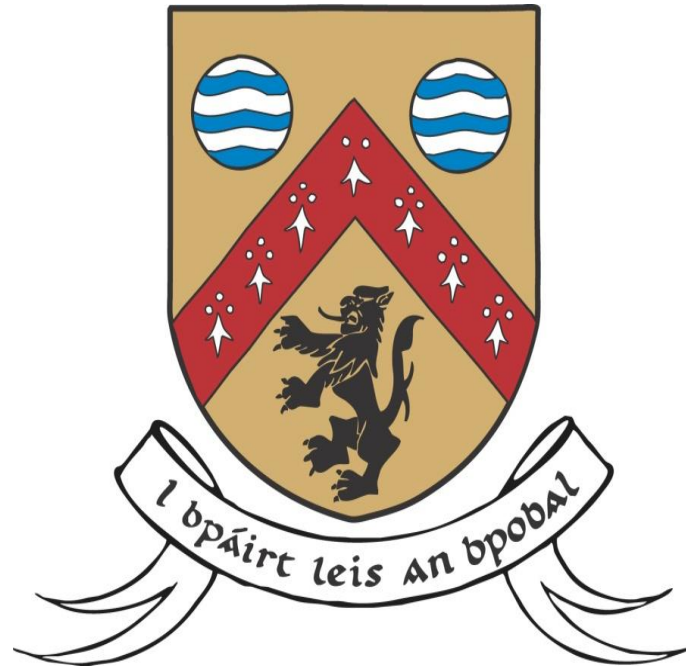


LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE LAOISE



MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT

APRIL 2022

TUARASCÁIL BHAINISTÍOCHTA

AIBREÁIN 2022

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 2022 is as follows:-

Finance, & Allocations Notified

Expenditure and income to the 31/03/2022 is summarised below:

Service Division	Budget Allocation (€)	Expenditure to 31/03/2022 (€)
Housing and Building	19,748,000	3,966,418
Road Transportation and Safety	22,946,000	1,875,433
Water Services	3,259,000	845,002
Development Management	9,706,000	1,913,971
Environmental Services	7,939,000	1,284,943
Recreation and Amenity	4,361,000	631,810
Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare	786,000	5,172
Miscellaneous Services	9,453,000	2,175,765
Central Management Charge	10,139,000	1,859,562
Total	88,337,000	14,558,076

Service Division	Budget Allocation (€)	Income to 31/03/2022 (€)
Housing and Building	21,415,000	4,117,808
Road Transportation and Safety	18,682,000	167,191
Water Services	4,380,000	857,859
Development Management	6,946,000	2,096,165
Environmental Services	1,942,000	363,142
Recreation and Amenity	781,000	455,648
Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare	314,000	34,867
Miscellaneous Services	8,702,000	2,397,848
Superannuation	714,000	164,947
Local Property Tax	9,065,150	3,021,716
Rates	14,662,952	1,928,614
Capital transfer	732,898	0
Total	88,337,000	15,605,805

Allocations Notified

DHLGH - Disabled Persons Grant Scheme and Improvement Works in Lieu Scheme (IWILS) 2022	€613,382.00
DHLGH - Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability Scheme	€1,111,500.00
DCEDYI - Playground Capital Grant Scheme (Accessibility/Biodiversity Improvements- Portarlington)	€16,541.00
Heritage Grants DHLGH	€190,540.52
LIS DRCD	€351,880.00

Housing & Regeneration

Laois County Council staff continue to assist IPAS with the accommodation of a number of persons who have arrived into Ireland over the past 6 weeks. Currently there are 268 persons that have been accommodated through LCC and IPAS. The main hosting centres are at Durrow, Abbeyleix, Portlaoise, Mountmellick, Clonaslee and Graiguecullen. Many others have also come into the county through their own means, some residing with families and others accommodated by the various parishes. At time of writing there are three emergency rest centres under consideration by LCC with a view towards standing these up should the case arise. It is also the case that not much more, if any, accommodation is readily available in County Laois and as a result efforts are being made to match privately pledged accommodation with displaced people as they enter the country.

The Local Authority, on foot of a request from the Dept of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, has returned lists in relation to :-

- Vacant buildings and
- Site suitable for medium to long term solutions

Members are advised that Laois County Council has set up a “Ukrainian Crisis Multi Agency Response Forum” along the lines of and largely similar to the Covid-19 Community Response Forum of the past two years.

The forum convened for its 3rd meeting on Wednesday 20th April 2022 at which a number of tasks and local actions were agreed. The forum consists of representatives from 23 separate state and voluntary agencies.

All efforts currently are being supported by An Garda Síochána, Dept of Social Protection, the HSE, the St. Vincent de Paul, Civil Defence, various local voluntary groups, local communities and Housing personnel at this point.

Members will be updated on a regular basis on any developments locally and in addition should note that the Council’s website hosts information on the refugee crisis on its home page bearing Ukrainian translations.

The Council is very grateful to all who have given assistance to date in sourcing available accommodation, to those who have made offers of support and to all the local communities who have welcomed families into their areas.

