



COMHAIRLE | CLARE
CONTAE AN CHLÁIR | COUNTY COUNCIL

TUARASCÁIL MHÍOSÚIL ÓN PHRÍOMHFHEIDHMEANNACH

MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT

Márta / March
2024



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FINANCE & SUPPORT SERVICES

Two in a Row: Another Win for Clare County Council



Pictured are: (back row, l-r) Monica Meehan, Head of Human Resources; James O'Neill, Senior Account Manager with Softworks, who sponsored the award category; Cllr Joe Cooney, Cathaoirleach; Deirdre Power, Administrative Officer; Noeleen Fitzgerald, Director of Finance and Support Services; Patricia McNamara, Administrative Officer; Pat Dowling, Chief Executive; and (front row, l-r) Jim O'Sullivan, IS Analyst Developer; and Bhavesh Patadiya, IS Analyst Developer (all Clare County Council unless otherwise stated). Photo: Chris Bellew, Fennell Photography.

Clare County Council was named as winner in the category, 'Embracing New Ways of Working', at the CIPD HR Awards held at the Mansion House, Dublin, on 23rd February.

This award recognises organisations of any size that can demonstrate how they are excelling in their support for their people and managers in embedding new ways of working. Clare County Council was shortlisted in the category along with Bank of Ireland, ESB, KPMG and McKesson Cork.

The judges commented that, "Clare County Council's ap-

proach focussed on how to embed hybrid working and deliver on the benefits. The judges were impressed with the approach that moved beyond a covid response to be a real retention and inclusion initiative. With multiple strategies for different staff, it resulted in quantifiable and demonstrable benefits on culture, learning and development, and achieved cost benefits. The Council adopted innovative methods, especially for outdoor staff. They significantly progressed the digitalisation of activities, using digital check-ins, new digital devices, reducing paperwork and the need for time in office, allowing more time on-site."

HUMAN RESOURCES

**Recruitment Competitions
February**

Eligibility Exercises & Desktop Shortlisting

IS Analyst Developer
Beach Lifeguards & Senior Beach Lifeguards

Competitions Advertised

Retained Firefighter – Shannon, Kilrush, Kilkee, Killaloe
Senior Executive Librarian
Caretaker/Cleaner – Kilrush
Technician Grade I (Environmental)

Interviews

Executive Planner
Assistant Planner
Graduate Planner
Beach Operatives
Print Room Attendant
IS Analyst Developer

Learning and Development

ONLINE TRAINING PROGRAMMES / WEBINARS / INFORMATION SESSIONS

FEBRUARY

Courtroom Skills
Grade 5 & Analogous Officer Training
Grade 6 Administrative Officer & Analogous 2-Day Programme
Junior Achievement TY Mock Interviews
Interview Training
IPA A-Z
LGMA Pilot Coaching Programme for Internal Coaches

Essential Skillz Online Training

GDPR
Health & Safety Induction
Slips, Trips & Falls
Wellbeing & Remote Working

Health & Safety

·1-Day Line Manager Health & Safety Training
2-Day Refresher Occupational First Aid Training
3-Day CSCS Signing, Lighting & Guarding
3-Day New Starter Occupational First Aid Training
Banksman Training
Confined Spaces Medium Risk
Dealing with Difficult Customers & Personal Safety
DSE Assessors Training
Manual Handling
Prevention Management of Aggression & Violence Training
Road Opening & Reinstatement Basic
Safe Pass

Cyber Security Courses - Metcompliance

Social Engineering Course micro-course issued to all admin staff

Employee Wellbeing

employee wellbeing

- The Wellbeing Hub featured Healthy Eating for the month of February
- Safer Internet Day email issued to all staff with resources for home & work.
- The Hospital Saturday Fund attended at the Council offices on the 14th February to provide information on their health plans and options for staff.
- A webinar on Home Buying was organised by Bank of Ireland and promoted to staff. It included insights into housing market trends, what's driving them and where housing stock is currently available

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

Ennis MD introduces digital tree survey solution

Introducing a new web-based platform to capture and manage the data of tree stock in the district.

Ennis Municipal District has launched a digital tree inventory system, thanks to the collaboration of the ICT department, building on the success of the housing inspections solutions. The system is a web-based platform that enables the MD personnel to collect and manage the data of tree stock in its area using geographic information system (GIS) technology.

The system maps the location, species, size, condition, and risk level of each tree in the district. It allows the MD staff to access and update the data, and to generate reports and statistics on the tree stock. It also supports the planning and implementation of maintenance and pruning activities and alerts the staff about any dangerous or diseased trees that need urgent attention.

The system aims to improve the management and preservation of the urban forest, and to enhance the environmental and aesthetic value of the district. The system also provides a dashboard and a 3D representation of the trees in specific areas, which can help the staff to visualize the spatial distribution and diversity of the tree stock and to identify any gaps or issues that need to be addressed.

HR Launch online Job applications systems

The HR department has introduced an online job application portal that streamlines the application process for the applicants and the HR staff. The portal was developed and is supported by Clare county council ICT team, which enables candidates to access and apply for various positions within the Clare county council through a user-friendly web interface.

The portal keeps both the applicants and the HR staff informed and updated about the application process through email alerts. The portal simplifies the recruitment workflow and saves time and resources for the HR department.

PROCUREMENT

The following Clare County Council tender competitions were published on eTenders in the period from 29th January to 23rd February 2024 inclusive:

Tender Name	RFT ID	Response deadline	Procedure
Demolition and reconstruction Works at No. 4 Ballymacravan, Ennistymon, Co. Clare	3095590	06/03/2024 16:00	Open
Demolition and reconstruction works of two housing units at Glen North, Ennistymon, Co. Clare	3094533	06/03/2024 16:00	Open
Provision of Services for Chough (<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>) and Peregrine (<i>Falco peregrinus</i>) Surveys	3010299	04/03/2024 17:00	Open
Single Supplier Framework Agreement for a Creative Advertising Agency	3017444	05/03/2024 14:00	Open
Expression of Interest for Turnkey Housing Developments/ Housing Schemes and/or Land for the Provision of Social and Affordable Housing to Clare County Council	3132869	31/05/2024 16:00	Preliminary Market Consultation
The redevelopment of two housing units at Grey Gables and Laurel Lodge, Ennis, Co. Clare	3131995	15/03/2024 16:00	Specific Contract from a Council Framework

FINANCE

Increased Cost of Business Grant

As part of Budget 2024, the Government signed off on a package of €257m for the Increased Cost of Business (ICOB) Grant as a vital measure for small and medium businesses. Clare County Council, funded through Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE), will manage the rollout of the grant to qualifying businesses.

Eligible businesses will receive a once-off grant payment. The amount of the grant payable to eligible businesses is based on the value of the Commercial Rates bill the business received in 2023. However, it is not a Commercial Rates waiver and businesses should continue to pay their Commercial Rates bill as normal.

What is the purpose of the grant?

The grant is available to qualifying businesses as a contribution towards the rising costs faced by businesses. The grant is intended to aid businesses but is not intended to directly compensate for all increases in wages, or other costs, for every business.

How much is the grant?

The grant is based on the value of the Commercial Rates bill received by an eligible business in 2023.

- For qualifying businesses with a 2023 Commercial Rate bill of <€10,000, the ICOB grant will be paid at a rate of 50% of the business's Commercial Rate bill for 2023.
- For qualifying businesses with a 2023 Commercial Rate bill of between €10,000 and €30,000, the ICOB grant will be €5,000.
- Businesses with a 2023 Commercial Rates bill greater than €30,000 are not eligible to receive an ICOB grant.

What businesses are eligible to receive the grant?

The following are the main qualifying criteria:

- Your business must be a commercially trading business currently operating from a property that is commercially rateable.

- Your business must have been trading on 1st February 2024 and you must intend to continue trading for at least three months from the date you verify your information.
- You must provide confirmation of your bank details.
- Your business must be rates compliant. Businesses in performing payment plans may be deemed to be compliant.
- Your business must be tax compliant and must possess a valid Tax Registration Number (TRN).

Please note that Clare County Council reserves the right to claw back any grant payment which is later found to be incorrect. This includes any circumstances such as error by the recipient business or the local authority making the payment, or where a business makes a false declaration of eligibility.

How soon can businesses avail of the grant?

An online system is being developed to manage the submission of essential information. This Council will write shortly to businesses with further details, including how to register and how to submit information online. The system is expected to be available in mid-March.

What is the closing date?

The closing date for businesses to confirm eligibility and to upload verification details will be 1st May, 2024.

Where can I find out further information?

Further correspondence and guidance will be issued to commercially rateable businesses in the next few weeks. In addition, an FAQ will be available online when the grant scheme opens. One should refer to this guidance and FAQ prior to making your submission.

If you have queries regarding your Commercial Rates account including outstanding balances, contact Clare County Council Finance team or your local Account Manager, details issued with recent Commercial Rates invoice 2024. Our team are happy to discuss any balances outstanding on your rates and what steps can be taken to ensure compliance with the scheme.

PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Town Centre First

The Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD, and Minister of State with responsibility for Local Government and Planning, Kieran O'Donnell TD published the first-ever Town Centre First plans for 26 towns across the country including Sixmilebridge Town Centre First Plan.

Sixmilebridge Town Centre First Plan sets out a vision for the future development of Sixmilebridge, addressing key emerging issues including tackling dereliction and vacant properties, improving community facilities and public space and building on the town's assets and positive attributes including the river and heritage. The focus is very much on job creation, place-making and an improved quality of life is key for the sustainable development of the town. All 26 Town Centre First plans for Phase 1 will be available on a new website, www.towncentrefirst.ie

At the launch of Phase 1 plans in Adare, Co. Limerick, representatives of Sixmilebridge Town Team, Eileen Moloney and Mark Noonan joined Carmel Kirby, Director for Economic Development, Joan Tarmey, Town Regeneration Officer and Anne Griffin, Shannon MD. Town Teams and Town Regeneration Officers were in attendance from around the country.

Minister Humphreys also announced funding for Phase 2 Town



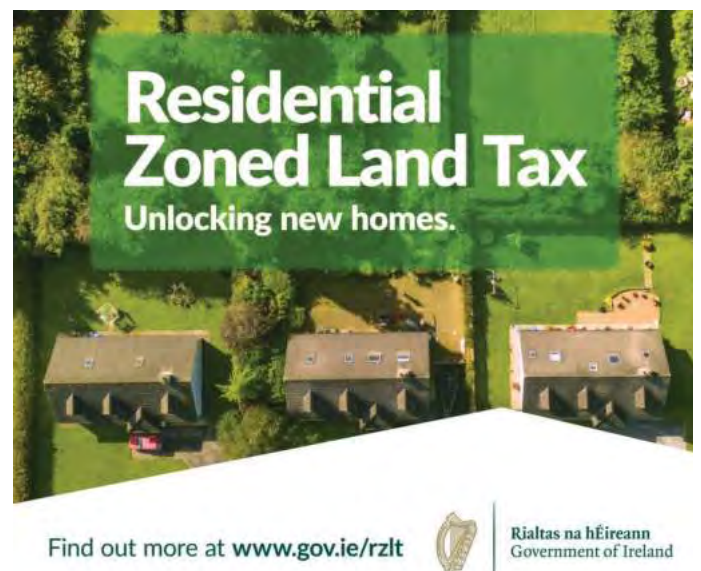
Left to right: Mark Noonan, Eileen Moloney, Sixmilebridge Town Team; Minister Heather Humphreys and Minister Kieran O'Donnell; Joan Tarmey, Town Regeneration Officer; Anne Griffin, A/Senior Executive Officer, Shannon Municipal District; and Dr Carmel Kirby, Director of Services, Economic Development.

Centre First Plans - one for each county. The Minister selected Kilrush town as the next town in Clare that will benefit from the preparation of a TCF Plan. Supports were also announced for Town Teams in each county along with a Project Development Measure that will assist community groups in moving projects towards being shovel-ready.

FORWARD PLANNING

Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT)

The first annual review of the RZLT Map has been completed and the Annual Draft Map for the liability year 2025 was published on 1st February, 2024. A public notice was issued in both national and local papers and submissions on the Annual Draft Map can be made up until the 1st April 2024 for the inclusion/exclusion of specific sites and from 1st February 2024 to 31st May 2024 for rezoning requests on lands identified on the annual draft map. Copies of the Annual Draft Map are available for viewing on the Council website, at the Council offices and libraries. More information relating to this process, including what the RZLT is, the identification of lands liable for the tax and how to make a submission on the Annual Draft Map is available on the Council website.



Public realm works at Cappa, Kilrush

The design team are continuing to progress the Town and Village funded public realm works at Cappa with on going engagement with the local community.

It is intended that a Part 8 planning consent application will be progressed in the coming weeks.

One Shannon Hub

During February, targeted stakeholder engagement was conducted with various interest groups on the One Shannon Hub transformational project Shannon Town Centre, where learning were gleaned which will assist in informing the project over the coming weeks. In addition, various meetings also took place with the design team and with the project delivery team within the County Council. Further targeted consultation meetings are planned to take place in early March. It is anticipated that a preferred concept design will be developed over the coming months ahead of a likely URDF funding call.



Kilrush Maritime Training Centre

Members of the Clare MEZ Project Team attended the Seafarers Conference held in Limerick where the theme for the day was “Realising Ireland’s Maritime Ambition”. The conference brought together representatives from Ireland’s maritime industry, supply chain workforce, and training & education institutions to explore the opportunities to support and grow the fishing and offshore wind industries in Ireland. The conference was opened by Minister Simon Coveney – Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment.



Seafarers Conference Opening Address by Minister Simon Coveney.

Key issues such as “spatial squeeze” were raised at the conference where MARA chief executive office Laura Brien indicated that there will be “no hierarchy” of access to Ireland’s sea areas under its new maritime licensing system. MARA’s remit

is not just offshore renewable energy (ORE), and licensing, it also extends to telecom cables, erosion works to port development etc. Concerns were raised throughout the day by many speakers that Ireland was lagging behind other countries in ORE development. The need for a data hub, as a one stop shop for information, evidence of activity by inshore vessels and the need for expanded provision of maritime safety training together with the development of micro-credentials were identified by the President of MTU Professor Maggie Cusack as key areas of priority for the marine sector now.



Seafarers Conference (left to right): Dr Val Cummins; Hugh Kelly, Simply Blue Group; Minister Simon Coveney; Prof. Maggie Cusack, President, MTU; Dr Paul Hegarty – Head of College, NMCI.

In tandem with the Seafarers Conference the Irish Skipper Expo was held in the University of Limerick bringing together fishermen and the marine industry from Ireland and beyond. In conjunction with the Conference and the Skipper Expo, Clare MEZ welcomed Clayton Burry of Virtual Marine Canada to Ireland for discussions around the inclusion of simulation in the provision of maritime training in Kilrush. Mr Burry attended the Conference and Expo in conjunction with the team together with focused discussions and presentations in Clare County Council Offices.

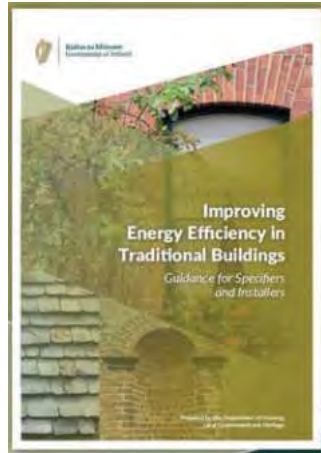


Visit from Virtual Marine (left to right): Dr Carmel Kirby, Director of Services; Councillor Ian Lynch; Clayton Burry, Virtual Marine; Sheila Downes, Environmental Assessment Officer.

CONSERVATION AND BUILT HERITAGE

Energy Efficiency in Traditional Buildings

Malcolm Noonan TD, Minister of State for Nature, Heritage, and Electoral Reform, launched the new publication, *Improving Energy Efficiency in Traditional Buildings: Guidance for Specifiers and Installers*, on 1 February 2024.

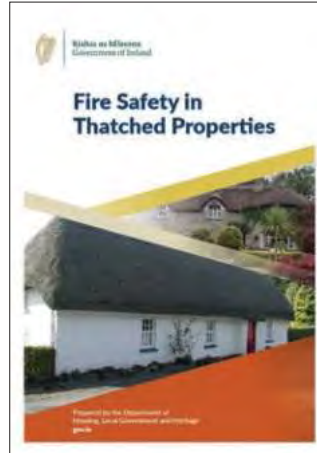


Fire Safety in Thatched Properties

The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage has published a booklet entitled *Fire Safety in Thatched Properties* in conjunction with the National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management. This booklet is aimed at thatch owners and occupiers and offers clear advice on the simple measures required to reduce the risk of fire.

Copies are available at the Clare County Council main reception or it is available to download at: <https://www.buildingsofireland.ie/app/uploads/2023/10/Fire-Safety-in-Thatched-Properties.pdf>

As part of the implementation of this fire safety guidance the Department are running a pilot scheme in 2024 where thatch owners can request a visit to their property by an engineer from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. The engineer will provide advice on how to apply the published guidance in the property. This service will be available free of charge. It will be available for an initial six-month pilot period,



however, if it proves successful the Department will look to make it available on an ongoing basis.

Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS) and the Historic Structures Fund (HSF)

Successful applicants will be notified in March and these conservation works are scheduled to commence in Q1 2024.

Community Monuments Fund (CMF)

Successful applicants for the Community Monuments Funding will be notified over the coming weeks.

Section 57 Applications

Section 57 Declarations are issued to owners of buildings or structures that wish to conduct works to their structures. A Section 57 Declaration determines whether works would be considered ex-empt from planning. A Section 57 Declaration can also be used to clarify the curtilage of a protected structure, or what elements are to be protected. There is no fee for a Section 57 Declaration.

Section 57 Declarations	February 2024	Total (Valid) Year to date 2024
No. of Section 57 Declaration Requests received	6	9

HERITAGE

Clare County Heritage Plan 2024-2030

February saw the completion of the Clare County Heritage Plan which will span the period 2024-2030. This comprehensive plan outlines the Council's strategic vision and objectives for the preservation, management, and enhancement of County Clare's heritage over the next six years. It reflects extensive consultation with the Heritage and Biodiversity Forum, community stakeholders, heritage professionals, and the public, ensuring that the plan is both representative and inclusive of the diverse heritage interests within the county.

