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A Riverside Park for All?

Kildare County Council has proposed the creation of a 6.3-kilometre Liffey Valley Park, stretching from Celbridge Bridge to St Catherine's Park in Leixlip.

The project aims to transform the existing mix of riverbank meadows, wooded estates, and scattered trails into a continuous greenway for walkers, cyclists, and paddlers. A public survey and a pop-up exhibition in Celbridge Library, launched in April, are gathering input to help shape the preferred route. Core elements of the proposed design are still under review as part of this community consultation.

The timing is driven by several key factors. Population growth in Celbridge and Leixlip has surged by 10 percent since the last census, but the availability of accessible green space hasn't kept pace. At the same time, Kildare's Climate Action Plan highlights the importance of green corridors to reduce car dependency and improve air quality. If the feasibility study is successful, it could unlock funding opportunities through the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund as well as EU Interreg grants in 2026.

Feedback from local residents has already helped guide the conversation. An online survey conducted in December 2024 received 843 responses, with most people highlighting recreation, nature, and "places to sit by the water" as top priorities. Notably, 68 percent of respondents said they currently drive to the Liffey because existing trails are fragmented and discontinuous.

In terms of land ownership, much of the riverside terrain is already publicly controlled by bodies such as Kildare County Council, the Office of Public Works (OPW), the ESB, and Fingal County Council at St Catherine's Park. However, there are still private sections that need to be addressed, including lands at Donaghcumper and parts of Leixlip Demesne. The Council has reported that initial discussions with these private stakeholders have been positive.

Although the formal study area ends at the Kildare county line, the potential for expansion into Lucan has not been overlooked. Two of the four proposed route options include future spurs that would pass under the M4 to connect with Lucan Demesne and the Grand Canal Greenway. South Dublin councillors have pushed for the creation of a joint-county taskforce to ensure that trail design and signage align smoothly once the park extends into Lucan's territory.

While future milestones remain to be announced, community input is being actively sought right now. Residents can contribute by completing a short survey at consult.kildarecoco.ie, or by visiting the pop-up display in Celbridge Library until 20 June and in Leixlip Library from 24 to 28 June. Council ecologists will also lead free guided walks—one at Leixlip Gate on 6 July and another at Castletown weir on 13 July. Spaces are limited and must be booked through Eventbrite.

The River Liffey has long linked Lucan, Leixlip, and Celbridge, yet its banks remain largely fragmented, fenced off, and difficult to access. If approved and funded, the new Liffey Valley Park could transform this overlooked stretch into a vibrant, biodiverse, and easily accessible corridor right at the Dublin-Kildare boundary. The potential is considerable—but so are the challenges. That's why the feasibility team is calling on locals to share their insights now, before final decisions are made. Whether your connection to the river involves picnicking at Castletown, paddling beneath the Wonderful Barn, or simply wanting a quiet bench with a view, now is the moment to have your say.



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EDITORIAL

Welcome to our July Edition of Little Village.

For all the over 70's it's good news. The Government have announced that the over 70's will be entitled to a companion travel pass which allows them to take a travel companion that is over 16 years with them for free on public transport. See our article on "Over 70's benefit from new companion pass".

Seasonal eating is becoming very popular. By shopping and cooking with what's naturally abundant each quarter, you get better flavour, save money and support local food producers. Read our article on "Cooking with the Seasons" and make your own mind up.

Finally, if you want to take a trip and not sure where to go then read our "Beyond the Pale Series" and maybe you might be persuaded to give wee Donegal town a visit.

The Little Village Team

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Lucan vs. Leixlip: Correction

In our last edition we featured an article 'Lucan vs. Leixlip: A Friendly Rivalry Through Time'

One of our readers pointed out that we only mentioned two of the GAA clubs and other aspects of the towns. See comments below.

Our apologies for these omissions.

'We have 2 GAA clubs in Leixlip which are Leixlip and Confey. You didn't mention their local rivalry. It seems you have forgotten there are two sides to the village and two churches, small shopping centres in both. Leixlip has the garda station, Confey has the library.'



A Brief History of Kildare

Early Roots (Pre-Christian to 5th century)

Before recorded history, the fertile Curragh Plains and Bog of Allen drew Bronze Age and Iron Age peoples who left behind ring-barrows, crannógs, and trackways. By the dawn of the 5th century, a small pagan sanctuary on the ridge of Druim Criaidh ("ridge of clay") would become the seed of Kildare town.

St Brigid and the Monastic Golden Age (c. 480 – 12th century)

Around c. 480 CE, St Brigid founded "Cill Dara" ("church of the oak") beside a great sacred oak, establishing a double monastery for women and men. Her community's fame as a centre of learning, manuscript illumination, and hospitality turned Kildare into one of Ireland's major early Christian sites, ranked with Armagh and Clonmacnoise. The illuminated Book of Leinster (12th c.) is traditionally linked to Kildare's scholarly milieu.

Norman Conquest and Medieval Borough (12th – 15th century)

The Norman invasion (1169–75) folded Kildare into the Lordship of Ireland. Richard de Clare ("Strongbow") granted the lands to Maurice Fitzgerald; his descendants became the powerful FitzGerald Earls of Kildare. They rebuilt Brigid's cathedral in stone, erected Kildare Castle, and controlled the Pale's southern marches. The town received a borough charter (1319), hosting markets that served soldiers garrisoned to watch the Gaelic frontier.

