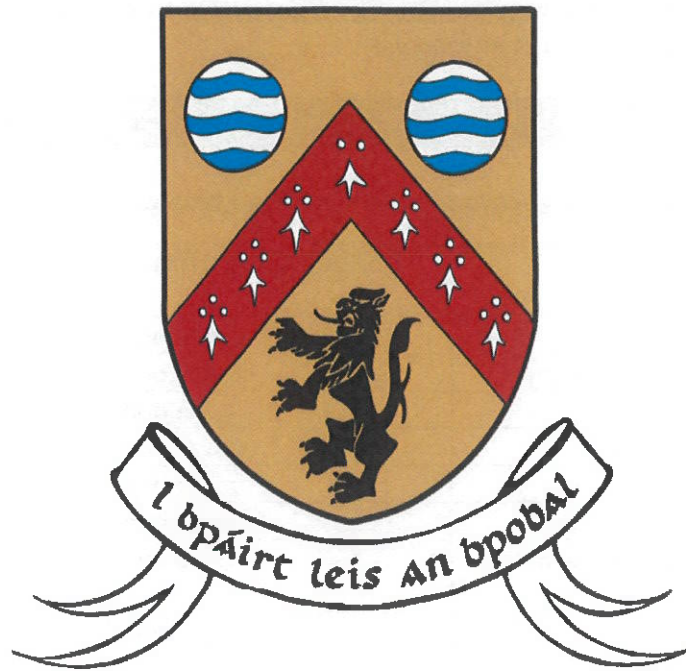


LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL
COMHAIRLE CHONTAE LAOISE



MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT
APRIL 2021
TUARASCÁIL BHAINISTÍOCHTA
AIBREAN 2021

To: Each Member of Laois County Council
Do: Gach Ball Comhairle Chontae Laoise

Section 136(2) of the Local Government Act, 2011 as inserted by Section 51 of the Local Government Reform Act, 2014, requires the Chief Executive to prepare monthly management report. The report for April 2021 is as follows:-

Finance, & Allocations Notified

Expenditure and income to the 31/03/2021 is summarised below:

Service Division	Budget Allocation	Expenditure to 31/03/2021
Housing and Building	15,772,000	3,074,344
Road Transportation and Safety	21,225,000	1,928,457
Water Services	3,421,000	768,327
Development Management	6,970,000	1,923,902
Environmental Services	7,500,000	977,462
Recreation and Amenity	3,926,000	653,448
Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare	822,000	84,605
Miscellaneous Services	9,533,000	2,743,070
Central Management Charge	9,714,000	2,062,720
Total	78,883,000	14,216,335

Service Division	Budget Allocation	Income to 31/03/2021
Housing and Building	17,594,000	3,470,753
Road Transportation and Safety	16,749,000	1,984,706
Water Services	4,534,000	1,044,430
Development Management	4,423,000	2,399,664
Environmental Services	1,501,000	329,043
Recreation and Amenity	601,000	347,574
Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare	330,000	65,492
Miscellaneous Services	8,126,000	1,261,049
Superannuation	700,000	157,082
Local Property Tax	9,063,079	2,265,770
Rates	14,495,092	1,666,049
Capital transfer	766,829	766,829
Total	78,883,000	14,092,392

Allocations Notified

Food Safety Authority of Ireland 2021	€202,840
Local Authority Waste Enforcement Measures Grant Scheme	€137,370
National Transport Authority - Active Travel 2021 Allocation	€3,283,000
Rural Regeneration Development Fund	€1,094,880
DHLGH - Recoupment of Well Grants	€32,924.86
DHLGH - Recoupment of Subsidy Claim - GWS	€50,622.67
DHLGH - Energy Efficiency/Retrofitting Programme	€839,134

Housing & Regeneration

Rebuilding Ireland Construction Programme

Scheme	Units	Progress
Shannon St., Mountrath	6	Complete
Ballymorris, Portarlinton	22	Complete
Gleann naGlaise, Ballyroan	10	On-Site. Site back open since 12th of April after 4 months closed due to COVID 19 Level 5 restrictions.
25-30 Moore St., Rathdowney	6	On-Site. Site back open since 12th of April after 4 months closed due to COVID 19 Level 5 restrictions.
Pattison Estate, Mountmellick	10	On-Site. Site back open since 12th of April after 4 months closed due to COVID 19 Level 5 restrictions.
Sean Doire, Durrow	22	On-Site. Site back open since 12th of April after 4 months closed due to COVID 19 Level 5 restrictions.
Coolroe, Ballybrittas (Rural)	1	On-Site. Site back open since 12th of April after 4 months closed due to COVID 19 Level 5 restrictions.
Harbour Court, Mountmellick	6	Stage 2 submitted on 23/3/21.
Mooreville, Rathdowney	7	Stage 3 documents to be submitted to Department in Q2 2021.
St. Kierans Park, Errill	14	Stage 4 submission being prepared for the Department.
Clonrooske, Knockmay	13	Revisions made following recent meeting with Portlaoise councillors. Stage 2 submission being prepared for the Department.

Iona, Abbeyleix Road	9	Draft layout being prepared for discussions with local councillors.
Oak Park Halting Site	4	Tenders advertised in March 2021.
Carraig Glas, Stradbally	26	Stage 2 application approved by the Department of Housing 12/4/2021. Part 8 Planning submission to follow

Urban Regeneration Programme

Scheme	Units	Progress
Former C.B.S. Site	67	Part VIII granted. Detailed design is currently underway. CALF funding application to be submitted in Q2 2021.
Hepburn/Knockmay	54	Cluid Housing Association are progressing this development. Revised site layout submitted for 54 units.
O'Moore Place Regeneration	To be determined	Concept drawings on the proposed development are being prepared for future discussion.
Convent Site, Portlaoise	51	Stage 2 approved in February 2021. Enabling works contract this summer with main contract due to go to tender later in the year.
County Hotel, Portlaoise	11	Stage 1 approval for 11 units granted on 4/9/20. Redesign required following engagement with the Department of Heritage. Meeting with local councillors to be held before the end of May.
Vacant Homes Office		The Vacant Homes Officer has carried out an initial inspection on 225 vacant dwellings to date. Following this inspection, no further action has been deemed necessary in 103 cases due to the properties being found to be occupied, undergoing works by the owners or in a location of low housing need and unsuitable for social housing. 73 vacant houses have been identified to date as being suitable for social housing due to the type of house and location and further action may be taken in these cases. 40 properties have been identified as having potential for use as development sites for social housing and these sites will be examined further. 12 vacant properties have been acquired by CPO and 5 properties are currently going through the CPO process.

