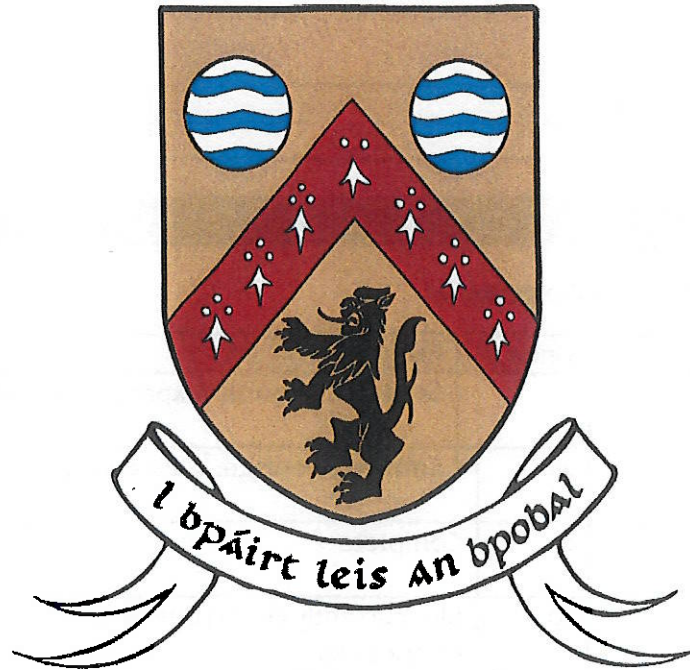


LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE LAOISE



**MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT
FEBRUARY 2021
TUARASCÁIL BHAINISTÍOCHTA
FEABHRA 2021**

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

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

Allocations Notified

Allocations Notified

Regional & Local Road Grants	€12,639,322
Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan	€3,630,000

Housing & Regeneration

Rebuilding Ireland Construction Programme

Scheme	Units	Progress
Shannon St., Mountrath	6	Contractors on site. Expected delivery date Q1 2021.
Ballymorris, Portarlinton	22	Contractors on site. Expected delivery date Q1 2021.
Hillview, Portaoise	2	Complete
Gleann naGlaise, Ballyroan	10	Site currently closed due to COVID 19 Level 5 restrictions.
25-30 Moore St., Rathdowney	6	Site currently closed due to COVID 19 Level 5 restrictions.
Pattison Estate, Mountmellick	10	Site currently closed due to COVID 19 Level 5 restrictions.
Sean Doire, Durrow	22	Site currently closed due to COVID 19 Level 5 restrictions.
Coolroe, Ballybrittas (Rural)	1	Site currently closed due to COVID 19 Level 5 restrictions.
Harbour Court, Mountmellick	6	Stage 3 documents to be submitted to Department in Q1 2021.
Mooreville, Rathdowney	7	Stage 3 documents to be submitted to Department in February 2021.
St. Kierans Park, Errill	14	Tenders returned on 23 rd December. Evaluation on-going.
Clonrooske, Knockmay	11	Revisions required following recent meeting with Portlaoise MD.
Iona, Abbeyleix Road	9	Draft layout submitted and Stage 2 documents to be submitted to Department in Q1 2021.
Oak Park Halting Site	4	Part VIII approved in December 2020. Tenders due to be advertised in Q1 2021
Carraig Glas, Stradbally	26	Stage 2 application submitted to the Department in January 2021.

Urban Regeneration Programme

Scheme	Units	Progress
Former C.B.S. Site	67	Part VIII granted. Detailed design is currently underway and ground investigations will resume when current Covid19 restrictions are lifted. CALF funding application to be submitted in Q2 2021.
Hepburn/Knockmay	60	Cluid Housing Association are progressing this development. Design being reviewed following recent meeting with Portlaoise MD.
O'Moore Place Regeneration	34	The Council is progressing the resolution of the access issue in respect of Doran's Field prior to development.
Convent Site, Portlaoise	51	Stage 2 submitted to the Department for approval on 17/9/20.
County Hotel, Portlaoise	11	Stage 1 approval for 11 units granted on 4/9/20. Design being progressed by CLUID Housing in conjunction with LCC
Vacant Homes Office		<p>A total of 248 properties have been investigated by the Vacant Homes Officer following reports of vacancy by Council Members and other Elected Representatives, members of the public or via www.vacanthomes.ie and applications under the Repair & Leasing Scheme and Buy & Renew Scheme. A total of 28 applications have been received to date under the Repair & Leasing Scheme of which 5 are currently under consideration.</p> <p>The Vacant Homes Officer has carried out an initial inspection on 220 vacant dwellings to date. Following this inspection, no further action has been deemed necessary in 97 cases due to the properties being found to be occupied, undergoing works by the owners or in a location of low housing need and unsuitable for social housing.</p> <p>70 vacant houses have been identified to date as being suitable for social housing due to the type of house and location and further action may be taken in these cases. 37 properties have been identified as having potential for use as development sites for social housing and these sites will be examined further.</p> <p>12 vacant properties have been acquired by CPO and 5 properties are currently going through the CPO process.</p>

