

LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE LAOISE



MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT
DECEMBER 2022/JANUARY 2023
TUARASCÁIL BHAINISTÍOCHTA
NOLLAIG 2022/EANAIR 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 December 2022/January 2023 is as follows:-

FINANCE & ALLOCATIONS NOTIFIED

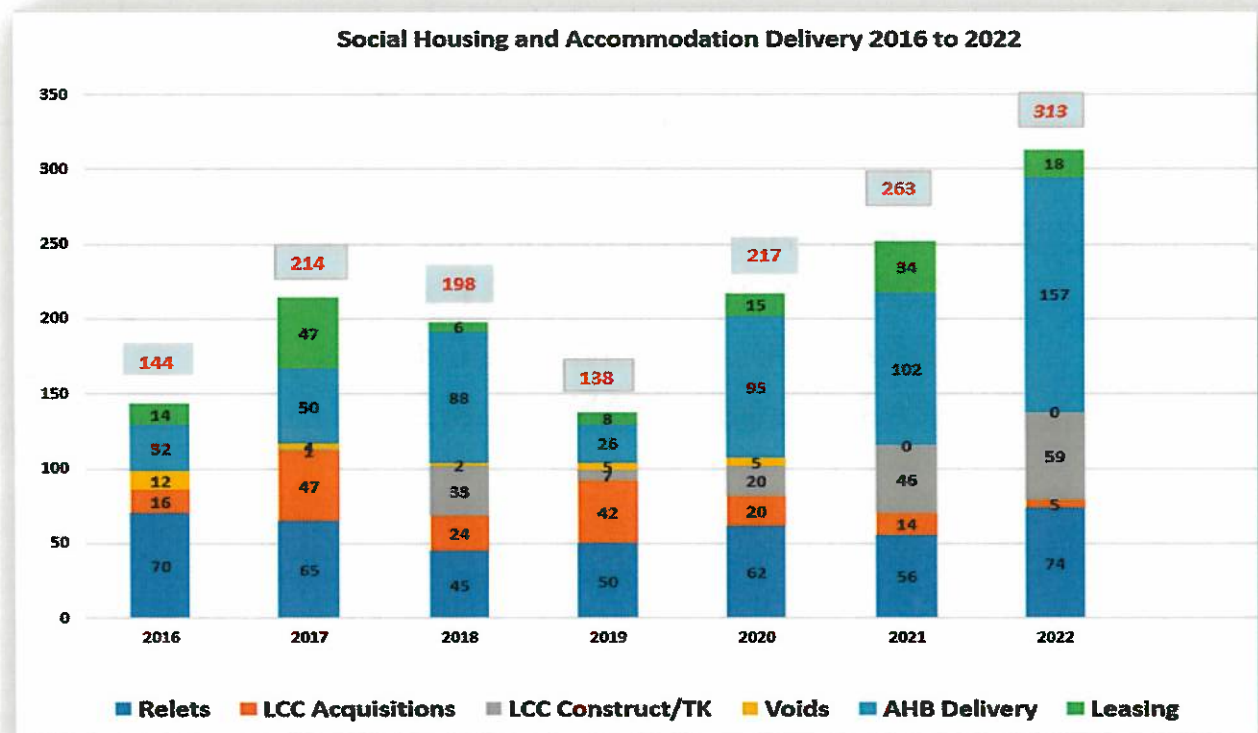
The Annual Financial Statement for 2022 is currently being prepared and will be finalised in March 2023. A report for the year end 31/12/2022 will then be made available

Allocations Notified

Community Recognition Fund	€1,014,607
Local Biodiversity Action Fund – Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage	€100,000

HOUSING & REGENERATION

SOCIAL HOUSING DELIVERY



In the year ending 31/12/2022, 315 households were housed / nominated to be housed by various means, as shown on the chart below:

	Relets	LCC Acquisitions	LCC Construct/TK	Voids	AHB Delivery	Leasing	Totals
2016	70	16		12	32	14	144
2017	65	47	1	4	50	47	214
2018	45	24	33	2	88	6	198
2019	50	42	7	5	26	8	138
2020	62	20	20	5	95	15	217
2021	56	14	46	0	102	34	252
2022	74	5	59	0	157	18	313
							1,478

Note A: Figures relating to those housed in 2022 include acquisition and leasing of properties, which are not included in the new build figures below.

Note B: Figures include those properties that are due to be tenanted in the coming weeks. Allocations/nominations to some properties completed in 2022 and listed were made in 2023.

The following targets have been approved for 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

Annual Social Housing Delivery Targets under Laois County Council Housing Delivery Action Plan

Year	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Total
Units	254	365	175	66	40	*900

*Total figure of 925 units published in HDAP includes 25 proposed LA Buy and Renew units. These units are not counted f social housing delivery figures.

Social Housing Schemes constructed in the year ending 2022

Location	No. of Houses	House Types	Constructed by	Comment
Coolroe, Ballybrittas	1	3-bed bungalow	LCC Construction	Tenanted
The Orchard, Ballylynan (Phase 1)	4	4 No. 3-Bed 2 Storey	LCC Turnkey	4 units delivered from a total of 5. 2 units tenanted
Droughill Lawns, Portarlinton	26	14 no. 2-beds (8 bungalows) 12 no 3-beds	Oaklee Housing	Tenanted
Bruach Na Habhainn, Killeen (Phase 1)	3	3 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey	LCC Turnkey	Tenanted. Final unit to be delivered in Q2 2023.
Rathvarna, Killeslin	2	2 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey	Part V	Tenanted

Aughnaharna, Portlaoise	2	2 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey	Part V	Tenanted
Gleann na Glaise, Ballyroan	10	10 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Construction)	Tenanted
Sean Doire, Durrow	22	10 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 8 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 4 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey	LCC (Construction)	Tenanted
The Maltings & Roselawn, Portlaoise (Phase 1)	55	Roselawn (15 no. 3 bed 2 storey) Maltings (40 no. 2 bed apts)	Cluid Housing	Tenanted
Holdbrook, Portlaoise	10	10 no. 2 bed apts (over 55's)	Cluid Housing	Tenanted
Clonrooske Abbey, Portlaoise	14	10 no. 3 bed 2 storey 4 no. 4 bed 2 storey	Cluid Housing	Tenanted
Featherbed Lane, Borris-In-Ossory (Ph 2)	5	5 No. 3 Bed 2 storey	LCC Turnkey	Tenanted
The Springs, Kilminchy, Portlaoise	43	43 no. 3 bed 2 storey	Cluid Housing	Complete – to be tenanted
Pattisons Estate, Mountmellick	10	10 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Construction)	Complete – to be tenanted
Doirinn Alainn, Ballylinan (Phase 4)	9	6 no. 3 bed houses 3 no. 2 bed houses	North & East Housing	Tenanted
TOTAL UNITS CONSTRUCTED	216			

Social Housing Schemes Under Construction

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 Q2 2023
Moore St, Rathdowney	6	6 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Construction)	On site – expected delivery Q4 2023
Mooreville, Rathdowney	7	3 No. 2 Bed bungalow 4 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Construction)	On site – expected delivery Q4 2023
St. Kieran's Errill	14	6 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 8 No. 2 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 – delivery Q3/Q4 2023
Market Square, Portarlinton	18	15 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey 2 No. 2 Bed Apts 1 No. 3 Bed Apt	LCC (Turnkey)	On site – delivery Q2 2023
Bruach Na Habhainn, Killeen	1	1 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Turnkey)	On Site – Phase 1 (1 unit) delivery Q2 2023
The Orchard, Ballylynan (Phase 3)	1	1 No. 3-Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Turnkey)	On Site – Phase 3 (1 unit) delivery Q3 2023
Oak Park Halting Site	4	4 no. serviced bays	LCC	TAU funded scheme. Issues have arisen with discovery of an underground ESB cable on site. Estimated delivery date Q4 2023 but dependent on ESB addressing issue as a matter of urgency.