Turnkey Projects

Scheme	Units	Progress
Expressions of interest		The Council has invited expressions of interest from the public in respect of the supply of newly completed homes as turnkey projects.
Main St., Borris-in-Ossory	11	Contractors on site. 6 units complete with Phase 2 (5 units) in Q3 2021.
Clonaslee	7	Complete
Church Avenue, Stradbally	31	Turnkey application approved by the Department 4 th March 2021. Expected delivery Q4 2022.

Approved Housing Bodies Delivery

Scheme	Units	AHB	Progress
Borris Road, Portlaoise	36	Tuath	Complete
Bellingham, Portlaoise	30	Cluid	Contractor is on site. 24 of the 30 units have been delivered. Phase 5 (6 units) expected delivery end of Q2 2021.
Ballickmoyler Road, Graiguecullen	20	Co-Operative Ireland	Complete
Doirin Alainn, Ballylinan	12	North & East	Complete
The Glen (Phase 2) Kilnacourt Portarlinton	18	Co-Operative Ireland	Contractor is on site. Expected delivery in May 2021.
Wilton Lawns, Portarlinton	2	Respond	Contractor is due to commence on site in May with delivery expected at the end of Q4 2021.
Lake Drive Kilminchy	10	Co-Operative Ireland	Contractor is on site with expected delivery in May 2021
Holdbrook, Portlaoise	20	Cluid	Contractor is on site. Phase 1 (10 units) to be delivered at the end of May 2021 Phase 2 (10 units) to be delivered in June 2022.
Clonrooske Abbey, Portlaoise	32	Cluid	Contractor is on site. Phase 1 (14 units) expected delivery in May 2021 Phase 2 (6 units) expected delivery in Q4 2021

			Phase 3 (12 units) expected delivery in Q2 2022
Spa Street, Droughill, Portarlinton	26	Oaklee	Contractor is back on site. Expected delivery in February 2022
The Meadows, Mountrath Road, Portlaoise	48	Cluid	CALF funding has been approved for delivery of these units. Works have commenced on site and delivery is expected in Q4 2022
Ballymorris Court, Portarlinton	46	Cluid	CALF funding has been approved for delivery of these units. Expected delivery in Q4 2022
Harpers Lane, Portlaoise	44	Respond	Contractor is due to commence on site end May/early June 2021 with expected delivery in Q4 2022.

From the above tables it can be noted that there will be 120 new homes delivered under our New Build programme in 2021. As expected the Covid19 Level 5 lockdown has had a negative impact on our 2021 delivery with a number of units being pushed in to 2022.

In addition to the units outlined in the above tables the Housing Department are also in discussion with various AHB's regarding the delivery of further Social Housing units throughout the county. The total number of units currently under discussion in the county, in addition to the units mentioned above, is 370 broken down by MD area as follows –

- Portlaoise MD – 209
- Borris in Ossory/Mountmellick MD – 111
- Portarlinton/Graiguecullen MD – 50

Refugee Resettlement Programme

There is currently 1 family remaining to be housed under our Refugee Resettlement Programme. It is anticipated that this tenancing will now be able to take place at the end of May and this will see us completing our current Refugee Resettlement Programme to house 22 families.

Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan

Since 1st February 2018, 99 Rebuilding Ireland Home Loans have been approved.

HAP

There are currently 1,082 active HAP tenancies, 299 of which have transferred from rent supplement.

Private House Grants

To the 16th April, 2021 the following grants for privately owned houses were approved:-

- 43 Housing Aid for Older People Grant Applications in the sum of €186,068
- 27 Mobility Aids Grants have been paid in the sum of €112,950
- 24 Housing Adaptation Grants have been paid in the sum of €189,750

Private Rented Inspections

470 Private Rented Inspections were carried out in 2020. No physical Private Rented Inspections have been carried out to date in 2021 due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Housing Maintenance

Month	Work Orders Raised	Work Orders Closed	Work Orders Open
January 21	234	221	13
February 21	216	206	10
March 21	251	194	57
TOTAL (YTD)	701	621	80

Month	Work Orders Raised	Work Orders Closed	Work Orders Open
January 20	517	517	0
February 20	341	341	0
March 20	228	228	0
April 20	120	120	0
May 20	205	205	0
June 20	278	278	0
July 20	287	287	0
August 20	286	282	0
September 20	359	359	0
October 20	369	363	6
November 20	286	276	10
December 20	296	256	40
TOTAL JAN to DEC	3,572	3,516	56

NOTE: There are also 406 routine maintenance requests currently on-hold due to current Level 5 COVID restrictions.

Housing Re-Lets

Month	LA Keys Surrendered	Properties Acquired	Works Completed
January 21	8	0	7
February 21	2	1	6
March 21	3	2	9
TOTAL (YTD)	13	3	22

Month	LA Keys Surrendered	Properties Acquired	Works Completed
January 20	4	2	10
February 20	6	4	8
March 20	9	3	6
April 20	4	1	11
May 20	7	0	11
June 20	4	1	12
July 20	7	0	8
August 20	10	2	3
September 20	12	5	13
October 20	9	1	15
November 20	4	0	5
December 20	2	0	10
TOTAL JAN to DEC	78	19	112

Midlands Housing Retrofit Programme

Laois has been notified that it can proceed with the inspections of 160 homes as part of a pilot initiative under the above programme. The scope of eligible works includes:

- a) Attic Insulation
- b) Flat Roof Insulation
- c) External Wall Insulation / Dry Lining / Pumped Cavities
- d) Windows & Doors
- e) Heat Pumps
- f) LED Lighting

Houses must achieve a minimum BER rating of “B2” (or Cost Optimal Equivalent). It is proposed to carry out the inspections and subsequent works in two phases.

