

LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL
COMHAIRLE CHONTAE LAOISE



MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT
AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2023
TUARASCÁIL BHAINISTÍOCHTA
Lúnasa/Meán Fómhair 2023

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 August/September 2023 is as follows:

FINANCE & ALLOCATIONS NOTIFIED

Expenditure and income to the 31/08/2023 is summarised below:

Service Division	Budget Allocation	Expenditure to 31/08/2023
Housing and Building	€21,247,400	€13,282,025
Road Transportation and Safety	€26,291,600	€12,364,397
Water Services	€3,404,500	€3,083,503
Development Management	€9,586,000	€6,736,546
Environmental Services	€8,677,500	€5,506,608
Recreation and Amenity	€4,990,000	€3,313,654
Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare	€900,000	€440,446
Miscellaneous Services	€9,498,700	€6,052,293
Central Management Charge	€11,213,300	€1,555,881
Total	€95,809,000	€52,335,353

Service Division	Budget Allocation	Income to 31/08/2023
Housing and Building	€22,725,300	€14,400,926
Road Transportation and Safety	€21,583,000	€7,567,671
Water Services	€4,502,000	€2,744,549
Development Management	€6,495,500	€3,860,022
Environmental Services	€2,231,000	€1,250,960
Recreation and Amenity	€1,049,000	€461,465
Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare	€436,000	€151,191
Miscellaneous Services	€11,954,262	€5,930,006
Superannuation	€720,000	€112,540
Local Property Tax	€9,033,703	€4,516,852
Rates	€14,578,963	€9,975,170
Capital transfer	€500,272	
Total	€95,809,000	€50,971,352

The Miscellaneous Services Expenditure is broken down as follows:

Service Division	Budget Allocation	Expenditure to 31/08/2023
Machinery Account	€220,000	€123,749
Administration of Rates	€2,211,000	€371,590

Franchise Costs	€104,000	€97,887
Op of Morgue and Coroner Expenses	€130,000	-€23,186
Op of Markets and Casual Trading	€3,000	€1,998
Local Representation/Civic Leadership	€987,000	€570,225
Motor Taxation	€226,000	€173,778
Agency & Recoupable Services	€5,617,700	€4,736,251
Total	€9,498,700	€6,052,293

The Central Management Charge Expenditure is broken down as follows:

Corporate Building Costs	€2,038,300	€424,496
General Corporate Services	€1,281,000	€884,779
Information and Communications Tech	€1,738,000	€1,334,636
Human Resources Function	€1,083,000	€677,700
Finance Function	€761,000	€450,103
Pensions and Lump Sum Costs	€4,312,000	€2,834,604
Total	€11,213,300	€6,606,318

Allocations Notified:

Department of Transport - Additional RI Works	€232,000
Department of Rural & Community Development - LIS Round 2 for 2023	€926,415
OPW Minor Works Approval Funding - Clonaslee Bridge - gravel removal	€20,700.00
OPW Minor Works Approval Funding - Cloneygowan minor works	€88,200.00

HOUSING AND REGENERATION

SOCIAL HOUSING DELIVERY

Annual Social Housing Delivery Targets under Housing for All

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

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Total
Social Housing completions to date	229	160	-	-	-	389

Social Housing Schemes completed in 2023

Location	Total No. of Houses	House Types	Constructed by	Comment
Market Square, Portarlinton (Vignoles Gardens)	18	15 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey 2 No. 2 Bed Apts 1 No. 3 Bed Apt	LCC (Turnkey)	18 units completed.

Ballymorris Green, Portarlington (Ph 1)	34	34 no. 3 bed 2 storey houses	Cluid Housing	Phase 2 (12 units) to be completed in early 2024
South Dublin Road, Kilminchy (Dunamais View)	36	13 no. 2 bed houses 23 no 3 bed houses	Cooperative Housing	Tenancing underway
Ashwood Walk, Portlaoise	4	4 no. 3 bed houses	LA Part V	Tenanted
Goldencroft, Portlaoise (Old CBS lands - Ph 1 and 2)	24	24 no. 3 bed houses	Cluid Housing	37 units in Phases 1 and 2. First 13 units (Phase 1) reported as constructed in 2022 figures, however, could not be tenanted until access to the complex was completed. All 37 units (13 + 24) to be tenanted at end Sept.
Harpurs Crescent, Portlaoise	44	20 no. 2 bed houses 16 no. 3 bed houses 4 no. 1 bed apt 4 no. 2 bed apt	Respond	Tenancing to commence in early Oct.
TOTAL	160			

Social Housing Schemes Under Construction in 2023

Location	Total No. of Houses	House Types	Constructed by	Comment
Harbour Court, Mountmellick	6	6 No. 2 Bed bungalows	LCC (Construction)	On Site - expected delivery Q4 2023
Moore St, Rathdowney	6	6 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Construction)	On site - expected delivery Q2 2024
Mooreville, Rathdowney	7	3 No. 2 Bed bungalow 4 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Construction)	On site - expected delivery Q2 2024
St. Kieran's Errill	14	6 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey 8 No. 3 Bed 1 Storey	LCC (Construction)	On site - expected delivery Q4 2023
Church Avenue, Stradbally	31	9 No. 4 Bed 2 Storey 20 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 2 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey	LCC (Turnkey)	On site - phased delivery starting Q3 2023
Bruach Na Habhainn, Killeen	1	1 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Turnkey)	On Site - Phase 1 (1 unit) delivery Q2 2024
The Orchard, Ballylynan (Phase 3)	1	1 No. 3-Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Turnkey)	On Site - Phase 3 (1 unit) delivery Q2 2024
Oldcourt, Ballylinan	1	1 No. 4 bed 1 storey	LCC (Renewal)	On site - expected delivery Q2 2024
Townparks, Rathdowney Rd, Borris-in-Ossory	26	4 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 12 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 10 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey	LCC Turnkey	On site - expected delivery Q4 2024
Shannon Street, Mountrath	20	13 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey	LCC Turnkey	On site - expected delivery Q4 2024

