

VOTE No1

Cllr

Malcolm Noonan

Kilkenny City West Local Elections on May 23rd 2014



Creating  
Sustainable  
Communities  
Together

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## A chara

I am standing as a candidate for the Local Elections in May in the newly constituted electoral area of Kilkenny City West (which includes Callan, Dunnamaggin, Kells and Stoneyford).

These Local and European Elections of 2014 are happening at a pivotal time in Irish, European and Global history. We have come through the worst economic and fiscal crisis imaginable where failed economics and lack of political courage have enriched a minority and impoverished many people, perhaps for generations to come. The gap between rich and poor could not be more pronounced than it is just now. There also exists a climate crisis that needs to be urgently addressed for social justice, economic as well as for environmental reasons.

We have a clear choice; return to boom bust cycles of economic growth or seek to create a new paradigm based on local economic resilience, income equality, sustainable development, respect for natural resources, and one that is socially inclusive, diverse and where opportunities for all are equal; young and old.

## How can this be achieved?

Well it needs to begin at a local level and it starts with you. Where structures of local governance are such that they support local indigenous enterprise, innovation and entrepreneurial activity, where they support the arts, community development, engagement and participation, social inclusion and are governed by sound planning, energy, transportation and development policies and then we have a sound basis for change. But that's only one half of the battle. We must be collectively prepared to engage in a meaningful way with these structures to create a fairer and sustainable model of community, social, economic and environmental solidarity.

The Local Government Reform process which frames this election is based on achieving savings and creating efficiencies within Local Government. While certain savings may be warranted it will further centralise power to Government and undermine community's capacity to respond to the crisis through participative means.

Participation is therefore crucial to achieving change. Many people have lost faith in Local Government's capacity to deliver radical reform. I believe passionately in local government as a cohesive force for engagement but its potential has yet to be realised. I have worked across Europe on projects with other local authorities. Indeed the EU has in place a range of tools, funding streams and initiatives that we could tap into here in Kilkenny. In my opinion a dedicated unit within the reformed structures of Kilkenny County Council that can lead on thematic EU projects is essential to reap the rewards for communities; rural and urban.

More deep rooted is the need to change how Local Government engages with communities; moving towards collaborative planning and away from adversarial planning processes that become

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a point of conflict between communities and public bodies or private developments. The idea of 'co designing' or working together towards a consensus will allow all voices to be heard in a process and give us all a sense of both ownership of and responsibility towards our future plans and actions.

This newsletter is about giving you an overview of my achievements over the past five years, my current priorities and my objectives for the years ahead should the people of Kilkenny decide to put their trust in me again. There's a lot to consider; but I feel it's important that I be clear with you about my agenda and vision.

Táim ag tnúth go mór le bhur nabhár spéise a phlé le libh linn an bhfeachtas seo agus tá súil agam go leanfaidh a comhrá ar aghaidh libh ina dhiaidh an toghchán comh mhaith.

I look forward to talking about issues that interest you over the course of this campaign. I also hope that you will stay involved in the conversation after election day. Please feel free to contact me about any of the issues I have raised here, or about anything that concerns you related to local government.

*Melcedon*



## A little bit about me

Married to Jennie, we have three boys; Colm, Tristan and Stephen. Our lives are busy. Jennie works in community family support and childcare and is a student, but we still manage to squeeze in time for family. I come from a big family and I have always appreciated how our parents ensured we received the emotional and material support we needed through life.

Before entering politics, I had worked as an environmental and community activist for twenty years; as Director of Friends of the Earth, Ireland and a founding member of the Kilkenny County Community and Voluntary Forum. I setup and ran my own landscape gardening business for many years after returning from working in Dublin as a graphic designer. In the past few years I have worked with a community based suicide prevention project; Lifeline Kilkenny where we developed Kilkenny's first County suicide prevention plan .

In 2006 I received a BA(Hons) in Sustainable Rural Development from LIT. This has given me a good grounding for my career as a local public representative and in Green politics but in particular on issues that are affecting rural Ireland.