HOUSING DELIVERY Housing for All 2022-2026 Social Housing Build Delivery Target

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

Social Housing Schemes Currently Under Construction – LCC & AHB

Location	No. of Houses	Constructed by	Comment
Moore St, Rathdowney	6	LCC (Construction)	On site – expected delivery Q2 2022
Pattison Estate, Mountmellick	10	LCC (Construction)	On site – expected delivery Q2 2022
Gleann na Glaise, Ballyroan	10	LCC (Construction)	On Site – expected delivery Q3 2022

Sean Doire, Durrow	22	LCC (Construction)	On Site – expected delivery Q2 2022
Coolroe, Ballybrittas	1	LCC (Construction)	Complete
Harbour Court, Mountmellick	6	LCC (Construction)	On Site – expected delivery Q2 2023
Featherbed Lane, Borris-In-Ossory (Ph 2)	5	LCC (Turnkey)	On Site – expected delivery Q2 2022
Bruach Na Habhainn, Killeen	4	LCC (Turnkey)	On site – Delivery Q2 2022
The Orchard, Ballylynan	5	LCC (Turnkey)	On Site – Phase 1 (2 units) delivery Q2 2022 On Site – Phase 1 (3 units) delivery Q4 2022
Market Square, Portarlinton	18	LCC (Turnkey)	On site – delivery Q2 2023
Church Avenue, Stradbally	31	LCC (Turnkey)	Phase 1 on site for delivery Q1 2023; Phase 2 to be delivered Q4 2023.
Oak Park Halting Site	4	LCC	TAU funded scheme – delivery estimated at end of 2022.
Harpurs Lane Portlaoise	44	Respond	On site – expected delivery Q1 2023
Clonrooske Abbey, Portlaoise	32	Cluid Housing	Cluid to meet with developer before end of April regarding confirmation of delivery date for this scheme and will advise following meeting.
The Maltings & Roselawn, Portlaoise	55	Cluid Housing	Phase 1 (15 units) Estimated delivery Q4 2022
Holdbrook, Portlaoise	10	Cluid Housing	Phase 2 – delivery Q4 2022
Droughill Lawns, Portarlinton	26	Oaklee Housing	On site – expected delivery mid May 2022 following delays with utility connections
The Springs, Kilminchy, Portlaoise	43	Cluid Housing	2 Phases – on site; Phase 1 (19 units) delivery estimated at Q3 2022
Goldencroft, Portlaoise (Old CBS site)	67	Cluid Housing	3 Phases – on site; 1 st Phase (13 units) Q4 2022
Ballymorris Green, Portarlinton	46	Cluid Housing	Currently on site - Phase 1 (15 units) delivery delayed due to availability of sub-contractors – estimated at Q3 2022
South Dublin Road, Kilminchy	36	Cooperative Housing	On site – delivery not expected until end 2023.
TOTAL	507		

Social Housing Schemes at Planning, Design or Tender Stage – LCC & AHB

Location/Scheme	No of Houses	To be constructed by	Comment
St. Kieran's Errill	14	LCC (Construction)	Stage 4 approved on 13 th April 2022
Mooreville, Rathdowney	7	LCC (Construction)	Stage 4 to be submitted in Q2 2022

Carraig Glas, Stradbally	26	LCC (Construction)	Stage 2 Approved
Clonrooske, Portlaoise	11	LCC (Construction)	Stage 1 Approved
Iona, Portlaoise	7	LCC (Construction)	Stage 1 Approved
Doonane	12	LCC (Construction)	Stage 1 Approved – includes two serviced sites
Derry Road, Durrow	22	LCC (Construction)	18 dwellings plus 4 serviced sites proposed Stage 1 Approved
Ballyadams	1	LCC (Construction)	Stage 1 Approved – Tender underway for engagement of Design Team
Stradbally Road, Portlaoise	80 (approx)	Mixed tenure	Masterplan for entire lands recently noted by Portlaoise MD members. Options being explored for tenure and delivery of scheme
Bracklone St, Portarlington	12	LCC (Construction)	Stage 1 To Be Submitted
Rushall Mountrath	2	LCC (Construction)	Stage 1 To Be Submitted
Main St, Ballinakill	3	LCC (Construction)	Stage 1 To Be Submitted
Moanbaun, Mountrath	9	LCC (Construction)	Stage 1 To Be Submitted
The Meadows (old Midland Dairies site), Portlaoise	49	Cluid Housing	On site for delivery Q4 2023
Convent Lands, Portlaoise	51	Sophia Housing	Stage 3 application submitted to Dept.
County Hotel, Portlaoise	10	Cluid Housing	Site investigations still ongoing, delays due to structural condition of the building.
Hepburn Court	54	Cluid Housing	Part 8 planning application on display for public consultation; closing date for comments /submissions 17 th May 2022.
Curragh na Mona, Abbeyleix Road, Portlaoise	39	Respond Housing	Awaiting CALF approval. Commencement on site expected in Q3 2022
Doran's Site, adj to O'Moore Place, Portlaoise	70 potentially	Coop Housing	Meeting took place with Coop and site owner - layout/no of units to be finalised.
TOTAL	494		