		4 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey		
Ballymorris Green, Portarlington (Ph 2)	12	12 no. 3 bed houses	Cluid Housing	Currently on site – Last phase of scheme – advised that these units will be delivered in early 2024
Clonrooske Abbey, Portlaoise	18	18 no. 3 bed 2 storey	Cluid Housing	Advised delivery of 6 units in Q3 2023 Delivery date of final 12 units TBC
Goldencroft, Portlaoise (Old CBS site – Phase 3)	30	26 no. 2 bed houses 4 no. 2 bed bungalow	Cluid Housing	Awaiting delivery of Phases 1 and 2 (37 units) in Q3 2023 Phase 3 to be delivered by Q4 2023.
The Meadows (old Midland Dairies site), Portlaoise	48	19 no. 3 bed houses 9 no. 4 bed houses 20 no. 2 bed apts	Cluid Housing	Currently on site – expected delivery early Q4 2023 – delays with utility connections
Ard Branagh, Portlaoise	6	6 no. 3 bed houses	Circle Housing	Currently on site – expected delivery by end 2023
Mount Stewart, Summerhill, Portlaoise	4	1 no. 4bed house 3 no 3bed houses	LA Part V	Currently on site – expected delivery Q4 2023
Sruth na Gleanna, Killeslin	5	1 no. 4bed house 3 no 3bed houses	LA Part V	Currently on site – expected delivery Q4 2023 and last unit in 2025.
TOTAL	236			

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

Location/Scheme	No of units	House Types	To be constructed by	Comment
Carraig Glas, Stradbally	26	15 no. 2 bed houses 9 no. 3 bed houses 2 no 4 bed houses	LCC (Construction)	Stage 4 approved and construction to start in Q4 2023.
Clonrooske (Knockmay), Portlaoise	12	8 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 3 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 1 No. 3 Bed 1 Storey	LCC (Construction)	Part VIII approved. Stage 3 to be submitted in Q4 2023.
Iona, Portlaoise	7	2 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 1 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 4 No. 1 Bed Apt	LCC (Construction)	Part VIII approved. Stage 3 to be submitted Q4 2023.
Doonane	12	12 no. 3 bed 2 storey	LCC (Construction)	Stage 2 approved. Part VIII exemption. Stage 3 to be submitted Q4 2023.
Derry Road, Durrow	24	10 No. 1 Bed 1 Storey 5 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 5 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 4 No.2 Bed Apartmts	LCC (Construction)	Stage 2 to be submitted in Q4 2023. Tender for demolition closed and demolition to commence in early Q4 2023.
Ballyadams	1	1 no. 6 bed bungalows	LCC (Construction)	Stage 2 Approved. Part VIII exemption period complete and Stage 3 to be submitted in Q3 2023.

Stradbally Road, Portlaoise	28 approx	Tenure mix - numbers and houses types - to be confirmed in detailed design	LCC Social and Affordable	Design Team appointed. Site investigation and topographical surveys are currently being carried out on site. Upon completion of same (Q3 2023), a detailed design for a scheme will be produced and will include proposed mixed tenure of the scheme. Following this a meeting of the MD members will be arranged to discuss design.
Bracklone St, Portarlinton	15	15 no. 2 bed houses	LCC (Construction)	Site investigation surveys on-going and Stage 2 to be progressed in Q4 2023
Rushall Mountrath	3	3 no. 3 bed 2 storey	LCC (Construction)	Site investigation surveys on-going and Stage 2 to be progressed in Q4 2023
Maryborough School, Stradbally Road, Portlaoise	11	2 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey 7 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey 2 No. 1 Bed 1 Storey	LCC (Construction)	Stage 1 To Be Submitted in Q4 2023
Main St, Ballinakill	3	2 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 1 No. 1 Bed Apt	LCC (Construction)	Site investigation surveys on-going and Stage 2 to be progressed in Q4 2023
Moanbaun, Mountrath	15	4 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 7 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 4 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey	LCC (Construction)	Site investigation surveys on-going and Stage 2 to be progressed in Q4 2023
1 New Road, Portlaoise	1	1 No. 4 Bed 1 Storey	LCC (Renewal)	Stage 3 to be submitted in Q4 2023.
6 Emmett Terrace, Mountmellick	1	1 No. 4 Bed 1 Storey	LCC (Renewal)	Stage 3 to be submitted in Q4 2023.
13 and 14 Lakeglen, Portlaoise	2	1 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 1 No. 4 Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Renewal)	Tender for demolition advertised in Q3 2023.
Beladd, Portlaoise	5	1 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 3 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 1 No. 4 Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Construction)	Design Team to be Appointed and Stage 1 to be submitted in Q4 2023. Tender for demolition of existing properties to be advertised in Q4 2023.
French Church St. Portarlinton	2	2 no. 2 bed apts	LCC (Renewal)	Stage 1 To Be Submitted in Q4 2023.
Convent Lands, Portlaoise (CAS)	52	33 no 2 bed apts 15 no 1 bed apts 4 no. 2 bed houses	Sophia Housing	Tender evaluation complete, Stage 3 being prepared for submission to Dept for construction budget approval, following which, contractor will be appointed.
County Hotel, Portlaoise (CAS)	10	8 no. 1 bed apts 2 no. 2 bed apts	Cluid Housing	Stage 1 approved under CAS.

				Surveys carried out so far have outlined significant challenges re the protected front façade. A section 57 planning report for the site has been finalised and agreement reached on which buildings on site can be demolished. A conservation report to accompany a S179A planning notification is currently being prepared by LCC with Cluid input as to the challenges on this site. An in-committee meeting with MD members will be arranged as part of this process.
"Radharc Darach" Hepburn Court, Portlaoise	54	8 no. 2 bed bungalow 12 no. 2 bed 2 storey 34 no. 2 bed 2 storey	Cluid Housing	Site now in Cluid ownership. Tender for construction currently being evaluated. Local residents will be informed by Cluid in relation to phasing of the build and any potential effect of this.
Curragh na Mona, Abbeyleix Rd, Portlaoise	39	5 x 2 bed fully accessible apts 12 x 2 bed bungalows 6 x 3 bed house with downstairs bedroom 2 x 4 bed house with downstairs bedroom 2 x 2 bed apts – accessible (ground floor) apts 2 x 1 bed 1 st floor apts 4 x 3 bed 2 storey. 6 x 2 bed 1 st floor apts	Respond Housing	Revised CALF application currently under review by Dept and a notification expected in the coming weeks. Planned construction to commence mid -Oct 2023 as advised by Respond.
TOTAL	323			

