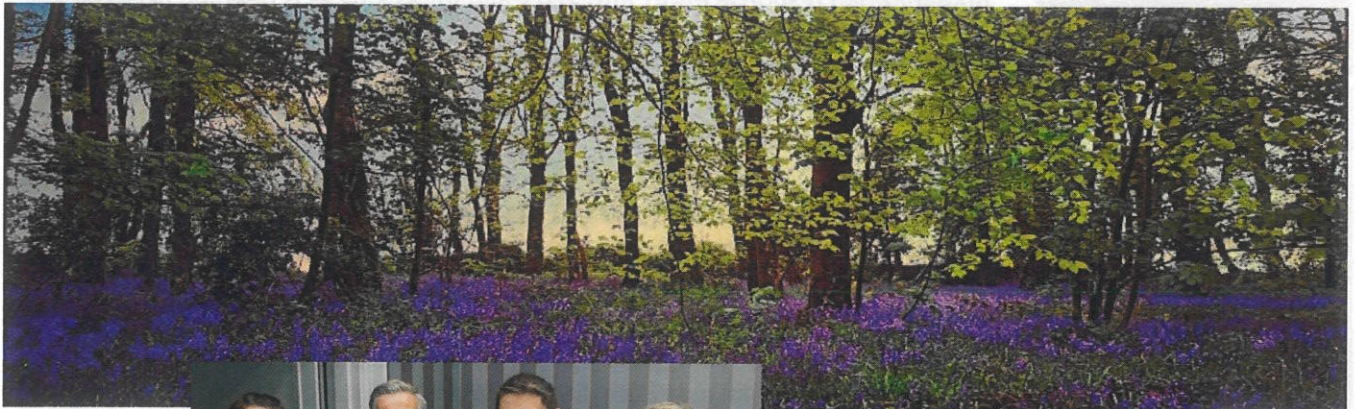




COMHAIRLE CHONTAE LAOISE

LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL



TUARASCÁIL BHLIANTÚIL 2022

ANNUAL REPORT 2022

JOINT MESSAGE BY THE CATHAOIRLEACH AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE



Thomasina Connell
Cathaoirleach

We are very pleased to present this Annual Report for 2022, which outlines the wide variety of services provided by Laois County Council during the year together with details of the many infrastructure projects progressed by the Council.

Laois County Council has continued to respond to the many challenges in providing much needed services to the public. At the start of 2022, little did we know that the invasion of Ukraine would result in one of the greatest displacements of people since the second World War. A dedicated Ukrainian Response Team was established within the Council to provide the necessary supports and address the challenges arising. At the end of 2022, there were 789 displaced Ukrainian citizens living in Laois. The Council will continue to meet its obligations and support the humanitarian response effort into 2023 and for as long as is deemed necessary by Government.



John Mulholland
Chief Executive

The provision of social housing remains a high priority for Laois County Council in order to meet growing demands. The Council's five year strategy under "Housing for all" commits to the delivery of 534 social and affordable homes by 2026, of which 229 were delivered in 2022. The Council is confident that in excess of a further 300 units will be delivered in 2023. In addition the Council is progressing the delivery of a number of units under the Affordable housing initiative. The development of a number of serviced sites for self builders at various locations throughout the county also continues to be a priority for the Council. Under the Energy Efficiency/Midlands Retrofitting programme, the Council undertook works on a total of 185 properties around the county which has resulted in increased energy efficiencies.

The County Development Plan 2021-2027 was adopted by the Council in January 2022. This is the most significant policy document to underpin the Council's strategic perspective for the growth of the County. Reviews were commenced on Local Area Plans for Portlaoise and Carlow/Graiguecullen areas in 2022.

Continued expansion took place in the J17 National Enterprise Park in Portlaoise with the sale of sites to two new businesses who join the existing operators in this large-scale Enterprise Park. During 2022, the Local Enterprise Office continued to provide grant assistance to eligible Laois businesses to help fund start-up costs, business expansion plans, entry into new markets and job growth. In 2022, €319,515 was approved in grant aid to 14 Laois companies with potential to create 51 additional full time jobs.

Abbeyleix was named as Ireland's Tidiest small town again in 2022 winning a gold medal. Durrow was also highly commended in the national "Young Persons" category and Portarlinton was given an Endeavour Award in acknowledgement of the highest percentage increase on the previous year. Portlaoise in the highest population category was awarded a silver medal.

Throughout 2022, the Council implemented many of the practical actions contained in the Climate Action Strategy 2019-2024 and worked with other stakeholders in helping County Laois adapt to and mitigate against climate change. The SEAI Annual Report 2021 on Public Sector Energy Efficiency Performance, reports that Laois County Council made a 59% saving by the end of 2021 against the 33% target by 2020 and 51% by 2050 which is the highest achieved for any local authority in Ireland.

We look forward to continued progress in 2023. We are confident in our ability to manage the challenges and to progress the development of the County for the betterment of present and future generations.

Tá súil again go bhainfaidh tú árd Eolas agus suim as an Tuarascáil Bhliantúil seo.

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MISSION STATEMENT

“The Council will lead the sustainable economic, social, cultural and community development of our County and deliver quality public services to the communities we serve”

Mandate

Laois County Council is the primary democratically elected authority in County Laois which provides an extensive and diverse range of services that impact upon the county’s economic, social, environmental, infrastructural, Industrial, tourism, and cultural activities. These services include the provision and maintenance of houses, roads, planning and economic development, waste management, environmental protection, recreational activities, libraries, cultural and community development, including recreation and sport. Laois County Council act as agents for the delivery of water and waste water services. The Council is serviced by a large workforce, including the Chief Executive, professional, technical, legal, administrative, financial and outdoor employees.

Council Membership

Laois County Council consists of 19 Elected Members– six members each from the Borris-in-Ossory – Mountmellick and Graiguecullen-Portarlington Municipal Districts and seven members from the Portlaoise Municipal District



Elected Members with the Chief Executive at Laois County Council AGM in June 2019

Council Meetings

Council Meetings in 2022 were usually held on the last Monday of each month in the Council Chamber with the option to join by remote means. There were fifteen meetings held in 2022 with no meeting held in August.

Corporate Policy Group (C.P.G.)

The Corporate Policy Group is designed to enhance the democratic mandate and policy making role of the elected members. The C.P.G. is supported by the Chief Executive and comprises the Cathaoirleach of the Council together with four Chairs of the Strategic Policy Committees (S.P.C.'s) and up to June 2022 the Cathaoirleach of the Graiguecullen/Portarlington Municipal District. The main function of the C.P.G. is to co-ordinate the work of the different S.P.C.'s and provide a forum where policy decisions affecting the whole Council are agreed for submission to the full Council for decision. The C.P.G. met on 12 occasions in 2022.

Municipal Districts

The following are the details in relation to the number of Municipal District Meetings held in 2022:

Borris-in-Ossory/Mountmellick Municipal District - 12 meetings

Graiguecullen/Portarlington Municipal District—11 meetings

Portlaoise Municipal District—12 meetings

MEMBERS OF LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL

MEMBERS OF BORRIS IN OSSORY-MOUNTMELICK MUNICIPAL DISTRICT



Patrick Bracken (F.F)



John King (F.G.)



Oliver Clooney (Non Party)



Conor Bergin (F.G)



Seamus McDonald (F.F)



James Kelly (Non Party)

MEMBERS OF PORTLAOISE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT



Barry Walsh (F.G)



John Joe Fennelly (F.F)



William Aird (F.G)



Noel Tuohy (Labour)



Catherine Fitzgerald (F.F.)



Caroline Dwane Stanley (S.F.)



Thomasina Connell (F.G.)

MEMBERS OF PORTARLINGTON-GRAIGUECULLEN MUNICIPAL DISTRICT



P J Kelly (F.G.)



Aisling Moran (F.G.)



Padraig Fleming (F.F.)



Ben Brennan (Non Party)



Aidan Mullins (S.F.)



Paschal McEvoy (F.F.)

Cllr. Mary Sweeney resigned from Laois County Council with effect from the 31st December 2021 following 22 years of public service, both with Portlaoise Town Council and as a County Councillor for the Portlaoise Municipal District. Cllr Sweeney also served as Cathaoirleach of Laois County Council. She was a dedicated public representative and was widely respected. Cllr Sweeney was also a staff member of Laois County Library service. The Elected Members together with Management and Staff wished Cllr. Sweeney every good wish for her retirement.



Mary Sweeney (F.G)

DIRECTOR OF SERVICES:

Donal Brennan

SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER, HUMAN RESOURCES/CORPORATE AFFAIRS

Pat Delaney

CORPORATE AFFAIRS

Corporate Plan

Laois County Council's Corporate Plan 2019 –2024 was adopted by the Members of the Council in November, 2019. The Corporate Plan provides the framework for the implementation of a coherent strategy for the development of the county for the period 2019-2024 and was prepared following consultation with employees, elected representatives, community, voluntary and environmental interests, external stakeholders and other public bodies operating at local level.

Customer Charter

Laois County Council's Customer Charter sets out the way in which the Council endeavours to deal with its customers. The document is on display in all public Council Offices and on our website at www.laois.ie. This Charter includes a commitment to equality in service provision and a recognition of the diverse nature of the community we serve. The Charter also includes a Customer Complaints Procedure which may be availed of by any person not satisfied with the quality of service received.

Highlights

- 20th March 2022—Ceremony of Remembrance and Reflection to remember all those who lost their lives during the pandemic and to pay tribute to those who contributed to how the challenges were faced.
- 28th April 2022— Civic Reception in honour of Gary O'Reilly
- 12th May 2022—Civic Reception in honour of Nicole Turner
- 27th May 2022—Cathaoirleach's Reception in honour of Laois Association Dublin
- 29th July 2022—Civic Reception in honour of Mike Dunphy
- 18th August 2022—Civic Reception in honour of Portlaoise AFC Girls U14 Soccer Team
- 19th September 2022— Official Welcome in honour of the World Ploughing and the National Ploughing Association
- 3rd November 2022—Civic Reception in honour of Laois U16 Camogie Squad
- 10th November 2022—Civic Reception in honour of Zach Tuohy
- 25th November 2022— Civic Reception in honour of Laois Ladies Football

- 1st December 2022—Civic Reception in honour of Martin McDonald



Group at a Civic Reception for Mike Dunphy on 29th July 2022



Presentation to Anna May McHugh at a Civic Reception on 19th September 2022



Presentation to Zach Tuohy at a Civic Reception on 10th November 2022



Presentation to the Laois U16 Camogie Team at a Civic Reception on 3rd November 2022

Annual Service Delivery Plan

The Members at their meeting of the Council held on the 12th of December 2022 adopted the Annual Service Delivery Plan for 2023. The implementation of the Plan will be reviewed in 2023 as part of the process of developing the 2024 Plan. The performance of the Council in relation to the performance indicators as specified by National Oversight and Audit Commission will also be taken into account.

Partnership

The following were the members of the Workplace Partnership Committee as at 31st December 2022

Management Nominees

Angela McEvoy
Carmel McNicholl
Adrian Barrett
Bernie Foran
Susan Grant

Union Nominees

Anne Marie Maher
Rosa Bray
Deirdre Alexander
Tom O'Carroll
Edmond Kenny

The Partnership Committee met on one occasion during 2022.

Irish Language Scheme

Laois Local Authorities Irish Language Scheme was confirmed by the Minister for Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and came into effect on 1st December 2009. The scheme is available to view on our website, www.laois.ie. Work continues on the preparation of a new scheme. Laois Local Authorities recognise that our customers have the right to choose to do business with us in their preferred language and they are facilitated in their dealings with us as far as practicable, whether that is through Irish or through English.

If you wish to contact the Council in Irish, please send an e-mail to gailge@laoiscoco.ie.

Freedom of Information (F.O.I.)

The Freedom of Information Act 2014 was enacted on 14 October 2014. It introduced significant changes to the Freedom of Information regime repealing and replacing the Freedom of Information Acts 1997 and 2003 and expanding the scope of FOI to a number of further bodies. It also consolidated, modernised and updated the legislation generally.

Applications received in 2022

Applications on hand at 31 st December 2021:	2
Applications Received in 2022:	70
Decisions taken during 2022 (including 14 applications discontinued):	63
Applications not Continued with:	14
Applications dealt with outside of FOI:	0
Applications on hand at 31 st December 2022:	7

Nature of Requests

Personal:	25
Non-Personal:	45
Mixed:	0

Appeals

There were 1 appeal to the Information Commissioner in 2022.

Sources of Requests

General Public, Solicitors and Others:	45
Journalists:	25

National Performance Indicators

Section 126c of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 sets out the functions of the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) which includes examination of the performance of local government bodies against forty two indicators.

The report in respect of 2021 was published by NOAC in November 2022. Laois County Council's performance in each area in 2021 is included in this report in each of the relevant sections.

Rolling Register of Electors at 22nd February 2023

<u>Dail Constituency</u>	<u>Presidential Electors</u>	<u>Dail Electors</u>
Laois—Offaly	52,375	53,154
Kildare South	5,832	5,933
<u>European Parliament Constituency</u>	<u>European Electors</u>	<u>Potential European Electors</u>
South	58,939	841
<u>Local Electoral Areas</u>	<u>Number of Electors</u>	
Borris in Ossory-Mountmellick	20,200	
Graigucullen-Portarlinton	20,300	
Portlaoise	21,587	
<u>Postal and Special Voters</u>		
Gardai	Laois –Offaly	1
	Kildare South	0
Defence Forces	Laois –Offaly	183
	Kildare South	41
Diplomats	Laois –Offaly	7
	Kildare South	0
Physically Disabled	Laois-Offaly	9
	Kildare South	0
Occupation	Laois—Offaly	1
	Kildare South	0
Anonymous Voters	Laois-Offaly	0
	Kildare South	0
Special Voters	Laois-Offaly	12
	Kildare South	0

HUMAN RESOURCES

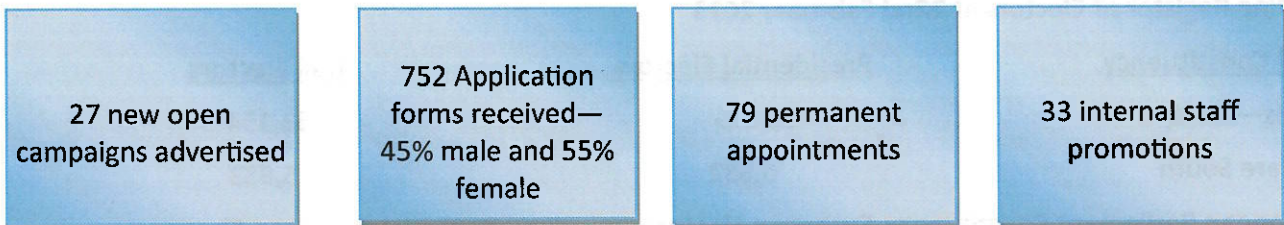
Recruitment Statistics

A total of 530 people (including retained firefighters) were employed by Laois County Council as of 31st December 2022.

During 2022 the Council held 31 competitions. For the most part in-person interviews were held at County Hall.

Successful Delivery

Since January 2022, the following outputs were delivered for our Council



Work Life Balance Initiatives

2022 saw the successful rollout of the official blended working initiative with employees being invited to apply for remote working from home.

The existing work life balance initiatives including Career Break, Work Sharing, and Shorter Working Year continued.

National Performance Indicator

Performance Indicators in this document come from the National Oversight and Audit Commission Report No. 50, published November 2022 using data up to 31.12.21, as this is the most recent data set available.

In relation to the national performance indicator on the number of working days lost to certified and un-certified illness the following statistics apply.

Total No. of Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) staff in LA (based on data up to 31/12/2021)	Certified	Uncertified
449.26	2.50%	0.22%

The national target for absences on certified and uncertified illness leave is set at 3.5%.

Industrial Relations

Laois County Council continued to maintain good industrial relations during 2022 with no major disputes arising. The Council continues to operate in accordance with the Public Service Agreements in consultation with the relevant Unions. Negotiated pay increases backdated to February 2022 and October 2022 were successfully applied along with the restoration of a 35 hour working week.

Employee Training & Development

Laois County Council is committed to the training and development of all our employees in the context of securing the goals and objectives of the Council and the skills development of employees. The Council is committed to continuous improvement in service delivery through the personal development of its employees.

The annual training programme is primarily based on the training needs identified through staff Team Development Plans and Personal Development Plans as part of the Performance Management Development System process. The Programme also incorporates Health & Safety requirements, National FETAC programmes, third level open learning programmes and business related seminars/workshops as they arise.

2022 saw a range of training programmes delivered a sample of which included –

- Safepass
- Manual Handling
- Signing Lighting and Guarding at Roadworks
- Road Surface and Repair
- Road Opening and Re-Instatement
- TTM Audit and Inspection
- Driver CPC
- Ladder Safety
- Chainsaw Training
- Waste Water Treatment Plant Operations
- Occupational First Aid for Outdoor workers
- Record Management Training
- Green Public Procurement

Open Learning Programme

Laois County Council endeavours, subject to available resources, to facilitate and support employees wishing to pursue third level open learning courses that are relevant to and contribute to the business development of both the Council and the employee's role and responsibilities. A number of the open learning programmes that were facilitated during 2022 included:

- Cert in GDPR Foundation Training
- CIPD Cert in People Management
- Cert/Diploma in Local Government Studies
- IPASS Certificate in Payroll Techniques

Equality & Supporting Diversity

Laois County Council is an equal opportunity employer and is committed to a broad range of policies, practices and procedures which have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality and protect human rights of staff and people availing of its services.

November 2022 saw the publication of the Councils Gender Pay Gap Report which is accessible on our website at <https://laois.ie/wp-content/uploads/Gender-Pay-Gap-Report-2022.pdf>

This report was compiled based on available data up to 30th June 2022.

INFORMATION COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

HEAD OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS:

Pat Grassick

The Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Department manages the Council's ICT infrastructure, software systems and websites. This includes the server Datacenter, desktop and laptop computers, mobile phones and the wired and wireless network communication equipment in County Hall, Area Offices, Libraries, and other Council locations throughout the county.



The Department provides technical support to all other Council sections and to the members of Laois County Council and is responsible for the implementation, maintenance, development, and security of the Council's ICT systems. More than 9,500 technical support calls were handled by ICT support staff in 2022, a steady year-on-year increase as digitisation of service rises across the organisation. This also reflects the hybrid environment and demonstrates the value of ICT support in the delivery of services by the Council.

The ICT Department is committed to a policy of continuous improvement of ICT services, both within the Council itself and to the public who avail themselves of the Council's services with a growing focus on online services to the citizens of Laois.

Council Chamber

An Audio-Visual Conferencing system was rolled out in the Council Chamber to facilitate hybrid meetings and improve the overall sound quality and meeting experience. This provides best in class virtual meeting room technology to the Council and the elected members in the carrying out of their duties on behalf of the citizens of Laois.



ICT Security

The profile of Cyber Security was raised within Laois County Council with the recruitment of an Information Security Officer. Internal and external cyber testing took place to check for potential vulnerabilities in the Council IT infrastructure. A security monitoring system (SIEM) was put in place to aggregate activity on the IT network and identify any possible malicious activity that may occur.

In 2022, the Department continued our commitment to open and collaborative communication with the security community, maintaining links with the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), the national Local Authority's Security Officers Group, the regional security officer's group, and other peers.

The Department measured the Council against 2 standards – CIS Controls (130 measures) and the NCSC’s Public Sector Cyber Security Baseline Standards (104 measures) to identify gaps; and the Department strive to make continuous improvements to the Council’s security posture. The Department also carry out regular staff awareness campaigns of the threats that exist in an increasingly digital landscape.

ICT Communications

In 2022 Laois County Council replaced the legacy phone system in County buildings with a cloud-based solution, Microsoft Teams. This has provided a state-of-the-art phone system and further improves our contact with citizens. The unified communications platform allows staff the opportunity to ‘answer from anywhere’ and eliminates the rigidity associated with the old phone system.

National Performance Indicators 2021

Per capita total page views of the local authority’s websites in 2020	Per capita total number of followers at end 2020 of the local authority’s social media accounts	Overall Cost of ICT Provision per WTE	Overall cost of ICT as a proportion of Revenue Expenditure
7.70	0.69	€4,361.91	2.32

CLIMATE ACTION & COMMUNITY STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE**DIRECTOR OF SERVICES:****Donal Brennan****A/SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER:****Pamela Tynan**

<u>Members</u>	<u>Sectoral</u>
<i>Cllr John King</i>	<i>Ruth Sullivan (PPN, Community/Voluntary)</i>
<i>Cllr Pdraig Fleming (Chair)</i>	<i>Bobby Delaney (PPN, Environment)</i>
<i>Cllr P J Kelly</i>	<i>Donald Scully (Agriculture Farming Pillar)</i>
<i>Cllr James Kelly</i>	<i>Michael Gorman (PPN, Social Inclusion)</i>
<i>Cllr Oliver Clooney</i>	<i>Ann Fingleton (PPN Business/Commercial)</i>

Laois Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)

Laois Local Community Development Committee was established in September 2014 for the purposes of developing, coordinating and improving a coherent and strategic approach to Local and Community Development. The LCDC is supported by the Community Department of Laois County Council and oversees the implementation of:



- Social Inclusion Community Action Programme (SICAP). Laois LCDC continued to oversee implementation of the SICAP Programme 2018-2023 and administered the annual budget of €694,860 for 2022. The contract implementer is Laois Partnership Company.
- Community objectives in the Local Economic & Community Plan.
- Laois Local Development Strategy operated under the LEADER Programme 2014 – 2020 and the Transitional Programme 2021/2022, in partnership between the local authority (financial partner) and local development company (implementing partner).
- LEADER Programme 2014–2020 – this concluded on the 31st March 2021 for which the Laois Local Action Group (LAG) approved 134 projects to the value of €5,557,492.21
- Transitional LEADER programme 2021/2022 commenced on the 1st April 2021 with Laois LAG being awarded the amount of €1,092,976 for projects. As of 31st December 2022, 47 projects were approved by the LAG to the value of €1,982,597.66. This amount is to be reduced by de committals and LEADER cooperation/Food projects, leaving a project balance of €0.02 as of 31st December 2022.
- LEADER EURI funding allocation of €485,767. As of 31st December 2022, 13 projects were approved by the LAG to the value of €484,302.56, leaving a project balance of €1,592.48.
- Community Activities Fund – An amount of €237,048 was allocated to 132 groups (€106,185 in capital funding and €166,863 in current funding).