Key areas of focus within the plan include the conservation of natural and built heritage, enhancing public engagement and access to heritage sites, and promoting heritage as a pivotal

element of Clare County's social, economic, and environmental well-being. The plan also addresses emerging challenges and opportunities, such as climate change impacts on heritage sites and the integration of digital technologies in heritage promotion and education.

The Heritage Plan 2024-2030 is now scheduled for endorsement at the upcoming March



meeting of Clare County Council. This endorsement will mark a significant milestone in our collective efforts to safeguard and celebrate Clare County's unique heritage. The plan will be implemented in collaboration with the local authority, community groups, and other stakeholders, with a strong commitment to achieving the outlined objectives and delivering tangible benefits for the county's heritage and its residents.

Participation in National Strategy Meeting on Underwater Cultural Heritage

On the 27th of February, the Heritage Officer participated in the National Strategy meeting on Underwater Cultural Heritage, held at the Custom's House in Dublin. The meeting brought together various stakeholders, including government officials, heritage professionals, and academic experts, to discuss the development and implementation of a comprehensive national strategy for underwater cultural heritage. This strategy aims to address the challenges and opportunities associated with the protection of our submerged heritage resources, which are an integral part of our national identity and historical legacy.

Participation in National Strategy Workshop on Archaeological Research in Galway

On 23rd February, the Heritage Officer participated in the National Strategy Workshop on Archaeological Research, hosted in Galway. The workshop convened experts, practitioners, and policymakers from across the country to discuss current trends, challenges, and future directions in archaeological research. Key topics included technological advancements in archaeology, strategies for preserving archaeological sites, and methods for enhancing public engagement and education about archaeological heritage.

Community Heritage Grant Scheme 2024

The Heritage Council is now accepting applications from community groups and not for profit non-governmental organisations in Clare for its Community Heritage Grant Scheme 2024. Projects that can be commenced after an offer date in mid-April and completed before 15th November 2024 can be considered under this scheme. Submit your application via the Heritage Council's Online Grants System by Monday, 25th March, at 5pm. All relevant information is available from the Heritage Council's website: <https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/funding/community-heritage-grant-scheme-2024>

The funding opportunity will help communities in the delivery of heritage and biodiversity actions including workshops and training events that promote good heritage and biodiversity practice. The Heritage Officer is available to assist communities with their applications for the Community Heritage Grant Scheme. They can offer guidance on application procedures, project planning, and development to ensure that proposals are robust and align with the funding criteria. Communities seeking to apply for heritage-based projects for 2024 are encouraged to reach out for support in navigating the application process.



BIODIVERSITY

'World Wetlands Day' Online Webinar

Clare County Council's Biodiversity Officer in partnership with Wetland Surveys Ireland Ltd. and the Community Wetlands Forum held an online webinar on the 1st February to celebrate World Wetlands Day. This year's theme was 'Wetlands and Human Wellbeing'. In 2022 and 2023, Clare County Council commissioned Wetland Surveys Ireland to undertake a desktop and field survey exercise of wetland sites in County Clare. Wetlands are one of the most important natural resources, not just for biodiversity, but also for the ecological services wetlands provide, such as purification of drinking water, carbon sequestration and storage and flood attenuation. The first part of the talk was given by Dr Patrick Crushell of Wetland Surveys Ireland, who discussed the County Clare Wetland Survey Project and the valuable contributions of wetland ecosystems to the county. The second part of the online webinar was delivered by Dr Kate Flood of the Community Wetlands Forum. Kate's presentation covered the social and cultural relationships that exist



World Wetlands Day Online Webinar.

between communities and their local wetlands/peatlands, ecosystem services of wetlands and how wetlands can influence

well-being. Kate also covered community mapping projects. An introduction was given by Clare County Council's Biodiversity Officer Barry O'Loughlin and the proactive steps communities in Clare can do to conserve and protect their local wetlands and promote biodiversity recording to link in with citizen science projects.



Wetland site, 'Loch an Teasctha'. Photo: Wetland Surveys Ireland Ltd.



Lough Graine Nature Sanctuary in East Clare and The Common Knowledge Centre near Lisdoonvarna.

Biodiversity Office Collaboration Projects: Lough Graine Nature Sanctuary and The Common Knowledge Centre

In February, Clare County Council's Biodiversity Officer met with two organisations doing their bit for biodiversity. It was a pleasure to meet Marina of Lough Graine Nature Sanctuary (LGNS) who showcased the LGNS site in east Clare and their plans for tree planting and habitat management and outreach programmes at the sanctuary. The Lough Graine Nature Sanctuary is committed to protecting and restoring biodiversity and addressing the biodiversity crisis through rewilding initiatives, restoring permanent oak forests, protecting existing biodiversity and engaging in outreach programmes to connect children and adults with nature. The Biodiversity Officer also met with The Common Knowledge Centre near Lisdoonvarna who are involved in planning outreach biodiversity training events and promoting the restoration and conservation of biodiversity. The group manages a landholding of 50 acres in extent and commissioned a biodiversity report to inform targeted actions for the period 2024-2030. Clare County Council has recently supported both organisations through the Heritage Organisation Support Fund and will offer further support to carry out further biodiversity enhancement actions.

Clare County Council's Irish Garden Bird Survey Results

Staff at Clare County Council participated in BirdWatch Ireland's citizen science project the 'Irish Garden Bird Survey' which recorded garden birds at the Council's Office headquarters in Ennis from November 2023 to February 2024. Staff from human resources and customer services worked with the Biodiversity Officer to record garden birds. A bird feeder was installed. A total of 23 bird species were recorded during the survey period which will inform BirdWatch Ireland's database. Annual surveys such as the Irish Garden Bird Survey are important to flag any problematic declines nationally. In recent years, song thrush, greenfinch and long-tailed tit have demonstrated ongoing declines which are monitored by Birdwatch Ireland. The Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland assessment published by BirdWatch Ireland and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in Northern Ireland in 2021 have found that 25% of Ireland's regularly occurring bird species are in severe decline with an additional 37% showing moderate declines. A combined 63% of Ireland's bird species are in serious trouble largely attributed to habitat loss and pollution. It is proposed to install some bird nest boxes on Council grounds to provide a refuge for declining populations.

Clare County Council Garden Bird Survey 2024													
Species No.	Species	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9	Week 10	Week 11	Week 12
1	House Sparrow			1	5	2				2	2	1	
2	Starling			3	25			3	2	3	3	4	3
3	*Hooded Crow			2	1			1	2	3	2		
4	Jackdaw			2	1				2		1	2	1
5	Blue Tit			1	2	1							
6	Chaffinch			1	1				1				1
7	*Herring Gull			2	1					7			1
8	*Rook			2	4				2	1			
9	Blackbird				1			2	1	2	2	1	
10	Robin			3	2	3		2	2	2	2	1	1
11	Wood Pigeon			1	1			1	2	1	1		
12	Great Tit				3								
13	Feral Pigeon				1			2			2		
14	Pied Wagtail				1								1
15	Duncock					1							
16	Wren					1		1		2			
17	Bullfinch							1					
18	Song thrush			1						2	2	2	
19	Blackcap								1				
20	*Black-headed Gull									1			
21	Goldfinch										1		
23	Collared Dove												2

Comments * denotes a species flying over

Works and the Bird Nesting Season

The bird breeding season commences from 1st March for a period up until 31st August (inclusive). Any operations relating to vegetation removal subject to the relevant statutory instruments (Section 40 of the Wildlife Act 1976 and Wildlife Amendment Act 2000, as amended) can not now be undertaken unless they are listed as an exemption during the closed period. It is intended that the Planning Department will be organising a training program on best practices for hedgerow management over the coming months. This training will be developed together with the roads section and Municipal District Offices.



Bird nesting season: work restrictions from 1st March.

Funding Opportunities

Bat Conservation Ireland

Bat Conservation Ireland have announced the opening of the application process for their Small Grants Scheme for 2024. There are 4 funding streams available for bat-related research, conservation and events in Ireland for 2024 as follows:

- Funding for Bat Groups affiliated to Bat Conservation Ireland;
- Funding for bat education events (to be carried out in line with any public health re-strictions/guidelines in place at the time);
- Irish-based bat research; and
- Carrying out bat conservation work.

The online application form for 2024 can be found at the link: <https://www.batconservationireland.org/small-grants-scheme-application>

The deadline for applications for the current funding phase is Saturday, 16th March 2024 at 5pm.



DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT - PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The table below shows the number of planning applications processed during the month of February (to 29/02/2024), together with the year to date figures. Fifty-two per cent of planning applications received in February were received by electronic means.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS	February (to 29/02/24)	Year to date 2024
No. of planning applications received	101	158
No. of Planning Decisions made	77	155
No. of decisions notified by An Bord Pleanála	5	10
No. of pre-planning enquiries received	24	39
No. of Section 5 applications	12	22
No. of Section 97 Exemption Cert applications (in respect of Part V of the Planning & Dev Act 2000)	3	8
Submissions received regarding Compliance	14	40

PLANNING ENFORCEMENT

February 2024 Stats are as follows:

New Complaints received	10
New Files opened	10
Files Closed	5
Warning Letters issued	8
Enforcement Notice issued	3
Legal	0

LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE

- **Mentoring:** LEO Clare began 2024 with a continued strong requirement for all of our Mentoring Options including mentoring in Starting a Business, Finance, Digital Marketing, Export Development and Brexit. In February 21 mentoring applications have been assigned.
- **Training:** LEO Clare training programmes continued to be delivered with five new programmes including a 6-week Digital Marketing Programme, Start Your Own Business, TikTok, Search Engine Optimisation and Cyber Security. We also concluded training programmes that commenced in January.

Local Enterprise Week 2024

Small businesses and budding entrepreneurs will have the opportunity to sample 15 events aimed at helping them to start or grow their business as part of this year’s Local Enterprise Week in County Clare. The initiative of the Local Enterprise Offices nationwide, supported by Enterprise Ireland and the local authorities, takes place from the 4th to 8th March this year across the country.

While there are hundreds of events taking place nationally during the week, including two National Spotlight events that are available for free online, there are plenty of events in Clare open to all. These events will focus on Exporting, Sustainability, Leadership & Women in Business networking.



Left to right: Padraic McElwee, Head of Enterprise, and Cathaoirleach of Clare County Council, Cllr Joe Cooney.

Cliffs Of Moher Retail Expo

The Cliffs of Moher and Clare Retail Expo took place on February 19th at the Cliffs of Moher, with 28 local food and craft businesses exhibiting over the weekend to both the public and over 50 local and national buyers.

The Local Enterprise Office supported the events organisation and supported many of the business’s preparation for the event through our broad range of supports including mentoring, upskilling and other practical supports. Initial feedback from

the businesses who showcased is positive with many making sales on the day to the public and securing new contracts with buyers who attended the Event.



Left to right: Cathaoirleach of Clare County Council, Cllr Joe Cooney, Wilde Irish Chocolates, JJ Corry Irish Whiskey, and Padraic McElwee, Head of Enterprise.

February Evaluation Committee Meeting

The Local Enterprise Office Evaluation and Approvals Committee (EVAC) held their first evaluation meeting of 2024 in February. Two Business Expansion and one Priming Grant project were approved for funding.

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

Property Transactions and Conveyancing

The Table below shows the number of property transactions completed by Property Management Unit up to 27th February and also shows the final figures for 2023.

As the property market in the County is quite active, we continue to assist many solicitors acting for their clients on issues associated with title, boundaries, old leasehold folios etc.

Transaction type	February 2024	Year to date 2024	Full year 2023
Lease / Sub Lease of Property / Building	1	1	7
Licence to use property / building	2	4	7
Grazing Agreement for Lands	9	17	17
Deed of Transfer signed	1	2	15
Contract for Sale / acquisition signed	0	0	1
Deed of Right of Way / Wayleave signed	0	4	2
Deed of Rectification / Variation signed	0	0	4
Allotment Agreements signed	40	40	39

Shannon Allotments

The renewal of the agreements for the Shannon Allotments have now been completed and we are pleased to be able to allocate an allotment to four new people this year. We plan to meet the Allotment Association early in March.

Grazing of Land

The Tender for the grazing of lands was advertised and are

allocated to the successful tenderers.

Casual Trading

The renewal of the annual Casual Trading Licences is ongoing and licences are being granted for some events, including Farmers Markets.

DERELICT SITES

The Derelict Sites team are currently dealing with 260 properties that are considered derelict. The activity in recent years has substantially increased with 127 derelict properties identified in the years 2022 and 2023. To date in 2024, we have opened files on 9 new properties. Initial engagement with owners or their representatives is key to resolution of the issues of dereliction and to gain an understanding of the various reasons why the properties are in a derelict state. Where derelict properties are sold, we commence engagement with the new owners of those properties to ensure they are aware of their responsibilities under the Derelict Sites Act, 1990.

We are also seeing the number of planning applications for refurbishment works and extensions increasing and works commencing on individual properties. We are advising property owners of the vacant property refurbishment grant, where the property is suitable for residential use. With time and effort, working with owners, financial institutions and other departments, there are definite options for positive re-development and revitalisation of many such derelict sites.

The table below provides a snapshot of the activity in February (up to 27th February) and the comparative figures for the full year 2023.

Derelict Sites	February 2024	Year to date 2024	Full Year 2023
No. of new files opened	6	9	58
No. of Section 8(2) Notices issued - Intention to enter site on Derelict Sites Register	4	12	41
No. of Section 8(7) Notices issued - Entry of site onto Derelict Sites Register	7	7	24
No. of Section 11 Notices issued - Measures required to render the site non-derelict	0	0	0
Notice of Valuation of Property for Derelict Sites Levy - Section 22	0	1	7
No. of files closed / property removed from Derelict Sites Register	2	2	15

No. of Notices served to Compulsorily Purchase derelict sites (CPO) (see note below)	0	2	10
No of Vesting Orders signed	0	0	9

Compulsory Acquisition of Derelict Sites (CPO)

The Department of Housing, Heritage and Local Government has launched a CPO activation programme for local authorities and has set targets for CPOs for each local authority. We commenced this programme in 2022 and the Table below sets out the status of those CPO’s commenced in 2022, 2023 and to date in 2024.

Year	No of CPOs commenced	Current Status
2022	6	3 - Completed and transferred to Housing for refurbishment / re-development
		1 - Completed recently and is for sale since mid-January 2024
		1 - Works have commenced and CPO parked for now
2023	12	8 - At Vesting Stage and lodged in PRA
		2 – Early Stage of CPO process
		1 - Objection received and has been referred to An Bord Pleanála
2024	2	1 - Works have commenced and CPO parked for now
		2 – Notice of commencement of CPO process issued
		1 - Objection received and has been referred to An Bord Pleanála

In addition, the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund will provide funding for CPO's on a rolling basis in the town of Ennis with the objective being that these properties would then be sold on the open market. A particular emphasis will be on properties that have potential for residential use. One such CPO is with the PRA for registration and works have recently been completed in order to safeguard the property in the interim.

Derelict Site Levy

Determination of valuations on the derelict sites which are on the Derelict Sites Register has commenced and notices have been issued to eight property owners. One of these has appealed the valuation to the Valuation Tribunal and a decision is awaited. The levy is an annual levy while the property remains on the Derelict Sites Register and amounts to 7% of the value of the property, on an annual basis. This will be further

progressed in 2024 when all properties on the Derelict sites Register will be valued for the purposes of billing the levy.

Survey of Vacant and Derelict Properties

The Team is currently carrying out surveys of vacant and derelict properties in towns and villages around the County. Based on the Geo-directory data on vacancy and dereliction, the Department of Housing, Heritage and Local Government has asked the Council to validate the data that they hold. To date, we have passed the figure of 1,700 surveys completed (27th February 2024), with the data being uploaded digitally. There are a number of towns and villages yet to be done and it is intended that it will be completed in March 2024. The data collected will be the basis for future policy direction by the Department and will guide the work programme of the Derelict Sites Team and the Vacant Homes Team.

VACANT PROPERTY REFURBISHMENT GRANT - FOR DERELICT AND VACANT PROPERTIES

We continue to have high levels of enquiries and applications for the Croí Cónaithe Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant. At end of February, there was a total of 320 applications for the grant and this is the seventh highest number of applications in the country. Our response time for new applications is generally less than three weeks. To date we have processed seven grant payments and claims for payment will be increasing in the coming months as work is being completed on the grants approved in 2022 / 2023.

The table below sets out the status of applications. To date 57% of applications are for rural areas of the county and 43% for properties in towns and villages.

No. of Applications Submitted		Overall %
Year 2022	33	10%
Year 2023	251	78%
Year 2024	36	11%
Total no. of Grant Applications	320	100%
Proposed use of Grant aided property		
Private Residence	231	72%
Rental Property	89	28%
Decisions Made		
Approved	150	47%
Rejected	13	4%
Withdrawn	26	8%
Grant Funding Paid Out	6	2%
Grant Funding Withdrawn	2	1%
Total	197	62%
Applications in progress		
In Progress	30	
Further Information Requested	72	
Awaiting Technical Inspection	21	
Total	123	38%

There is no doubt but that this measure will boost the supply of rental properties and properties for permanent residence and will deliver on a key priority of 'Housing for All' National Policy and the Vacant Homes Action Plan, the key objective of which is to reduce vacancy and dereliction in our cities, towns, villages and rural countryside and provide more housing options in the process.

Full details of the scheme and eligibility criteria are published on the Council's website. The contact email address for further information and guidance on the grants scheme is vacanthomes@clarecoco.ie. We continue to meet individual owners to guide them through the process and to ensure they have all the documentation when submitting their application. We will consider holding further one-to-one clinics around the County during 2024.

Based on the applications received and the revised grant levels, there is a potential investment of up to €7.5 million by Government in the refurbishment of vacant and derelict properties in County Clare to be returned to economic use as permanent homes.