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Minimum targets recently issued by Dept of Housing in relation to the delivery of Affordable Purchase/Cost Rental housing by the local authority are as follows:

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	TOTAL
LA Affordable Purchase & Cost Rental Delivery Target	5	7	10	8	8	38

Expressions of Interest were invited via advertisement and LCC website in December 2021 in respect of:

- a. Appropriately zoned land for housing development
- b. Advanced Purchase arrangements for un-commenced residential developments

Expressions of Interest submitted for advanced purchase turnkey arrangements are currently being examined. Members are also advised that the Council's Housing Team has met local builders on a face to face basis to explore the potential of affordable and cost rental agreements.

A survey of potential purchasers of affordable houses was recently published, closed on 1st April 2022.

Total no of responses	84	
	Couples	44
	Individuals	40
		52%
		48%
Average income*	€37,104.55	
Income range reported	Up to €76,360	
Average price of a home respondents think they can afford	€152,000	
Average price of a home they could afford on income (Income X 3.5 plus 10% deposit)	€143,000	
Target Affordable Price range	€35,000 - €367,000	
Most popular location	Portlaoise	
Second most popular location	Mountmellick/Abbeyleix	
Most preferred house type	House	

**It should be noted that 5 respondents did not insert income details when completing the survey.*

REGENERATION / VACANT HOMES

A Vacant Homes/ Regeneration internal working group (comprised of SEO Housing , Vacant Homes Officer, Derelict Sites Technican, Planner and Chief Technican) has been established to map and examine vacancy and dereliction in a number of towns.

Mountmellick

An initial survey has been completed in Mountmellick. Further investigation on a number of identified properties to confirm their vacancy status is being carried out and the information on this survey is currently being mapped.

When the vacancy status of the identified properties is established, the Working Group will assess the future potential use of such properties, in terms of housing or other use.

A plan for acquisition of properties, subject to available funding and/or use of the CPO process will then be determined for each area.

This will be dependent on

- (a) the number of viable properties for residential use,
- (b) the requirement for and level of social housing already in that locality and
- (c) the capacity of the local authority to carry out works to the property with funding provided for under the **Buy and Renew Scheme** criteria, if dereliction is extensive or the property is difficult to renovate for housing purposes.

Owners will also be encouraged to use the **Repair and Lease Scheme** to bring properties back into use.

A similar exercise will also be carried out in Mountrath in the coming weeks.

Generally across the County, Expressions of Interest were invited via advertisement and LCC website for vacant /derelict properties.

CPO

Vacant Properties acquired by CPO now in Council ownership	15
Properties currently undergoing CPO	5

Repair & Leasing

Applications received to date	35
Applications approved to proceed	6
Applications under consideration	3
No. of Leases commenced	1
Applications Refused	26*

*Applications refused as properties deemed to be unsuitable for the R&L Scheme due to:

- (a) their location in areas of low housing demand or;
- (b) the extent of works required exceeded the Scheme limit or;
- (c) works were commenced or almost complete before an application was submitted, which is not permitted under the R&L Scheme.

HOUSING STOCK

Housing Re-Lets

Month	LA Keys Surrendered	Properties Acquired	Works Completed
January 22	11	0	3
February 22	6	1	11
March 22	4	0	2
TOTAL (YTD)	21	1	16

NOTE: There are currently 40 vacant units from our existing stock and a further 11 units that the Council acquired recently. Works are either ongoing on these properties or specifications are being prepared for works to be carried out.

Housing Maintenance

Month	Work Orders Raised	Work Orders Closed	Work Orders Open
January 22	424	411	13
February 22	517	482	35
March 22	404	265	139
TOTAL (YTD)	1,345	1,158	187

Midlands Retrofit Programme:

Address	Properties	Units Commenced	Units Completed	Update
Mountain View Sq., Portlaoise	24	24	21 houses M&E complete	M&E Works completed on 08/04/2022 on all 24 houses.

				All works to be fully complete on 29 th April 2022.
Hillview Drive, Portlaoise	18	18	4 houses M&E complete	M&E works complete on four houses. All works on houses to be completed 10 th July.
Quigley Pk, Rathdowney	20	20	2 houses M&E complete	M&E works complete on two houses.
Radharc Alainn, Arles	18	18	0	M&E works commenced 11 th April 2022
Derrymore, Portarlington	26	26	26 houses M&E complete	M&E Works completed 14/04/2022 on all 26 houses. All works to be fully complete on 29 th April 2022.
Kirwan Park, Mountmellick	51	51	0	Air-tightness Test completed 07/03/2022. M&E works still to start
Total Properties	157	106	53 Units (M&E complete)	

Energy Efficiency/Retrofitting Programme:

Address	Properties	Units Commenced	Units Completed	Update
O'Moore Place, Portlaoise	28	0	0	Re-tendered in Q1 2022; tenders due back in April.
Total Properties	28	0	0	

Target Retrofitting Programme for 2022

The target number of units determined for 2022 to retrofit to a B2/Cost Optimal standard in County Laois - **Target of 39 residential units**

The programme will allow for an average spend of €33,333 per property on eligible energy efficiency works with additional project management fees also available, the detail of which will issue under separate cover.