Survey inspections commenced in September 2020 on the first phase. Feedback to date has been positive from residents. Tenders for Phase 1 (62 houses) were returned in March 21 and evaluation is on going. Tenders for Phase 2 (98 houses) are due to be advertised in Q2 2021.

The Council has received notification of a grant towards the costs of Energy Retrofit Works on its 31 houses in O’Moore Place. The Council is currently preparing a scheme for these works.

Homeless Presentations

Time Period	Homeless Presentations	Emergency Homeless
March 14 th – April 16 th 2021	19	10
Year to Date	50	27

Individuals Accessing	Emergency Accommodation as of 16 th April, 2021	Transition Accommodation as of 16 th April 2021
Adults	13	3
Children	5	3

Housing Allocations Year to 16th April 2021.

Method of Housing Delivery	Numbers allocated
1 st allocation including new builds LCC	5
2 nd and subsequent allocations LCC including refurbished stock	20
Nominations to Approved Housing Bodies	38
Total Allocations	63

Social Housing List at 16th April 2021

Social Housing Applicants	774
Applicants in receipt of HAP	1059
Total Applicants	1833

Housing Application Form – changes to household means policy

The Department of Housing has by regulation introduced a new national Social Housing Application Form. It came in to effect on 19th April 2021 and is available from the Housing Department and www.laois.ie. With this new application the determination of whether an applicant household meets the income criteria will now be based on a calculation of their preceding 12 months net average income prior to the date of receipt of application. This will ensure that the most comprehensive picture of a household's current and previous income is available at the point of carrying out the assessment.

Planning, Development and Heritage

FORWARD PLANNING PROGRESS REPORT

Draft COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021-2027

Public Consultation concluded on the Draft Laois County Development Plan on the 23rd March 2021. All submissions are available on www.consult.laois.ie. The submissions will now be considered in the Chief Executives report and this will be circulated to the Council in June 2021 for their consideration.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT REPORT

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMPARATIVE FIGURES FROM 2020 TO 2021

Year	Valid applications from 01/01/2021 – 08/04/2021	Valid applications from 01/01/2020 – 08/04/2020
	176	131

2021 PERFORMANCE	
Number of valid applications received:	176
Number of decisions made	151
Number of applications granted:	124 (Decisions to Grant)
Number of applications refused:	7 (Decisions to Refuse) 3.97% refusal rate
Invalid applications returned to applicant:	39 (2021 Invalid Applications) 18.75%
Files scanned up to -	
Referrals to Area Offices (working days):	within 14 days achieved
Pre planning	
No of requests to date	134
No of meetings held to date Up to and including the 8 th April 2021	118
Wait time	2 weeks

ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

2021	2021		2020	
	Mar	Jan - Mar 2021	Mar	Jan - Mar 2020
Service Review				
Total number of new cases subject to complaints that were investigated	25	37	1	17
Number of Warning Letters served	18	44	1	131
Number of Enforcement Notices served	8	31	7	23
No Of cases referred for legal proceedings	2	2	0	1
Number of cases in Court(incl adjournments)	8	17	6	14
Number of cases Resolved in Court	1	1	0	1
Number of Files Closed	22	40	2	52
Number of cases on system	166	0	166	166

Enforcement Costs recouped	€ 1,200.00	€ 4,086.24	€ 350.00	€ 1,491.24
Number of Valid Retention Applications Received relating to Enforcement Action	1	9	6	15
Fees received through Valid Retention Applications Received relating to Enforcement Action	€204.00	€ 2,447.00	€1,092.50	€ 4,588.28
Legal fees paid	€7,962.10	€ 8,559.84	€1,161.12	€ 1,613.76

Heritage Officer Report

FUNDING UPDATE

Funding open for applications

Community Monuments Fund for conservation of **archaeological** sites is now closed to applications. A total of 7 projects were submitted to Laois County Council. These now need to be evaluated and submitted to Dept Housing, Local Government and Heritage by 30th April.

Recent Funding Applications

A call for funding for projects under the National Biodiversity Action Plan was made in March. An application was subsequently submitted for funding towards Biodiversity awareness raising activities and a Laois Wetlands survey.

Funding Awarded

Built Heritage Investment Scheme

Funding of €72,000 for conservation of protected structures in Laois has been announced by the Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage This is divided across 12 properties across the county. Work is ongoing on notifying recipients and administration of funding and payments.

Historic Structures Fund

Four applications from Laois were submitted for consideration under via the Historic Structures Fund, a decision on these is awaited.

RONNIE MATHEWS ARCHIVE

The archive of Ronnie Mathews has been acquired by Laois County Council. This extensive paper archive relating to all aspects of the life and history of Portarlinton, was collected over a lifetime by the late Ronnie Mathews. This is an enormously valuable archive to acquire for the people of the county. Funding from the Creative Ireland fund has been allocated to catalogue and conserve the material with a view to making some of it publicly accessible.

UPCOMING EVENTS

A commemorative event on the Portlaoise Plane and Col Fitzmaurice was held online on 12th April 2021. The event was attended by over 180 people. Presentations were recorded and the events available on the Facebook page of "Fitz and the Famous Flight".

HEALTHY IRELAND PROJECTS

Gardening for Biodiversity/Nature is good for you

The Gardening for Biodiversity book has been reprinted as part of the overall “Nature is Good for you” campaign. This also tied in with the Nature podcast (see below) and “Spring into Heritage” downloadable worksheets. More on the campaign at <https://www.laois.ie/nature-is-good-for-you>

In your Nature Podcasts

In partnership with BirdWatch Ireland and Offaly County Council 6 episode of a new Podcast on wildlife and nature have been released to date and so far over 10,000 downloads have been recorded. The In Your Nature Podcast can be found at <https://inyournature.buzzsprout.com/>.