ENNIS MUNICIPAL DISTRICT

Renew Bunnratty Conference

February was a busy month on a number of fronts in the Ennis Municipal District with a significant number of meetings, briefings and workshops attended by the Team. Engagement continued throughout the month which culminated in an agreement with Clare GAA to jointly develop an almost 200 space carpark on their lands beside Cusack Park and the Cloister. The main updates to the key projects and works programme carried out during February are as follows:

Public Bus Service Update

Ennis MD staff continue to liaise with the National transport Authority to deliver this important infrastructural project which is projected to commence in Q1 2025. The NTA Town Bus Team worked with the NTA Active Travel Design Team and the Council's Road Design Team to define the proposed bus stop locations on the Tulla Road for inclusion in the detailed design for the Tulla Road Cycle Scheme. We are awaiting the NTA's draft layout of the proposed bus stop at Friars Walk / Museum.

Tulla Road Cycle scheme

Detailed design is currently underway on this project. Fortnightly on-line progress meetings are continuing with an on-site meeting held recently. The next steps include the procurement by the Council of a CCTV drainage survey and an Arborist Report.

Limerick Road (incl. St Flannan's Drive) Cycle scheme

Our Technical Advisors, Tobins Consulting Engineers, are progressing with the Concept Design and Route Option Development phase of the scheme. To inform same, Traffic Counts and Junction Turning Movements have recently been completed at a number of the key junction locations within the scheme.

Additional Carparking at Waterpark House Campus

The Part VIII Application has been submitted and is being considered. We now await the Planners report which will ultimately come before Ennis MD Members for information and the full Council Membership for decision. If favourable, we will complete the detailed design and tender documentation and go to the market at the earliest juncture.

Ennis Transport Plan Update

Our Technical Advisors, SYSTRA Ltd, has submitted the first draft of the Ennis Area Based Transport Assessment (ABTA) & Local Transport Plan (LTP) High Level Objectives and initial long list of Transport Options for initial evaluation by the Council. This will involve a Cross Directorate review carried out by staff from Ennis MD, Planning Section, Climate Change Team and the Transportation Section.

As the draft Baseline Study, draft Objectives and initial long

list of Transport Options are submitted, meetings are arranged between the Ennis MD, Road Design Office, SYSTRA and UCL to identify the appropriate time in the progression of the Ennis Local Transport Plan for UCL to commence work with Ennis MD in applying streetscape allocation principles to optimise the use of available streetscape on individual streets across the urban area.

Specific Operational Works

Ennis MD were recently invited by the Brothers of Charity to attend the official opening of a new footpath at the Clonroad Business Park.

The footpath was installed by Ennis MD crews following representations and campaigning by the students of Streetwise. The project was funded by the Ennis MD Elected Members through their general municipal allocation. The completed projects ensures that there is now safe access to and from the business park for all road users including pedestrians.



Ennis MD as part of its upgrade and maintenance works, has recently replaced the fencing to Ballybeg Woods Carpark. The old fencing which was in poor repair was replaced with a new pressure treated timber post and rail fence.



Ennis MD in conjunction with the NTA have commenced the construction of two new rural bus stops on the R458 at Manus-

more, Clarecastle. The works when complete will provide 2 designated stops for the locals at Manusmore on the TFI 343 route giving them connectivity to Ennis and surrounding towns and villages.

Ennis MD have carried out additional road safety improvement measures at the junction of Tierneys shop on the Tulla Road. Safety bollards were installed to prevent illegal parking which was inhibiting the free flow of traffic at this junction.



Other Key Strategic works

In addition to the aforementioned, Ennis MD staff continue to work alongside our colleagues in the Project Management Office who are managing the Ennis Public Realm project, the Road Design Office in relation to the Active Travel Projects and the General Design Office on various concept proposals

as well as our colleagues in Ennis 2040 in progressing the ambitious plans outlined in the Ennis 2040 Economic & Spatial Strategy.

The 4 main proposals currently being progressed under the Strategy are as follows:

Francis Street

Enabling works now progressing on this site. Ongoing liaison with Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage (DHLGH) to secure approval for specific Affordable Housing Funding for this project.

Abbey Street

Public consultation events completed as follows:

Tues 30th January 2024	15:00 - 19:00	Templegate Hotel
Weds 31st January 2024	18:00 – 20:00	Community Centre, Barefield
Thurs 1st February 2024	19:00 – 21:00	Clarecastle

All events were very well attended with more than 400 feedback sheets submitted. All views will now be carefully considered as progress is made in respect of submitting a planning application.

Harvey’s Quay

Concept Design and finalisation of proposed scheme is ongoing. Discussions continuing with the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage regarding the proposed development.

Post Office Field Masterplan

Draft Master Plan recently completed for this location with public consultation to be scheduled in the near future.

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Clare Explores Connections with Birmingham



The Lord Mayor of Birmingham travelled to Clare the weekend of 16th February, to initiate efforts by Clare County Council and Birmingham City Council to explore the establishment of economic links between the UK's second largest city and the Shannon area, including the airport and industrial zone.

Councillor Chaman Lal and key figures from Europe's largest local authority arrived at Shannon Airport before embarking on a comprehensive two-day tour of County Clare.

The itinerary included meetings with business leaders in Shannon, including representatives of the Future Mobility Campus, El Electronics and Jaguar Land Rover, ahead of a Shannon Chamber business lunch, which will feature a keynote address by Darragh O'Brien TD, Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Councillor Lal also visited the Cliffs of Moher Experience, enjoyed a cruise on Lough Derg, and attended the Bunratty Castle Medieval Banquet.

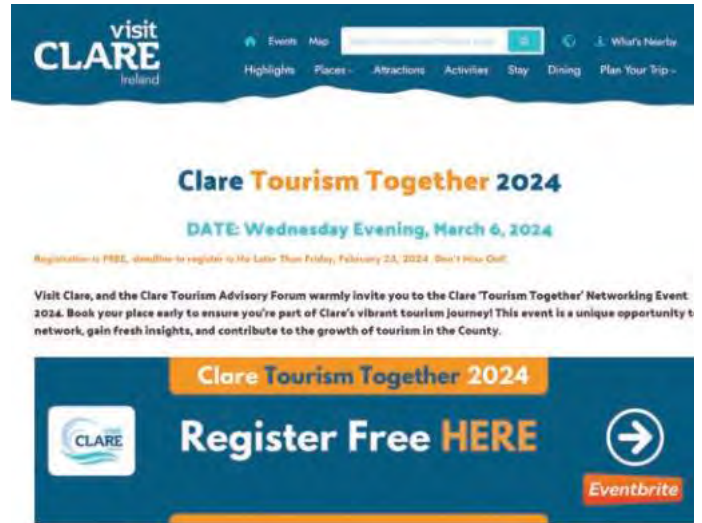
The Lord Mayor's visit follows his acceptance of an invitation from the Cathaoirleach of Clare County Council, Councillor Joe Cooney, and Chair of the County Clare Twinning Committee, Councillor Tony O'Brien. On the invitation of the Lord Mayor, a Clare delegation will make a return visit to Birmingham, this year, as the city will celebrate the 50th anniversary of their St Patrick's Day celebrations.



Clare tourism operators unite to address sector challenges

This upcoming tourism networking event on 6th March will discuss the urgent need for increased collaboration and the development of new initiatives to bolster the local sector in light of the unprecedented challenge posed by the reduced accommodation supply in the county.

Tourism interests from across Clare are being invited to gather at The Inn at Dromoland for the annual 'Tourism Together' Networking Event 2024, which features a keynote address by travel writer and *Irish Independent* Travel Editor Pól Ó Conghaile. With 33% of bed nights in Clare currently contracted to the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY), the Clare Tourism Advisory Forum and Visit Clare are issuing a rallying call to the wider sector to attend the event and share their ideas on how Clare can position itself to meet current challenges and attract new business.



Preparations underway for St Patrick's Weekend in Clare



As we approach St Patrick's Weekend, we are inviting event organisers in Clare to submit details of any festivities or special events that celebrates the event in the county. Whether planning parades, concerts, workshops, or any event that celebrates our heritage and welcomes visitors to our county during this time, to share these event details with us.

We will be promoting all appropriate events through our website and social media channels, aiming to maximise their visibility and encourage engagement.

Marketing & Promotion: Spotlight on the website across the Visit Clare platforms

There are weekly promotional campaigns scheduled across the Visit Clare platforms (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn), directing traffic to the VisitClare.ie website.

These posts increased in 2024 to include highlights on our towns and spotlights to the range and variety of tourism businesses within the county, featuring Accommodation, Attractions, Activities, Festivals & Events, and dining.



Visit Clare Newsletter Sign-Up

Visit Clare is inviting sign-ups to the Visit Clare newsletter. It has the latest in tourism developments within the County, including news, views, and potential business opportunities.

Useful Insights: Subscribers will gain access to our curated Visit Clare Tourism Newsletter, with the latest updates, insights, and opportunities designed to keep you informed and help your business.

Selective Dispatches: Our newsletters are occasional and are intended to be timely and relevant, ensuring you receive only the most pertinent information without unnecessary clutter.

Secure and Smooth Delivery: Our newsletters are delivered via MailerLite, known for its dependable and user-friendly service, guaranteeing an easy reading experience.

Hassle-Free Unsubscription: If you decide our content is no longer for you, unsubscribing is straightforward. You can opt out anytime via the link in our newsletter footer or by letting us know at Tourism@Clarecoco.ie.

We'd be delighted to welcome you aboard and are eager to bring you the best of Clare Tourism. Sign up: www.VisitClare.ie/trade

Sign up for Visit Clare News, Views, and Opportunities!

Have Your Colleagues Sign-Up for Our Visit Clare Tourism Trade Newsletter!

Do you know a Clare Tourism Trade colleague who could benefit from hearing about the latest Visit Clare Tourism News? Encourage them to stay informed and connected by signing up to the Visit Clare tourism trade newsletter via www.VisitClare.ie/trade.

Our occasional newsletter will feature the latest Clare tourism news, views, and opportunities, designed to keep our trade community informed. It's an important tool for anyone involved in Clare's tourism sector, offering valuable information to enhance our collective success.

Help us strengthen our network by spreading the word. Together, we can continue to grow and enrich Clare's tourism experience for all.

Go to www.VisitClare.ie/trade

Vandeleur Festival Kilrush 2024 is back by popular demand, featuring incredible artists and performers



The first acts have been announced for the second annual Vandeleur Festival Kilrush which takes place from June 27th to 30th. Irish-American supergroup Cherish The Ladies, the world-famous Kilfenora Céilí Band and country music star Robert Mizzell will be head-lining at the Vandeleur Walled Garden and Visitor Centre with further acts to be confirmed in the coming weeks. Supported by Clare County Council, the Kilrush Town Team, Kilrush Amenity Trust CLG and Kilrush Credit Union, the four-day festival also will feature street entertainment in Kilrush town centre

Loop Head Lighthouse getting ready to open for 2024 season



Loop Head Lighthouse reopens for tours on Saturday 16th March, 2024. From 16th March - 14th June, tours are on weekends and bank holidays only. From 15th June - 29th September, tours take place daily on the hour and half hour every hour from 10am-5pm.

Refurbishment works of the Light House Keepers Cottage, Loop Head Lighthouse are near completion and the house will be ready later in the season for accommodation purposes for short term lets. This project has been prioritised by Clare County Council in line with the current accommodation crisis and will also increase the economic benefits to the local community.

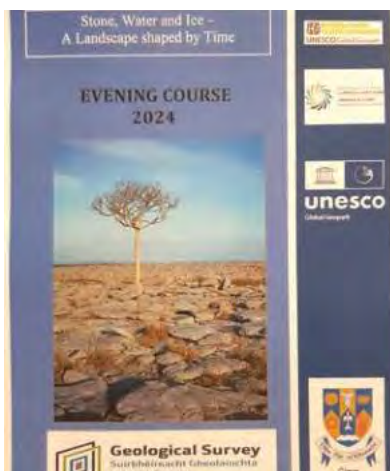
Geopark Code of Practice in Sustainable Tourism

Over 60 businesses in the Burren Ecotourism Network are expected to submit their Geopark Code of Practice in Sustainable Tourism by February 29th. This Code measures their engagement with waste, water and energy management, their contribution to their communities, their use of local produce and services, their commitment to working together and to the principles of Leave No Trace, and their ambassadorship of the Burren & Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark. Their submissions will be assessed and scored by external evaluators and their achievement level (Emerald, Green or Amber) will be announced at the Geopark Code Awards Night on the 25th of April.



Introduction to the Landscape and Geology of the Burren

The ever popular and fully subscribed course 'Introduction to the Landscape and Geology of the Burren' began on the evening of the 27th of February in the Burren Outdoor Education Centre. Led by Geopark Geologist Dr. Eamon Doyle and Colin Bunce, in collaboration LCETB, the course will run over several weeks and will culminate in a field trip in the Burren. This is the 14th year of this very successful course.



Bunratty Castle a canvas for the "HerStory" lights show in celebration of St Brigid



Bunratty Castle was privileged to act as a canvas for the amazing "HerStory" lights show in celebration of the remarkable patron saint, St Brigid.

The theme of this year's show was there is room for everyone under St Brigid's Cloak.

Herstory, working with Clare artists, lit up the skies in Doolin, Ennistymon and Bunratty over the St Brigid's Bank Holiday weekend as they welcomed Springtime and recognised the many strengths of women throughout history.

Bunratty Celebrates Ancient Pagan Festival Of Imbolc

Imbolc, the ancient pagan festival marking the beginning of spring, was celebrated at Bunratty Castle and Folk Park on February 4th.

Visitors were shown how to make Saint Brigid's Crosses, an iconic symbol that has graced Irish homes for centuries while members of the Wolfhound Society of Ireland were also onsite on the day with opportunities for the public to engage with them and discover more about one of Ireland's most celebrated indigenous Irish canine breeds.

Local Basket maker Michael Foudy demonstrated the time-honoured tradition of making traditional style baskets using locally sourced materials such as hazel and willow while the Bunratty

Bean an Tí's were also on hand demonstrating the art of traditional butter making at the Golden Vale Farmhouse.

As the Folk Park springs into life for the new season, the Clare Vintage and Engine Tractor Club were also on hand to showcase an array of vintage agricultural machinery at work including corn grinders, water pumps and mini threshing machine, all traditional agricultural machines that would have been used in the 1900s, the period during which the folk park is based upon.



Chief Executive Designate of Tourism Ireland, Alice Mansergh, visits Bunratty Castle and Folk Park



Adrienne O'Flynn and Alice Mansergh, CED, Tourism Ireland.

Bunratty Castle and Folk Park were delighted to welcome Alice Mansergh, Chief Executive Designate of Tourism Ireland, for a tour of the Castle and Park this February.

During her visit Ms Mansergh learned about the future development plans for the park, the importance of maintaining authenticity and immersive experiences for visitors to enjoy, as well as Shannon Heritage's/Clare Tourism Development's vision towards a collective approach in promoting County Clare to overseas markets.

Lord Mayor of Birmingham enjoys Bunratty Castle Medieval Banquet



Bunratty Castle and Folk Park had the honour of hosting the Lord Mayor, Councillor Chaman Lal, and Lady Mayoress, Vidya Wati, at their famous Medieval Banquet.

The Lord Mayor of Birmingham journeyed to County Clare to initiate collaborative efforts between Clare County Council and Birmingham City Council. The objective of this partnership is to explore economic ties between the UK's second-largest city and the Shannon area, which includes the airport and industrial zone. During the visit, the Lord Mayor met with various business leaders in Shannon to discuss potential opportunities for collaboration.

St Brigid's Weekend Celebrations



Thursday, February 1st, marked St Brigid's Day 2024, a tradition that is widely celebrated at the Cliffs each year. The celebrations at the Cliffs of Moher took place from Monday 29/01/24 to Monday 05/02/24. The first advertisement of the celebrations at the cliffs was published to social media in January and received large traction with the Facebook post having a reach of 69.4k and 2.1k post engagements. In the Visitor Centre, there were 'how to guides' on making St Brigid's crosses and Brídeog Dolls courtesy of the staff at the Cliffs of Moher Experience. Visitors also had the opportunity to 'Meet St. Brigid' and learn her story. The craft demonstrations were heavily engaged with, and visitors were delighted to be bringing their St Brigid's crosses home with them.

Cliffs of Moher & Clare Retail Expo 2024



The Cliffs of Moher and Clare Retail Expo 2024 took place on Monday, February 19th. This event was supported by Clare Local Enterprise Office, Clare County Council and The Burren & Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Geopark Geofood. In total, there were 28 exhibitors at the event, all of whom received positive engagement from retail buyers and consumers visiting the Cliffs of Moher Experience. The event began at 11am where all the exhibitors were set up at their station showcasing world class products for purchase along with samples for potential buyers. Anne Marie Rynne and Kate Lavin performed live traditional music on the ground floor of the visitor centre contributing to the incredible atmosphere at the event. Bunratty Castle entertainers also entered the interactive visitor centre and performed live music which captured the attention of many visitors. Luckily,

the weather was clear, allowing the entertainers to perform more live music at the entrance of the visitor centre drawing visitors towards the centre.

At 2pm, the Cliffs View Café hosted a lunch for the exhibitors and buyers featuring locally sourced Geofood with a range of delicious starters, mains, and deserts on the menu. Bobby Kerr – Chair of the Cliffs of Moher Centre DAC Board gave a welcoming address at the lunch supported by Carol Gleeson Geopark Manager who spoke to Geofood which was enjoyed by all. A big thanks to all the staff, organisers, Clare Local Enterprise Office, Clare County Council, GeoFood and the Burren & Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Geopark for their support in the arrangement of a successful retail expo.



WEST CLARE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT

Kilrush Electoral Area



Elected Members of Kilrush Electoral Area and Ennistymon Electoral Area, West Clare MD attended a Workshop, which also included cross-directorate staff of Clare County Council, to discuss the implementation and review of the West Clare Plan of Strategic Priorities 2019-2024.

Mars Cinema

Tourism Development International Ltd were appointed as consultants for the Mars Cinema Feasibility Study in December 2023. A strong project team is in place consisting of David McNulty, Project Director, John Ruddle Strategic Tourism Planner / Accountant / Capital Grant Specialist, Tim Darmody Architectural Advisor and Eoin O Cathain ROD Engineers. The West Clare MD office are working closely with the Project Team currently on the study.

