for Minor works have also been made for a number of locations in the south of the County which are awaiting approvals from the OPW.

Approval has been received for Rathcurby Drainage works and works are planned for 2024.

The Council continue to liaise with the OPW with a view to commencing planning for the four remaining schemes.

4. Economic Development

Abbey Quarter - Partnership Equity

When the 50:50 Partnership was set up in 2016 with NTMA to develop the buildings on the Abbey Quarter site, Kilkenny County Council contributed equity in the form of land to the value of €2.5m. This was matched with cash of €2.5m from the NTMA. This funding has been used along with debt finance from the NTMA to complete the first phase of the commercial development, i.e. the Brewhouse which is now fully occupied.

Additional equity funding is now required from both partners to progress the next Phase of the development on the site. The Partnership is required to maintain a balance between debt and equity. The estimated cash required over this period is €10m and Kilkenny County Council's share is €5m. It is anticipated that this funding will be paid in on a phased basis as and when required. The debt finance will be drawn down from the NTMA when construction is due to commence.

Abbey Quarter - Urban Street & Park

Phase 2 of the public realm in the Abbey Quarter will involve the development of the central street through the site and the development of the two and a half acre park centred around St. Francis Abbey. This development will provide access and open up all plots for future development. Planning consent is in place since February 2021. URDF grant funding has been secured.

The project is due to commence in Quarter 3 2024 and is expected to be completed in Quarter 1 2026.

Abbey Quarter - Board Walk

Funding has been secured through URDF Call 2 for the development of a Boardwalk connection from the Riverside Garden at Greensbridge to the existing Riverside Walk at Bishops Meadows. This will complete the last missing link in the Riverside Walks through the City Centre. The planning application was submitted to An Bord Pleanála in Quarter 3 2023. The timing of construction is dependent on the grant of planning.

Abbey Quarter - Engineers Block

The Council is committed to providing infrastructure to enhance Kilkenny's reputation as an excellent location to do business. We support both the IDA in their role in attracting new international businesses seeking to locate in Kilkenny, and Enterprise Ireland in supporting High Potential Start-ups. The nature of recent enquiries from businesses seeking to locate in Kilkenny indicates that appropriate 'landing' space, that provides advance offices is required by businesses looking to establish a footprint in Kilkenny. These businesses are looking for appropriate office space to support 'start-up teams' and the start-up phase of their operations. In this

regard, the Council intends to purchase the Engineer's Block building adjacent to the Abbey Quarter and to repurpose it with up to 1,000 square metres of 'landing space' that will provide short term offices for businesses seeking to locate in Kilkenny, while they lease or purchase long term office solutions, either in the Abbey Quarter or elsewhere in Kilkenny. The building will be reconfigured into a range of offices ranging in size from 4-6 desks to 40-50 desks over 3 floors. A total of €6m has been provided in the Capital Programme for this project and the Council will make application to Enterprise Ireland under the Smart Regions Fund for co-funding.

Abbey Quarter - Sweeney's Orchard

The Council has completed a review of the Abbey Quarter Masterplan. The Sweeney's Orchard component of the Abbey Quarter benefitted from extension and rationalisation in the review to ensure its successful integration with the wider City Centre. The revised Masterplan recommended delivery of a street through Sweeney's Orchard to connect Green Street and St Francis Bridge. This will help open up the site and facilitate development on either side of the street. The Council has already identified Sweeney's Orchard for social housing delivery of up to 75 units under Housing for All. The Masterplan also states that it is appropriate and necessary to provide car parking in the Sweeney's Orchard area to serve new developments within the Abbey Quarter area, including the proposed housing and commercial developments. The topography of the site lends itself to the provision of undercroft parking spaces and parking options could increase, depending on detailed design options. The Council will submit an application under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) Call 4, when it is launched later this year, to design and construct: the proposed street through Sweeney's Orchard; a mobility hub and undercroft to provide optimal car parking on the site, in accordance with the emerging Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP). A budget provision of €15m has been included in the Capital Programme for this purpose.