AFFORDABLE HOUSING / COST RENTAL

Minimum targets for Laois 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

Discussions ongoing to progress potential affordable units as follows:

Affordable	AHF approved in principle by DHLGH	AHF Application submitted to DHLGH- Potential no of unit yield	Advance Turnkey Purchase EOI's under consideration Potential No of unit yield	Part V- Potential No of Unit Yield	LCC Construction Potential No of Unit Yield
Affordable	13	0	*76	8	40 minimum
Cost Rental			27		

**Expressions of Interest received for 76 proposed units across 4 potential schemes, under consideration from the perspective of demand, affordability of price and feasibility of subsidy funding from DHLGH. Not all units may be realised.*

- Local Authority Subsidy Agreement currently being prepared in relation to 13 affordable units recently approved. A survey recently went live on www.laois.ie to ascertain interest in affordable purchase in Stradbally and general promotion of the Local Authority Affordable Purchase Scheme (LAAPS).
- Design being finalised for social and affordable housing on Council owned landbank on the Stradbally Road, Portlaoise. No. of affordable units to be determined but estimated above at 30-40 units. Funding mechanism for affordable housing on this site still to be determined.
- Initial design and costings for up to 5 social/affordable units on site at Beladd currently being examined.

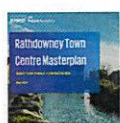
Call remains open for Expressions of Interest in respect of:

- Appropriately zoned land for housing development
- Advanced Turnkey Purchase arrangements for un-commenced residential developments in respect of social/affordable housing.

REGENERATION / VACANT HOMES

Regeneration Team

Laois County Council has established a multi-disciplinary Regeneration Team, comprising staff from Housing, Planning and the Town Regeneration Officer, aimed at addressing vacancy and dereliction in the county.



TOWN REGENERATION

- Policy and strategy
- Town Centre First
- Town Team



DERELICT SITES

- Derelict sites activation
- Working with owners
- CPO



VACANT HOMES

- Survey work
- Identifying properties for CPO for social housing
- Administering grants

This team aims to achieve targets set, by gathering data via:

- Geodirectory exercise (set out below)
- Continued engagement with property owners
- Engagement via derelict sites legislation where appropriate
- Action objectives of the Town Centre First Plan for Rathdowney and other town/village plans.

Vacancy Surveys

The Vacant Homes Team is currently continuing to survey properties identified as being vacant in data supplied by GeoDirectory (via a Dept of Housing 2022 initiative).

The app has shown the following data so far - of the 821 properties surveyed to date (residential and commercial), 498 properties were found to be vacant, with 31 of those found to be derelict.

Housing Section will endeavour to contact the owners of the vacant residential properties and outline the schemes available to return these properties to use for housing. Where ownership cannot be established, local enquiries will continue in relation to ownership, vacancy history, etc. Where all other means of returning the properties to use have been exhausted, use of the CPO process to acquire properties deemed to be suitable for social housing or onward sale to private market will be considered. Suitability for social housing will depend on the need and housing typology of need in particular locations.

Vacancy / Regeneration Funding Schemes

- Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant - Croí Conaithe (Towns) Fund
Grant available up to a maximum of €50,000, including VAT, for refurbishment of vacant properties for *use as a principle private residence or to be made available for rent*, including the conversion of a property which has not been used as residential heretofore. A top-up grant of up to €20,000 is also available for properties which are derelict.

Croí Conaithe (Towns) Applications at 31st August, 2023

No. of Applications received	94
No. Approved	35
No. Approved in Principle	17
Applicants under consideration	35
No. Refused	3
No. Withdrawn by Applicant	4
No. applications with works completed	6

- Buy and Renew Scheme
 - This scheme enables the local authority to recoup costs where we acquire a property that is need of major refurbishment, beyond the limits of our acquisition cost ceilings.
 - 2 properties received B&R Construct Stage 2 approval in 2022 – 1 New Road, Portlaoise and 6 Emmett Terrace, Mountmellick.

• Repair and Leasing Scheme

Applications received to date	45
Applications approved to proceed	10
Applications under consideration	4
No. of Leases commenced	1
Applications Refused	30*

**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.*

CPO Activation Programme

Circular 14/2023 provides details on the launch of the CPO Activation Programme. Laois target has been set for properties to enter the Compulsory Acquisition process, where engagement with the owner has not resulted in the vacant or derelict property being brought back into use, to be subsequently used for social housing or made available for sale on the open market.

A target of 60 vacant and derelict properties to enter the Programme and 16 CPOs / Compulsory Acquisitions to commence/complete in 2023 has been set for Laois County Council.

At 31 st August, 2023	Target	Actual
Vacant and derelict properties that have entered the CPO Activation Programme	60	94
CPO's / Compulsory Acquisitions commenced/completed in 2023	16	4

PRIVATE RENTED INSPECTIONS

Laois County Council is responsible, through inspection, for determining if a property meets the standards for rental accommodation in accordance with the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2019.

Target for number of inspections in 2023 is 874.

	1 st Jan – 31 st August 2023
No of properties inspected	822
No of notices of works issued	695

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

SERVICED SITES FOR SELF BUILDERS

Laois County Council is actively considering the development of serviced sites over the coming years at a number of locations in the county.

In the first instance, eligibility will be determined by criteria as set out under the Croí Conaithe (Towns) Fund – Ready to Build Scheme (Serviced Sites for New Homes) Scheme. Under the scheme, local authorities are supported to make serviced sites in towns and villages available to potential individual purchasers. These sites will be available at a discount on the market value of the site for the building of a property for occupation as the principal private residence of the purchaser. The level of discount to the individual will depend on the level of servicing cost incurred by the local authority before the sale of

the site with discounts up to a maximum of €30,000. The amount of such discount will be reflected in the sale price of the site to the purchaser. The following locations are currently under consideration for serviced sites and/or have advertised sites for sale. Sites to be a minimum of 0.25 acres in size.