I was elected in 2004 as Kilkenny's first Green Party County and Borough Councillor. I worked hard over the subsequent five years and with some notable achievements; bringing an ecological perspective to planning, transport, water, community development and other areas of Local Authority work. But by 2009 I faced into that year's election against a backdrop of deep political and civil turmoil. It was humbling to have been held in such trust by people in Kilkenny to be returned again when our Party had lost most of our representation on councils around the country.

In 2011 I contested the leadership of the Green Party when John Gormley stood down. My wish was to see the party return to what it was good at, representing communities at local level, but also to distance ourselves from the destruction caused by the bank guarantee and bailout. We should never have stood over that. Following Eamon Ryan's election I was appointed Environment Spokesperson. I still believe that we have much to offer Irish politics but more importantly Irish people.



Ours is an international movement and here an all Island Party founded on principles of equity, sustainable economics, social justice and global solidarity towards planet and people.

## The City's Mayor

As Mayor of Kilkenny I embraced the issue of diversity as a theme; diversity of culture, of political consensus and opinion and of the many communities that go to make up the fabric of our City and County. It was a great privilege to be Mayor in 2009 when the City celebrated 400 years of its charter and I was proud to see the logo I designed for the Kilkenny 400 year used in official publication on the event. It was important to use the year to revive the significance of St Patrick's Day on the City's event calendar. 2009 marked a turning point in reaffirming the value of the festival to Kilkenny people.

It was also important that I challenge our collective thinking on the city; on issues of transport in particular as I was convinced that pursuance of the Central Access Scheme or Inner Relief Road was wrong on every level. I held a number of Town Hall meetings on urban mobility and other issues.

My term was also marked by securing funds to purchase St Mary's Church on behalf of the people of Kilkenny ([see more about this later this newsletter](#))

## Supporting Local Economies

My time as Mayor was set against a backdrop of a deep economic crisis. Exploring solutions that move away from unsustainable economic growth but towards resilient local economies has and continues to be one of the cornerstones of my motivation in local government. With its wealth of resources, Kilkenny is well positioned and has great future potential in terms of sustainable local economy. My office hosted a conference 'Local Economies; Strong Communities'. It brought together experts from Australia, US and the UK all with a singular message around strengthening local economic activity, limiting the damage to local food supply chains by large retail multiples, changing public procurement in favour of local goods and services and using local community scale energy sources for local business.

My happiest memories of my term as Mayor were around opening up the office to the people. We held dances, concerts, recitals, drama, town hall meetings, film nights, social events, civic receptions on an almost weekly basis. Indeed I was privileged to play a concert in City Hall with Tommy Ramone of the Ramones, to honour Cartoon Saloon, Young Irish Filmmakers, to revitalise our twinning with Moret Sur Loing and initiate a twinning with Kilkenny Minnesota. It was a whirlwind year, one that I will cherish. The abolition of our Borough Council and Mayoralty will be regretted by most people in Kilkenny.

representing  
communities  
at local  
level





## What have I done over the past five years?

'Mayor Malcolm Noonan with members of the Kilkenny 400 Fruit Tree Project Committee and Mayor Patrick Septier of Moret Sur Loing planting an old Kilkenny variety of apple tree by the banks of the Nore'.

### • Kilkenny's first County Integration Strategy

During my Mayoralty I was instrumental in the setting up of Kilkenny Integration Forum, becoming its first and current Chairperson. Since then we developed Kilkenny's first County Integration Strategy; an important piece of work in ensuring our new communities and indigenous Traveller Community can participate fully and feel included in the civic life of our City and County.

### • Kilkenny Community Garden's & Allotment Association

I advanced the development of Kilkenny Community Garden's And Allotment Association and secured with the help of our Parks Department a municipal allotment site which now provides a food and social resource to 24 plot holders and two community projects at Shandon Park.

### • Developing EU Projects and Funding Opportunities

One of my first priorities as Mayor was to secure the future of St Mary's Church and Graveyard in the heart of the City. I had long felt that it could become one of our most valued heritage sites and was instrumental in securing €900,000 in funding to purchase St Mary's in December 2009. As chairperson of the restoration committee I am now overseeing the church and graveyards exciting redevelopment.