Tudor Turbulence and the Earls' Fall (16th century)

During Henry VIII's bid to tighten control over Ireland, the 9th Earl, "Silken Thomas" FitzGerald, rebelled (1534). His defeat and execution ended the Earls' supremacy; their estates were confiscated, and the cathedral fell into ruin. Yet Kildare remained strategically important on the Dublin–Munster route.

Plantations, Wars, and Georgian Renewal (17th – 18th centuries)

Though the county escaped mass plantation, the 1640s Confederate Wars and 1798 Rebellion both scarred Kildare's countryside. After the Williamite wars, landlords such as the Dukes of Leinster (at Carton and later Castletown House) drove an 18th-century revival: straight-lined estates, canal works (the Grand Canal reached Sallins in 1763), and Ireland's first purpose-built racecourse on the Curragh (1741).

Industrial and Railway Age (19th century)

The arrival of the Great Southern & Western Railway (1846) turned Kildare town and Newbridge into rail hubs, bringing barracks, breweries, and textile mills. During the Great Famine, the county suffered less than western regions but still saw heavy emigration. The Curragh Camp, opened 1855, became the largest British military base in Ireland.

Independence and Modern Growth (20th – 21st centuries)

Kildare's towns played roles in the 1916 Rising (Fenian training at the Camp) and the War of Independence; the Curragh Mutiny (1920) and later internment camp marked tense transitions. Post-1922, horse-breeding flourished—studs like the National Stud (1945) and training yards cemented Kildare's global equine reputation.

With the M7 motorway (1983–2003) and commuter rail electrification, Kildare became a key Dublin commuter belt. Tech and logistics parks near Leixlip, Celbridge, and Naas attracted Intel (1989 onward) and Lidl's Irish HQ. Population has tripled since 1960, yet the Curragh's open grassland and Brigidine pilgrimage keep the county's ancient heart visible beneath its modern dynamism.

From a sacred oak and a monastic flame to microchips and motorways, Kildare's story is one of layered continuity: faith, horseflesh, and frontier have each left an indelible mark on Ireland's "church of the oak."



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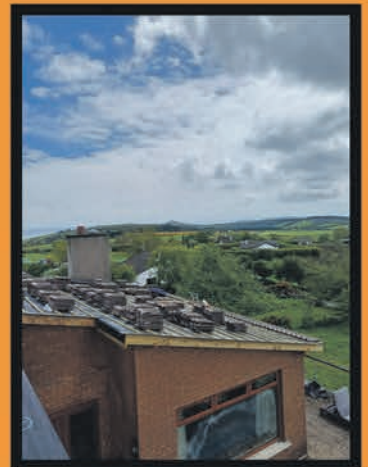
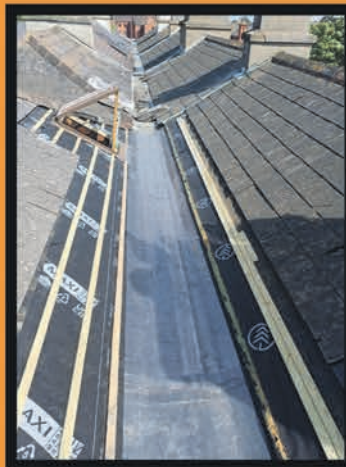
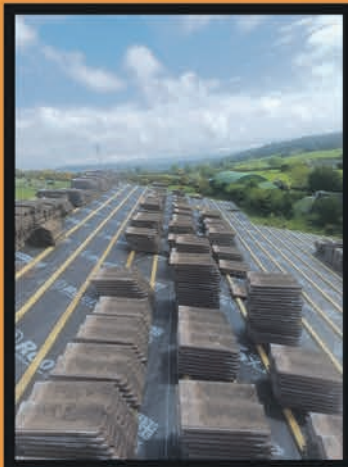
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Child homelessness in Ireland



As of March 2025, approximately 4,675 children were living in emergency accommodation across Ireland. Just a month later, in April–May 2025, that number rose to 4,775—an increase of around 100 children in a single month. This continues an upward trend seen throughout the past year. For context, there were 4,561 homeless children in October 2024, and 4,316 in April 2024. These figures highlight a clear and troubling rise in child homelessness over time.

Is child homelessness increasing or decreasing?

Child homelessness has been steadily increasing throughout 2024 and into 2025. Year-on-year, overall homelessness has grown by about 17 to 21 percent, with the number of children affected often rising at an even faster rate. The jump of approximately 100 additional children in emergency accommodation between March and April 2025 alone underscores the severity of the issue. This current figure marks the highest level recorded in recent years, surpassing pre-pandemic peaks such as those seen in October 2019.

Why is this happening?

Ireland's ongoing housing crisis is the primary driver of rising child homelessness. A severe shortage of both rental and social housing has led to skyrocketing rents, pricing many families out of the market. With few alternatives available, families are remaining homeless for longer periods.

Private rental instability plays a major role, with over half of family homelessness cases linked to issues such as evictions, unaffordable rent, or the ending of tenancies. Economic pressures also contribute heavily: rising living costs, stagnant incomes, and inadequate social supports are pushing families into financial precarity.

On a structural level, slow housing delivery, overreliance on emergency shelters, and policy shortfalls in tenant protection and eviction prevention continue to deepen the crisis. Child protection agencies, including Tusla and Focus Ireland, have reported surging demand, resulting in overcrowded and overstretched emergency accommodation hubs.

What's being done?

The government has launched several housing initiatives, including the "Housing for All" strategy, aimed at increasing the supply of social and affordable housing. However, many of these targets have not been met. The Winter Eviction Ban, introduced in late 2022, has helped limit some seasonal evictions but has not succeeded in reversing the broader trend.