This will bring the overall average grant available per property to approximately €36k depending upon the number of properties being retrofitted in each local authority area.

Preparation of submission to Dept of Housing currently underway - to be submitted by the 27th April 2022.

HOUSING NEED

Homeless Presentations

Time Period	Homeless Presentations	Emergency Homeless
16 th March – 14 th April 2022	30	5
Year to Date	75	25

Homeless Accommodation

Individuals Accessing.....	Emergency Accommodation as of 14 th April 2022	Transition Accommodation as of 14 th April 2022
Adults	12	0
Children	9	0

Social Housing List at 14th March 2022

TOTAL No of Social Housing Applicants	1,761
Applicants in receipt of HAP	914
Net Need	847

Housing Allocations

Method of Delivery	Allocations to 14 th April 2022	Numbers allocated Year-to-date 2022
First allocation of New Build/Acquired unit	0	3
Relet / Refurbished Stock Allocation	5	21
Nomination to AHB housing	1	10
TOTAL Y-T-D		34

Housing Assistance Payment

No of Active HAP Tenancies at 14 th April 2022	914
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LOANS & GRANTS

Loans

*Local Authority Home Loan: 4th January 2022 – 14th April 2022	
No of Loan Approvals	4
No of Applications refused	0

Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan Scheme now closed. All applications **received on or after the 4th January 2022 will be in respect of the new Local Authority Home Loan.*

A briefing note was recently circulated to the elected members in relation to the Local Authority Home Loan, First Home Shared Equity and Help to Buy Schemes.

Grants at 13th April 2022

Allocation 2022 (including LA funded portion)	No of Applications Received in 2022	No of Approved Applications at works stage	Comment
€1,389,375	72	112 (€723,400)	All grants approved can proceed to carry out works and draw down grant monies upon satisfactory completion. Applicants revert to LCC once works are complete.

Disabled Persons Grant for Social Housing at 13th April 2022

Allocation 2022 (including LA funded portion)	Expenditure / Commitments to date	No. of applicants benefitting	No of new applications Received in 2022	Comment
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€681,535	€251,642	26	16	Dept Funding allocation advised must be supplemented by LA's own funds (10%) Funded programme provides for all Priority 1(severe) applications for small works received by date of funding submission to DHLGH (18/02/22) and construction of 3 extensions in 2022. Further Priority 1 (severe) applications for small works received in 2022 will be considered subject to available funding.
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Queries in relation to Housing Grants should be emailed to housinggrants@laoiscoco.ie

LEASING

RAS/Leasing Statistics at 14th April 2022

Active RAS tenancies	85
Active short-term leasing tenancies (Social Housing Leasing Scheme)	30
Active Repair & Leasing Scheme tenancies	1
Active long-term leasing tenancies with private landlords/investors	10
Active long-term Mortgage to Rent leasing tenancies with a private company	20

PRIVATE RENTED INSPECTIONS

All private rented dwellings must comply with the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2019 and the local authority has no discretion in this regard. This also includes those properties whose landlords are availing of the HAP scheme, who agree to an inspection of the property when they sign up for the scheme.

Property owners not availing of the HAP scheme are also subject to inspection if they rent the property in a private arrangement.

Laois County Council staff have inspected 169 properties in Quarter 1 of 2022 and issued 167 improvement letters. This correspondence is in the form of a letter detailing the works that need to be carried out to deem the property compliant and the time limits within which to do so, as recommended in the guidelines for private rental inspections.

Having reviewed the process, to date Laois County Council has noted very few communications from property owners in relation to the wording of correspondence or notices issued under the Regulations.

Queries from landlords relate mostly to technical aspects of the works required, with an understanding of the need to comply with the Regulations. If a property owner is anxious about aspects of an improvement letter issued, they can contact the local authority and be assured that a reasonable practical approach will be taken to give them the opportunity to address the issues raised.

Notwithstanding that and recognising the health and safety of the tenant as priority, should urgent works be required, the property owner is made aware of the consequences of non-compliance within a safe timeframe, i.e., fines and/or prosecution under the Regulations.

The Housing Inspections team can be contacted via email at propertyinspections@laoiscoco.ie

Private Rental Standards - Housing Inspections

Target for private rented inspections in 2022	1,181
No of private rented inspections carried out 01/01/2022 – 14/04/2022	197

LAOIS DRAFT COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021-2027

The LCDP (2021-2027) came into effect on the 8th March 2022. It is currently subject to a Draft Direction from the Minister for Local Government and Planning, with public consultation being held on the 21st March 2022 until 3rd April 2022. 14 (no.) submissions were received. A further 2no. submissions were received after the prescribed period.