### • URBACT LINKS

During my time as Mayor I wrote Kilkenny's application to become part of an EU Funded Project URBACT LINKS ([www.urbact.eu/links](http://www.urbact.eu/links)), as a consequence, Kilkenny was partnered with 9 other EU Cities and a related Local Action Plan (LAP) was adopted in December 2013. The objective was to develop best practice in ecological restoration of heritage buildings and the sustainable development of historic town centres.

The objective was to develop best practice in ecological restoration of heritage buildings and the sustainable development of historic town centres. This work is ongoing through the Local Action Plan adopted by Kilkenny Borough Council in December 2013.

Within the plan I initiated innovative on site training programmes in St Mary's Church on traditional building skills and eco restoration. I proposed a 'Living Above the Shops Scheme' to tie in with the 'Living Cities' initiative to attract more people to live in the City Centre and reduce our housing list. We advanced proposals through LINKS for an electric shuttle bus service and seek funding opportunities for these projects

## What have I done over the past five years? continued...

under the European Commission's ERDF Programme, 2014–20. This will form the basis for our proposal to the EU later in 2014.

I am proud of the achievements of LINKS to date. It is my hope that our newly constituted local government structures will provide further opportunities for EU Partnerships and Thematic Twinnings with Kilkenny City and County to attract investment, enhance research and development and promote entrepreneurship particularly among young people.

### • The 400 Fruit Tree Project

As Mayor I was keen to develop legacy projects related to Kilkenny 400. One proposal put forward by a member of the public during one of my Town Hall meetings caught my imagination. The proposal was to plant 400 fruit trees, around the City; in schools, business campus, public spaces and housing estates to connect the City with urban food growing, recalling the City's food growing on burgage plots and how it can connect to future resilience. I invested some of my Mayoral allowance in the project. Others invested too and we convened a group of volunteers to oversee and plant small orchards. To date we have exceeded the target and plan to continue the project with the support of the Local Authority.



## What have we done as Local Authorities over the last five years government term?

- Purchase of St Mary's, the Brewery site and developing public realm projects in Kilkenny City and surrounding towns are but a few worth mentioning. Added to this we have put significant investment in the upgrade of wastewater and water treatment plants, including Purcellsinch and the Kilkenny City supply. We developed Woodstock Gardens, more cycle lanes, play facilities, parks and recycling facilities.
- We have opened the Ferrybank Library Service, advanced the new City Library Project and supported the development of the new Butler Gallery, We turned a disused swimming pool into a community resource for the Marble City Boxing Club.
- Significant road improvement schemes have been completed on the Kells road, Newpark Drive and other key areas. We have developed the Medieval Mile project and other plans to further enhance economic development.
- Kilkenny Borough Council has given significant support to many community projects and our diverse festival programme over many years. Kilkenny Arts Festival has been but one of the beneficiaries. The abolition of the Borough Council will present a challenge to the new single County Council structure. It is my hope that these projects;
- The City and County has and continues to win awards in Tidy Towns, IBAL and other forums. This is reflective of the collective effort that the elected members and staff of Kilkenny Local Authorities put in with the support of the wider community.
- Retrofitted over 140 houses, 2 community centres and business premises to a high level of thermal comfort and energy efficiency.

# What other things have I done over the past five years?

- I worked with Marble City Boxing Club to help secure their new premises at the old James Stephen's Swimming Pool
- **Established Kilkenny County Cycling and Walking Campaign Group**
- I have been the only member of Kilkenny County Council or Kilkenny Borough Council to vote and actively campaign against the Central Access Scheme and to advocate for the completion of the Northern Ring Road first.
- **Brought forward proposals to develop Kilkenny as a training hub in traditional building skills and eco restoration.**
- Successfully campaigned for investment in cycle infrastructure around the City
- **Advanced plans for a low floor Electric Shuttle Bus Service for Kilkenny City linked to Rural Transport.**
- Took Supreme Court Action to demand access to justice on environmental issues that is not prohibitively expensive to citizens or community groups.
- **Sought 'green' public procurement by favouring local contractors, ecological and locally sourced materials for public projects**
- Campaigned for policies to protect vernacular heritage of our towns and villages
- **Campaigned for protection of local shops, family business and farm families against the practices of retail multiples**
- Advocated the retrofit programme for low income households across the City to address the issue of fuel poverty urban and rural, will continue to be developed and supported.

