

# Building for Tomorrow

**Kildare Library Service Development Plan  
2025 - 2029**

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Powered  
by Our  
People

Matching  
Service to  
Community

*“Libraries are the oxygen of public life. The books in our libraries offer us information and ideas, but they also stimulate us to pursue more knowledge and to form new ideas of our own that add to our curiosity, and encourage our open-mindedness, for the benefit of ourselves, our friends and our communities.”*

**President Michael D. Higgins**



## **Cllr. Kevin Duffy**

**Cathaoirleach of County Kildare**

As Mayor of Kildare County Council, I am extremely proud to present “Building for Tomorrow”, the Kildare Library Development Plan 2025 - 2029. This plan represents Kildare County Council’s strategic blueprint to develop and enhance library services for the people of Kildare over the next 5 years.

Kildare public libraries are not just places to borrow books; they are vibrant community hubs that foster learning, creativity, and connection. “Building Tomorrow” is an ambitious forward-looking strategy that seeks to improve access, use and visibility of public libraries as an essential community service. This plan proposes to develop new high quality library buildings that reflect the quality of services available, improving access and opening hours and enhancing digital services.

This new library development plan is progressive and builds on the legacy and learnings from the last plan. The objectives were developed following wide ranging public consultation with community stakeholders including elected representatives. It aims to bridge some of the barriers to access that still exist, try novel ways of engaging new communities of library members, support library staff to deliver improved services and expand the role and profile of the library in the community.

I thank the library staff for their commitment and their enthusiasm to take on the many challenges that lay ahead. The Elected Members and I look forward to working closely with them and we will endeavour to support the County Librarian and her team to deliver the ambitions of “Building Tomorrow” over the lifetime of the Council.



## Sonya Kavanagh

Chief Executive

I am delighted to present “Building for Tomorrow”, the Kildare Library Service Development Plan 2025-2029, that sets out the objectives for the development of our libraries for the next five years. It aims to build communities through empowerment and inclusion in a sustainable manner.

“Building for Tomorrow” has been derived from extensive consultation with stakeholders of Co. Kildare. It is the first time where we have sought, so comprehensively, to listen to people’s views on our library services and respond to them. This has led to a fuller appreciation of how the service can play its part in making a difference to people’s quality of life.

Since the last Library Development Plan there have been significant improvements to Kildare Library Service. There is no better example of that than the new Naas Library & Cultural Centre which has quickly become a hub of community and cultural engagement, situated at the very heart of the town.

The new Library Development plan will deliver further improvements with plans for a new library in Clane and a new Newbridge Library, Kildare County Archives & Cultural Centre that will accommodate a growing population with diverse needs and support our new communities.

There will be challenges ahead as technology continuously changes and Kildare Library Service aims to respond to significant population growth and the needs of one of the fastest growing young populations in Ireland. This plan ambitiously outlines how these challenges will be met. Central to the goals of the plan are the core values of intellectual freedom, diversity, social inclusion and accessibility. This plan is underpinned by key national objectives while also outlining important local ambitions in terms of library membership, buildings and services.

I look forward to the successful implementation of this plan with the support of the elected members of Kildare County Council, members of the public, our staff and partners. I thank the County Librarian and all the library staff for their energy and commitment to date and will continue to support them to achieve the goals and objectives they have set for themselves over the next 5 years.



## Gillian Allen

County Librarian

There has been a significant level of achievement since the publication of the previous Kildare Library Development Plan “Recover, Refocus, Re-Energise” in 2020. COVID-19 highlighted the value of libraries within our communities and the high level of esteem in which libraries are held. Since then, a new national public library strategy, ‘The Library is the Place’ was launched in 2023 with three main themes: People, Spaces and Connections. Our new Kildare Library Development plan aims to reflect those themes and ensure Kildare Library Service is at the forefront of helping to deliver the aims of the national strategy.

Over the next five years, we aim to implement the ambitious objectives outlined in “Building for Tomorrow” the Kildare Library Service Development Plan 2025-2029. We will build on our past achievements and address the evolving needs of our community which were identified through a comprehensive consultation process using a design thinking user-centred approach. Through Design Thinking our aim is to reach those who we have not reached before, listen to their ideas and expand our connections with our communities.

Key initiatives include the development of new library buildings, the integration of advanced technology, and the promotion of environmental sustainability. We will also work on enriching our collections, fostering intergenerational connections, and celebrating the diverse cultures within our community. By doing so, we aim to make our libraries not only places of knowledge but also spaces where everyone feels welcome and valued.

I extend my deepest gratitude to the Chief Executive, Kildare County Council Senior Management Team, the Elected Members, the library team, our strategic partners, and the many stakeholders who have contributed to this ambitious plan.

Together, we will build a brighter future for Kildare, ensuring that our libraries continue to inspire, educate, and connect our communities for generations to come.

# Review of the Last 4 years 2020-2024

From 2020 to 2024, Kildare Library Service experienced transformative change in all areas and services. COVID 19 as a backdrop presented many challenges but also initiated many technological advancements. As the saying goes “necessity is the mother of invention”. Evolving literacy needs, requirements and extra funding ensured a wider audience for our collections. The climate change and biodiversity emergencies prompted other areas of focus for programming.

## Information Technologies

During this period, we implemented Spydus, a new nationwide Library Management System which significantly enhanced our operational capabilities. Our library app was further developed and our library website overhauled with a completely new look. Our 15 branch network was upgraded with a new network server to efficiently manage public access across 200+ computers in all of our branches. This was secured by the introduction of Meraki MX firewalls including an upgrade to our public WiFi. We extended SurfBox self-service printing to include part-time branches, providing vital print facilities community-wide. Another major change was the introduction of a new PC Booking system called Netloan. A more versatile system that

allows patrons to self-book and self-extend sessions. It uses a future-proof preferred protocol - Library Communication Framework (LCF) to interface with Spydus.

## Reader Services - Right to Read Initiatives

Kildare Readers Festival moved completely online in 2020 and moved to a hybrid model from 2021 to 2022. Guests to the festival have included Patrick Freyne, Annemarie Ní Churreáin, Cauvery Madhavan, Honorée Fanonne Jeffers, Sue Rainsford, Kit Fryatt, Lynn Buckle, Rosaleen McDonagh and Oein DeBhairduin.

Spring into Storytime, Summer Stars, Children's Book Festival and Family Time at your Library all moved online in 2020 and since 2021 have moved to a hybrid model where the majority of events are held in person, but some are offered online also. Kildare Libraries had over 4,700 children participate in Summer Stars in 2024!

A new initiative for young people and adults, Ireland Reads was introduced in 2021 which encourages everyone to pledge to read for pleasure every February. Kildare Libraries has had

some fantastic events for Ireland Reads including Kerri Ní Dochartaigh and Manchan Magan (2021), Emma Donohue (2022) and Caoilinn Hughes (2023) among others.

The Little Library initiative was also introduced in 2021. For the first two years Little Library focused on rebuilding the link between the library and Kildare ELCs which had been interrupted during the pandemic. From 2022 My Little Library Bags for children starting primary school were distributed by the library service. Over 4,800 children have received a My Little Library Bag containing books to prepare them for starting school. Little Library at Bedtime was introduced in 2023 with libraries providing a bedtime storybook to all children under the age of five. Over 1,000 children have joined the library for the first time with the introduction of these initiatives.

## Programmes & Events

Programming for the period was marked by a sharp pivot to online provision throughout the pandemic with a gradual return to hybrid and in-person events.

Countywide Kildare programmes include STEAM, TTT (Toys, Technology, Training) Let's Talk About Parenting, POP! Power of Play, Kildare Readers Festival, Young Readers Festival, Irish Military Seminar, Connections Through Literature and the Writer in Residence programme with Maynooth University.