Laois Public Participation Network (PPN)

Laois PPN was established in March 2015 and is the main link through which the Local Authority connects with the Community and Voluntary, Social Inclusion and Environmental groups within County Laois. The PPN facilitates groups to nominate PPN representatives to decision and policy making bodies in the county, such as the LCDC, SPCs and the JPC. Laois PPN continues to grow its network with 660 groups currently registered.

Laois PPN in collaboration with Laois County Council welcomed hundreds of nominated delegates from 31 PPNs representing 18,000 PPN member groups from across Ireland, for the National PPN Conference 2022 which took place in the Midlands Park Hotel from Friday the 21st until Saturday the 22nd of October, 2022. The event was supported by the Department of Rural and Community Development. Minister Joe O' Brien, T.D. in addressing the conference, highlighted the importance of the PPN Networks, in supporting Communities throughout the Covid 19 Pandemic. Delegates attended a variety of excursions, which showcased the fantastic work of Laois PPN member groups.

Laois PPN worked in collaboration with Laois County Council on several initiatives and projects that supported Communities in Laois such as – The Ukrainian Community Response Forum, Heritage Week, Fire Safety Week, Community and Voluntary Awards and Laois Connects.

Laois PPN supported PPN Member groups in 2022 through a variety of well attended training and capacity building events and was an information hub on funding opportunities and public consultations.



Laois Community & Voluntary Awards 2022

The 2022 Laois Community & Voluntary Awards Ceremony was held on the 28th October, 2022 in the Midlands Park Hotel, Portlaoise, hosted by Laois County Council in association with Laois PPN and sponsored by the People First Credit Union. Nominees were honoured in 7 categories for their contribution to community life in Laois, including an individual Unsung Hero Award and a newly established Sports Award, Best Kept Residential Area and a Junior Volunteer of the Year Award. The Awards showcase annually the great work that is being carried out locally by the community/voluntary, social inclusion and environmental sectors in County Laois.

Educational Partnership

The Schools Business Partnership “World of Work” programme is aimed at 2nd year students as this intervention has been shown to be more effective in addressing/ averting the issue of early school leavers. This programme is run with Portlaoise College and involves an introductory session, company overview, a Day in the Life where students meet members of Council staff with varying work and education backgrounds, a site visit and a wrap session. The programme is run by the National Schools Business Partnership and the Department of Education and Skills in association with Laois County Council.

Laois Comhairle na nÓg

In 2022, Laois Comhairle na nÓg had 35 members and held 31 meetings. Their project for 2022 was Mental Health Awareness. They organised a very successful Colour Fun Run event held on the 13th of May, 2022, which had just under 500 people in attendance from all around Laois.



The Comhairle members also took part in several consultations and events. One of these events was the launch of the travel card in Dublin. 2 members of Comhairle na nÓg took part in the Tedx talks in Dun Laoghaire. The Laois Comhairle AGM was held in the Midlands Park Hotel on the 25th October, 2022 and was attended by all secondary schools in Laois as well as Youth Reach, Family Resource Centres, St Francis School and Vicarstown Youth Club.



Pride of Place 2022

In its 20th year, the Pride of Place awards is an annual competition, organised by peacebuilding charity Co- operation Ireland and is sponsored by IPB Insurance. It is an All-island competition, whereby local authorities from across the island of Ireland nominate groups in their communities, who they believe have made a significant contribution to improving their neighbourhood, working collectively. In 2022 Laois was represented by Ballinakill entering the category for a Population 300 to 1000 citizens.

On the 16th May, 2022, Abbeyleix Tidy Towns were announced as winners of their category at the IPB Pride of Place 2021 awards held in the INEC, Killarney. The award was received by Mary White, Betty Whelan and Councillor John Joe Fennelly.



County Laois Joint Policing Committee (JPC)

The County Laois Joint Policing Committee met 4 times in 2022. The JPC Strategic Plan 2022-2027 was adopted at the September 2022 Laois County Joint Policing Committee meeting held on 12th September, 2022. Joint Policing Committee Working Group meetings per Municipal District continue to take place each quarter.

Community Projects (Elected Members) Fund 2022

Over 101 community groups/projects were funded under the Community Projects (Elected Members) Fund in 2022 totaling €102,256.

Collaborative Projects/Social Inclusion

Laois County Council partnered with stakeholders in respect of projects during 2022, to include:

- Community Coaching Programme
- Laois Sports Partnership Social Inclusion Disability Programme
- Laois Integration Network
- Laois Africa Day
- Integration supports for new communities
- CYPSC
- Make Way Day

Make Way Day 2021

Laois County Council supported #makewayday22 on Friday 30th September, 2022 by creating awareness, around the access issues faced by the people of Laois, as they go about their daily business. It was led by the Disability Federation of Ireland and is a unique collaboration across Ireland and the voluntary and local government sectors. But most of all it's about people with disabilities.

“Make Way Day” is a campaign that brings the disability and wider community together, to consider the needs of people with disabilities in the public spaces we all share.



As part of *Make Way Day* 2022, Laois County Council in collaboration with IWA, NCBI, NLN, Rehabcare Portlaoise, Laois Sports Partnership, Laois PPN and supported by Volunteer Laois conducted a number of Walkability Audits on Friday morning, 30th September in the following locations:

- Portlaoise
- Stradbally
- Rathdowney

The objective of these audits was to identify what we can do to make our streets more accessible.

Laois Connects 2022 Promoting Positive Mental Health & Wellbeing

Laois Connects 2022 took place from the 1st to the 31st October 2022. This was the second consecutive year that it ran for the month. The programme featured online programmes as well as indoor and outdoor programmes and events. Durrrow comedian Bernard O Shea and Irish International & Leinster Rugby star James Lowe contributed videos in support of and promoting mental health awareness as part of our promotion. The initiative also featured an interview with Michelle McCormick of GROW, which highlighted her own personal mental health journey.



Disability Participation and Awareness Fund

In 2021, Laois County Council were Successful in an application under the Disability Participation and Awareness Fund and awarded €75,000 for the delivery of a suite of projects that continued to be delivered in 2022. Works included accessibility works at Portlaoise Leisure Centre, Sightless Cinema Initiative, an Access for All/Social Inclusion Week and Disability Awareness training for staff.

Laois Age Friendly Programme

The Age Friendly Alliance and the Older Peoples Council (OPC) Executive both met 5 times in 2022. The focus for the year was in preparing a new Age Friendly Strategy for 2023-2027. A strategy workshop involving all stakeholders took place in March 2022- subsequent surveys took place both in hard copy and through our consultation portal- representative views of 155 people were received. The preliminary findings were presented at an Age Friendly Consultation event in Bloom HQ, Mountrath on the 26th July 2022, where 100 people were in attendance. This took the format of facilitated round table discussions on the 8 World Health Organisation Themes. Each table then presented a brief synopsis of the issues discussed and the actions sought on each theme. Feedback from each table was analysed and a draft strategy was prepared. It is envisaged that the new strategy will be ready to launch in early 2023.

The OPC convention took place for the first time since 2019 in Meath in May 2022. This proved to be a very positive and informative event which was attended by the Age Friendly Programme Manager and two members of the OPC.

Laois Age Friendly are also represented on the HSE working group for Integrated Care Programme for Older People and this process is ongoing with the aim of facilitating aging well at home.

In November, 2022, the ICE Card initiative was launched. This card is primarily for use “In Case of Emergency”, and provides card holders the opportunity to fill in the card with their own personal details, which would help first responders and medical staff in such an event.

Laois Africa Day

Laois Africa Day took place on Saturday the 28th May, 2022, on the grounds of Laois Leisure, in Portlaoise. It was well attended on what was a beautiful day. It featured and showcased the sights, sounds, crafts and food of Africa and celebrated the contribution of the African community to Laois. The event was attended by the Ambassadors for Poland & Brazil, Mrs Anna Sochanska & Mr Marcel Fortuna



Biato, who addressed the large crowd. Cathaoirleach Conor Bergin and Chief Executive of Laois County Council, Mr John Mulholland, Deputy Charlie Flanagan & Minister Sean Fleming were also in attendance. The wonderful Cllr Yemi Adenuga, from Meath County Council and also star of Gogglebox, who was the first elected black female representative elected in Ireland, also addressed the crowd.

Healthy Ireland

The Healthy Ireland Fund aims to support innovative sectoral, evidence-based projects, programmes and initiatives that support key national policies in areas such as mental health, physical activity, nutrition and sexual health, that promote a tobacco free Ireland and reduce alcohol consumption, while also developing spaces and places for health and wellbeing. 2022 saw a wide range of programmes implemented with a cross section of partners.

- **LGBT+ Mural**

Midlands LGBT+ Project, a Laois based service that supports in reducing isolation among LGBT+ people in the Midlands, revealed a new Pride themed mural in Portlaoise on the 28th February, 2022. Officially launched by Minister Roderic O’Gorman, Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, the stunning mural is located behind the Library, just off Meehan Court, Portlaoise. The mural was funded by Healthy Laois to promote LGBT+ awareness and visibility and was created by local artist ADW which depicts a striking representation of solidarity and strength for the LGBT+ Community.

- **Active Parks**

Five lockable Healthy Ireland Community Notice Boards were provided in Public parks/ Amenity areas in Portarlinton, Portlaoise, Mountrath and Mountmellick and Rathdowney. Funded by Healthy Laois, in conjunction with Laois County Council’s Sport and Leisure Department, these provide a platform for local groups and organisations to promote local activities. A series of free Outdoor Classes in public green spaces was delivered by the LCC Sports and Leisure Department funded by Healthy Laois in eight locations countywide, Portarlinton, Abbeyleix, Stradbally, Timahoe, Mountrath, Castletown and 2 locations in Portlaoise. These sessions utilise our public spaces, whilst engaging a cross section of the community in outdoor exercise.

- **Ireland First Fitstick Trail**

This newly installed trail is a 2km stretch adjacent to the old bog railway line in Derryounce, Portarlinton County Laois. This trail is designed for the use of ACTIVATOR™ Poles/ Fit Sticks and is also suitable for wheelchairs. Walking with ACTIVATOR™ Poles Improves stability, reduces impact on hips/knees, develops core strength, improves posture, and promotes better gait pattern. Through funding from Healthy Laois, activator poles were purchased and programmes delivered throughout Laois by Laois Sports Partnership.



- **Clean Air Around Us**

The Clean Air Around us programme in Laois is an innovative way of developing tobacco free Playgrounds for the next generation of children in the county. The 'Clean Air Around Us' campaign and signage helps to direct people to the QUIT support services and provides a space which supports those who are trying to quit but also appeals to adults to be mindful of their behaviour and the impact it has on others. The signage was designed by the Animation class in Abbeyleix Further Education & Training Centre and particularly targeted young people.



- **Musical Memories**

Musical Memories saw the introduction of weekly Ukulele sessions in both Mountmellick and Portlaoise Men's Sheds. The men took great pride in learning a new skill with their friends and peers, in a sociable and encouraging environment. They worked on a common set of songs, suitable to their skill level. The effects of Musical Memories on the participants has been invaluable in many aspects, particularly in the area of well-being and mental health.

- **Minister Feighan Visit**

Minister Frank Feighan, T.D., Minister of State for Public Health, Well Being and National Drugs Strategy visited a number of Healthy Ireland funded initiatives in Laois on Tuesday, 3rd May, 2022, to view at first-hand various health partnership programmes and health and wellbeing initiatives being undertaken by Healthy Ireland Laois in the county.

- **Men's Health Week**

As part of celebrating Men's Health Week in June 2022, the Irish Men's Sheds' Association held a walk around Abbeyleix Bog, which was led by Laois Sports Partnership in conjunction with Healthy Laois. Men's Shed members travelled from Navan, Slane and Waterford to take part in the event, which celebrated the Launch of the new "Walkshop" resource for Mens Shed members in Ireland.

- **Healthy Communities**

This collaboration with Laois Partnership was formed in response to the rising cost of living and particularly in returning to school. Healthy Ireland Funding provided school packs to children across Laois and fresh food supports to families, which alleviated the pressure on parents and allowed those children to return to school with confidence.

- **Light Up Mental Health**

A Mental Health Activity Workshop was held in Youth Work Ireland Laois Premises in Portlaoise on Monday 10th October 2022, where amongst other wellbeing activities, young people decorated glass jars to create lanterns followed up by a 3km walk. This concluded at Áras an Chontae, where the lanterns were placed in a heart shape to show unity and solidarity. This programme demonstrated several creative ways to cope with mental health and encouraged the teenage demographic to enjoy a walk and exercise outdoors. Following the success of this event, a further programme was held in December 2022 with Laois Traveller Action Group.

- **Healthy Laois Workshop November**

On Thursday, the 24th November, 2022, a Consultation Workshop was held in the LOETB Centre of Excellence, O' Moore Park, Portlaoise. The workshop brought together a broad cross section of Laois Community Groups and agencies, in addition to service users, to help inform the new Healthy Laois 2023- 2025 Strategy. A series of round table consultations and feedback sessions were held. The workshop offered an opportunity for meaningful collaboration with groups and organisations and the focused discussions provided an insight into the issues affecting the citizens of county Laois

Community/Environmental Programmes

Continuing the excellent partnership with elected representatives, local communities, schools and agencies, the following supports, initiatives and projects were arranged:

- Ongoing support of the Laois Federation of Tidy Towns through online workshops, seminars and awards, and advice by in-house experts and staff in a range of disciplines. The Laois Federation of Tidy Towns Awards were held for the first time since 2017 in conjunction with the Community & Voluntary Awards 2022 Ceremony on the 28th October, 2022.
- There are 75 schools in Laois registered with the Green Schools Programme. Laois County Council supports their efforts through providing themed workshops, teacher seminars and advice - 8 schools received Green Flag awards in 2022.
- Laois County Council and 2GoCup launched a major new environmental campaign to dramatically reduce single-use coffee cups in Laois on the 15th November, 2022. The businesses taking part in the pilot project are The Pantry, Café Latte, The Bay Tree, Supervalu, Chocolate Brown and Square Coffee. This campaign is being supported by the Laois County Council and Portlaoise Tidy Towns.



An Choil Beag LEAF:-

Mini Woodlands were planted on different dates by the schools and launched in the Holy Family NS on 28th November, 2022 and in Scoil Bhríde on 7th December, 2022, funded by LBAF in each primary school campus and the Laois Education Centre for teachers in December, 2022. Choill Bheags are a small, dense, biodiverse native woodland habitat on the school grounds. They are outdoor living classrooms, with space created for seating for classes to spend time learning outside. As An Choill Bheag matures, nature trails can be developed and students can learn the necessary skills to maintain, monitor and study this essential and beautiful ecosystem in their school grounds.

Composting in Schools Programme

Teachers from 10 schools across the county attended the programme sponsored by Laois Education Centre over 3 weeks in December 2022. Each school will receive €250 worth of composting equipment and two visits each to conduct food waste audits and set up a bespoke composting system.



Applications for funding support were invited from interested bodies, groups, committees and organisations who intended to engage in environmental/amenity works during 2022. These included:

- **Community (Environmental) Grant Scheme**

Grants were awarded to groups based on amenity works which included landscaping, development of open spaces (planting trees & shrubs, flowerbeds etc) and/or purchase of equipment to maintain/improve/clean up areas/open spaces. 95 groups countywide received funding of €31,066 in 2022.

- **Tidy Towns Grant Scheme**

Applications for funding support were invited from Tidy Town groups in line with judging categories of the National Tidy Towns Competition. During 2022, €33,929 was allocated in grants to 23 groups under this scheme.

Climate Change

During 2022, a wide variety of projects were undertaken, in pursuance of these objectives. Key initiatives include:

- Laois County Council has long been a forerunner in terms of energy efficiency and decarbonisation.
- A cross sectoral Climate Action Team, which meets on a monthly basis.
- Laois County Council co-ordinates a Low Carbon Implementation Group which is comprised of a range of stakeholders including those who are collectively working towards the common goal of reducing the carbon footprint of Portlaoise Town. This work continued in 2022 and a Low Carbon Town Logo was designed.
- Sustainable Energy Communities (SEC): Durrow SEC and Portarlington Business Association SEC have both commenced work on Energy Masterplan (EMP) from SEAI. Portlaoise 2040 SEC have been approved for EMP and have gone out to tender for consultants.
- A School Sustainable Travel Study for Portlaoise to identify benefits and barriers to the development of a cycling culture in school aged children was completed by An Taisce in 2022. Many of the measures identified in this report are being actioned in 2023.
- Climate Literacy Courses for Transition Year students has been delivered to all 10 Secondary Schools in County Laois. This incorporates a teacher training element over 8 weekly action-based learning modules.
- Laois County Council achieved an estimated efficiency increase of 46.8% which far exceeds the national target of 33% for 2020 and is not too far off the 50% target for 2030.

Midland Energy Agency

Laois County Council continues to be the lead authority for the Midland Energy Agency and the Energy Officer co-ordinates monthly working group meetings and quarterly steering group meetings between all the local authorities in the MEA.

Home Energy Saving Kits

Codema **Home Energy Saving Kits** are available in all our library branches. This kit allows you to get a better understanding of the energy usage in your home, problem areas that may need your attention and ways to improve energy efficiency. The kits are available in Portlaoise, Portarlington, Mountmellick, Abbeyleix, Mountrath, Rathdowney and Durrow.



Burial Grounds

The Community Section has responsibility for 27 active burial grounds within the county. Grant aid is provided to voluntary cemetery committees and improvement works were carried out on a number of the burial grounds in 2022 as part of the annual works programme.

2022 saw the construction of two Columbarium Walls in St Peter and Paul's Cemetery, Portlaoise. The walls are for the inurnment of cremated remains with each wall containing 40 niches capable of holding two standard cremation urns.



Town & Village Renewal

In 2022, €794,552 in funding was awarded under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme 2021 benefitting 5 projects at 5 locations in County Laois. Of these, 2 projects are nearing completion with the remaining 3 due for completion during 2023. In late 2022, €917,496 in funding was awarded under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme 2022 benefitting 5 projects at 4 locations in County Laois. All projects under the 2019 Town and Village Renewal Scheme are now complete with 2 remaining projects under the 2020 scheme due for completion in Quarter 2 2023.

Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF)

Borris In Ossory Courthouse RRDF project - RRDF (Category 2) funding in the amount of €212,332 was awarded in 2022 and an integrated design team was appointed by Laois County Council in Quarter 4 of 2022. This project will develop plans for the renovation and re-use of the historic courthouse building in Borris in Ossory. The project aims to provide remote working and community facilities and regenerate a prominent vacant building for the benefit of the local community.



Durrow Community Enterprise Hub

RRDF (Category 1) funding in the amount of €1,456,983.00 was announced in 2022 this project. The project will see the redevelopment of the former Methodist Chapel and Hall into an Enterprise Centre with co-working space as well as a cultural / gallery and exhibition space.

Fáilte Ireland Outdoor Dining

Canopies for outdoor dining were constructed in Durrowand Hynd’s Square, Portlaoise with grant funding of €164,596 under Fáilte Irelands “Local Authority Weatherproofing & Outdoor Dining Infrastructure Scheme”.



National Performance Indicators 2021

Percentage of local schools involved in the local youth council/Comhairle na Nóg scheme	Percentage number of organisations included on the County Register and proportion of those organisations part of the Social Inclusion College with the PPN
100%	12.88%

ARTS SECTION

Laois Arthouse, Stradbally

The Arts Office presented 'In Trust. In Gratitude. In Hope. 10 Years at the Laois Arthouse', an exhibition featuring the work of over 60 artists who have been part of the Laois Arthouse programme since its establishment in 2011. Each artist provided their unique insight into Laois-born poet, Pat Boran's specially commissioned poem *The Window Seat*, with a stunning series of mixed media creations in a variety of themes. As part of the Laois Arthouse 10th year anniversary exhibition, a successful panel discussion 'Til Something Moves' explored the optimum conditions for sustaining creative work as visual artists and writers, and the role Studio Spaces and Residencies.



The Artists in Schools Scheme

Ten schools participated in this scheme in 2022. The scheme allows students to have an in-depth experience with a professional artist and gives them the opportunity to experience different art media. Schools included Maryborough NS, St Mary's CBS, Scoil Bride, Scoil Mhuire, Mountmellick Further Education, Knock National School, Scoil Bhride, St Colmcille's NS, Heywood Community School & Castlecuffe NS.

Laois Bealtaine Festival

A selection of creative projects took place for the month of May for the Laois Bealtaine Festival. The Arts Office partnered with the Dunamaisie Arts Centre, Laois Sports Partnership and Laois Library Service to present events, which were specifically aimed for older people in celebration of Creativity. The theme for 2022 was 'And catch the heart off guard'.



Laois Culture Night

The seventeenth edition of Culture Night took place at the end of September and contained an exciting programme of events. The theme for Culture Night was 'One Night for All-Oíche Dár Saol'. Laois had a broad spectrum of sixteen events – free to the public and included a rich mix of performances and exhibitions. A highlight of the evening was the official launch of 'Protectour' sculpture by Artist James Hayes in Portlaoise. This artwork was commissioned under Open Competition by Laois County Council and funded by the Per Cent for Art scheme. The launch of the Swift themed mural in Mountmellick also took place on the evening.



Leaves Festival of Literature and Music

The Leaves Festival 2022 brought the best of Irish literature and music to Laois in November. The festival welcomed Booker Prize shortlisted Claire Keegan as its 1st festival length writer in residence. Claire joined the festival for a public event with novelist and broadcaster Edel Coffey as well as a series of workshops for students, in libraries, the prison and in the Dunamaise Arts Centre. There were two screenings of the award-winning film *An Cailín Ciúin* based on Claire Keegan's story *Foster*.