Ballymorris Green, Portarlinton (Ph 1)	34	34 no. 3 bed 2 storey houses	Cluid Housing	IW connection to be made in Feb 2022
Harpurs Lane, Portlaoise	44	20 no. 2 bed houses 16 no. 3 bed houses 4 no. 1 bed apt 4 no. 2 bed apt	Respond	On site -- expected delivery Q2 2023
Ballymorris Green, Portarlinton (Ph 2)	12	12 no. 3 bed houses	Cluid Housing	3 phases. Currently on site - Phases 1 and 2 (34 units) expected delivery changed to Q1 2023 due to utility connection issues. Phase 3 (12 units) expected delivery Q1 2023
Clonrooske Abbey, Portlaoise	18	18 no. 3 bed 2 storey	Cluid Housing	Cluid Housing advised that: Phase 2 (6 units) are at second fix stage. To be delivered Q2 2023. Phase 3 (12 units) are completed, however utilities not yet connected. Delivery Q1 2023.
Goldencroft, Portlaoise (Old CBS site)	67	13 no. 2 bed apts 24 no. 3 bed houses 26 no. 2 bed houses 4 no. 2 bed bungalow	Cluid Housing	3 Phases – on site. First phase (13 units) delivery Q1 2023 as ESB connection not yet made
South Dublin Road, Kilminchy	36	13 no. 2 bed houses 23 no 3 bed houses	Cooperative Housing	On site – 3 phases for delivery commencing Q2 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 Q3 2023
TOTAL	347			

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

Location/Scheme	No of Houses	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)	Currently out to tender for construction – due back Q1 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 Q1 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 advertised Jan 2023
Doonane	12	12 no. 3 bed 2 storey	LCC (Construction)	Stage 2 approved. Part VIII to be progressed.
Derry Road, Durrow	22	9 No. 1 Bed 1 Storey 4 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 5 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Construction)	18 dwellings and a minimum of 4 serviced sites proposed Stage 1 Approved
Ballyadams	1	1 no. 6 bed bungalow	LCC (Construction)	Stage 1 Approved – Design Team appointed; Stage 2 submitted
Stradbally Road, Portlaoise	80		Mixed Tenure	Masterplan for entire lands recently noted by Portlaoise MD members. Tender

				evaluation for Design Team complete.
Bracklone St, Portarlington	15	15 no. 2 bed houses	LCC (Construction)	Stage 1 approved in Q3 2022
Rushall Mountrath	2	2 no. 3 bed 2 storey	LCC (Construction)	Stage 1 To Be Submitted in Q1 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 Q1 2023
Main St, Ballinakill	3	2 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 1 No. 1 Bed Apt	LCC (Construction)	Stage 1 To Be Submitted in Q1 2023
Moanbaun, Mountrath	15	4 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 7 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 4 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey	LCC (Construction)	Stage 1 approved
1 New Road, Portlaoise	1	1 No. 4 Bed 1 Storey	LCC (Construction)	Single Stage - To Be Submitted in Q1 2023
6 Emmett Terrace, Mountmellick	1	1 No. 4 Bed 1 Storey	LCC (Construction)	Single Stage - To Be Submitted in Q1 2023
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	Application approved Jan 2023
Convent Lands, Portlaoise (CAS)	52	33 no 2 bed apts 15 no 1 bed apts 4 no. 2 bed houses	Sophia Housing	Stage 3 application approved; Due to proceed to next stage of construction tender in Feb 2023.
County Hotel, Portlaoise (CAS)	10	8 no. 1 bed apts 2 no. 2 bed apts	Cluid Housing	Bat Survey complete – no findings. Propping up works complete to enable the completion of further investigation site which will inform Stage 2 CAS application and planning.
“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	Part VIII approved; site transfer in progress. Construction to commence as soon as possible.
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	Respond yet to advise re review of CALF Funding issues by the Dept of Housing and likely construction commencement date.
Doran’s land adj to O’Moore Place, Portlaoise	30			Discussions ongoing with landowner.
TOTAL	469			

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

In the year ending 2022:

Affordable	Advance Turnkey Purchase arrangement – EOI received Potential No of unit yield	Part V – Potential No of Units Yield	LCC CONSTRUCTION Potential No of Units Yield
Affordable	55	8	5
Cost Rental	27		

- Design Team procured for the design of social and affordable housing on Council owned landbank on the Stradbally Road, Portlaoise.

Call remains open for Expressions of Interest in respect of:

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

Workshop/seminar for elected and SPC members to be arranged in relation to Affordable Housing.

REGENERATION / VACANT HOMES

Vacant Homes Office

A full time Vacant Homes Office was established in Laois County Council in 2022. Some of its key functions are:

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

Vacancy Surveys were carried out in Mountmellick and Mountrath in 2022. Efforts are currently underway to make contact the owners of residential properties identified as being vacant in the surveys, to outline options available to return these properties to use for housing purposes. Where ownership cannot be established we will proceed to make local enquiries in relation to ownership, vacancy history, etc. and use the CPO process to acquire properties deemed to be suitable for social housing where all other means of returning the properties to use have been exhausted.

Vacancy / Regeneration Funding schemes

- **Croí Conaithe (Towns) Fund Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant**
 - A grant of up to a maximum of €30,000, including VAT, available for the refurbishment of vacant properties for occupation as a principal private residence,

including the conversion of a property which has not been used as residential heretofore.

- o The scheme was previously limited to properties located in towns or villages but has recently been expanded to include all properties per DHLGH Circular 43/2022.

Croí Conaithe (Towns) Applications at 31st December 2022

No of Applications received to date	25
No refused	3
No approved in principle	2
No finally approved	2
No under consideration	18

- **Buy and Renew Scheme**

- o 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.
- o 2 properties received B&R Construct Stage 1 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.

SERVICED SITES

Laois County Council is actively considering the development of **serviced sites** over the coming years at a number of locations in the county. In advance of finalising its plans, Laois County Council has opened a **survey** to establish the level of interest in serviced sites among prospective home buyers in the county and, in general, their preferred locations.

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 survey can be located on the links below:

<https://laois.ie/serviced-site-development-survey/>

<https://consult.laois.ie/en/content/serviced-site-development-survey>

The following locations are currently under consideration for serviced sites. Sites to be a minimum of 0.25 acres in size.

Location	No. of Sites	Comment
Doonane	2	Stage 1 approved as part of larger housing scheme Part VIII to be progressed in Q1 2023
Derry Road Durrow	4	Stage 1 approved as part of larger housing scheme Part VIII to be progressed in Q2 2023
Castletown	9	Proposal. Detailed design currently on-going
Ballacolla Road, Durrow	4	Proposal. Detailed design currently on-going.
Gleann na Glaise	4	Proposal. Detailed design currently ongoing.
TOTAL SITES UNDER CONSIDERATION	19	

**Ongoing discussions in relation to sites in Abbeyleix and Ballyroan.*

HOUSING STOCK

Housing Re-Lets

Month	LA Keys Surrendered	Properties Acquired	Works Completed
January 22	9	0	3
February 22	7	1	11
March 22	5	0	4
April 22	5	0	14
May 22	6	0	5
June 22	3	0	7
July 22	3	0	6
August 22	6	1	3
September 22	4	0	6
October 22	5	2	5
November 22	4	1	6
December 22	4	1	4
TOTAL (YTD)	61	6	74

NOTE: There are currently 20 vacant units from our existing stock and a further 9 units that the Council acquired. Works are either ongoing on these properties or specifications are being prepared for works to be carried out.

NOTE: Laois County Council were approved Voids Department funding in 2022 for 60 units at a total cost of €660,000.