Turnkey Projects

Scheme	Units	Progress
Expressions of interest		The Council has invited expressions of interest from the public in respect of the supply of newly completed homes as turnkey projects.
Main St., Borris-in Ossory	11	6 units complete with allocation in Q1 2021 and Phase 2 (5 units) in Q3 2021.
Clonaslee	7	7 units complete with allocation in Q1 2021
Church Avenue, Stradbally	31	Turnkey application submitted to the Department for approval in January. Expected delivery Q4 2022.

Approved Housing Bodies Delivery

Scheme	Units	AHB	Progress
Borris Road, Portlaoise	36	Tuath	Contractor is on site. Phase 1, 2 and 3 (27 units) complete and tenanted. Development is on track for delivery of the final Phase 4 (9 units) in February 2021.
Bellingham, Portlaoise	30	Cluid	Contractor is on site. 15 of the 30 units have already been delivered. Development is on track for delivery of phase 4 (9 units) in February 2021 Phase 5 (6 units) expected delivery end of Q2 2021.
Ballickmoyler Road, Graiguecullen	20	Co-Operative Ireland	Contractor is on site. 20 units complete with occupation of units to happen in Q1 2021
Doirin Alainn, Ballylinan	12	North & East	Contractor is on site. Phase 1 and 2 (6 units) are completed. Development is on track for delivery of final Phase 3 (6 units) in February 2021
The Glen (Phase 2) Kilnacourt Portarlinton	18	Co-Operative Ireland	Contractor is on site. Expected delivery in February 2021.
Wilton Lawns, Portarlinton	2	Respond	Contractor is due to commence on site when current lockdown is lifted
Lake Drive Kilminchy	10	Co-Operative Ireland	Contractor is on site with expected delivery in March 2021

Holdbrook, Portlaoise	20	Cluid	Contractor is on site. Phase 1 (10 units) to be delivered in March 2021 Phase 2 (10 units) to be delivered in April 2022.
Clonrooske Abbey, Portlaoise	32	Cluid	Contractor is on site. Phase 1 (14 units) expected delivery in March 2021 Phase 2 (6 units) expected delivery in Q3 2021 Phase 3 (12 units) expected delivery in Q1 2022.
Spa Street, Droughill, Portarlinton	26	Oaklee	Site currently closed due to COVID 19 Level 5 restrictions. Expected delivery in February 2022

From the above tables it can be noted that there will be 174 new homes delivered under our New Build programme in 2021. The current Covid19 Level 5 lockdown has had a negative impact on our 2021 delivery with a number of units being pushed in to 2022.

In addition to the units outlined in the above tables the Housing Department are also in discussion with various AHB's regarding the delivery of further Social Housing units throughout the county. The total number of units currently under discussion in the county is 546 broken down by MD area as follows –

- Portlaoise MD – 313
- Borris in Ossory/Mountmellick MD – 111
- Portarlinton/Graiguecullen MD - 94

Refugee Resettlement Programme

There is currently 1 family remaining to be housed under our Refugee Resettlement Programme. This tenanting will take place as soon as the current government guidelines allows and this will complete the current Refugee Resettlement Programme to house 22 families.

Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan

Since 1st February 2018, 96 Rebuilding Ireland Home Loans have been approved. 88 applications have been declined. Some of the reasons for negative outcomes include:

- Don't have the deposit required
- Repayment on the mortgage would exceed 30/35% of their income
- Already sufficiently committed (i.e. already are at capacity with other loans)
- Credit rating issues

HAP

There are currently 1,072 active HAP tenancies, 289 of which have transferred from rent supplement.