The festival also celebrated 40 years of Salmon Publishing with a music and poetry event while it welcomed native poet Pat Boran and chef Rory O'Connell (in conversation with Katy McGuinness).

There was plenty of music too with Harpanno, Alannah Murray and The Messages amongst others. Another event saw host Ronán Hession in conversation with broadcaster Clare O'Brien and there was also an afternoon open mic event of poetry and music. The World of Words, a collection of short stories by new Irish writers that is the culmination of a creative writing journey started almost a year ago in the aftermath of lockdown, was also launched.



Local Live Performance Scheme Phase 3 & 4

Funded by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media and administered by the Arts Office, the scheme supports the arts and culture sectors through the provision of live performance, by engaging the services of professional artists, musicians, producers, crew and other staff. Under phase 3, fifteen applications from individuals/groups/promoters in the county were approved for funding. Under phase 4, eleven applications were approved for funding. Events included exhibitions, recitals, performances in care settings and in the prison, outdoor film screening, and dance performances in a host of venues and locations throughout the county

Sightless Cinema

The launch of Laois 'Sightless Cinema' was announced in March - an online radio drama workshops for people with a visual impairment to present online radio drama workshops for people with a visual impairment from Laois for the first time. This was a Disability Awareness and Participation funded project, supported by the Laois County Council Arts Office and the Laois office of the National Council for the Blind of Ireland (NCBI).



Faoin Spéir & re:CENTRING Laois

Celebrating the return of audiences to the arts after the pandemic, Dunamaise Arts Centre presented re:CENTRING Laois, funded by the Arts Council's Faoin Spéir/In the Open and Laois County Council.

This event took place in collaboration with the Arts Office and Music Generation Laois. Fitzmaurice Place, Portlaoise was transformed into a haven for the arts that featured an extravaganza of free activities and performances for all to enjoy.

Platform 31

Artist Kate Heffernan was selected as the Laois recipient as the 2022 Platform 31 artist development scheme - a national opportunity for artists to develop their practice and test new ideas of collaboration, research, audience development, place-making and sharing their work. The programme is designed to support and offer career development for 31 mid-career artists (one artist in each of the 31 local authorities around Ireland)

Dunamaise Arts Centre

Laois County Council continued to support the Dunamaise Arts Centre as one of the main arts venues in Laois, and the Arts Office continues to work collaboratively with Dunamaise Arts Centre DAC on numerous programmes.

Laois Music Centre (LSM) and Music Generation Laois

A weekend of events took place marking the opening of the Laois Music Centre and the 21st year celebration of the Laois School of Music in October. It was a hugely historic event and delightful to see the Music Centre in such comfortable surroundings at the old Scoil Mhuire site as well as concerts in St Paul's Church of Ireland over the weekend celebrating current students, alumni who are carving out professional careers in music as well as the talented music educators and of course the students.

Supports to the Arts

Financial supports for individuals and groups continued in 2022 through the Arts Act Grants Awards Scheme and the Tyrone Guthrie Centre Bursary

Creative Ireland Laois Programme

This programme supported by Creative Ireland in partnership with Laois County Council included a range of activities and events during the year, with a small sample set out below:

- Creative Ireland Laois strategy 2023-2027- People from all over the county gathered to discuss Laois's Cultural and Creativity Strategy that will be implemented from 2023 to 2027. Postal and email consultations were also received.
- Cruinniú na nÓg 2022 is a day of creativity for children and young people under the age of 18 which celebrates and encourages participation in culture and creativity through 'doing', 'making', and 'creating' from visual and performing arts to workshops and adventures in heritage, libraries, culture, science, technology or climate action.
- Creativity in Older Age is a multifaceted initiative that engages with older adults in Laois through a variety of approaches: Fadó Faces is a portraiture project, 'Activations' is a capacity development project & 'Talking Art' is an Art Appreciation Programme.
- The Mountmellick Swift Project mural was supported by Creative Ireland Laois as part of the Creative Ireland Programme which was launched on Culture Night.
- Laois Short Film Bursary winner of €10,000 was awarded to Songway Films for their short film The Light Within. The film is a supernatural tale was set in Rosenallis, Co. Laois.



- Equipment grants, totalling €5,178.17, were awarded to 11 people working in the arts, heritage and craft sectors.
- Two awards under Made in Laois (co-create) Grant Scheme totalling €3,940, was awarded to two artists for work in the community.

Seachtain na Gaeilge

Laois Arts Office in association with the Dunamais Arts Centre were delighted to present a Bilingual conversation between writer Rita Kelly and Clíodhna Ni Anluain. Writer Rita Kelly had a seasonal conversation with Clíodhna Ni Anluain referring to springtime in her work and her valued friendship with renowned poet Máirtín Ó Direáin who wrote the poem An tEarrach Thiar/Springtime in the West.



SPORT & LEISURE SECTION

Leisure Provision

Portlaoise and Portarlington Leisure Centres are both managed by Laois Leisure and have been renamed as Laois Leisure Portlaoise and Laois Leisure Portarlington. Both centres are making significant progress to re-establish the service provided post-pandemic. Extensive upgrading works were carried out to the centre in Portlaoise to facilitate re-opening in February 2022. These works were partly funded through the Sports Capital Programme and Better Energy Community (SEAI) grant scheme and Disability Grant.

Laois Leisure Portarlington scooped the 'Best Leisure Centre' award at the Ireland Active Leisure, Health and Fitness Association's annual National Quality Standards Awards, held in the Slieve Russell Hotel in Cavan on Friday, November 25th 2022 and Laois Leisure Portlaoise and Portarlington both achieved 'Outstanding' in the National Quality Standards for 2022/23.

Laois County Council continue to provide advice and support to Ballinakill Community Development Association, who operate Ballinakill Outdoor Pool. The Sport & Leisure Office assisted Ballinakill Community Development Association CLG throughout the year. Additionally, the Council made a financial contribution towards the staffing and safety costs of operating the facility, during a very successful summer season in 2022 and the swimming pool featured strongly as part of the Pride of

Place judging in September 2022.



Playing Facilities

Laois County Council managed twenty-one community play facilities in 2022, which required a considerable annual maintenance and repair programme, responding to a significant increase in usage post pandemic and aging of playground equipment.

The Council completed a new accessible play space at Portlaoise Leisure Centre playground, which was officially opened in June 2022. Additionally, an extensive upgrade of Doonane playground was completed in September 2022. Laois County Council continued to deliver on accessibility and biodiversity enhancements of several play spaces during 2022.

Laois County Council continue to assist local groups with the development of community playgrounds. Ballinakill playground was officially opened in March 2022 by An Cathaoirleach Conor Bergin MCC. Installation commenced on Borris in Ossory playground and MUGA in July 2022 and it will open to the public in the Spring of 2023. Funding was awarded to Trumera Community Centre under the CLÁR programme in 2022.

Green Flag Award for Parks

The Sport and Leisure Section worked with other sections to secure the retention of the prestigious Green Flag Award at Páirc an Phobail, Portlaoise and the People's Park Portarlinton in 2022.



Bike Week

Bike Week 2022 is a national programme which encourages people to use their bicycles for travel and leisure and was co-ordinated by the National Transport Authority and funded by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport. Funding of €22,500 was secured by Laois County Council from the Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport to deliver the 2022 Bike Week Programme. Laois County Council co-ordinated over 58 events with the assistance of schools & community partners countywide, which took place from May. Events included family fun cycles, school cycling events and workplace cycles including Laois County Council's.

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE ACTIVITY PROGRAMME

National Recreation Week/National Play Day

National Recreation Week/National Play Day

National Recreation Week/National Play Day is a joint initiative between the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) and Local Authorities. Laois County Council 's Sport & Leisure Section delivered a series of workshops in partnership with local groups countywide in July 2022. These events were aimed at Creating Playful Communities, to get children and young people in targeted areas playing outdoors.

Special Projects 2022

CLÁR Projects

Work on the maintenance and development projects continued throughout 2022. Funding was secured for eleven additional recreational projects under CLÁR 2022 .

The official openings of the Canal Side Recreation Area in Vicarstown and pitch facilities in Camross took place on October 30th and 31st 2022, which were funded under CLÁR.

Outdoor Rural Infrastructure Programme (ORIS)

Work on the maintenance and development projects continued throughout 2022. Funding was secured for an additional seven projects under ORIS 2022.

Healthy Ireland Projects 2022

Laois County Council continued the delivery of the Active Parks Programme in 2022, including during Laois Connects Mental Health Awareness week in October, with delivery of the programmes in public areas/parks in Portlaoise, Portarlington, Mountmellick, Castletown, Abbeyleix and Stradbally. Delivery of the programme which offers free activity sessions for adults and groups of all ages and abilities was extremely successful and well received in all of the communities, we received unprecedented feedback outlining the importance of these sessions to participants and requests for more.

Support of Clubs/Community Groups

During 2022 the Sport & Leisure Office continued to successfully work with clubs, schools and community groups to apply for and draw down funding to develop their facilities including;

- Sports Capital Grant Scheme
- Large Scale Sports Infrastructure Scheme
- CLÁR Programme
- Town and Village Renewal Scheme
- Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS)

Active Community Hubs

The Sport and Leisure Section continues to work with Laois Sports Partnership and local communities to provide support for Stradbally/Vicarstown/Timahoe Hub and Rathdowney/Errill Hub. The aim of the active Community hub is to promote sustainable physical activity opportunities in local communities.

Operation Transformation

Together with SVT Activity and Wellness Hub Laois County Council helped secure Stradbally as the primary location for the filming of Operation Transformation which commenced in December 2022. The programme will showcase images and community activities from various locations in the county.



URBACT

In 2022, Portlaoise participated along with five other partner towns of Rathdrum, Rush, Donegal Town, Sligo and Cork City to participate in a European knowledge sharing initiative with the objective of promoting and delivering a number of initiatives to the end of 2022 to enhance play opportunities for all ages in Portlaoise.

LAOIS WATER SAFETY

Water Safety Awareness 2022

Laois County Council in conjunction with Laois Water Safety Area Committee delivered several key events to promote Water Safety Awareness in 2022. Schools & community group visits were conducted, whereby basic water safety awareness talks and ring buoy demonstrations were delivered.

The events emphasised the importance of wearing the appropriate lifejacket/buoyancy aid when participating in open water.

Water Safety Classes 2022

WATER safety Ireland – Laois successfully delivered Spring and Autumn Water Safety Classes during 2022 at Laois Leisure Portlaoise. Swim Week 2022 was held in Ballinakill Outdoor Pool in June 2022. In total 125 adults & children participated in Irish Water Safety Classes in Co Laois throughout the year.

Paws Programme

Laois County Council in association with Laois Water Safety and Portlaoise Leisure Centre continued to successfully support & deliver the Primary Aquatic Water Safety Programme (PAWS). Primary schools were visited in Laois during 2022 by Water Safety Ireland - Laois' instructors.

World Ploughing Championships 2022

Volunteers from Water Safety Ireland – Laois operated the stand at the World Ploughing Championships in Ratheniska for three days and successfully distributed information and promotional material on behalf of Water Safety Ireland

Ring Buoys

During 2022 Laois County Council continued to inspect, maintain, erect and replace ring buoys at open water locations countywide. The Council placed an order in 2022 for 26 ring buoys sensors having received funding from Dublin City Council led SMART Solutions initiative. The sensors will be installed in early 2023.



LIBRARY SERVICES

COUNTY LIBRARIAN:

Bernie Foran

Public Libraries continue to offer an efficient frontline service for the community and our members in 2022 providing free access to library books and multimedia, government and Council information, online services and internet/wifi/printing facilities. Public Libraries re-opened fully throughout the county in January 2022 post level 5 public health government guidelines offering full services. The Library service continues to offer book deliveries to the housebound and cocooners and a “call and collect” service which means customers can pre-order any books or library resources in advance and call to the library and collect.

Portlaoise New Library

Works continue on the new library on Main Street Portlaoise with a planned handover date of Q2, 2023 enabling furniture, shelving including stock and IT fitout to commence, with a planned opening date of May/June 2023. Laois County Council is committed to the development of the new library and will facilitate the provision of educational and cultural information for the community and our visitors. Occupying a central location on the Main Street, the library will form a significant element of The Cultural Quarter development in the historic core of Portlaoise showcasing the Fort Protector and Fitzmaurice Place. The library has been designed to be universally accessible, welcoming and inclusive to all communities as well as providing study space, meeting rooms, sensory library services and a dedicated Local History and Studies reference and reading room.

Free Little Library Bag

Laois County Library Service provided a “My Little Library” book bag to every child starting school in September 2022 encouraging children to join their local library. The book bags which were collected from the Library were available in either Irish or English and were intended to help children navigate starting school.

Dormant Accounts and Heritage Grant Funding

The library service was awarded dormant account funding of €27,035 for four library projects : Sanctuary Library project; Parenting Support Programme (parenting talks, workshops, classes and resources); Sensory Library Project (Equipment and Resources) and Literacy software for reading. The library service was also awarded €8,614 under the Heritage Councils “Heritage Stewardship Scheme” for the preservation and provision of access to two collections of historic photographs relating to County Laois: the Ivo De Vesci Collection owned by Viscount De Vesci and the O'Brien Collection recently donated to the library service. The Ivo De Vesci Collection documents the De Vesci family and landed estate in Laois from 1900-1957. It is a collection of local, social and national historical significance.

Summer Stars Reading Challenge 2022 and Storystroll 2022

The library service signed up over 1,200 children in the county to its annual Summer Stars reading programme during the months of June, July and August and were delighted to welcome back younger readers. A county wide event programme, hosting over 170 individual events, was held to encourage young readers to join the library. For 2022, the library service created and hosted a Library Storystroll in

outdoor public parks which reproduced in full the children's book "Wee Donkeys treasure Hunt" by Erika McGann so that children and families could read along and then visit their local library to complete a treasure hunt and quiz. Over 1,700 free craft bags were created and collected for young readers and families coming into the library.

Library of Sanctuary Initiative

As part of the Library of Sanctuary Programme, the library service accessed dormant accounts funding to create a guide to services within the community, primarily aimed at those who had recently moved to Laois or to Ireland. The information booklet is a very concise signpost to services and some community involvement for the county. It covers areas such as emergency services, social entitlements and health, accessing school, travel and accommodation. It also suggests avenues for anyone who wishes to get involved in the community. The booklet is available in Ukrainian. The Library service also purchased Ukrainian language books for children and adults to add to library stock in addition to access to online newspapers, ebooks and other forms of information and resources in Ukrainian and other languages. We hope as new communities arrive in Laois, that they will think of the library service as a resource to make the transition to life in Laois a little easier.



Parenting Support Programme

With funding under the dormant accounts scheme, the library service ran a series of Parenting Support programme and events from September to December 2022, in collaboration with Offaly Library Service. The events included a mix of online talks and seminars over Zoom and in-person workshops and events held in library branches in both counties. A broad range of topics were covered, geared for parents/guardians of newborns up to teenagers and included well-known speakers such as Dr. John Sharry, Dr. Mary O'Kane and Fiona Ferris from As I Am. In addition, parenting support books were purchased for every branch to supplement the existing stock available.

Home Energy Saving Kits - Library lending scheme supported by Laois County Council Environment

The Home Energy Saving Kits lending scheme was officially launched by Cathaoirleach Cllr Thomasina Connell at 12 noon on Wednesday, 12th October in Portlaoise Library.

Each toolkit contains five tools and six practical exercises to help the public save energy at home and are available to borrow free of charge from 7 library branches in **Laois Libraries**.

The scheme has been developed by Dublin's energy agency Codema who acts as an energy agency to the four Dublin Local Authorities and aims to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions in the Dublin region.

The kits are accompanied by a step-by-step user manual and demonstration video, along with a Guide to Home Energy Savings which contains a range of tips to save energy across all areas of the home.

All of these resources are available on www.codema.ie/thinkenergy and more information on the Home Energy Saving Kits is available at www.codema.ie/energysavingkit



One County One Book

The Library Services were delighted to collaborate and participate with the Arts section on the 2022 Leaves Festival. The "One County One Book" initiative took place during the months of October and November featured award winning author Claire Keegan's book *Small Things Like These*. Copies of the book were loaned to local schools, general users and branch library book clubs. TY classes from local schools in Portlaoise and Mountmellick got an opportunity to meet the author in person and discuss the book and themes which was a fantastic opportunity for all involved. In Mountmellick Library, the local bookclub were also part of a one-off adult writing class with Claire Keegan.



LOETB Community Education at the Library

In 2022 in collaboration with Laois And Offaly ETB, the library service provided free adult classes in the libraries in the areas of Art, Digital Skills, Creative Writing and Photography. Over 180 class sessions were held with over 1,141 attendees in Durrow, Mountmellick, Stradbally, Portlaoise, Portarlinton, Abbeyleix and Mountrath Libraries.

Below picture shows the launch of the LOETB Creative Writing course authored short story collection *Scribblers to Scribes* in Portlaoise Library. Ten local authors read extracts from their work which was the culmination of a writing Initiative of LOETB tutor Ryan Dunne and Laois County Library Services.

Decade of Centenaries

Laois County Library services facilitated the programmes below as part of the Decade of Centenaries Programme and is supported by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media and Laois County Council under the Community Strand of the 2022 Decade of Centenaries Programme.

Historian in Residence Programme

Utilising the resources and archives of Laois County Library, the Historian in Residence developed a research and engagement programme that explored various aspects of Laois history in the revolutionary period. The historian engaged with local communities and historical groups utilising Library resources, books and the County archives to assist with the residency. The aims of this project tied in with the national Decade of Commemoration's aims and achieved the following outcomes:

- Library talks both online and in-person
- Researched and written blog posts and articles related to Laois in the period, with details at this link: <https://laoislocalstudies.ie/articles>

Purchase of Library stock

The Decade of Centenaries programme has supported libraries with funding the purchase of Irish-related reading materials, including materials for young people. The section includes history, biography, Irish fiction, culture, sporting and modern Irish literature and reading material. The services are an accessible and free service for all sections of the community. The financial support of the Decade of Centenaries book grant will assist in developing and updating library collections for both adults and children. The aims of this initiative are to ensure a stock of high quality published Irish material such as history, Irish culture and general Irish material and is available for the public to borrow and browse in our public libraries.

History Lectures

Laois County Library services hosted a series of history lectures taking themes from the Appendix A -2021 National Guidelines "[Significant historical events and broad themes](#)", using both local and national speakers and facilitators.

A broad variety of Library talks were held online and in-person during 2022 including:

- De- Valera 1922 and the coming of the Civil war by Dr David McCullagh
- The Press in Troubled Times: a history talk by Teddy Fennelly
- Irish is a foreign language": a talk on the Irish language during the revolutionary years, 1912-1923
- Interactive traditional Irish craft workshops for Children
- Cumann Na Mban Talks and exhibition -see below

An exhibition on Laois Cumann na mBan opened in Mountmellick Library on Tuesday 5th July at 7.30 pm. The exhibition was curated by Mountmellick native Bernadette Dunne with the support of Laois County Library as part of its Decade of Centenaries programme.

The stories of the Laois women that featured in the exhibition were compiled from official records housed in the Military Archives and the oral histories gathered by Bernadette. The Cumann na mBan exhibition

and related events are part of a long-term and on-going engagement by Laois Local Studies in projects which are bringing back into the light women's experience of the revolutionary period. It is hoped that the exhibition will encourage the public to share and record for posterity more stories relating to the forgotten women of revolutionary Laois.

Digitising

The archive collection of Portarlinton historian Ronnie Mathews was acquired by Laois County Council in 2021. Ronnie Mathews, a well-known historian and author of several books on Portarlinton, had collected documents, maps and artefacts relating to the town over his whole life, and the collection also includes some items collected by his father. The acquisition of the Mathews Archive follows the announcement of funding through the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund for conservation and regeneration of the historic Market Square in Portarlinton, with plans for the conservation and reuse of the Market House in the Square, which has been leased by Laois County Council.

Laois County Library Service have digitised part of the postcards collection pertaining to the 1920-1930 period of the town which form part of the collection above.

Col James Fitzmaurice Commemoration Committee - Celebrating the Rich History of Flight in Laois: Fitzmaurice Portlaoise Plane Archive and Portlaoise Festival of Flight.

Col. James Fitzmaurice was a pilot from Laois. In February 1922, Colonel Fitzmaurice joined the Irish National Army's Air Service following the formation of the Irish Free State. Early in 1923 he was promoted to Captain, and in 1928 he flew the first transatlantic plane from east to west. As part of the Decade of Centenaries, a dedicated website and archive has been developed to record and inform the community on this unique facet of aviation and its local link to Portlaoise.

Social Media

The library service has an active social media presence across a range of platforms including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and TikTok. A small team made up of staff members from each branch library follow a regularly scheduled posting timetable to advertise upcoming events, showcase new library stock, promote gallery and community programmes and highlight various library initiatives. The library service has over 10,000 followers across all platforms and is continually growing.

Online Resources

The Library service provides access to a wide range of free online resources as part of library membership, including:

- eBooks and eAudiobooks through the Borrowbox app
- online magazines through the Libby app
- international daily newspapers through the Pressreader app
- eLearning Courses through the Universal Class app
- children's picture books in over 50 languages with LOTE4Kids
- academic journal articles and essays with JSTOR
- access to historical Irish newspaper records in library branches with the Irish Newspaper Archives

National Performance Indicators 2021

No of Library visits per head of population per the 2016 census	1
No of items issued to borrowers in the year	125,766
Library Active Members per head of population in 2021	0.08
Registered Members in the library	15,368

A/Director of Services:

Carmel McNicholl

The invasion of Ukraine by Russia in February 2022 resulted in one of the greatest displacements of people since the second World War. Ireland along with its European partners initiated its response effort. As part of the overall national response to this humanitarian crisis, there were a number of immediate asks of the Council, which were complied with:

- To identify suitable available accommodation options within the county and to assist the International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS) with the accommodation of a number of the new arrivals into Ireland
- To establish and lead a “Ukrainian Crisis Multi Agency Response Forum” along the lines of and largely similar to the Covid-19 Community Response Forum which sat in 2020 and 2021.
- To assemble lists of suitable vacant premises in the county that could be considered to accommodate refugees, so to develop short and long term responses that meet our country’s obligations under the Temporary Protection Directive.
- To provide details of suitable sites for consideration for medium to long term accommodation solutions.