Housing Maintenance

Month	Work Orders Raised	Work Orders Closed	Work Orders Open
January 22	424	424	0
February 22	517	517	0
March 22	404	404	0
April 22	392	392	0
May 22	352	352	0
June 22	363	363	0
July 22	340	340	0
August 22	364	364	0
September 22	406	406	0
October 22	374	329	0
November 22	533	473	60
December 22	377	242	135
TOTAL (YTD)	4,846	4,651	195

Midlands Retrofit Programme:

Address	Properties	Units Commenced	Units Completed	Update
Mountain View Sq., Portlaoise	24	24	24 houses complete	All Works complete, claim paid on 19 houses.
Hillview Drive, Portlaoise	19	19	19 houses complete	All Works complete, claim paid on 14 houses.
Quigley Pk, Rathdowney	20	20	20 houses complete	All Works complete, claim paid on 15 houses.
Radharc Alainn, Arles	18	18	18 Houses complete.	All Works complete, claim paid on 15 houses.
Derrymore, Portarlinton	26	26	26 houses complete	All Works complete.
Kirwan Park, Mountmellick	51	51	51 houses M&E complete	M&E, windows and doors complete on 52 houses. Insulation and timber boxing to be complete by 30 th January.
Total Properties	158	158	158 Units (fully complete)	

Energy Efficiency/Retrofitting Programme:

Address	Properties	Units Commenced	Units Completed	Update
O'Moore Place, Portlaoise	27	13	7	Construction Works has commenced on 7 houses. 7 houses with heating completed and external insulation works complete. Works continuing on the remainder of the houses.
Total Properties	27	13	7	

NOTE A: Laois County Council has been approved Department Retrofitting funding for 47 units at a total cost of €1,299,987. Surveys of these properties (listed below) commenced in Q3 2022 and tenders advertised in Q1 2023.

- 1) Thornberry, Abbeyleix – 16 units.
- 2) Church Avenue, Stradbally – 9 units.
- 3) Slieve Bloom Park, Clonaslee – 8 units.
- 4) St. John's Square, Portlaoise – 7 units.
- 5) Old School Road, Ballylynan – 7 units.

There will be a match funding requirement from the Council in the above regard, which will be determined when tender prices are returned.

NOTE B: The Housing Section are currently preparing their submission for the continued programme of retrofitting homes in 2023. We have been advised that funding will be made available for up to 65% of last year's programme and we have been provisionally approved funding with an average of €36,000/unit.

The following 56 units in the following estates are being considered in 2023:

- 1) St Brigids Place, Portlaoise – 29 units.
- 2) Fr O'Connor Crescent, Mountrath – 11 units.
- 3) Erkindale Drive, Durrrow – 6 units.
- 4) Rossmore View, Graiguecullen – 10 units.

(NOTE: The above estates were prioritised based on property age and MD area.)

There will be a match funding requirement to complete all the retrofitting works which will depend on the tender prices returned.

Once this proposal has been approved by the Dept, we will commence surveys of properties to inform the tender for works.

HOUSING NEED

Homeless Presentations

Time Period	Homeless Presentations	Breakdown of Household
1 st January – 31 st December 2022	244	69 families 175 single persons

Homeless Accommodation

	Emergency Accommodation booked 1 st Jan to 31 st Dec 2022	Social Housing allocated from homelessness in 2022
Families	26	44
Single Persons	63	19
TOTAL	89	63*

* This figure accounts for 29.3% of Laois County Council's total allocations in 2022.

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

Accommodation and supports are provided by Laois County Council to homeless individuals with complex needs, in accordance with the Housing First National Implementation Plan 2022 – 2026. A target for the provision of 35 units of accommodation over five years is included in this plan, that is, 7 per year. In 2022, Laois County Council exceeded this target by providing 8 Housing First units for 8 single persons in cooperation with the Peter Mc Verry Trust.

Social Housing List at 31st December 2022

TOTAL No of Social Housing Applicants on waiting list	1,805
Number of SH applicants availing of HAP supports	865
Number of HAP tenants transferred from Rent Supplement	332

RAS/Leasing Statistics at 31st December 2022

Active RAS tenancies	77
Active short-term leasing tenancies (Social Housing Leasing Scheme)	29
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	27

Social Housing Income thresholds

Members will be aware that with effect from 1st October 2022, the Dept of Housing moved Laois to Band 2 in respect of the income eligibility thresholds for social housing support, i.e., revised threshold of €30,000, an increase of €5,000 on the previous limit.

Recent DHLGH Circular 48/2022 Social Housing Assessment (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations 2022 provides for a **further increase in addition to the above** in respect of income eligibility thresholds nationally. In the case of Laois, this means a further increase in the Band 2 threshold to €35,000.

Band	Single Adult	2 Adults	1 Adult 1 Child	1 Adult, 2 Children	2 Adults 1 Child	2 Adults 3 Children	3 Adults 4 Children
1	€40,000	€42,000	€41,000	€42,000	€43,000	€45,000	€48,000
2	€35,000	€36,750	€35,875	€36,750	€37,625	€39,375	€42,000
3	€30,000	€31,500	€30,750	€31,500	€32,250	€33,750	€36,000

The table above gives a snapshot of the revised thresholds, with Band 2 for Laois highlighted. Applications submitted from 1st January 2023 will be assessed as per the revised regulations. Per the Circular attached, applications assessed and determined prior to that date, as exceeding the income limit, can be re-submitted by the applicant for assessment.

Housing Allocations / Nominations to AHB's

Method of Delivery	Allocations from 1 st January – 31 st December 2022
First allocation of New Build/Acquired unit	54
Relet / Refurbished Stock Allocation	67
Nominations to AHB housing	205
Housed via leasing	20
	346

The total number of allocations in 2022 to persons with a disability at the end of Q4 2022 is 67.

*this figure includes AHBs

LOANS AND GRANTS

Loans

Local Authority Home Loan (LAHL) at 31st December 2022

No of Loan Approvals	28
No of Applications refused	21

Grants

Housing Adaptation Grants at 31st December 2022

Allocation €1,389,375.00

	No of Grants paid in 2022	Value
HOP	110	€501,770
MAG	41	€173,000
HGD	51	€570,220
	202	€1,244,990

Disabled Persons Grant for Social Housing

In 2022, Laois County Council was advised of an allocation of €674,720 by the Dept of Housing.

Laois County Council made a further submission and was approved by the Dept of Housing in 2022 to fund additional works to progress our programme for 2022 in respect of applications deemed urgent and medically 'severe'. This also meant an additional expenditure outlay by Laois County Council.

DPG works at 31st December 2022:

Original Allocation 2022 (including LA funded portion)	€674,720
No. of Applications for which works were completed (including 3 extensions)	57
Value	€747,716.22

There are currently 31 applications on hand, of varying levels of medical need, which the Council was not in a position to consider in 2022 given the funding position and availability of contractors. All applications on hand at the end of February 2023 will be submitted to the Dept of Housing for approval.

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

PRIVATE RENTED INSPECTIONS

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

At 31st December 2022

INSPECTIONS	RAS	HAP	COMPLAINTS	AHB	SHLS	TOTAL
Quarter 1	4	158	5	0	2	169
Quarter 2	5	177	1	119	2	304
Quarter 3	1	110	0	341	1	453
Quarter 4	3	95	7	121	8	234
TOTAL	13	540	13	581	13	1,160

Laos County Council were in the top 10 Local Authorities for achieving the 25% target for rental inspections under *Housing for All*.

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE TO REFUGEES FLEEING CONFLICT

As we enter 2023, the conflict in Ukraine is approaching its first anniversary, with no immediate signs of a resolution.