Stage 1 of the project has commenced and includes a Site Appraisal, taking into account potential constraints, market research/analysis and stakeholder consultations.

Stage 2 will consider the findings of Stage 1 to develop options for the flagship attraction, to recommend the optimum (market driven) development plan.

The project is expected to be finalised by mid 2024. This Feasibility Study will be used to support a future grant application to ensure the development progresses to the next stage of construction of a flagship facility for the town of Kilrush.



PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

TRANSPORTATION

Roadworks Programme and Operations

The 2024 Schedule of Municipal District Works (Annual Roadworks Programme) has been drafted and will go before each Municipal District for consideration during March.

Strategic Transportation

Active Travel	<p>The following is a brief overview of the activities within the Active Travel office:</p> <p>Tulla Road Cycle scheme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Detailed design for this project is ongoing, this is being undertaken by AECOM Consulting Engineers. Regular on-line progress meeting continuing. CCTV drainage survey is underway and expected report to be furnished to designers by end of February. Aecom have been tasked with additional design work such as Newpark Rd. and the inclusion for 12 Bus Stops. <p>Ennis LTP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Traffic Survey data has been gathered and is currently being assessed and modelled. <p>Limerick Road (incl. St Flannan's Drive) Cycle scheme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The Concept Design and Route Option Development phase of the scheme continues to progress well with draft options expected from the consultants Tobins by the end of February/early March. <p>Connecting & Co-creating Ennis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">This project will continue through 2024 with a number of junction-tightening and raised crossings planned. <p>'Safe Routes To School' programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Clonmoney National School: Construction works for this scheme began on January 22nd. The works will involve footpath improvements, kerb buildout, raised junction crossing, line marking, installation of pencil bollards, driver feedback signs and public lighting. The programme for the works is expected to last 8 weeks.The Options Selection phase for An Gaelscoil Mhíchíl Cíosóg Safe Routes To School are currently being developed by the Active Travel Section.The Delivery Plan for St Mochulla, Tulla Safe Routes to School has been completed by An Taisce. Based on this an implementation plan will be developed by the Active Travel team. <p>Clare Bridges – Pedestrian & Cycling Connectivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Barry Transportation are currently developing the preliminary design for 11 Bridges throughout the county.
Public Lighting	<p>Whilst no further survey works were completed for the initial weeks of February under the PLEEP (Public Lighting Energy Efficiency Programme), survey works are re-commenced on February 26th in the Killaloe Municipal District. Completed survey works currently stand at 70%.</p> <p>For the benefit of Councillors, public lighting faults can be reported online at https://enerveo.com/report-a-fault/republic-of-ireland, by Phone (0818-372772) or via Local Authority Identification (https://www.clarecoco.ie/services/roads-and-transport/road-maintenance-issues/report-a-broken-streetlight).</p> <p>The public lighting section continues to work with our public lighting maintenance contractor Enerveo and ESB networks in an effort to reduce outage numbers and timelines. Increased repair times are present due to significant infrastructure works required at some locations in order to meet the requirement to meet ESB Networks Minimum requirements for Public Lighting. Such repairs are future proofing and allowing for reduced outage areas and timelines going forward.</p> <p>The public lighting section has, and continues to seek additional resources where possible from both our maintenance contractor Enerveo and ESB Networks.</p>

Road Design Office

TII Road Safety Projects:

Project	Progress Update
HD17	<p>N85 Lahinch Road/Shanaway Road An amended feasibility report for an interim safety measure at Shanaway Junction was submitted to TII on the February 16th. TII have provided a 2024 allocation for this pedestrian crossing.</p> <p>A junction improvement layout incorporating the aforementioned pedestrian crossing is being developed by the Road Design Office following discussion with TII. A design report will be submitted to TII on the completion of a Road Safety Audit.</p> <p>N67 Doonbeg Pedestrian Crossing A feasibility & design options report was submitted to TII for their consideration in December 2023. An amended feasibility report is being prepared to incorporate junction tightening of the L2028 Killard Road. A speed survey has been carried out.</p> <p>N67/L2030 Kilrush Rd - Doonbeg Junction Buildouts. This site has been identified as a HD17 site. A feasibility report has been submitted to TII and a Road Safety Audit is being carried out.</p> <p>N68 Cranny Cross Junction A feasibility & options report for vehicle activated signage at this location has been approved at TII Gateway 1 and a design report is being prepared. TII have provided a 2024 allocation for this measure.</p> <p>N85 Clareabbey Roundabout Pedestrian & Cycling Facilities A feasibility and design options report was submitted to TII for their consideration in December 2023. An amended feasibility and options report was submitted to TII on February 16th 2024. TII have provided a 2024 allocation to advance the design of this measure.</p> <p>N67 Ministers Place, Kilkee A concept landscape design proposal has been prepared. A lighting design has been prepared.</p> <p>N67 Mount Charles Terrace An amended feasibility report is being prepared. A lighting design has been prepared. A speed survey has also been carried out.</p> <p>N68 Rocky Road Roundabout Pedestrian Crossing A traffic/pedestrian survey has been carried out.</p> <p>N85 Leckaun Junction with L4206 & L8318 Two Road Safety Inspection items to be addressed in March with the introduction of Stop Ahead signs and the replacement of 80kph signs with rural speed limit applies signs.</p>
Noise Action Plans	<p>Strategic Noise Mapping & Noise Action Plans Agglomerations Technical Working Group meetings and workshops are ongoing.</p> <p>Work is progressing on the Draft Limerick Clare Agglomeration Noise Action plan & the Clare Noise Action plan.</p>
Fence Retrofitting Programme	<p>A Fence Retrofit Assessment Report for 2024 is ongoing. An inventory of boundary fencing within the Clear Zone of national roads where a speed limit of 100km/h applies is currently being prepared to comply with the TII standard of replacing post & rail fencing with a tensioned wire mesh restraining system.</p> <p>Projects on the N68 have been submitted to TII for their approval. An allocation of €50,000 was provided by TII for 2024.</p>

Other Projects 2024:

Project	Progress Update
Bridge Rehabilitation Programme	An allocation of €615,000 was provided by the Department of Transport to continue the Bridge Rehabilitation programme.
Safety Improvement Works on Regional and Local Roads	The Following allocations were provided for Low Cost Safety Schemes in 2024: R471 Bothar Mor, Shannon €90,000 R-352/L-4066 Bodyke Village €50,000 L2016/L6044 Querrin L2016 / L6044 €40,000 L-4118 Gaurus, Ennis, Co. Clare €15,000 R-478-64/L5142 Lough South Doolin €74,000 R-481-17/L5180 Ballybreen Kilfenora €35,000 L-4608 Rosslvan, Ennis €40,000 R484 Kilmihil Village €40,000 R-471/L-3046 Harrold's cross €55,000 L3312 Bealach Buí €45,000 R474/L8344 Connolly €45,000 Total €529,000
Liaison with NTA regarding bus shelters	Works have commenced on the replacement of the bus shelter in Lahinch.

Health and Safety

The Health & Safety Team are currently compiling all the data for the Annual Safety Report 2023, where it will set out the programme of work for the upcoming year and set Top Level H&S Objectives in order to ensure continuous improvement in the Occupational Health & Safety Management System for the Local Authority during 2024.

The annual review by the Safety Management Committee is scheduled for March 4th where subject to approval of the programme of work, Top Level H&S Objectives and updates to the Occupational Health & Safety management System will be issued to all staff for implementation.

The implementation of the programme of work will be monitored throughout the year by the H&S Teams ongoing reviews of Safety Statements, Risk Assessments and H&S Audit and Inspection plans.

An ISO 45001 Surveillance Audit was successfully completed by the National Standards Authority of Ireland with Clare County Fire & Rescue Service during February with a full Re-Certification Audit Scheduled for April 2024.

CAPITAL DELIVERY / PROJECT MANAGEMENT OFFICE

<p>Doolin Pier Visitor Services Building</p>	<p>The council are at present liaising with the department with a view to securing additional funding required to progress this project to Statutory Consent stage. This follows environmental evaluation of land use options, and re-engagement with appointed design team in 2023.</p>
<p>Ennis Public Realm Re-generation (Project B)</p>	<p>The works are now well under way, following a significant advance in project activity in line with agreed programme and phasing plan. The appointed contractor has now mobilised 5 crews to the town centre , in order to progress foul sewer refurbishment works in parallel with the Public Realm upgrade.</p> <p>Advance sewer works are being completed in O’Connell Street ahead of the Public Realm works. The laying of these foul sewers will enable the installation of essential medium voltage infrastructure, and the retirement of the existing legacy cabling which must be removed to facilitate construction of the shared surface pavement. Simultaneously, the public realm works are progressing along the street with the completion of concrete pours along the central carriageway section. Kerbs have been laid in tandem in preparation for laying of paving in coming weeks.</p> <p>Central carriageway concrete sections are also in place in High Street, and paving has commenced in February 2024. Foul sewer refurbishment is also well progressed, in advance of commencement of Public Realm works in coming weeks.</p> <p>Road Closures are now in place for O’Connell Street, and High Street, and further road closures will be advertised during 2024 to facilitate the works programme and to complete certain foul sewer replacement works in advance of the streetscape works.</p> <p>The works requirement within the contract obliges Shareridge to have a Public Liaison Officer (PLO) as part of their Team who is based in their Project Office in Ennis Town Centre. The PLO is engaging extensively with affected parties as the works progress and, in advance of commencement of every work phase. The public and traders are encouraged to take every opportunity to meet with the project team to ensure that their needs are communicated, and disruption is minimised wherever possible. The contractor and design team are also convening fortnightly drop-in meetings, as well as issuing weekly progress update bulletins. Affected/interested parties are invited to email ennispublicrealmb@share-ridge.ie if they wish to be added to mailing list.</p> <p>It is unavoidable that there will be disruption with a major civil and infrastructural works of this nature but every effort is being made to keep this to a minimum while allowing the necessary access to allow timely completion. It is expected that the longer-term benefits in terms of user amenity and accessibility will far outweigh the shorter-term inconvenience. The cooperation and understanding of all stakeholders in this regard is greatly appreciated.</p>
<p>Ennistymon Inner Relief Road and Bridge Crossing (Blake’s Corner)</p>	<p>The Judicial Review process is ongoing.</p>

Killaloe Bridge and By-Pass

Progress remains steady despite heavy rainfall over the course of the month. Milestones achieved include opening of Hill Road Stagger Junction. Upcoming Milestones include:- delivery of backspan edge girders to West Abutment W/C 26th Feb. and opening of Creeveroe Road Stagger Junction W/C 26th Feb.



Killaloe Bypass Section

Kincora: Kerbs being installed. Pavement activities scheduled to commence W/C 26th Feb.



Main Cut: Kerb install scheduled to commence W/C 26th Feb. re. Chainage 100-650. Kerbs installed Chainage 650-1100.



Hill Road to Creeveroe Road: Cycle Track and Footpath activities commenced. Topsoil to verges in progress.

Creeveroe Road to Shantraud: Surfacing to Cycle Track and Footpath in progress.

Shantraud Roundabout: Blockwork wall in progress. Remaining kerb installation scheduled to commence 22nd Feb.

Shannon Bridge Crossing Section

Shantraud to Clarisford Junction: Drainage and service duct installation in progress.

Clarisford to West Embankment: Fill to sub-formation of embankment in progress.



Shannon Bridge

Span 5 (East Pier 2 - East Pier 1): Cross girders installed.

Span 6 (East Pier 1 - East Abutment): Cross girders installed.



Span 2 (West Pier 1 – West Pier 2): Cross girders installed.

West Pier 2: Scaffolding for steel erection in progress.

Central Pier: Concrete works complete. Curing. Scaffolding for steel erection in progress.

Piling enabling works for 600t Crane in progress.



R494 Upgrade

Section 7 (South of Rail Bridge): Watermain installation in progress. Culvert commenced.



Section 7 (North of Rail Bridge): Kerb installation commenced. Pavement activities commenced. Pavement on new access ramp to Shannonside Business Park commenced. Temp. access road to facilitate closing of 'plug' to embankment installed. Road pavement commenced on embankment from Kilmastulla Bridge to Section 6 (Hayes' Farm).



Section 6 (Northbound Lane): Watermain installed. Drainage ongoing. Capping layer being installed.

Section 2(Northbound Lane): Accom. Wks commenced. Ductile Watermain diversion complete.



Section 2 (Southbound Lane): Accom. Wks. continue.

Section 1: Works to Pumping Station in progress. Accommodation works in progress.



Kilmastulla Bridge

VRS installed. Sand Asphalt laid. Preps for kerbs commenced.



Rail Bridge

Kentledge slabs complete on south. Kentledge slabs in progress on north approach. Bridge parapets installed.



RW03 (Shannonside Embankment): Parapets installed and stitched. VRS commenced.



Additional project specific information including monthly drone footage, traffic management plans etc. is available on: <https://www.clarecoco.ie/services/capital-projects/roads-and-bridges/killaloe-bypass-shannon-bridge-crossing/>

Measure A8 of the Multi Annual Rural Water Programme (MARWP)

Clare County Council received notification of Measure A8 of the Multi Annual Rural Water Programme (MARWP) for villages without waste water collection and treatment from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. This notification confirms the Minister’s decision on the applications received and the provision of funding to deliver same. The Council is engaging with the Department and progressing the matter internally. The Physical Directorate is also considering combining this with the delivery of the Developer Provided Water Infrastructure Programme in South East Clare.

The members will be kept updated as matters progress.

Kilkee Flood Relief Scheme

As part of Public Consultations for the Kilkee Flood Relief Scheme, Clare County Council will put on public display a draft set of fluvial planning drawings and reports in the Sweeney Memorial Library, Kilkee from 26th February to 6th March. The documents will also be available to view on the project website, www.kilkeefrs.ie

Representatives of Clare County Council, the Office of Public Works and scheme consultants JBA/ JB Barry will be present on the 6th March from 2pm to 5pm to address any queries on the scheme.

CCC intend to submit a planning application for the fluvial scheme to An Bord Pleanála towards the end of March.

Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF)

Discussions are ongoing with the Department of Housing and to that regard a meeting with the LIHAF Management Committee was held in Dublin on the 20th of February last.

Infrastructure & Housing programme delivery and additional funding for the project was discussed in detail and CCC await a favourable response which will enable us to move forward with the project.

In parallel, discussions with the relevant landowners is ongoing regarding the acquisition of the necessary lands for the scheme. It is hoped that all lands necessary can be acquired by agreement, but we are exploring our options should a CPO be required as a last resort

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

<p>N19 Shannon Airport Access Road</p>	<p>Phase 3 (Design and Environmental Evaluation) stage is currently ongoing with Phase 4 (Statutory Consent) stage progressing thereafter.</p> <p>The Project Team continue to work across a range of areas including the preparation of the various Chapters of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) which will result in submitting this project for Statutory Consent in mid-2024.</p> <p>Phase 5 (Enabling and Procurement) & Phase 6 (Construction) will progress thereafter which are subject to timely consents, no legal challenge, funding, etc. The construction contract is estimated to be in the region of 18 months in duration.</p> <p>Discussions continue regarding the necessary Land Transfer Agreements between The Minister for Transport, the Shannon Group and Clare County Council and as always, further information and associated literature on the project can be accessed via the scheme website www.shannonaccess.ie</p>
<p>Quin Flood Relief Scheme</p>	<p>Concrete works have now been completed on the scheme. Land reinstatement and accommodation works are progressing well and will be completed in the coming weeks, weather permitting. Fencing and finishing works will be carried out at the earliest juncture once favourable weather conditions permit.</p> <div data-bbox="485 781 1386 1160" style="text-align: center;"> </div>
<p>Remediation of sites containing ACM</p>	<p>Statutory approval aspects are currently being reviewed in advance of issue of tender documents for a works contract in respect of the excavation and remediation of the sites. Proposals for the disposal of bulk soil material were received in the summer of 2023, thereby defining the receiving locations and transport requirements for the bulk materials to be removed.</p> <p>The sites continue to be routinely monitored and maintained as required by Council staff in accordance with our agreed approach following discussion and consultation with the EPA.</p>
<p>Shannon Town & Environs Flood Relief Scheme</p>	<p>During the period, scheme consultants RPS have issued a number of reports for review, including the EIA Screening, Buildability Report and the latest iteration of the Options Report. Clare County Council are currently reviewing same.</p> <p>Liaison with statutory consultees is ongoing, with an upcoming meeting planned with the Marine Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) in late February.</p> <p>Procurement of the 'Lagoon Monitoring' contract will be complete by the end of February with the intention of starting monitoring works in March.</p>
<p>West Clare Railway Greenway (Section 1: Kilrush to Kilkee)</p>	<p>A TII peer review of the 'Option Selection Report' was carried out last month and the Project Team are now addressing items raised. The Project Team are simultaneously preparing for the final formal Public Consultation event (PC3) which is planned for early Q2.</p>
<p>West Clare Railway Greenway (Section 2: Ennis to Ennistymon)</p>	<p>Work continues on the 'Option Selection Report' and it is due to be completed in Q1, 2024. Following which, the Project Team are preparing for Public Consultation (PC3) which will take place following a peer review.</p>

<p>West Clare Railway Greenway (Section 3 & 4: Ennistymon to Miltown Malbay and Miltown Malbay to Moyasta)</p>	<p>Public Consultation 1 concluded in February. The Project Team are collating information which will feed into the Consultation Report.</p>
<p>Other Greenway Proposals</p>	<p>No update this month.</p>

General Design Office

Scarriff Rural Regeneration Project

The tender design for the 2 buildings to be refurbished and the proposed new Car Park are complete. The Quantity Surveyors, Cuddy QS, are preparing the Bill of Quantities for these works which is due to go to tender Mid-March.



Town and Village Renewal Schemes

Clonlara – Construction works concluded. Snagging and final accounts in progress.



Drumgeely – Works nearing completion, expected completion mid-February.



FIRE & BUILDING CONTROL SECTION

Training Courses

Clare County Fire & Rescue Service personnel underwent a number of training courses during February, including Emergency Services Driving Standard (ESDS) Refresher Training, Breathing Apparatus Initial Wearers Training and Effective Decision Making Training.