The Irish State implemented its response in accordance with Directive 2001/55/EC, which established that the duration of temporary protection afforded by EU states to Ukrainian citizens fleeing the conflict, was for an initial period of one year ie to March 2023, with the possibility of extension. In October 2022 it was announced at a European Council meeting that the Commission had decided that the period of temporary protection should be extended for a further period of one year ie to March 2024.

To support the proposed rapid provision of emergency accommodation the Government also put in place a separate Planning regulation, which came into effect on 23rd June 2022. This provided that certain classes of temporary development, including residential accommodation, undertaken by or on behalf of a State authority, to provide protection to displaced persons from Ukraine, will be exempt from the provisions of the Planning and Development Act (other than environmental considerations) for an initial period of 1 year with a maximum extended total period of 3 years from 4 March 2022.

A dedicated Ukrainian Response Team was established within the Council to provide the necessary supports and address the challenges arising, effective from 1st July 2022.

Laois County Council leads and coordinates the delivery of local services and supports via the “**Laois Ukrainian Community Response Forum**”. The Forum, consisting of 23 member groups/agencies, was established in March 2022, convened 11 times during 2022, and continues to meet on a monthly basis. All efforts are supported by An Garda Síochána, Dept of Social Protection, the HSE, Civil Defence, the Local Development Company, LOETB, TUSLA and various local voluntary groups, and community organisations.

As they arrived into the county throughout the year, Ukrainian citizens were hosted at IPAS contracted centres in Durrow, Abbeyleix, Portlaoise, Mountmellick, and Clonaslee. Others had made private arrangements, staying with friends or relatives, residing with host families, accommodated via the various parishes and also in private rented accommodation.

Effective from mid July 2022, the Council’s Ukrainian Response Team took over the management of the Irish Red Cross pledged accommodation list, and worked to relocate local Ukrainian families to vacant pledged properties and to shared accommodation arrangements with local host families.

A new national call for vacant properties, the ‘Offer A Home’ Scheme, was launched in November 2022, and the matching of Ukrainian families to suitable properties in Laois under this scheme commenced.

In line with a national programme rollout and following site investigations in late 2022, a site in Rathdowney was deemed suitable for a modular homes development. Municipal District members were briefed and the 42 home project is being managed by the Office of Public Works in conjunction with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, who are progressing a local public engagement process.

At the end of 2022 there were 789 displaced Ukrainian citizens in Laois. Approximately 300 of these were in the accommodation centres detailed above, with the remainder in privately sourced or pledged accommodation. These numbers are increasing and the influx is predicted to continue. Accordingly, the Council will continue to meet its obligations and support the humanitarian response effort into 2023 and for as long as is deemed necessary by Government.

TRANSPORT, WATER SERVICES, ENVIRONMENT AND EMERGENCY SERVICES STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE

DIRECTOR OF SERVICES:

Simon Walton

SENIOR ENGINEER:

Adrian Barrett

<u>Members</u>	<u>Sectoral</u>
<i>Cllr. Paddy Bracken (Chair)</i>	<i>John Killeen, Development/Construction</i>
<i>Cllr. John Joe Fennelly</i>	<i>John Talbot, Agriculture/Farming</i>
<i>Cllr William Aird</i>	<i>Deirdre O'Connell Hopkins, Trade Union</i>
<i>Cllr Ben Brennan</i>	
<i>Cllr Noel Tuohy</i>	

The Roads Department received road grants and budget funding of over €27 million for the year and additional funds were received over and above what was adopted in the roadworks scheme bringing the figure to €28m. The 2022 Roadworks Programme was progressed across all three Municipal Districts and is complete.

Significant additional funding was received from August onwards from the Department of Rural and Cultural Development under Local Improvements Scheme. Works were completed on the schemes in October 2022.

Road Design

Laois County Council completed a large number of maintenance and improvement schemes in 2022 which included the completion of the N80 Kyletalesha to Mountmellick Phase 1 Pavement Asset Repair and Renewal and the HD 28 pavement surface improvement works, enhancements to signage, line markings, capital pavement works together with installation of bollards, public lighting, and junction improvement works. The following outlines the works completed and associated funding.

Capital Maintenance Killyganard N78 – Expenditure €200,000

500 meters of surface reinstatement on the N78, north of Ballylinan and close to the Kildare border.

HD28 Pavement Resurfacing Sites – Expenditure €1,000,000.00

The following works were carried out under this scheme:

- N80 Graiguecullen
- N80 Garrough
- N80 James Fintan Lalor Avenue
- Stradbally, Windy Gap

N77 Abbeyleix Road Rehabilitation and Enhancement Scheme –

The Part VIII was approved by the Elected Members at the May meeting and detailed design is complete and the Council are currently in the process of appointing a contractor for the works.

N80 Kyletalesha to Mountmellick Phase 1 Pavement Asset Repair and Renewal – Expenditure €2.4 Million

2022 saw the completion of the N80 Kyletalesha to Mountmellick Phase 1 Pavement Asset Repair by Roadstone Ltd. The works began in June 2022 and concluded in December 2022 with the completion of the planing out and restoration and strengthening of 2.5 km of roadway.

Capital Kyletalesha to Derrycloney Phase 2 – Expenditure €450,000

A detailed design was progressed for this section of the N80 and works are expected to start on this section of road in the summer of 2023.

N77 Deer Pilot Scheme - Expenditure €70,000

Vegetation clearance work was undertaken on the N77 south of Abbeyleix to improve visibility for motorists travelling along that section of road. The work carried out at this location was due to the high level of deer crossing.

Public Lighting

There is a total of 9,500 public lights in Laois with 65% of the lights in the county upgraded to LED.

Winter Maintenance

Call-out operations were carried out on 45 occasions during the 2021/2022 Winter season treating 458km of the salted network in Laois. To date there have been 40 callouts during the 2022/2023 winter season.

Portlaoise Municipal District (Central Area)

In the Central Area, a total road length of 8.5Km was improved under Restoration Improvement Works (Strengthening) Schemes.

A total road length of 8.2km was resealed and had skid resistance improved under Restoration Maintenance Works (Surface Dressing) Schemes.

Footpath Programme including Urban Renewal

Over €195,00 of footpath works were carried in the towns of Portlaoise, Abbeyleix and Ballyroan in 2022.

Portlaoise Town Planting

This Municipal District maintains containers, beds and hanging baskets at over 300 locations around Portlaoise Town. These locations are planted with winter bedding in November and with summer bedding in May each year.

The Municipal District Office also works closely with Portlaoise Tidy Towns with the planting and maintenance of these hanging baskets in the Main Street and Lyster Square in the town. The hanging baskets are on display from June to October each year.

Portlaoise Biodiversity Projects

The Portlaoise Municipal District Office manage 36,000m² of annual cut and short cut meadows in Portlaoise town environs. A Bluebell Meadow was established on JFL Avenue near the Bridge Street Centre.

In conjunction with Portlaoise Tidy Towns the “Portlaoise – A Town in a Garden” Roundabout Strategy was developed on 2021. In 2022, the Market Square Roundabout and Father Browne Avenue Roundabout were upgraded with the provision of lighting, sculptures and pollinator friendly planting.

In conjunction with LEADER and Portlaoise Tidy Towns, the Spring Bulb Planting Programme for Portlaoise commenced in 2022 on JFL Avenue at Bridge Street and Credit union, Dublin Road, Stradbally Road and Mountmellick Road.

A beautiful hand painted nature-based mural was put in place on the Rankins Wood Entrance to Páirc an Phobail in Summer 2022.

Climate Action

The 10,000 Trees for Portlaoise Project in conjunction with Trees on the Land, Portlaoise Tidy Towns and Climate Action Plan was progressed in 2022. Planting locations for over 3,000 new whips & trees were identified in 2022, with planting scheduled for spring 2023.

Outdoor Dining

New canopies and planting were installed in the outdoor dining area at Hynes Square 2022. Landscaping and planting works were carried out on Jessop Street at the entrance to Hynds Square and Main Street.

Community Involvement Schemes

Road surfacing, footpaths and drainage works were carried out on the L-81109, adjacent to Jimmy Maher Park on the Carlow Road Abbeyleix.

Road Drainage Works programme

Drainage works were carried out at the following locations:

- Byrnes Lane
- Jimmy Maher Park Lane
- Clonad
- Ironmills
- Cashel Ballyroan
- Rear Lane Abbeyleix Road
- Bartells Bridge
- Knock

Climate Change Adaptation Schemes & Drainage programme

Drainage works were carried out at the following locations:

- Clontycoe drainage
- Clonboyne Drainage Advance Works
- Clonadacasey
- Mountmellick Road
- Crutt Gaignahown
- Woodgrove Portlaoise
- Cashel Ballyroan
- Tullore Ballyroan
- Ballyroan Rd Abbeyleix
- Rathmoyle Abbeyleix

The type of works involved replacing undersized drains with new culverts, high quality soakaways and open water courses and improving the road drainage network.

Road Safety Schemes & Junction Improvement Works

Works to enhance road safety to enhance visibility and driver safety were carried out at

- Ballypickas
- Lauragh / Knightstown
- Nolan's Cross at Pass / Ballyheyland
- Kyletalesha
- Cappoley, Portlaoise
- Ralphs Grove
- Sheffield Cross

Clár Safety Scheme

Pedestrian crossing and associated footpath works were carried out in Raheen at Tobar an Léinn NS.

Local Improvement Schemes

Road improvement works were carried out at the following locations;

- Eyne Portlaoise
- Moate Ballinakill
- Graiguenahoun Abbeyleix

Bridge Rehabilitation Works

Bridge replacement works were completed at Bridge Street Bridge, Portlaoise.

Traffic Calming

Traffic calming works were carried out at various locations in the Portlaoise Municipal District Area. The majority of these works, related to the installation of traffic calming ramps in residential areas including: Esker Hills, Glenbarrow, The Hermitage, Ratheven, Kilminchy, Hillview Drive & Raheen.

Green Flag Award

The Green Flag Award scheme recognises and rewards well managed parks and green spaces, setting the benchmark standard for the management of recreational outdoor spaces across Europe and around the world.

Páirc an Phobail Portlaoise was awarded a green flag again in 2022.

2022 IBAL Anti-Litter League

Portlaoise achieved 20th place out of 40 towns that were assessed as part of the Irish Business Against Litter League (Round 1). Portlaoise achieved second place overall in the final round of judging. Portlaoise achieved the status of "Clean to European Norms".

River Works

Ecological Surveys were carried out on the River Triogue and Glendownes, Portlaoise in 2022 in preparation for river works planned for 2023.

Other Works

The Portlaoise Municipal District Road Office also carries out other tasks on an annual basis such as:

- Maintenance and developments of Pairc an Phobail and the Triogue Linear Park
- Street cleaning and litter collection
- Renewal of road markings
- Drainage maintenance, cleaning, and repairs
- Verge trimming at junctions on regional roads
- Control of invasive plant species in public areas
- Grass cutting and weed control in Portlaoise town centre
- Tree Surgery works in public areas
- Road surface repairs
- General maintenance of infrastructure such as railings and barriers.
- Service of Hedge cutting notices
- Issuing of Public Notices (including hazards on the road such as debris and soil)

The office also works with groups such as Tidy Towns, Downtown Traders, Farmers Market, Christmas Market and Christmas Lights Committees on an annual basis.

Graigucullen-Portarlington Municipal District (Eastern Area)

In the Eastern Area, a total road surfacing length of 13 km was completed by Restoration Improvements Works (Strengthening) in 2022.

A total road surfacing length of 16.6 km was completed by Restoration Maintenance Works (Surface Dressing) in 2022.

Bridge rehabilitation works were carried out on several bridges in 2022, most notably –

- Inch/Curraclone Bridge (L7950): Structural repair and replacement of the stone abutments and pitched flooring of the western arch of the Inch Bridge on L7950 across the Stradbally River:



- Gales Bridge (L3978): This involved the removal and re-construction of a section of damaged parapet / wingwall at the Castletown side of the bridge.
- Clogh Road Bridge (R426): Reconstruction of length of stone masonry wing wall.
- Sallys Bridge (R430): The scope of works included the removal of a length of damaged parapet on both sides of the bridge and re-construction in traditional stone masonry:
- Luggacurren Bridge (L7853): Re-construction of arch and parapet walls in traditional stone masonry:



Safety Improvement Works were completed in Newtown/Doonane. These works involved the removal of a length of hedging that was obstructing sightlines on the R430. Speed radars were also procured for Pound Cross near Ballybrittas. Safety improvement works were also carried out at Molloys Crossroads at the junction of the R430 and R431.

Under the Local Improvement Scheme (LIS), the following lengths of roadway were surfaced:

- Whitebog, Ballylinan
- Ballykillen, Ballickmoyler
- Rossena, Ballickmoyler
- Ballyadding, Ballybrittas
- The Strand, Ballickmoyler
- Dunbrin Lower
- Ballyhide

Significant road drainage works were carried out across the Municipal District in 2022 including:

- Tennisrath: installation of road gullies and drainage pipework out falling to nearby watercourse (to resolve property flooding issue)
- Dunbrin: installation of road gullies and drainage pipework out falling to soak away
- Skehana: installation of road gullies and drainage pipework out falling to nearby river (to resolve road flooding issue)
- Arles: installation of manhole and collector channel to resolve flooding on N80
- Fossey: installation of road gullies and significant length of drainage pipework/infilling of open drain and widening of roadway
- Clogh Road, the Swan: installation of road gullies and drainage pipework to resolve water ponding on roadway
- Timahoe: installation of road gullies and drainage pipework out falling to adjacent river to resolve water ponding on roadway adjacent to the playground
- Moores Cross: installation of road gullies and construction of manholes to resolve road drainage issue/road subsidence
- Keeloge, Killeshin: installation of road gullies, connection to existing culvert, to remove excess water flowing on the R430

Under the 'Towns & Villages Renewal Scheme', new seating, litter bins, planters and a tourist information board were installed in Stradbally. New seating, footpath bollards, planters and tourist information board were installed in Portarlington. New footpaths were constructed in the People's Park in Portarlington and significant planting was carried out along the Link Road in Portarlington.

In consultation with Portarlington Tidy Towns committee, 11 new solar compactor bins were also installed in Portarlington.

A range of traffic calming, and road safety measures were also installed across the Municipal District in 2022. These included:

- speed ramps, speed radars, pedestrian crossings, new parking spaces, new wheelchair parking spaces, new pedestrian crossings, roadside drainage works, fencing works, localised road surfacing repair works, road signage, road markings, emptying of litter bins, street sweeping, hedgecutting and a range of landscaping works in the public realm.



A 5-year River Maintenance Programme was developed in 2020 for Barrow Drainage District works. In 2022, the following river maintenance works were completed under this Programme:

- River Douglas: 2.5km of River Douglas between Gales Bridge and Ballynagar, works were completed in Oct 2022:



- Ballymanus Bridge: Removal of silt islands in Stradbally River just upstream of canal aquaduct and silt removal works completed in July 2022.
- Stradbally River (Stradbally to Garrans): Vegetation removal works on 3.2km of the Stradbally River from Stradbally Town to Garrans. Tree/vegetation removal was completed in August 2022.
- Carried out a degree of silt removal works at the N80 Maidenhead culvert

Footpath repair and construction works were completed across the Graiguecullen/Portarlington Municipal District in 2022. These are some of the larger footpath projects:

- Main Street (both sides) from Bank of Ireland to Market Square. Enabling works were carried out along footpaths on Portarlington Main Street to facilitate the ESB installation of underground cables and removal of the overhead lines. The ESB removed their overhead lines and poles at the end of November 2022. New streetlights were installed and switched on along the length of the Main Street and on Foxcroft Street.
- Canal Road Footpath and Cycleway
- Canal Road (adjacent to Clanmalire estate)
- Station Road
- Edenderry Road, Portarlington
- Saint Abban's Terrace, Coolanagh
- Main Street, Stradbally (opposite church)
- Foxcroft Street, Portarlington
- Derrymore, Portarlington
- Crann Nua, Portarlington

Under the Local Improvement Scheme (LIS), six lengths of roadway were surfaced:

Emo Park, Emo
Milford, Kilmoroney
Skehana, Ballylinan
Killeen, Maganey
Ballymaddock, Stradbally
Clogrenan

Borris in Ossory/Mountmellick Municipal District (Western Area)

Road Maintenance

In the Western Area, a total road surfacing length of 19km was completed by Restoration Improvements Works (Strengthening). A total road surfacing length of 19km was completed by Restoration Maintenance Works (Surface Dressing).



Community Involvement Schemes

Road surfacing, footpaths and drainage works were carried out at:

- Tentore, Ballacolla
- Whitefields, Camross
- Cappagh Lane, Rosenallis
- Grantstown, Ballacolla
- Rathphelan, Mountrath
- Twomey Park, Mountmellick

Local Improvement Schemes

Road surfacing and drainage works were carried out at:

- Ballykealy, Durrow
- Meelick, Rosenallis
- The Derries, Errill
- Lisduff, Errill
- Coolagh, Clonaslee
- Monnagh, Coolrain
- Newtown, Castletown
- Ballyquiade, Ballybrophy
- Glenall Camross
- Shanboe, Borris-in-Ossory
- Kyle, Rathdowney

River Drainage

River maintenance works were completed at the following locations:

- Vegetation removal on the River Barrow between Portnahich Bridge and Garryhinch Bridge.
- Vegetation removal on the River Nore between Derryduff Bridge and Danganroe Bridge.
- Siltation removal works were completed on the River Erkina at Donaghmore Bridge.
- Removal of gravel bars beneath Irishtown Bridge in Mountmellick.
- Vegetation removal on the Drummond drain, tributary of the River Barrow.
- Drainage maintenance on the water courses in Mountmellick Town.

Bridge Rehabilitation Works

Poormans Bridge, Shanahoe

A 3-tonne weight restriction had been imposed on the bridge since 2011. The works consisted primarily of taking down sections of the piers and cutwaters in order to remove tree stumps and rebuilding of the piers and cutwaters. Other works carried out include the installation of tie bars, repointing, masonry repair works, providing rubbing strips to both sides of the carriageway and resurfacing the road.

R421 Tinnahinch Bridge, Clonaslee

Tinnahinch Bridge was struck by a vehicle and approximately half of the southern parapet wall was damaged. The staff in the Borris-in-Ossory/Mountmellick staff demolished the remaining portion of the parapet wall and reconstructed the parapet wall using rubble stone (existing material), with cut stone coping. The stonework was constructed using lime mortar.

Rushin Bridge, Mountrath

Single-arch bridge over tributary of the Whitehorse River. Arch barrel extended/widened by 4ft to north side to accommodate road-widening scheme.

Meelick Bridge, Rosenallis

Replacement of existing masonry arch culvert with pre-cast concrete box culverts. Temporary diversion of services to facilitate the works. Re-alignment of the existing stream upstream and downstream of culvert. New parapet walls, pavement works and accommodation works.

In addition to bridges mentioned above, Council staff also repaired several other bridges including Turfarney Bridge, Rathdowney, and Plucks Bridge, Camross.

Drainage Programme

Drainage Schemes were delivered at several locations around the Municipal District in 2022 including:

- Moran's Cross, Durrow
- Health Centre, Durrow
- O'Moore's Forest, Mountmellick
- Drinagh, Mountmellick

The type of works involved replacing undersized drains with new culverts, high quality soakaways and open water courses all with the intention of keeping the road network clear of surface water.

Climate Change Adaptation Grant

The following schemes were funded under the Climate Change Adaptation Grant:

- Drainage and embankment stabilisation works on the L-1005 The Cut to Clonaslee
- Road raising at Ballybooden, Ballacolla.

NTA Public Realm Improvement Project – O’Connell Square, Mountmellick

The NTA provided funding for a public realm enhancement scheme for the historic centre of Mountmellick Town. The objective of the project was to create a safe and pleasant square and generally enhance the public realm in the core of the town. This was achieved by the provision of limestone kerbs and channels in combination with high quality pavement slabs and cobble lock. The public lighting scheme incorporated traditional feature lighting.



Footpath Works

Footpath improvement works were undertaken during 2022 at the following locations:

- The Green, Clonaslee
- Rosenallis Rd., Clonaslee
- Forest, Mountrath
- The Rock
- Rosenallis Village
- Errill Village
- R445 Portlaoise Rd., Mountrath
- O’Moore Street, Mountmellick
- Rathdowney Rd., Borris-in-Ossory
- Shanboe, Borris-in-Ossory
- Ballacolla Village

Active Travel/NTA Projects

Laois County Council received an allocation of €3m which increased to €4.7m during 2022 from the National Transport Authority for the delivery of Active Travel projects. Active Travel is utilising modes of transport where the use of physical energy is required, such as walking or cycling. Delivery of Active Travel projects largely centres around walking and cycling improvements.

In 2022 Laois County Council delivered several active travel projects:

Rathleague Footpath, Portlaoise

- New 3m wide footpath from Bloomfield Cross to Portlaoise GAA
- 580m in length
- Additional public lighting provided

Ballyroan Footpath

- New 2m wide footpath from the national school to GAA Club
- 450m in length
- Additional public lighting provided
- New footbridge provided over stream

Ballinakill Footpath

- New footpath serving Ballinakill outdoor swimming pool from Church Street
- 150m in length
- New public lighting and boundary treatment provided

Junction Tightening Works

Junction tightening schemes involve the narrowing of wide crossing points at estate entrances or other minor roads. Such schemes can see reductions in crossing widths from 20m down to 7m. Crossing points are also reconstructed as raised crossings. These measures bring about a safer environment for all road users, particularly pedestrians and those with mobility or visual impairments.

In 2022 junction tightening works took place at:

- Ballymorris Manor, Portarlinton
- Rose Court, Portarlinton
- Millbrook Manor, Portarlinton
- Beechfield, Portlaoise
- Liogard, Portlaoise

Portlaoise Local Transport Plan (LTP)

The preparation of Portlaoise Local Transport Plan (LTP) commenced in Q3 2022 following the appointment of engineering consultants.