## • **The Central Access Scheme and Participation in Decision Making**

I have spent the past ten years campaigning against the Central Access Scheme (CAS) and arguing the case for completing the loop of the outer ring road around Kilkenny City. The logic of this is self evident; completing a defined development boundary around the city, eliminating HGV traffic through residential areas, Kennyswell Rd, Granges Rd, taking 'through' traffic out of the city and protecting the historic core of the city and our heritage reputation. The CAS has already cost you the taxpayer millions of euro and will cost much more by the time Kilkenny County Council have completed archaeological investigations in the most sensitive area of the City at Vicar St.

**'I don't know many people who think it's a good idea to spend 11 or 12 million euro on a piece of road and a bridge to a derelict site in a small city of 26,000 people. We can and must move from adversarial planning towards collaboration for the common good'.**

In September 2013, Kilkenny people took to the streets in the largest single demonstration against a local public project ever held in Kilkenny. Over 7,000 petition signatures have been gathered by a dedicated campaign group of individuals and the case for the completion of the outer ring road over the CAS has been made by this group and concerned heritage groups. All of this was ignored by Kilkenny County Council and most of the elected members of both Councils.

So what can we learn from this? It is clear to me that local government needs to change how it brings projects forward. Having accurately identified the problem, there needs to be engagement with communities, with all stakeholders and collaboration towards solutions. CAS was presented as a fait accompli, the public were asked to 'comment' on it. Local government can and must do things better.



# Membership of Voluntary Committees & other Forums

- Chairperson and founding member of Kilkenny Integration Forum
- Chairperson and founder of Kilkenny Community Gardens & Allotments Association
- Chairperson St Patrick's Day festival and Tadfest committee
- Chairperson kilkenny cycling and walking campaign group and rep on national federation of cycle campaign groups (cyclist.ie)
- Chairperson St Mary's Church & Graveyard Conservation & Restoration Committee
- Member of urbact local support group (ulsg) links eu programme for historic cities
- Member of Kilkenny Heritage Forum
- Member of Rockfall Music Festival committee (raising funds for O'Neill Centre) for 25 years
- Member City Walls steering committee
- Member strategic policy committee for planning
- Director and vice chairperson of Loughboy Area Resource Centre (larc)
- Member Kennyswell Mass committee
- Director Barnstorm Youth Theatre Company
- Chairperson Comhairle na nOg Steering Committee





# My objectives over the next five years

The single greatest challenge we face as a society now is how we adapt to the rapid pace of sociological, ecological and economic change within a world that is far less secure due to resource depletion.

We can only change the global if we foster and nurture the local. A community's resilience can be measured by participation in local decision making and activation through voluntary activity. The local government 'reform' that sets the backdrop to the 2014 local elections assumes that Local Community Development is a service that needs to be provided and not a radical voice for change.

If the community voice is to be heard in the new proposed local government structures, they will need to be resourced and treated as equals. If Kilkenny County Council is taking the lead role in funding and facilitating local community development, community organisations should be afforded the freedom to maintain that critical independent thinking that represents marginalised groups so well.

Training of community groups towards participatory planning to help rural and urban communities to develop their own plans and participate fully in the new Social and Economic Committees (SEC's) that are being established after May 2014.



