

Recreation and Amenity Progress Report March, 2016

Ducketts Grove Castle and Walled Gardens

Ducketts Grove remains a popular venue for recreational use. Along with the Irish Cancer Foundation's "Relay for Life", the Christmas Fair and other events including the Carlow Tourism Fair and Vintage Club Rally, it is estimated that over 70,000 people approximately visit Ducketts Grove annually.

Carlow County Development Partnership is operating the workshops, canteen and exhibition areas. The main buildings remain of keen interest to National and International Paranormal Science Groups. A complete renewal of the herbaceous/floral Garden element was undertaken in December and further works have been carried out to the Gardens in 2016. Car parking has generally been adequate for events over the last 10 years – however the recent Christmas Fair attracted an exceptionally large crowd, giving rise to considerable traffic delay because the parking facilities could not cater for a larger than planned attendance. It is expected that many groups who have raised money for charity, local development and Carlow Tourism will be successful again this year.

Oak Park Forest Park

Oak Park Forest Park, on the outskirts of Carlow Town, remains very popular for quiet walks in a beautiful setting. The attractions – universally accessible playground, cleared/replanted forest and exercise areas are of increasing attraction to everybody.

Extensive works have been completed to the surface of the paths to enhance the walkways and to protect the wooden structure from the elements. Damage to many trees and fencing in the Park required works to ensure safety for all users. The Urban Forest Renewal Programme has completed a further stage – the necessary felling and planting of designated areas of the Forest Park. These self-financing works were completed by Emerald Forestry in conjunction with the programme required by the Forestry Service.

Tullow Town Park

At Tullow, the first Skateboard Park is now very popular. Great credit is due to the Members from the Tullow electoral area for their initiative in this proposal – and to the Develop Tullow Association for their great work in maintaining Tullow Town Park. Further proposals will enhance the Park's ecological diversity.

Muinebheag

The Trustees of McGrath Park are to be commended for such a marvellous facility used by hurling, football, soccer, pitch & putt, tennis, athletics and cricket clubs. Bagenalstown Improvement Group under the leadership of Paddy Gardiner is to be congratulated for their marvellous work throughout Bagenalstown, including the Town Park.

River Barrow

Carlow Local Authorities with Carlow Tourism and Carlow County Development Partnership will continue to source funding for the priorities of the Barrow Corridor Study. The benefit from the amenities and the facilities recently constructed by Waterways Ireland at Clashganny were highlighted. The improvement of access and parking facilities are now urgent priorities to be considered at Clashganny. Congratulations to Carlow County Development Partnership and to Borris Tidy Towns for their progress on a new walkway, proximate to the Lock area. Carlow County Council pursued the upgrading of tidal boating facility at St. Mullins in conjunction with Waterways Ireland. The navigation channel of the Barrow has become a matter of serious concern to boaters and fishing interests and those concerned with future flooding due to silting and overgrowth. It is impossible to progress any initiative at the Barrow without some remedial action in this respect, which will need help and understanding from the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Serious flooding at St. Mullins highlights the urgency of a solution. The continuous build-up of deposits on the river bed may well limit flood protection measures and negate those already in place.

SEAI Better Energy Communities 2014

Carlow County Council completed energy upgrades on over 300 houses in 2015. This included upgrading of the heating system, ventilation, windows and doors, lighting and high efficiency stoves. To date over 1,300 houses have received energy upgrades in County Carlow. Remaining Local Authority houses (200 approximately) will be completed by the end of 2016. These works have been very well received by householders – whose energy bills have more than halved and with much greater living quality.

It is disappointing that several communities in the County did not participate in spite of considerable funding being available and a high level of support forthcoming from Carlow County Council. Carlow County Council in conjunction with the Carlow Kilkenny Energy Agency has prepared a schedule of projects for possible grant aid in 2016.

1.	Bagenalstown Swimming Club Ltd., Bagenalstown, Co. Carlow.
2.	O'Brien Cement, Bellvue Port, Co. Waterford.
3.	Gairdin Beo, Carlow.
4.	Windgap Parish, Kilkenny.
5.	Wayside Properties Ltd. (Supervalu), Portlaoise, Co. Laois.
6.	Kilkenny County Council
7.	Kilkenny College Ltd.
8.	Dealgan House Nursing Home Ltd., Dundalk, Co. Louth.
9.	Johnswell Development Committee, Co. Kilkenny.
10.	Costern Ltd. T/A Trinity Care, Gormanstown, Co. Meath.
11.	Lidl Ireland, Newbridge, Co. Kildare.
12.	Gathabawn Church, Co. Kilkenny.
13.	Kilkenny Cooling Systems – Various locations.
14.	Galmoy GAA, Co. Kilkenny.
15.	Clontubbrit Church, Co. Kilkenny.
16.	Rafpro Ltd. (Ritz), Carlow Town.
17.	Frank Murphy Services Ltd., Cloneen, Co. Kilkenny.
18.	Lisdowney Church, Co. Kilkenny.
19.	Fitzgerald Nurseries, Co. Kilkenny.
20.	J. Walsh Hardware Ltd., Co. Carlow.
21.	Visual Arts Centre, Carlow Town.
22.	Various Houses at Co. Carlow & Co. Kilkenny

Projects have been completed at New Oak Estate, Carlow Library, Civic Offices, Carlow Fire Station, New Oak Community Centre, Visual Centre for Contemporary Arts, Public Lighting at Various Locations, Carrigduff Swimming Pool, and C.Y.M.A. Carrickduff Swimming Pool is to be congratulated for their particular initiatives in identifying recommended improvement works for grant aid.

Seamus O'Connor,
Director of Services.