Location	No. of Sites	Comment
Ballacolla Road, Durrow	4	Offers accepted by 2 out of 4 offers made. Services/utilities currently being constructed on site.
Gleann na Glaise, Ballyroan	4	Further information sought from applicants in advance of formal offers. All services/utilities in place on site.
Doonane	2	Stage 1 approved as part of larger housing scheme Part VIII & Stage 2 to be progressed in Q4 2023
Derry Road Durrow	4	Stage 1 approved as part of larger housing scheme Part VIII & Stage 2 to be progressed in Q4 2023
Castletown	9	Proposal. Detailed design currently on-going
TOTAL SITES UNDER CONSIDERATION	23	

HOUSING STOCK

Housing Re-Lets

Month	LA Keys Surrendered	Properties Acquired	Works Completed
January 2023	6	2	6
February 2023	2	2	1
March 2023	6	5	16
April 2023	6	4	9
May 2023	10	2	14
June 2023	6	1	2
July 2023	4	3	6
August 2023	9	0	2
TOTAL (YTD)	49	19	56

NOTE: There are currently 21 vacant units from our existing stock and a further 14 units that the Council acquired. 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 2023	504	504	0
February 2023	378	378	0

March 2023	464	464	0
April 2023	357	357	0
May 2023	440	440	0
June 2023	325	313	12
July 2023	274	207	67
August 2023	409	274	135
TOTAL (YTD)	3,151	2,937	214

Energy Efficiency/Retrofitting Programme:

The Midlands Retrofit Programme (MRP) was rolled into the Energy Efficiency Retrofit Programme (EERP) in 2022.

A summary of both programmes is outlined in table below.

PROGRAMME	COMMENTS
MRP - 159 Units	159 units completed.
EERP (2021) - 29 Units - (O'Moore Place)	29 units completed.
EERP (2022) - Phase 1&2 - 41 Units (Thornberry, Church Ave, Slieve Bloom Park)	Tender evaluation for the 2022 Retrofit Programme comprising 62 houses has been completed. It is now proposed to commence works in phase's set out below. Phase 1 1) Thornberry, Abbeyleix - 20 units. • Works commenced.
EERP (2022) - Phase 3 - 21 Units (St. Fintan's Tce, Old School Road, St Johns Sq.)	Phase 2 1) Church Avenue, Stradbally - 12 units. 2) Slieve Bloom Park, Clonaslee - 9 units. • Tender awarded and works to commence in Q4 2023.
EERP (2023) - 53 Units (St. Brigid's Pl, Fr. O'Connor Cres., Erkindale Dr, Rossmore View)	Phase 3 1) St Fintans Terrace - 6 units 2) Old School Road, Ballylinan - 8 units 3) St. John's Square, Portlaoise - 7 units. • Tender awarded and works to commence in Q4 2023.
EERP (2023) - 53 Units (St. Brigid's Pl, Fr. O'Connor Cres., Erkindale Dr, Rossmore View)	Surveys of the 53 units is under way.

HOUSING NEED

Notices to Quit/Social Housing Acquisitions

To date there have been 86 Notices to Quit reported to Laois County Council, of which 70 are valid. All NTQ's are examined on a case-by-case basis and tenants are being dealt with using all social and other housing options available.

From 1st January – 31st August 2023:

Acquisitions completed	14
Acquisitions currently in progress	8
No. of above that have Tenants in Situ	9
Acquisitions under consideration from EOI's submitted	23

The above figures change with every case examined and regular cross referencing between NTQ's presented and Expressions of Interest for acquisition of properties.

Homeless Presentations

Time Period	Homeless Presentations	Breakdown of Household
1 st July to 31 st August	18	8 families, 10 singles

Homeless Accommodation

	Emergency Accommodation Households booked at 31 st August 2023	Social Housing allocated from homelessness in July & August 2023
Families	7	2
Single Persons	13	2
TOTAL	20	4

Social Housing List at 31st August 2023

TOTAL No of Social Housing Applicants on waiting list	1,677
Proportion of SH applicants availing of HAP supports (782)	46.6%
Proportion of HAP tenants transferred from Rent Supplement (112)	7%

RAS/Leasing Statistics at 31st August 2023

Active RAS tenancies	68
Active short-term leasing tenancies (Social Housing Leasing Scheme)	25
Active Repair & Leasing Scheme tenancies	1
Active long-term leasing tenancies with private landlords/investors	11
Active long-term Mortgage to Rent leasing tenancies with a private company	29

Applicants housed during the period 1st January – 31st August 2023

Method of Delivery	No. housed 1 st January – 31 st August 2023
First allocation of New Build/Acquired unit	51
Relet / Refurbished Stock Allocation	49
Housed via leasing	0
TOTAL	100

Nominations to AHB - 1 st January – 31 st August 23	161
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LOANS AND GRANTS

Loans

Local Authority Home Loan (LAHL) at 31st August 2023

No of Loan Applications received since scheme commenced in January 2022	98
No of Applications approved since scheme commenced in January 2022	37
No of Applications refused since scheme commenced in January 2022	26*

**Predominant reasons for refusal are "Repayment Capacity not demonstrated" and "Insufficient Savings Record/Source of Equity", i.e., applicant not showing that they can afford to meet the monthly repayments on the prospective mortgage, and/or they have not proven that they have consistent, regular savings, and/or the deposit is made up of lump sums lodged that cannot be verified.*

Recent Interest changes on LAHL affecting borrowers who draw down from 28th Sept 2023:

Type of Loan	Duration	Existing Rate	New Rate
LAHL	Up to 25 years (incl)	3.35%	4%
LAHL	26 to 30 years (incl)	3.45%	4.05%

Private Grants

Housing Adaptation Grants at 31st August 2023

Allocation €1,421,438 (€1,137,150 Exchequer + €284,288 LA Own Resources)

	No. of applications received to 31/08/2023	No. of applications paid by 31/08/2023	Value of applications paid by 30/06/2023	No. of applications currently at work stage	Value of applications currently at work stage
HOP	125	82	€380,300	63	€291,325
MAG	13	9	€26,719	6	€26,730
HGD	121	37	€253,658	57	€434,937
TOTAL	259	128	€660,677	126	€752,992

Disabled Persons Grant for Social Housing

DPG works at 31st August 2023:

Allocation 2023 (including LA funded portion)	€641,100
No of new applications received to 31/08/2023	22
No of Works approved to date (incl 3 extensions*)	40
Value of approved works to date	€648,468

**It should be noted that extensions costing over €75,000 will only proceed subject to Dept approval and planning if required. Should planned extensions not complete in 2023, it will not be possible to draw down allocated funding in the current year.*

Queries in relation to Housing Grants should be emailed to housinggrants@laoiscoco.ie

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE TO REFUGEES FLEEING CONFLICT

Laois County Council continues to lead and coordinate the Laois Ukrainian Community Response Forum. The Forum, consisting of 23 statutory and voluntary groups/agencies, meets regularly, with 18 meetings held to date, ensuring consistency and efficiency in service delivery and supports to new arrivals to our county from Ukraine. The most recent data indicates there are approximately 1,119 displaced Ukrainian citizens in the County. Approximately 300 of these are in accommodation centres such as hotels, guesthouses, hostels, and refurbished properties, with the remainder in privately sourced or pledged accommodation.

In addition to the above number, and following the signing of a contract between DCEDIY and the owner of the Stradbally Estate on 1st September last, an emergency/transitional site commenced operation on 5th September for a period of 6 weeks, with a maximum occupational capacity of 750. The number accommodated at this location is subject to regular fluctuation as the relocation of the residents by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth DCEDIY, has already commenced, to spaces that become available at other established accommodation centres around the country.

The Council continues to assist DCEDIY with the temporary accommodation of Ukrainian arrivals to our county, as well as providing liaison locally in relation to vacant buildings and sites suitable for medium to long term accommodation solutions.

The Council also continues to allocate privately pledged/offered accommodation to Ukrainian families, with 50 households having been provided with accommodation through these mechanisms to date.

Site works are continuing at the 42 Modular Homes project in Rathdowney. DCEDIY have indicated that the handover of the site to them from OPW is anticipated by the end October.

Separately, DCEDIY have commenced engagement with the Council regarding our participation in the Irish Refugee Protection Programme Phase II, under which 102 Syrian refugees will be relocated and housed in County Laois, commencing in 2024. This will be done under the supervision of an Interagency Working Group, many of which are existing members of the Response Forum.

PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT, ARTS & HERITAGE

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Final figures for 2022 are now available for Housing completions and Commencements in 2022 using the [Regional Development Monitor](#)

Housing Commencements ((which includes both private and social units) have been recorded as follows

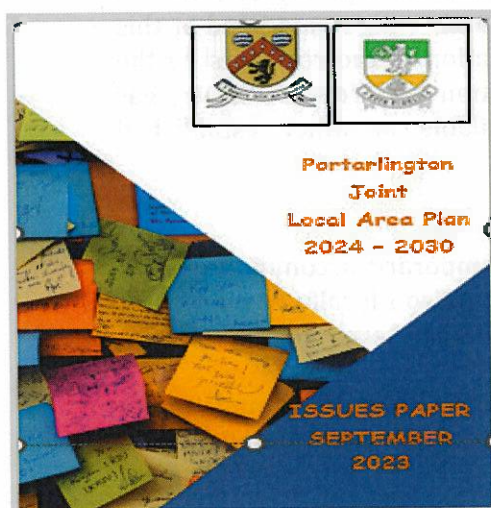
- 2023- 359 - (69 of which are one-off units)
Source Building Control Management System (BCMS)

Housing completions (which includes both private and social units) have been recorded as follows

- 2023 -327residential units (57 of which were single houses)

All data has been sourced from the CSO new dwelling completions quarterly publication available on the Regional Development Monitor - Connection data provided to the CSO by ESB network Connections. This is supplemented with data from Eircode, Geodirectory, BER Data etc.

A review of the Housing strategy/HNDA will be carried out in 2023 to consider the implications of revised census figures and housing activity in the county. The review will assist in the making of the Local Area Plans for Graiguecullen, Portarlinton, Portlaoise and Mountmellick.



Portarlinton Joint Urban Area Plan

Public notices will appear in the local papers on Tuesday 19th September marking the commencement of the review of the Portarlinton JLAP. Public Consultation commences on Sept 21st for 4 weeks. A public information session will be held on Oct 4th in Portarlinton Library.

The issues paper will be available online and at Council offices.

Development Contribution Scheme

The Draft Development contribution scheme was adopted by the members at a special council meeting on 6th September 2023. The new scheme will take effect from the 20th of October 2023.

Log Cabins

A discussion paper on log cabins was brought before the Housing and Planning SPC on 12th September 2023. Revisions to the policy and the rural housing guidance will be developed which has regard to the comments of the SPC members.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE

E-Planning Project	E-Planning has been live since 11 th November 2022 60% applications in 2023 have been made online – 371 on line out of total 622 applications made to date in 2023.			
Planning Applications	Year	Valid applications from 01/01/2023 11/09/2023	-	Valid applications from 01/01/2022- 11/09/2022
		384		429
Total Number of valid applications received:	384			
Invalid applications returned to applicant	238			
TOTAL TO DATE IN 2023	622			
Number of applications granted:	375 (Decisions to Grant)			
Number of applications refused:	16 (Decisions to Refuse) 4% refusal rate			
PRE PLANNING				
No of requests to date	228			
No of meetings held to date	195			
Wait time	2.5 weeks			

ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

Current year	2023		2022	
Service Review	Aug	Jan - Aug	Aug	Jan - Aug
Total number of new cases subject to complaints that were investigated	14	112	11	85
Number of Warning Letters served	22	304	27	275
Number of Enforcement Notices served	7	80	4	30
No Of cases referred for legal proceedings	0	11	0	6
Number of cases in Court(incl adjournments)	0	43	0	37
Number of cases Resolved in Court	0	9	0	7
Number of Files Closed	4	77	12	123
Number of cases on system	177	177	141	141
Enforcement Costs recouped	€ 500.00	€ 5,419.76	€ -	€7,520.26
Number of Valid Retention Applications Received relating to Enforcement Action	2	24	3	36
Fees received through Valid Retention Applications Received relating to Enforcement Action	€1,428.24	€34,625.01	€7,128.00	€33,491.70
Legal fees paid	€3,295.16	€14,171.92	€587.94	€20,061.50

HERITAGE:

1. Just Transition Project Conservation and Pollination

The Just Transition Fund (JTF) is a key pillar of the government's just transition plan for the Midlands region. A fund is available for projects focusing on retraining workers and proposals to generate sustainable employment in green enterprise in the region, and supporting communities to transition to a low carbon economy. The objective was to fund innovative projects that contribute to the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the Wider Midlands region and which have employment and enterprise potential. It will support projects that take a whole-of-Midlands strategic approach and complement other sources of public funding.