In 2022 the library service established a Climate Action programming team to coordinate climate actions across the library network. A highlight has been the establishment of the Kildare Seed Library; a collection of organic and open-pollinated seeds available for our library members to 'borrow' to grow, eat and share their own vegetables, herbs and edible flowers. An accompanying series of educational workshops have taken place along with social seed swap events.

POP! Power of Play was launched in 2022, a dedicated programme for very young children and their parents who needed additional social opportunities following the pandemic. A series of high-quality music,

dance, storytelling, STEAM and sensory events form the programme, delivered in Kildare's 7 main libraries.

## Kildare County Archives & Local Studies

Kildare County Archives and Local Studies staff continued to administer and organise the wide-ranging programme of activities as part of the Decade of Centenaries programme in the 2020-23 period. Working with the Kildare County Council Decade of Commemorations Committee, a wide-ranging programme of events, exhibitions, talks and workshops took place involving local community groups throughout County Kildare. Local studies collections were reorganised to increase accessibility, with ongoing efforts to catalogue the extensive materials to facilitate better public access and research capabilities.

The publication of War of Independence and the Civil War in County Kildare, along with the seminal Remembrance The World War I Dead of Co. Kildare were made available for free in branches and a soft copy was made available on Borrowbox.

The Irish Military Seminars featured a range of speakers, exploring Kildare and Ireland's military heritage, moved to digital format in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic, with subsequent events returning to in-person formats in Newbridge. The Archives upgraded to Axiell Collections software and ongoing cataloguing and cleaning of collections. Significant enhancements were made to the Archives and Genealogy pages of our website, which were populated with new content and digitised materials. We expanded our Online Archives webpage, digitising and uploading significant historical documents, including Grand Jury Presentment Books and Poor Law Union Minute books, which are now accessible worldwide.

## Capital Developments

The most significant development was the opening of the new Naas Library & Cultural Centre in 2024, a state-of-the-art facility that includes extensive indoor and outdoor spaces equipped for a wide range of cultural and educational activities, demonstrating a major milestone in our commitment to enhancing community

services. With 1,275<sup>m2</sup> indoor space and 923<sup>m2</sup> of outdoor public realm space, it includes a Maker Space equipped with three 3D printers, a laser cutter, a vinyl cutter, sublimation printers and several sewing machines. A dedicated Art Gallery, three rooms with Study Spaces and a booking system to manage this. A Changing Spaces facility, three meeting rooms, a sensory space and our lovely new restored Chamber is equipped with the latest AV equipment including a large projector screen and online web conferencing capabilities.

Ballitore library had some badly needed restoration work with reapplication of lime render. This provided a nice opportunity for the specialist contractor to provide a demonstration on this traditional technique, to the local community.

Part 8 approval for a new library at Clane and new Newbridge Library, Kildare County Archives & Cultural Centre in Newbridge was granted in this period allowing progression as we go forward with our new library development plan.

### Sustaining Our Planet

In October 2022, the Kildare Libraries Climate Programming Team was established to align with the government's inclusion of public libraries in the National Implementation Plan for the Sustainable Development Goals 2022-2024. Comprising library staff from various branches and professional levels, the team is united by a passion for issues such as biodiversity, climate change, social justice, and heritage. Believing in the library's role as a hub for education, action, and resource sharing, the team has enhanced existing structures to benefit users and staff. Over the past two years, they have delivered free training sessions, workshops, and events, often collaborating with local experts.

Key initiatives, as mentioned above, included the Kildare Seed Library, with workshops on seed saving and ecological gardening, musical wetland walks, sustainable printing for children, and cookery demonstrations featuring plant-based and locavore cuisines. They also offered workshops on bicycle maintenance, clothing repair, and heritage crafts during Heritage Week. Other highlights include

bilingual Pop-Up Forest School sessions, eco-conscious Christmas tips, staff training on the Sustainable Development Goals, a sustainable living course, and climate-focused events like film screenings, writing workshops, and a Climate Readers Day. The team also organised biodiversity talks, pollinator-friendly planting sessions, and information on topics such as pocket forests and sustainable energy.

### Age Friendly Libraries

After lots of work, surveys, walkability studies, funding applications and collaboration all of our libraries achieved Age Friendly status by 2023.



The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (2015), United Nations



Kildare Seed Library (2024), Kildare Library Service



Local Age Friendly Programme (2023), Kildare County Council

# Today's Community Needs in Context

## Community, Societal and Global Challenges

Our library sits at the heart of our community and its success depends on staying relevant in an ever-evolving society. As socio-cultural models, values, and beliefs shift, libraries must adopt a dynamic approach to services. We have observed several key challenges:

### Inter-generational Divide in Society

Different generations have varying needs and expectations from libraries. Younger users may prioritise digital resources and modern study spaces, while older patrons might value traditional collections and quiet areas. Bridging these differences is crucial to ensure libraries remain inclusive and cater to all age groups. As one person noted, "The future of libraries may be an open book, but a sense of belonging is what will help them thrive, especially addressing the loneliness epidemic among the youth."

### Growing Disharmony

Society's increasing polarisation poses a challenge for libraries, which aim to remain neutral and inclusive spaces. Conflicts can arise over differing views on materials and programmes. Staff have noticed a particular concern in relation to content disagreements and the spread of misinformation. This adds pressure, making it more important for libraries to maintain their role as trusted information providers. One staff member expressed concern, saying, "Disinformation is scary."

### Challenges in Communication

Reaching all segments of the community is challenging due to differences in preferred communication channels and the digital divide. Traditional methods like notice boards may not engage younger users, while digital communications can miss those lacking internet access skills. As one user noted,

"I had no idea how much is going on until I started coming. The library offers many things that would interest people, but communication is not reaching them." Staff have also expressed a need for clearer, more user-friendly marketing materials to improve engagement.

### The 'Great Time Shortage'

With busy modern lives, people have less time to visit libraries or participate in extended activities, expecting more efficient and convenient services. This 'Great Time Shortage' pressures libraries to streamline their offerings to fit busy schedules, requiring a rethinking of traditional services.

### Disconnect Between Membership & Usage

Despite rising usage, traditional memberships don't always reflect this increase. Many access services without becoming formal members, creating a disconnect between active users and official numbers. Staff observed, "Library usage is going up, memberships are not," and highlighted that online members are often treated differently than physical ones. This disconnect complicates measuring the library's impact and securing support.

### Some of what we heard

"I became a member in the past year. It's a great service. I didn't know that it was free, what was available and what I'm missing out on... I think library services need to be promoted more."

"Our library is a community hub, its services and place for people to connect, young and old, through the art of literature or old-fashioned face to face conversation, a pulse in the survival of our community."

"I would like to see the perception of libraries changing in our communities - they are not just outdated places to get dusty books, they are an essential community space that provides services and a safe and welcoming space that everyone can access."

# Building for Tomorrow

Library as the third place: democratic catalyst for change.

The 'third space' provides platforms for cooperation, connection, inspiration and most importantly, for a meeting space where your money, status or origin have no influence. Oldenburg<sup>1</sup> says that the third space is essential for healthy societies, a 'Spiritual Tonic that strengthens and invigorates the entire community'. Third places, then, are "anchors" of community life and facilitate and foster broader, more creative interaction. In other words,

"Your third place is where you relax in public, where you encounter familiar faces and make new acquaintances. "The architect, Aat Vos<sup>2</sup>, who was inspired by Oldenburg asks, "in what ways can we use third places to stimulate meaningful encounters and to build a healthy, cohesive society for all?"

But rather than be led by our own ideas of how libraries should be, we should listen to what the stakeholders want, what the hard-to-attract teenage community seek and learn from the commercial sector that so often knows how to capture these audiences. The library should have the potential to become the 'living room of the city'.

How the library presents itself is important.

Too often our civic institutions are old, shabby or too 'institutional'. The library needs to inhabit the world of the hip, happening place at the cutting edge.