In accordance with Directive 2001/55/EC, the duration of temporary protection afforded by EU states to Ukrainian citizens fleeing the conflict was for an initial period of one year ie to March 2023, with the possibility of extension. In October 2022 it was announced at a European Council meeting that the Commission had decided that the period of temporary protection should be extended for a further period of one year ie to March 2024. This is the framework under which the local authority role in providing a humanitarian response operates.

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

Laos County Council continues to lead and coordinate the “**Laos Ukrainian Community Response Forum**”. The Forum, consisting of 23 member groups/agencies, convened its 12th meeting on Wednesday 11th January 2023. All efforts are being supported by An Garda Síochána, Dept of Social Protection, the HSE, Civil Defence, the Local Development Company, LOETB, TUSLA and various local voluntary groups, and community organisations.

Most recent data indicates there are 832 displaced Ukrainian citizens in County Laois. Approximately 300 of these are in accommodation centres such as hotels, guesthouses and hostels around the county, with the remainder in privately sourced or pledged accommodation.

Laois County Council continues to assist the International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS - under the auspices of Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, DCEDIY) with the temporary accommodation of Ukrainian arrivals to our county, and provides ongoing details in relation to:-

- Vacant buildings and;
- Sites suitable for medium to long term solutions

and is engaging with the Department of Housing with regard to same.

Following site investigations late last year, a site in Rathdowney has been deemed suitable for a modular homes development. MD members have been briefed and this 42 home project is being managed by the Office of Public Works in conjunction with DCEDIY, who are progressing a local public engagement process.

The Council continues to allocate privately pledged accommodation to Ukrainian families, both in shared settings with a host family, and in matching vacant properties offered under the 'Offer A Home' campaign which launched nationally last November. More than 20 families have been provided with accommodation through these mechanisms to date.

A Ukrainian language speaker also joined the Council's Ukrainian Response Team on 10th January last, which will further assist and enhance service delivery.

A new **Community Recognition Fund** was announced on 24th January 2023, with Laois being allocated €1,014,607. A minimum spend of 60% of the fund must be incurred in 2023. The fund is designed to specifically support communities across the country that have welcomed and are hosting families and citizens from Ukraine and other countries. It is specifically targeted at capital projects that are located in communities, towns and villages that are hosting new communities and aims to support the development of facilities that will be used in the future by all members of the community. These projects can be delivered directly by the local authority or in conjunction with community organisations.

Examples of the projects that will be supported under the fund include:

- The refurbishment of local sports clubs and facilities
- The upgrade of community facilities such as play areas, walkways, parks and community gardens
- The purchase of equipment to benefit local clubs, festivals, music and arts organisations
- The enhancement of school or parish facilities that are open to the wider community after hours or on weekends
- Transport infrastructure such as community vehicles and bus shelters

The deadline for submission of funding proposals to the DRCD is **15th March 2023**.

PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT & HERITAGE

County Development Plan 2021-2027 Update

There has been much activity in the Housing Construction sector in 2021 / 2022.

Planning permissions have been granted for approximately 2,000 residential units since 2019. This does not include approximately 500 residential units granted in rural areas in the same period.

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

- 2021-611- (128 of which are one-off units)
- 2022-367(up to end of Q3) - (86 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

- 2021 – 392 units (incl. Single, Scheme and apartment)
- 2022 – 307 units (up to end of Q3 2022)

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, Portarlington, Portlaoise and Mountmellick.

LOCAL AREA PLANS

Graiguecullen / Carlow Joint Urban Area Plan

The Chief Executives report on the submissions received on the issues paper was presented to both Carlow County Council and Laois County Council for noting in December and January 2023 respectively.

Portlaoise LAP

The closing date for submissions to the issue paper on the Portlaoise LAP was 16th December 2022. A CE report on the 10 submissions received is currently being prepared by the Forward Planning Team and will be circulated to the members of the Portlaoise MD in February 2023.

Residential Zoned Land Tax

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

20 submissions were received during this consultation period. A chief executives report is being prepared on the submissions received.

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

Rathdowney Town Centre First Plan

KPMG Consultants were engaged by Laois County Council to prepare this plan and held consultations in the town on the 23rd November 2022 and 26th November 2022. It is proposed to establish a **Town Team** which will be supported by the Local Authority to deliver the actions of the Town Centre First Plan. It is intended to have a town team established in February 2023. It is envisaged that the plan will be completed by April 2023 with a draft plan in February.

Aughnaharna Masterplan

A Steering Group has been established of stakeholders including Landowners and Council officials to prepare a Masterplan for lands at Augnaharna from the southern circular road to Rathleague. The masterplan will look at transport links for the lands taking account of current land uses and proposed land uses.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE

E-Planning went live in the planning section on the 11th November 2022.

Of the 144 planning applications received from this date to year end, 65 were on the new e-Planning system.

The e-Planning Project is an online system through which planning applications can be made and through which applicants will be kept updated on the progress of their application. The project aims to improve efficiency, reduce the potential for invalid applications, and deliver on the government strategy to move more public services online.

	2021 PERFORMANCE	2022 PERFORMANCE
Total No of Applications	930	840
Number of valid applications received:	742	618
Number of decisions made	692	626
Number of applications granted:	657	582
Number of applications refused:	35	44
Invalid applications returned to applicant:	188 20.21%	225 36%
Applications appealed to An Bord Pleanála	15	24
No of Oneoff House Granted permission	174	188
No of houses with Urban Areas (Multiple Units granted)	553	222
No of applications with an EIAR submitted	4	3
No of applications with an NIS	17	8
PRE PLANNING		
No of pre planning meetings held to Year End	424	351

ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

Current year	2022		2021	
	Dec	Jan - Dec	Dec	Jan - Dec
Service Review				
Total number of new cases subject to complaints that were investigated	5	122	8	143
Number of Warning Letters served	45	435	2	259
Number of Enforcement Notices served	11	83	5	67

No Of cases referred for legal proceedings	2	13	0	12
Number of cases in Court(incl adjournments)	10	61	5	65
Number of cases Resolved in Court	3	11	3	7
Number of Files Closed	7	158	5	137
Number of cases on system	143	143	179	179
Enforcement Costs recouped	€ 40.00	€8,912.95	€ 259.40	€12,660.30
Number of Valid Retention Applications Received relating to Enforcement Action	3	51	5	47
Fees received through Valid Retention Applications Received relating to Enforcement Action	€5,793.00	€51,814.70	€1,711.25	€37,587.17
Legal fees paid	€26,877.36	€82,137.80	€553.50	€38,587.62

HERITAGE

1. Laois Heritage Plan Projects

Heritage Council funded projects for 2022 were completed successfully and all funds recouped.

An application for 2023 funding has been sought from the Heritage Council.

2. Community Monuments Fund

Community Monuments Fund for conservation of **archaeological** sites is open for applications, public closing date **17th February 2022** to Laois County Council.

3. Community Action Projects

The Heritage Council is now accepting applications from community groups and not for profit non-governmental organisations around the country for its [Community Heritage Grant Scheme 2023](#).

A total of €1.5m is available for this year's scheme. Applications are sought for projects aimed at improving access and inclusion to heritage sites, and that apply good heritage practice to the management of places, collections, or objects (including buildings), with the maximum grant amount increased to €25,000 this year.

Funding is also available for groups who want to improve access to heritage for people with disabilities, as well as for projects which explore the heritage of minorities, including newly arrived immigrants, and the Traveller community. The scheme also supports training events for traditional building skills, biodiversity, and archaeology, as well as the purchase of specialised equipment.

4. Conservation Grants

Applications for the **Built Heritage Investment Scheme** and **Historic Structures Fund** for 2023 have closed on the 24th January 2023 and are currently under assessment to be forwarded onto the Dept.