Private House Grants

To the 10th February, 2021 the following grants for privately owned houses were paid:-

- 0 Housing Aid for Older People Grant Applications
- 1 Mobility Aids Grants have been paid in the sum of €3,500
- 2 Housing Adaptation Grants have been paid in the sum of €11,000

Private Rented Inspections

470 Private Rented Inspections were carried out in 2020. No physical Private Rented Inspections have been carried out to date in 2021 due to Covid-19 restrictions. 36 Virtual Inspections have been carried out to 10th February, 2021

Housing Maintenance

Month	Work Orders Raised	Work Orders Closed	Work Orders Open
January 21	234	103	131
TOTAL (YTD)	234	103	131

Month	Work Orders Raised	Work Orders Closed	Work Orders Open
January 20	517	517	0
February 20	341	341	0
March 20	228	228	0
April 20	120	120	0
May 20	205	205	0
June 20	278	276	2
July 20	287	279	8
August 20	286	279	7
September 20	359	343	16
October 20	369	329	40
November 20	286	252	34
December 20	296	195	101
TOTAL JAN to DEC	3,572	3,364	208

NOTE: There are 222 routine maintenance requests currently on-hold due to current Level 5 COVID restrictions.

Midlands Housing Retrofit Programme

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

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

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

Tenders for Phase 1 (62 houses) were advertised in December 2020 with the return date postponed until March 2021 due to COVID restrictions

Homeless Presentations

Time Period	Homeless Presentations	Emergency Homeless
January 1 st 2021 – February 10 th 2021	22	11
Year to Date	22	11

Individuals Accessing	Emergency Accommodation as of 10 th February 2021	Transition Accommodation as of 10 th February 2021
Adults	7	1
Children	0	2

Housing Allocations Year to 12th February 2021.

Method of Housing Delivery	Numbers allocated
1 st allocation including new builds LCC	0
2 nd and subsequent allocations LCC including refurbished stock	11
Nominations to Approved Housing Bodies	16
Total Allocations	27

Planning, Development and Heritage


FORWARD PLANNING REPORT


COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Laois County Council has prepared the Draft Laois County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 which will be on public display from 12th January 2021 to 23rd March 2021 and can viewed at the following locations:

- <https://consult.laois.ie>
- Planning Office, Laois County Council, Aras an Chontae, JFL Avenue, Portlaoise, Co.Laois (by appointment only during normal opening hours as per Covid-19 Guidelines)


The Planning Department will also be holding number of **Webinars** throughout the public consultation period in lieu of community meetings due to the COVID-19 restrictions. Each webinar will focus on a different topic related to the Draft Plan. The following webinars are scheduled, details of which and registration can be found on <https://consult.laois.ie/en/consultation/draft-laois-county-development-plan-2021-2027>.

LIVE WEBINAR 



Draft Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027

Laois County Council's Planning Department will be running a series of live webinar events to engage with members of the public in relation to the Draft Laois County Development Plan 2021 – 2027.



If you wish to attend the free public consultation events you can do so by registering on:
<https://consult.laois.ie/en/consultation/draft-laois-county-development-plan-2021-2027>

The following events shall be hosted online:

- 18TH FEB** THURSDAY, 7pm – 9pm
"Population and Where We Live"
- 22ND FEB** MONDAY, 7pm – 9pm
"Job Creation in the County – The Economic Priorities"
- 24TH FEB** WEDNESDAY, 7pm – 9pm:
"Enabling and Servicing Development – Infrastructural Requirements and Priorities"
- 01ST MAR** MONDAY, 7pm – 9pm:
"Cultural, Built and Natural Heritage in County Laois"

For more information and to view the Draft Plan, visit:
<https://consult.laois.ie/en/consultation/draft-laois-county-development-plan-2021-2027>

Observations or submissions regarding the Draft Plan are also invited from members of the public and other interested parties, including children, or groups or associations representing the interests of children. You can make an observation or submission via the following options only;

- Online here by registering on <https://consult.laois.ie/> where you can then make a submission on the draft chapters, appendix, environmental reports and maps.
- Via email to cdp@laoiscoco.ie; or
- In writing marked "Draft Laois County Development Plan 2021- 2027" to the Senior Planner, Planning Department, Laois County Council, Aras an Chontae, JFL Avenue, Portlaoise, Co Laois.

All submissions and observations must be received before 5pm 23rd March 2021.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT REPORT

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMPARATIVE FIGURES FROM 2020

Year	Valid applications from 01/01/2021 – 15/02/2021	Valid applications for same period in 2020
No of applications	77	51

Pre planning resumed from the 11th January 2021 and 47 pre-planning meetings were held in January 2021, at which members of the public had an opportunity to discuss planning matters with a planner prior to submitting a planning application.