The library should be a place where we are free to express and even lose ourselves. A place to unwind rest, play and create. To be the authentic true self. Schiller<sup>1</sup> in his 'On the Aesthetic Education of Man' said "man is never so authentically himself than when at play."

Another sociologist Eric Klinenberg<sup>1</sup> and author of "Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarisation, and the Decline of Civic Life" wrote:

"Libraries are the kinds of places where people with different backgrounds, passions and interests can take part in a living democratic culture. They are the kinds of places where the public, private and philanthropic sectors can work together to reach for something higher than the bottom line . . . If we have any chance of rebuilding a better society, social infrastructure like the library is precisely what we need."

His research has shown that neighbourhoods and communities flourish or flounder depending on the strength of their social infrastructure. The title comes from a phrase used by Andrew Carnegie to describe his vision for public libraries as beautiful, uplifting places that make life better for all people. Access to libraries should be based on just one thing: being human. (We do of course allow assist dogs into our buildings and maybe robots if well-behaved)

The library and cultural centre is a conduit space - acting as 'place maker', a place that is multifunctional and adapts to the user's needs, a place whose role is to improve quality of life, whether through education, recreation, culture, imagination or exploration.

<sup>1</sup> Oldenburg, R., 1989. The Great Good Place. New York Paragon House.

<sup>2</sup> Vos, A., 2017. How to create a relevant public space. Amsterdam: trancityxvaliz.

<sup>1</sup> Schiller, F., 1795. On the Aesthetic Education of Man. London: Yale University Press.

<sup>1</sup> Klinenberg, E., 2018. Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarisation, and the Decline of Civic Life. New York: Crown.

# Our Challenges

Throughout all of our research we asked questions to help us define compelling purpose and vision statements. Our communities and our staff told us that they recognise the importance of what we do, but also pointed to the great change and many challenges facing our society. In times of great change we need to rethink, re-imagine and work to understand why we exist and be ambitious about what we want to become.

## What people say

Libraries are there to open up people's minds and open them up to a world of opportunity - to educate, inspire and challenge them, to make people think. As well as to provide recreational and creative opportunities, opportunities for growth and well being. Libraries are there to bring a community together, to provide a focal, central, neutral, inclusive, friendly and welcoming space where people can come together to meet, share ideas and broaden their horizons.

**Respondent to survey**

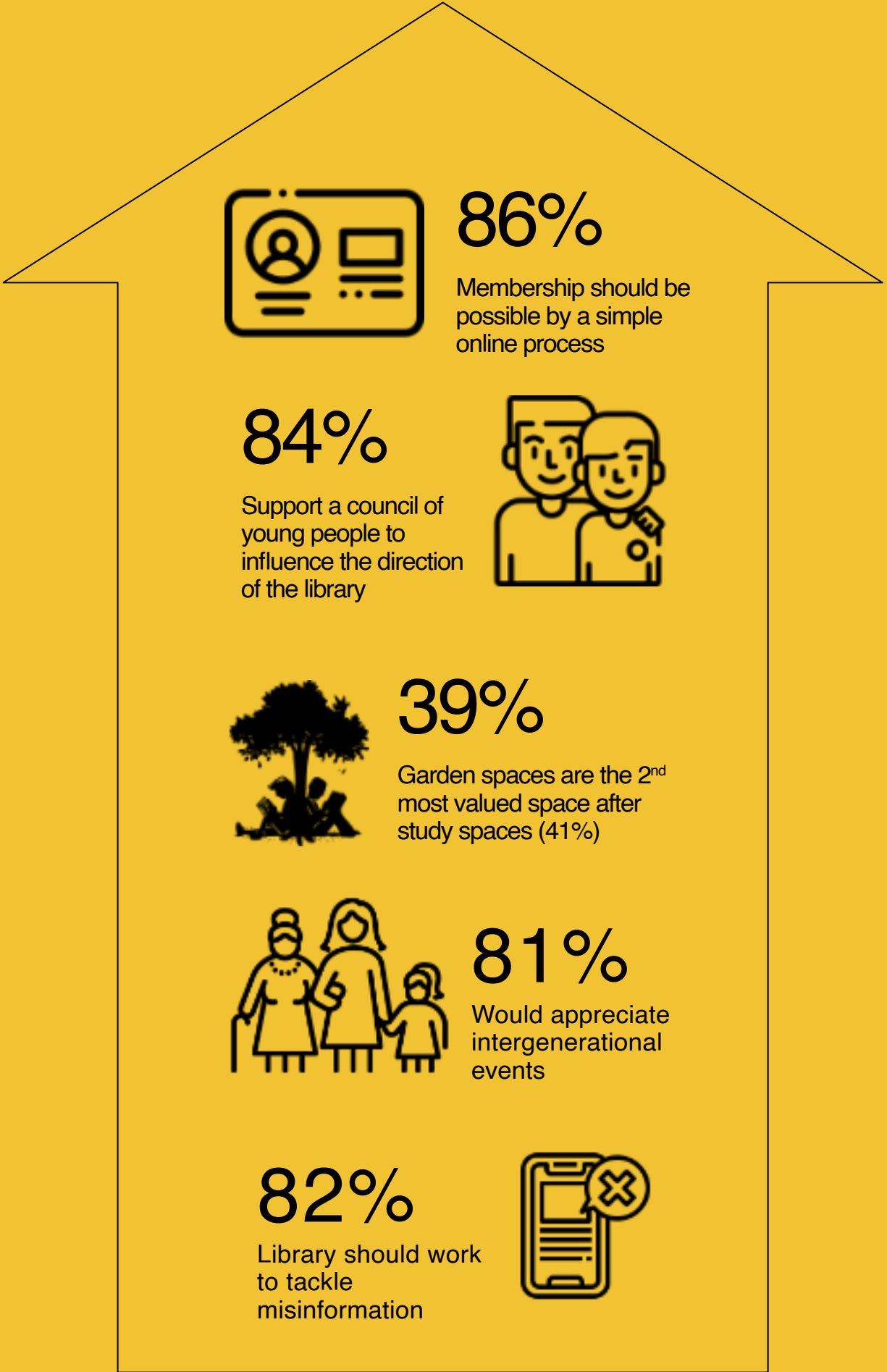
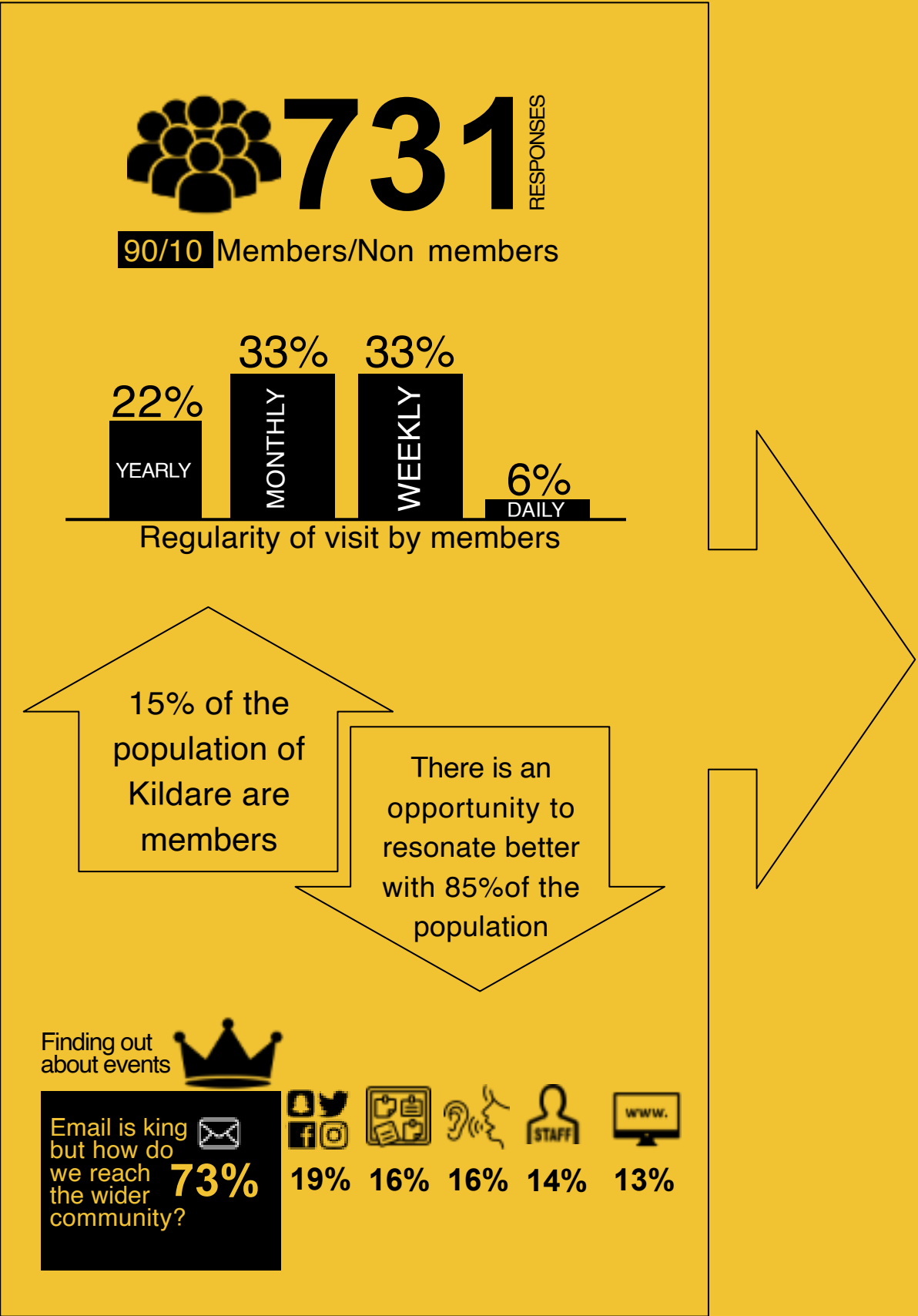
## Our Vision