Abbeyleix Climate Action End of Residency Project

An interactive online digital exhibition will be created by Dr Niamh Shaw to mark the end of the Abbeyleix Climate Action Project. This is underway and will be launched in May. The report of the full community engagement with climate action project will also be available.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Biodiversity week will be held 15-23 May and will be marked with local radio broadcasts and social media awareness-raising.

Heritage Week will be held 14 – 22 August. Planning for online events is ongoing.

Local Enterprise & Economic Development

Student Enterprise Awards:

Student entrepreneurs from St Mary’s CBS and Scoil Christ Ri will represent the County at this year’s Student Enterprise Programme National Final on Friday 14th May. An estimated 350 students from 7 schools took part in the programme.

In the Senior Category, Laois will be represented by Colm Byrne, Aaron Dooley, Adam Ramsbottom from “O-Glo” at St Mary’s CBS. O-Glo manufactures handmade candle holders using poured concrete which is fired and spray painted. DecorNation from Scoil Christ Ri and Illuminate from Portlaoise College were placed 2nd & 3rd. In the Junior Category, the students representing Laois at the National Final are Antoni Calka, Clinton O’Eijofor & Ar Rahim SK MD from “M Pouch” at St Mary’s CBS, Portlaoise. M-Pouch make Eco Friendly pouches from recycled materials for storing face masks.

In the “Most Creative Business Idea” Section open to senior students, Niamh Conroy from Scoil Christ Rí, Portlaoise came out on top. Her idea “Virtu Train” goes forward to the National Final.

Other winners included ‘Voca Vibes’ from Scoil Christ Ri, Portlaoise for Best Commercial Potential. Most Innovative Award went to ‘Mag Vis’ from Heywood College. Mountrath Community School won Best Product and the team with the Best Team Spirit was ‘Isolation Decoration’ from Clonaslee College. ‘Go Go Gum’ from Portlaoise College took the award for Best Video and the One to Watch on the day was ‘Lumos Craft’ from Dunamase College. In the Creative Business Video Competition the award went to ‘Virtu-Train’ from Scoil Christ Ri.

Portlaoise Façade Enhancement Scheme

The Business Support Unit will be launching this scheme at the end of April 2021.

Marketing Project with Downtown Portlaoise

The following works have all been completed- extension of sound system in the town, new signage on approach roads, production of marketing video, additional seasonal lighting and new gazebos. Artistic installation in the Top Square and the erection of lamp post banners will be completed by early summer.

THE SMALL BUSINESS ASSISTANCE SCHEME COVID (SBASC)

This scheme closes on the 21st April 2021. 51 completed applications have been received to date and are currently being processed.

RATES WAIVER 2021

All Businesses have received letters and rate demands for 2021. The six-months waiver (January to June) has been applied to 941 accounts at a value of €2,266,203. Appeals are currently being reviewed.

Roads, Transportation & Smarter Travel

Roadworks Scheme 2021

The Annual Road Works Scheme 2021 will be presented for the Members' consideration at today's monthly meeting.

National Transport Authority – Active Travel 2021

Funding recently announced under the NTA Active Travel Scheme 2021 totalling €3,283,000 for the following projects:

Active Travel: 2021 Allocations

Laois County Council

Project Code	Project Name	2021 Allocation
LS/21/0001	Transport Studies/Mobility Plans: Towns including Portlaoise, Portarlington, Mountmellick and County Cycle Network Plan	€390,000
LS/21/0002	Triogue Blueway, Portlaoise	€250,000
LS/21/0003	Father Brown Avenue Cycle Scheme, Portlaoise	€100,000
LS/21/0004	Beladd Cycle Scheme, Portlaoise	€50,000
LS/21/0005	Portlaoise Cycle Parking	€50,000
LS/21/0006	Dublin Road, Portlaoise - Pedestrian, Cycle & Traffic Management Scheme	€100,000
LS/21/0007	The Rock Footpath Scheme	€300,000
LS/21/0008	Rathleague Footpath Scheme	€300,000
LS/21/0009	Ballyroan Footpath Scheme	€250,000
LS/21/0010	N80 Carlow Rd, Stradbally - Footpath Scheme	€300,000
LS/21/0011	R419 Edenderry Rd, Portarlington - Footpath Scheme	€75,000
LS/21/0012	Summerhill Lane Pedestrian Crossing, Portlaoise	€60,000
LS/21/0013	Cork Road, Durrow - Footpath Improvement Scheme	€200,000
LS/21/0014	Timahoe Rd, Portlaoise - Footpath Improvement Scheme	€83,000
LS/21/0015	Ballinakill Swimming Pool to Main Street - Footpath Scheme	€200,000
LS/21/0016	Ballyroan Rd, Abbeyleix - Pedestrian and Cycle Scheme	€75,000
LS/21/0017	Light Segregation Cycle Schemes	€100,000
LS/21/0018	Low-Cost Junction Tightening/Pedestrian Crossing Schemes	€200,000
LS/21/0019	Low-Cost Permeability Measures	€100,000
LS/21/0020	Safe Routes to Schools Programme - Support Infrastructure	€100,000
Total:		€3,283,000

Outdoor Seating and Accessories Grant Scheme 2021

The Failte Ireland/Laois County Council Outdoor Seating and Accessories for Tourism & Hospitality Business Scheme will provide a level of financial assistance to tourism and hospitality businesses across the county to purchase and/or upgrade equipment to provide additional outdoor seating and, therefore, increase their outdoor dining capacity for the summer of 2021.

Grant aid available is 75% of the cost of the equipment to a max of €4,000. The scheme is open between 12th April and 30th September 2021. The scheme is being led by the Roads Section, with the assistance of Planning Section and the Business Support Unit.

Environment & Environmental Protection

1. Kyletelesha Tipping Head and Civic Amenity Site, Portlaoise:

Normal services continue at the Kyletelesha Landfill & Civic Amenity Site.