2021 PERFORMANCE	
Number of valid applications received:	(Valid Applications)77
Number of decisions made	(Decisions Made)78
Number of applications granted:	(Decisions to Grant) 77
Number of applications refused:	(Decisions to Refuse) % refusal rate 1 (1.28%)
Invalid applications returned to applicant:	(2021 Invalid Applications) 12
Referrals to Area Offices (working days):	within 14 days achieved
Applications appealed to An Bord Pleanála in 2021.	3

Enforcement

2021 Service Review	2021		2020	
	Jan-21		Jan-20	
Total number of new cases subject to complaints that were investigated	3		2	
Number of Warning Letters served	12		2	
Number of Enforcement Notices served	9		0	
No Of cases referred for legal proceedings	0		0	
Number of cases in Court(incl adjournments)	4		0	
Number of cases Resolved in Court	0		0	
Number of Files Closed	4		5	
Number of cases on system	168		192	
Enforcement Costs recouped	€ 399.22		€ 1,191.24	
Number of Valid Retention Applications Received relating to Enforcement Action	2		13	
Fees received through Valid Retention Applications Received relating to Enforcement Action	€376.00		€1,783.78	
Legal fees paid	€597.74		€351.78	

HERITAGE

1. Nature is Good for you Campaign

As part of the Healthy Ireland “Keep Well Initiative, a new campaign called “Nature is Good for you” has been started to promote the mental health benefits of getting out in nature. This has just been launched with the reprint of the Gardening for Biodiversity Books and an online workshop with Juanita Browne this week. This will be followed in March with a new In your Nature Podcast in partnership with BirdWatch Ireland and Offaly County Council

2. Town and Village Renewal Heritage Projects

Projects applied for in Stradbally and Timahoe were successful and work with the local community will commence shortly. An application for Donaghmore Workhouse was unsuccessful.

3. Just Transition

Full details required by the Just Transition Fund for the joining Laois Offaly project were submitted on time. Final approval of funding is expected by the end of Quarter 1 2021.

4. New Laois Heritage Plan 2021

Work will commence on the Drafting of a new Heritage plan in 2021. Consultation will commence in April approximately with a view to presenting a new plan for adoption in Q4 of 2021.

CONSERVATION

Two separate architectural heritage conservation grant schemes (for Protected Structures) will run in Laois in 2021, with funding from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

1. Built Heritage Investment Scheme and Historic Structures Fund

The closing date for the Conservation Grants 2021 was extended to 28th February, to allow owners time to obtain quotes.

2. Community Monuments Fund

The Community Monuments Fund (for archaeological monuments) 2021 announcement was delayed (also because of Covid) and is now likely to be announced in late Feb/Early March.

BROADBAND REPORT

National Broadband Ireland (NBI)

Surveying is continuing throughout the county. This involves surveying of poles, lines and manhole chambers of existing Telecom infrastructure.

Surveying in the Ballylinan DA is ongoing at present with the first build due to start in the Carlow area in June of this year.

ID	DA Location	County Name	Survey/Design phase	Planned Build Phase
DA020	Carlow	CARLOW	01/06/2020	2021 Q2
DA069	Portlaoise	LAOIS	31/08/2020	2021 Q3
DA071	Roscrea	TIPPERARY	07/09/2020	2021 Q3
DA123	JOHNSTOWN	KILKENNY	05/10/2020	2022 Q1
DA153	BALLYLINAN	LAOIS	Ongoing	
DA186	MOUNTRATH	LAOIS	05/02/2021	

Town and Village Renewal Scheme 2020:

Funding has been approved for the provision of ICT equipment, furniture and screening to the 4 BCP locations in Vicarstown, Emo, Killeshin, Donaghmore.

The DRCD allow for 90% funding of the overall cost under the 2020 scheme, total project cost in this case is €40,000, therefore the remaining 10% / €4,000 to be made up as follows; Laois County Council to provide match funding in the sum of €2,400 (60%) and a community contribution in kind of €1,600 (40%). In kind contributions can be provided in the form of voluntary labour (by the groups involved) which must be based on the time spent working on the project.

WIFI4EU:

Tender documents are being prepared at present to progress the roll out of free wifi in public locations around the county – Portlaoise , Portarlington , Clonasee/ Mountmellick. The first step is to engage consultants to provide the infrastructure.