Kildare Library Service seeks to drive community connection, engage and integrate our culturally diverse society, connect and inform communities in the face of social division, promote respect and inter-generational connection, engage and liberate all our community through the free provision of knowledge, technology and space.

More broadly, we strive to be relevant in an ever-changing world. To ensure our services continue to meet the information needs and enrich the lives of people and communities living and working in Kildare and in the surrounding districts.

# Kildare Library Service

## Public Survey by Numbers



# 7 Key Development Areas

1

Our Collections  
Enlivening Content

2

Our Community  
Reaching Out

3

Our Heritage  
Stories & Placemaking

4

Our Spaces  
Real Space / Digital World

5

Our Staff  
Enabling Our Team

6

Our Infrastructure  
Capital Developments

7

Our Environment  
Sustaining Our Planet

## Our Collections

# Enlivening Content

Kildare Libraries have evolved significantly, moving beyond traditional book lending to embrace digital offerings such as eBooks, eAudiobooks, computer games, DVDs, and a full suite of online services and content - our eServices. Today, our libraries will also feature Maker Spaces equipped with modern technology like 3D printing, laser cutting, and sewing machines. This evolution aligns with rapid technological advances and changing public expectations, presenting an opportunity to refresh our collections and appeal to new audiences.

### Make Reading More Gratifying through the Public Library

The appeal of gamification has increased, turning potentially mundane activities into engaging experiences. By incorporating elements like competitive leaderboards and rewards, reading becomes a rewarding and enjoyable activity.

"Reading challenges. If you read X books you get a reward, for example," suggests a model where achievements in reading are tangibly recognised.



#### Key focus area

Our primary goal is to make reading more enjoyable by gamifying it, making it more rewarding and adding competitive element, thereby increasing readership.



#### How we will achieve success

We'll design reading challenges and reward systems that incentivise continued engagement, making reading a more gratifying experience.

### Getting People Thinking

In today's era of misinformation, Kildare Libraries play a crucial role in promoting critical thinking and media literacy. As curated information hubs with expert staff, libraries are well-positioned to combat misinformation as trusted sources of truth. Empowering users to critically evaluate content across all platforms is more important than ever. "82% agree or strongly agree the library should work to tackle misinformation" highlighting the need for libraries to guide public understanding.



#### Key focus area

In partnership with the LGMA and media literacy professionals we will promote methods to help users verify facts and navigate misinformation, empowering them to make informed decisions.



#### How we will achieve success

Success will be measured by our ability to provide effective guides and tools that help users critically assess the accuracy of information they encounter, tailored to their media consumption habits.

### Literacy for All

Despite advancements, literacy remains a challenge in Irish society, and Kildare Libraries are pivotal in addressing this through both national initiatives and local programmes. From the 'Right to Read' campaign to the Kildare Readers Festival, we strive to support literacy across all community segments. Extending our collections to include materials for diverse populations, including non-English languages and resources for the LGBT+ and neurodivergent communities, is essential. "93% agree or strongly agree it is important to provide literature for the full spectrum of society," reinforcing our commitment to inclusivity.



#### Key focus area

Our focus is on supporting comprehensive literacy efforts and expanding our

collections to cater for every member of the community.



#### How we will achieve success

We will continue to participate in and develop reading and literacy programmes, enhancing our collections - as per our Collection Development Policy - to include a broader range of culturally and linguistically diverse materials.

## Our Community

# Reaching Out

Kildare Libraries serve as crucial community hubs, engaging diverse groups. Despite this, many potential users remain non-members. Our objective is to expand awareness and involvement across all communities within the library framework.

### Make Membership Easier

Library memberships offer substantial benefits, yet barriers such as complicated processes hinder user registration and renewal. Simplifying the process is essential. Immediate full membership upon online registration will provide access to a wide range of services. "Online members feel like second-class members." While online membership can give immediate access to eBooks and other eServices it is necessary to go to a library to obtain 'full membership' with certain documents required. The need for improvement was highlighted. Remarkably, 86% support a straightforward online registration process, demonstrating the demand for modernising access similar to other online services.



#### Key focus area

Our focus is on modernising membership procedures by eliminating outdated barriers, making it possible to become a full member from anywhere.



#### How we will achieve success

We will overhaul the current sign-up process and use design thinking to introduce a more appealing registration method, thereby facilitating easier access to library memberships.

### The Voice of the Youth

Engaging young people is vital, and partnering with youth organisations aims to amplify their voices in library policies and services, such as a Teen Festival. Surveys show 88% of respondents agree that libraries should connect more with schools, emphasising the importance of youth-focused initiatives.



#### Key focus area

Our strategic focus is empowering young people with a platform in their libraries.



#### How we will achieve success

We will collaborate with youth councils to coordinate programmes and events like festivals, providing young people with a meaningful role in library activities.

### Making Connections

Our libraries are vital community connectors that foster inter-generational and multicultural interactions. Supporting groups like local football clubs and knitting circles can broaden community engagement. A significant 73% of surveyed individuals express interest in combined community events, underscoring the potential for libraries to serve as hubs for diverse group interactions.



#### Key focus area

We will promote symbiotic relationships among various community groups to enhance mutual interests.



#### How we will achieve success

By organising joint events where community groups can share stories and collaborate, we will enhance understanding and community spirit.

### Inter-generational Connections

Kildare Libraries play a pivotal role in bridging the digital divide between tech-savvy youth and older generations. Creating spaces for skill-sharing enhances digital literacy and traditional skills. "Some people are afraid to use new tech," but 81% appreciate inter-generational events, showing a strong community desire for these interactions.



#### Key focus area

Fostering inter-generational learning and skills exchange is our primary focus.