Charities such as Focus Ireland and the Simon Communities are advocating for immediate and targeted actions. They urge the government to prioritise social housing allocation for homeless families and to introduce dedicated Child Support Workers for children living in emergency accommodation. The estimated cost for staffing 37 such workers is approximately €2 million. These groups also call for measures to stop families from cycling repeatedly through the homelessness system and to address "hidden homelessness" that goes unrecorded.

Child poverty advocacy efforts, highlighted in the Child Poverty Monitor, stress the need for expanded support in housing, income security, and early childhood education. These efforts include increased investment in early-years programmes and family welfare services.

At a systemic level, there are growing calls for better data collection and

stronger coordination between housing and child welfare bodies like Tusla. Long-term investment in preventative policies is seen as critical to halting the crisis before it deepens further.

Summary

In April 2025, a record 4,775 children were living in emergency accommodation in Ireland. This surge represents a continuing and significant upward trend, largely fuelled by a combination of rental market pressures, inadequate housing supply, policy gaps, and economic hardship. While government measures such as "Housing for All" and eviction protections signal some response, critics argue these initiatives fall short in urgency and effectiveness.

Charities continue to push for stronger commitments to social housing access, tailored child support services, and more comprehensive, joined-up policies. Ireland now faces a crucial test: whether it can balance urgent housing development with meaningful income supports and robust child welfare systems to halt and ultimately reverse the rise in child homelessness. For that to happen, swift, sustained, and coordinated action is essential.

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IRELAND FAILING TO MEET EMISSION TARGETS

Ireland is not on track to meet its legally binding greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions targets, with projections showing major shortfalls by 2030—and both financial and environmental consequences loom if urgent action isn’t taken.

Current performance vs. targets

- According to the EPA (May 2025), Ireland is projected to reduce emissions by only 23–29% relative to 2018 levels by 2030—well below its legally mandated target of 51%.
- Sectoral ceilings under the first (2021–25) and second (2026–30) carbon budgets are set at roughly 4.8% and 8.3% annual reductions respectively.
- Emissions decreased by 6.8% in 2023, but remain significantly short of needed cuts in transport, agriculture, and buildings.
- Air quality emissions (e.g., SO₂, NO_x, PM_{2.5}) are compliant with EU limits, but climate-warming greenhouse gases are lagging far behind.

Consequences of underperformance

- 1. Financial penalties (carbon credit purchases)**
 - Under the EU Effort Sharing Regulation, Ireland must purchase unused emissions allowances from states exceeding targets—costing €7.5–26 billion by 2030, with conservative estimates at €8–28 billion.
- 2. Carbon budget carryover and compounding penalties**
 - Exceeding one carbon budget means excess emissions are carried forward, increasing deficit in the next budget. If land sector emissions overshoot from 2026 onward, penalties are compounded with multipliers, raising future reduction pressure.
- 3. Legal and reputational risks**
 - Ireland faces court challenges for failing statutory climate obligations; its 2017 plan was overturned in Climate Case Ireland (2020).
 - Domestically, advocacy groups like Friends of the Earth warn that existing plans lack real-world impact and call for stricter implementation
- 4. Economic and social impacts**
 - A failure to decarbonise impairs competitiveness, exposes Ireland to volatile carbon markets, and risks diverted investment—while the general public faces higher energy costs and taxes to bridge the gap.
 - Infrastructure sectors (transport grid upgrades, EV rollout, retrofitting) must scale rapidly to avoid lock-in of high-emission systems

What’s being done—and what’s missing

- Climate Action Plan 2025 (CAP25) seeks to accelerate renewables, electrify transport and heat, introduce circular economy initiatives—but lacks detailed metrics on execution timelines.
- EPA notes that despite some progress, full implementation is needed to avoid missing budgets—especially in agriculture, transport, and residential sectors.
- Independent watchdogs (EPA, Fiscal/Climate Councils) demand faster deployment of grid upgrades, EV incentives, farm reform, and peatland restoration.

Summary

Area	Status
Annual GHG reduction	Behind pace; 23–29% vs. 51% target
Carbon budgets	Exceedances expected
Financial risks	€8–28 bn in carbon credit or related costs
Legal risks	Court challenges and compounding penalties

Ireland is currently failing to meet its emissions obligations, exposing itself to steep financial, legal, and environmental consequences. Without accelerated delivery of CAP25 and structural policy shifts in key sectors, the gap to targets will continue to widen—making corrective action both urgent and inevitable.



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Eligibility and Implementation:

- **Age:**
The FT+C PSC will be available to all individuals aged 70 and over who are already entitled to Free Travel.
- **Application:**
There is no need to apply for the companion pass; it will be issued automatically to eligible individuals.
- **Implementation:**
The Department of Social Protection (DSP) will start issuing the FT+C PSCs from July 2025.
- **Existing Free Travel Passholders:**



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COOKING WITH THE SEASONS

How (and Why) to Let Ireland's Calendar Guide Your Kitchen

Seasonal eating is far more than a trendy culinary hashtag; it reflects a deep-rooted rhythm that has guided Irish cooking for centuries. By aligning meals with the natural cycles of climate, soil, and agriculture, we gain more than just fresh flavours. Cooking with what's locally abundant each season enhances taste, reduces food waste, supports nearby farmers, cuts food miles, and often saves money. It's a practice that connects the kitchen to the land—and to the time of year.