A LTP is a short to medium-term plan that sets out the town's transport strategy for the period to 2030 to

coincide with the period of the Portlaoise Local Area Plan (2024-2030). It will also consider longer term proposals as contained in documents such as 'Portlaoise 2040 and Beyond'.

The LTP will be required to examine all transport modes and how they interact both in the town centre and throughout its environs.

The final LTP will support and feed into the preparation of the Portlaoise LAP which will commence in 2023.

Safe Routes to Schools Programme

Led by An Taisce, the SRTS Programme was developed in response to ongoing issues of safety and congestion at the school gate and on routes to school. The programme aims to support active travel to school (walking and cycling). Plans to carry out improvements to front of school locations were advanced in 2022 in conjunction with An Taisce and the NTA. Draft measures have been prepared and these will be assessed and agreed with a view for implementation in 2023.

The three Round 1 schools are:

- Maryborough NS, Portlaoise
- Scoil Phadraig Naofa, Mountmellick
- Scoil Mhuire, Abbeyleix
-

Other Schemes

Other multi-annual projects which saw further advancement with design and planning in 2022 were

- Active Travel Scheme - Father Brown Avenue, Portlaoise
- Part 8 approval received in December 2022
- Active Travel Scheme – Dublin Road, Portlaoise
- Triogue Way, Portlaoise

Road Type	1-4 Rating	5-6 Rating	7-8 Rating	9-10 Rating
A) Regional	14.77	5.13	61.21	18.71
B) Local Primary	9.98	23.66	47.77	16.03
C) Local Secondary	11	26.83	49.72	11.79
D) Local Tertiary	16	24.27	36.3	14.73

	Regional Road Strengthening	Regional Road Resealing	Local Road Strengthening	Local Road Resealing
Length	9	9.1	40.1	33.8
Amount expended	2,074,565	646,016	4,571,423	1,296,816

WATER SERVICES

A/SENIOR ENGINEER:

Trevor Hennessy

Uisce Éireann

The Department for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, published the Framework for the Future Delivery of Water Services in June 2022 and it sets out the next phase in the transformation of the water sector in Ireland. Irish Water will be known as Uisce Éireann from January 2023 and will assume full responsibility for the delivery of all public water services in Ireland on a phased basis during the year.

Irish Water Capital Investment Plan 2019 to 2024

Irish Water continues to fund all Water Services Capital Projects. Laois County Council in conjunction with Irish Water have completed various schemes to support the socio-economic development of the County. In relation to the Portlaoise Water Supply improvement Scheme, borewell PW09 at Coolbanagher has recently been developed and is currently on standby to be used when required.

Irish Water are also developing Well PW07 and Well PW08 at Coolbanagher. Two borewells at Doolough have been brought into production to serve the Portarlinton Water Supply. Further progress was made on the borewell at Fermoy WTP to provide water in Durrow.

Programmes

Disinfection/PH control programme – Civil works progressing in Meelick, Derryguile, Kyle, Five Wells, Derrymoyle and Lough WTPs. MEICA works progressed at the Strand, Knocks, Derryguile, Lough, Kyle, Five Wells, Clonin Hill, Derrymoyle, Ballyroan and Meelick WTP. Process proving now complete at the Knocks, Kyle and Ballyroan WTPs. ESB supply upgrade currently being progressed for Five Wells. Power switchover at Lough WTP now complete. Design for Kilminchy WTP and Fermoy WTP currently being progressed by CWL/IW.

Inlet Works Storm and Sludge Program – Castletown WwTP - New Storm Tank installation is complete. Training for Laois County Council operational staff now complete. Snagging list has been issued by IW to EPS.

Ballyroan WWTP Upgrade – A laser scan survey of the plant and an asbestos survey are being progressed/ carried out. Catchment questionnaire completed by Laois County Council for IW. Onsite works now expected to be progressed in 2023 by Conway Engineering.

Irish Water Small Towns & Villages Growth Programme

Under this Programme Irish Water have allocated €2.249m for the improvement and increase in treatment capacity at three waste water treatment plants in Laois. These are Ballyroan, Ballinakill and Borris-in-Ossory. Ballyroan is the most advance of these with Irish Water currently considering the options and pricing report for this site. Ballinakill and Borris-in-Ossory are at design stage.

Lead Mitigation Strategy – Derryguile WTP has been identified as a priority plant under the IW Lead Mitigation Strategy for addition of Orthophosphate Treatment.

Mountrath Sewer Diversion - diversion of sewer from under Patrick Street Bridge, Mountrath recently completed by Dunne Brothers Ltd. in 2022.

Mountmellick and Portarlinton DAP – Catchment Appreciation Meeting took place between IW/LCC/ Jacobs on the 31/8/2022. Site visit by Jacobs to both Mountmellick and Portarlinton took place on the 15th and 16th of November 2022. Survey works to be progressed throughout 2023.

Networks and Water Conservation.

First fix, find and fix and lead replacement work continued throughout the county in 2022. Significant progress was made in leakage management in Portarlinton following back yard service works in St. Michael's Park.

Replacement of watermain on the Swan network is now complete.

Mains rehabilitation works were also carried out in Abbeyleix and Stradbally in 2022, which will provide a safer, more secure water supply by minimising the frequency of bursts and improving the resilience of the network.

Water Services Laboratory

Laois County Council's Water Services Laboratory is an INAB accredited facility certified under the international standard ISO 17025:2017. The Laboratory retained its accreditation status following an annual INAB assessment on 5th April 2022. The Laboratory was originally granted accreditation in 26th October 2016 by INAB. The sample throughput in 2022 was 4,068 which is similar to the 2021 figure of 4,076.

Our customers include Irish Water for all public water supplies and wastewater schemes in Laois, Offaly County Council for private water supplies in Offaly, LAWPRO Regional Offices in Kilkenny, Clonmel and Tullamore for river and lake catchment projects. In addition, the Laboratory undertakes sampling and testing programmes for the Water Services and Environment Departments within Laois County Council.

There is ongoing engagement with WSTO, the Water Committee of the CCMA and the DPHLG to finalise the Business Plan for the implementation of the Network of Accredited Local Authority Laboratories Shared Service. Under this Plan the Laboratory will develop into a regional scale facility providing services to neighbouring local authorities. It is projected the sample throughput in the Laboratory will increase in the short-term from the current figure of 4,076 to 9,000. There is continued efforts to enhance our accreditation status by extending our accreditation scope and investing in modern instrumentation which will allow greater analytical capacity. Since 2020, a capital investment of € 157,000 in instrumentation has been made.

Multi Annual Rural Water Programme 2019-2021

The strategic objective of the Rural Water Programme is to improve quality, reliability and efficiency of water services to rural dwellers where Irish Water services are not available. Work continued to support the

Group Water Scheme Sector in conjunction with the DPHLG and with the support of the National Federation of Group Water Schemes financially, administratively and technically to ensure that a safe, dependable and adequate water supply is provided to the rural population and farming community in Laois in compliance with the European Union (Drinking Water) Regulations, 2014, as amended, thus protecting the public health of the people of Laois and supporting the socio-economic development of the agricultural sector.

Some works were delayed due to the COVID 19 restrictions. Water conservation and network upgrade works were completed on a number of schemes in 2022. Grants totaling €107,130 were paid to Ballacolla GWS, the Heath GWS and Barrowhouse GWSS in respect of these upgrade works.

Irish Water confirmed that The Rock GWS was taken in charge by them on 7th of December 2022 and work is progressing on transitioning of Moyadd GWS to Irish Water and this scheme will be taken in charge in 2023.

Works on Wastewater Community Connection project at Goodwin Estate will commence early in 2023 and will be complete by end of April 2023.

Application and Feasibility Studies for Vicarstown and Cullohill were submitted to the Department on the 15th of September for funding under Measure, A8 (Waste Water Collection and Treatment Needs for Villages and Settlements without access to Public Waste Water Services). These applications are being reviewed and adjudicated upon by the Department .

Subsidy payments of €509,152 was paid to a number of Group Water Schemes in the county towards the running costs of their water supply schemes.

There were 65 applications received for grant aid assistance to improve private water supplies to domestic households and the sum of €139,944 was paid out to 39 applicants in respect of well grants in 2022.

Dangerous Structure and Places

A Register of Dangerous Places/Structures is maintained by the Council and there are 9 open files on the register in Laois at 31st December 2022. All files are being monitored & progressed.

Performance Indicators 2021

% registered schemes monitored	84.68
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ENVIRONMENT

SENIOR ENGINEER:

Adrian Barrett

The key aims of the Environment Section are to promote sustainable development, to provide an environmentally efficient waste management infrastructure, to implement the Eastern Midlands Waste Management Plan and to maintain proper regulatory and monitoring systems for environmental protection and control of pollution.

The Environment Section is responsible for a range of statutory and non-statutory functions, which include:

- Environmental Complaints Management
- Waste Management
- Environmental Protection – Water, Air & Noise
- Litter Management – Prevention & Control
- Recycling & Civic Amenity Sites
- Planning Referrals
- Tidy Towns

Each year as part of Laois County Council’s commitments and obligations under EU & State rules, an RMCEI Plan (Recommended Minimum Criteria for Environmental Inspections) is developed outlining Laois County Council’s inspection objectives. The RMCEI contains non-binding criteria for the planning, carrying out, following up and reporting on environmental inspections. Its objective is to strengthen compliance with EU environment law and to contribute to its more consistent implementation and enforcement in all Member States.

Environmental Complaint Management

The Environment Section operates an Environmental Complaints Management System and a free-phone litter/dumping reporting facility. Complaints are categorised and referred to the appropriate personnel for investigation. The following is the breakdown of the complaints received in 2022:

Complaint Type	Complaints	Investigated	Resolved
Litter	130	130	130
Abandoned Vehicles	33	33	33
Waste Enforcement	551	530	530
Management & Infrastructure	9	9	9
Air	39	28	28
Water	50	42	42
Noise	34	30	30
Veterinary	35	35	35
Total	881	837	837

Waste Enforcement

In 2022 Waste Enforcement Officers carried out 512 household waste inspections in different housing schemes in Portlaoise, Portarlington, Mountrath, Mountmellick, Ballylinan, Crettyard and Clonaslee. Of the 512 households surveyed, 470 households demonstrated compliance with the Waste Bye-Laws. Notwithstanding numerous requests, 42 households have not demonstrated compliance. These 42 households have been issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice (€75).

The Waste Enforcement Section is committed to maintaining and improving the high-quality environment it has provided for the people of County Laois through the enforcement of Waste Legislation and Regulation. The Section has had a successful year in resolving waste complaints and working closely with colleagues in the Planning Enforcement Section. In 2022, 551 waste enforcement related complaints were received.

The Environment Section is responsible for reviewing and issuing new Waste Facility Permits and Certificate of Registrations. In 2022, there was 13 active Waste Facility Permits and 4 active Certificates of Registration under the Waste Management (Facility Permit and Registration) Regulations, 2007 as amended. There was 1 Certificate of Registration under the Waste Management (Registration of Sewage Sludge Facility) Regulations 2010.

In 2022 Waste Enforcement continued to expand the deployment of mobile audio devices in blackspot areas. This technology has resulted in a marked decrease in illegal waste activity at several installation sites.

Waste Enforcement worked with the Waste Enforcement Regional Lead Authority (WERLA) in tackling national waste enforcement priorities in 2022 and will be focusing on national waste enforcement priorities for 2023 as directed by Eastern and Midlands Region WERLA.

The National Waste Enforcement Priorities 2022 – 2024 are:

- Tackling Illegal Waste and Multi-Agency Sites of Concern
- Construction and Demolition Waste
- End of Life Vehicles and Metals
- Household and Commercial Waste
- Producer Responsibility Initiatives and local priorities

Anti-Dumping Initiatives 2022 - 'Mattress & Bulky Waste Amnesties' Project

Mattress Amnesties & a Bulky Waste Amnesty Day were held in four locations throughout the County. These amnesty days focused on the collection of mattresses and household bulky waste which may have been stored in backyards and sheds of residents with the potential of being disposed of by illegal dumping, backyard burning, or being collected by an illegal Waste Collector "Man in the Van" and as material for illegal bonfires.

This project captured materials from the 3 Municipal Districts of Laois – Portlaoise MD at Portlaoise Rugby Club and at the Kyletalesha Civic Amenity Site, Borris-In-Ossory/Mountmellick MD at the Brand Central Carpark, Rathdowney & the Graiguecullen/Portarlington MD at Pedigree Corner and

Portarlinton. 2,432 Mattresses collected and 43 Tonnes of Bulky Goods were collected.



Clean up Open Space Areas - Illegal Dumping

Throughout 2022 the Environment Section carried out the removal of 642 tonnes of illegally dumped waste at various locations from around the county.

Clean-Up Laois Week

Clean Up Laois Week returned to Laois after a two-year break and ran from 18th to 22nd April 2022. *National Spring Clean* has been operated by An Taisce since 1999 in partnership with the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government, and local authorities throughout the country.

Laois County Council and their sponsors Bord na Mona ask local communities to spring into action and join the fight against litter. Groups, communities, neighbours and friends register with the Environment Section to receive packs of bags, gloves and litter pickers to help tackle the issue of litter in their local areas. The collected litter was gathered by Bord na Mona during the week commencing 25th April 2022. This initiative is Ireland's biggest and longest running anti-litter campaign and makes a real impact on local environments. Last year the county saw 104 groups registered and more than 1,700 volunteers taking part.

Throughout 2022, the Litter Wardens, with the co-operation of community groups along with the Council appointed contractors removed **415.12** tonnes of illegal dumped waste to authorised facilities.



Historic unregulated Waste Disposal Sites

Department funding was received to carry out Environmental Risk Assessments for 3 unregulated historic waste disposal sites (Aghanure, Killabban & Rathdowney Road, Durrrow). These site risk assessments were completed and Certificate of Authorisation Applications for each facility was submitted to the EPA.

Environmental Protection

Environmental Protection staff are involved in the implementation of legislation and policy regarding river water and groundwater quality, air quality and noise pollution as they apply in County Laois.

A) Water Quality

- Approximately 96 planning applications were assessed, and reports generated on water pollution prevention measures.
- Farm inspections were carried out in the Douglas and Barrow River Catchments. The purpose of the farm inspections is to improve the water quality in the “at-risk” river catchments identified as catchments under pressure from agricultural activities. Approximately 50 farms were inspected. Where necessary, warning letters and verbal warnings have issued.
- The Council continued to monitor discharge licenses to rivers and groundwater in 2022 under Section 4 of the Local Government (Water Pollution) Acts 1977 to 1990. 14 licences were operational in 2022.
- The Council also inspected septic tanks in accordance with the EPA’s National Inspection Plan 2022 – 2026: Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems. Five Advisory Notices were issued as a result of these inspections.
- Laois County Council received 50 water quality complaints in 2022.
- Laois County Council continued to liaise with and supply information to Central Government, the EPA and LAWPRO in relation to the Draft River Basin Management Plans 2021-2027 and the Draft Water Framework Directive Planning Guidelines.

B) Air Quality

There was one active Air Emissions License in the county in 2022. Laois County Council received 39 air quality complaints in 2022. The nature of these complaints included agricultural odour problems, illegal burning and smoke nuisance. There are 3 air quality monitoring stations (Portlaoise, Mountrath and Emo Court) in the county. Live air quality data for all three monitoring stations in the county can be found at www.airquality.ie.

C) Noise Pollution

Laois County Council received 34 noise complaints in 2022. 53% of these complaints were domestic in nature with the remaining complaints raising concerns re commercial/industrial activities in the County.

Litter Management - Prevention & Control

The Litter Management Plan was adopted by Laois County Council at their monthly meeting on the 1st of March 2022. It is a statutory plan prepared as prescribed in Section 10 of the Litter Pollution Act 1997 as amended, which requires local authorities to make and implement a Litter Management Plan and to review the plan every three years.

Laois County Council has 3 full-time litter prevention and control officers.



Laois County Council issued 47 fixed penalty notices in 2022, for breaches of Litter Pollution Act, 1997.

In partnership with the local Tidy Towns groups, the Environment Section continued to promote the Anti Dog Fouling campaign. This campaign aims to promote responsible dog ownership and encourage dog owners to clean up after their dogs, through a multi-faceted advertising programme with an emphasis on public education and awareness and encouragement to do the right thing. Staff continued working with Tidy Towns groups to provide Mutt Mitt Dispensers along popular walking routes in many areas.

Waste Facilities and Infrastructure

Landfill and Civic Amenity Sites

The Council continued to manage and operate the Landfill, Transfer Station and Civic Amenity Area in Portlaoise. Increased supervision and direction by landfill staff have seen a big reduction in the contamination levels of the collected materials. All waste licence monitoring is being carried out and is up to date.

The Portarlinton Civic Amenity Site is operational under the management of Bord na Mona Recycling. The Environment Section carries out regular site inspections to ensure good levels of service are being provided.

The Council also operates 43 Bring Banks (bottle and can banks) throughout the county and these sites are maintained & monitored daily. A total of 1641.66 tonnage of recyclable material was collected in 2022.

Planning

The Environment Section assesses applications received for planning permission for compliance with environmental legislation and best practice.

The typical issues that are considered from an environmental perspective are:

- The proper management of Construction & Development /Site Clearance Waste
- Nutrient Management Plans
- Farmyard Management/Nitrates Directive
- Noise Impact Assessments
- Quarry Operations
- Anaerobic Digestion Plants

2022 Awards & Achievements

Tidy Towns

Abbeyleix were named as Ireland's Tidiest Small Town again in 2022 winning a gold medal. Durrow were also highly commended in the national 'Young Persons' category and Portarlinton were given an Endeavour Award in acknowledgement of the highest percentage increase on the previous year. Portlaoise in the highest population Category G, were awarded a Silver medal.

Midlands Energy Agency Overview of Energy Usage in 2021

The SEAI Annual Report 2021 on Public Sector Energy Efficiency Performance, reports that Laois County Council made a 59% saving by the end of 2021 against the 33% target by 2020 and 51% by 2050 which is the highest achieved for any local authority in Ireland.

- Laois County Council continued to work as the lead local authority in the Midlands Energy Agency.
- Display Energy Certs for buildings visited by the public and with a floor area greater than 250m² in line with SI 243 (2012) and Energy Audits in line with SI 426 (2014) as amended.
- Laois County Council continues its participation of the OPW Optimising Power at Work Programme at County Hall and have saved 152,671kWh 276,183 kWh since 2014 (baseline year) from County hall alone which is equivalent to energy used by 66 Irish Homes for a year.
- Gap to Target Analysis was conducted for all Local Authorities in the MEA which is a model for use by public bodies to evaluate their energy efficiency performance and energy-related greenhouse gas emissions over time, in accordance with SEAI's public sector energy monitoring and reporting framework for the period to 2030. This enabled the Council to model future Greenhouse Gas emissions pathways, incorporating decarbonisation initiatives and anticipated supply-side gains from electricity system decarbonisation and biofuel blending.
- Laois County Council continued its programme of street light replacements and replaced an additional 600 existing SOX and SON lights with LED's. Total kWh savings to Laois were in the order of 148904 kWhs in 2022.

National Performance Indicators 2021

Total no of households availing of a 3 bin service at 31/12/2021	% of households availing of a 3 bin service	Total no of pollution cases that were the subject of a complaint during 2021	Total no of pollution cases closed during 2021	Total no of pollution cases on hand at 31/12/2021
13,010	106.11	1030	1025	27

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INFRASTRUCTURE, WATER SERVICES, ENVIRONMENT, EMERGENCY SERVICES & SPECIAL PROJECTS

% area unpolluted or litter free	% area slightly polluted	% area moderately polluted	% area significantly polluted	% area grossly polluted
10	86	5	0	0

% of schools that have been awarded/renewed green flag status in the two years to 31/12/2021

46

Total billable wattage of the public lighting system	Average billable wattage of the public lighting system	Percentage of the total system that LED lights represent
3188	72.84	61.86

HEALTH & SAFETY

HEALTH & SAFETY OFFICER:

Jim Bolger

The implementation of the Council's Safety Management System (SMS) was adversely impacted in Quarter 1 by the ongoing Covid 19 pandemic. However, as the situation improved, the Covid Response plan was amended as appropriate as work programmes normalised. Consequently programmes of work and inspection schedules were adhered to and projects ran smoother in general. While online meetings have their place, the return of face to face meetings enhanced communications. In relation to the Councils safety training programme, there was more scope for discretionary training allied to our commitment to statutory training.

LAOIS CIVIL DEFENCE

Laois Civil Defence provides a wide range of services to the local community. They provide services such as First Aid, Search & Rescue, Swift Water Rescue as well as providing cover for community events.

Civil Defence's prime role is to give aid and assistance in times of emergency supporting the frontline emergency services. They operate a Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council registered ambulance service and aid the Local Authority, Fire Service, Gardai and Ambulance Service.

LAOIS COUNTY FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

The Fire Service continued to provide a quality service in the areas of Fire Prevention, Fire Brigade Operations, Community Fire Safety Awareness and Major Emergency Planning.

Laois County Fire & Rescue Service attended **795** emergency incidents consisting of **306** fires, **355** special service incidents & **134** false alarms.

A new Class B fire appliance and a new water tanker were both delivered in 2022, funded by the National Directorate for Fire & Emergency Management.



To enhance equipment standards the programme for replacement and updating of equipment was continued in 2022. New breathing apparatus sets & cylinders, ladders and specialist rescue equipment was provided.

To enhance Safety, Health and Welfare for fire crews the Standard Operational Guidelines program to implement a set of for fire brigade operations continued in 2022. In addition, our Health, Safety & Welfare Management Programme was approved by Senior Management and was reviewed 30 times throughout the year.