Laois and Offaly Conservation of Medieval Churches and Pollinator

In May 2021 this project linking conservation of medieval heritage and biodiversity was launched by Laois and Offaly County Councils. The three year project was awarded €748,000 under the Government's Just Transition Fund. The total budget for the project is €880,000. Six sites (3 in Laois and 3 in Offaly) were chosen for inclusion in the project. In Laois the sites are: Kilmanman, Dysart Gallen, and Clopook. In Offaly the sites are: Kilmurry, Kilbride, Monasteroris.

Project Progress

The project is on schedule to be completed by the end of 2023. The project can be divided into two main two main components – 1. Project works and 2. Project Training & Education. See below for details of progress on these components.

Project Works:

Works at Clopook, Dysartgallen, and Monasteroris (in Offaly) are essentially finished. Works are continuing at Kilmanman, Kilbride and Kilmurry, but on schedule to be finish in 2023.

Project Training & Education:

Online lecture series	DELIVERED
Stonework conservation workshops	DELIVERED
Biodiversity workshops	To Complete
School's workshops	To be delivered in Sep/early Oct
Videography/ Media	Ongoing - to be completed for end of project

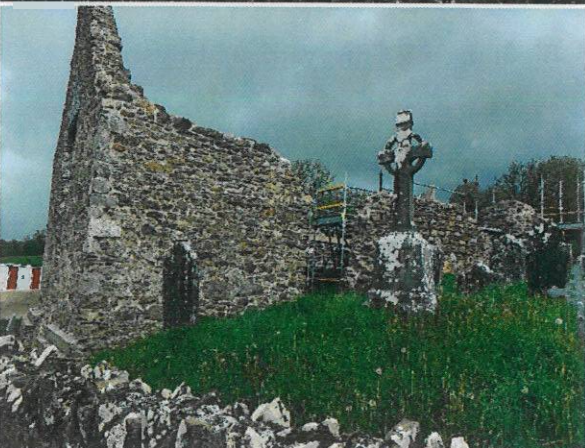




Fig 1. Before of After photos of works on Clopook Church & Graveyard, and Dysart Gallen Church & Graveyard.

2. Laois Heritage Plan Projects

- **Midlands radio Advertisements:**
Project ongoing in partnership with Offaly and Westmeath County Councils. Previously biodiversity ads ran on Midlands radio from 22nd May until 16th June across three local authorities. Next phase will consist of interviews with local biodiversity champions from each county.
- **“In Your Nature” Podcasts by BirdWatch Ireland:**
New series continuing. Heritage Officer promoting on social media and continuing to jointly fund.

3. Heritage Week 2023

- Heritage Week was held from the 12th to the 20th of August 2023

- 18th 2000 copies of the Laois Heritage Week Event 2023 Event Guide were printed and distributed to all libraries. An online PDF version was also circulated.
- Pre-Heritage Week article in the Leinster Express.
- 48 separate events were listed for Laois Heritage Week 2023. Some of these events ran on a number of days or every day of Heritage Week.
- 5 events were organised directly by Laois Heritage Office alone or in collaboration with other agencies:
 - The Big Dig in Portlaoise.
 - The Golden Ravens Viking re-enactment group in Portlaoise.
 - New Pastures: Irish Iron age Livestock & Lifeways in The Cube Portlaoise.
 - High Status Waters of Laois – Camross.
 - 20th Century Architecture Walking Tour, Portlaoise.
- Daily social media updates of events on Facebook and Twitter.

Laois Heritage Week 2023 – In photos



Heritage Week 2023: Pick Your Own sunflower event, Heath House.



Heritage Week 2023: Stradbally Hall Tours. Heritage Week 2023: 20th Century Architecture Walking Tour, Portlaoise.



Heritage Week 2023: Laois Cricket club and Malthouse Tour, and Dunamaisé Beekeepers Stradbally.



Heritage Week 2023: The Golden Ravens Viking re-enactment group in Portlaoise.

ARTS

Laois Arts Office Summer Arts Programme August

An array of creative arts, drama and architectural workshops were hosted in the county as part of Laois Arts Office Summer Arts Programme in July and August. Summer Art Workshops were held in Rathdowney in association with the local community from 1-4 August. Clodagh Kennedy, took the workshops and the Arts Office worked with the Rathdowney Art Group,



Rathdowney

Workshops took place in Rosenallis in association with Laois Partnership. It was an integrated art workshop involving children from the Ukrainian community and local children. We were fortunate to have an artist delivering the course who could speak in the Ukrainian children's language.

Workshop took place in Stradbally in preparation for the Culture Night parade where children and young people made models for inclusion in the Culture Night Parade.

LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Local Enterprise Office Update – September 2023

- 5 Trading Online Voucher applications approved.
- 21 businesses set up to avail of 1-1 mentoring.
- 9 training courses were delivered to 125 participants.
- 3 businesses signed up for the Lean for Business programme.
- 4 businesses signed up for the Green for Business programme.
- 1 new Laois business was assisted to access Micro Finance Ireland (MFI) loan funding.

Business Support Unit (BSU) Update – September 2023

The Vacant Commercial Property Incentive Scheme which launched in Portarlington on 9th May brought about interest, the BSU have received a number of calls in respect of buildings available in the area. Business Incentive Scheme: maps were prepared to extend the scheme in Killenard. This came before Municipal District meeting 13th September 2023.

Abbeyleix Streetscape - 51 applications were received, 32 have been approved with works commencing, 2 in progress awaiting further documentation, 6 are not proceeding and 11 applicants did not meet the criteria. To-date 13 applicants have been paid.