As spring arrives between March and May, the kitchen begins to brighten with tender stalks of asparagus, purple-sprouting broccoli, early rhubarb, radishes, salad leaves, and the first flush of new potatoes. Spring lamb also makes its seasonal debut. In the kitchen, this can inspire dishes like an asparagus and leek tart—puff pastry layered with Ballymaloe relish, blanched asparagus, and Irish goat cheese. Rhubarb and ginger compôte, gently stewed in apple juice and sweetened with a touch of local honey, becomes the perfect topping for porridge or a scoop of ice-cream. Lamb pairs beautifully with a twist on salsa verde, where wild garlic replaces half the mint for a vibrant, foraged finish.

Summer, stretching from June through August, overflows with strawberries, raspberries, tomatoes, courgettes, cucumbers, peppers, broad beans, and the first batches of Irish honey. With such bounty, dishes stay light and quick. A tomato panzanella made in 15 minutes—with day-old soda bread, ripe tomatoes, fresh basil, and creamy mozzarella from the Burren Smokehouse—makes a colourful, refreshing lunch. Courgette ribbon salad with a zesty lemon and rapeseed oil dressing, topped with toasted hazelnuts, is an easy side with flair. And for dessert, a berry-filled Eton mess made with Wexford strawberries, crushed meringues, and whipped cream satisfies every time.

Autumn's arrival from September to November brings a hearty palette of pumpkins, squash, beetroot, carrots, leeks, Savoy

cabbage, apples, pears, and foraged wild mushrooms. The cooler air calls for cosy tray-bakes of roasted root vegetables—beetroot, parsnips, and carrots coated in rosemary and maple syrup and roasted to caramelised perfection. A wild mushroom risotto made with garlic-sautéed chanterelles and finished with Carrigaline cheese offers depth and comfort in every spoonful. Apples and blackberries, often windfallen or foraged from hedgerows, become a classic crumble—enhanced by an oat topping that adds crunch and long-lasting energy.

Winter, covering December through February, still offers an impressive selection: Brussels sprouts, kale, parsnips, celeriac, Jerusalem artichokes, and stored apples and pears dominate Irish fields and pantries, while citrus fruit imported from southern Europe adds brightness. In colder months, a celeriac and potato soup, blended with stock and cream and garnished with crispy bacon lardons, is both warming and indulgent. Brussels sprouts take on new life when roasted with Ballycastle honey, cracked pepper, and finished with grated Dubliner cheese. For dessert, poached pears simmered in spiced cider and served warm with vanilla skyr become a festive treat.

To get the most out of seasonal food, it helps to know what's fresh when. Bord Bia's "Best in Season" calendar makes it easier to choose well. For instance, importing tomatoes in January can add more than two kilograms of CO₂-equivalent emissions per kilo, while local summer tomatoes typically carry under 300 grams. The environmental difference is striking. Opting for local produce when it's in season is one of the simplest yet most effective ways to reduce your dietary carbon footprint.

In the end, when you align your meals with Ireland's harvest calendar, you do more than eat well—you support the environment, your community, and your own health. Keep a seasonal guide on the fridge, talk to growers at local markets, and let what's freshest lead the way at dinnertime. It's a small shift with a big impact—flavourful, cost-effective, and kind to the planet.

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With Minister for Education and Cllr Ted Leddy at St Philip the Apostle Senior National School in Mountview

Hot School Meals

The Hot School Meals Programme has been extended to more schools in Dublin West – please get in contact if your school is not included for more information.

In addition, following concerns about nutritional quality and waste, a review is being conducted by the Department of Social Protection. As a parent myself I very much welcome this.

Public Transport Update

Many residents have raised major concerns about the prevalence of 'ghost' and late buses on a number of routes serving Dublin West. I share those concerns.

As a TD I have been able to delve more deeply into the public transport issues.

The NTA (National Transport Authority) has stated its priority is to fix capacity issues on existing services, rather than to enhance them, citing a limited budget for new or additional services. We have also lost out on additional train carriages which were earmarked for the Maynooth line pre-2020 but post Covid were moved to intercity services.

I raised concerns about delays and decisions made by the NTA with the Taoiseach in the Dáil. He said he would look into those matters and committed to holding the NTA to account. I am also meeting the new Minister for Transport in coming weeks about Dublin West.



Pictured with Jeremy Ryan from the NTA, as we discussed Transport issues in Dublin West

It was a pleasure to attend and support the recent Race Night fundraiser hosted by Westmanstown Gaels. A fantastic evening that brought the community together in support of both the men's and women's teams.

Garda Westmanstown Gaels GAA Race Night



Laraghcon Roundabouts

I have made representations to Fingal County Council, requesting that safety measures at this location be improved, which will be included for consideration in the Council's 2026 Programme of Works. The road will also be part of an upcoming speed limit review.

M50 - Liffey Valley Active Travel Crossing

Improving walking and cycling routes across Dublin West has been a long-standing priority of mine. That's why I've been advocating for new active travel crossings over the River Liffey. Following my engagement with Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), funding has now been allocated to Fingal County Council to begin design work on potential routes that could be an alternative to vehicle use on the M50.

The project is currently in the early planning stages, with a technical advisor being appointed to carry out a feasibility study and develop design options. Once complete, a report will be submitted to both Fingal County Council and TII for review.

Mount Sackville 160th Anniversary Gala Dinner



Pictured with James O'Higgins Norman, Principal Mrs Eileen Cuddihy-Higgins, and Cllr Siobhan Shovlin

It was a real privilege to attend a special event celebrating the 160th anniversary of Mount Sackville. The evening brought together parents, teachers, and past pupils to honour the school's rich history and lasting impact on the community. (image provided) "pictured with James O'Higgins Norman, Principal Mrs Eileen Cuddihy-Higgins, and Cllr Siobhan Shovlin.