The Chief Executive's Report is currently being prepared on the submissions received and will be returned to the Minister by the 1st May 2022. A copy will also be circulated to the Elected Members and the OPR.

LOCAL AREA PLANS

Work on the 4 Local Area Plans for Portlaoise, Mountmellick, Graiguecullen and Portarlinton will commence following the adoption of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027.

Two of the Plans, Graiguecullen and Portarlinton will be in the form of joint plans with Carlow County Council and Offaly County Council respectively.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMPARATIVE FIGURES FROM 2021 TO 2022

Year	Valid applications from 01/01/2022 – 10/4/2022	Valid applications from 01/01/2021 – 10/04/2021
	168	173

2022 PERFORMANCE

Number of valid applications received:	168
Number of decisions made	173
Number of applications granted:	157 (Decisions to Grant)
Number of applications refused:	16 (Decisions to Refuse)
Invalid applications returned to applicant:	47 (2022 Invalid Applications)
Files scanned up to -	8 th April 2022
Referrals to Area Offices (working days):	within 14 days achieved
Pre planning	
No of requests to date	108
No of meetings held to date Up to and including the 10 th February 2022	91
Wait time	2 weeks

ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

Current year Service Review	2022		2021	
	Mar	Jan - Mar	Mar	Jan - Mar
Total number of new cases subject to complaints that were investigated	9	35	25	37
Number of Warning Letters served	29	92	18	44
Number of Enforcement Notices served	5	11	8	31
No Of cases referred for legal proceedings	0	1	2	2

Number of cases in Court(incl adjournments)	4	23	8	17
Number of cases Resolved in Court	3	4	1	1
Number of Files Closed	21	50	22	40
Number of cases on system	164	164	166	0
Enforcement Costs recouped	€ 600.00	€ 3,156.98	€ 1,200.00	€ 4,086.24
Number of Valid Retention Applications Received relating to Enforcement Action	3	7	1	9
Fees received through Valid Retention Applications Received relating to Enforcement Action	€2,401.80	€ 5,897.50	€204.00	€ 2,447.00
Legal fees paid	€54.12	€ 5,920.77	€7,962.10	€ 8,559.84

BROADBAND

1. National Broadband Ireland (NBI)

Section 254 Licences have been applied for in the Eastern Municipal Area to provide pole network for rollout. NBI are currently working on the Programme of works for rollout in the county. NBI are engaging with LCC in relation to above and in relation to hedge cutting.

2. WIFI 4 EU.

WiFi4EU is a project developed by the European Union that intends to bring free WiFi to local communities. The rollout of the provision of WIFI infrastructure in public places has commenced (equipment, installation and maintenance and support) in the following locations : Portlaoise, Portarlinton, Abbeyleix, Mountmellick , Mountrath as follows :

- Fit out in Portlaoise almost complete in various building along the Main Street, Fitzmorris Place, Lyster Square and the Plaza at Co. Hall.
- Fit out is currently under way in Portarlinton and in various building along the Main Street and the Link Road.
- Fit out is currently under way in Abbeyleix and in various building along the Main Street.
- Survey and Consultation is under way with property owners in Mountmellick and Mountrath.

This project is being delivered by “Network and Infrastructure Support Ltd.” On behalf of Laois County Council. The Broadband Officer is available for any queries in relation to this project.

3. Broadband Connection Points (BCP's)

As part of the roll out of the National Broadband Plan, Laois County Council launched Broadband Connection Points (BCPs) in 6 areas in rural Laois.

1. Vicarstown Community Centre
2. Emo “Old School” Community Centre
3. Oisin House Rossmore, Killeshin
4. Donaghmore workhouse and Agricultural Museum
5. Shanganamore Community Centre Barrowhouse
6. Ballyroan Community Centre

Connected Hubs Fund Call 2 Project closing date was 6th April with 2 BCP's (Ballyroan and Donaghmore) applying for funding.

HERITAGE

Community Monuments Fund

Allocations have been announced under the Community Monuments Fund for Laois, from the Department of Housing Local Government and Heritage.

Under stream 1, conservation works, funding will go to:

- Rahin Medieval Church, Ballylynan €85,000
- Dysart Enos Church Ratheniska, €34,555.70.

Under stream 2 conservation plans funding has been awarded to:

- Ballyadams Castle €29,784.16,
- Clonreher Castle €29,107.66,
- Baunaghra Church, Rath Downey, €12,093.