(a) Transfer Station & Civic Amenity Site:

Both waste reception areas are busy and the waste quantities received are greater than Quarter 1 of 2020. Due to staff numbers at the facility and its impact on the proper supervision of operations, it is hoped to relocate the transfer station side of operations to the Civic Amenity Site.

A Revised Site Layout Plan is being prepared and a cost estimate for the proposed works will be carried out.

(b) Landfill Aftercare Monitoring:

All waste licence monitoring is on-going and up to date.

2. Portarlinton Civic Amenity Site:

This facility is operated and managed under contract with AES (Ireland) Ltd.

3. Bring Banks:

There are 42 Bring Bank sites provided in the county. To end of March 2021 there has been 515.04 tonnes of recyclable material collected.

The new regional contract for the collection of glass and cans has been awarded to the current contractor Glassco Recycling Ltd. The three-year contract is to commence on 1st May 2021. This new contract will result in an annual expenditure increase of €25,000 based on the 2020 quantities of materials collected.

It is agreed between Longford, Offaly, Westmeath & Laois County Council that Longford County Council would contact the Regional Waste Management Waste Management Office about the increased costs and to seek funding from REPAK.

4. Historic Unregulated Waste Disposal Sites:

A Request for Tender (RFT) has been advertised for the engagement of Environmental Consultants to reassess the Tier 1 & Tier 2 Site Investigations carried out in 2009 & 2011 etc. on eTenders. This RFT relates to historic unregulated sites at:-

- Aghanure
- Killabban
- Rathdowney Road, Durrow

Laois County Council has been advised that Department Funding will be allocated for the engagement of the successful Environmental Consultant.

5. Waste Enforcement & Litter:

Environmental Complaint Register

Complaint Type	Litter	Abandoned Cars	Waste Enforcement incl. C&D	Management & Infrastructure (Bring Banks)	Air	Water	Noise	Vet	Total
Jan	10	2	53	1	2	2	1	2	73
Feb	8	3	71	1	1	4	2	2	92
March	38	5	93	2	3	8	2	1	152

- 2021 – 317 complaints logged for investigation for months of Jan/Feb & March.
- 2021 – 39 fixed penalty notices issued to date, for breaches of Litter Pollution Act, 1997
- Notices - 4 Section 55 Notices has been issued to date in 2021.

6. Illegal Dumping:

Enforcement efforts have commenced on suspected “Man in the Van” illegal waste collectors, evidence has been given from members of the public to Environment Staff, with a view to the Council initiating legal proceedings.

Waste Enforcement continue to issue Waste Bye Law letters requesting refuse collector details to various problematic areas within the County.

Illegal dumping continues to be removed from areas around the County such as Portlaoise; the Heath; Clonenagh Mountrath, Stradbally, Ballyfin, Abbeyleix, Shanahoe, Coolrain, Kilcavan, Shane, Coolbanagher, Ballacolla, Camross, Rossmore, Killeshin.



Rubbish being removed from Stradbally.

Anti-Dumping Initiatives 2021

Waste Enforcement Section is currently working on applications under the Anti-Dumping Initiatives for the 2021 ADI scheme. The Closing date for these applications is May 5th, 2021.

7. Clean-Ups:

Although Clean Up Laois Week did not officially go ahead this year, community groups continue to pick litter in accordance with the latest Government's advise. An Taisce continue to advertise the national Spring Clean Up, which has encouraged community, residential and sporting groups to clean up their own areas. Environment staff continue to provide clean up packs and advice on the changing guidelines. Environment staff then liaise with these groups to arrange pick up and disposal of the collected rubbish.

In some instances, due to the volume of litter, rubbish collected, it has been necessary to engage a contractor to remove the waste to an authorised waste facility. The table below gives an indication of the tonnages usually removed by the Litter Wardens during the three months, January to March. You will note that the volumes have drastically increased for the same period in 2021.



Summer Grove

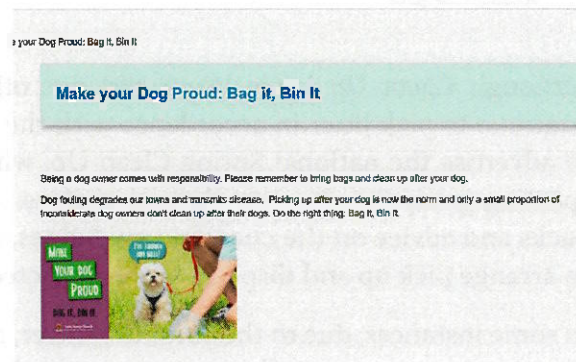


Tonnes taken to Kyletalesha Landfill by Litter Wardens			
Month/Year	2019	2020	2021
January	7.04	7.34	6.5
February	4.66	7.02	22.49
March	4.46	5.64	13.48
Total	16.60	20.00	42.47

Anti-Dog Fouling Campaign

The Anti-Dog Fouling Campaign will be officially launched by Cathaoirleach Catherine Fitzgerald next week in Pairc on Phobail.

Social Media campaign commenced on website and on facebook on 1st April, Similar images will continue to be posted through the month of April 2021. The posts also make reference to the fact that Dog fouling degrades our towns and villages and transmits diseases.



Website and Facebook items posted 1st April 2021 and 8th April 2021, reached by nearly 10,000 people.

Ten Mutt Mitt Dispensers have been erected in Portlaoise town along Sli na Slaninte routes, 2 in the Linear Park and 3 in Pairc and Phobail. In total 70 units have been purchased and distributed around the county.

Surveys have been carried out by staff on a no. of popular walking routes throughout the county to ascertain the current situation. A further round of surveys will also be carried out in September in an effort to measure the success of the campaign.

8. **RMCEI (Recommended Minimum Criteria for Environmental Inspections)**

The 2020 Annual Returns Report for the RMCEI Plan Implementation and the 2021 Laois County Council RMCEI Plan have been submitted to the EPA. A mid-year review of the 2021 plan will be carried out at the end of Q2 2021. It is anticipated that the mid-year review may include for a reduction in the number of Waste Management Inspections due to staff changes etc.