Laois County Fire and Rescue Service processed **62** fire safety certificate applications and **55** District and Circuit Court licensing applications in 2022. **25** premises were inspected under the Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003 and **44** during performance inspections were carried out on premises throughout the County. (During Performance Inspections are fire safety assessments of public assembly type premises when they are open to the public and including large occupancy venues, bingo halls, public houses, night clubs, outdoor events etc)

Laois County Council Fire and Rescue Service participated in **168** fire safety consultations with members of the public and fire safety consultants throughout 2022. In addition, planning & liaison meetings and site visits were carried out on several licensed and unlicensed outdoor events including the Electric Picnic Music Festival and the National Ploughing Championships. During performance inspections were also carried out during these outdoor events.

Laois County Council Fire and Rescue Service carried out the following work under Part III of the Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003.

- A) Served **5** immediate Closure Notices under Section 20A of the Act on potentially dangerous buildings throughout the County,
- B) Served **1** Fire Safety Notice under Section 20 of the Act,
- C) Requested **5** number Fire Safety Assessments, permitted under Section 18(6) of the Act, to be carried out on premises where fire safety deficiencies were observed but did not necessitate immediate action as per items a and b above,
- D) Fire Authority provided fire safety advice letters, permitted under Section 18 (4) and 18 (5) of the Act, on **57** premises throughout the County.

Annual Report 2022

INFRASTRUCTURE, WATER SERVICES, ENVIRONMENT, EMERGENCY SERVICES & SPECIAL PROJECTS

The Fire Safety Primary Schools Programme was carried throughout the County between October and December 2022. All eight fire stations were involved with this programme. Fire safety information was received by over 1800 3rd class primary students.

National Fire Safety Week (17th - 23rd October 2022). Laois County Council Fire and Rescue Service personnel, in all eight fire stations, provided presentations on fire safety in the home throughout the County. The presentations were aimed specifically at our most at risk demographic i.e. over 65's. Laois Community Fire Safety Group (group members include Laois County Council Fire and Rescue Service, TFI Local Link Laois Offaly, Laois Public Participation Network and Age Friendly Laois), ran a smoke detector in the home competition in local newspapers, radio, facebook , twitter and on our www.laois.ie page. Fire Service personnel, from all eight stations, are currently installing smoke detectors in the winning entrants homes throughout the County . Smoke detectors have been installed in over 500 homes throughout the County since this annual competition commenced in 2018. Additionally, the Community Fire Safety Group actively delivered fire safety messages to communities in order to target our most at risk demographic during Fire Safety Week and at Halloween. The Group used text ,WhatsApp messages, local newspapers and social media to deliver fire safety messages and this new programme included correspondence to all 650+ community groups available through the Laois Public Participation Network.

All Major Emergency Management facilities were maintained, with all relevant plans, sub-plans and procedures were updated throughout the year.

National Performance Indicators 2021

Average time taken in minutes to mobilise fire brigades in respect of fire incidences in fire stations (full time)	Average time taken in minutes to mobilise fire brigades in respect of fire incidents in fire stations (retained)	Average time taken in minutes to mobilise fire brigades in respect of all other (non-fire) emergency incidents (full time)	Average time taken in minutes to mobilise fire brigades in respect of all other (non-fire) emergency incidents (retained)
N/A	5.49	N/A	5.19

% Fire cases first attended within 10 minutes	% Fire cases first attended after 10 minutes but within 20 mins	% Fire cases first attended after 20 minutes	% All other emergency incidents first attended within 10 mins	% All other emergency incidents first attendance after 10 mins but within 20 mins	% All other emergency incidents first attendance after 20 mins
31.10	56.10	12.80	31.82	53.18	15.0

Cost per Capital

€44.65

HOUSING, REGENERATION AND PLANNING STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE

DIRECTOR OF SERVICES:

Angela McEvoy

A/SENIOR ENGINEER:

Trevor Hennessy

SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER:

Georgina Ireland

SENIOR SOCIAL WORKER:

Fionnuala Daly

<u>Members</u>	<u>Sectoral</u>
<i>Cllr. Thomasina Connell</i>	<i>Michael Kelly Jr, (Development/Construction)</i>
<i>Cllr. Barry Walsh</i>	<i>Bobby Fitzpatrick (Business/Commercial)</i>
<i>Cllr. Caroline Dwane Stanley (Chair)</i>	<i>Michael Cobbe (Community/Voluntary)</i>
<i>Cllr. Paschal McEvoy</i>	<i>Sheelagh Coyle (Social Inclusion)</i>
<i>Cllr. Catherine Fitzgerald</i>	

HOUSING SERVICES

The Core Objective for Housing is to ensure that all our citizens enjoy an adequate standard of housing accommodation appropriate to their needs, and as far as possible, in a location and tenure of their choice and to provide a responsive and supportive housing service for those in need of assistance.

Report on SPC

The Housing Strategic Policy Committee met 4 times - in March, June, October and December 2022, at which various issues were discussed and noted by Members.

Housing For All 2022 – 2026

Further to the publication of the Affordable Housing Act 2021, DHLGH Circular 28/2021 on Affordable Housing - Amendments to Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, and “*Housing for all; a New Housing Plan for Ireland*” in September 2021, Laois County Council prepared a **Housing Delivery Action Plan** in relation to the provision of social and affordable housing in Laois for the period 2022-2026. The plan can be found on <https://laois.ie/wp-content/uploads/LCC-Housing-Delivery-Action-Plan-2022-2026.pdf>

Social Housing Build Delivery 2022

In addition to the management of approximately 2,322 units, the Council is tasked with delivering 534 new social housing units by 2026.

Annual Social Housing Delivery Targets 2022-2026

Year	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Total
Units	200	79	80	87	88	534

The total number of units delivered in 2022 was 216. These were provided via local authority direct construction, Part V, turnkey projects and in cooperation with Approved Housing Bodies.



Sean Doire Durrow – 22 house development – Laois County Council Construction

22 direct build and turnkey capital schemes are currently in progress in Stradbally, Durrow, Rathdowney, Errill, Mountmellick, Ballyroan, Borris-in-Ossory, Killeen, Ballylinan, Doonane, Mountrath, Portarlinton, Portlaoise and are being progressed through the Department's Capital Stage Approval process.

Affordable Housing

The Affordable Housing Act 2021 and associated Regulations sets out the mechanism for delivery of affordable and cost rental housing. The Department of Housing has set a minimum target of 38 affordable units to be delivered by 2026. Laois County Council is currently exploring a number of options in this regard.

Vacant Homes

A full time Vacant Homes Office was established in Laois County Council in 2022. The Vacant Homes Office has an advisory role both internally for local authority teams and externally as a contact point for members of the public and interested parties on vacant homes/properties to assist, inform and provide advice on bringing vacant properties back into use.

The Vacant Homes Office identifies vacant properties in Laois and works with property owners to bring the properties back into use for social and private housing purposes. Vacant properties can also be reported to the Vacant Homes Office on www.vacanthomes.ie or by e-mail to vacanthomes@laoiscoco.ie.

Some of the key functions of the Vacant Homes Office are as follows:

- Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant under the Croí Cónaithe (Towns) Fund
- Repair & Leasing Scheme
- Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) of vacant properties to secure future residential use

Vacancy Surveys

Vacancy Surveys were carried out in Mountmellick and Mountrath in 2022. The Council is endeavouring to contact the owners of residential properties identified as being vacant in the surveys to outline options

available to return these properties to use for housing purposes. Where ownership cannot be established the Council will proceed to make local enquiries in relation to ownership, vacancy history, etc. and consider use of the CPO process to acquire properties deemed to be suitable for social housing where all other means of returning the properties to use have been exhausted.

Further information on the Vacant Homes office and the above schemes is available at www.laois.ie/departments/housing

Housing Management and Maintenance

In 2022, Laois County Council progressed 4,846 maintenance work orders and retrofitted 165 of our housing stock as part of the Midlands Retrofit Programme.

Retrofitting works commenced in O'Moore Place, Portlaoise and will continue through 2023. Budget approval has been granted for the retrofitting of an additional 47 homes through the county in 2023.

We also carried out re-letting works to 74 of our properties that were surrendered during 2022.

Housing Needs Assessment

At 31st December 2022, there were 1,805 applicants on the Council's waiting list for social housing support.

In 2022, the Department of Housing advised of an increase in the income threshold in respect of eligibility for social housing from €25,000 to €30,000 with effect from 1st October 2022. That threshold was subsequently increased to €35,000 with effect from 1st January 2023.

Housing Assistance Payment

HAP commenced in Laois on 1st December 2016. There were 865 tenancies active by 31st December 2022, with 332 of these having transferred from rent supplement. All HAP properties must be inspected within 8 months from the time that the first HAP payment is made to the landlord. A total of 540 inspections were made in 2022.

The Homeless HAP Place Finder supports homeless households in securing a HAP tenancy. In 2022, 48 homeless households were accommodated through HAP.

Traveller Accommodation

Laois County Council's Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024 set a target for the delivery of 37 units of standard local authority housing. To date Laois County Council has provided 61 standard local authority houses. The Programme also provided a target for the refurbishment of Oak Park Halting Site, with the provision of three additional bays. Construction works are ongoing at the site.

Estate Management

Estate management remains a key function for the Housing Section. The Housing Section provided a range of supports to various resident groups, including grants and a painting programme.

HOUSING, REGENERATION AND PLANNING

In 2022, the five estates in Knockmay engaged with the Estate Management Section and in cooperation with the Treo Nua Centre, carried out extensive enhancement works to the area.

Laois County Council held a Best Kept Garden Competition in the area and an award ceremony was held in November in County Hall.



Laois County Council's Strategic Plan for People with Disabilities 2021 – 2026

The Council's Strategic Plan for People with Disabilities 2021 – 2026 was adopted in December 2021. The Strategy forms an integral part of the Housing Service Delivery Plans and will promote and support the delivery of accommodation for people with disabilities using all appropriate housing supply mechanisms.

In 2022, 67 households with a person(s) with a disability were allocated housing by Laois County Council and the various Approved Housing Bodies in the county. This figure accounts for 31.16% of the total allocations by Laois County Council in 2022.

Homeless Services/Emergency Accommodation

Laois County Council continued in 2022 to provide emergency accommodation, where appropriate, to households presenting as homeless. All housing supply mechanisms are utilised in seeking to accommodate those who are assessed as homeless.

In 2022, 244 households presented as homeless (24 repeats), that is 69 families and 175 single persons.

Laois County Council booked 89 households into emergency B&B in 2022, i.e. 63 single persons and 26 families and 63 households were allocated housing from homelessness, 44 families and 19 single persons.

This figure accounts for 29.30% of Laois County Council's total allocations in 2022.

Laois County Council also prevented 48 households from entering homelessness due to the intervention of the HAP Place Finder.

Accommodation and supports are provided by the Council to homeless individuals with complex needs,

in accordance with the Housing First National Implementation Plan 2022 – 2026. A target for the provision of 35 units of accommodation over five years is included in this plan, i.e. 7 per year. In 2022, the Council exceeded this target by providing 8 Housing First units for 8 single persons in cooperation with the Peter Mc Verry Trust.

Loans and Grants

The **Local Authority Home Loan (LAHL)** Scheme is available nationwide. It came into existence on the 4th January 2022 and replaced the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan Scheme.

Applications are for the purchase of new or second-hand residential properties and for self-builds. It also includes purchase of homes through State schemes such as the Tenant Purchase Scheme and Affordable Housing Scheme. In the year 2022, 28 Home Loans were approved and 21 were declined.

Private Grant

In 2022, Private Grants totalling €1,244,990 were paid to out for Housing Adaptation Grant Schemes for Older People and People with a Disability.

Disabled Persons Grants

Works to the value of €747,716.22 were carried out to assist tenants of 57 properties. This number included the construction of 3 extensions.

Approved Housing Bodies

Approved Housing Bodies (AHB) provide and manage social housing for people who qualify for housing and are nominated by the housing authority. The Council has a very positive working relationship with the Approved Housing Bodies who are active in the County.

National Performance Indicators 2021

Social Housing Stock

No of dwellings in the ownership of the Local Authority at 01/01/2021	2,222
No of dwellings added to the Local Authority owned stock during 2021 (whether constructed or acquired)	61
No of Local Authority dwellings sold in 2021	9
No of Local Authority dwellings demolished in 2021	2
No of dwellings in the ownership of the Local Authority at 31/12/2021	2,272
No of Local Authority owned dwellings planned for demolition under a DHLGH approved scheme	1

HOUSING, REGENERATION AND PLANNING

Housing Vacancies

% of the total number of Local Authority owned dwellings that were vacant on 31/12/2021	1.72
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Average Re-letting time and cost; Maintenance Cost by Unit

Average time from date of vacation of dwelling to the date in 2021 when a new tenancy had commenced	23.52 wks
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Average cost expended on getting the re-tenanted dwellings ready for re-letting (€)	20,265.57
---	-----------

Average per unit expenditure in 2020 on repair and maintenance of LA Housing (€)	835.33
--	--------

Private Rented Sector Inspections

Total no of registered tenancies in the LA area at the end of June 2021	N/A
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No of rented dwellings inspected in 2021	246
--	-----

% inspected dwellings in 2021 not compliant with standard regulations	99.59
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No of compliant and non compliant dwellings that became compliant during 2020	8
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No of inspections undertaken by the local authority in 2021	247
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Long term homeless adults

Number of adults in emergency accommodation that are long-term homeless as a % of the total number of homeless adults in emergency accommodation at end of 2020/1	0
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PLANNING**SENIOR PLANNER:****David O'Hara****SENIOR EXECUTIVE PLANNER:****Donal Kiely**

The overall objective of the Planning Department is to implement the provisions of the Planning Acts and provide appropriate support measures in order to promote the physical, social and economical well being of the county so that living standards are protected and raised, and work opportunities fostered and created, having regard to the principles of sustainability.

The Planning Department can be broken down into 5 separate areas:

- i) Development Management
- ii) Forward Planning
- iii) Planning Enforcement
- iv) Building Control
- v) Unfinished Housing Estates

(i) Development Management

The number of planning applications received in 2022 was 840. However, 225 of the total applications received were invalid and required the applicant to submit a new application. The main reasons for invalidation of planning files were public notices being out of date, or not erected on site, previous permissions expired, agents name omitted from maps/drawings, north point not shown on maps and distances not shown on site layouts.

Invalidation of planning files was increased as a result of the introduction of the ePlanning project in 2022

2022 Performance

ePlanning went live on the 11th November 2022. Of the 144 applications received from this date to year end, 65 were on the new ePlanning system. The ePlanning Project is an online system through which planning applications can be made and through which applicants can be updated on the progress of their application. The project aims to improve efficiency, reduce the potential for invalid applications, and deliver on the government strategy to move more public services online.

The following table gives a breakdown of planning applications received and decisions made during 2022:

Total No of Planning Applications	840
No of Valid applications received	618
Invalid applications returned to applicant	225 (36%)
Number of decisions made	626
Number of applications granted	582
Number of applications refused	44
Referrals to Area Offices (working days)	Within 14 days achieved
No of applications appealed to An Bord Pleanala in 2022	24

Large Residential Developments (LRD)

One formal pre application consultation or LRD meeting was held with a perspective applicant for a development of 249 dwelling units, a creche and 1200 sqm of commercial floor space on the Centrepoint site in Portlaoise.

Customer Service Initiatives

2022 saw the continuation of the scanning of planning applications as they are received by the Planning Authority. Throughout 2022, the public were able to access all planning applications on-line **within two weeks**, however, this was mostly achievable within 5 days of the Planning Authority receiving them.

352 pre-planning meetings were held in 2022, at which members of the public had an opportunity to discuss planning matters with a planner prior to submitting a planning application. The Planners also facilitated the public by holding a number of pre-planning meetings on site.

44 Section 5 applications were processed by Laois County Council in 2022.

The Planning website continues to be a very popular tool of engagement with approximately 137,503 page views last year.

Licensing of Outdoor Events

An outdoor event is defined as a public performance which takes place wholly or mainly in the open air or in a structure with no roof or a partial, temporary or retractable roof, a tent or similar temporary structure and which consists of music, dancing, displays of public entertainment or any activity of a like kind. The organisers of such events are required to obtain a licence from the Planning Authority where the audience comprises of 5,000 or more people.

One such outdoor event occurred in County Laois in 2022 – the annual “Electric Picnic” music festival returned to Stradbally attracting 70,000 people in September 2022.

Preplanning consultation was held for a second outdoor festival for Emo in July 2023.

(ii) Forward Planning

Forward Planning plays a pivotal role in the physical, economic and social development of County Laois. The Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 provides the strategic framework and policy context within which the Local Authority makes its planning decisions.

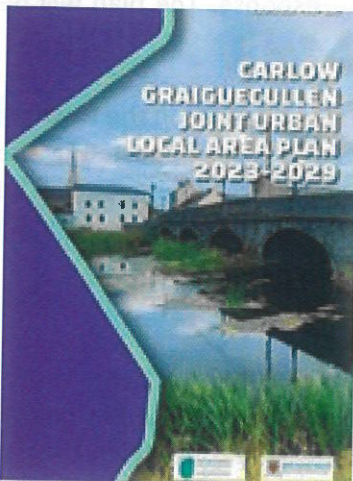
Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027

The Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 was adopted by the Council on the 25th January 2022 and came into effect on the 8th March 2022. The County Development Plan is a statutory document prepared by the Planning Authority in accordance with the requirements of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the Planning & Development Regulations 2001 (as amended). Zoning Maps contained in Volume 2 of the Plan will inform the LAPs for Portlaoise and Mountmellick.

The Minister issued a Section 31 draft Direction to Laois County Council on 7th March 2022 in relation to a number of aspects of the Plan relating to energy targets, policy on building heights and zonings. The Minister concluded the process and issued the Direction with minor amendments on the 28th September 2022.

Local Area Planning

Carlow Graiguecullen Joint Urban Area Plan 2023-2029



Laois County Council in conjunction with Carlow County Council commenced the process of reviewing the Joint Local Area Plan for the Carlow/Graiguecullen Area. An issues paper was put on Public Display in September – October 2022 inviting submissions from the public. A public Consultation day was held in the Talbot Hotel Graiguecullen on the 6th October 2022. It is envisaged that a Draft plan will be on public display April – May 2023.

Portlaoise LAP



Laois County Council commenced the process of reviewing the Portlaoise Local Area Plan in November 2022. An issues paper was put on Public Display in November – December 2022 inviting submissions from the public. A public information day was held on the 1st December 2022. It is envisaged that a Draft plan will be on public display April – May 2023.

Lands at Stradbally Road Masterplan 2022

Consultants were engaged to prepare a masterplan for the Tyrrell landbank at Stradbally Road, Portlaoise to address housing, recreation and amenity and connectivity with surrounding land uses. The Masterplan was noted at the March Municipal District Meeting of the Portlaoise Area. The next step is to engage a Design teams for the Housing elements of the masterplan in 2023 and bring the scheme to Part VIII.

HOUSING, REGENERATION AND PLANNING

Rathdowney Town Centre First Plan

Laois County Council received funding in 2022 to carry out a Town Centre First Plan. The Town Centre First initiative aims to create town centres that function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community.

Rathdowney was chosen as the town for this project. Towns such as Rathdowney are facing significant challenges and opportunities that require a coordinated and comprehensive response. The plan will be underpinned by a clear diagnosis of local strengths and challenges.

KPMG Consultants were engaged by the Council to prepare the plan and held consultations in the town on the 23rd and 26th November 2022. It is proposed to establish a **Town Team** which will be supported by the local authority to deliver the actions of the Town Centre First Plan. It is envisaged that the plan will be completed by April 2023.

Residential Zoned Land Tax

The Government's Housing For All – A New Housing Plan for Ireland proposed a new tax to activate vacant land for residential purposes as a part of the Pathway to Increasing New Housing Supply. The Residential Zoned Land Tax was introduced in the Finance Act 2021. The process to identify land to which the tax applies commenced in 2022 and the tax will be payable from 2024.

Laois County Council prepared a draft map of the land considered to be in scope for the RZLT as of October 1, 2022. Any interested individuals or parties were invited to make submissions in respect of land on the draft map up to 1st January 2023. Laois County Council received 20 submissions during this consultation period.

A supplemental map will be published on 1 May 2023 identifying additional land considered to be in scope as a result of a change of zoning, servicing or where the local authority becomes aware of the fact that land, which did not appear on the draft map, may meet the criteria for being in scope, such as where this has been identified during submissions.

Local Authority Development (Part 8 projects)

Planning reports were prepared for the following Part 8 local authority projects and were approved by the Council during 2022:

1. Stradbally Fire Station (January 2022)
2. Fort Protector Outdoor Performance and Event Space (May 2022)
3. Housing Development at Hepburn Court "Radharc Darach" (June 2022)
4. Housing Development at Clonrooske View (September 2022)
5. Fr. Brown Avenue Cycle Infrastructure Upgrade works (December 2022)

(iii) Planning Enforcement

The Planning Authority, in accordance with the statutory requirements under the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended, seeks to ensure compliance with planning permissions and also to prevent unauthorised development.

Work was continued in 2022 by the enforcement team to ensure that any breaches of planning law were investigated and followed up.

In 2022, Council staff attended Court on 61 occasions in respect of enforcement prosecutions and while some cases are still ongoing, 11 cases were successfully resolved during 2022. The Planning Authority served 83 enforcement notices, 435 warning letters and investigated 122 new complaints all of which highlight the active pursuit of planning non-compliance and unauthorised development by our Enforcement Section.

(iv) Derelict Sites

The Council is implementing its powers under the Derelict Sites Act 1990 targeting those properties that are on the Derelict Sites Register. Working with the owners of those properties, the outstanding issues are being dealt with and those properties that are no longer deemed 'derelict' are then removed from the Derelict Sites Register.

Total Number of Files opened for 2022: 43

Total Number of Files closed as a result of dereliction being addressed in 2022: 15

Total Number of Files: 93

Total No of sites on Derelict Sites Register : -13

Total Number of Files: 65

(v) Vacant Sites

10 sites were entered onto the Vacant Sites register at the 1st January 2022. These related to sites within Portlaoise, Portarlinton, Mountmellick and Graiguecullen. Valuations have been received in relation to the sites.

One site in Portlaoise has paid a levy of €52,500.