#### How we will achieve success

By hosting events where young and old can teach and learn from each other, we will effectively bridge the generational divide.

### Celebrating All Cultures

Our communities are becoming increasingly diverse, so it's essential to create inclusive environments that celebrate all cultures as well as ours. To support integration and social inclusion. This approach not only enhances social cohesion but also enriches the cultural tapestry of our library services.



#### Key focus area

We will work to understand the cultural needs and preferences of all community users to develop programmes that celebrate and integrate diverse cultures.



#### How we will achieve success

By hosting culturally inclusive events and programmes, national and local cultural festivals. We will facilitate better cultural understanding and appreciation among all library users.

## Our Heritage

# Stories and Placemaking

Over the past decade, Kildare Libraries have evolved to meet the fast-paced demands of modern society, striving to communicate their extensive offerings more effectively. In an age where concise and captivating storytelling is paramount, the library system seeks to attract both existing users and newcomers to the diverse services of the Kildare Library Service.

### Consistent Communication Across Platforms

Despite utilising multiple marketing channels, Kildare Libraries face challenges in reaching all potential users due to the diverse ways people access information. It's crucial to enhance visibility across various platforms to meet today's

informational consumption trends. "I **never heard any advertisements in the media; I wouldn't have associated the library with exercise classes, or crafts or kids' events,**" reflects the need for broader outreach. Although **73% of users get event information from the newsletter**, many are unaware of its existence or don't receive it regularly. Additionally, social media engagement is low, with only **19% finding out about events this way**, underscoring the need to optimise these channels.



### Key focus area

Our strategy will concentrate on refining our marketing to make it more consistent and impactful, ensuring it resonates with both members and potential users.



### How we will achieve success

We will engage directly with our community to identify the most effective platforms for reaching them, followed by implementing a dynamic marketing plan that ensures quick and efficient communication of events.

## Discovering Our Heritage

The desire to connect with one's heritage is a powerful motivator for engagement. Offering genealogy services has been highly requested, with **75% interest in using such services. "The last time I used the library was to attend an event in Kilcock Library about local history; I enjoy that kind of thing," and 91% agree libraries should be repositories of local history.**



### Key focus area

Enhancing connections to personal and local heritage through targeted services and events is a priority.



### How we will achieve success

Kildare County Archives and Local Studies will deliver a range of archival, genealogical, and local history resources online. Our experienced genealogists will facilitate deeper connections to personal and community histories through the delivery of digitisation, research facilities, workshops, and outreach.

## Daily Life As Gaeilge

There's a significant interest in incorporating the Irish language into daily activities in a casual, engaging way. Activities like Irish Pilates have been well-received, indicating a broader opportunity for increasing Irish language engagement through everyday library interactions.



### Key focus area

We aim to make the Irish language a more integral, enjoyable part of our services at the library.



### How we will achieve success

We will work closely with our programming team and Irish Officer, to incorporate the Irish language into more library events, in publicity materials with

the use of bilingual - Irish /English - enhancing its presence and usage in library communications.

## Our Spaces

# Real Space / Digital World

In recent years, Kildare Libraries have made advancements in technology such as integrating sensory pods and virtual tech. As the digital landscape expands, so does the demand for both physical spaces, screen-free environments and digital spaces for accessing resources like eBooks and eAudiobooks. It's crucial for Kildare Libraries to adapt continuously to the evolving needs of both users and non-users.

### eServices for All

As digital literacy varies, some users feel left behind by the rapid advancement of library eServices, feeling intimidated or perceiving difficulties even before use. "I've never used any of your apps or anything - I had an idea in my head that they would be difficult to use."



#### Key focus area

Providing user training in our eServices and providing robust support to help users maximise these tools.



#### How we will achieve success

We will provide demonstrations and workshops in all of our eServices. We will also create straightforward guides to aid in their usage.

### Caffeine Culture

The rise of coffee culture in Ireland, where many remote workers prefer cafes over

other settings, poses both a challenge and an opportunity for libraries. Gone are the days of no food or drinks in the library. People are now welcome to bring tea or coffee and small snacks as long as they respect the space, keep it clean and respect other users. "63% agree that tea and coffee should be accessible in libraries." "I'd love a hangout space, with old fashioned Edinburgh library theme, Big comfy Queen Anne chairs, old fashioned comfy house, and coffee."



#### Key focus area

Leveraging the prevalent coffee culture to attract remote workers and other non-users to the library.



#### How we will achieve success

We will make it known to users that their teas and coffees are welcome. We can provide free keep cups. We will promote and incentivise the coffee culture to use the library for work, study and just a nice comfy free space to enjoy those beans and that book by creating a café-like atmosphere that encourages more visitors.

### Green Libraries and Outdoor Spaces

The popularity of biophilic design in workplaces and hospitality for its stress-relieving benefits suggests a similar approach could enhance library spaces. With 39% of survey respondents valuing outdoor library spaces highly, there is a clear mandate for integrating green, sustainable designs that also educate users on environmental awareness.



#### Key focus area

Expanding and enhancing outdoor and green spaces within our libraries to provide both relaxation and education on sustainable practices.



#### How we will achieve success

We aim to have outdoor spaces in all future library developments to aid biodiversity using native and pollinator friendly planting. If we can't in some existing locations we will incorporate biophilic design within.

### Data Dashboard

There's a growing need to monitor and manage library statistics efficiently. The creation of a data dashboard or KPI tracker will centralise data on various metrics, including physical and digital loans, membership, event attendance, and more.



#### Key focus area

Implementing advanced footfall monitoring systems across all library branches to provide accurate and live user traffic data.



#### How we will achieve success

We will standardise the installation of footfall sensor cams in all branches, integrating these data points into our centralised dashboard for real-time analytics.

### Library Innovation and Outreach

Introducing mobile library solutions like a WiFi-enabled vehicle and borrowable tech can address the digital divide and enhance accessibility. Innovative services such as library lockers for remote pick-ups and drop-offs could significantly extend our reach.



#### Key focus area

Expanding our service delivery models to include mobile and remote library services and to enhance accessibility and convenience for all users.



#### How we will achieve success

Our mobile library will come equipped with WiFi and multimedia tools for outreach events and we will pilot convenient remote locker systems for borrowing at appropriate locations.

### Accessibility & Neurodivergence

Inclusive design and Age Friendly spaces are important to make our spaces accessible and comfortable for all members including the neurodivergent community.



#### Key focus area

Review all our libraries and introduce sensory spaces and age friendly areas where appropriate.



#### How we will achieve success

Consult and work with representative groups, professionals and our accessibility officer to make meaningful, informed design choices and maintain our Age Friendly library status.

## Our Staff

# Enabling our Team

At the heart of Kildare Libraries is its dedicated team, who are integral to the success of the service. The national "Local Government Services Report 2023" highlighted an impressive 90% satisfaction rate for library services. The survey also revealed a strong awareness of library services among the public, increasing from 78% in 2021 to 82% in 2023. Results showed that the library services were the fifth most utilised local authority service underscoring the pivotal role that skilled and engaged staff play in overall user satisfaction.

Staff feedback echoed the importance of their roles, with one staff member stating, "I just love it - the idea that we might change a life or many lives by doing what we do." Others highlighted the diverse and impactful nature of their work, "The variety involved in the job - so much going on, different age ranges, different activities, and the possibility to make an impact and a difference in the community." Moreover, many staff expressed a deep sense of fulfilment in assisting patrons, "I love helping people - whether this is to find books they want, make recommendations, teach them how to research their school projects..." However, challenges such as covering for vacant positions and a need for more professional development were also voiced, underscoring the necessity for improved support and resources.

We will engage in a multifaceted approach to staff development and workplace improvements. By addressing these initiatives, Kildare Libraries aims to nurture a more dynamic, skilled, and motivated workforce capable of adapting to changing community needs and enhancing overall library services.