Shop Front Grant Scheme: 20 applications received to date this year, 2 refused, 15 approved and 3 in progress. There are also 8 applications from the 2022 Scheme that were brought forward into the 2023 Scheme to allow sufficient time for the works to be carried out.

Shop Fitout Grant Scheme: 2 applications received to date this year and both have been approved

Business Incentive Scheme: 4 applications received to date this year, 1 refused, 2 approved and 1 in progress. Killeshin Hub: Works commenced 26th June 2023, the first stage payment is due the week of 18th September 2023.

ROADS, TRANSPORTATION, DRAINAGE & PUBLIC REALM

Safe Routes to School

Laois County Council received NTA funding for 3 No. Schemes under the Safe Routes to Schools Program. The schools were selected by an Taisce for interventions as Round 1 schools :

- Scoil Phadraig Naofa Mountmellick
- Scoil Mhuire Abbeyleix
- Maryborough National School, Portlaoise

The total value of works to be undertaken as part of the 3 schemes is approximately €1million. Front of school works commenced during the school holidays in Mountmellick & Abbeyleix.

Scoil Phadraig Naofa Mountmellick

This scheme entails the delivery of

- 3 New Zebra Crossings
- 1 speed ramp
- Junction tightening works at 3 housing estate entrances
- Creation of a School Safety Zone by the installation of pencil bollards and bespoke road markings
- Raised uncontrolled crossings at minor road junctions



Raised Zebra Crossing



Junction tightening and raised uncontrolled crossing

Scoil Mhuire Abbeyleix

This scheme entails the delivery of

- 2 New Zebra Crossings
- 6 speed ramps
- Junction tightening works at 3 housing estate entrances
- Creation of a School Safety Zone by the installation of pencil bollards and bespoke road markings
- Raised uncontrolled crossings at minor road junctions



Measures to prevent illegal parking



Scoil Mhuire School Safety Zone Created

Ballybrittas Bus Shelter Enabling Works

The NTA funded Bus Shelter enabling works program has commenced with the first to be delivered in Ballybrittas. Works will follow on in Kilminchy & Mountrath with additional locations to be added following agreement with the NTA

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

1. **Kyletalesha Landfill, Transfer Station & Civic Amenity Site, Portlaoise:**
Normal services continue at Kyletalesha Landfill Facility and Civic Amenity Site. Landfill monitoring and aftercare maintenance is on-going. All monitoring results are being submitted to the EPA.

A new traffic management layout directing all traffic (transfer station, recycling centre & landfill) over the weighbridge to facilitate a single point of payment is being introduced in September. New layout attached.

2. **Bring Banks:**
Tonnes of 2023 collected recyclable material is in Table 1 below.

Month	Tonnage	Month	Tonnage	Month	Tonnage
Jan	164.24	May	156.04	Sept	55.53
Feb	129.06	June	126.87	Oct	0
Mar	140.63	July	116.05	Nov	0
Apr	119.26	Aug	165.44	Dec	0
Annual Total			1,173.12 Tonnes		

Table 1 – 2023 Bring Bank Tonnes

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

3. Waste Management, Complaints & Litter Management:

a) Waste Enforcement & Complaints

Table 2 below details the number and types of complaints received to the end of June 2023.

Nature	Number	Nature	Number
Waste Management/Enforcement	404	Air	31
Litter	270	Noise	29
Water	43	Waste Infrastructure	11
Total		788	

Table 2 – Environmental Complaint Register

b) Litter Fines

Month	Number	Month	Number	Month	Number
Jan	4	May	5	Sept	7
Feb	10	June	7	Oct	0
Mar	3	July	10	Nov	0
Apr	4	Aug	7	Dec	0
Annual Total			57		

Table 3 – 2023 Litter Fines

c) Illegal Dumping

Tonnes of material collected is 248 tonnes.

4. Waste Management & Enforcement:

The Environment Section continues with its duties and responsibilities regarding facility authorisation, waste management and enforcement, producer responsibility and the national waste priorities.

5. Anti-Dumping Initiatives:

Two Bulky Waste Amnesty events held to date (Portlaoise & Mountmellick). Bed bases, mattresses, couches, chairs & tables were collected. No final figures yet for quantities of materials collected.

Two additional amnesty days are proposed.

6. Environmental Protection

a) Protect the Water Quality Status in all Water Bodies

- On site investigations of complaints in relation to water quality/water pollution are being carried out by Environmental staff.
- On-site investigations of complaints in relation to water pollution.
- On-going assessment of planning applications with regards to water quality protection.

b) Air & Noise:

- All noise and air complaints are being investigated.
- On-going assessment of planning applications with regards to air and noise protection.

Emergency Planning, Fire Services & Flood Relief

To date (7th September 2023), Laois County Fire & Rescue Service attended 446 emergency incidents, consisting of 161 fires, 206 special service incidents and 79 false alarms.

Turnout by Station*:

Portlaoise - 201	Portarlinton - 73	Stradbally - 84	Mountmellick - 93
Abbeyleix - 51	Mountrath - 63	Durrow - 47	Rathdowney - 51

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

New Fire Station in Stradbally

Following approval of Part 8 proposals, Laois County Council received 'NDFEM approval in principle, for the construction of a new Fire Station at Stradbally.' Laois County Council has now prepared a design brief for the project with a view to the appointment of a design team to oversee the detailed design, tendering and construction of the new Fire Station. A restricted tender competition was held to pre-qualify design teams. 3 architect-led design teams have been qualified & a detailed stage 2 tender competition is now being prepared.

Mountmellick Fire Station upgrade

Approval to go to tender for the upgrade has been sought from the NDFEM but no approval provided to date. The Part VIII document has been completed by Tobin Consulting Engineers & will be brought forward both to the MD & Laois County Council in the coming months.

Civil Defence

Volunteers

Civil Defence continues to provide ongoing training and upskilling for volunteers. As of 09th September all volunteers meet the minimum training standard requirements, as required by the Department of Defence.

2 recruit classes have been completed in 2023 bringing the total number of active volunteers to 51 as of 9th September 2023. The forecast number for Q4 of 2023 was 45 active members.