Fire at Plant in Laraghcon

A fire occurred at the former CPI Plant at Laraghcon on 23 March 2025. Dublin Fire Brigade attended and brought the blaze under control albeit substantial damage was caused. A Garda investigation is ongoing. The owners are implementing a post incident management plan to clean the site.

Our chaotic secondary school lottery needs a major redesign

Emer Currie Opinion
Common applications process would simplify admissions, alleviating stress for parents, schools and the State



SCHOOL PLACES Minister commits to Common Application Process Pilot in 2026-7

Some of you will know that as a Senator and Election Candidate I campaigned for a Common Application Process to be implemented in areas like Dublin West where secondary school places are in high demand, waiting lists are long, and families can face disappointment when it comes to securing their preference.

You may recall my opinion piece about the benefits of same in the Irish Times – please google if you would like to read more.

I was successful in getting a commitment in the Programme for Government about rolling them out. This approach has been tested by secondary schools in areas like Limerick and Ennis and is now also being trialled by principals in Dublin 15 for primary school special class places.

The Minister for Education has recently committed to me in the Dáil that a pilot for a broader system for secondary schools will begin for school year 2026-2027, aiming to streamline enrolment and admissions, reducing stress and worry for both parents and students. I have asked the Minister to include Dublin West in this pilot.

Emer is working in Dublin West with...

Regina Doherty MEP, Cllr. Kieran Dennison, Cllr. Ted Leddy, Cllr. Siobhán Shovlin, Cllr. Gayle Ralph, Cllr. Colm O'Rourke

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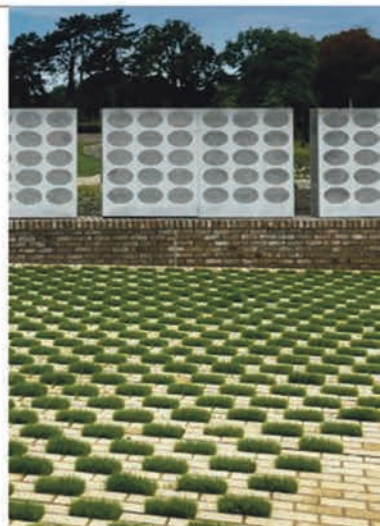
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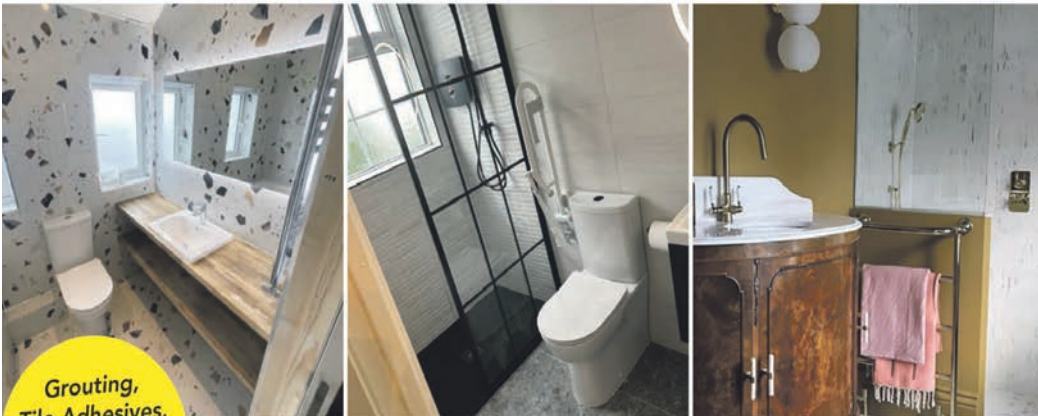

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Kildare County Council launches Survey for an Outdoor Recreation Plan and Local Sports Plan

Kildare County Council has launched a consultation exercise to support the development of a new Outdoor Recreation Plan and a new Local Sports Plan.

The input of individuals, organisations, clubs and groups from across Kildare is vital for the development of these two strategic plans. These plans aim to guide the management and development of sports and outdoor recreation while

increasing participation over the course of the next five years.

The online survey is open to all Kildare residents to share their views on sport or outdoor recreation opportunities, including those who do not currently engage in physical activity and those who face barriers to doing so. The survey can be accessed at the web page listed below. It takes approximately 10 minutes to complete: <https://forms.office.com/e/DthKMaSPAD>

The survey will close on Friday, 27 June 2025.



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Our Beyond the Pale Series goes to Donegal Town

Donegal Town - the lively harbour hub that anchors Ireland's north-west.

Set where the River Eske flows into Donegal Bay, Donegal Town is a compact gem that's easy to explore on foot yet offers a rich mix of heritage, local flavour, and outdoor adventure. Framed by the Bluestack Mountains and fronting the iconic Wild Atlantic Way, it serves equally well as a relaxing weekend break or as a base for delving into the untamed peninsulas of County Donegal.

At the heart of the town stands Donegal Castle, a striking 15th-century stronghold once held by the O'Donnell chieftains and later remodelled under the English Crown. Visitors can join guided tours that wind through the castle's grand hall with its impressive timber roof, explore the restored Jacobean wing, and learn about Gaelic clan history through detailed exhibitions. Just across the river are the haunting ruins of the Franciscan Friary, founded in 1474 and believed to have inspired the Annals of the Four Masters.