Local Enterprise & Economic Development

Local Enterprise Office (LEO):

There continues to be a steady demand for LEO supports as follows:

- €101,871 approved in grant aid to 5 Laois businesses – a further intake is currently being prepared for evaluation in May 2022.
- 380 owners/managers/employees participated in LEO training programmes
- 32 potential entrepreneurs participated in Start Your Own Business Courses
- 82 Laois businesses availed of mentoring in finance, marketing, exporting, HR and health & safety
- 9 Trading Online Voucher approvals to the value of €19,530
- 13 Laois companies currently taking part in a Green for Micro Programme
- 6 Laois companies currently taking part in LEAN Programmes
- 27 Laois companies participated in the Client Stimulus Programme

Student Enterprise Awards 2022

The Local Enterprise Office is working with the secondary schools in Laois to deliver workshops in business planning, ideas generation, marketing and finance. The Student Enterprise County Final took place on Tuesday 29th March (virtually on YouTube and Facebook). 427 students across 7 schools in Laois took part in the programme. Teenage entrepreneurs from Mountrath Community School and Portlaoise College took the County award and will go forward to represent Laois at this year's Student Enterprise Programme National Finals.

National Enterprise Awards 2022

Salutem Insights will represent Laois at the National Enterprise Awards to be held in the Mansion House on the 2nd June 2022. Salutem Insights create tailored solutions for a variety of complex pharma industry issues within the public and private marketplace. They are attending a judging panel in Mullingar on 12th May.

Upcoming Ministerial Visit

The office of Minister English has confirmed that he will be visiting the Local Enterprise Office in Laois on 12th May from (approx.. 2.30 pm to 5.30 pm). The itinerary has not been finalized but will involve a brief reception in County Hall followed by a visit to two locally based businesses.

Business Support Unit (BSU)

The BSU

- a) launched an advertising campaign in January/February 2022 in respect of the Town & Village Streetscape Enhancement scheme. A further 44 applications were received bringing the total number of applications received to date to 106.
- b) is chairing a steering committee in conjunction with the Roads Section to support Downtown Portlaoise with the provision of a Christmas Festival in Portlaoise in December 2022. 2 meetings have been held to date this year.
- c) was successful in its application for funding to the Department of Agriculture in respect of a reboot of Laois Taste. They were awarded €10,780.
- d) launched the Portarlington and Portlaoise Façade Enhancement Schemes 2022 in early April. These Schemes will assist owners of commercial and residential properties through the painting of the exterior of their properties within designated areas in Portarlington and Portlaoise.
- e) launched the Shop Front Improvement & Accessibility Grant Scheme 2022 in April.
- f) launched the Business Incentive Scheme 2022 in April for Abbeyleix, Borris In Ossory, Durrow, Mountmellick, Mountrath, Portlaoise, Portarlington and Rathdowney. This

Scheme encourages the use of vacant commercial premises within designated areas in each town by providing financial assistance through a reduction on their Rates bill over a 3 year period (Grant of 75% of rates in Year 1, 50% in Year 2 and 25% in Year 3)

Roads, Transportation & Smarter Travel

Roadworks Programme 2022;

The Annual Road Works Scheme 2022 was adopted by the Members at the March 2022 Monthly Meeting. Work has commenced to deliver the Road Works Scheme across the three Municipal Districts.

River Drainage Maintenance

Various, county-wide surveys are ongoing to inform and underpin river drainage maintenance works later in 2022.

TII Capital Maintenance Scheme Funding;

Funding has been confirmed by TII in the amount of €199,938.00 for works at Killyganard on the N78.

Local Improvement Scheme Funding:

LIS funding has been confirmed by the DRCD in the amount of €351,880.00. Engagement with the applicants is commencing with a view to delivering works over the Summer. Funding will be allocated to the various MD's based on the number of schemes on awaiting completion in each MD. The number of LIS projects on hand in County Laois is as follows;

MD	Number of schemes	Proportion	Funding
Portarlington / Graiguecullen MD	30	38.46%	€135,333.05
Portlaoise MD	12	15.39%	€54,154.33
Mountmellick / Borris-in-Ossory MD	36	46.15%	€162,392.62
TOTALS:	78	100%	€351,880.00

Environment & Environmental Protection

1. Kyletalesha Landfill, Transfer Station and Civic Amenity Site, Portlaoise:

The cost for disposal of domestic green/garden waste has been reduced. New charge outlined below:

Domestic Green/Garden Waste: For weights less than or equal to 40kg: €1.00 per bag or minimum charge of €3.20, whichever is the lowest. Weights above 40kg will be charged at €80 per tonne.

The Green/Garden Waste Charge only applies to **homeowners** bringing domestic grass and hedge cuttings and does not apply to Green Waste material from commercial enterprises etc. This Green/Garden Waste Charge does not apply to timber.

2. Bring Banks:

Tonnages of collected recyclable material in 2022.

Jan 2022	Feb 2022	Mar 2022	April 2022 (To Date)
163.77	115.14	159.58	93.08

Table 1 – 2022 Bring Bank Tonnages

The bring bank facilities in the county are being inspected and maintained by Environment staff.

3. Waste Enforcement & Litter Management:

(a) Clean Up Laois Week 2022 - 18th to 22nd April 2022.

The collected litter will be gathered by Bord na Mona during the week commencing 25th April.

(b) Waste Enforcement & Complaints

Table 1 below details the number and types of complaints received to date in 2022 by the Environment Section.