Local Enterprise & Economic Development

NATIONAL ENTERPRISE AWARDS:

31 companies across the country were shortlisted by the Local Enterprise Offices for the National Enterprise Awards in 2020. The final took place virtually from the Mansion House on Thursday 11th February with Laois being well represented by Integrileads Ltd. They are an award-winning appointment setting company based in Bloom HQ in Mountrath. Founded by Aisling Kirwan, Jayne Delaney and Eimear O'Connor, they have 40 years combined experience scheduling highly qualified appointments for companies in the technology sector. The company works with national and international clients giving them exceptional insights of different markets across multiple geographies. A past county winner of "Best Start Up Business" in Irelands Best Young Entrepreneur Competition, Integrileads is the only Irish appointment setting company to hold a Business All-Star Accreditation. Previously, Laois achieved national success at the awards in 2018 when Cyc-lok Ltd won the National Innovation Award for their innovative modular bike parking system.

LOCAL ENTERPRISE WEEK 2021

Local Enterprise Week takes place virtually from March 1st – 5th. A host of experts will be on hand to offer advice to entrepreneurs through various workshops/mentoring clinics.

Events include:

- Benefits of Green for your Business
- Spring back & step forwards: Building Leadership & Resilience
- Introduction to Public Relations for your business
- Building the New – a dynamic session focusing on innovation and opportunity
- Remote Working: Managing Time & Energy
- AgriTech Revolution in Farming and Food

For a full list of event log onto www.localenterprise.ie/week

THE BUSINESS RESTART GRANT AND RESTART GRANT PLUS SCHEMES

The Business Restart Grant and the Restart Grant Plus Scheme has seen the Council paying out €7,651,391 to 708 businesses affected by the Covid-19 closures. The scheme closed to applications on the 31st October 2020 and we have since completed all final returns to the Department.

Commercial rates were waived for the period 27th March 2020 to 27th December 2020. The total value of the waiver was €5,878,615 and has been applied to 1,313 rate accounts.

“Circular Fin 1/2021 – Commercial Rates Waiver for First Quarter 2021” issued from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage on the 27th January 2021. This will apply a waiver for the first three months of 2021 to specified businesses. This scheme has modified criteria and the Council will apply the waiver to eligible categories. Ratepayers in the excluded category that were severely impacted by the pandemic can engage with the local authority on a case by case basis. Details of the scheme have been advertised on <https://laois.ie/commercial-rates-waiver-2021/>

Roads, Transportation & Smarter Travel

J17 National Enterprise Park

Laois County Council has substantially completed an infrastructure provision contract at the J17 National Enterprise Park including roads, sanitary, telecommunications, electricity and gas services. Laois County Council has signed contracts for the completion of the final road surfacing layer, road markings and traffic route lighting. These works will commence as soon as soon as current public health restrictions are lifted.

TII Funding;

TII funding allocation has been received for National roads within the county in the following amounts;

- National Road Maintenance - €482,717
- National Road Improvement - €1,550,957

TII Funded Projects

Whilst the majority of TII funded works under the 2020 Roadworks Scheme are complete there are a number of specific National Road Schemes being progressed, as follows;

- **N80 Stradbally Road Portlaoise Pavement Renewal (Church to Ballymacken);** Tender documents for the delivery of this Scheme have been finalised and agreed with Transport Infrastructure Ireland. This tender has been published and subsequently awarded. The estimated value of the Scheme is €2.0M. Works will commence in Q1 2021.
- **N77 Abbeyleix Road Portlaoise Pavement Renewal (JFL to M7);**
 - o A sum of €900k has been previously advised to Elected Members to fund a pavement renewal scheme on this stretch of the N77.
 - o Approval has also been received for safety works along this stretch of the N77 from TII in the amount of €495k.
 - o Additionally HD15 Safety Scheme discussions are ongoing with Transport Infrastructure Ireland whereby other improvements to provide enhanced pedestrian connectivity, enhanced provision for cyclists and landscaping are being sought for this important approach to Portlaoise Town.
 - o Consultants have been appointed to progress the design element of this project.
- **HD28 Road Resurfacing ;** This programme of resurfacing re-establishes skid resistance to the road network. We are awaiting our 2021 programme of works under this programme to be confirmed by TII. In the meantime tow HD28 schemes carried forward from 2020 will be completed by the end of February 2021 in Abbeyleix (N77) and Portlaoise (N80 JFL)

River Drainage Maintenance

Surveys are currently underway to seek consents for the 2021 programme of works and full details of that programme will be presented to Elected Members later in Q1 2021.