For those who want to see Donegal Bay without dipping a toe in the water, the Donegal Bay Waterbus offers an hour-long cruise that glides past seal-dotted sandbanks and the fairy-tale Beacon lighthouse. Sailings are tide-dependent and run most days throughout the 2025 season, complete with live commentary and a traditional céilí on the return leg.

A short 1.5-kilometre stroll south leads to the Donegal Craft Village, a vibrant courtyard where artisans such as glass-blowers, weavers, and chocolatiers demonstrate their crafts in studios open to the public. In town, the volunteer-run Donegal Railway Heritage Centre offers a nostalgic look at the narrow-gauge railway era through vintage carriages and interactive exhibits. To dig deeper into the town's layered past, visitors can follow the self-guided Historic Town Trail, which links 21 heritage plaques across sites including Georgian shopfronts, famine relief structures, and the old Diamond market square.

Nearby beaches offer world-class coastal experiences within easy reach. Both Rossnowlagh and Murvagh have earned Blue Flag status for 2025, ensuring clean waters, lifeguard patrols in summer, and thriving surf schools. Murvagh adds a family-friendly forest loop to its sandy appeal, while Rossnowlagh's three-kilometre stretch is famous for its gentle, rolling waves that are perfect for beginners.

Donegal Town also holds its own in Ireland's culinary scene. It won the Foodie Town Award in 2019 and continues to impress with its local fare and festivals. This year, the Donegal Festival of Food will take place in nearby Oakfield Park on the 24th and 25th of May, featuring appearances by chefs Marco Pierre White and Rachel Allen. For something more casual, The Olde Castle Bar is a favourite for seafood chowder, and The Reel Inn offers both hearty pub food and live traditional music well into the night.

Accommodation options cater to every taste and budget. Harvey's Point offers serene lakeside suites and acclaimed tasting menus, while Lough Eske Castle pairs five-star luxury with turreted charm and a spa housed in the former stables. Cosy B&Bs like the Gateway Lodge and Mill Park Hotel, nestled beside the river, tend to book out early during festival season, so plan ahead.

Having a car provides the most freedom for exploring beaches and cliffs, though local taxis and seasonal shuttle buses also reach popular spots like Rossnowlagh, Slieve League, and Killybegs. Ample parking is available near the Quay, and a recently introduced one-way traffic system through The Diamond keeps the town centre calm and pedestrian-friendly.

For those seeking to travel sustainably, Donegal Town is increasingly geared toward greener tourism. Reusable bottle refill stations are dotted around the pier and craft village, while many cafés now offer KeepCup-compatible lids. Guided hikes are encouraged to protect fragile trails in the Bluestacks, and visitors are reminded to observe Blue Flag guidelines—such as keeping dogs off bathing zones during the summer.

Now is the perfect time to visit. With newly signposted heritage sites, an expanding roster of food festivals, and some of Ireland's best beaches just minutes away, Donegal Town is stepping out from the shadow of being simply a gateway to the county's wilder reaches. It's small enough to feel intimate, yet full of enough charm and activity to fill a long weekend—and it makes a superb launchpad for discovering the untamed beauty of the northwest. So pack layers, bring your appetite, and embrace the spirit of adventure: Donegal Town is ready to welcome you.



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Irish Government welcomes EU Council agreement

But critics warn rights are being eroded



This week, EU transport ministers reached a political agreement on a comprehensive update of air passenger rights—the first major reform since the original EU 261 regulation in 2004, after 12 years of negotiations.

Ireland’s Minister of State Seán Canney, attending the Council meeting, described the deal as “a major milestone in putting passengers first, with fairer, simpler and more transparent rules” and said he “looks forward to the agreement now moving forward to the next stage of the legislative process”.

However, Irish Labour MEP Aodhán Ó Ríordáin strongly criticised Ireland’s support for the deal, accusing the government of siding with airlines rather than passengers. He described the Council’s position as “an appalling decision” that would see EU consumers lose “basic rights we have held dear for years,” especially given Ireland’s reliance on air travel as an island nation.

What’s changing?

The political agreement introduces updates across 30+ passenger rights, including:

- Compensation thresholds**
 - Short- and medium-haul flights: Delay threshold raised from 3 to 4 hours before compensation eligibility (€300).
 - Long-haul flights (>3500 km): Threshold increased from 3 to 6 hours; compensation reduced from €600 to €500.

More rider protections

- **Rerouting obligations:** Airlines must reroute passengers promptly—even via other carriers or transport modes. If not within 3 hours, passengers can rebook and claim up to 400% of the original fare.
- **Assistance provisions:** Clearer duty on airlines for food, refreshment, accommodation, and mandatory disembarkation after prolonged tarmac delays.
- **Tamping down “no-show” tactics:** Passengers can no longer be denied return flights if they miss the outbound leg accidentally protecting customers from punitive airline policies.
- **Streamlined claims:** Prefilled compensation forms will be auto sent; passengers have 6 months to file, and airlines must reply or pay within 14 days.
- **Tightening ‘extraordinary circumstances’:** Airlines bear the burden of proving they took all reasonable measures to avoid disruptions—making it harder to dodge compensation entirely.

Implications for Irish air passengers

Alleged dilution of rights
Irish MEP Ó Ríordáin warns that increased delay thresholds could cause fewer and later claims, stripping away protections Irish consumers currently enjoy under EU law.

Potential for real-world gains
However, travel commentator Eoghan Corry notes the measure offers a compromise: while some rights are lost, others are gained—and average fare prices may fall modestly (perhaps around €8 per ticket).