### Key focus area

Providing continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities



### How we will achieve success

In association with the LGMA we will provide CPD that includes workshops, seminars, and courses relevant to current library trends and technologies. Establish a programme to assist staff in pursuing professional librarian qualifications.

competencies, like AI, that align with personal and professional growth.



### Key focus area

Facilitating Regular Team Meetings



### How we will achieve success

Schedule consistent team meetings to foster communication, innovation and collaborative problem-solving, enhancing team cohesion and operational efficiency.



### Key focus area

Enhancing both online and in-person training opportunities



### How we will achieve success

Expand training modules to include both digital and physical formats, catering to varying learning preferences and ensuring comprehensive skill development.



### Key focus area

Leveraging existing staff skills while fostering new ones



### How we will achieve success

Create opportunities for staff to apply their existing skills in new, innovative projects while encouraging the acquisition of new

## Our Infrastructure

# Capital Developments 2025-2029

Between 2025 and 2029, transformative capital developments will modernise library services across Kildare County. These projects focus on enhancing accessibility, sustainability, and user experience, creating inclusive spaces for learning, collaboration, and cultural enrichment.

### Newbridge Library, Kildare County Archives & Cultural Centre

The planned expansion for Newbridge library will meet the needs of a population that has doubled since the 1990s. The project completed the Part 8 planning process in 2023. The new, 2340 square metre facility will incorporate and conserve the existing Art Deco County Library building, provide a modern library service for the Newbridge Community and a new home for the Kildare County Archives and Local Studies Collection.



#### Key focus area

Modernising and expanding the library facilities to support a growing community and enhance user experiences.



#### How we will achieve success

Newbridge Library, Kildare County Archives & Cultural Centre will be a flagship public building that stands at the entrance to the town. The multi-functional facility will include a modern archive facility, library and cultural space. Externally the project will include a sensory garden to the rear, an enclosed garden space at the front and sustainably designed public realm space on the Main street that includes seating, landscaping and recreational space. The building will accommodate meeting rooms for large and small gatherings, exhibition, lecture and workshop spaces, remote working facilities, printing and research supports, temperature controlled archives and local studies collections, sensory and gallery spaces. A place where people come for the ambiance, to work, to learn, to meet others, to relax and to become inspired.

### Development of Clane Library

Our new Clane library will transition from a cramped 98<sup>m2</sup> leased space to a more spacious 580<sup>m2</sup> facility at The Village Centre. This expansion is designed to accommodate a community that has grown significantly since the 1990s.



#### Key focus area

Relocating and expanding Clane library to better serve its enlarged community and meet diverse user needs.



#### How we will achieve success

The new library will offer comprehensive facilities including adult, children, and young adult lending collections, a maker space, study spaces, a multifunctional space for events and exhibitions, a meeting room, and a sensory garden and courtyard space for outdoor events, effectively supporting the quadrupled population.

### Upgrading the Mobile Library

The upgrade of our Mobile Library to a new, environmentally friendly vehicle equipped with modern technology will extend library services more effectively across Kildare County.



#### Key focus area

Revamping the mobile library to expand its role in community outreach with modern technology and environmentally friendly fuel options.



#### How we will achieve success

The new Mobile Library will come equipped with public WiFi, a digital screen promoting library activities and eServices, and self-service printing. It will also facilitate outreach activities such as storytelling and digital workshops, enhancing accessibility and engagement throughout the county.

### Celbridge Community Facility and Library

A new multi-purpose community facility is planned for Celbridge to replace the library built in 1983,

which no longer meets community needs due to limited space and accessibility.



#### Key focus area

Creating a comprehensive community hub that provides enhanced cultural and recreational opportunities.



#### How we will achieve success

By developing a versatile community facility that integrates a library, cultural centre, meeting spaces, a playground, an outdoor performance area, and a sensory garden, we will provide a dynamic space that encourages greater community engagement and caters to a population of over 20,000.

### Maynooth Library Development

Kildare Library Service will investigate options to deliver a new library in Maynooth, to enable an enhanced level of service to be offered to the expanding population of Maynooth.



#### Key focus area

Identify suitable locations for Maynooth library that offer more space for community engagement and library services.



#### How we will achieve success

During the lifetime of this development plan we will investigate the options to deliver a new library in Maynooth to enable an enhanced level of service for a growing population.

## Our Environment

# Sustaining Our Planet

Kildare Library Service has responded to the climate change and biodiversity emergencies in a number of ways. As Kildare County Council now has a Climate Action Coordinator, Biodiversity Officer and Energy Efficiency Officer we have the expertise to draw on to inform our strategies, our events and public programming.

### Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Events

We are committed to aligning library programming with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to inspire community action and awareness. Planning for the future, we hope to offer practical workshops and events that celebrate our natural environment and our resourcefulness.



#### Key focus area

Delivering events that address critical SDG themes like health, sustainable communities, and clean energy while celebrating nature and resourcefulness.



#### How we will achieve success

By hosting diverse events, practical workshops, and collaborative activities, we will engage the community in meaningful and enjoyable ways, with a particular focus on the following areas: Affordable and Clean Energy, Good Health and Well-Being, and Quality Education. Our initiatives will promote Gender Equality and Decent Work and Economic Growth by positioning libraries as catalysts for change and platforms for opportunity. We prioritise Innovation and the Reduction of Inequality while actively contributing to Climate Action and the development of Sustainable Communities. Responsible Production and Consumption is central to our approach, reflected in practices like green

procurement and zero-waste libraries. Additionally, we strive to support Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions by fostering inclusive spaces and building partnerships.

### Retrofit & Restoration of Existing Buildings

Improving energy efficiency in library buildings is a priority for reducing environmental impact and operational costs. We have begun to retrofit our buildings to make them more energy efficient. This work is ongoing that will require substantial investment including, insulation, heat pumps and PV solar panels where appropriate.



#### Key focus area

Retrofitting buildings with sustainable energy solutions, including insulation, heat pumps, and solar panels.



#### How we will achieve success

Through phased energy upgrades, starting with major works in Athy and Leixlip libraries, supported by investment and climate action plans.

### New, Energy-Efficient, Low-Carbon, & Biodiverse Libraries

Our latest building, Naas Library & Cultural Centre includes a sensory garden with pollinators and native plants. Rainwater is collected and used to irrigate the flower boxes all over Naas town. Swift boxes were installed to provide nesting sites for these summer visitors.

In our plans for a new Clane library we consulted with our Climate Action Coordinator and Energy Officer and have included extensive PV solar, battery storage and heat pumps. Green procurement will inform our tender for construction.

We received some grant aid to buy a new Mobile Library and are currently researching the best options as to carbon free fuels such as HVO in collaboration with our Fleet Manager and Machinery Yard. Solar panels will be included on the roof of this vehicle.

Future library projects will serve as models of sustainability and biodiversity, showcasing innovative and eco-conscious designs.