5. NPWS Local Biodiversity Action Fund 2023

The fund administered by the National Parks and Wildlife Service aims to provide funding to assist biodiversity officers, and heritage officers in local authorities without a biodiversity officer, with the implementation of projects that promote actions contained in the National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021.

Applications are being sought for projects in relation to the following

- Preparation of restoration plans for degraded habitats
- Implementation of conservation measures arising from restoration plans
- Preparation of county Plans for IAS
- Removal of IAS
- Projects that support conservation measure implementation in Natura 2000 sites
- Invasive alien species projects, including county IAS Plans
- Pond creation - urban or rural
- Improving habitat connectivity
- Biodiversity & IAS training across local authority staff
- Communications and education projects targeting site users, to raise awareness of biodiversity and to encourage site stewardship

An indicative budget of €100k per local authority is available, with a 15% co-funding requirement. The deadline for receipt of applications is **Friday 24th February 2023**.

BROADBAND

1. National Broadband Ireland (NBI)

All Section 254 Licences applied for, 26 to date with 18 in 2022 have been granted in 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, ducting, new poles and rollout.

NBI are rolling out fibre in the Portlaoise and Graigucellen MD areas at present.

2. WIFI 4 EU.

WiFi4EU is a project developed by the European Union that intends to bring free WiFi to local communities.

The aim of WiFi4EU initiative is to bring high-quality WiFi access to places where it is not yet available but would provide value for the community and visitors to the County.

The rollout of the provision of WIFI infrastructure in public places has been completed (equipment, installation and maintenance and support) in the following location:

Portlaoise, Portarlinton, Stradbally, Abbeyleix, Ballinakill, Ballyroan, Mountmellick, Mountrath, Camross and Borris in Ossory as follows:

Signage will be located in all of the above areas early in the new year.

Portlaoise WiFi4EU project was launched in June, and it is proposed to launch all other locations in the coming weeks as well as advertisement.

The remaining areas will be officially launched early in 2023.

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. Oisín House Rossmore, Killeshin
4. Donaghmore workhouse and Agricultural Museum
5. Shanganamore Community Centre Barrowhouse
6. Ballyroan Community Centre

4. Vex Robotics.

Vex Robotics and gaming programme has been secured for 2 schools initially in Barrowhouse and Ballyroan. This will commence in Shanganamore Community Centre BCP in Barrowhouse and also in Ballyroan Community Centre BCP in January. This programme will be offered to a max of 10 children between the age of 10 – 14 in both locations. There will be an introduction event of 2 hours showing children how to build and operate Robots, with groups then putting in as much of their own time thereafter to develop the project. All the equipment will be supplied. This will prepare them to build their own Robots and take part in Regional finals in Feb/March.

LOCAL ENTERPRISE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Annual Employment Survey:

The 2022 Employment Survey of LEO clients showed positive job creation in each of the 31 Local Enterprise Offices. 7,870 new jobs were created nationally in 2022 representing a net employment gain of 3,447. The total employment in LEO supported businesses in 2022 is 37,863. LEO Laois showed a net employment gain of 79 new jobs in 2022, an increase of 32 on 2021.

RESULTS of 2022 EMPLOYMENT SURVEY				
LEOs	No. Clients	2022 Gross Jobs (FT + OT)	2022 Total Gains	Net Jobs
Carlow	219	1,101	243	56
Cavan	179	1,413	215	89
Clare	220	1,353	261	105
Cork City	187	887	234	159
Cork North & West	276	1,409	247	58
Cork South	157	863	246	170
Donegal	248	1,464	309	135
Dublin City	429	1,966	543	261
Dublin Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown	291	1,346	218	103
Dublin Fingal	239	1,069	270	206
Dublin South	279	1,401	259	102
Galway County/City	268	1,192	221	43
Kerry	280	1,248	280	93
Kildare	256	1,297	284	148
Kilkenny	182	1,077	193	103
Laois	143	747	111	79
Leitrim	157	435	95	23
Limerick	305	1,815	376	177
Longford	253	1,300	183	87
Louth	222	913	206	61
Mayo	206	1,226	255	64
Meath	257	1,407	293	22
Monaghan	169	1,005	241	115
Offaly	204	1,196	279	154
Roscommon	176	1,032	219	64
Sligo	205	998	160	35
Tipperary	283	1,528	398	238
Waterford	280	1,222	267	61
WestMeath	258	1,484	303	195
Wexford	234	1,773	330	177
Wicklow	159	696	131	64
Grand Total	7,221	37,863	7,870	3,447

2022 was a very productive year. Highlights include:

- €319,514 approved in grant aid to 14 businesses with potential to create 51 new jobs.
- €14,054 approved in TAME grants to support business to develop their export journey.
- 34 Trading online vouchers approved to the value of €€71,870.
- 260 Laois businesses availed of mentoring with over 300 one-to-one business advise sessions delivered.
- 85 training courses were delivered with 979 participants of which 135 potential start-ups participated in Start Your Own Business Courses.
- 8 companies participated in the Lean for Micro Programme.
- 10 Laois Companies took part in the Midlands Management Development Programme along with 8 businesses from Offaly.
- 11 Laois businesses took part in a six week Grow Your Business Programme.
- 31 companies took part in the Green for Micro programme.
- Supported 10 Laois companies in making applications to Micro Finance Ireland.
- 7 secondary schools in Laois took part in the Student Enterprise Awards Programme.
- Over 100 businesses attended Local Enterprise Week in March 2022.

A total of €2,236,474 has been approved in LEO funding to Laois based companies for the period January 2018 to December 2022 with a total of €2,178,885 paid out. This funding supported the creation of 308 jobs.

The Portlaoise Innovation Centre/The Cube

The Portlaoise Innovation Centre Designated Activity Company formally received the keys to the building known as 'The Cube' in late December 2022. This follows purchase of the building by way of a turnkey agreement whereby the previously vacant and derelict building was refurbished to meet a high specification to the requirements of the DAC. The refurbishment included structural, mechanical and electrical and internal fit out works at a cost of €1.62 million. Members will be aware that this was funded with assistance from Enterprise Ireland through the Regional Enterprise Development Fund in the amount of €1.34 million, the balance of €280,000 from Laois County Council as joint venture partner.

In the matter of tenanting and business start ups Members should note that a tenant has been secured for the entire 1st floor, that positive discussions are taking place with regard to a client for the second floor and the ground floor will comprise a mix of hot desks, energy efficient services to the public and Midlands.ie presence

ROADS, TRANSPORTATION, DRAINAGE & PUBLIC REALM

J17 National Enterprise Park - Phase 4 - Western Arm

Works commenced in Q4 2022 on the initial elements of phase 4, consisting of the installation of foul and surface water infrastructure along with commencing the construction of the 900m long Western Arm, connecting the roundabout at Glanbia to the roundabout at Irish Rail's Depot.



Works have been undertaken to enhance the presentation of the National Enterprise Park through the installation of gateway features at both entrances and landscaping on the approaches to roundabouts, which will first come into bloom in Spring/Summer 2023.



Safe Routes to Schools – Round 2

Schools selected for Round 2 of the NTA's Safe Routes to School programme were announced in mid-December 2022. The successful Laois schools are;

- Camross NS, Camross
- St Pauls NS, Irishtown, Mountmellick

Laois Schools, successful in Round 1, are;

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

An Taisce Green-Schools SRTS officers have been liaising with the school principals, the wider school communities and Laois County Council staff. They have collected baseline information including maps of school travel patterns, surveys of parent attitudes and concerns, front of school audits and walkability audits. This baseline information provides an evidence base and a local mandate for potential active travel interventions. The SRTS

officers discuss and agree potential improvements in local walking and cycling infrastructure with both the school and local authority personnel.