Activity Report January to September 2023

- 81 Community Events
- 18 Missing Person Search Activities
- 8 Supports to the Ukrainian Crisis
- 1806 hours were carried out by volunteers on events between 11/06/2023 & 07/09/2023 (This does not include training hours)

Facilities

Civil Defence has begun the move into its new Headquarters building in the Kew Lew Industrial Estate. Works have been underway to renovate the training rooms and offices and the first training course (Missing Person Search Responder) was held on Tuesday 5th of September in the new facility.(pic attached)



Training

In this quarter volunteers have attended several training courses in disciplines such as:

- PHECC Emergency First Response
- Missing Person Search Responder
- Rescue3 Lifejacket for Emergency Services
- PHECC Cardiac First Response Advanced Instructor
- PHECC Emergency First Response Instructor
- Pre-Hospital Trauma Life Support
- QQI Level 6 Manual Handling & People Moving Instructor
- Rescue3 Swiftwater & Flood Responder Instructor recertification.

VEMS

The Department of Defence launched the new Volunteer Equipment Management System in July. Locally Laois Civil Defence have rolled out the system fully and all operations, training and equipment maintenance are being recorded on this system.

The system was designed to handle the management of volunteers, central stock order and the maintenance records of vehicles and equipment.

CORPORATE, COMMUNITY, CLIMATE ACTION, CULTURE, LIBRARIES & TOURISM

COMMUNITY

Laois Public Participation Network

National Ploughing Championships 2023

Laois PPN attended the National Ploughing Championship 2023 with other PPNs from around the country in September in the DRCD tent.

Property Marker

Laois PPN was successful in its application for funding for a Property Marker machine. The Property Marker is a Crime Prevention device that provides a unique identifier on property. Laois PPN has arranged training for Community Gardai in Laois and delivery of the Property Marker is expected by the end of September. Laois PPN will work with An Garda Síochána on this crime prevention initiative to support Community Groups.

Laois Comhairle na nÓg

Podcast training, led by Ann Marie Kelly was held during the month of August for Comhairle members. The training commenced with the group interviewing each other which gave them an opportunity to learn interviewing skills. They interviewed local people and learned how to record a Podcast.

Podcast Launch will take place on the 30th September 2023, in the Dunamais Theatre. CNN 2023 AGM will take place on the 7th November 2023 in the Midlands Park hotel. Preparations are currently underway.

Climate Action and Community Strategic Policy Committee

A SPC meeting was held on 11 September 2023 where a number of presentations were made to the Committee:

- Update on the Sports Capital Grant .
- Update in relation to the Laois Age Friendly Strategy 2023-2027.
- Overview of the Community Climate Action Fund.
- Update on the Local Authority Climate Action Plan.
- Update from Town Regeneration Officer.

Joint Policing Committee

A meeting of the Joint Policing Committee was held on 11 September 2023 which was attended by the new Chief Superintendent Mr Anthony Lonergan. Chief Superintendent Lonergan presented a detailed report on crime and traffic statistics across Laois.

Laois Connects

Preparations are ongoing for Laois Connects 2023 taking place from the 9th to the 15th October this year. This mental health awareness initiative, which has run since 2013, focuses this year on the theme of "Anxiety". The Laois Connects committee, which welcomed Youthwork Laois and Jigsaw Laois Offaly to its membership this year, will be running events throughout the week.

Events schedule will be available to view on ww.laois.ie and all social media platforms.

As part of the event this year, the 12th October is to be designated as " Mind Yourself Day" with events taking place throughout the day including a free movie screening for students of "Lakelands" . There will be a panel discussion facilitated by Ann Marie Kelly, who will be joined by panellists from Youthwork Laois , Jigsaw Laois Offaly and former Laois Paralympian, Ailish Dunne..

Researcher and lecturer, Joe Tierney of TUS Athlone will present on the theme of “*Re-imagining Aging through outdoor adventure*”. Joe is an engaging and dynamic speaker and this talk is suitable for an older audience who are, or want to remain active. It will also benefit activity providers and all those who work with older people. The LOETB’s Janice O Brien will deliver a cooking demo and Q & A on “*Nutrition for Older People*”.



Age Friendly Laois

The AGM takes place in Castletown Community Centre from 2pm to 5 pm. Expressions of interest will be sought at the event for a new Older Peoples Council Executive to be formed. Refreshment will be served and there will be entertainment on the day.



Community & Voluntary Awards 2023

84 nominations were received for the Community and Voluntary Awards 2023, with the ceremony taking place on Friday 3rd November in the Midlands Park Hotel. Once again, the awards are being hosted in association Laois Public Participation Network being sponsored by People First Credit Union. The application process has now closed with the nominations currently being judged by various independent PPN judges.

Climate Action

Judging of Tidy Towns

A total of 17 Tidy Town Groups submitted their application for the Laois Federation of Tidy Town Awards 2023 and the judging and deliberation of these applications took place in August.

Greening of Durrow Scarecrow festival

The Climate Action Section funded a number of initiatives at this year's Durrow Scarecrow festival to support the greening of the event. 'Green your Festival' Signage was developed and displayed throughout the festival emphasising separation and prevention of waste. Sponsorship was provided for a theatre production and children's workshop called "Spooky Beore – A Caws for Concern" with a climate action and peatland conservation theme.

Sport & Leisure Section

Sports Capital & Equipment Programme

Sports Capital & Equipment Grant Scheme opened for applications on July 17th 2023 and closed on Friday, September 8th at 5pm. The Sport & Leisure Section partnered with Laois PPN to deliver a Sports Capital Workshop in August and assistance was provided to over 50 organisations to make grant applications.

Some attendees pictured at Sports Capital Workshop in Áras an Chontae, August 2023

Parks Tennis 2023

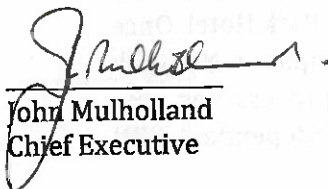
Parks tennis programme was successfully delivered in partnership with 4 community groups during July/August with 150 children participating.



Parks Tennis Rathdowney

Chief Executive's Orders

- 🚩 A schedule of Chief Executive Orders signed during the month of August/September 2023 will be circulated.


John Mulholland
Chief Executive

September 18th 2023