**Communities should be placed at the centre of Local Governance and Decision Making**



# Other Priorities

- Ensuring that community development principles underpin all new structures within the new Local Community Development Committees (LCDC's)
- I hope to build on the outputs of 'Local Economies, Strong Communities' initiative by developing policies on local Green Public Procurement, supporting local food growers and producers, supporting our indigenous craft and creative sectors, small and medium enterprises, and our independent retailers.
- Work to advance training in participative planning methodologies within Kilkenny County Council in order that future development plans and public projects move beyond statutory and often tokenistic 'consultation' towards inclusive participation of everyone in local decision making, including where feasible plebiscites are used to deliberate on large infrastructural projects that can affect rural or urban communities.
- Ensuring that the Aarhus Convention on Access to Justice on Environmental Issues becomes embedded in the Corporate Policy and Citizen Charter of Kilkenny County Council
- Advancement of rural renewable energy projects
- Advancement of the Callan 'Social Inclusion Town' initiative
- Explore EU Funding opportunities to build on the Commonage Architectural Project in Callan and URBACT LINKS in Kilkenny that will advance Kilkenny as a Centre of Excellence for Traditional Building Skills and Eco Restoration Training and Research.
- Continue to pursue a Pilot Public Transport Project for Kilkenny City based on a low floor electric shuttle bus service
- Work with relevant agencies,( SEAI, EU) to develop the Brewery site in Kilkenny as Ireland's first Zero Carbon development and a net exporter of renewable energy to the grid.
- Work with stakeholders to build and manage a public skate park on the brewery site and to explore options for other 'minority' sports in the city.
- Develop projects, plans and policies based on 'modal shift', cycling/walking, car pooling, park and stride etc (Smarter Travel) as alternatives to outdated expensive projects like the Central Access Scheme (CAS).
- Develop a City and County Action Plan for Cycling and Walking
- Continue to develop urban food growing initiatives such as 400 fruit tree project, Community Gardens and Allotments countywide



- Develop Local Climate Action Plans to help communities to reduce energy consumption, tackle fuel poverty, address energy needs using local renewable energy sources and adapt to and mitigate against future extreme weather events.
- Work with rural communities to develop Local Action Plans and Village Design Statements to help protect rural areas, services and economies
- Work with local business, food producers and the farming community to protect local food supply chains by enhancing the Kilkenny Farmer's Market, implementing planning policies that favour town centre's over out of town retail multiples and working with initiatives such as Healthy Food for All to ensure that low income families have access to good wholesome food.
- Work to strengthen programme budgets for the Arts Office and Library Services, reinstate Community Arts Grants and strengthen the creative and crafts sector with relevant agencies and promote the development of a new Strategic Plan for the Arts for County Kilkenny
- Strengthen the position of Kilkenny's St Patrick's Day Festival and Tradfest to become one of the premier St Patrick's Day Festival's in Ireland.
- Work with other festivals to share resources, including a single box office and develop a common marketing strategy for the City and County's festivals
- Incorporate the initiatives such as the implementation of the County Suicide Prevention Plan and mental health initiatives into the work of the Local Authority.
- Continue to work towards integration and inclusion of new communities and the Traveller Community in County Kilkenny
- A new County Play Policy for children.
- Continue to act to protect local family and independent retailers and town centres from large retail multiples.
- Develop a Regional Wood Fuel Policy to strengthen local fuel resilience, create rural enterprise opportunities and enhance biodiversity.
- Continue to advocate on behalf of rural communities, the undergrounding where feasible of high voltage cables.

**We can only change the global if we foster and nurture the local.**



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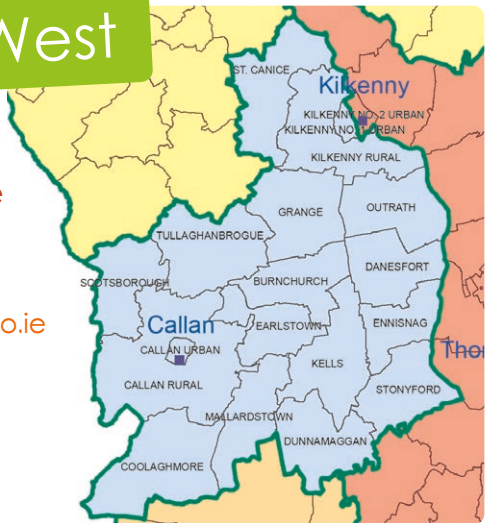


# Vote **ECONOMY, ECOLOGY, SOCIETY** Malcolm Noonan on May 23rd.

## Kilkenny City West

If you want to help out with our campaign please contact:

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**I'm working with Grace O Sullivan, our candidate for the European Elections in the South Constituency.**

Grace is a community and environmental activist, passionate about creating sustainable urban and rural communities and strengthening the social agenda in Europe. Please Vote Number 1 Grace O Sullivan in the European Elections.