The SRTS programme is an important element of progressing the creation and development of safer walking and cycling routes within communities. Funding for progressing these SRTS interventions is provided through the NTA Active Travel Investment Programme and allocations for Round 1 schools are likely as part of the 2023 NTA Active Travel Fund, soon to be announced.

Changes to Fixed Payment Offences

The S.I. No. 589/2022 - Small Public Service Vehicle (Fixed Payment Offences And Driver Licence Period) Regulations 2022 has introduced the following changes to the regulations for penalties for Taxis from the 1st January 2023;

- Failure to take a person with a guide dog – has been raised to the maximum value of €250.00 for each offence
- Failure to take a person using a wheelchair – is newly added to the Regulations, also at €250.00.

ENVIRONMENT & 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.

2. **Bring Banks:**

Tonnages of collected recyclable material in 2022.

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total Tonnage
2022	163.77	114.28	162.18	120.57	133.64	149.84	132.44	172.27	57.17	120.65	138.07	121.82	1641.66
2021	196.89	140.31	177.84	173.60	143.65	170.08	153.40	139.77	160.03	115.17	130.24	176.10	1877.09
2020	138.37	86.81	121.35	205.29	195.24	190.74	177.39	160.14	146.11	141.37	144.68	176.83	1884.33
2019	138.80	113.96	86.93	108.42	122.60	86.79	129.25	105.45	86.87	112.86	100.25	122.97	1315.15

Table 2 – 2022 Bring Bank Tonnages

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

3. **Waste Management, Complaints & Litter Management:**

a) **Illegal Dumping**

Tonnes of material collected for 2022 is 649 tonnes.

Table 3 below shows the material collected from 2019 to 2022.

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022
Tonnage	367	238	530	649

Table 3 – Illegal Dumping Tonnages

b) Waste Enforcement & Complaints

Table 4 below details the number and types of complaints received in 2022.

Nature	Number
Waste Management/Enforcement	566
Litter	129
Water	47
Air	38
Noise	35
Waste Infrastructure	9
Total	824

Table 4 – Environmental Complaint Register

c) Litter Fines

During 2022, 47 litter fines were issued (44–litter & 3–dog fouling).

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. Historic Landfills:

There are 18 historic landfill sites on the EPA Section 22 Register. During 2022, Certificate of Authorisation Applications were submitted to the EPA for Aghnure, Killabban and Rathdowney Road, Durrow Landfills.

Previous Certificate of Authorisation applications were submitted for Trumera, Wynne Park and Oughavaí Landfills.

The remaining 12 landfills are Class C Low Risk Category Sites. Risk assessments and applications to the EPA will be prepared when funding is made available by the Department of the Environment.

6. GAP Regulations - Farm Inspection Update

- The purpose of the farm inspections is to improve the water quality in the “at-risk” river catchments identified as catchments under pressure from agricultural activities.
- Farm surveys are being carried out in the Douglas and Barrow River Catchments.
- The Environment Section provided an information evening with the I.F.A on the 7th of November 2022
- Farm surveys include an inspection of the farmyard and its nearest watercourses and a follow up desk top study in relation to the farmlands.

- Approximately 50 Farms have been visited in 2022 and farms ranked as high, medium low risk, as appropriate. Where necessary, warning letters and verbal warning have issued.

7. **Waste Management (Storage, Presentation & Segregation of Household and Commercial Waste) Bye-Laws**

Waste Enforcement Officers carried out 512 household waste inspections in different housing schemes in Portlaoise, Portarlinton, Mountrath, Mountmellick, Ballylinan, Crettyard and Clonaslee.

Of the 512 households surveyed, 470 households demonstrated compliance with the Waste Bye-Laws. Notwithstanding numerous requests, 42 households have not demonstrated compliance.

These 42 households have been issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice (€75).

Emergency Planning, Fire Services & Flood Relief

In 2022 Laois County Fire & Rescue Service attended 795 emergency incidents consisting of 306 fires, 355 special service incidents & 134 false alarms.

Turnout by Station*:

Portlaoise – 338	Portarlinton - 129	Stradbally – 158	Mountmellick – 125
Abbeyleix - 91	Mountrath – 76	Durrow – 103	Rathdowney – 64

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

Retained Fire Services in Ireland – A Review of Recruitment and Retention and the Future Sustainability of Service Delivery

The above report was launched by the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage in December 2022. The document refers to a review, undertaken over 2021 and 2022, which inter alia concludes that ‘work life balance options for retained fire fighters needs to be addressed to make the retained fire service an attractive employment option’. For it’s part, Laois County Council has recently piloted a new roster system at Portlaoise Fire Station with a view to supporting enhanced work life balance and appropriate distance/time criteria. The pilot, if successful, will be rolled out across other stations noting, in all cases, that emergency response service levels for local communities are observed and retained.

New Fire Station in Stradbally

Following approval of Part 8 proposals in February 2022, for a new Fire Station in Stradbally, Laois County Council has recently received ‘approval in principle for the construction of a new Fire Station.’ 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 delivery of the new Fire Station. This brief was sent to the NDFEM in December & approval to appoint the design team is now awaited.

Mountmellick Fire Station upgrade

Approval to go to tender for the upgrade has been sought from the NDFEM.

Other NDFEM capital funded projects

A new Class B fire appliance funded by NDFEM funded by NDFEM was delivered in November & is now on the run in Portarlington

Civil Defence Facilities

A Part 8 Consultation process for the provision of a new Civil Defence Facility at Mountrath Road, Portlaoise is currently ongoing with a closing date for submissions of 6th February 2023.

WATER SERVICES AND RURAL WATER

Uisce Éireann

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

Portlaoise Water Supply Improvement Scheme – Following submissions from Laois County Council, Irish Water is progressing the introduction of Borewells PW07 and PW08 at Coolbanagher. IW/NOD currently agreeing design with the ESB. This intervention will provide for increased supply to the network, enhanced resilience for periods of drought and enable a planned maintenance programme for all Borewells to be introduced, funding is available from Irish Water under Capital Maintenance.

Disinfection/PH control programme – Civil works progressing in Meelick, Derryguile, Kyle, Five Wells, Derrymoyle and Lough WTPs. MEICA works progressed at the Strand, Knocks, Derryguile, Lough, Kyle, Five Wells, Clonin Hill, Derrymoyle, Ballyroan and Meelick WTP. Process proving now complete at the Knocks, Kyle and Ballyroan WTPs.

ESB supply upgrade currently being progressed for Five Wells. Power switchover at Lough WTP now complete. Design for Kilminchy WTP and Fermoy WTP currently being progressed by CWL/IW.

Irish Water Small Towns & Villages Growth Programme

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

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

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

Ballyroan WwTP Upgrade – A laser scan survey of the plant and an asbestos survey are being progressed/carried out. Catchment questionnaire completed by LCC for IW. Works now expected to progress in 2023.

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

Networks and Water Conservation - First fix, find and fix and lead replacement work continued throughout the county in 2022 and will continue into 2023. Significant progress was made in leakage management in Portarlinton following back yard service works in St. Michael's Park.

Replacement of watermain on the Swan network is now complete.

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

National WWPS programme – Bob's Bar Pump Station has been issued by Irish Water to Ward & Burke Construction / Tobin Consulting Engineers for detailed design. Survey works recently completed on site by Tobin's to finalise design.

Taking in Charge

Continue working with IW to take the 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.

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

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 in due course.

Water conservation and network upgrade works were completed on a no. of schemes in 2022. Grants totaling €107,130 were paid to Ballacolla GWS, the Heath GWS and Barrowhouse GWSS in respect of these upgrade works.

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

Well Grants – There were 65 applications received for grant aid assistance to improve private water supplies to domestic households in 2022 and the sum of €139,944 was paid out to 39 applicants in respect of well grants. The remaining grant applications will be processed in 2023.