Part 8 Pedestrian/cycle link from PSC to People's Park, Triogue Blueway Phase 1

Part 8 consultation commenced on the 4th February and open for submissions up to 22nd March.

Environment & Environmental Protection

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

Normal services continue at the Kyletelesha Landfill & Civic Amenity Site following the takeover of operations at the facility by Laois County Council.

(a) Accommodation Works:

The Accommodation works at Kyletelesha are nearing completion.

These works enable all customers (both for the Tipping Head and the Civic Amenity Area) to go across the weighbridge. This will provide for greater accountability, a fairer charging regime and will also allow data to be gathered on the weights of recycled items.

(b) Landfill Aftercare Monitoring:

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

The SCADA system must be upgraded in the current year in order for the Council to be fully compliant with the EPA landfill licence.

2. Portarlinton Civic Amenity Site:

A contract for the operation and management of the Portarlinton Civic Amenity Site was awarded to AES (Ireland) Ltd for a period of one year with the option of extending the contract for a further 12 months with a maximum of two such extensions. This contract commenced on the 01st January 2021.

3. Bring Banks:

There are 42 Bring Bank sites provided in the county.
In January 2021, 196.86 tonnes of recyclable material was collected.

4. Waste Enforcement & Litter:

Environmental Complaint Register

Complaint Type	Litter	Abandoned Cars	Waste Enforcement	Management & Infrastructure (Bring Banks)	Air	Water	Noise	Vet	Total
Complaints 2020	245	61	570	85	48	49	25	24	1107
Complaints 2021	10	2	52	1	2	2	1	2	73

- 2021 – 73 complaints logged for investigation in January.
- 2020 – 163 fixed penalty notices issued to date, for breaches of Litter Pollution Act, 1997
- 2020 – 2 fixed penalty notices for breaches of Management (Storage, Presentation and Segregation of Household & Commercial Waste) Byelaws 2018.
- Notices - 10 Section 55 Notices, 3 Section 56 Notice and 3 Section 9 Notices has been issued to date in 2020.
- The 2020 Recommended Minimum Criteria for Environmental Inspections was reviewed taking into account of Covid-19 and its effect on the programmed schedule of inspections etc.

5. Illegal Dumping:

The incidents of illegal dumping activity have significantly increased. Illegally dumped waste material was removed during January & February from areas such as Derrybeg, Mountrath; Clonenagh & Clonreher Bog; Ballymacken Bus Park; Springhill, Killeshin; Jessop St., Portlaoise; Ridge of Cappard, Rosenallis; Redcastle, Mountrath; Clonminham, Portlaoise.



Pictures from Clonenagh and Clonreher Bog before Clean-up

Without the aid of CCTV footage, the Environment Enforcement Staff find very difficult to issue fines and to instigate legal proceedings against offenders. Efforts are also being hampered due to Covid-19 and its effect on the Council's ability to carry out detailed examinations of the illegally dumped waste material.

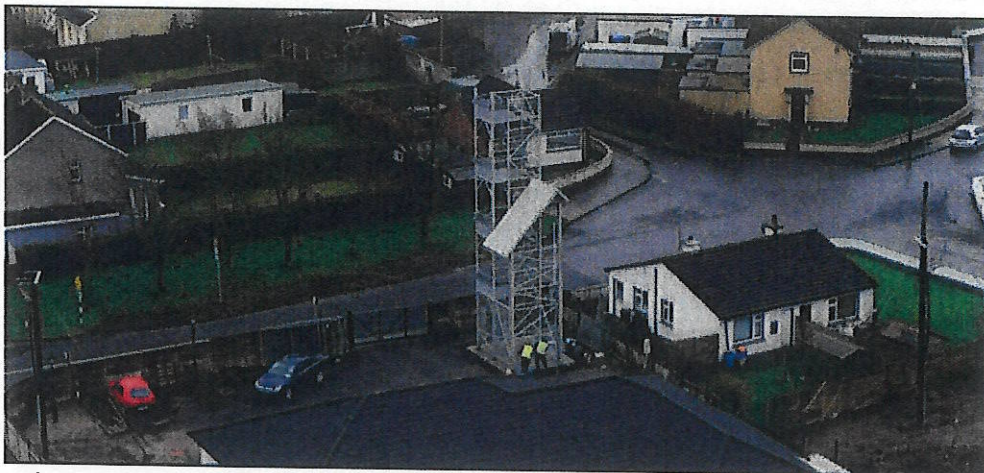
6. Environmental Protection:

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

- (a) On site investigations of complaints in relation to water pollution have ceased by Environmental staff in compliance with Health and Safety and Covid-19 control measures. Only inspections relating to complaints which pose a risk to human health are authorised for site inspections until restrictions are lifted. All complaints are recorded and dealt with remotely if possible or will be inspected as soon as restrictions are lifted.
- (b) Preparation of RMCEI report to include planning for inspections near completion. RMCEI due for submission on 15/02/21.
- (c) Inspection and enforcement of existing and new water discharge licenses has ceased due to COVID Restrictions. Currently reviewing licenses and corresponding with License applicants virtually in preparation to resume inspections when restrictions are lifted
- (d) Corresponding in writing and by telephone with all premises in Kyletalesha following the investigation of polluting matter in the Triogue River.

Emergency Planning, Fire Services & Flood Relief

- Work has been completed on the Mountrath Fire Station upgrade, a €130,000 project, which consists of a new 4x4 garage & the erection of a fire service drill tower. This is being funded by the NDFEM.



- Work is nearly complete on a new trench rescue training facility in Abbeyleix - €30,000 & will be complete by the end of 2020. This is being funded by the NDFEM. Additional work has also been carried out to provide welfare facilities for LCC Roads section staff to improve social distancing requirements due to Covid -19.
- Planning & design is underway for the Mountmellick Fire Station upgrade, a, €150,000 project, which consists of a fire service drill tower & new concrete yard to the rear of the fire station. The current suspension of non-essential construction activity has delayed the progress of this project.
- In accordance with the Planning & Development Acts, a Part 8 application is currently being produced for the proposed new fire station in Stradbally.

Flood Relief

Mountmellick FRS

- Options report being finalised in preparation for the Public Consultation Event on scheme options towards the end of March 2021

Clonaslee FRS

- Public engagement event launched on the 8th February to inform the development of the scheme.

Mountrath Minor Works

- Section 177AE application made to An Bord Pleanála on the 4th February for the provision of an overflow culvert on the Shannon Stream to the Mountrath River.

WATER SERVICES AND RURAL WATER

EPA Report – Focus on Private Water Supplies 2019

In February 2021 the Environmental Protection Agency published a report focussed on Private Group Water Schemes and Small Private Water Supplies. Private supplies such as these provide water supply to approximately 20% of the population in Ireland. The EPA highlight concerns regarding a national increase in incidences of nitrate exceedances in scheme sampling.

Laois County Council is responsible for compliance monitoring of 9 regulated Private Group Water Schemes across County Laois. The EPA indicates a Nitrate exceedance for one of these Schemes in 2019 which is now addressed to the point where all compliance samples for that Scheme are compliant with relevant standards. In general compliance monitoring in County Laois indicates a very positive, standards compliant, performance for the 9 Private Group Water Schemes.

A small private supply (SPS) is defined as any business or organisation supplying water from their own well that is used for drinking or in food production (e.g. hotel, food outlet, B&B, school, sports club, restaurant) [Reference: EPA Handbook on the Implementation of Drinking Water Regulations for Water Services Authorities (2010)]

There is a legal obligation on any entity operating a Small Private Water Supply in County Laois to register that supply with Laois County Council. In turn Laois County Council, in the interest of public health, is legally obliged to monitor the quality of the supply and to investigate and take action where standards are not being met.

There are currently 86 registered Small Private Water Supplies in County Laois, approximately 3 times the national average in terms of registered supplies per County. In 2019 Laois County Council issued 10 Boil Water Notices and undertook 6 audits on Small Private Supplies all in a manner seeking to protect public health and support the delivery of a potable water supply. Similar numbers will prevail for 2020.

In the interests of public health and to accord with statutory obligations it is incumbent on those providing Small Private Water Supplies in County Laois to register with Laois County Council, whereupon appropriate supply monitoring and management measures can be facilitated, all in the interests of public health. It is likely the case that, notwithstanding a relatively high registration rate, there are unregistered Small Private Supplies in County Laois.