9. **Environmental Protection:**

i) **Protect the Water Quality Status in all Water Bodies:**

- (a) On site investigations of complaints in relation to water pollution are being carried out by Environmental staff in compliance with Health and Safety and Covid-19 control measures.
- (b) Investigation ongoing into surface water discharges to the Borris Road Pump Station and foul water discharges to the lakes at Kilminchy.
- (c) Investigation into unauthorised wastewater discharges in the Triogue River at Abbeyleix road, Portlaoise
- (d) On-going assessment of planning applications with regards to water quality protection
- (e) Regulation of Discharge Licensed Companies

ii) **Air & Noise:**

- (a) On site investigations of complaints in relation to air and noise are being carried out by Environmental staff in compliance with Health and Safety and Covid-19 control measures.

Emergency Planning, Fire Services & Flood Relief

- In 2021 (to 31st March 2021), Laois County Fire & Rescue Service attended 128 emergency incidents consisting of 65 fires, 42 special service incidents & 21 false alarms.

Turnout by Station*:

Portlaoise -46	Portarlinton - 28	Stradbally - 21	Mountmellick - 24
Abbeyleix - 14	Mountrath - 13	Durrow - 16	Rathdowney - 10

*Note - figures are higher as many incidents are 2 station turnouts as per the PDA.

Fire Services Capital Programme

- Planning & design is continuing for the Mountmellick Fire Station upgrade, a, €150,000 project, which consists of a fire service drill tower & new concrete yard to the rear of the fire station. The current suspension of non-essential construction activity has delayed the progress of this project.
- In recent months Elected Members were advised of an allocation of €140,000 for the acquisition of a new Water Tanker to support Fire Services operations in County Laois. The tender competition has closed & the order has been placed with HPMP Fire. Delivery is expected in mid-2021
- A tender competition for new PPE has also closed & the order has been placed with Hunter Apparel Solutions for an initial order of 140 sets of fire kit. Delivery is due early Q2
- In accordance with the Planning & Development Acts, a Part 8 application is currently being produced for the proposed new fire station in Stradbally.

COVID-19 Report update

- Laois County Fire & Rescue Service continues to provide a full emergency service. In addition Covid - 19 Contingency Planning is still a key focus for the Fire & Emergency Service.
- In parallel the Civil Defence have provided key assistances, servicing requirements of the HSE, the Community Forum Call Centre and other local agencies. Civil Defence taskings have been scaled back due to volunteers returning to work & operations being scaled back nationally.

WATER SERVICES AND RURAL WATER

Public Water and Wastewater Capital

The following capital works have been approved by Irish Water:

- **Ballyroan WwTP** – This is now complete. Process testing results show compliance with the licence requirements. We will be encouraging IW to proceed with storm tank and waste sludge storage tank as soon as possible.
- **Durrow** – bring an additional production borewell into service in Fermoy – M + E works substantially complete, bringing of new borewell into supply ongoing. Installation of larger 6 inch pump with a 4 inch motor and associated works now complete by Champions. David Ball due on site the week commencing 19/04/2021 to complete testing - flow, level, quality - of the new production well. Provision of a storage/blend tank and booster pump set also being discussed with IW.
- **Coolbanagher** – Irish Water intend to commission PW9 only. Currently with Asset Planning in IW – NOD addressing ESB connection issue. Due to be handed over to Asset Delivery by the end of April 2021.

- **The Strand WTP** – boil water notice has been issued for this WTP, upgrade works as part of the Laois/Offaly disinfection programme intended to be completed by the end of April 2021, with a 30-day process-proving period by the end of May 2021.
- **Castletown WwTP** – Inlet Works Storm and Sludge Program, new storm tank and sludge holding tank intended to be installed on site by the end of 2021. Replacement of fixed decanter with moving decanter is expected in the next two months. Order is placed and fabrication is underway.
- **Doolough Wells** - Champions and EMR have completed all works on site at Doolough. The rising main has been sterilised. The wells are now pumping into supply. The plant is working in automatic, taking it's run signal from Corrig Reservoir.

Multi Annual Rural Water Programme 2019-2021

Measure 2 -Public Health Compliance

- **The Heath GWS:** Work in progress.

Measure 3 - Enhancement and Water Conservation

- **Ballypickas GWS:** the supply and laying of a distribution mains extension-work planned for 2021 – Awaiting Department approval to proceed.
- **Mains Upgrade** – Tender award recommendation received from consultant – preparation for works to commence in progress.
- **Heath GWS:** Network upgrade – advertised & tenders submitted. Recommendation of the Consultant due.

Measure 6 - Community Water and Wastewater Connections

- **Waste Water Community Connection at Goodwin Estate:** Project is progressing and will appear on the eTenders site from Friday 26th March 2021.

Railway Mews, Portarlinton: Surveying for misconnections started prior to Christmas and found that a small number of connections are blocked with grease. Surveying contractor has confirmed that they will recommence when Level 5 restrictions are lifted.

Dangerous Structures – Local Government (Sanitary Services) Act, 1964

- **Centrepoint Shopping Centre, Portlaoise-**The owners of the property were identified and a Notice in accordance with Dangerous Structures legislation was issued. Subsequently works commenced on-site, involving the erection of a wire mesh fence, provision of pre-cast concrete road barrier blocks behind the fencing and rehangng of the rear gates. A further update has been requested from the owners.

Corporate, Community, Climate Action, Arts, Culture, Libraries & Tourism

CORPORATE

The 2021/2022 Register of Electors has been published and is available for inspection at the locations listed on our website.

COMMUNITY

Covid-19 Community Response

Covid-19 Helpline

To date (30.03.2020 – 15.04.2021) the helpline has received **783 calls**.

Calls Received 2020: 732

Calls Jan 2021: 24

Calls Feb 2021: 13

Calls March 2021: 13

Calls April 2021: 3

While the volume of calls received remains low, this is as a result of local groups taking a proactive lead in their communities assisting the most vulnerable during this time. The helpline continues to be promoted on various outlets such as Laois Co Council web page, social media and local radio.