Domestic Lead Remediation Grant Scheme

The Domestic Lead Remediation Grant Scheme has been in existence since 2016 and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage have revised the eligibility criteria with effect from 1 December 2022. The grant is no longer means tested and is available for both public and private water supplies. This grant provides 100% financial assistance (max of €5,000) to eligible applicants to replace lead piping and fittings in a house, that is occupied as the applicant's normal place of residence. Applications can be made through the local authority.

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

Corporate

The following Civic Reception was held on the 1st December 2022:

- Mr. Martin McDonald - Winner of the O/65 race in the 21st World Masters Mountain Running Championship.

Community

Laois PPN

Laois PPN hosted the 3 Municipal District plenaries on 5th, 6th and 7th of December, 2022 and the County Plenary on the 14th December, 2022 with very good attendance each night. A detailed presentation was delivered on the National PPN Conference hosted by Laois PPN. Ms Emma Murtagh of The Wheel, presented a Grant Writing Tips & Tricks Workshop.

On Thursday 8th December, 2022, Laois PPN attended the MRPPN in Tullamore, hosted by Offaly PPN. Laois PPN made a presentation to all in attendance on the new formatted Newsletter.

Laois PPN held a Memorial Walk the 6th of November, 2022 in remembrance of the late Mick Dowling. This was the third year that Laois PPN organised a walk to honour Mick's memory and was attended by his family and friends.

Laois Comhairle na nÓg

The tender for the Provision of Services for Laois Comhairle na nÓg on behalf of Laois County Council was awarded to Youth Work Ireland (Laois) for 2023 and 2024.

Age Friendly Programme

The new Age Friendly Strategy has been re-formatted and proposed actions for 2023- 2027 are currently being discussed with delivery partners.

A total of 1000 ICE cards were distributed in November 2022 and a further 5000 will be distributed during 2023.

Healthy Laois

On Thursday, the 24th November, 2022, a Consultation Workshop was held in the LOETB Centre of Excellence, O' Moore Park, Portlaoise. The workshop brought together a broad cross section of Laois Community Groups and agencies, in addition to Service Users, to help inform the new Healthy Laois Strategy 2023- 2025. A series of round table consultations and feedback sessions were held, which were facilitated by Ms Storm Powell and Mr Jim O'Brien.

The workshop offered an opportunity for meaningful collaboration with stakeholders groups and organisations and the focused discussions produced very good information which provided insight into the issues affecting the citizens of county Laois, with key actions and outcomes identified.

Town and Village Renewal Scheme

In December 2022, €917,496 in funding was awarded to Laois under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme 2022 benefitting 5 projects at 4 locations in County Laois. All projects under the 2019 Town and Village Renewal Scheme are now complete with 2 remaining projects under the 2020 scheme due for completion in Quarter 2 2023. Of the 5 projects under the 2021 TVRS, 2 projects are nearing completion with the remaining 3 due for completion during 2023. Details of recent TVRS 2022 approvals are:

TVRS 2022	Details	TVRS 2022 Grant Amount
Portarlington	Delivery of Phase 3 of the Portarlington People's Park Landscape Masterplan to include the following; Central Plaza/Event Space, Community GIY Garden, Outdoor Adventure Activity Area, upgrade of play equipment features in the existing playground and development of natural play features, upgrade of park furnishings throughout including park benches, signs, bins and associated professional fees.	€500,000
Ballinakill	Further development of Ballinakill Amenity Park and Outdoor Swimming Pool to include Installation of a Multi Use Games Area, Pool Tanking System, and surfacing of an Accessible Parking Area.	€250,000
Mountmellick	The further development of the Community Arts Centre in Mountmellick to enhance the existing Arts & Music Venue in the town through the surfacing of an Accessible Parking Area.	€67,500
County Laois Marketing Campaign Measure	Develop a marketing campaign to attract remote workers and mobile talent to the county of Laois, through showcasing the centrality of the county, the quality of life, access to hubs and an extensive recreation offering.	€50,000
Ballyroan Project Development Measure	Conduct a feasibility study on the site of the Old Boys School Ballyroan with a view to determining future uses.	€49,996
		€917,496

Local Community Development Committee

An Expression of Interest to develop a Local Development Strategy and operate the Local Action Group for the new LEADER Programme 2023-2027 was submitted on the 16th December 2022 by Laois LCDC to the Department. It is proposed to contract a Rural Development Programme Team of officers to work with the community and deliver the work on the ground with Laois County Council as Lead Financial Partner. Correspondence is awaited from the Department in this regard.

SPORT & LEISURE UPDATE

Annual Inspection of Playgrounds

The annual inspection of playgrounds was carried out by Play Services Ireland and the subsequent report issued in January 2023.

Operation Transformation

Sport & Leisure Section & Healthy Laois Co-ordinator worked closely with SVT Activity & Wellness Hub to secure the location of operation Transformation in Laois. Filming commenced in Dec 2022 and ongoing support is being provided on a weekly basis to support communities involved.

ARTS & CULTURE

Arts Awards and Opportunities Information Sessions

Applications are open for 2023 Arts Act Grants, the Tyrone Guthrie Centre Bursary, Artists in Schools Scheme and expressions of interest for Laois Culture Night 2023. Expressions of interest for the Laois Arthouse Studios and Residential Studios in Stradbally have also been sought. Closing date for applications is Friday 17th February 2023. The Arts Office is hosting two information sessions on upcoming grants and funding opportunities in 2023, one in-person session at Dunamais Arts Centre on Thursday 19th January and one online session on Thursday 26th January.

Port Art Collective Briefing

The Arts Office were invited by Port Art Collective to give a talk on upcoming grants and opportunities along with Arts Council representative. Port Art Collective has members from Portarlinton and surrounding areas who represent many strands of the arts.

Creative Ireland Laois Events

'Activations' Networking Event for Laois Artists aged 55+ took place on Thursday 19th January at Dunamais Arts Centre. 'Activations' is part of Laois's Creativity in Older Age Programme supported by Creative Ireland in partnership with Laois County Council Arts Office with Sarah Thornton as the facilitator.

Tech for Artists Event for Laois Artists aged 55+ will take place at Laois Arthouse, Stradbally on Monday 23rd January, with three sessions: Introduction to using Instagram to gain inspiration and to promote your work, digitising your work and drop-in session for technical enquiries.

LIBRARY SERVICES

New County Library, Main Street, Portlaoise.

Works are continuing on the new library on Main Street Portlaoise with a handover date now planned for March 2023. The internal fitout and configuration of the library will then commence in April commencing with shelving fitout, children's library and furniture set up, local studies room set-up, movement and arranging of library books and stock in the various categories and the setup of all ICT infrastructure. A planned opening date to the public of May/June 2023 is envisaged. The new library will facilitate the provision of educational, cultural and information services for the community and our visitors. Occupying a central location on the Main Street the library will form a significant element of The Cultural Quarter development in the historic core of Portlaoise showcasing the Fort Protector and Fitzmaurice Place. The library has been designed to be universally accessible, welcoming and inclusive to all communities as well as providing study space, meeting rooms, sensory library services and a dedicated Local History and Studies reference and reading room.

Family Time at your library

Laois County Library Services hosted Reading and Storytime events for families and children over the month of December. As part of the national "Right to Read" literacy programme" families were encouraged to attend interactive storytimes in all branch libraries .

Laois County Library Services took part in Library Ireland Week 2022 by celebrating and promoting Libraries as Places of Sanctuary in Laois with a schedule of in-house and outreach events. Below is a library visit and tour by Fáilte Isteach.



Campaign against Period Poverty: As part of the campaign against period poverty free sanitary products will be available in the bathrooms of Mountmellick, Portlaoise and Abbeyleix libraries.