Safety Management System Audit

Clare County Fire & Rescue Service took part in a two day NSAI audit to the ISO 45011 Standard (Health & Safety) on the 19th and 20th February. The audit included a Management Review together with onsite visits to Shannon and Scarriff Fire Stations. The Fire Service retained their ISO 45011 accreditation following the Surveillance Audit. The audit report highlights the very high standard of Health & Safety that continues to be demonstrated in the Fire Service in Clare.

Recruitment of Fire Service Personnel

Recruitment Open Days took place at Shannon and Kilrush

Fire Stations on Saturday 24th and Sunday 25th February from 1.00pm to 4.00pm each day. It is hoped that this will result in new recruits for both stations.



Fire & Building Control Section Main Activities	Jan 2024	Feb 2024 (Up to 26/02/2024)	Year to Date 2024
Number of Emergency Calls Attended	159	66	225
Number of Fire Safety Certificates Received	10	6	16
Number of Fire Safety Certificates Granted	7	6	13
Number of Fire Safety Certificates Invalidated	1	0	1
Number of Disability Access Certificates Received	3	6	9
Number of Disability Access Certificates Granted	6	1	7
Number of Commencement Notices Received	44	27	71
Number of Dangerous Structures/Places Complaints	2	4	6

(Note: In the Feb Monthly Report, the Jan figures related to 1st- 23rd January due to timing of report)

CLARE CIVIL DEFENCE

Operational Duties:

- Civil Defence provided medical cover at a number of events in February including Run the Banner (Kilnaboy); Run Clare (Meelick); Ladies Football Clare vs Roscommon (Cusack Park); Ladies Camogie Clare vs Offaly (Cusack Park) and National Hurling League Clare vs Cork (Cusack Park).
- Clare Civil Defence assisted An Garda Síochána with a missing person search at the Cliffs of Moher over a 21 day period. Members of Limerick Civil Defence attended during the final stages of the search. This search has since been stood down with no trace of the missing person.



Members' Training & Professional Development

- Members participated in weekly training set out by Civil Defence instructors - this training included boat training, vehicle training, search training and use of drones.
- 14 members successfully completed Auxillary Fire Service (AFS) training.
- 8 members successfully completed Swiftwater Flood First Responder Course which took place on the River Fergus.



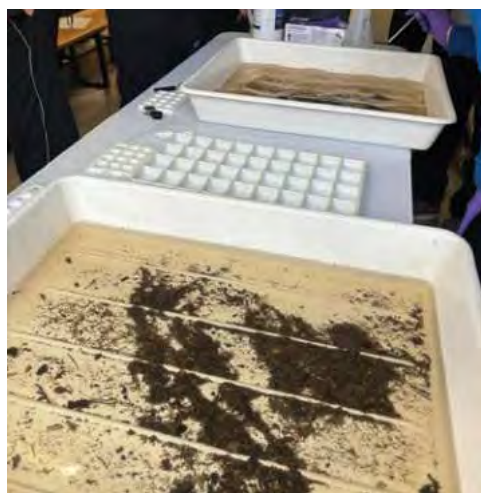
ENVIRONMENT

Environmental Awareness

An Taisce Green Schools

Clare County Council supports and encourages active participation in the An Taisce operated Green Schools programme. Our Environmental Awareness Officer (EAO) carries out Green School assessments and makes recommendations to An Taisce on the awarding of a Green Flag. In February our EAO met with 6 schools to undertake assessment visits.

In addition to assessment visits our EAO presented to 150 second year students at St Patricks Comprehensive School, Shannon on Protecting and Conserving our Water Resources. Our EAO demonstrated a Small Stream Investigative Assessment and brought freshwater stream samples to the school. The students learnt about freshwater invertebrates and the role their presence plays in determining the water quality status of a waterbody.



Community engagement

Clare County Council Greener Clare team upon request delivers presentations and talks across Clare. This is great opportunity for raising awareness within communities to an already available audience that would not necessarily attend an environmental talk. Our EAO met with the Sixmilebridge Irish Countrywomen's Association (ICA) to deliver a talk on the Environment Sections various work programme including a Recycling workshop.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Champion Programme

During February our EAO presented at a Local Authority Water Programme World Wetland Day event on the SDGs. SDGs are built into all our EAOs presentations and were included in the presentations this month to St Patrick's Comprehensive Secondary School and Sixmilebridge ICA.

Our EAO promoted use of the use of Accelerator Action Tool to the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) Destination Certificate Green Team in February and in addition, later in the month, assisted in the use of the tool to assess SDG alignment

to the Clare Tourism Strategy.

Our EAO presented on Clare County Councils SDG Champion programme at the Department of Environment Climate and Communication (DECC) SDG Champion quarterly meeting at "Ideas Lab" at the University of Galway this month.



February Awareness Campaigns

Responsible Dog Ownership, National Spring Clean, Sustainable Development Goals, Bin it Or Bring it home were promoted on social media (@GreenerClare / @ClareCoCo) and/or print media during February.

Gardening

February is a month of transition for the Gardening Team, with much of the seasonal winter work completed while plants and trees have been dormant, and attention now turns to spring and summer planting. One of the final winter tasks is the collection and shredding of Christmas trees. The mulch from these trees will be used by the Team as a natural and sustainable weed suppressant.



During February, the team also provided assistance to Kilrush Municipal District by undertaking the pruning and shaping of mature trees around the Market Square area in Kilrush Town.

In early February, the Team received a new zero turn lawnmower. This asset will ensure the team can continue to produce a high-quality finish to lawns and green areas at various corporate campuses.



With the gradual rise of ground temperatures and the much-welcomed increase in daylight hours, the Gardening Team is also busy preparing hanging baskets that will be installed in the coming weeks at various locations around Ennis, in advance of the St Patrick's Day celebrations.



Our Gardening team manager presented to the Environment Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) in February. The presentation summarised some of the recent projects undertaken by the team and outlined our Ennis Roundabout Project 2024-2027.



Water Enforcement and Laboratory Scientific Services

The table below summarises the work of the scientific teams to date in 2024:

Water Enforcement Scientific Team	February 2024	Total YTD 2024
Bathing Water Monitoring	Season starts in June	Season starts in June
Domestic Wastewater Treatment Plant Inspections (NIP Plan)	20	20
Public queries processed with regard to DWWTS grants	5	13
Monitoring Inspections of Section 4 licenced premises	16	17
Planning applications (Agriculture)	4	6
Planning applications (Domestic)	22	42
Planning applications (Large Developments)	4	5
Planning applications (Forestry)	10	33
Pollution complaints received	9	36
Private Commercial Drinking Water Supplies	17	17
Private/Public Group Water Scheme supplies	26	44
Rivers	10	11
Warning & advisory letters issued	2	3

Annual Drinking Water Returns – Public and Private GWS and Commercial Private Supplies

In accordance with Section 58 of the Environmental Protection Agency Act, 1992, Clare County Council are required to submit the 2023 annual drinking water monitoring returns for private drinking water supplies. All 2023 drinking water monitoring data was uploaded and submitted through the Environmental Data Exchange Network Monitoring Data System (EDEN-MDS)

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

by the deadline of 28th February 2024. Drinking water supply details must also be updated in EDEN for the 2023 reporting period by 28th February 2024. We have complied with all statutory obligations in this regard.

Waste Enforcement

Environmental Monitoring (Illegal Dumping/Litter)

The Waste Enforcement Team continued to respond to waste and litter related complaints in February. A total of 80 complaints relating to litter (6) and waste (74) were received in February. All of these are currently being investigated, followed up and appropriate enforcement action will be taken.

Waste Facility Permit / Certificate of Registration Applications

The Environment Section received 2 new Waste Facility Permit (WFP) Applications and 1 Permit Review Applications in February. Inspections of all 3 sites were carried out to inform the Waste Enforcement team of site status and to ensure no environmental pollution was occurring. A decision will be made whether to grant or refuse within statutory timeframes.

Multi-Agency Meeting

A multi-agency meeting was held between An Garda Síochána and the Councils Waste Enforcement team, arising from repeated complaints of dumping specific locations. Concerned residents from the area also attended the meeting.

Shannon Estuary Anti-Pollution Team (SEA-PT)

Fines issued under the Litter Pollution Act 1997, As Amended
A total of 9 litter fines were issued in February with 1 paid to date, under the Litter Pollution Act, 1997.

Riverbank clean-up, Clarecastle

The riverbank clean-up in Clarecastle took place on Saturday 24th February. The Environment Section supported the clean-up and assisted with transfer of the waste collected during the clean-up to the Central Waste Management Facility in Inagh.

Staff Training

Staff from the Waste Enforcement team attended training on Courtroom Skills during February, to assist staff when giving evidence in court.

Recommended Minimum Criteria for Environmental Inspections (RMCEI)

The Environment Section have prepared for submission our Annual RMCEI return for 2023 to the Environmental Protection Agency. This provides a summary of all resources, inspections, monitoring and sampling and enforcement actions undertaken by the Council and it is required to be submitted by the end of February each year.

Burning of agricultural waste

The Waste Management (Prohibition of Waste Disposal by Burning) Regulations 2009 makes it an offence to dispose of waste by burning. An initial five-year exemption was provided for the permissible disposal of agricultural green waste by burning. This exemption was extended on several occasions. In 2023, the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications announced that the practice of burning agricultural green waste was to end in November 2023. The Environment Section promoted the change via social media to advise the local farming community of alternatives to burning. We have also updated our Web page to reflect the change in legislation. <https://www.clarecoco.ie/services/environment/enforcement/burning/>

CLIMATE ACTION

Climate Action Plan Development

The Draft Climate Action Plan 2024 – 2029 was considered and adopted by the Elected members on February 12th 2024 at a full meeting of the Council. The Elected members were previously briefed on the Chief Executives report on submissions to enable full consideration of the plan. The Chief Executives reports followed on from a successful public consultation period in relation to the plan. The SEA and AA process were completed and it was noted that the adoption and implementation of the LACAP will not individually or in combination with any other plan or project adversely affect the integrity of any European site. The Plan was adopted by members at the February 12th meeting.

Local Authorities have 30 days from adoption to fully publish the plans which involved the finalisation of the Environmental reports and notification to designated authorities.



Community Climate Action Programme

The Community Climate Action Programme closed for applications on the 28th of February 2024. The Community Climate Action Officer has been supporting community groups and organisations across County Clare in the development of potential projects and initiatives. Several online and in person information sessions were again held in February to assist community groups with the application process.

A new Community Climate Action officer, Dara Dever started in the role on February 26th 2024. Kelly Slattery moves on to a new role within Clare County Council.

Please see the table below detailing the Programme timelines:

Project Milestones	Dates
Online portal open for expression of interest (applications)	06/12/2023
Online portal closed for expression of interest (applications)	28/02/2024
Confirmation of Ministerial approved projects	17/07/2024

A period of evaluation will occur post closure of submissions. The programme supports small and large, rural, and urban communities to take climate action at a local level. The Department of Environment, Climate and Communications has allocated €572,000 to Clare County Council, under phase 1 of the programme, to fund small (up to €20,000), medium (between €20,000 and €50,000), and large-scale (between €51,000 and €100,000) community climate action projects.

Please contact the Community Climate Action Officer Dara Dever on ddever@clarecoco.ie / communityclimate@clarecoco.ie for further information.

Energy & Climate Awareness

Raising awareness of Climate Change and building the public literacy in this regard are key actions with the Climate Action Plan. Directly educating via Webinars and presentations but also collaborating with other stakeholders is how we intend to affect this. In January and February 2024, the Climate team took part in the number of such events:

Climate Action Co Ordinator, Morgan Lahiffe met with Transition Year students of St Flannan's College Ennis on January 24th and Colaiste Muire, Ennis on January 31st to present to them on Climate Change and key changes we can make to ensure a more sustainable footprint going forward.



Climate Action Coordinator pictured at Colaiste Muire, Ennis.

The EirGrid Energy Citizens Roadshow took place on Wednesday 21st February in the Treacy's West County Hotel in Ennis. Clare County Council took a stand at this roadshow. Clare County Council Climate Action Officer Chris Dixon O'Mara presented to the gathering on the Climate Action Plan and Energy Opportunities ahead. The information event also informed local communities across Clare about how EirGrid plans to future-proof the electricity grid, while ESB Networks outlined its role in connecting microgeneration. The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) provided advice on home energy upgrades and retrofitting grants.



Climate Action Officer speaking at West County Hotel.



Climate Action Officers pictured at Eirgrid Roadshow.

ISO50001 Energy Audit

A one day Energy Audit from the NSAI was carried out on February 23rd. The surveillance audit is designed to assess our ongoing commitment as an organisation to energy management and to ensure compliance with the requirements of the internationally recognised ISO 50001 Standard and accredited by the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI). The audit concentrated on one significant energy user, assesses energy data from throughout the year and makes recommendations.

Clare County Council passed the audit with a minor recommendation around revolving resources sitting at Energy Management Team.



Reduce Your Use

The Reduce Your Use campaign for Winter 2023/24 continues with email, online and social media engagement, led by the Energy Management Team, providing guidance on how to reduce energy consumption in the home and the workplace. Reduce Your Use supports public bodies to encourage staff to cut energy waste over the winter months and implement operational actions that reduce energy consumption. Staff of Clare County Council are receiving biweekly reduce your use emails. Further information on the Reduce Your Use campaign and guidance can be viewed on the Reduce Your Use Your Say Engagement Page: <https://yoursay.clarecoco.ie/reduce-your-use-campaign-2023-2024>

WATER

Asset Transfer

This update is as per the Monthly Management Report for the February 2024 Council Meeting but is set out here again for your information.

Following an assessment of the water and wastewater networks in County Clare, 383 sites have been identified for potential transfer to Uisce Éireann to date. Following on site surveys, 71 of these assets have been determined to be duplicate, non-operational assets or assets which Uisce Éireann will not accept. Of the remaining 312 assets, 221 have now been fully transferred to Uisce Éireann. The 91 assets remaining to be transferred are divided into the following four categories:

- Internal Query (13 assets) – These consist of assets for which need further investigation or information /approval from another council section to proceed, or sites under transfer via a different section of the council.
- National Special Projects Office (NSPO) (53 assets)– Assets are proposed to this department within Uisce Éireann to obtain their agreement for the Asset Transfers from Local Authorities. Most assets now being dealt with in this category are folios under third party ownership but where water assets are present and operational, often for decades. Department Circular L1 2022 proposes that property in long term operational possession but not in the Council name be obtained by the adverse possession process and provides for grant support to Councils for this process.

- These folios will then be transferred on to Uisce Éireann.
- With County Solicitor (25 Assets) These assets are now with the County Solicitor to progress by ordinary transfer or by adverse possession processes.

Rural Water Programme

The Rural Water Team continues to support group water schemes to ensure a robust and sustainable quality and quantity supply of water is available.

The long-awaited Multi-annual Rural Water Programme 2024-2026 framework document was formally published on the 23rd of January 2024 and invitations will now be issued for Group Water Schemes to submit applications for funding. The Department will meet with local authorities in the coming weeks and will organise workshops to support local authorities in the preparation of submissions. The Rural Water Team will continue to assist Group Water Schemes with their applications and in the selection of the most suitable funding measure within the 2024 – 2026 programme. Group Water Scheme Taking in Charge applications are actively being progressed by the Clare Rural Water Team.

A significant number of applications under the ‘Grant for Improvement Works to a Private Water Supply’ under the Rural Water Programme continues with a total number of applications received in 2023 now standing at 84. There is a continued demand for this grant in 2024.

SHANNON MUNICIPAL DISTRICT

Renew Bunratty Conference

A community-led sustainable tourism conference was held in Bunratty on 6th February 2024 in association with TUS Limerick School of Art and Design and Bunratty Local Development Association. Pat Dowling, Chief Executive, was a guest speaker at the event and his keynote address highlighted Clare County Council’s commitment to further developing and preserving the local tourism attractions in Bunratty. The conference was very informative and included a tour of the facilities at Bunratty including the Folk Park. It focused on an array of topics including the circularity of tourism, responsible travel, use of digital and multimedia, focusing on its strengths/uniqueness, the future of Bunratty, and the importance of the role of the local community in sustainable tourism.

President of TUS Professor Vincent Cunnane confirmed that TUS plays a pivotal role in supporting and developing the region’s economy. The conference was an opportunity to bring together some of the leading experts in the area of tourism including researchers and lecturers who shared their experience and ideas.

The conference was attended by Cllr PJ Ryan and Cllr J Crowe and Anne Griffin, A/Senior Executive Officer.



Pat Dowling, Chief Executive, speaking at the event.

Collaborative project with national schools, An Taisce and Shannon MD

Shannon Municipal District was proud to support the ‘An Choill Bheag’ initiative, which was a collaborative effort with An Taisce and a number of national schools in Shannon. The project will result in 800 native trees being planted throughout 2024 at four locations.

It is a grassroots approach to educating young school goes through an outdoor living classroom of the importance of trees and highlighting the very real issue of climate change and biodiversity loss.

LEAF Ireland stated that it was delighted to be working with Clare County Council, Shannon Municipal District, and a number of schools in the Shannon area to plant 800 native trees in four locations, as part of our An Choill Bheag initiative. An Choill Bheag is an initiative of LEAF Ireland and the Environmental Education Unit of An Taisce.

On Thursday, 1st February, students from St John’s National School planted the first 200 native trees of mixed variety, in the green area adjacent to the school. Planting these native trees, not only helps address the climate and biodiversity emergencies but also creates an outdoor learning space for the students and community to explore as the woodland matures. Before Christmas, the students spent a day mapping the area to be planted, investigating what species were already present and decided on the most appropriate species to plant.

Over the coming weeks, the students will return to care for the recently planted trees, the area will be mulched to suppress the grass growth and retain moisture in the ground. A final visit will take place later in the Spring, the students will be shown how to care and look after this new habitat and educational signs will also be put in place.



Kite flying initiative in Shannon Town Park...

The Kite Power Festival was held in Shannon Town Park on 11th February 2024. The Hunt Museum were the main organisers of the event with sponsorship from Shannon Airport. Its main aim was to highlight the power of wind as an energy resource. Cathaoirleach Cllr Donna McGettigan was on hand to make presentations to the winners on the day. Prizes were given for the best flyer, the best use of recycled packaging and decoration and the best artistic design.