Butts Regeneration

The Council made a successful application to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and secured €850K in funding to prepare a comprehensive Regeneration Plan for the Butts Area of Kilkenny City. This funding will allow the Council to carry out a detailed assessment of the area and to engage with residents to determine the optimal measures that will best benefit the community now living there. The Butts is one of the oldest communities in Kilkenny City and was built at a time when families didn't have cars and work was close by. The Butts now faces a range of socio-economic challenges that necessitate urgent attention. Residents and service providers have highlighted the pressing need to tackle anti-social behaviour, lack of services and housing inadequacies. A comprehensive and holistic regeneration plan will help set out the public realm, amenities and community facilities needed to create a better quality of life and environment for all residents in the area. The project is being led by the recently established Town Regeneration Office, and will represent a community engagement project supported by design and planning to deliver real town centre first regeneration. A further budget provision of €3m has been provided in the Capital Programme to fund the implementation of the non-housing elements of the Regeneration Plan over the next 6 years.

Dereliction and Vacancy

A provision of €7m has been provided in the budget to tackle dereliction and vacancy throughout the City and County (of which €6m has been provided by the Department of Housing Local Government and Heritage under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) Call 3 to tackle dereliction in Kilkenny City.) In tandem with public realm improvements, the Council will proactively use its powers to bring back into use derelict and vacant buildings in towns and villages across the County, to help revitalise the aesthetic appeal and stimulate vibrancy and vitality in local communities. Refurbished streets and repurposed buildings will help boost economic activity, enhance community spirit and create more attractive places for people to live, work and socialise.

Urlingford

Urlingford was designated as Kilkenny's first "pathfinder" town under the Government's Town Centre First policy. Following on from this a Town Centre First Plan has been agreed with the Urlingford Town Team and other stakeholders. One of the key objectives in the Urlingford Town Centre First Plan is the redesign of the public realm in Urlingford, which has seen very little change since the town was bypassed some years ago. The Council intend to seek funding under the Rural Regeneration Development Fund (RRDF) to enhance the public realm space in Urlingford. The overall estimated cost provided for in the Capital Programme is €2.5m.

Waterford Airport

As part of the investment required to upgrade Waterford Airport, the three Local Authorities - Waterford, Wexford and Kilkenny have previously agreed to invest €2m, (*Waterford - €1.2m, Wexford - €400k and Kilkenny €400k*) as part of an overall investment package of €20m involving Government and private investment. We are awaiting further contact from Waterford City and County Council on this initiative.

Planning

There is an imperative over the next six years to provide adequate funding towards planning initiatives to be undertaken by the Council. A provision of €1m has been made in the Capital Programme to allow the Council continue its proactive approach to planning-led development, so that we can preserve the City and County's unique character and heritage, optimise land use, enhance infrastructure and foster vibrant communities. The Council will engage with all relevant stakeholders through the various hierarchy of statutory and non-statutory plans, from Local Area Plans and Masterplans through to the City & County Development Plan, to harness local insights and promote inclusive, strategic and sustainable development.

5. Corporate Buildings

Meubles Building

The Meubles building and site was acquired by Kilkenny County Council in 2006. The building fronting onto John Street has been used by various organisations and Kilkenny County Council over the years. The building is in need of a significant

upgrade. Part 8 Planning approval is in place since 2013 for the existing building and the extension to the rear. The proposal now is to bring the building and site back into use to consolidate the Council's office requirements. The estimated cost of the development is €8.5m and a grant application will be made under the new THRIVE Grant Scheme.

Climate Action

The Council adopted its inaugural Climate Action Plan in February 2024, which sets out how we intend to transform the way we do our business to achieve our statutory emission reduction and energy efficiency targets. The Council is committed to the transition, as evidenced not least by our determination to retain ISO50001 accreditation. The Council has also joined forces with the 4 other local authorities in the south east to submit an application to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) under the Pathfinder Programme, to secure co-funding to support the investment required to meet our 2030 climate action targets, including 51% reduction in Greenhouse Gas Emissions and 50% improvement in energy efficiency. The Capital Programme includes a budget provision of €5.5m over the next 6 years to make the necessary investment in our buildings and fleet to meet these targets.

6. Recreation & Amenity

Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme

The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) supports the development of new outdoor recreational infrastructure and the necessary repair, enhancement or promotion of existing outdoor recreation amenities in rural areas to help grow and sustain the outdoor activity tourism sector. Over the past 5 years significant investment has been made under the ORIS to improve outdoor recreational facilities across the county. Since 2019 over 40 projects have been progressed and the completion of same will see an investment of c.€4.5million, some examples are provided hereunder:

Measure 1 Applications

- Freshford Loop Walk Upgrade Phase 1 & 2 - Completed;
- Windgap Village Loop - Repair & Enhancement of Walking Trail - Completed.