#### Key focus area

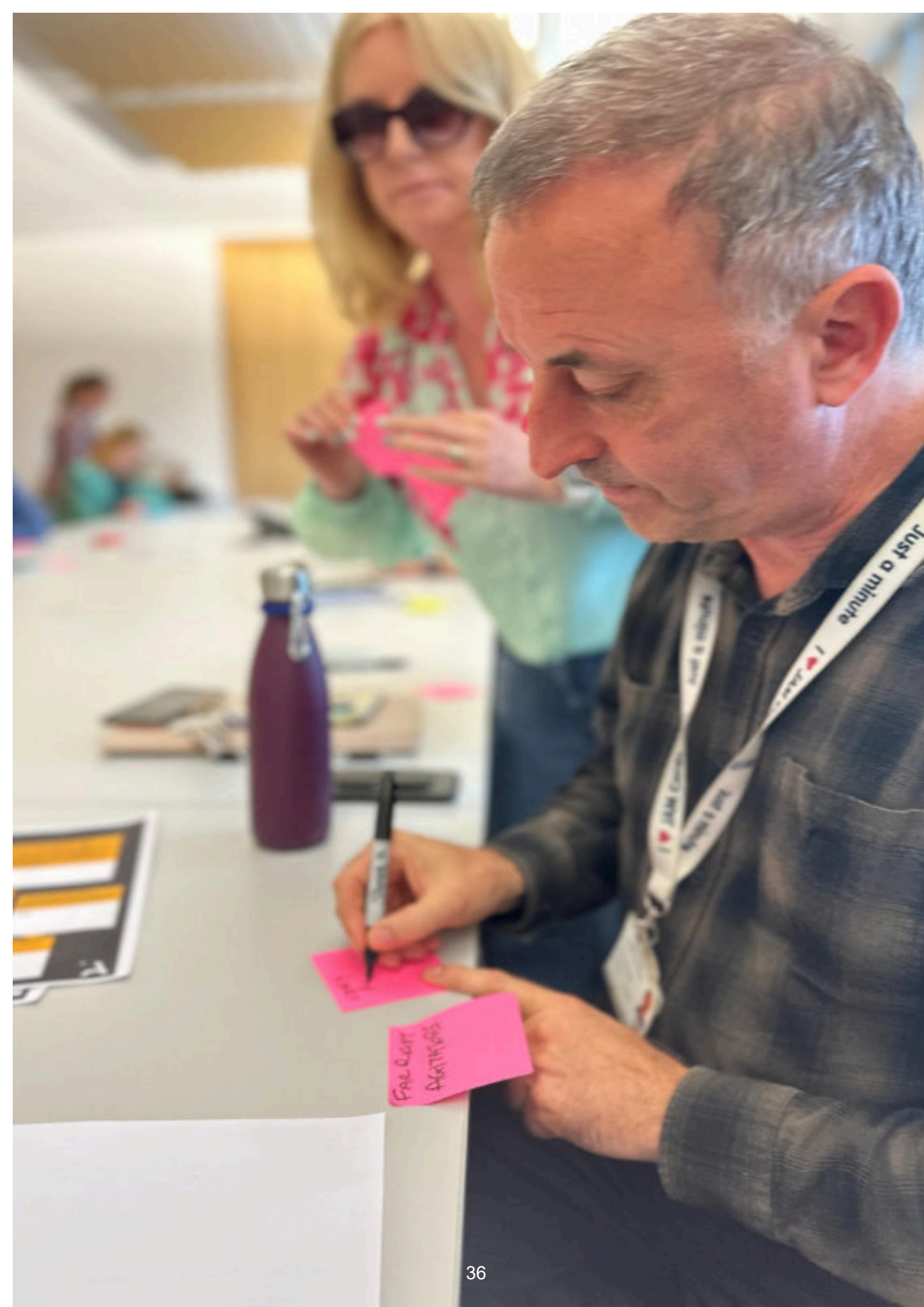
Developing libraries with renewable energy systems, green infrastructure, and biodiversity-focused features.



#### How we will achieve success

By integrating renewable energy systems like solar panels and heat pumps, guided by input from Climate Action and Energy teams, and adopting green procurement practices.

Mobile libraries run on a sustainable fuel such as HVO. All new capital developments will have inputs from the Climate Action team including the Energy Officer and the Biodiversity Officer and we will aim to implement their suggestions.

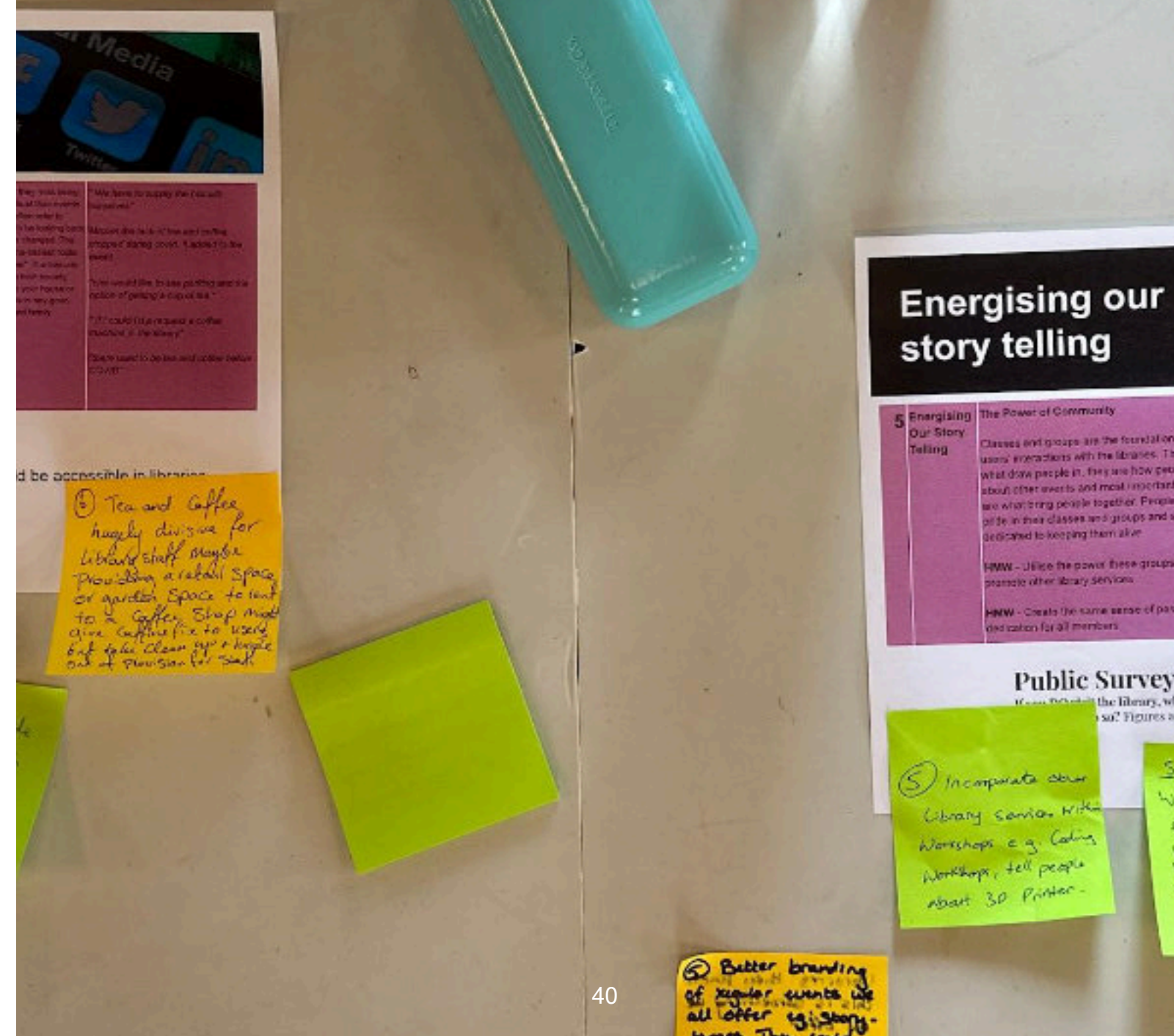




# Consultation Process

*"Modern libraries must reflect the different ways in which people use them and we need to continually review our approach to ensure existing and emerging needs are met."*

Heather Humphreys, T.D.  
Minister for Rural and Community Development



Artistic impression of the consultation with Comhairle na nÓg by artist Dee McNally, 2024

# A Human Centered, Design Approach

Understanding the needs of our community is increasingly complex as society diversifies and evolves at a rapid pace. Yesterday's assumptions often fall short of today's requirements. Many innovation or strategy failures stem from outdated assumptions about user problems, needs, and solutions.