Slí na Sláinte route in Shannon town

Shannon MD has completed the Slí na Sláinte route in Shannon town with directional signage erected throughout the route. The attractive, brightly coloured signage will encourage people to incorporate more walking into their lifestyles. Developed by the Irish Heart Foundation, the route encourages people to walk the recommended 30 minutes a day on a regular basis. There are currently over 230 community Slí na Sláinte routes nationally.





Transformative TVR project in Drumgeely, Shannon completed

The revitalisation project for Drumgeely under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme was recently completed by Clare County Council and Shannon Municipal District. This historic area of Shannon which was the original town centre in the 1960's, has seen works resulting in a very high quality, accessible amenity area with new paving, seating, lighting and planting areas. Its main aim was to positively impact outdoor living both for the local community and visitors and has received very positive feedback.

The Town & Village Renewal Scheme under the Department of Rural and Community Development promotes sustainable, inclusive communities and is a vital step in helping our local communities remain vibrant.



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

HOUSING

For 2024 the housing public counter will remain open to the public, without appointment, from 9am until 1pm and by appointment after 1pm. Customers who require appointments in the afternoon can call 065 6846334 to schedule same.

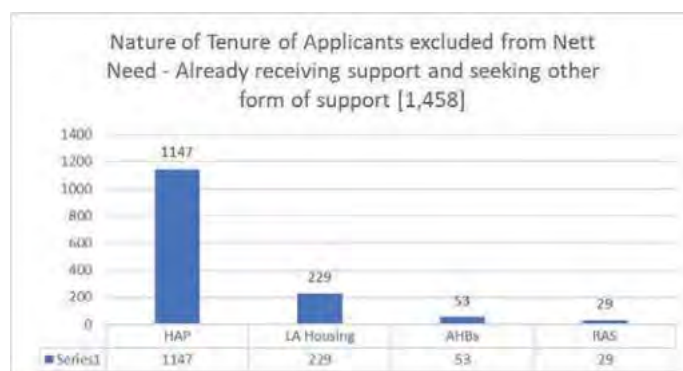
The Clare Homeless Action Team (HAT) office is open by appointment during office hours and can be contacted on 065 684 6291 or by email: hat@clarecoco.ie. Our Ukrainian support team can be contacted on 065 6846577 or by email: communityresponseforum@clarecoco.ie

Social Housing Demand

The highest demand throughout the county remains for 1 and 2-bedroomed properties. There are 2,144 applicant households (76%) who have a requirement for this property type. The Allocations/Assessment Team are currently carrying out a review of the areas where the demand for this property type is greatest.

Current Housing need as of 28/02/2024

Total Households on List	2,821	
Transfer Applicants (see below)		1,458
Nett Need	1,363	



Housing need by Area of choice and number of beds approved:

Count of FIRST AREA OF CHOICE	BEDS_APPROVED			
	1 and 2 beds	3 beds	4 beds	Total
ENNIS	922	205	80	1207
SHANNON	169	35	16	220
CLARECASTLE	134	24	10	168
INAGH/ENNISTYMON/LAHINCH	122	27	5	154
KILRUSH	96	27	7	130
FEAKLE/SCARIFF/WHITEGATE	100	26	4	130
MEELICK/PARTEEN/WESTBURY	66	29	13	108
MILTOWN MALBAY/MULLAGH/QUILTY	74	10	2	86
KILKEE/CROSS/CARRIGAHOLT	64	12	1	77
COROFIN/RUAN	58	17	1	76
NEWMARKET-ON-FERGUS	49	19	4	72
KILLALOE	52	13	2	67
LISDOONVARNA/BALLYVAUGHAN	46	11	3	60
SIXMILEBRIDGE	37	11	7	55
COORACLARE/DOONBEG	34	9	5	48
TULLA/KILKISHEN/BROADFORD	34	7	3	44
CLONLARA	23	6	1	30
KILDYSART/BALLYNACALLY	20	4	3	27
QUIN	17	7	1	25
KILMIHIL	12	5	2	19
KILMALEY	9	2		11
KILFENORA	6	1		7
Grand Total	2144	507	170	2821

Newly Qualified Applicants



Housing Allocations



Properties in the new social housing development at O'Connell Street, Ennis, have been allocated and the new tenants received the keys to their new homes on 22nd February last. This development comprises 9 one-bedroomed apartments and 1 two-bedroomed apartment. This new development is centrally located and services such as education, employment and shops are all within walking distance therefore reducing reliance on cars. Furthermore, repurposing this vacant building will make the town more attractive which in turn means more benefits to our local economy.

Right: Mr Bernard Ryan receiving the keys to his new home in O'Connell Street, Ennis, from Máirin Hill. Also included in the photograph Ann O'Dea, Allocations Team and Joan Leahy Account Manager. Mr Ryan stated: "I am absolutely delighted to receive the keys to my new home and wish to express my sincere thanks to all the Housing Team for making this happen."



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

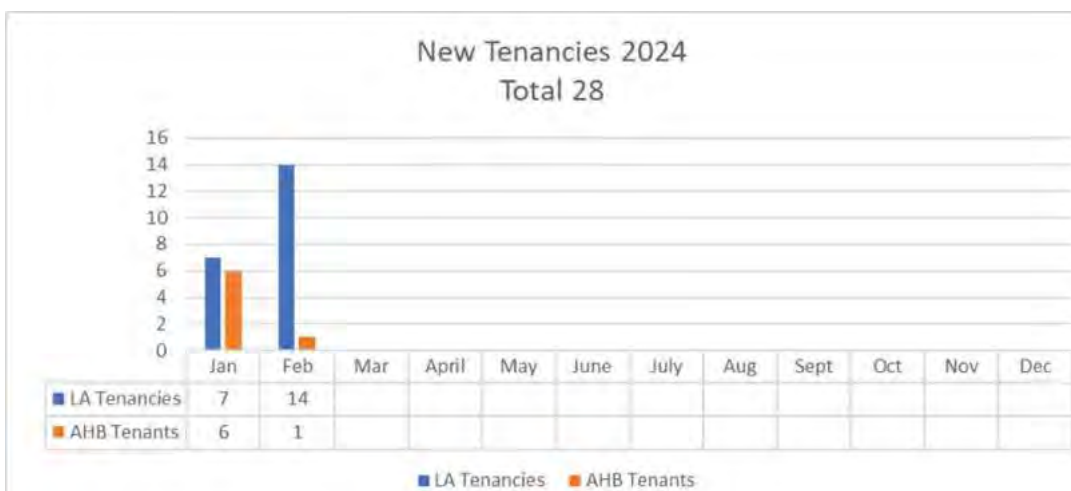


Mr Kofi Bempah receiving the keys to his new apartment. Mr Bempah in accepting his keys stated: "I am so happy and grateful to get this property. I have been living and working in Ennis for the last 18 years and getting this house means so much to me."

Above left: Ann O'Dea and Catherine Breen from our Allocations Team are pictured outside one of the new homes at the official opening of An Cosan Gheall estate. Above right: Michael Owusu- Sekyere & Paulina Arthur & their 3 children who are residing in the An Cosan Gheall estate.

The social housing development comprising of 3 and 4 bed-roomed houses located at An Cosan Gheall, Limerick Road Ennis was officially opened by Darragh O'Brien, Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, on 16th February last. These properties were delivered by Inis Housing. Clare County Council

had 100% nomination rights to this development. Properties were advertised via our Choice Based Letting portal. To qualify for this development applicants had to be qualified for social housing support with this Authority.



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Tenant Purchase Incremental Scheme

There remains significant interest in the LA Tenant Purchase Incremental Scheme. We currently have 13 open cases at various stages of the process of which upto 7 may finalise sales in 2024.

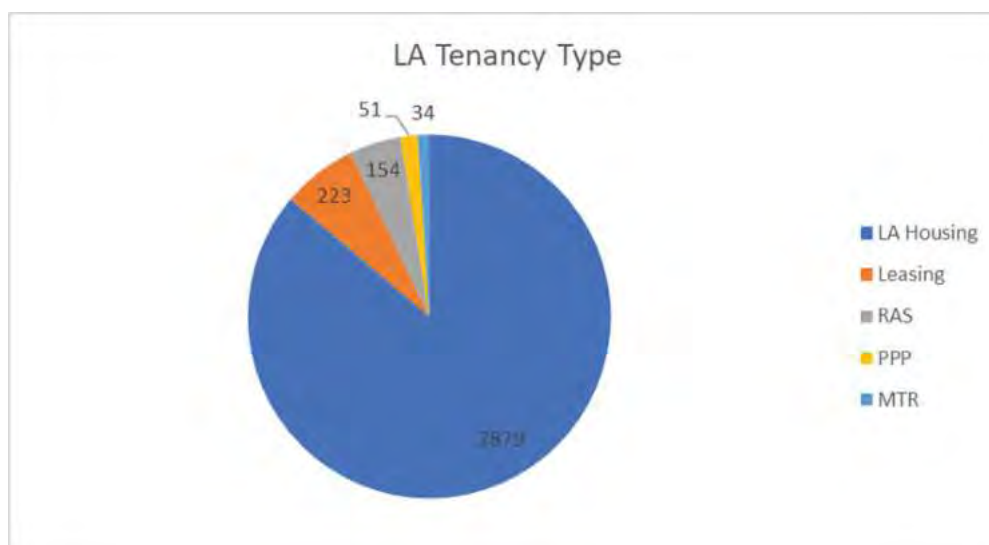
Having consulted with elected members in relation to maintaining our newer stock we have agreed that properties purchased or built since 1st January 2016 will not be available for sale under this scheme. This can be reviewed at end of current Housing Delivery Plan period in 2026. We have also agreed that 1-bedroom properties will not be available under the scheme.

The Department issued a Circular in December 2023 advising of small changes to the scheme including a reduction in minimum income eligibility and adding further income sources as eligible, including certain state pensions and disability payments.

Housing Tenancies

*Breakdown of tenancies by municipal district (including RAS; long- and short-term leasing; PPP; Traveller accommodation & Mortgage to Rent. *Excludes AHBs*):

29th Feb 2024			
MD	Allocated	Occupied	Total
Ennis MD	3	1292	1288
Killaloe MD		364	364
Shannon MD	9	730	732
West Clare MD	1	955	959
Grand Total	13	3341	3354



Approved Housing bodies are providing approximately 850 tenancies to Social Housing Applicants

Clare County Council have full nomination rights in respect of the majority of AHB properties and these properties are advertised via our Choice Based Letting System. Nominations are prepared in accordance with a new National Process agreed by LAs and the AHB sector and commenced in July 2022.

Vacancies

Vacant Stock	Ennis MD	West Clare MD	Shannon MD	Killaloe MD	Total
Traveller Accom.	3	7	2	0	12
Derelict Properties	0	0	0	0	0
Projects	4	12	1	2	19
Casual Vacancies	16	12	6	3	37
TOTAL	23	31	9	5	68

Estate Management

The Estate Management Team continue to undertake regular routine and response calls to tenants, dealing with ASB complaints as well as inspecting Local Authority tenancies and providing the necessary supports to tenants.

The team were successful in securing a repossession in court earlier this year in a case where there were continued breaches of a Tenancy Agreement and we will continue to seek repossessions through the courts in such situations.

The Estate Management Team have started extensive inspections of council stock this year with almost 180 properties in Shannon inspected during January and a further 190 in Ennis in February. It is planned to carry out inspections on 2,000 properties this year in relation to general upkeep of the properties, refuse collection etc. Follow up calls are scheduled in relation to approximately 10% of the properties inspected to date to ensure compliance with issues of concern are addressed.

Any matters that need to be brought to the attention of the Estate Management unit can be done so by emailing asb@clarecoco.ie Listed hereunder shows details of work being undertaken by the Estate Management team this year to date.

	February	Total year to date
ASB Complaints recd	66	107
Housing Inspections	~190	~370
Referrals to TSS (including Tulsa)	8	13
Tenancy Notifications/Warnings issued	6	10
Abandonment Notices issued	4	8
Keys collected from Casual Vacancies	7	10
Repossession Orders	0	1
Daily Patrols	629	1,158

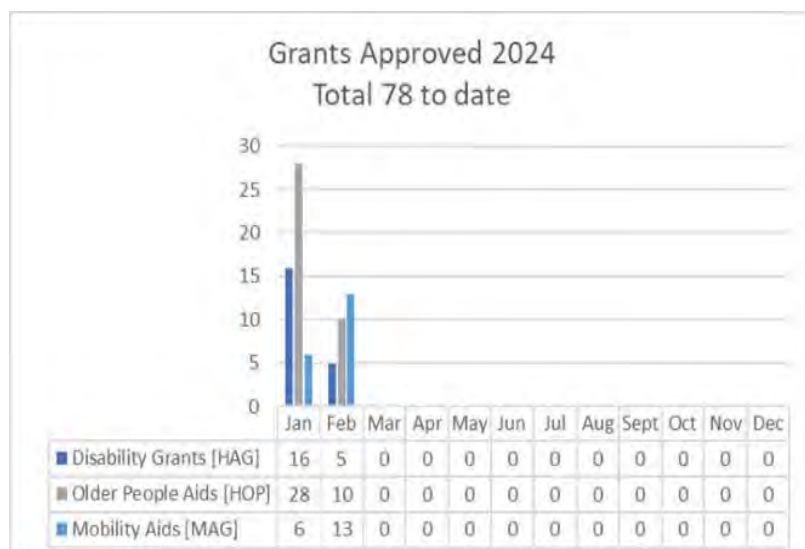
The Tenancy Enforcement team carry out continued patrols of Local Authority housing estates and Traveller sites and have a very visible presence to manage and mitigate against complaints of antisocial behaviour. The team engage proactively with tenants to help prevent anti-social behaviour and between daily patrols of local authority sites, specific meetings with tenants as well as engaging with local communities and their representatives. The working hours of the TEO team are flexible to meet required need, involving working after hours and weekends as the need dictates. The TEO team can be contacted out of office hours, should the need arise, by contacting the Council Emergency Phone no. (087) 2599568

Private Rented inspections

218 inspections were carried out up to February 2024. These inspections were carried out on HAP, RTB, RAS and Leased properties, as well as in response to complaints that were received. The team continue to follow up where properties do not meet the minimum rented standards and Improvement Letters are issued to landlords advising of works required. In most cases works, while essential, are minimal and relate to need for vents, emersion insulation, smoke alarms, window restrictors, and similar type items. Generally landlords engage well with the council on receipt of these letters and items are corrected without need for further intervention. Where a landlord has not engaged with us or not carried out works an Improvement Notice is noticed, and of 1,105 inspections carried out in 2023 only 6 Improvement Notices were required and todate in 2024 none have been issued.

Housing Grants

Grants approved for to date this year:





Local Authority Home Loan

Full details on the Local Authority Home Loan (LAHL) and eligibility criteria including the Loan Calculator and Information Booklet can be found on www.localauthorityhomeloan.ie

There are currently 55 Local Authority Home Loans Approved in Principle. Updated figures are outlined as follows:



Traveller Accommodation

Clare County Council continue to progress our Traveller Accommodation Program [TAP] 2019 – 2024.

We have also commenced preparation of the next 5-year Traveller Accommodation Programmes (TAPs) for adoption by 31 December 2024. Preparation of the new plan will require housing authorities to consult with adjoining housing authorities, the HSE, approved housing bodies, the Local Traveller Consultative Committee, other local Traveller representative groups, community and interest groups and the public in general. Housing authorities, following consultation, must make an estimate of the current and projected accommodation needs of Traveller families arising over the five-year programme. We are currently working with the Traveller Community Development Program in preparing a detailed traveller led needs analysis in preparation of same.

It is expected that draft plan will be available for public consultation in Q3 2024.

Homeless Services [Homeless Action Team HAT]

The demand on the Homeless Action Team within Clare County Council continues to increase with an increased number of complex cases and issues presenting. This is evident given the increased levels of support, being requested from households around areas such as Homeless Services, Advice and Support and the need for Emergency Accommodation within this region. Within this period there has also been an increase in presentations and households who have been assessed as Non HRC Compliant. While such households are not eligible for services in the area, the amount of work and interactions each staff has had with such households has increased and placed considerable pressure on all members.

In conjunction with this there has been a significant rise in the number of presentations of individuals and households experiencing difficulties and concerns around addiction or mental health concerns, dual diagnosis, physical disabilities, prison releases, hospital discharges and a further increase in the number of households presenting from the Travelling Community.

Prevention and support remains a key factor in the workings of the Homeless Action Team. A number of single and household presentations worked with staff around prevention options and supports which in turn prevented the need for Emergency Accommodation and avoiding entering a homeless situation. Other individuals and families were supported in accessing Emergency Accommodation either within our services or through private establishments. However, as Emergency Services and Accommodation remains at capacity with continuous demand for additional capacity, a number of

individuals remain overstaying with friends or family until a vacancy presents within Emergency Accommodation.

The Homeless Action Team continues to pursue additional emergency accommodation options. This continues to prove challenging due to demand for accommodation. The Council has completed the purchase of an additional property for emergency accommodation during the past month. This will be available for homeless women and children. A service provider is being procured through tender process to manage the accommodation and provide the necessary supports.

Emergency Accommodation Status as of 22/02/2024

	Families	Adults	Dependents	Providers
Laurel Lodge	0	13	0	1
Laurel Lodge Weather Initiative	0	8	0	0
Cusack Lodge	5	8	9	1
Westbrook	0	16	0	1
Westbrook Weather Initiative	0	3	0	0
Ashford Court	12	19	17	1
EA Families	3	4	6	3
EA Individuals	0	11	0	4
TOTAL	20	82	32	11

Exits/Discharges from EA 19/01/2024 to 22/02/2024

3 - Self Discharge

4 - Discharged: Breach of conditions / Non-use of bed space

Notices to Quit

We continue to support circa. 60 clients with valid Notice to Quits in existing private rental agreements. A further 15 NTQs are invalid. Our staff are actively engaging with these clients to assist them in accessing other housing solutions and to avoid the need for entering homeless services. Since eviction ban was removed we have supported a further 90 households through various solutions including allocations of LA properties, AHB properties, purchase through tenant in Situ Scheme, new HAP properties, etc. In addition, a small number of clients are being supported through the transboundary scheme where they are renting in border areas outside of Clare boundary, and a further three households have been referred to the Housing Agency as they may be able to avail of the Cost Rental Tenant in Situ program through the Agency.