Year	Complaint Type						
	Waste Enforcement	Management & Infrastructure	Air	Water	Noise	Vet	Total
2022	224	3	5	13	9	11	265

Table 2 - Environmental Complaint Register

(c) Litter Fines

To date 16 litter fines have been issued. Two related to dog-fouling offences and these two fines have been paid.

4. Illegal Dumping:

Waste Enforcement continue to tackle illegal dumping in various problematic areas within the County in accordance with current legislation. Enforcement efforts are limited by virtue of the current prohibition on the use of CCTV etc.

106 tonnes of material collected to mid-March.

Emergency Planning, Fire Services & Flood Relief

In 2022 (to 8th April) Laois County Fire and Rescue Service has attended 204 emergency incidents consisting of 68 fires, 107 special service incidents and 29 false alarms.

Turnout by Station*:

Portlaoise – 69	Portarlinton - 30	Stradbally – 44	Mountmellick – 25
Abbeyleix - 32	Mountrath – 18	Durrow – 32	Rathdowney – 25

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

Fire Services Capital Programme

- The Part VIII planning process for a new fire station for Stradbally was approved by Laois County Council at its January 2022 meeting. Correspondence has now been sent to the NDFEM advising them of same & requesting approval to go to tender for a design team to progress the project.
- The upgrade to Mountmellick Fire Station is at design stage. This work consists of new drill tower, concrete yard and hydrant connection. Tobin Consulting Engineers have been awarded the design contract and have commenced the preparation of the documents to progress the project.

WATER SERVICES AND RURAL WATER

Public Water and Wastewater Capital

The following capital works have been approved by Irish Water:

Durrow –Provision of a storage/blend tank and booster pump set being discussed with Irish Water. Final hydrogeologist report/recommendation detailing correct/sustainable operation of the new well, to be forwarded to Irish Water/Laois County Council-ongoing.

Portlaoise Water Supply Improvement Scheme - Irish Water now progressing with developing well PW07 and well PW08. A draft planned maintenance programme has been submitted to IW for funding approval. A meeting took place at Kilminchy WTP on the 04/03/2022 with Briody Well Drilling Ltd., to discuss/progress this maintenance programme.

Disinfection/PH control programme – Civil works progressing in Derryguile, Kyle, Five Wells, Derrymoyle and Lough WTPs. MEICA works progressed at Knocks, Derryguile, Lough, Kyle, Five Wells and Ballyroan WTP. Process proving now complete at the Knocks and Ballyroan WTPs. Kyle WTP currently in process proving. ESB supply upgrade currently being progressed for Five Wells and Lough WTPs.

Castletown WwTP-Inlet Works Storm and Sludge Programme – New Storm Tank installation is complete. Remaining civil works and M + E works to be completed over the coming weeks.

Ballyroan WwTP Upgrade – A laser scan survey of the plant and an asbestos survey are being progressed/carried out.

Borris Road, Portlaoise.

Irish Water are going to consider if accommodating a gravity flow into the proposed deeper storm storage tank is feasible.

Filter Upgrade Programme – Kilminchy WTP put forward for upgrades, confirmation of scope required post filter assessment report.

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

Networks and Water Conservation - First fix, find and fix and lead replacement works continue throughout the county. Significant progress in Portarlinton in the area of leakage management. Replacement of watermain in the Swan network is ongoing.

Taking in Charge

Continue working with IW to take the 17 no. outstanding legacy estates in charge by IW - already taken in charge by LCC. 10 no. estates have been progressed and referred to the Planning Section and work is ongoing on the remaining 7 no. estates.

Multi Annual Rural Water Programme.

Projects under the current programme, 2019 – 2021, are being completed and claims paid and recouped. The Department has advised that details of the next Rural Water Programme will be issued during Q3.

Well Grants – 14 no. applications have been received in 2022 and all are being progressed.

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

CORPORATE

A 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 we faced and are facing the challenges was held at Fitzmaurice Place, Portlaoise on Sunday 20th March 2022.

COMMUNITY

Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)

Laois LCDC received an allocation of €273,048, (€166,863 current expenditure and €106,185 capital expenditure) under the Community Activities Fund. 183 applications were received seeking funding in the amount of €838,189. Laois LCDC approved 131 applications (34 capital expenditure, 86 current expenditure and 11 receiving a mixture of both).

Laois Public Participation Network

Laois PPN hosted the first in person Midlands Regional PPN (MRPPN) meeting since the pandemic. The event took place at Castle Durrow on Thursday 7th April with PPN representatives from Laois, Offaly, Kildare and Westmeath attended.

Laois PPN have organised a Social Inclusion Week. It will feature a mixture of online and in person events and will commence on Monday 25th April.

Laois PPN will host the PPN National Conference at the Midlands Park Hotel on Friday and Saturday 21st and 22nd October, 2022. The PPN National Conference presents a golden opportunity to showcase the County of Laois, Laois PPN and Laois County Council. Representatives from the 31 PPN's across Ireland and the Department of Rural and Community Development will be in attendance. Laois PPN wish to give a special thanks to Laois County Council for their support in Laois hosting the PPN National Conference.