Measure 2 Applications

- Silaire Wood, Graiguenamanagh, Replacement of 450lin.m timber boardwalk and restoration of existing loop walk - Completed;
- Millennium Forest - Trail Enhancement and Accessibility Scheme - Design and Tender Docs completed, works to commence 2024;
- Jenkinstown Wood - Walking Trail Rehabilitation Scheme - works commenced Q1 2024.

Measure 3 Applications

- Woodstock Estate - Rehabilitation to Woodstock Loop Walk and Ladies Loop Walk and enhancement of main entrance - Completed;

- Kilkenny Countryside Park – Development of new 24 acre Park on site of old landfill in Dunmore – Completed;
- River Nore Linear Park - Lacken Walk Timber Boardwalk Replacement Scheme – Works tender assessment completed and works to commence 2024.

Project Development Measure Applications

- Castlecomer Discovery Park Masterplan plus Planning & Design for Free Activity Attraction – Near completion;

Calls under this funding stream have been annual in recent years and funding applications are divided into following four categories: -

Measure 1 - grant available €30,000 and Local Authorities can submit a max. of 7 apps,
 Measure 2 -grant available €200,000 and Local Authorities can submit a max. of 3 apps.

Measure 3 - grant available €500,000 and Local Authorities can submit a max. of 1 app.

Project Development – grant available €50,000 and Local Authorities can submit a max. of 2 apps.

(10% Match funding must be provided by the Local Authority)

It is likely 13no. individual applications (subject to project identification and future funding) will be submitted by KCC per call and an estimated overall project cost of €1.51m has been allowed for same annually over the life of this Plan.

South East Greenway

The South East Greenway is a joint venture between Kilkenny, Wexford and Waterford County Councils and is funded, in the main, by Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII). The completed project will see the reimagining of the 24km disused railway line between New Ross and Waterford City into a world-class greenway. To date, 9km are completed and a further 5.5km are under construction with an anticipated completion date for same for the end of this year. The remaining 10km will progress to detail design and tender stage over 2024 with construction commencing on elements of same in 2025.

Greenway Related Projects:

Greenway Link to Glenmore: Part 8 planning was approved in 2023 and a funding application for c.€2.2m was submitted in February 2024, under the Rural Regeneration Development Fund (RRDF), to advance this project to detail design, land acquisition and construction stage. The funding application also incorporated the provision of a new Pink Rock Cycle Loop, which would offer Greenway users, travelling from the New Ross end, the option of cycling back on an alternative route along the scenic River Barrow.

Greenway Link to Slieverue: The Feasibility and Route Selection Report were completed in 2023. It is anticipated that the planning process will commence later in 2024.

Woodstock (Inistioge) to South East Greenway Link: The Tender Assessment and Recommendation Report for Technical Consultancy Services has been approved by Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) up to and including Phase 0 to 4. The appointment of the successful multi-disciplinary engineering consultancy team was concluded in February 2024. The scope of services will see the project advance through feasibility, route selection and planning and the contract period for same is set at 49 months.

The costs associated with the above, c.€1.3m, are fully funded by TII.

Rural Regeneration Development Fund

Rural Regeneration Development Fund - Category 1

This Fund is a key part of Our Rural Future and was put in place to support landmark regeneration projects that will breathe new life into rural towns and villages. The projects put forward must demonstrate that they can rejuvenate town centres, boost economic growth and footfall and make our rural towns and villages more attractive places to live, work and raise a family.

Projects put forward under this Category must have the necessary planning and other consents in place and be ready to commence at the date of application.

In February 2024, under the Fifth Call, a funding application for c.€2.2m was submitted to advance to construction of the South East Greenway to Glenmore Connectivity Link and the Pink Rock Cycle Loop.

Rural Regeneration Development Fund - Category 2

Under Category 2 a smaller grant fund is available to enable the development of a project proposal to ready same, in terms of planning, design and land acquisition, for future funding calls under Category 1 RRDF.

The Callan Friary Complex is a recent example of a successful outcome under this funding stream.

Woodstock Gardens & Arboretum

Historic Structure Fund (HSF)

An application was submitted in February 2024 under the HSF for funding to stabilise the external walls of the Woodstock House ruin. This work is required to a) safeguard the house shell and b) to allow for future works to the internal structure which is currently unsafe to access.