Affordable Housing Schemes for County Clare

CCC continues to run Expression of Interest (EOI) Campaigns seeking proposals on options to deliver affordable homes in County Clare.

CCC have been successful in securing approval for the first Affordable Housing Scheme in County Clare under the new Affordable Funding Scheme. Approval has been received for 10 properties in Oakwood View in Shannon.

Two further submissions are under consideration by the DHLGH for inclusion on the scheme.

We are progressing development of online application system to enable interested parties apply when properties are advertised in coming months.

A new online information portal went live recently at <https://affordablehomes.ie/> providing general information to the public.

Defective Concrete Blocks Grant Scheme

The Defective Enhanced Defective Concrete Blocks [DCB] Scheme went live in mid-July for private dwellings, with the finalised Act, regulations, updated YQA's (Your Questions Answered) & Ministerial Guidelines published.

Applications to the scheme can be submitted online through our website. The website includes supporting information to further assist homeowners regarding the application process. CCC DCB Team have also included a video on CCC's website recently on "how to make an application" to further assist homeowners in the application process. In addition, our team are available to assist with any queries homeowners may have. This Team can be contacted by email at dcb@clarecoco.ie or alternatively by phone at 065-6846385, 065-6846468 & 065-6846309.

We have received a number of applications since the commencement of the scheme through the online portal and continue to validate applications prior to sending them to the Housing Agency for their review and assessment.

Our staff continue to hold workshops in each electoral area to further assist homeowners on how to make an application to the Scheme via the online portal. These workshops were targeted for people with limited digital resources and/or capabilities, to assist them further in making an application. So far in 2024 Walk in clinics have been held in Kilrush, Ennistymon, Scarriff, Shannon and Ennis

CCC continue to engage with the DHLGH to ensure social houses affected by DCB are included in a similar scheme.

Update on capital programme

Our Capital team Housing Delivery targets for 2024 is 153 units and the team is working hard to ensure this is achieved and indeed exceeded. Schemes in Scarriff and Sixmilebridge are currently under construction. Design work is progressing on a number of other social housing projects, which are at various stages of development.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



Works ongoing on Sixmilebridge project



Progress on Scarriff housing development

Approved Housing Bodies

The Approved Housing Body (AHB) sector have a busy year ahead and the Housing Department will be providing a co-ordinating role in liaising with the Dept, putting the necessary agreements in place, making the required funding available and providing on-site technical support. The Housing Department are currently holding meetings with all these bodies to ensure delivery targets are met for the coming year.

SHIP Capital	No. approved	Current stage	Start Date	Completion Date
Scarriff	18	Under Construction	Q1 2023	Q3 2024
Sixmilebridge	15	Under Construction	Q1 2023	Q3 2024
111 Dún na hInse	1	Under Construction	Q4 2023	Q2 2024
Main Street Clarecastle	1	Under Construction	Q1 2024	Q3 2024
38 St Patrick's Terrace, Kilrush	1	Contractor Appointed	Q1 2024	Q4 2024
St. Senan's Terrace, Kilrush	5	Under Construction	Q3 2023	Q2 2024
Clarehill Clarecastle	13	Turnkey – Under Construction	Q3 2023	Q4 2024
Garrán Cathaigh, Leadmore Kilrush	14	Turnkey – Under Construction	Q4 2023	Q4 2024
Drumcliff Rd. Ennis	26	Stage 2 approved by DHLGH. Judicial Review Proceedings have been initiated in relation to S179A.	-	-
Ennistymon	30	Stage 2 approved by DHLGH. Project on hold.	-	-
Gort Rd. Ennis	20	Stage 2 approved. Permission granted by An Bord Pleanála on 2nd January 2024. Tender for construction contract currently being prepared.	Q2 2024	Q3 2025
Doonbeg Road, Kilkee	25	Stage 1 approval. Design Team has been appointed and design is progressing.	Q3 2024	Q1 2026
Back Road, Kilrush	12	Stage 1 approval. Design Team has been appointed and design is progressing.	Q3 2024	Q1 2026
Moore Street, Kilrush	16	Stage 1 approval. Design Team appointed.	Q3 2024	Q1 2026
Doonbeg Lands	8	Stage 2 approved by DHLGH. Application submitted to An Bord Pleanála on 18th August 2023.	Q3 2024	Q3 2025
Shallee Drive / Cloughleigh Rd	5	Stage 1 approval. Design Team appointed.	Q3 2024	Q3 2025
Subtotal	210			

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Approved Housing Body Projects	No. approved	Current stage	Start Date	Completion Date
Quin, Ennis (Co-Operative Hsg. Ireland) CALF Turnkey)	36	Under construction: 10 units in Phase 1 26 units in Phase 1	Q1 2023 Q3 2023	Q2 2024 Q3 2024
Cluain na Laoi, Kilkishen (Circle Housing Assoc.) CALF Turnkey	16	Under construction: 8 units in Phase 1 8 units in Phase 2	Q1 2023 Q1 2023	Q1 2024 Q3 2024
Acha Bhile, Lahinch Rd., Ennis (Cluid Hsg. Assoc.) CALF Turnkey	21	Under construction 6 units in Phase 2 15 units in Phase 3	Q1 2024 Q1 2024	Q3 2024 Q4 2024
Market Street, Ennis (Co-Operative Hsg. Ireland) CALF Turnkey	14	Under construction	Q3 2023	Q4 2024
63 Shannon Heights, Kilrush (Sophia Hsg. Assoc.) CAS Renewal Construction	1	At procurement stage	Q1 2024	Q4 2024
Loughville, Ennis (Tuath Housing) CALF Turnkey	48	Construction to commence: 16 units in Phase 1 32 units in Phase 2	Q1 2024 Q2 2024	Q1 2025 Q2 2025
Crusheen (Cluid Housing Association) CALF Turnkey (Part V)	3	Under construction	Q3 2023	Q2 2024
Clonroad, Ennis, St. Vincent de Paul CAS Turnkey	12	Under construction	Q1 2024	Q4 2024
Bruachlan, Westbury (Cooperative Hsg. Ireland) CALF Construction	22	Planning application ongoing - at further information stage.	Q3 2024	Q3 2025
Subtotal	173			
Total	383			

UKRAINIAN SERVICES

There are currently 5,519 Ukrainian Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection (BoTP's) living in County Clare, representing an additional 9 people in the County compared to figures released in January. There are 3,396 people accommodated in 39 multi-occupancy facilities located throughout the County. The remaining people are accommodated in residential settings in formal hosted arrangements through the Irish Red Cross and

Clare County Council's 'Offer-A-Home' scheme. We currently have 202 homes offered under this scheme, with an average of 2 homes being offered each week. To date our Matching & Relationship Manager has facilitated the accommodation of 404 people that were originally living in hotel and multi-occupancy facilities.

SPORTS & RECREATION



Active Ennis Leisure Complex

New stereo system in Fitness Studio

We recently installed a new surround sound stereo system in our Fitness Studio. Class numbers and hall booking remain very popular. With the installation of this stereo system fitness instructor can enhance the overall experience for class goers and have clearer communication during their classes. This system also adds a strong selling point for new instructors looking to rent the Hall.



Swim Galas and Community Games

On the weekend of the 23rd to the 25th of February the pool hosted two Swim Galas. The 'Ennis Invite Gala' was held on Friday and Saturday. This Gala hosted swimmers from eight different clubs from around Munster. On Friday 147 swimmers took part and on Saturday 245 swimmers participated. There were also 40 Master Level Swimmers swimming in the event.

On Sunday it was the turn of the Pony Club. Six Clubs around Ireland with a total of 160 children. The children that took part in the Gala were aged 8-18. This was one of five events in Pentathlon held by the Pony Club. The Parish Community Games were also held in the Pool from the 27th to the 29th of February.

Swimming Lessons

February saw our current block of Swimming Lessons end on the weekend of the 23rd/24th. A new block of Swimming Lessons will begin on the 2nd/3rd of March. Swimming Lessons are in huge demand and quickly book out.

New Classes

We added some new classes to our timetable in January. On Wednesday evenings we have 'Bums & Tums', and on Thursday we have added Disco Tec- Step Aerobics, both taught by Karriann.

View the timetable at: <https://www.activeennis.ie/facilities/active-ennis-leisure-complex/prices-membership-opening-hours/>



Footfall Report Active Ennis Leisure Complex

It has been a busy month in the Active Ennis Leisure Complex with a total of 24,261 visitors to date. This is an average of 809 visitors per day. A total of 18,800 visitors entered the premises over December with an average of 627 visitors a day.

Average daily footfall for January was up by 29% (809) compared to December (627), This may be due to the holiday period over December, changes in opening hours and swimming lessons finishing up.

The lowest number recorded for January was Thursday 04/01/2024, on this day footfall was 41% (481) lower than average (809), this could be due to swim lessons not being

held on this week and milder weather on that day as it had been raining for the previous 3 days.

The highest number recorded for January was Saturday 13/04/2024, on this day footfall was up 37% (1,110), this may be due to swim lessons recommencing on this day. Over the winter period (Nov-Jan) the average footfall was 757. The total footfall over these 3 months was 68,145.

Lee's Road

January saw a busy period for Lee's Road. A total of 20,106 vehicles entered the park which was a 36% increase compared to December with an average of 649 vehicles per day. Revenue also increased a total of 6.5% for January.

These increases may be due to a very mild January and an increase in sporting activity such as Soccer, GAA and Rugby.

Kilrush

In December bookings for facilities in Kilrush saw an increase of 16.1% and the number of active hours also saw an increase of 11.1%. Revenue also increased by 45.4% in December.

www.activeennis.ie www.activekilrush.ie

Any defects or operational issues can be reported by email to info@activeennis.ie



General Updates

- The Programme Manager position has been filled.
- We are still working with Bluescope Technologies to develop and improve our website.
- We will be advertising our Outdoor Recreation Officer position very soon.

Schools & Youth

- 'Get Going Get Rowing' began in St. Joseph's Secondary school, Spanish Point on January 31st and will hopefully launch in Colaiste Mhuire Ennis once the programme is completed in Spanish Point.
- Borrowing of playground markings and sportshall athletics packs by primary schools continues.
- The dates of our annual primary school Sportshall Athletics competition have been set – Wednesday March 20th and Thursday March 21st, in Corofin GAA hall. James, Lizzy and Finn from Clare LSP will be visiting schools this week to demonstrate competition activities

to new schools who will be competing this year.

- Our 'Active Homework Challenge 2024' for primary school children, concluded on Jan 26th. The year's challenges involved Ellen and Lizzy from Clare LSP, the Shannon Taekwondo team, and Sonic Fitness. We had 27 primary schools register for the challenge this year.
- Active Storytime was delivered in Ennistymon Family Resource Centre on February 6th and emailed out to primary schools on request.

Education & Training

- Season Of Respect Level 1 Club Award workshops took place on January 24th and February 5th. Season of Respect Level 2 workshop was completed by Inagh Kilnamona GAA club on February 6th.
- Disability Awareness Training was delivered online by James on February 12th.
- Four Sports First Aid Courses have been set for Ennis (March 9th) Shannon (March 23rd) Lisdoonvarna (April 13th) and Kilrush (September 14th).

Sports Inclusion

- Inclusive gymnastics with Ennis Gymnastics Club is ongoing on Monday and Tuesday evenings. There are 50 children who attend these sessions.
- The brand new integrated physical education programme with TY students and students from the ASD hub in St. Caimin's Secondary school in Shannon has restarted for 2024.
- Eire Og / Corofin GAA All-stars Inclusive Clubs are back running indoor sessions for over 40 children with a disability.
- Clare Comets Basketball All- Stars continue to run their indoor sessions on Saturday's in Ennis National School.
- Both Derg AC (Saturday mornings) and Tulla AC (Thursday evenings) continue to run sessions for over 40 children with a disability.

Older Adults

- We continue to support our tutors in delivering weekly classes to over 300 older adults in County Clare.
- We have commenced an Activator Pole Walking programme in Killaloe with 12 participants.

Active Communities

- Three locations are hosting our Banner Mile ten-week swimming programme. 36 are participating across Shannon, Lahinch, and Ennis.
- 22 ladies have just completed our West Clare Women on the Move gym programme, and a second block is now part-funded.
- 17 men participate in our West Clare Men on the Move gym programme. The second block is now part-funded also.
- 18 men are taking part in our Shannon Men on the Move

programme.

- We have now completed 7 workshops in our Women in Sport Leadership programme, with 17 female sports coaches taking part. The first in-person workshops were held in our office over the past fortnight.
- We have funded women in basketball in our Shannon Sports Hub for teenagers and adults.

Club Development

- Our coach support workshop 'Sports Nutrition for Teens' with Grainne Travers, was well received on Thursday 25th of January at Clare Education centre. Feedback from coaches averaged a 9.8 out of 10 for the workshop.
- Through volunteer supports, dormant accounts, we are supporting 4 clubs that were identified in hub areas that need assistance with coach education such as running a NGB course.

Minority Communities

- Attendance to our Winter Wellness programme has been consistent at 7-9 people on Fridays with Kasia doing Dance fitness. This presents an excellent chance for integration, with both Ukrainians and local Irish residents participating. Doolin Yoga will commence body conditioning classes every Tuesday for a six-week period, welcoming all individuals at a nominal fee of €2 per session.
- Working in partnership with Clare Traveller Community Development we have identified a group of 10 traveller women who want to get physically active. We are on week 3 of a 6-week programme in Cloughleigh Community Hall

every Monday with our tutor Kasia. This class is a mix of dance fitness and chair yoga. It has received fantastic feedback with an average attendance of 6.

- This week, on February 16th, we approved four membership bursary applications. This underscores the significant need for financial assistance in enabling access to sports activities.

ESF+ Sport4Empowerment Programme

- Working with Swim Ireland on a project to bring a group of traveller men - from not being able to swim through to being certified swim coaches. We are working on surmounting the literacy issues and time commitment from the group. Working in conjunction with Swim Ireland, Traveller CPD, CLDC.
- Developing a 'Haven Club' concept for children in residential care for families utilising domestic services. Principal of idea is that the cohort drop out of playing team sports and don't resume during this trying time in their young lives. Allowing them to keep involved with a variety of sporting organisations will increase lifelong participation and strengthen the goal of having as much normalcy in their lives during this trying period of their young lives. This could be replicated with children in homeless services if successful. Have held focus groups with children, one to one discussions with Clare Haven Staff.
- Have held one to one discussion with International Protection Applicants in Ennis and Miltown Malbay, Focus groups with Busy Park Residents and Roma community Leaders.

WEST CLARE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT - NORTH CLARE LEA

North Clare Integrated Traffic & Transport Plan

It has been agreed by the West Clare Municipal District to develop a North Clare Integrated Transport and Traffic Plan, to be led by the Physical Directorate and supported by input from the Tourism Directorate as well as by the West Clare Municipal District. This plan will address capacity and infrastructural challenges relating to additional visitor traffic, combined with local transport needs, during the tourism season in North Clare. A Steering Group has been set up to progress and draft Terms of Reference have been discussed & agreed both by the West Clare MD as well as the North Clare Community Group (NCCG) at a meeting which took place at the Falls Hotel, Ennistymon (picture hereunder).

The process of developing the Transport and Traffic Plan for North Clare is ongoing with a comprehensive consultation process underway between Clare County Council and the



local communities in North Clare. In the short term, Clare County Council is seeking to identify early intervention measures that will alleviate traffic congestion at key pressure points in North Clare.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Rural & Community Information Clinics (Q1 2024)

Between Monday 29th January and Thursday 1st February, the Rural Development Directorate hosted a series of walk-in clinics to support community groups and organisations in project development and funding opportunities. These events were delivered at multiple venues across the county, and offered morning, afternoon and evening sessions, so as to ensure maximum outreach and provide community groups with multiple opportunity to attend a session.

These events, facilitated by the Rural Directorate's Rural and Community Development Officers (RCDOs), coincided with the application period for two funding opportunities for community groups: the Clare Local Area Grants Scheme (CLAGS) and the Local Enhancement Programme (LEP). Attendees were able to discuss these funding opportunities with the RCDOs and receive guidance on preparing applications. Where a group's need or project aspiration was not aligned to these funds, RCDOs were also able to advise on other potential funding sources.

The clinics also provided an opportunity for emerging and newly established community groups and organisations to meet with the RCDOs, to see what potential grants are available to them and understand how the process works. Groups utilised the opportunity to discuss various issues affecting them and to arrange follow-up meetings with the RCDOs, including site visits and meetings in their own localities. Elected Members were also present at the events to lend their support and expertise.

Across the four days of clinics, and the nine venues, a total of 74 attendees engaged with the RCDOs, representing a strong level of attendance from a broad range of community groups and organisations. Feedback from the events was very positive, with attendees grateful for the opportunity to meet with RCDOs in-person and to avail of bespoke guidance and advice. These information clinics contributed to a 25% increase in the number of applications received under the Clare Local Area Grants Scheme this year, from 396 applications in 2023



to 497 applications in 2024. It is anticipated that further clinics will be rolled out throughout the year as appropriate.

Healthy Clare



My name is Samantha McCarthy and I am delighted to introduce myself as the Healthy Clare Co-Ordinator with Clare County Council. Growing on the work completed to date by Dena McGrath and the members of the Healthy Clare Working Group, I am delighted to be able to support The Healthy Ireland Vision. The Healthy Ireland vision is an Ireland,

where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential, where wellbeing is valued and supported at every level of society and is everyone's responsibility.