In this dynamic environment, it is crucial to continually reassess and update our understanding of the community we serve. The rapid pace of change means that strategies which were effective in the past may no longer be relevant. Therefore, a more flexible and responsive approach is required. By engaging directly with the community and prioritising a deep understanding of their current needs and behaviours, we can develop solutions that are both innovative and effective.

For the development plan we have adopted a design-led methodology consistent with the design principles for government, and we actively consulted with a diverse range of stakeholders to ensure that our services

are aligned with the real, often nuanced needs of our users. This commitment to human-centred design not only enhances the relevance and impact of our initiatives but also fosters a more inclusive and supportive community environment. Moreover, this approach empowers our staff by involving them in the consultation and design process, ensuring they have a direct hand in shaping the services they deliver and are better equipped to meet the evolving needs of the community.

Our approach followed the ARRIVE framework, prioritising the first four of the six stages for this project:

A	Audit
R	Research
R	Reframe
I	Ideate
V	Validate
E	Execute

AUDIT: Identifying and framing the right questions to understand the core problem.

Firstly it was important to first gain a macro understanding of the library system. We completed a PESTLE analysis and scoping consultations with library staff and leadership. This work helped us to identify high level

challenges and questions for deeper investigation with the wider community.

RESEARCH: Gathering insights through direct engagement with users and stakeholders.

Through a variety of user centered research methods we empathised with our members and non members. Non members are particularly helpful in clarifying any gap that exists between the existing service provision and the collective community needs. In fact a strong dissenting voice often helps to clarify ambiguous issues, to make visible important misgivings held by the wider community. Through the course of this research it became clear that there would be no issue finding current active users to interview and survey, capturing non-users and potential future users would prove more challenging. Library leadership made significant efforts to ensure 10%of survey responses reflected a non user voice.

Staff are uniquely placed to make sense of the community feedback and relate it to existing initiatives. Their rich experience means they can assimilate public feedback into actionable insight but long term employees are subject to bias and outdated assumptions. To overcome this a number of staff participated in interviewing and first received training. They were provided with an interview topic guide along with a template to transcribe interviews.

REFRAME: Analysing the collected data to define key insights and needs.

The findings from our AUDIT and RESEARCH were synthesised and shortlisted in to 26 challenge areas. A visual document was prepared and used as part of an ideation workshop held in the newly launched county library. Ideas were captured in 2 formats, over 100 high level ideas were captured on post-its and 25 considered ideas expanded out and detailed through the provision of a template.

WRITE-UP

The information amassed through this process has been synthesised into themes & topics informing the strategic actions outlined in this document.

Large scale public survey - >700 responses  
Branch Consultations - X5  
Staff interview training - X2 group sessions  
One to one interviews - X17



Design Principles for Government in Ireland



Design Principles for Government in Ireland (2022)- Dept.Public Expenditure & Reform

# Appendix

## Table of strategic actions

<b>Our Collections Enlivening Content:</b>	<p>1/ Make Reading More Gratifying through the Public Library: Our primary goal is to enhance the reading experience by gamifying it, making it more rewarding and competitive, thereby increasing readership.</p> <p>2/ Getting People Thinking: We aim to develop straightforward methods to help users verify facts and navigate misinformation, empowering them to make informed decisions.</p> <p>3/ Literacy for All: Our focus is on supporting comprehensive literacy efforts and expanding our collections to cater to every community member.</p>
<b>Our Community Reaching Out:</b>	<p>4/ Make Membership Easier: Our focus is on modernising membership procedures by eliminating outdated barriers, making it possible to become a full member from anywhere.</p> <p>5/ Collaboration with Young People: Our strategic focus is empowering young people with a platform in their libraries.</p> <p>6/ Making Connections: We will promote symbiotic relationships among various community groups to enhance mutual interests.</p> <p>7/ Inter-generational Connections: Fostering inter-generational learning and skills exchange is our primary focus.</p> <p>8/ Celebrating All Cultures: We will work to understand the cultural needs and preferences of all community users to develop programs that celebrate and integrate diverse cultures.</p>
<b>Our Heritage Stories and Placemaking:</b>	<p>9/ Consistent Communication Across Platforms: Our strategy will concentrate on refining our marketing to make it more consistent and impactful, ensuring it resonates with both members and potential users.</p> <p>10/ Discovering Our Heritage: Enhancing connections to personal and local heritage through targeted services and events is a priority.</p> <p>11/ Daily Life As Gaeilge: We aim to make the Irish language a more integral, enjoyable part of our services at the library.</p>
<b>Our Spaces Real Space / Digital World:</b>	<p>12/ <b>eServices for All:</b> Enhancing the user-friendliness of our eServices and providing robust support to help users maximise these tools.</p> <p>13/ <b>Caffeine Culture:</b> Leveraging the prevalent coffee culture to attract remote workers and other non-users to the library.</p> <p>14/ <b>Green Libraries &amp; Outdoor Spaces:</b> Expanding and enhancing outdoor and green spaces within our libraries to provide both relaxation and education on sustainable practices.</p>

	<p>15/ <b>Data Dashboard:</b> Developing a comprehensive digital dashboard to track and analyse library usage and performance metrics effectively.</p> <p>16/ <b>Footfall Cameras:</b> Implementing advanced footfall monitoring systems across all library branches to provide accurate and live user traffic data.</p> <p>17/ <b>Library Innovation &amp; Outreach:</b> Expanding our service delivery models to include mobile and remote library services to enhance accessibility and convenience for all users.</p> <p>18/ <b>Accessibility &amp; Neurodivergence:</b> Review all our libraries and introduce sensory spaces and age friendly areas where appropriate.</p>
<b>Our Staff Enabling our Team:</b>	<p>19/ <b>Providing continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities:</b> Develop a structured CPD program that includes workshops, seminars, and courses relevant to current library trends and technologies. Establish a program to assist staff in pursuing professional librarian qualifications.</p> <p>20/ <b>Facilitating Regular Team Meetings:</b> Schedule consistent team meetings to foster communication, innovation and collaborative problem-solving, enhancing team cohesion and operational efficiency.</p> <p>21/ <b>Enhancing both online and in-person training opportunities:</b> Expand training modules to include both digital and physical formats, catering to varying learning preferences and ensuring comprehensive skill development.</p> <p>22/ <b>Leveraging existing staff skills while fostering new ones:</b> Create opportunities for staff to apply their existing skills in new, innovative projects while encouraging the acquisition of new competencies that align with personal and professional growth.</p>
<b>Our Infrastructure Capital Developments planned 2025-2029:</b>	<p>23/ <b>Newbridge Library, County Archives &amp; Cultural Centre:</b> Modernising and expanding the library facilities to support a growing community and enhance user experiences.</p> <p>24/ <b>Development of Clane Library:</b> Relocating and expanding the Clane library to better serve its enlarged community and meet diverse user needs.</p> <p>25/ <b>Upgrading the Mobile Library:</b> Revamping the mobile library to expand its role in community outreach with modern technology and environmentally friendly fuel options.</p> <p>26/ <b>Celbridge Community Facility and Library Redevelopment:</b> Creating a comprehensive community hub that provides enhanced cultural and recreational opportunities.</p> <p>27/ <b>Maynooth Library Development:</b> Identify suitable locations for Maynooth library that offer more space for community engagement and library services.</p>
<b>Our Environment Sustaining our planet:</b>	<p>28/ <b>Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Events:</b> We will continue hosting diverse events aligned with the SDGs, focusing o practical workshops and celebrations of nature to inspire action and resourcefulness.</p> <p>29/ <b>Retrofit &amp; Restoration of Existing Buildings:</b> We are committed to ongoing retrofitting, with plans for energy-efficient upgrades like insulation, heat pumps, and solar panels across library buildings.</p> <p>30/ <b>New, Energy-Efficient, Low-Carbon, &amp; Biodiverse Libraries:</b> Future library projects will prioritise sustainable design, including renewable energy systems and biodiverse features, with climate-conscious practices guiding every development.</p>