The Council phone line **057 866 4000** is open Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays) between the hours of 9am to 5pm, for the **Laois County Council Community Response Support Helpline** to facilitate the most appropriate community response to the needs of vulnerable people living in the community where their usual sources of support have become unavailable due to COVID19 and to deal with normal Council queries.

The Council supports the dissemination of information regarding the Vaccine Rollout programme via the Helpline, the website and regular social media updates.

Laois Community Support Response Forum

The most recent meeting of the Covid-19 Community Forum took place on 31st March 2021, it being the 1st anniversary of the formation of the forum and the community call helpline. Since its inception the forum have met on 19 separate occasions, with the group consisting of 24 members representing 18 organisations. The forum have and continue to contribute to the health and safety of the local community and aims to contribute to the community wide effort to limit the spread of COVID-19. Laois Co Co through the forum ensure that a wide variety of groups working across the county assist those in need and do so in a collaborative and targeted manner. Notwithstanding the difficulties being experienced by many people in our community the Forum believes that the multiple voluntary and state agencies are working well together and that help is available for the vast majority of people seeking assistance and advice.

Public Participation Network

Spring Gardening Online Workshop

Laois PPN are holding a 4 week online Spring Gardening Workshop for their members. The workshop is currently ongoing and fully booked.

Laois Check-In Cards – Update

The Laois Check-In cards are an initiative of Laois County Council. It is promoted in collaboration with Laois PPN.

350 Laois Check-In cards have been distributed by Laois PPN member groups to the elderly and vulnerable across the County to date.

Midlands Regional PPN

The Midlands Regional PPN consists of the PPNs from Laois, Offaly, Westmeath, Meath, Kildare and Longford. Meetings take place on a quarterly basis. The April meeting of the Midland Regional PPN is being virtually hosted by Laois PPN with a presentation by Laois PPN under the “Rebuilding Theme”.

Laois PPN Member Group Update

Laois PPN is comprised of members from Community, Social Inclusion and Environmental groups. Member Groups recognise the benefits of being registered with Laois PPN. The number of member groups continues to grow, there is now a record high of 600 groups registered with Laois PPN.

Comhairle na nÓg

A Steering Group Meeting was held on 31 March 2021 where an update on Comhairle was given. Comhairle na nÓg currently has 12 members and meets weekly online, it has been a process of teambuilding and recruitment thus far. New Members are currently being engaged from Mountmellick community school, with 6 secondary schools already represented. Follow up continues with all schools to ensure that all young people are represented.

Age Friendly update

- The Chatters and Matters radio show continues. Sponsorship has been secured to ensure the show will continue until June 2021. Elaine Moore, A/Administrative Officer Community Section of Laois County Council was interviewed by Midlands Radio 3 to highlight the recent success of the Virtual Community and Voluntary Awards Ceremony held in December 2020 and to encourage people to submit nominations for 2021.
- The Age Friendly Business Recognition Scheme has been delivered to 14 businesses. Two have fully completed the process and are now Chartered Age Friendly Businesses.
- A decision was made by the Age Friendly Alliance at a meeting on 15/04/2021 to extend the life of the Current Laois Age Friendly Strategy 2016-2021 until 2022.

Community Funding

- **Community Resilience Fund**
Launched in November 2020, the Keep Well Campaign is aimed at helping people - individuals & communities - to keep up their resilience & wellbeing through an especially challenging winter and through to Spring/early Summer. The campaign is well under way, budget has been fully allocated and radio advertising, adverts in local media and regular weekly posts to Social Media are taking place. On social media the Keep Well campaign has made 183 posts having 152,797 interactions. Activities have been adapted where required to fit with the current Covid-19 Guidelines, some activities have been completed while others are progressing as planned. The Keep Well programme has been extended to the 30th June 2021.
- **Community Grants Scheme (Environmental) 2021**
This grant scheme was advertised on 1st March 2021 and 124 Applications were received by the deadline of 9th April 2021. This is an increase of 15% on last year (106 applications). The applications are currently at Review Stage.

CLIMATE ACTION

- **Portlaoise Decarbonization Zone**
Laois County Council will be making a submission later this month to nominate Portlaoise as a Decarbonising Zone under Action 165 of the Government's Climate Action Plan
- **Training**
CARO has completed Climate Action training for Senior Management and Elected Members. Over the course of this year all staff will complete training in Climate Action. The Climate Action Team will complete their training next.

ARTS & CULTURE

Laois Bealtaine Programme

Online events planned include a comic play titled "Getting Hitched" with Carnation Theatre Company and an artwork competition for Laois Arthouse artists "Caring and Sharing" to provide a selected artwork for the three public Hospitals, St. Vincents Mountmellick, Abbeyleix District Hospital and St. Brigids Hospital Shaen. A further online exhibition of the submitted work is planned at the Arthouse also.

The Creative Ireland Laois Programme

Two Culture & Creativity team proposals were successfully selected for additional funding from the Creative Ireland - Creativity in Older Age Scheme.

1. A partnership scheme between the Arts Office and IMMA's Art and Ageing Programme to deliver an online visual arts engagement initiative for older people who are living at home, as well as in residential care. (€30,823).
2. A collaborative intergenerational music project with Music Generation Laois and Music Generation Offaly Westmeath - music as a tool to combat the isolation that older people are experiencing as a result of Covid-19 (€31,435).

Sport & Leisure Update

- **Laois County Council managed playgrounds:**—Essential repairs and weekly inspections are being carried out at all Laois County Council managed play facilities given the current COVID 19 restrictions. Horticultural works have commenced on playground accessibility projects.
- **Colloquium for Sports Facilities** for greater Portlaoise Area facilitated by Humphrey Murphy, Irish Leisure Consultants took place on Wed 14TH April and was well attended by representatives of 23 sporting organisations. A report and outline recommendations will issue shortly...
- **ORIS – Measure 1** – All groups awarded funding under ORIS 2020 have signed funding agreements and work plans have been agreed. Horticultural works have commenced in relation to a number of projects. Projects for 2021 are currently being outlined in anticipation of funding announcement in the coming weeks. 2019 projects delayed due to COVID restrictions are nearing completion

LIBRARY





Spring into Storytime






The library Service is hosting its annual Spring into Storytime online for 2021.