Next steps

The Council’s position now moves to the European Parliament for review. The Parliament may accept, amend, or reject the deal. Only after that, and with final approval from the Commission, will the updated regulation become binding—likely in 2026, according to expert estimates.

Final Take

Proponents argue that the updated legislation modernises and simplifies passenger rights, empowering airlines to reduce cancellations while still providing fair recourse for major delays.

Critics (including Irish MEPs and consumer groups) counter that this shift shifts the burden to consumers: the new thresholds could see many delays go uncompensated, and Ireland’s vote may reflect undue influence from airlines.

For Irish passengers, the overhaul signals both improved support systems in some areas and reduced compensation in others—reinforcing the importance of following developments in Brussels as the European Parliament reviews the text.



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The Tenant in Situ Scheme

The TenantinSitu Scheme (formally the CostRental TenantinSitu or CRTiS) is an initiative introduced in 2023 in Ireland to help renters at risk of eviction when their landlord decides to sell.

Here’s a clear overview:

What is the Tenant in Situ Scheme?

The Tenant in Situ scheme is designed to prevent homelessness among private renters whose landlords are selling their properties. To qualify, tenants must meet several criteria. They must have received a valid notice to quit due to the landlord’s intention to sell, and their household must be at risk of homelessness. Additionally, eligible tenants should not already be receiving support under the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP), the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS), or other forms of social housing. Income limits also apply—households must have a net income below €66,000 if they are in Dublin, or €59,000 outside of Dublin.

The scheme operates through local authorities, which assess whether tenants meet the eligibility criteria. Once a household is deemed eligible, the case is referred to the Housing Agency. The Agency then approaches the landlord with a market-based valuation for the property. If the landlord agrees to sell at that price, the Agency purchases the property. The tenant remains in their home, initially continuing to pay rent at the previous rate. Over time, the tenancy transitions into a cost rental model, ensuring long-term affordability and stability.

Is it working? What’s happening in practice?

Since its launch, the scheme has shown both promise and growing pains. Around 120 families have been directly protected from homelessness, and by April 2025, over 2,500 households had benefited through a combination of social housing and cost rental versions of the Tenant in Situ approach.

However, the scheme has faced significant challenges. Early in 2025, government funding delays meant that local authorities were unable to proceed with planned property acquisitions. This left many families in limbo, at continued risk of losing their homes. Logistical hurdles—including disputes over property titles, valuation issues, and audit requirements—have further slowed progress. In some cases, such as with Fingal County Council, authorities have had to withdraw from agreed purchases because of these complications.

The lack of clearly defined acquisition targets for 2025 has been another stumbling block. According to Sinn Féin and several housing advocacy groups, this absence of structure led to hundreds of stalled applications. Confusion has also emerged among tenants, with reports—such as those shared on Reddit—describing uncertainty over who is responsible for rent payments, repairs, and communication during the transition process. This ambiguity has left some tenants feeling unsupported and unsure of where they stand.

Political and NGO voices have grown increasingly vocal about the scheme’s shortcomings. Sinn Féin’s housing spokesperson Eoin Ó Broin and the charity Threshold have called for urgent improvements, including the immediate release of funds and the establishment of annual targets to guide acquisitions. The Irish Times has acknowledged the successful purchase of approximately 120 homes as a positive outcome but questioned the overall ambition of the scheme, given the slow pace and modest scale of implementation to date.

Is it working—or not?

The Tenant in Situ scheme is effective in principle and has delivered meaningful outcomes for dozens of families. It offers a humane, practical solution to a growing crisis and was introduced with strong intentions and

early success. But these gains are undermined by systemic issues. Delays in funding, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and inconsistent involvement from local authorities have all slowed progress. With hundreds of households at risk of eviction, the scheme’s momentum appears to have stalled, prompting calls for more decisive action.

What needs to be done

To realise the full potential of the scheme, funding allocations must be made on time, with annual budgets and local authority targets communicated clearly and early in the year. The acquisition process needs to be streamlined—especially in relation to property valuations, title verifications, and audit procedures—to prevent avoidable delays. Tenants should also receive clear guidance about their responsibilities during the acquisition phase, particularly in regard to rent payments and property maintenance. Finally, while €325 million has been earmarked for the scheme, acquiring only around 120 properties over 20 months is a modest outcome, suggesting that more ambitious targets and faster implementation are urgently needed.

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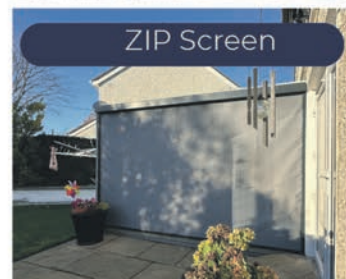


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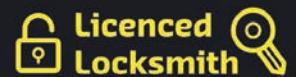
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Kildare County Council Arts Service Announces Arts Grants 2025 Awards

Kildare County Council Arts Service has announced funding under the Arts Grants 2025, to support creative and artistic projects in County Kildare.

Grant aid of €126,302 has been awarded via 17 separate schemes to 87 projects which will take place across all five of Kildare's Municipal Districts in 2025.

These awards support a broad spectrum of communities, including artists across all art forms, schools, youth groups, theatre groups, filmmakers and members of the public. The funded projects include large scale public events, concerts, exhibitions, performances, novels, artist residencies, short films and research work.

The Kildare Short Grass Film Commission Award 2025 will also be

announced soon. This award supports film production in the county, by commissioning an original film to be shot in County Kildare in 2025/26.