The estimated overall cost of the above is €315k and €200k has been sought under the grant application. In general, 50% (up to a max of 80%) of the overall project cost is available to applicants

Business Plan

There is an objective to develop and advance a business plan for Woodstock Estate, to position same as a major tourism and recreation flagship project for Ireland's Ancient East. The incremental improvements under the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme will not achieve this objection alone, therefore, a business plan setting out a clear roadmap to deliver on this objective is required. The progression of the Woodstock to the South East Greenway Connectivity Link creates massive opportunity and gives a real impedance to advance this long-standing objective. A sum of €5m has been included in the Capital Programme to advance same.

Sports Capital Programme

The Sports Capital Programme is the primary vehicle for government support for the development of sports and physical recreation facilities and the purchase of non-personal sports equipment. Grants are available to voluntary, not-for profit sports clubs, community groups, and local authorities etc. The purpose of the funding is to maximise participation in sport and physical recreation. The council secured funding for three projects in 2022 which included the provision of a ball-wall and exercise equipment in the new Kilkenny Countryside Park and the provision of a new all-weather Multi-use Games Area (MUGA) in Ferrybank Neighbourhood Park, which will be completed in the first half of 2024. We are currently waiting on a decision from the Department on 4no. applications submitted in September 2023, which have overall combined project value of €204k.

Under this funding stream a minimum of 30% match funding must be provided by the applicant.

Partnership Projects with Kilkenny LEADER Partnership (KLP)

Since 2020, Kilkenny Co. Council identified a number of projects that could be progressed in partnership with KLP and various local communities across the county. The funding in the main under this initiative is provided for under the LEADER Programme with match funding from KCC and the local communities directly. Under this initiative KCC provides the technical expertise and manages the projects through to delivery stage. Two of the projects completed under this partnership include the Access Road to service the Barrow Valley Activity Hub & Motorhome Aire in Graiguenamanagh and Phase 2 of the Slieverue Linear Park. The majority of the projects currently being progressed relate to feasibility, route selection and design options studies in a bid to ready potential projects for planning stage in anticipation of future capital funding opportunities.

Clover Centre

The members of the Clover Centre Social Club, Ferrybank recently agreed, following convening of an EGM, to transfer the lands of the former Clover Centre to Kilkenny County Council. The Council now intends to make application under the outdoor recreational Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) for funding in the first instance to prepare

a Masterplan for the lands, in conjunction with the local community, taking into consideration the recreational infrastructure that has been delivered in the Ferrybank area in recent years, including the Ferrybank Neighbourhood Park and the South East Greenway, currently under construction. The Council will then seek further funding under the ORIS and other source to implement the Masterplan. A budget provision of just under €950K has been provided in the Capital Programme towards the development of the Clover Centre.

7. Environment

Civil Defence Building

Kilkenny's Civil Defence has grown as a voluntary organisation from 12 to over 35 members and were central to the provision of community supports during covid restrictions. The future of the Civil Defence in Kilkenny will be strengthened through the provision of new facilities, required to keep equipment and to train volunteers. Provision in the amount of €2m has been made in the capital budget to deliver this facility over the coming years.

New City Fire Station

Kilkenny County Council's Fire and Rescue Services' Fire and Emergency Operations Plan 2022-2026 and the National Fire Services Capital Programme 2021 - 2025 has committed to the provision of two new fire stations in Kilkenny over the period 2021 to 2025.

Funding has been provided for the delivery of a new station at Urlingford that commenced in 2022 at a projected cost of €1.7m

A further allocation of €6m has been made to Kilkenny for the provision of a new fire station to service Kilkenny City and Environs. Kilkenny County Council is advancing plans for the delivery of this significant project for the City.

Cost inflation on other capital projects have seen a significant increase in project costs to delivery. Based on other comparable projects it is expected that the overall project cost will exceed the amount allocated under the national Fire Services' Capital Programme.

An additional fire appliance will be provided for the County under the current investment programme in line with the multi-annual replacement of fire engines around the County representing ongoing investment in our emergency services.

The previous Capital Programme saw the provision of a new station at Graiguenamanagh and two additional fire appliances.

The National Fire Services Capital Programme 2021 - 2025 will support 18 new fire station projects and the provision of 35 fire appliances. Kilkenny will benefit from more than 13% of this national investment in the fire service with the provision of two fire stations and a fire engine.

8. Community

As a local authority, working closely with our community and voluntary sector, we continue through our community section to develop and deliver capital projects in our towns and villages under the Town & Village Renewal, CLAR and Rural Regeneration and Development Funding. Over the last five years €12.7m has been invested in community based projects in Kilkenny under all three of these schemes across 74 projects in the county. In all cases match funding is required to ensure delivery of the projects and provision has been made in the capital budget to continue investment under these schemes in the coming years.