Laois Comhairle na nÓg

Laois Comhairle na nÓg continue to meet weekly. They are working on their project on Mental Health and are planning to hold 2 events before the summer. 6 members of Laois Comhairle attended Dail na nÓg on Saturday 26 March.

CLIMATE ACTION

Tidy Towns Seminar

There were over 60 attendees at a Laois Federation of Tidy Towns Seminar in Abbeyleix. Attendees were given a tour of the town and community garden followed by presentation by Debbie Nesbitt, Tidy Towns adjudicator, who specialises in the sustainability category, Robbie Quinn, Abbeyleix Tidy Towns and Ann Marie Maher, Sports and Leisure Officer, as well as a demonstration of Reverse Vending Machines from Voice Ireland, which will be rolled out nationwide by the end of the year.

Environmental Radio Show

A new Environmental Radio show and Podcast on Midlands 103 with Aisling O'Rourke called Let's Go Green is being broadcast every Monday from 7pm-8pm, sponsored by Laois, Offaly and Westmeath County Councils. It will include sustainable living tips and features on local climate action initiatives.

Picker Pals Promo Video

A Picker Pals promo Video was recorded in Scoil Bhríde and Gaelscoil Portlaoise, posted on social media and has gained over 4k views. The Picker Pals Programme is aimed at 1st and 2nd class and each pupil is encouraged to bring home a picker pack for the weekend and carry out a clean up with their family. It has been rolled out to 40 classes in schools nominated by Laois Federation of Tidy Towns and proved to be hugely popular with schools and over 1000 families are participating County-wide.

https://fb.watch/cjYKq_RS1E/

SPORT & LEISURE UPDATE

Playground Developments

Laois County Council has been awarded €16,541 for playground accessibility/biodiversity enhancements at Portarlinton under the Department OF Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) playground capital grant scheme.

Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS)

A total of six measure 1 applications are being submitted on 19th April 2022 to the Department Community and Rural Development (maximum grant €30,000). One additional project is being submitted under the new development measure (M4), seeking funding for technical and ecological scoping of a cycling and walking hub in Durrow.

ARTS & CULTURE

Laois Arthouse

The ongoing exhibition ‘ In Trust. In Hope. In Gratitude. ‘ continues to run, with strong visitor numbers attending.

Re/CENTRING/ Faoin Spéir - Mountrath & Abbeyleix

A very well attended family centred programme took place on Sunday 27th March in Mountrath curated by Kevin Kavanagh with a range of musicians, artists and performers. On 3rd April it was hosted in Abbeyleix, with Curator Emily Kilkenny Roddy. The event included a variety of free performances by local groups including Laois Youth Dance Ensemble, dance artist Sibéal Davitt, Ohr Dance Company, Abbeyleix N.S., Music Generation Trad Group and Afro Brazilian dance performance by Criola Dance group, as well as artists talks, crafts and exhibitions and much more.

Bealtaine Festival 2022

For the month of May the Arts Office, Laois County Council invite people of an older age to join in some of the wonderful events that are happening in Laois for the Bealtaine Festival 2022. In celebration of Creativity the theme for 2022 is ‘And catch the heart off guard’. Further details on the Council’s website and social media.

Library Update

Laois County Library Service are delighted to announce a new initiative that will see every child starting school in September receiving a free Little Library Book Bag. To help children navigate starting school, libraries have put together a bag of books especially for them that can be collected at any library. The initiative is a collaboration between libraries, the Department of Rural and Community Development, and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth as part of the First 5 Strategy.

The initiative will provide a My Little Library book bag to every child starting school in September for collection in the library, offer free library membership with a specially designed Little Library card wallet for the child, encourage free membership and use of the library for all children and adults in the family and include transition information for parents with each bag to support children on their learning journey. The book bags are available in either Irish or English.



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 and community primarily aimed at those who had moved recently to Laois or even 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 will be available in Ukrainian .

The library service works with Laois Integration Network and PoLaois (Polish Group) to help provide some children’s activities for some newly arrived families. The library are currently adding Ukrainian Books for children and adults to library stock and have online newspapers and resources in Ukrainian too.

The Gallery in Mountmellick Library are delighted to host the Laois African Support group for their exhibition celebrating African culture for the month of April. The exhibition will display hand carved wooden figures and framed hand paintings and some traditional musical instruments.



The Gallery in Abbeyleix Library are hosting an exhibition by Aileen Donovan, Aileen is a visual artist, mostly inspired by her surroundings and the environment. She works mostly with a glue gun to build up a painting which gives it a 3d affect. Sample of her works below



Tourism

Members are advised that Laois County Council has reached agreement regarding the purchase of a site adjacent to the Rock of Dunamais. The agreement is subject to the site proceeding to statutory planning approval for car parking and other visitor facilities. Proposals in this regard will be presented to members for their consideration in the short term.

Chief Executive's Orders

- ✚ A schedule of Chief Executive Orders signed during the month of April 2022 will be circulated.

John Mulholland
Chief Executive

April 21st 2022