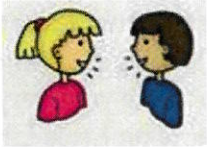



“Spring into Storytime “ is a national initiative that promotes reading and literacy in younger children . During March childrens Authors - Eoin McLaughlin, Dolores Keavney, Tatyana Feeney, Simone- Storygate , featured on Laois libraries facebook page and Youtube channel with animated storytimes, craft sessions.

Online Library Events

For April the below events continue online

Online Library Events during April & May 2021			
	Event	When	Description
	Erika's Crafty Corner	Weekly on Wednesdays at 11.30am	Erika's Crafty Corner is packed full of fun and easy activities for kids aged 6 and up available on our Facebook page. A great way of promoting creativity, building motor skills and critical thinking.
	Mountmellick Baby Book Club	Every Tuesday morning at 11.00am	Mountmellick Baby Book Club is gone online and is available on the Facebook page every Tuesday morning at 11 a.m. It is aimed 0-3 year olds and aims to support emergent literacy by encouraging sound awareness using action rhymes, songs and stories.
	Spring into Storytime: Stories on your Fingertips with Simone from StoryGate	Wednesday 14 th April	Based on Lucie Albon's book "The Elephant In My Hand", this is a playful story video for young children and their parents, in which storyteller Simone uses her hands as puppets and props. With a little face paint, her hands turn into an elephant with hiccups! (Available on Laois Libraries Facebook page)
	Rocket Readers Book Club	Fortnightly on Fridays at 11.30am	Every fortnight we bring you chapter reading over on our Laois Libraries Facebook page giving you a taste of some of the great books out there for 8-12 year olds. Borrowers are encouraged to comment and give us their thoughts on the book.
	Spring into Storytime: How Lilian Got Her Wings		This year marks the 50 th anniversary of the passing of Lilian Bland – the first woman to build

	with Juliette Saumande (Story + Craft)	Wednesday 21 st April	and fly a plane. Join children's author Juliette Saumande to hear about Lilian's story and to learn how to make your very own plane! (Available on Laois Libraries Facebook page)
	Parenting in the Online World	Thursday 22 nd April at 6.30pm	In this Webinar, Dr Mary O'Kane looks at some of the latest research on the impact of technology on our children, considering online contact, content, and conduct. From the question of how much is too much, to the impact of screens, she considers how we can best support our children to not only survive, but to thrive, in their online engagements. Email mountmellicklibrary@laoiscoco.ie to book your place.
	Short and Sweet Online Club	Last Thursday of the month at 11.00am	This is an online short story club which will run from January to May 2021. Join in from the comfort of your own home! We'll meet over Zoom once a month to discuss selected short stories. If interested email mountmellicklibrary@laoiscoco.ie or call 0578644588.
	Book Bugs Book Club	Fortnightly on Fridays at 11.30am	Discover a new picture book and song every fortnight on our Facebook page with our Book Bugs Book Club. Perfect for those aged between 4-7 years.
	Series of Music Talks with John MacKenna	Tuesday, 4 th , 11 th , 18 th & 25 th May at 7.00pm	Laois Libraries are delighted to welcome the renowned John MacKenna for a series of talks on music. The series will begin with the music and poetry of Leonard Cohen. John collaborated with Cohen, a friend of his for over 30 years, on "Between your Love and Mine", using Leonard's words and music to create a requiem. Join us for what promises to be a fascinating talk. Other artists that will be covered in the series are Mary Chapin Carpenter, Paul Simon and Gretchen Peters. Email mountmellicklibrary@laoiscoco.ie to book your place.

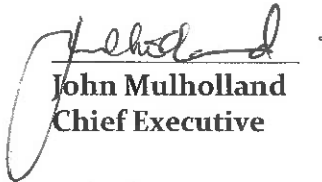
	<p>Talking Buddies</p>	<p>Wednesday, 5th May at 11.00am</p>	<p>Speech & Language Therapists Katie and Maria demonstrate how to use books and reading to encourage young children to talk and add to the words they already know. To book a place call 0578622333 or email portlaoiselibrary@laoiscoco.ie</p>
	<p>French Class with Aurelie</p>	<p>Saturdays in May at 10:30am</p>	<p>Alliance Francais tutor Aurelie will hold French classes over Zoom on Saturday mornings for 4 weeks. All competency levels are welcome, for anyone over the age of 16. Email portlaoiselibrary@laoiscoco.ie or call 057 8622333 to register.</p>
	<p>Portlaoise Library Baby Book Club</p>	<p>Weekly on Thursdays at 10.30am</p>	<p>Suitable for babies and toddlers from 0-3 years. Children are learning to talk and read from the moment they are born through interactions with their carers. The 5 components which help boost early literacy and help get children reading-ready are Talking, Singing, Reading, Writing and Playing. Every Baby Book Club session is based on these 5 components and takes place over on our Facebook page.</p>
	<p>Digital Library Training</p>	<p>ongoing</p>	<p>Would you like to be able to access library resources on the internet, download an eBook or audiobook, but you are not sure how to do this? Let our Digital Library Ambassadors show you how to get online. You don't even have to be a member of the library already, we'll help you join. To find out more contact Portlaoise Library: Tel. 0578622333 Email: library@laoiscoco.ie</p>

Europe Direct Portlaoise

Portlaoise Library has been successful in the recent call for Europe Direct center's 2021-2025 which will continue the Europe Direct Center portfolio for another 5 year period in the county . The Europe Direct Centre at Portlaoise Library provides access to material(offline and online) covering a wide variety of topics, including: General information about how the EU works, Information about the various EU institutions and agencies, the latest news about EU affairs and events, Information about citizen rights in the EU. The centre receives funding for events and activities

Chief Executive's Orders

- ✚ A schedule of Chief Executive Orders signed during the month of April 2021 will be circulated.



John Mulholland
Chief Executive

22/04/2021