In addition, Kildare County Council welcomed applications to the Kildare Creative Ireland Bursary Award 2025 and expressions of interest for the Kildare Cruinniú na nÓg Award 2025. Details of the projects funded under these awards will be published separately on the Creative Ireland website.

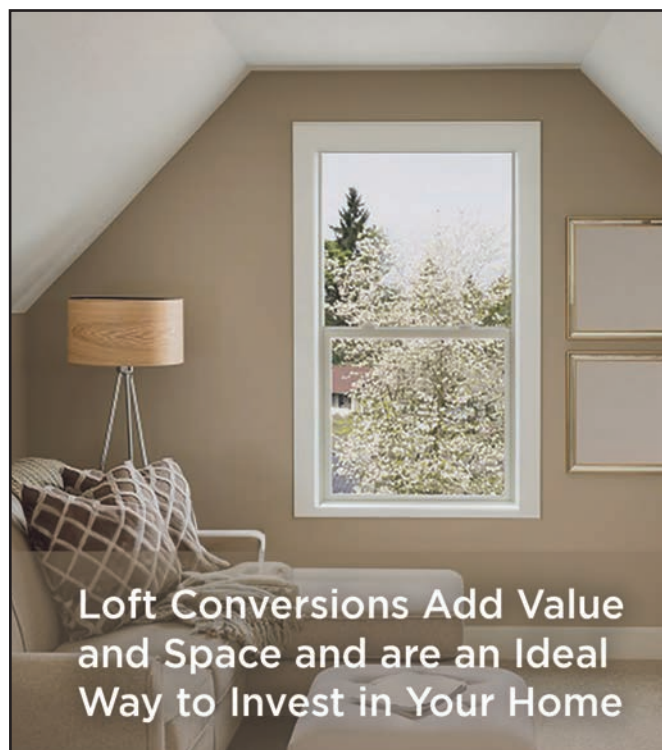
For a complete list of projects awarded under the Arts Grants 2025, please visit Kildare County Council Arts Service - Grants and Opportunities <https://kildarecoco.ie/artsservice/GrantsandOpportunities/>



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Data Centres in Ireland and their impact

Ireland's data centre boom has brought major economic gains, but it has also introduced significant climate and infrastructure challenges. Electricity demand from the sector now dominates national consumption and threatens to derail legally binding climate commitments. It also raises difficult questions about resource allocation in the face of urgent housing needs.



The path forward will require a careful balance—sustaining economic growth while ensuring that renewable energy and grid capacity keep pace. Whether that means tightening regulations, pausing new developments, or reshaping energy policy, the decisions made in the coming years will determine whether Ireland can continue to lead in tech without compromising its climate and social goals.

How many data centres are there—and what's coming?

As of early 2025, Ireland is home to approximately 121 data centres operated by 24 different providers, with Dublin remaining the country's central hub. Despite the already significant footprint, the pipeline for expansion remains strong. Reports indicate that 14 data centres are currently under construction, and another 40 are at various stages of approval or planning. However, a moratorium on new grid connections in Dublin, which runs from 2021 to 2028, is reshaping how and where companies locate their facilities. As a result, tech firms are increasingly exploring alternative sites in counties like Offaly, Cork, Kildare, and other regions outside the capital.

Electricity consumption: how much are they using?

Data centres are now a major force in Ireland's energy landscape. In 2024 alone, they consumed around 6,969 gigawatt-hours (GWh) of electricity—a 10 percent increase from the 6,335 GWh recorded in 2023. Their electricity consumption represented 22 percent of the country's total metered usage that year, up from 21 percent the previous year. To put the growth in perspective, data centres accounted for just 5 percent of electricity consumption in 2015. Projections suggest this figure could rise to as much as 31 percent by 2027 and may hit 30 percent by 2030 or 2032, driven in part by the explosion of demand from artificial intelligence applications.

Climate impact

The environmental implications of this growth are significant. Since 2015, annual increases in electricity

consumption by data centres have averaged between 22 and 23 percent, in stark contrast to the roughly 0.4 percent growth seen in other sectors. This makes data centres the primary driver of Ireland's rising electricity demand. They already account for between 2.5 and 4 percent of national greenhouse gas emissions, mainly due to their reliance on electricity and the use of onsite gas-powered generators.

A critical concern is that all of the wind-power capacity added between 2017 and 2023 was effectively absorbed by data centres, meaning there was no overall reduction in fossil fuel usage. As more data centres connect directly to the natural gas grid or install their own generators, their emissions intensity is increasing. This shift risks undermining national climate goals, particularly as the rollout of renewable energy infrastructure struggles to keep pace with the sector's expansion. Experts, including members of the Climate Change Advisory Council and academics like Professor Hannah Daly from University College Cork, warn that without stronger regulation and oversight, the country could fail to meet its 2030 climate targets and carbon budgets.

Policy and mitigation efforts

The Irish government is attempting to address these challenges. The 2024 Climate Action Plan aims to ensure that 80 percent of electricity comes from renewable sources by 2030 and calls for an acceleration in wind and solar power deployment. Projections suggest that expected renewable capacity—estimated at around 22 gigawatts—could eventually cover data centre demand, provided it is realised on time.

At the EU level, the 2025 Energy Efficiency Directive will impose new obligations on data centres, including mandatory waste-heat recovery and annual energy performance reporting. In Ireland, regulators now require new data centres seeking grid connections to have on-site energy generation or storage. While this rule aims to reduce strain on the national grid, it could also entrench reliance on fossil fuels. Alternatives, such as private-wire networks and dedicated energy parks, are currently under review.

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