One site in Graiguecullen was the subject of a valuation tribunal hearing in September 2022.

3 sites were noted to have commenced construction during 2022 and will be removed from the Register.

5 sites changed ownership and no levy could be charged during 2022.

Location of Sites	No of sites on the VSL register
Portlaoise	6
Portarlinton	3
Graiguecullen	1
Total	10

(vi) Building Control

The Building Control Section deal with all commencement notices received and carries out inspections on the buildings to ensure they comply with the various Building Control regulations.

HOUSING, REGENERATION AND PLANNING

In 2022 , a total of 533 New Buildings were notified to Building Control. A total of 77 no. buildings were inspected (at varying stages of construction) - an inspection rate of 14.4 %

(vii) Unfinished Housing Estates

Laois County Council is responsible for the taking in charge of estates. In 2022, 7 estates were taken in charge which are listed below. Traditionally this occurs when a request is received from the developer of the estate and/or the owners of the houses within the estate.

However, in recent years, where the developer has failed to complete the estate, Laois County Council has intervened to complete the estate and this work, where possible, is funded from the bond. This policy of actively pursuing the developer and bond holder will continue in 2022.

The following estates were taken in charge in 2022 –

- Tommy Murphy Park Graiguecullen
- Heathfields, Portlaoise
- Broomville, Portlaoise
- Broomville Close, Portlaoise
- Broomville, Lawns, Portlaoise
- Fieldbrook Court, Portlaoise
- Heathfield, Portlaoise

The Planning Department endeavour to liaise with the residents of unfinished estates to keep them fully informed of progress in relation to their estates.

Short Term Letting

As part of the measures to help address pressures in the private housing rental market, new planning legislative reforms to regulate the short-term letting sector - as provided for in the Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2019 and supplementary Regulations made by the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government entitled the Planning and Development Act 2000 (Exempted Development) (No. 2) Regulations 2019 - came into effect on 1st July 2019.

This applies to properties in Rent Pressure Zones. The following numbers relate to those reported in 2022 :-

Form 15 (2020 on-wards)	Annual Notification. This form should be returned no later than 4 weeks of the start of each year for existing uses or 2 weeks prior to the first instance of the proposed change of use for new uses
Form 16	This form is only required to be completed if the 90-day cap is reached during the year. It should be returned no later than 2 weeks after the event.
Form 17	End of year notification. It shall be returned no later than 4 weeks after the end of each calendar year.

National Performance Indicators 2021

New Buildings Inspected

New Buildings Inspected as a percentage of new buildings notified to the local authority	No. of local authority planning decisions which were the subject of an appeal to An Bord Pleanála that were determined by the Board in 2021	% of the determinations that confirmed (with or without variation) the decision made by the local authority
12.84	3	66.67

Enforcement cases closed as resolved

Total no. of planning cases referred to or initiated by the local authority during 2021 that were investigated	Total no. of investigated cases closed during 2021	% closed cases dismissed or statute barred or exempted development	% closed cases resolved to the local authority's satisfaction through negotiations	% closed cases due to enforcement proceedings	Total no. planning cases being investigated as at 31/12/2021
143	137	61.31	0	38.69	179

Cost per Capital of Planning Service

Cost per Capita
€26.60

Applications for Fire Safety Certificates

% applications for fire safety certificates received in 2021 that were decided within 2 months of their receipt	% applications for fire safety certificates received in 2021 that were decided within an extended period agreed with the applicant
20.97	54.84

HERITAGE

Actions of the County Heritage Plan

The following projects from the Laois Heritage Plan were undertaken with the support of the Heritage Council during 2022.

Heritage Awareness events

Heritage Awareness programmes were organised for Biodiversity Week and Heritage Week. At the National Heritage Week Awards in October 2022, Teddy Fennelly, Laois Heritage Society was selected as the Heritage Council's Heritage Hero for 2022. The Bats about Rooks Event organised in partnership with BirdWatch Ireland and the Kildare Bat Group in Portlaoise won the national Biodiversity Award, and Errill Tidy Towns won the Laois County Heritage Week Award for their project to mark the 175th anniversary of the great famine in Errill, by erecting a commemorative plaque and limestone seat, near the site of what was once a soup kitchen, to feed desperate people of the town during the famine.

The Heritage Offices of Laois and Offaly County Councils supported a new BirdWatch Ireland podcast "In Your Nature" about birds and other wildlife, which has now been downloaded over 40,000 times. Two short films were made about the history of the Gordon Bennett Motor Race in Laois in 1903. Made with the support from the Heritage Council and the Heritage offices of Laois, Carlow and Kildare County Councils, the films tell the story of how the race came to be in Ireland, and why the eyes of the racing world were turned to Ireland for this one event, this momentous but largely forgotten race that, still today, is thought to be the largest outdoor sporting event in Irish history. The films are published on the Council's website.

Connecting Communities

Portlaoise Plane and Col Fitzmaurice Commemoration

The Laois Festival of Flight was held in April 2022, with very good attendance at all events, good feedback from schools flight workshops and good press coverage. The Portlaoise Plane also featured as part of the Gordon Bennett event launch at the June Bank Holiday Weekend.



Timahoe

Continued engagement with the local community is very important for this site and the Council supported childrens archaeology workshops by The Bog Dig at the Timahoe Heritage Festival held on the June Bank Holiday weekend in 2022, which was well received and attended. Vegetation Management continued for the year at Timahoe, to improve the site for access and biodiversity.

HOUSING, REGENERATION AND PLANNING

Publications

Publications for 2022 included:

Fort Protector Conservation Plan

The Fort Protector Conservation Plan - a Partnership of Laois Heritage Society and Laois County Council, supported by the Heritage Council was launched in Portlaoise in June 2022. The Plan will guide the conservation and presentation of the 16th Century Fort Protector at the heart of Portlaoise and was led by Conservation Architect Richard McLoughlin in association with archaeologist Eoin Sullivan and Historian Diarmuid Wheeler.



THE HIGH FORTRESS: A Guide to the Rock of Dunamase

A publication on the Rock of Dunamase “THE HIGH FORTRESS: A Guide to the Rock of Dunamase” was launched in November 2022 in Portlaoise.

The book - an initiative of Laois County Council with the support of the Heritage Council – is published by Wordwell Books, edited by Peigín Doyle, with contributions from archaeologists Brian Hodkinson and Dr Sharon Greene, early medieval historian Dr Matthew Stout and geologist and ecologist Dr John Feehan.

Gardening for Biodiversity Book and colouring book have been reprinted and distribution is ongoing with high demand again from schools and groups nationwide.

Establish and promote the best practice in heritage management and conservation.

National Biodiversity Action Plan Projects

Local Biodiversity Action Fund Wetland Survey

The Laois Wetland Survey Phase II is complete and reports on Phase I (2021) and Phase II (2022) are available on the Laois County Council’s website. A public event at the Ridge of Capard was held during Heritage Week.

Local Biodiversity Action Fund Timahoe

Additional funding was made available for a project to enhance biodiversity at Timahoe in partnership with the Irish Wildlife Trust Laois Offaly Branch. Bird nest boxes, bat roost boxes and wildlife interpretation were installed at the site.

HOUSING, REGENERATION AND PLANNING

Just Transition Fund Project

The JTF project linking conservation of medieval heritage and biodiversity continued through 2022. The 3 Graveyard sites in Laois are as follows :-

Kilmanman (Laois)	Conservation Plan complete	Masonry conservation and management for pollinators will continue in 2023
Dysartgallen (Laois)	Conservation Plan complete	Masonry conservation and management for pollinators complete in 2022
Clopook (Laois)	Conservation Plan complete	Masonry conservation and management for pollinators complete in 2022

The Design Team is led by Howley Hayes Cooney Architects and including Colm Flynn Archaeologist, Fiona MacGowan Ecologist, Tina Aughney Bat Specialist, CORA Structural Engineers

Crannóg Media has recorded progress with the project at each site including community contacts on film for communication about the project.

Regeneration Projects

The Heritage Office worked in collaboration with other sections in Laois County Council and in the community, on the following regeneration projects in 2022:

Timahoe (Town and Village Renewal Scheme)

The conservation and refurbishment of the former Church of Ireland was planned throughout 2022 and will be completed in 2023, to enhance facilities for visitors to the site and the local community.

Stradbally TVRS

Bridge conservation works were completed. Swift boxes installed and biodiversity planting plan was completed, in collaboration with Stradbally Development Association

Community Monuments Fund

This national scheme aimed at conservation of archaeological monuments continued in 2022, with the completion of 5 projects which received funding from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage .

Structure	Applicant	Amount
Dysart Enos Church	Conservation work to windows and chancel arch	€34,556
Ballylynan Church	Masonry conservation to church walls	€85,000
Ballyadams Castle	Conservation Plan	€29,784
Clonreher Castle	Conservation Plan	€29,108
Baunaghra Church	Conservation Plan	€12,093
		€190,541

Raise awareness of and promote enjoyment of the heritage of County Laois

Colonel Fitzmaurice Flag

The Fitzmaurice flag - the US Flag which was given to Colonel James Fitzmaurice during his travels in America after that first flight from Ireland to America - was generously donated by Mr. Ross Mac Mahon to Laois County Council on the 20th August 2022. This adds to the wealth of priceless artifacts which contributes to the history of flight and exploration.



Creative Ireland Projects

Heritage and Landscape Training "Know your Locality"

A second blended online course on researching your local heritage was completed during March 2022, with a field excursion to the Rock of Dunamase, supported by Creative Ireland Laois.

Laois Festival of flight

The first ever Festival of Flight was held to celebrate the rich history of aviation and exploration in Laois. This event which ran from April 7th to 10th included school and family science and arts workshops, a music and poetry event, aircraft technical networking events, tours, films and a commemoration ceremony which drew visitors to the county from across Ireland. The Festival of Flight was run by the Col Fitzmaurice Commemoration Committee in partnership with Laois County Council, Laois Heritage Society, Music Generation Laois, the Dunamase Arts Centre and Midlands Science, supported by the Heritage Council, Creative Ireland Laois as part of the Creative Ireland Programme 2017-2022, The Decade of Centenaries Programme of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media.

Mountmellick Mural

A public art piece was installed in Mountmellick to celebrate the importance of the town for Swifts, a threatened urban bird, in partnership with BirdWatch Ireland. Artist James Kirwan created the mural which was unveiled on Culture night.

Conservation

Two separate architectural heritage conservation grant schemes (for Protected Structures) were run by Laois County Council in 2022, with funding from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

HOUSING, REGENERATION AND PLANNING

Built Heritage Investment Scheme 2022

The Built Heritage Investment Scheme is for smaller scale, labour intensive projects to conserve and maintain protected structures. A total of 11 projects were awarded funding

Project Ref No	Structure	Grant
BHIS/02	O'Connell House, O'Connell Square, Mountmellick	€ 7,180.00
BHIS/03	Lea Church of Ireland, Killenard, Portarlinton	€15,000.00
BHIS/04	Preston House Boutique Ltd, Main Street, Abbeyleix, Co Laois	€10,060.00
BHIS/05	Portrane House, Strabally Road, Portlaoise	€11,296.00
BHIS/06	St Pauls Church, "The French Church", French Church Street, Portarlinton	€10,500.00
BHIS/07	Tinnakill House, Tinnakill, Raheen, Portlaoise	€15,000.00
BHIS/09	Dwelling House Gorteen, Ballacolla, Co Laois	€11,750.00
BHIS/10	Thatched House, Rathleague	€ 9,114.00
BHIS/11	Thatched House, Shanbeg, Rosenallis, Co Laois	€ 5,650.00
BHIS/12	Thatched Farmhouse, Raheenleigh, Cullahill	€ 450.00

Historic Structures Fund 2022

The Historic Structures fund is for larger scale projects and buildings of community importance. Funding was successfully sourced for the following projects in 2022

Project Ref No	Name & Address of Structure	Grant
1	Abbeyleix Old Church	€50,000
2	Midland House, Portlaoise	€20,000
3	Cuffesborough House, Ballacolla	€44,590
4	Old Forge Jamestown	€10,000

HOUSING, REGENERATION AND PLANNING

BROADBAND

The following projects from the Laois Digital Strategy 2020-2024 were undertaken with the support of Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD). The Broadband Officer continues to utilise Government initiatives to maximise the potential of having broadband connectivity available throughout the county.



NBI Rollout

Surveying is almost complete in the county with rollout of new infrastructure and fibre now taking place. Over 200 customers have connected to the service with the first customer connecting in Monevea Crettyard in June 2022. All updates for premises can be found using an Eircode on the NBI website.

Vodafone recorded an advertisement in association with Dermot Bannon Architect in Donaghmore BCP showcasing connectivity in Rural Ireland, which is available on their Website.

WiFi4EU

WiFi4EU is a project developed by the European Union that is intended to bring free WiFi to local communities. Municipalities that applied received a grant to set up hotspots in commonly frequented indoor and outdoor locations, such as public squares, cultural institutions, municipal buildings, or health facilities. The aim of WiFi4EU initiative is to bring high-quality free WiFi access to places where it is not yet available but would provide value for the community.



HOUSING, REGENERATION AND PLANNING

Free public WIFI has been rolled out in 10 towns in Laois with 46 connection points at a total cost of €115,000. The following municipal districts in Laois are provided with this service

PORTLAOISE TOWN	Top Square, Main Street, Hynd Square, Fitzmaurice Square, Lyster Square and LCC Plaza.
BORRIS IN OSSORY / MOUNTMELICK MUNICIPAL DISTRICT	Mountmellick , Mountrath, Camross and Borris in Ossory.
PORTLAOISE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT	Abbeyleix, Ballinakill and Ballyroan.
PORTARLINGTON/ GRAIUGUECULLEN MUNICIPAL DISTRICT	Portarlington, Stradbally

Broadband Connection Points (BCP's)

As part of the roll out of the National Broadband Plan, Laois County Council continued to roll out **Broadband Connection Points (BCPs)** in rural Laois with the addition of the following locations: -

1. Shanganamore Community Centre Barrowhouse
2. Ballyroan Community Centre

These are public locations which have been selected to receive high-speed connectivity in the first year of the National Broadband Plan and are available to work or study within. These are part of the Connected Communities initiative.

Get Connected.

Working closely with Laois County Council and local communities, Cellnex has installed new infrastructure in Ballyfin, Castletown and Vicarstown which has transformed previous blackspots and delivered world-class mobile communications in the target rural areas. Vodafone have connected to the infrastructure and it is hoped 3(network provider) will connect shortly.



FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

HEAD OF FINANCE:

Gerry Murphy

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTANT:

Julie Bergin

The Finance Department is responsible for the following services:

Motor Taxation, Accounts Payable, Revenue Collection (Rates, Fire charges, Rents, Loans, Development contributions), NPPR, Internal Audit, Preparation of Annual Budgets and Financial Statements, Financial Management and all ancillary matters

Commercial Rates

The General Annual Rate on Valuation was .2217 (budget 2023)

Prompt Payment of Accounts

The Council complies with the terms of the Prompt Payments Act as amended by the European Communities (Late Payment in Commercial Transactions) Regulations.

Total number of late payments in excess of €250: nil

Commercial Rates Waiver Scheme 2022

Circular Fin 24/2021 dated 14th December set out the guidelines for the first quarter of 2022 for business affected by the covid 19 pandemic restrictions. The extended waiver was applied as a credit in lieu of rates to eligible businesses in the hospitality sector for the period 1st January 2022 to 31st March 2022. Laois County Council applied the waiver to 255 commercial rate accounts with a total value of €396,415 for quarter 1, 2022.

National Performance Indicators 2021

5 Year summary of revenue account balance

2017	€-128,095.00
2018	€-68,333.00
2019	€5,009.00
2020	€70,614.00
2021	€145,274

5 year summary of % collection levels for major revenue sources

The individual % figures for each of (a) Rates, (b) Rent & Annuities and © Housing Loans, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Rates	75	76	80	71	85
Rent & Annuities	96	96	96	93	96
Housing Loans	68	72	75	72	75

MOTOR TAXATION

The Council collects vehicle licence duties within its functional area on behalf of the Department of Transport including processing conversions, trailer licences, registration books & trade plates. Staff also deal with matters that cannot be resolved online i.e. issues in relation to vehicle ownership, acquisition, cessation of exemptions, release of data as per legislative framework and ad-hoc queries. This Section also manages the Cash Office for receipting purposes of all monies for the local authority.

At every opportunity, customers are encouraged to tax online where possible but alternative options are also available such as a walk-in service between 9.30am to 1pm Monday – Friday, via postal service and the drop box at main reception. The total number of transactions carried out by this office in 2022 is 22,497.

Vehicle Licences

Income in the Motor Tax Office for 2022 was €3,590,198 which represents an increase of 37.6% on the previous year. It is felt that the contributing factors for the increase was the introduction of an additional layer of security by financial institutions making online difficult for some customers not properly set up and possibly compounded by the fact that customers were keen to get out again post pandemic.

Details	2022	2021	2020	2019
Income (€)	€3.5m	€2.6M	€3.4M	€5.8M
No of transactions	22.5K	16.2K	21.8K	39.5K

National Performance Indicators 2021

Indicator (original Tax Discs only)	Percentage/Amount
% Motor Tzx transactions dealt with at the public counter	12%
% Motor Tax transactions dealt with by post	9%
% Motor Tax transactions dealt with online	79%
Average number of public opening hours per week	16 hours

Number of Vehicle Licence postal applications /% of overall postal applications which were dealt with

A) on the same day	98.69%
B) On the 2nd or 3rd day	1.01%
C) On the 4th or 5th day	0.03%
D) Over 5 days	0.27%

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT SECTION

HOITAXAT RUTOM

The Property Management Section continues to carry out the property management function of the Council. This includes co-ordinating the purchase, sale and leasing of property. This section also deals with lifting of charges on folios, rectification of boundaries, land registry queries, general queries and the administration of same. M.App Enterprise software is used to record all assets and disposals. Work is ongoing with regard to reconciling the Property Management Asset Register with the Fixed Asset Register in Agresso MS7.

Annual Finance Statement 2022

Revenue Account	Gross Expenditure 2022	Income 2022	Net Expenditure 2022
Expenditure by Division	€	€	€
Housing & Building	19,603,300	20,125,688	(622,305)
Roads Transportation & Safety	28,864,413	22,745,881	6,180,877
Water & Sewerage	4,850,850	4,899,498	48,650
Development Incentives & Controls	10,614,337	6,823,457	3,562,518
Environmental Protection	9,641,783	2,366,327	7,010,979
Recreation & Amenity	6,006,050	1,273,495	4,374,292
Agriculture, Education, Health & Welfare	972,950	424,914	490,344
Miscellaneous	<u>10,569,639</u>	<u>11,154,334</u>	267,920
Total Expenditure/Income	91,123,323	69,813,595	

Net cost of Programmes to be funded from Rates and the Local Government Fund	21,309,727
Rates	14,103,225
Pension Levy	-
Local Government Fund—General Purpose Grant	9,065,148
Surplus for Year before Transfers	1,858,646
Transfers from/(to) reserves	(1,781,295)
Overall Surplus for year	77,351
General Reserve@1st January 2022	145,274
General Reserve @ 31st December 2022	222,625

Capital Account

Balance at 01/01/2022	9,164,275
Grants	40,018,659
Other Income	7,688,188
Transfer from/to Revenue	1,136,145
Expenditure	(49,356,735)
Balance at 31/12/2022	8,650,532

FINANCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

ENTERPRISE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE

HEAD OF FINANCE/DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

Gerry Murphy

HEAD OF LOCAL ENTERPRISE (Local Enterprise Office):

Evelyn Reddin

<u>Members</u>	<u>Sectoral</u>
<i>Cllr. Conor Bergin (Chair)</i>	<i>Pat Hennessy (Agriculture/Farming Sector)</i>
<i>Cllr. Aisling Moran</i>	<i>Pat Culleton (Development/Construction)</i>
<i>Cllr. Seamus McDonald</i>	<i>Caroline Hoffman (Laois Chamber)</i>
<i>Cllr. Aidan Mullins</i>	<i>P.J. Phelan (Community Voluntary)</i>
	<i>Deirdre O'Connell Hopkins (Trade Union)</i>

The Business Support Unit of Laois County Council forms a central point of contact for existing and prospective businesses. Its aim is to nurture a pro-business environment which supports enterprise and promotes Laois nationally and globally as a location of choice for business and investment.

A priority for the Unit in 2022 was supporting businesses and enterprises as they continued to adapt and recover from the challenging economic environment, the impact of Brexit, Covid 19 and the ongoing Ukrainian crisis.

The Business Support Unit responded to these challenges by working closely with the business community and encouraging them to avail of relevant supports for their businesses. These supports were designed to help businesses stabilise and adapt to the evolving situation, in preparation for getting back on the road to recovery. Its ongoing focus was to ensure that Laois businesses were in the strongest position possible to deal with these challenges

Despite these challenges, 2022 was a very productive year and demand continued to be high for supports, from businesses across all sectors. Many businesses presented with similar challenges, the main ones being recruitment/retention of staff and high energy costs.

Business Incentive Schemes

2022 was a busy year with a large volume of businesses applying for both the Shop Front Improvement & Accessibility Grant Scheme and the Business Incentive Scheme. 17 businesses from around the County applied for the Shopfront Grant Scheme which gives businesses the opportunity to improve/repair their shop façade. It also gives businesses an opportunity to make the entrances to their shops more accessible to people with mobility issues. A further 9 businesses applied for the Business Incentive Scheme which provides grant relief on commercial rates for eligible vacant properties. The business incentive scheme was extended to the towns of Ballylinan and Ballinakill in 2022.

Portlaoise & Portarlington Façade Enhancement Schemes

These schemes continued to be in high demand in 2022 with 19 applicants in Portarlington and 21 in Portlaoise. These schemes have resulted in huge improvements in the streetscape of both towns.



Town and Village Streetscape Enhancement Scheme 2021/2022

The focus of this Scheme was to support the upgrade and enhancement of shopfronts facades and residential facades within selected rural towns / village centres.