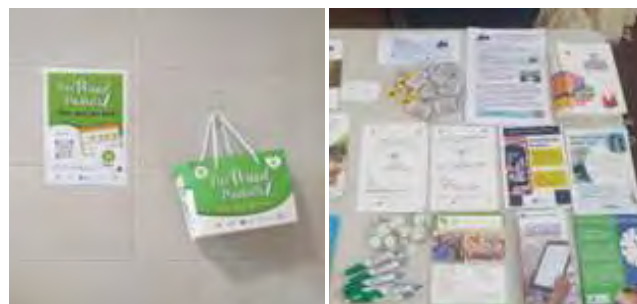
The Healthy Clare team are preparing for the announcement of the Healthy Clare Micro Fund 2024. We hope to announce this fund in March. In 2023, 15 organisations/groups received funding to support 20 projects under this fund. A further 7 projects were funded with Creative Ireland funding and 3 other organisations received core funding to support programmes linked to the core Healthy Ireland themes of Mental Health and Healthy Weight.

I am really looking forward to seeing how together we can promote Health and Wellbeing throughout Co. Clare.



The Healthy Ireland Framework 2019-2025 is a roadmap for building a healthier Ireland. It is based around four key goals which will be promoted through initiatives and collaborative events focused around the 6 healthy Ireland themes of:

- Mental Health.
- Physical Activity.
- Healthy Weight.
- Sexual Health.
- Tobacco Free.
- Reducing Drugs and Alcohol Related Harm.



Supporting local authority premises to provide free period products to members of the public.

Supporting communities and events at local health and wellbeing events.

Developing programmes and initiatives to support & promote health and wellbeing in Co. Clare through Social Media, Campaigns, Newsletters & Interagency Collaboration.

For more information, please contact the Healthy Clare Coordinator, Samantha McCarthy on healthyclare@clarecoco.ie and 087 987 8785.



Anne and Cillian from TFI Local Link Limerick Clare were delighted to attend and present to the February meeting of the Local Community and Development Committee (LCDC) where they shared information on all the recent service enhancements. The LCDC members discussed and provided feedback on Local Link’s improvements to connectivity across the County and are looking forward to future collaboration under the LECP.

Cultural Services

Clare County Library



Kilkee Library getting all set for Spring with their beautiful planting display.

Work is progressing on both the Clare Library Capital project and the upgrade to Clare Library website.

Online Resources usage as follows: keen demand for e-audiobooks and Pressreader. Pressreader is an international news stand that allows access to over 7,000 of the world’s leading newspapers and magazines from over 100 countries.

1866 E-Books	3567 E-Audiobooks	2382 E-Magazines
219 Online Courses	2205 Pressreader	68 Transparent Languages

Marketing, outreach & social media




A national reading campaign called “Ireland Reads” was launched on the 1st of February by the Libraries Development Unit. All libraries in Clare participated by sharing their favourite books, and hosting events to encourage people to 'get lost in a book'. Funding was provided to print 150 tote bags with the Clare Libraries and Ireland Reads logos. The bags were distributed to library users who attended events.

Media mentions

Media release for Ireland Reads, 19th February was included in the Clare Herald. The Co Librarian gave an interview on Clare FM on the popularity of the library service.

Outreach

A presentation on the library services was delivered to Ennis Active Retired by Niamh O'Donovan and Ellen Stritch. There was an audience of 58 people. Flyers were distributed and lots of queries were received about the new library. There were two more requests for Outreach events from other attendees.

	New Followers	Total Followers	Post Reach /Impressions	Post Likes	Engagement
	0	7438	72000	899	1300
	-2	2157	3011	27	142
	37	2076	3200	285	816

Library Activities in Figures

Total number of in branch events	225
Total audiences at in branch events	2882
Total number of outreach events	14
Total audiences at outreach events	117
Total number of deliveries	5
Total number of class novels issued	47

Right to Read



Kilrush Library hosted an Active Storytime with Elizabeth McNicholas, from the Clare Sports Partnership, for 17 children from the Gaelscoil

Children's events took place in Kilrush, Kilkee, Ennis and Ennistymon libraries in February to celebrate "Seachtain na Gaeilge". Beidh Julie Anne ag spreagadh an Ghaeilge trí scéalaíocht, ceoil, rannta agus dánta. Tabhairfaidh sí na páistí ar thuras go dtí Tír na gCeol agus cloisfidh siad scéalta, rannta agus dánta. Beidh siad ag ceiliúradh an Ghaeilge le linn Seachtain na Gaeilge. Feicfidh na páistí is na múinteoirí na leabhair áille as Gaeilge a bhfuil ar fáil faoi láthair chomh maith. Beidh an seisiún seo i nGaeilge le beagáinín Béarla fite fuaite.

Beidh ceardlanna líníochta le Aidan Courtney ar siúl sna

leabharlannai freisin.

Tabharfaidh maisitheoir Aidan Courtney ceardlanna líníochta spráúil trí Ghaeilge do pháistí ó scoileanna náisiúnta. Beidh neart idirghníomhaíocht, caint agus comhrá agus spraoi sa cheardlann dátheangach seo. Julie Anne encouraged Irish through storytelling, music, rhymes and poems. The children and teachers also viewed Irish books that are currently available. This session was in Irish with some English interspersed.

Drawing workshops with Aidan Courtney also took place in a number of libraries.

Illustrator Aidan Courtney gave fun drawing workshops through Irish to children from national schools. There was plenty of interaction, talk and conversation and fun in this bilingual workshop.

Healthy Ireland

A total of 9 Healthy Ireland events took place in Clare Libraries this month. Trish Cleary delivered an online Chair Yoga class to 15 people. Participants included people in Nursing Homes, Day Care Centres, together with individuals throughout the County. A total of 7 people attended and thoroughly enjoyed a talk and meditation on St. Brigid with Pius Murray at Tulla Library.

A group of 18 members of Kilmihil Active Retirement welcomed Trish Cleary, who provided a very enjoyable and uplifting Chair Yoga class. Two Chair Yoga Outreach events took place in Dun an Oir Community Centre, Kilkee, for members of Kilkee Housing Association and the wider community.

Sonia Millar delivered a Mindfulness class & Colette Nagle provided a taster Yoga Class for Parents & their children, as part of Tusla's Wellness Event for Parents in Kilrush Library. Pius Murray delivered a 'Walking for Wellness Talk', to parents attending Tusla's Wellness Event for Parents, Carers, and Guardians in Ennistymon Library.

Sonia Millar presented a mindfulness class for parents and worked with both parents and their children to create their own Little Story Bags to celebrate 'Ireland Reads Day' in Kilrush Library.

Creative Ireland

The Creative Communities Engagement Officer met with representatives from the Culture Team, their proposals have been submitted for Community Engagement projects through their departments and will begin from March until November. The CCE officer has completed the Creative Ireland and Hub na nOg training on the 'Voice of the Child', with several World Cafés being planned to ensure that children's voices are heard through creative programming, especially those seldom heard.

The Creative Communities open call funding closes on February 19th. The assessment panel will meet on the 26th to decide on the applications, and successful applicants will be notified in early March. The Shared Island 'Birds of a Feather' initiative funded by Creative Ireland will bring together approximately 50 women from Belfast, Ballinasloe, Inishbofin & Ennis to meet in person for the first time in Ennis on the 27th – 29th February. This is a two year project that encompasses craft, enterprise, shared stories and theatre and aims to break down barriers between communities north and south of the island.

Local Studies

The Local Studies Centre has added another resource to the Clare Libraries and Archives collection. A collection of photographs, business documents, correspondence and ephemera relating to the Cahir family of Parnell Street Ennis have been donated by Jerry Cahir. The transcription of the 1825 Freeholders and the transcription of entries from the 1821 census are ongoing. Michael Talty gave a talk to the Clare Roots Society on the 16th of February on the conservation and preservation of archival and book collections.

Clare Archives

The new Archivist started work in February and key projects have been identified for prioritisation.

The Archivist has commenced quality check of circa 500,000 scanned/digitised images that have been stored on external hard drives and identifying what the digitised images are as there is little metadata attached to them at present. To date, 2,000 images have been identified.

The Archivist is awaiting Council IT access before commencing other projects.

Clare Arts Office



Calling in the Cailleach embodied by Roisín Lennon, photographed by Myriam Riand with concept art by Áine O’ Brien illuminating Doonagore Castle, Doolin for the #Herstory Light Show in Clare

St Brigid’s weekend was marked with the Herstory outdoor light projections in Doolin, Bunratty and Ennis, which received phenomenal traction on social media (over 50,000 views). A total of 107 applications were assessed through the Arts grants scheme. The Artist in Schools residencies began in Ennistymon Community College, Lakyle NS and Ballynacally NS. The Embrace workshops began with the Brothers of Charity in Ennis, Tulla, Miltown Malbay, the National Learning Network and St. Anne’s School.

PRISM Street Art Works continued in Ennis and began in Shannon. The Creative Places programme in Shannon continued with meetings from the Arts Council regarding research and evaluation. Studios in Tulla and Ennis continue to operate at full capacity. Three exhibitions took place in Ennis, Scariff and Kilkee in February and one film screening, one concert, one youth theatre session and two talks were held in Culturlann Sweeney. The Arts Office also assisted with the filming of an advert in Lisdoonvarna and Fanore.

The Arts in the Community programme continued in St. Joseph’s Hospital, Ennis and in Raheen Hospital. Clare Youth Theatre continued in glór. Two Arts in Clare slots happened on Clare FM. The Arts Officer attended six meetings with organisations planning arts activities for 2024 / 2025 and attended two webinars, including being a guest speaker on the Bealtaine Festival one. The Arts Office supported LEO with the adjudication of the Student Enterprise Awards.

	Post reach	Post engagement	New Page likes	New Page followers	Total followers
Clare Arts Office	53,863	1,887	22	80	3200
Cultúrlann Sweeney	5,580	403	11	14	2,026
EASI Studios	17	1	2	2	136
Tulla Stables Artist Studios	9	0	7	7	654
CYT - Clare Youth Theatre	295	7	2	2	573
Riches of Clare	1608	217	1	1	2849
Clare culture night	96	1	1	1	1278
Embrace Arts Programme	8	1	3	3	573
Arts In Clare Group	-	-	-	52	3011
Clare Trad Group	-	-	-	30	2472

Clare Museum



Storyteller Ruth Marshall at St Brigid’s Day workshops in Clare Museum.

Junior Cert students from Ennis Community College visited Clare Museum. As part of the curriculum students are required to visit a museum and answer set questions on the experience afterwards. A total of 55 students visited in all, and their teacher gave very positive feedback, including that it was the most engaged he had ever seen them with an assignment.

A group of 9 secondary school teachers, from various counties, came to visit the Museum and assess how they can incorporate county museums into the school curriculum, particularly with respect to the Transition Year programme. There were 8 St. Brigid’s Day workshops for Primary Schools with local storyteller, Ruth Marshall. A total of 222 pupils from five different schools attended. They enjoyed stories and songs about the life of St. Brigid and learned how to make a St Brigid’s Cross, with each class receiving the cross that was made on the day as a souvenir. The Museum also hosted a talk on the GAA in 100 objects by Siobhán Doyle of the National Museum of Ireland, as part of the winter lecture series.

Clare Museum featured on Clare FM’s Atlantic Tales with Pat Flynn. This special programme on Clare FM featured John Rattigan telling the story behind the museum, information on the Mooghaun North Hoard and an archaeological dig at Derryboy while Teresa Carmody O’Shea spoke about her new role as the museum’s Education Officer. John Rattigan was also interviewed on Clare Focus by Clare FM. The Museum’s Facebook and Instagram engagement has increased since the beginning of the year, with a 100% increase for the Instagram page following an increase in posts created by the Museum.

A submission was made to Creative Ireland Creative Communities Project Awards for funding to undertake a project called ‘Museum in a Box’. As part of this project, it is proposed that Museum staff, along with a facilitator from the arts community, will go out into the wider community in Clare to engage with older people by bringing Museum objects to them, with the hope of sparking memories and stories related to the objects. The recordings from these visits will be used to create the ‘Museum in a Box’, which will then be available to view and listen to in the Museum. Plans have been put in place to collaborate with the Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board and the Limerick School of Art and

Design. The Museum’s Education Officer will meet with the facilitators and tutors at their Ennis-based facility in March to set out the various ways in which the Museum can contribute to their classes. A small number of objects have been donated to the Museum so far this year, and the Curator is currently cataloguing objects that were donated last year.

Clare County Library February 2024 Update:

Work on the new County Library including a new Art Gallery continues in readiness of an official opening later this year. External envelope works are near completion, internal works and now site works continue to progress. This will prove to be a fantastic addition to the town and county and enhance the attractiveness of the town from a visitor perspective.

New County Library Construction Project

Final stages of construction work continues to progress on the new Clare County Library and Art Gallery building. External Wall Insulation and Render is nearing completion, with External Cladding complete on the second floor. Cladding of the main entrance portico steel structure is underway. Mechanical and electrical contractors are near completion of second fix works for both trades. All equipment is installed to the plant room. The comms room is being fitted out in liaison with CCC IT services. Ceiling and Internal Wall Partitions are complete. Skirting and architrave installation has begun. Sanitary ware will soon be installed. The ductwork for ESB, Eir Networks and the water connection are complete. Ductwork for public lighting is near completion and external ground paving is underway along Causeway Link.

The state-of-the-art new build will provide a key resource for research, study, recreation, and art in a centralised location of Ennis town adjacent to the well-established glór theatre.





CORPORATE SERVICES

Freedom of Information & Data Protection

Previous years and 2024 to date - statistics to 26 February 2024

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Freedom of Information Requests	152	176	119	156	29
Freedom of Information Internal Review Applications	6	13	8	4	0
Appeals to Information Commissioner	1	4	2	4	1
Data Access Requests - Subject Access Request	5	6	10	10	4
Data Requests - Erasure Request	0	1	1	2	0
Data Access Requests - Third Party Access Requests e.g. Gardaí	20	27	27	29	8

Communications

The Communications Office communicates and promotes Council activities and services and raises public awareness of issues of local and national interest.

Media releases issued during February 2024 included:

- Celebrate St Patrick's Day 2024 in Ennis
- Shannon students plant trees for new habitat as part of An Choill Bheag initiative
- Winter Lecture Series at Clare Museum - 'Telling GAA Stories Through Objects'
- Clare libraries want you to Get Lost... in a Good Book.

Social Media

The Communications Office monitors and updates social media channels with creative content to enhance engagement with the public and maintain awareness of the work of the Council.

In the period 1st-25th February 2024, the Communications Office:

- Posted 42 times on Facebook, with total followers now 19,134.
 - Posted 56 times on X (formerly Twitter), with total followers now at 8,377.
 - Instagram followers are now 3,324.
- (Statistics accurate as of 26/02/2024)*

Register of Electors

All applications received by 20th February, for inclusion in the Register of Electors, are now processed. Approved applicants will be eligible to vote in the referendum taking place on 8th March.

Completed applications for inclusion on the Postal and Special Voters list have also been processed.

Those not already registered, or whose circumstances have changed, are requested to update their details at www.check-theregister.ie to be eligible for inclusion in future elections.

KILLALOE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT

Scarriff Integrated Rural Regeneration Project

The focus of MD work in February was on the submission on an €10million RRDF Category 1 Application for the development and enhancement of Scarriff Town Centre.

The project is located in the Market Square and comprises of 3 elements, all integrated.

1. The renovation of an existing vacant derelict 2 story building and rear premises in Scarriff Town centre and their conversion to a Community & Enterprise Hub
2. The development of a greenfield site to the rear of the building to use as a carpark associated with the Community & Enterprise Hub and for car-parking use as part of wider enhancements to Scarriff Town Centre.
3. Enhancement of public realm of Market Square (town centre) of Scarriff.

RRDF Category 2 funding was obtained in 2022 to purchase the (i) buildings (ii) and site and bring all elements including the enhancement of the public realm (iii) up to detailed design and planning consent stage. This has been achieved and the project is shovel ready with the procurement process for the appointment of specialists to oversee construction near completion.

This application for RRDF Category 1 is for capital funding of to advance the previously approved Category 2 project to completion and follows significant engagement between Killaloe MD, Scarriff Town Team, Scarriff Community Council and the Elected Members during 2023.



Socio-Economic Assessment of the benefits for advocating for the reopening Crusheen Railway Station

The re-opening of the Crusheen Railway Station is a long standing objective of Clare County Council and is a priority objective of the *Elected Members of Killaloe MD - Strategy and Workplan*.

In that context and following a delegation in 2023 led by the Elected Members of Killaloe MD and to the Chief Executive of Irish Rail advocating for its reopening, in February Repucon Consultants were appointed to undertake a Socio-Economic Assessment and Appraisal regarding the merits and benefits of re-opening of the Railway Station.

The outcome of this study managed by Killaloe MD is to advance an evidence-based argument for the reopening of Crusheen Railway Station; Provide a socio-economic impact report on the benefits of investment of a Rail stop in Crusheen and be used to inform submissions to various Government Policy Documents and eg All Island Strategic Rail Review and seek the reopening of the rail stop, which was granted planning permission in 2012.

Significant public engagement with the communities of Crusheen and North-East Clare on the study is anticipated over the coming months as part of the process.



Enhancing the range of services and functions at Killaloe MD

It is a strategic objective of Killaloe MD to increase the range of services and functions delivered at Municipal District Level in line with the provisions of the Local Government Act. In 2023 the facility for Monthly pre-planning clinics to be held in the MD office in Scarriff was introduced. In addition daily, customer and citizen engagement and contacts increased significantly in January, and February of this year, in comparison to same period in 2023.

	2023	2024	% increase
January	87	93	7%
February	65	122	88%

In line with objective of the Elected Members of Killaloe MD Strategy and Workplan to enhance the IT capabilities and usage to enable on-line streaming of Killaloe MD Meetings to a wider audience, in February I.T. and audio-visual enhancements to the facilities in Killaloe MD Offices in Scarriff were undertaken, to enable for the first time in the MD, the upcoming March MD Meeting to be attended virtually by members of the public and press.

February 2024 works/projects Killaloe MD

During the month of February Killaloe MD staff were involved in the following Projects

Works at Ballysheen Graveyard

This work was funded by 2023 GMA budget allocation.



Road Verge Drainage Maintenance on the R-352 in Clooney Village



Killaloe MD Roads Crew carrying out Drainage Works on L-8040



EV Charger installed, awaiting commissioning, in Killaloe