Town & Village Renewal

The 2023 Town and Village Renewal Scheme was designed to support the revitalisation of rural Ireland through a renewed focus on town centre economic and social vibrancy and regeneration in line with the Town Centre First policy. The types of activities supported include:

- Investment in infrastructure to support town and village centre markets;
- Projects bringing vacant and derelict buildings back into use as multi-purpose community spaces, or to address remote working needs;
- Investing in the development of parks, green spaces and recreational amenities in town centres
- A new option to allow local authorities to acquire plots of land to enable development of town regeneration, such as town parks, plazas etc.;
- Refurbishment to existing community centres.

We are still waiting on a decision from the Department on 5no. applications submitted under this call which have a combined overall project value of €1.5m. An example of one of the applications included in this submission is the Phase 2 Refurbishment of the Urlingford Community Centre. It is noted that grant funding, to a max, of 90% of the overall project cost is available under this Scheme.

Callan Friary Complex – Phase 1 & Phase 2

The Council were successful in securing funding under Rural Regeneration Development Fund (RRDF) for the design and planning costs to redevelop the former Friary complex in Callan. Once this phase is complete, the Council will then be in a position to apply for further funding under the RRDF and repurpose the Friary, including for: a new library building for Callan and works to the theatre space. The overall estimated cost for construction provided for in the Capital Programme is €10m.

Watershed

The LSSIF Project primarily focuses on enhancing The Watershed by implementing key improvements such as a Hydrotherapy pool, track hoists in the changing rooms for individuals with disabilities, expanding the gym area to promote inclusivity, and converting the balcony into a spin studio. The total estimated cost for the entire project is €4.1m and a grant of €2.67m has been approved under the LSSIF scheme.

Libraries

Capital investment in Kilkenny's library services is planned at an unprecedented level over the next 6 years. The Mayfair Library in Kilkenny City is nearing completion and will open to the public in April 2024. Two further projects are in the pipeline for Thomastown and Callan, with works to provide a new library at the Community Centre Thomastown to commence on site in March 2024 and plans for a new facility at Callan Friary Complex at design stage which will proceed to construction when all required consents are in place. The new library facility in Thomastown and the design process for Callan have received funding under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund. With 80% of the overall investment of €6m provided by the Department of Rural and Community Development and provision for the required 20% match funding included in this capital budget.

Community and Cultural facilities capital grant scheme.

Provision is made in the draft programme to set aside €250k each year from development contributions for the Council's community and cultural facilities capital grant scheme.

Watersports Hub

Under the Platform for Growth funding for Water Based Activity Centres, Fáilte Ireland has a fund of €19m available nationally to assist Local Authorities to develop Water Sports Hubs and further enhance the Tourism offer in Counties. Kilkenny was successful in progressing to Stage 2 of the application process and are proposing to develop a facility on the grounds of County Hall that will also facilitate the large contingent of water-based clubs using the River Nore in the City. The overall project cost is estimated to be in the region of €1m and with Fáilte Ireland funding and the previously committed Sports Capital grant there should be limited requirement for any funds from the Council's own resources. The Contract for Architectural and Project Management Services has been awarded to Hennessey Architects and they have commenced the Stage 1 preliminary design process

9 Tourism

Museum of Medieval Kilkenny

A budget of €8m has been provided in the Capital Programme for the Museum of Medieval Kilkenny (MOMK), which will combine the existing Medieval Mile Museum at St Mary's Church, with The Tholsel (City Hall) into a new unified tourism experience. This new flagship attraction will be a dynamic character-based experience, which will immerse visitors in the real life story of the ordinary people of medieval Kilkenny - the rich, the poor, the righteous and the rogues. In true horrible history style, visitors to the MOMK will meet the world's most famous knight, powerful Mayors and wealthy Medieval Merchants. They will also discover the darker side of medieval Kilkenny in caverns and tombs below ground and meet the much less fortunate victims of bizarre medieval punishments, including the poor handmaid burned at the stake for witchcraft. All this will be done in the new attraction in a light-hearted, fun and family friendly way. The MOMK will help create a new centre of

gravity for tourism in Kilkenny City, by attracting more of the many thousands of visitors to Kilkenny castle into the centre of the retail area, to spend more time and money, and thus further stimulate job creation. Additional grant funding of €1.5m has now been secured from Failte Ireland for this project bringing the total grant to €4.5m. Construction tenders have been received and a preferred contractor has been identified.