In 2022, grants totalling €116,400 were awarded to businesses and residences in the towns of Ballinakill, Ballylinan, Mountrath, Mountmellick and Rathdowney. A further €100,000 was allocated to Laois by the Department of Community and Rural Development in respect of Abbeyleix in 2022 and the BSU will be engaging with businesses and property owners regarding this scheme in 2023.

Town and Village Renewal Schemes

Rathdowney

A grant totalling €79,303 was awarded to Rathdowney Brand Central Hub to carry out refurbishment works to this previously vacant shopping centre property. The works consisted of the development of offices, a meeting room, a therapy room and the development of an internal space for the provision of an indoor market. The re-use of this previously vacant unit and large internal space is now a valuable resource for businesses in Rathdowney and the surrounding areas.

Killeshin

In 2022, a grant of €500,000 was awarded to **Killeshin Community Group** by the Department of Rural & Community Development under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme for an extension to the existing community centre in Killeshin. The extension will consist of a digital hub which will accommodate up to 20 people, together with a space for community activities. It will also include new car parking facilities at the centre. The Business Support Unit will be working closely with Killeshin Community Group in 2023 to advance this project.



Vacant Commercial Property Incentive Scheme

The Vacant Commercial Property Incentive Scheme is a pilot scheme which was launched in Portlaoise in collaboration with Laois Chamber Alliance and the Local Enterprise Office, Laois in March 2022. The aim of the scheme is to reduce vacancy and dereliction in the town centre by offering a package of incentives to businesses who rent/lease an empty building which has been vacant for 6 months or more. 54 vacant buildings have been identified in Portlaoise Town Centre. There is a lot of interest in the scheme and a new shop has opened on the Main Street as a direct result of the scheme. It is envisaged that the scheme will be extended to other towns in the County in 2023.



Laois Taste

The BSU received funding from the Department of Agriculture Tourism & the Marine for a project to work with Laois Taste in 2022. This project was co-funded by Laois County Council and consisted of the following:

- Re-Launch of the Provenance Scheme
- Update of the Laois Taste Food and Drink [Producers Directory](#)
- Support of Laois Taste at a number of high profile events
- Launch of new website for Laois Taste- www.laoistaste.ie

The project was very successful as it raised the profile of Laois Taste and created a greater awareness of Laois food on a local and national basis. This in turn has developed Laois into a food and drinks destination thereby supporting the local economy and creating jobs locally.



Portlaoise Town Team

The BSU continued to work collaboratively with Portlaoise Town Team and the other major stakeholders to support and promote Laois businesses in 2022. The various sub-committees of the Town Team worked hard on various projects- a cycle bus initiative, Tidy Towns projects and attractive new signage and lights - all of which were developed to promote Portlaoise as a place to live, work and do business. One of the main projects the BSU was involved with was the Portlaoise Christmas Festival which consisted of enhanced Christmas lights throughout the town, a Christmas market and a family Christmas experience in the Dunamaise theatre, all designed to attract visitors to the Town in the run up to and during the Christmas period.

J17 National Enterprise Park

Continued expansion took place in J17 National Enterprise Park in Portlaoise in 2022 with the sale of sites to two new businesses who join the existing operators in this large-scale Enterprise Park located just off the M7.

Works were undertaken in 2022 to enhance the appearance of the National Enterprise Park with the installation of gateway features at both entrances and landscaping throughout the park. The J17 National Enterprise Park has been a success for the County, with a number of high-profile employers announcing plans at the Enterprise Park in recent years, including Glanbia, Greenfield Global, Kirby Group Engineering and Midland Steel Reinforcement Supplies.

Financial Supports

During the year, the Local Enterprise Office (LEO) provided grant assistance to eligible Laois businesses to help fund start-up costs, business expansion plans, entry into new markets and job growth.

In 2022, €319,515 was approved in grant aid to 14 Laois companies with potential to create 51 additional full time jobs. 7 TAME (Export) grants were also approved to a value of €14,054 to develop clients' export journey.

Training

LEO continued to offer a range of online interactive training programmes to support businesses. 85 training courses were delivered with 979 participants of which 135 potential start-ups participated in Start Your Own Business Courses.

Mentoring

A total of 260 mentoring sessions were managed between experienced mentors and client companies in specific areas such as finance, social media.

Trading Online Vouchers

Designed to assist small businesses to trade more online, the Trading Online Voucher scheme offers companies training and advice, along with the financial assistance of up to €2,500. 34 Trading online vouchers were approved to the value of €71,870.

Microfinance Ireland

Micro Finance Ireland provides small loans through the Government's Micro Enterprise Loan Fund. to help startups and established businesses to get the finance they need for their business. In 2022, Laois LEO assisted **10** companies to access loans through the MFI fund and arranged for follow on mentoring where needed.

Lean for Micro Programme

8 companies participated in the Lean for Micro Programme. The Lean for Micro is designed to encourage clients to adopt lean business principles in their organisations to increase competitiveness. The programme is aimed at owners/managers, across a variety of sectors to gain an introduction to lean concepts as well as a practical understanding of lean by undertaking a short, focused in-company assignment with expert consultancy support and guidance.

Green For Micro Programme

31 companies took part in the Green for Micro programme. The aim of this programme is to assist businesses in lowering their carbon footprint, reducing costs and improving the environmental profile of the business in the marketplace. The Green For Micro programme offers a free two-day consultancy package with an independent industry expert who will set out a custom plan for the participating businesses. The Co-Working Hubs in Laois also participated in the programme.



Digital Start Programme

This programme has been designed to assist LEO clients in the Micro sector to prepare and implement a plan for the adoption of digital tools and techniques across the business. 2 Laois businesses took part in the pilot programme so far and LEO will continue to roll this programme out in 2023.

Midlands Management Development Programme

The Management Development Programme is the Local Enterprise Office's most comprehensive offering to small businesses in Laois. The objective of the programme is to enable companies to become stabilized, ready for growth and to further improve competitive advantage. This programme is for established owners-managers planning for the next stage of their business cycle. It is targeted at businesses that are established a minimum of 3 years such that the caliber of participants is high and business needs are similar. **10** Laois businesses completed this programme in 2022.

Grow your Business Programme

11 Laois businesses took part in a six week programme

Laois Hub Collective

LEO continued to work with the co-working hubs to develop collaborations. We hosted a number of training programmes in the hubs with a view to increasing awareness of the facilities and driving more traffic there.

Midlands “Engenuity” Engineering Cluster Programme

This is an ongoing collaborative initiative of the Midlands LEOs to develop engineering standards and to encourage shared learning and cooperation amongst engineering focused firms in the Midlands. 9 Laois companies members are now part of this network which focuses on bringing solutions to industry challenges for engineering firms in the Midlands using peer learning and leveraging existing Government supports.

Part of our remit in 2022 was to promote an enterprise culture in Co. Laois. As part of this LEO co-ordinated a series of enterprise programmes and events that promoted entrepreneurship across all sectors which included:

Local Enterprise Week

Over 300 enterprise events were collectively organized across the LEO Network and locally in Co. Laois to mark Local Enterprise Week 2022. This initiative showcased the full range of supports LEO Laois can offer small businesses, and provided over 100 Laois companies with networking and training opportunities.



National Enterprise Awards

Laois business, Salutem Insights Limited, won the ‘Mid East Regional Award’ at the 23rd National Enterprise Awards which were held at the Mansion House, Dublin in May 2022. Supported by LEO, Salutem Insights is a health economic and market access company, who support the healthcare sector with in-depth analysis, interpretation, and communication of clinical and health economic data.



National Womens Enterprise Day 2022

LEO Laois, in partnership with the Local Enterprise Offices of Longford Offaly and Westmeath organised National Women’s Enterprise Day 2022 on Thursday October 13th in Glasson Lakehouse, Westmeath. This event celebrates and supports women in enterprise from these four counties and is run on an annual basis. Key speaker at the event was Suzanne Jackson, award-winning blogger and influencer turned businesswoman.

Student Enterprise Programmes 2022

LEO Laois supports the development of entrepreneurship in secondary schools throughout Laois through the Student Enterprise Awards Programme. Over 300 students from 7 Laois second level schools took part in the 2021/2022 programme which encourages students to research, set up and run their own business with the help of the student enterprise co-ordinator. Supported by LEO Laois, two students from Portlaoise College were amongst the winners at the 2022 National Final. Oisín Grundy, outright winner of the ‘Creative Business Idea Video Competition’ at Junior Cycle Level was presented with his award by An Tánaiste Leo Varadkar at The Helix. Mosa Hafeez took 2nd place at Intermediate Level in the ‘My Entrepreneurial Journey Competition’.



Ministerial Visit

Minister Damien English visited enterprises in County Laois in May 2022. He met with key stakeholders in County Hall and then visited Portlaoise Enterprise Centre to meet with LEO Client company TSI Flowmeters Ltd. He also visited Laois Food producers at Ballykilcavan Brewing Company in Stradbally.



Laois Hub Collective

The Business Support Unit worked with Laois Hub Collective in 2022 to market the available hot desks, office spaces and training facilities that are available in the 7 remote working hubs located around the County. Laois County Council has received €50,000 in funding under the Town and Village renewal scheme to further promote the use of the hubs to remote workers and the BSU will be working on this project in 2023.



Christmas Festivities

Downtown Portlaoise together with funding from Laois Partnership and Laois County Council organised a Christmas Festival to encourage people to visit the Town over the festive period and support local businesses. The festival consisted of a Christmas event “The National Elf Academy” in Dunamais Arts Centre together with a Christmas market weekend and enhanced Christmas lights and decorations throughout the town.

National Performance Indicator 2021

No of jobs created with assistance from the LEO during the period 01/01/2021 to 31/12/2021 per 100,000	No of trading online voucher applications approved by the LEO in 2021 per 100,000 of population	No of those trading online vouchers that were drawn down in 2021 per 100,000 of population	No of participants who received mentoring during the period 01/01/2021 to 31/12/2021 per
55.49	82.65	50.77	382.54

TOURISM

In 2022 Laois County Council continued to promote the County of Laois by supporting a range of initiatives and by working with state agencies. The Laois Chamber of Commerce and Laois Tourism amalgamated to form Laois Chamber Alliance. The Council continued to support the Laois Chamber Alliance with their work promoting Laois. Work, also, commenced on a Tourism Promotional Brochure. O'Connell Marketing Consultants, who were contracted by Laois Tourism, continued with the marketing and promotion of the County. A strong online presence exists through the Tourism Website and Social Media channels actively promoting the County and what it has to offer. The Council also continued to work with Fáilte Ireland promoting Laois as a destination in Ireland's Ancient East Region.

Timahoe Heritage Centre:

Tenders were received for the conservation and upgrading of the Community-run Heritage Centre in the former Church of Ireland in Timahoe. The tender documents have been evaluated and it is proposed to award the contract for these works in early January 2023. The works include repairs to the vestry roof and external doors, painting, a new kitchenette and reception area, heating system and floor coverings.

Slieve Bloom Mountain Bike Trails;

In 2022 the focus has been on the development of a trailhead building which will be located in Baunreagh. The proposed trailhead building was redesigned in 2022 and an application for planning permission was submitted on the 8/12/2022, a decision is due in early 2023.

Tourism Destination Towns Fund:

Work continued on the Tourism Destination Town Project for Portlaoise. This included finalising with the design consultants the proposals for the script, planning and design of wayfinding and interpretation signage for the town. The directional signage, informative and interpretation panels are currently being manufactured. The installation of new lights as part of this project have been completed on Peppers Lane, Lyster Lane and Bull Lane.

Barrow Blue Way:

Work on the Barrow Blueway steadily progressed in 2022. The Laois section is complete. Consultants have been commissioned to prepare a 'Placemaking Plan' to provide consistency in terms of a wayfinding approach to facilities, amenities and access. Visitor monitoring counters were installed in 5 locations (Lowtown (Robertstown), Rathangan, Monasterevin, Vicarstown and Athy). Early usage numbers are positive.

Car Parking at The Rock of Dunamase

Laois County Council has reached agreement regarding the purchase of a site adjacent to the Rock of Dunamase. The agreement is subject to the works being approved for planning (Part VIII). Preliminary meetings regarding the Part VIII have been held with consultants.

Glenbarrow Carpark

Agreement has been reached in principle with a landowner to lease a site adjacent to the existing carpark. The final lease is currently being completed, following which it is proposed to commence the works to provide carparking in the area for up to 70 vehicles.

National Ploughing Championships 2022

The National Ploughing Championships returned to Ratheniska in 2022. The total attendance figure came to 277,000 visitors, with over 1,700 exhibitors. Laois County Council provided a marquee for 24 local exhibitors

who showcased their businesses/services. These included food and drink providers, craft producers and information providers.



Ras na mBan International Ladies Cycle Race

Stage 3 of Rás na mBan, the International Ladies Cycle Race, took place on Friday 9th September 2022. There was a ceremonial start of the 120 cyclists from Áras an Chontae. The Race started in Portlaoise, passing through Abbeyleix, Mountrath, Mountmellick, Rosenallis, Clonaslee and Kinnity where the cyclists climbed the Wolftrap Mountain and finished at the top of The Cut. This stage of the race was won by Lieke Van Zeelst from Greemount Cycling Academy. The race was covered by TG4 and reported on by RTE.



Tourism Grants

Laois County Council provided financial support in the sum of €78,000 for festivals and events in the County in 2022. These included The Old Forte Festival Portlaoise, Scarecrow Festival Durrow, The Folly Festival Cullohill, National Steam Rally Stradbally, Twin Trees Festival Ballinakill, Shine in Emo, The Gordon Bennett Classic Car Festival, The Leinster Fleadh, Laois Pride, Tri Laois. Laois County Council also supported Christmas Festivals/Lights in a number of locations around the County.

MY PAY, LOCAL GOVERNMENT SHARED SERVICES CENTRE/PAYROLL & SUPERANNUATION

A/DIRECTOR OF SERVICES:

Dermot O’Loughlin

The project is currently running on schedule and within budget. There are currently 86 employees based in the Shared Services Centre. Waves 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 have been completed on schedule with Laois, Offaly, Longford, Roscommon, Westmeath, Leitrim, Galway, Carlow, Monaghan, Cavan, Kildare, Meath, Kilkenny, Louth, South Dublin, Tipperary, Kerry, Wicklow, Sligo, Mayo, Clare, Fingal, Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown, Donegal, Cork and Wexford County Councils along with Limerick and Waterford County and City Councils, Cork and Galway City Councils and the LGMA are now live.

The following are the statistics on the project up to the end of December 2022:

Value of Payments	€6,264m
Number of Payments	7,181,737
Number of Pay Groups Paid	14,122
Number of Payroll Runs	8,249

Cork County Council were successfully onboarded to MyPay for payroll administration in June 2022. Work is ongoing with Dublin City Council with a view to bringing them onboard in 2023.

The Superannuation element of the project is ongoing:

- There are currently 20 Local authorities live for pension services with a plan in place to bring the remainder on board by 2023.
- MyPay is now administering the new Single Public Service Pension Scheme for the Local Authority Sector.

MyPay successfully maintained the ISAE 3402 standard. This is an internationally recognised standard for service organisations which must be renewed annually.

**TITLE, PURPOSE AND NUMBER OF MEMBERS OF EACH COMMITTEE AND JOINT COMMITTEE AND
THE NUMBER OF MEETINGS OF EACH COMMITTEE, JOINT COMMITTEE AND JOINT POLICING
COMMITTEE HELD DURING THE PERIOD JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2022**

Name of Committee	Members Elected	Number of Meetings
Local Community Development Committee	Councillor Paschal McEvoy Councillor John King Councillor Conor Bergin	11
Joint Policing Committee	Councillor Pdraig Fleming Councillor Paddy Bracken Councillor Seamus McDonald Councillor Paschal McEvoy Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald Councillor James Kelly Councillor Ben Brennan Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley Councillor John King Councillor P J Kelly Councillor Thomasina Connell Councillor Aisling Moran Councillor Conor Bergin	4
Heritage Forum	Councillor Pdraig Fleming Councillor William Aird	3
Placenames Committee	Councillor Paddy Bracken Councillor Noel Tuohy Councillor John King Councillor P J Kelly Councillor Aisling Moran	1
Naming Committee	Councillor Paddy Bracken Councillor Noel Tuohy Councillor John King Councillor PJ Kelly Councillor William Aird Coun cillor Catherine Fitzgerald Councillor James Kelly Councillor Pdraig Fleming Councillor Ben Brennan	4
Audit Committee	Councillor Pdraig Fleming Councillor Aisling Moran	5
Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee	Councillor B Walsh Councillor John King Councillor P J Kelly Councillor Paddy Bracken Councillor Paschal McEvoy Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald Councillor James Kelly	3

TITLE, PURPOSE AND NUMBER OF MEMBERS OF EACH COMMITTEE AND JOINT COMMITTEE AND THE NUMBER OF MEETINGS OF EACH COMMITTEE, JOINT COMMITTEE AND JOINT POLICING COMMITTEE HELD DURING THE PERIOD JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2022

Name of Committee	Members Elected	Number of Meetings
Kyletalesha Monitoring Committee	Councillor Paddy Bracken Councillor Thomasina Connell Councillor Aisling Moran	0
Rural Water Monitoring Committee	Councillor Pdraig Fleming Councillor P J Kelly Councillor Conor Bergin	1
Public Events Committee	Councillor Ben Brennan Councillor Paschal McEvoy Councillor James Kelly Councillor Thomasina Connell Councillor Aisling Moran	1
Twinning Committee	Councillor Pdraig Fleming Councillor James Kelly Councillor Conor Bergin Councillor Thomasina Connell	0

OUTSIDE BODIES—JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2022

Name of Committee Members Elected

Association of Irish Local Government	Councillor John Joe Fennelly Councillor John King Councillor Aisling Moran
Laois & Offaly Education & Training Board	Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald Councillor Pdraig Fleming Councillor Barry Walsh Councillor Willie Aird Councillor John King Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley
Laois Arts Theatre Company Ltd	Councillor Barry Walsh Councillor Thomasina Connell Councillor Noel Tuohy
Board of Abbeyleix Heritage Trust	Councillor John Joe Fennelly
Local Authority Members Association	Councillor Seamus McDonald
Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly	Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald Councillor Aisling Moran
Laois Partnership Company Ltd	Councillor Pdraig Fleming Councillor P J Kelly
Laois Leisure Limited	Councillor Aidan Mullins Councillor Noel Tuohy
Portlaoise Enterprise Centre	Councillor John Joe Fennelly Councillor William Aird Councillor Barry Walsh
Portarlington Enterprise Centre	Councillor Aidan Mullins Councillor P J Kelly
Board of Treo Nua Limited	Councillor Noel Tuohy
Dublin Mid-Leinster Regional Forum	Councillor Pdraig Fleming Councillor Paschal McEvoy Councillor Thomasina Connell
Midland Regional Drugs Task Force	Councillor Thomasina Connell
Portlaoise Innovation Centre	Councillor Thomasina Connell Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald
Eirgrid Laois Kilkenny Reinforcement Project Community Forum	Councillor Paschal McEvoy Councillor Thomasina Connell

MEMBERS EXPENSES SUMMARY**JANUARY – DECEMBER 2022**

	€
Conferences	2,802.07
Training	9,714.83
Phones	707.21
Monthly Expenses	93,162.82
SPC Chair Allowance	24,000.00
Representational Allowance	410,286.39
Cathaoirleach's Allowance	20,237.18
Leas-Chathaoirleach's Allowance	3,832.75
Municipal District Chair Allowance	17,960.65
Municipal District Allowance	9,210.70
OVERALL	€591,914.60

eTRAINING ATTENDED IN 2022 BY LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL MEMBERS

<u>Training</u>	<u>Venue</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Delegates</u>	<u>Expend</u>
AILG				
AILG – Module 1	Mullingar Cork	17th February 2022 19th February 2022	8	€1632.44
AILG—Annual Training Event	Buncrana	23rd—24th March 2022	12	€8,000.79
AILG – Module 2	Monaghan Enni	14th May 2022 12th May 2022	10	€3,720.29
AILG—Module 3	Roscommon	16th June 2022	4	€1,095.37
AILG Women’s Caucus	Sligo	1st June 2022	3	€1,239.94
AILG—Module 4	Bundoran	23rd July 2022	7	€3,632.98
AILG—Module 5	Sligo Killarney	27th October 2022 22nd October 2022	9	€5,093.26
AILG Module 6	Waterford Navan	17th November 2022 26th November 2022	6	€1,404.74
LAMA—Autumn Seminar	Trim	14th—16th September 2022	8	€3,555.90
Irish Planning Institute				€330.00
LAMA Spring	Kilkenny	11th—12th April 2022	2	€388.67
LAMA Autumn	Monaghan	9th—11th November 2022	10	€5,569.34
Irish Council for Social Housing	Sligo	19th—20th October 2022	5	€4,412.40
Overall Total:				€39,876.12

CONFERENCES ATTENDED IN 2022 BY LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL MEMBERS

<u>Conference</u>	<u>Venue</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Delegates</u>	<u>Expend</u>
The Finance Act 2021	Carlingford	7th—9th January 2022	3	€1,738.29
The Suck Valley Way	Roscommon	27th & 28th April 2022	5	€1,637.32
Public Affairs Ireland Conference	Online	25th May 2022	1	€250.00
Dereliction in Donegal & Beyond	Letterkenny	22nd July 2022	1	€392.99
Daniel O’Connell School 2022	Cahersiveen	28th & 29th Oc tober 2022	3	€2,028.85
The Role of Local Authorities in addressing the needs of older people	Carlingford	11th—13th November 2022	2	€994.96
Overall Total:				€7,042.41

HOW TO CONTACT US

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Cash Office, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8674308
Civil Defence HQ, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8664106
Environment, Áras an Chontae	Tel : (057) 8674330
Housing, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8664338
Human Resources, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8664075
Landfill Site, Kyletalesha, Portlaoise	Tel: (057) 8620653
Library Headquarters, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8594982
Motor Tax Office, Block 2, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8664315
Planning, Block 1, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8664201
Register of Electors, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8664105
Roads, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8664086
Sports & Leisure, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8674077
Water Services, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8674355