Stradbally Library

Creative Writing Course – a new creative writing course in collaboration with Ryan Dunne from the LOETB has commenced in January. The class takes place on Tuesdays from 3:15pm-4:45pm. Call or email the library to register your interest. Booking essential.

Digital/Smartphone Classes – a new course in collaboration with the LOETB for learning to use your smartphone/tablet will begin in Jan, start date to be confirmed. Taking place on Thursdays from 1pm-2:30pm. Call or email the library to register your interest. Booking essential.

Abbeyleix Library

Art Gallery – the gallery is continuing to host an exhibition of artworks by local artist Frances Duggan for January. The pieces on display are a mixture of landscapes and animals using oils and mixed media.

Mountmellick Library and Art Gallery –

We were delighted to host for the month of January from Mountmellick Community School a 6th Year Art Exhibition. 'Moving Forward' is an exhibition of work created and curated by sixth year students in Mountmellick Community School. These students range in age from fifteen to eighteen years old. The work in this show explores a range of disciplines, from painting and drawing to print-making and mixed-media sculpture. The art students have applied these mediums to explore the theme of 'Moving Forward' within their lives independently and as part of the school community. The students have produced exceptional work and we hope you visit and enjoy this expressive collection of artwork during library opening hours.

Writing Space: Mountmellick Library will be hosting a writing space on Thursday mornings where people can write/journal and meet. If interested call 0578644572 or email mountmellicklibrary@laoiscoco.ie to find out more.

Mountrath Library

Ciorcal Comhrá – Deardaoin, 12ú Eanáir ag 6.15pm go 7.30pm. Bígí linn le comhrá as Gaeilge agus cupán tae!

Rathdowney Library

Junior Chess Club – our chess club for ages 9-13 years takes place in the library on Thursday evenings from 7pm-8pm. Call or email the library for more details.

Sewing Club – our new sewing club meets on Monday evenings from 7pm-8pm. Call or email the library for more details.

Sensory Toy Resource Collection – a service for parents of children with additional needs who live in Co. Laois. The toys are designed to support the development of gross motor skills, fine motor skills and communication skills.

Durrow Library

Lego Club – Calling all master builders! Join us in the library on Wednesdays from 2pm-4pm for a different Lego building challenge each week. Booking advised.

Irish Circle – the Irish Circle group will meet up in the library on Tues, 10th Jan, Tues, 17th Jan and Tues, 24th Jan at 6:30pm. Call or email the library for more details.

Adult Book Club – the club will next meet on Tues, 31st Jan at 6:10pm. Call or email the library for more details.

Portarlington Library

Adult Book Club – The club is currently reading People Like Her by Ellery Lloyd. Next meeting takes place on Tues, 31st Jan at 11am. All welcome.

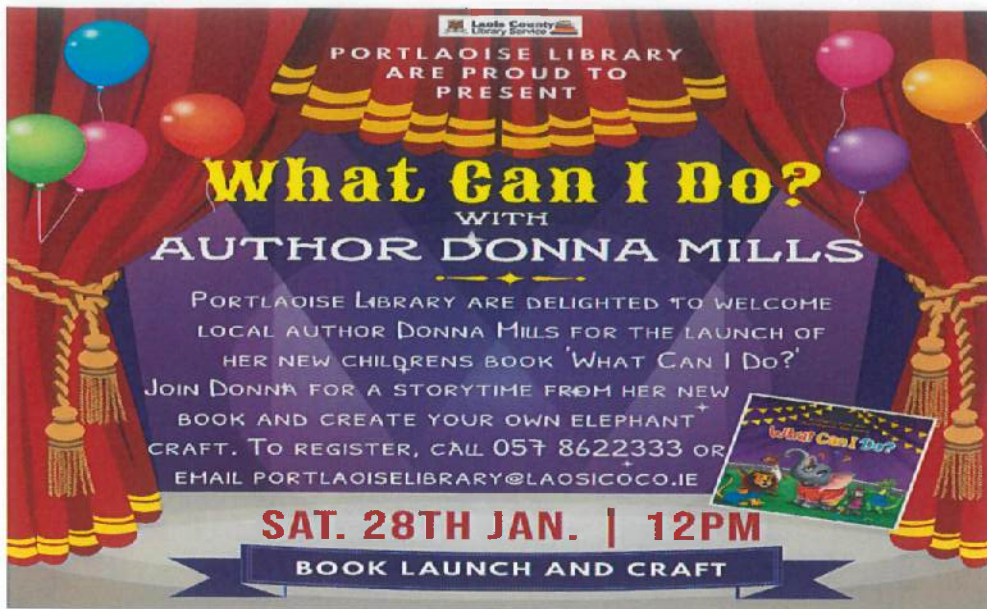
Cards in the Community – meets every Tuesday morning at 11am. Play popular card games for fun.

Knitting Group – meets every Friday morning at 10:30am. All skill levels from beginner to advanced are welcome!

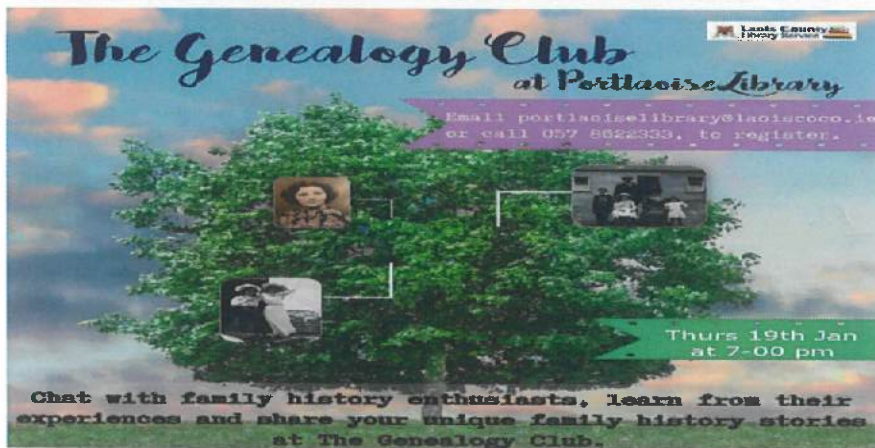
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Portlaoise Library

Portlaoise Library are looking forward to welcoming LOCAL AUTHOR DONNA MILLS on THIS DAY WEEK SATURDAY 28th January at 12 midday for the launch of her lovely new children's book 'What Can I Do?'

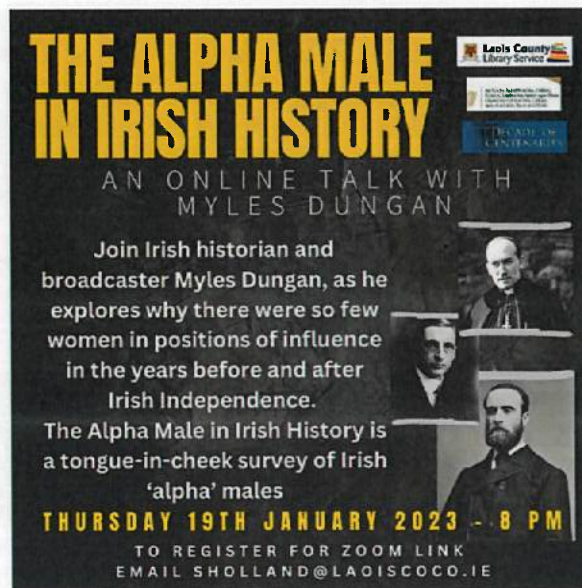


The Genealogy club continues in Portlaoise Library on Wednesday evenings . New members welcome



Recent Local history Talks held in Portlaoise Library as below :





Chief Executive's Orders

- ✚ A schedule of Chief Executive Orders signed during the month of December 2022/January 2023 will be circulated.


John Mulholland
Chief Executive

January 25th 2023