Public Water and Wastewater Capital

The following capital works have been approved by Irish Water:

- **Ballyroan WwTP** – Installation of 2nd Sequence Batch Reactor. Actuated valves were very late in being delivered. These are now installed and it is intended that the plant will be commissioned and operating by the end of February.
- **Durrow** – bring an additional production borewell into service in Fermoy – M + E works substantially complete, bringing of new borewell into supply ongoing. Price now received by Irish Water (IW) from Campions to install larger 6 inch pump with a 4 inch motor and associated works at Fermoy. Provision of a storage/blend tank and booster pump set also being discussed with IW.

Multi Annual Rural Water Programme 2019-2021

Measure 2 -Public Health Compliance

- **The Heath GWS:** Chlorine Control System & Upgrade - Recommendation of the Consultant due.

Measure 3 - Enhancement and Water Conservation

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

Measure 6 - Community Water and Wastewater Connections

- **Waste Water Community Connection at Goodwin Estate:** Site investigation works complete. The design and tender specifications are complete. Project is currently progressing to tender via eTenders.

Railway Mews, Portarlinton Surveying for misconnections started prior to Christmas and found that a small number of connections are blocked with grease. Surveying contractor to respond shortly with proposal to recommence. It is not clear whether they will recommence under Level 5 restrictions. This surveyor reduced service to eliminate any public facing work and was dealing with some in-house covid exposure.

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

Corporate

The publishing of the 2021/2022 Register of Electors is currently ongoing. The new Register will come into effect from the 15th February 2021.

Covid-19 Community Response

Covid-19 Helpline

To date (30.03.2020 – 17.02.2021) the helpline has received **765 calls**.

Calls Received 2020: 732

Calls Jan 2021: 24

Calls Feb 2021: 9

It is noteworthy that in 2021 the vast majority of calls received are from those seeking food parcels. PATH continue to provide this invaluable service and their selfless work in the community is deeply appreciated. Otherwise volume of calls are low, and this is similar to those in neighbouring counties. The helpline continues to be promoted on various outlets such as Laois Co Council web page, social media and local radio.

Due to the low volume of calls to the helpline at weekends a decision was taken to stand down the service on Saturdays. The Council phone line **057 866 4000** is open Monday to Friday, between the hours of 9am to 5pm, for the **Laois County Council Community Response Support Helpline** to facilitate the most appropriate community response to the needs of vulnerable people living in the community where their usual sources of support have become unavailable due to COVID19 and to deal with normal Council queries.

Laois Community Support Response Forum

The most recent meeting of the Covid-19 Community Forum took place on 8th February. Notwithstanding the difficulties being experienced by many people in our community the Forum believes that the multiple voluntary and state agencies are working well together and that help is available for the vast majority of people seeking assistance and advice.

Community

Public Participation Network

Age Friendly Business Recognition Scheme

Laois PPN is working in partnership with Laois County Council and Laois Chamber as part of the Steering Group on the Age Friendly Business Recognition Scheme in Laois. Laois PPN have commenced in February promoting the Age Friendly Business Recognition Scheme to our nearly 600 PPN Member Groups and via their Social Media. The first workshop for business owners took place on Wednesday 10th February.

Keep Well Campaign

Laois PPN is working in association with Laois County Council in promoting the Keep Well Campaign in the County. Regular updates via our Social Media and to their nearly 600 PPN Member Groups.

LCDC Election

Vincent Booth resigned his seat on the LCDC on 4th January 2021 due to work commitments. Currently Laois PPN have 4 sitting members on Laois LCDC (3 Members from the Community Pillar and 1 from the Environmental Pillar). As Laois PPN have three pillars (Community/Voluntary, Social Inclusion & Environment) it is noted that the Social Inclusion pillar is not represented on Laois LCDC. With this in mind, Laois LCDC formally requested that the vacant LCDC position be filled from the Social Inclusion pillar in order to ensure representation across all pillars.

Laois PPN sought nominations from groups in the Social Inclusion Pillar for a Social Inclusion Rep to the LCDC following the resignation of Vincent Booth. An online election took place of the eligible candidates. Following a successful election Laois PPN have nominated Mr. Naeem Iqbal. This nomination will go to the Council Meeting of Monday 22nd February for ratification.

Comhairle na nÓg

A Service Level Agreement between Laois County Council and Youth Work Ireland Laois was signed in January 2021 to facilitate and support the development of Laois Comhairle na nÓg as a strong inclusive structure for the participation of young people in local decision making and informing policy, for two years, 2021 and 2022. YouthWork Ireland have made contact with all Comhairle na nÓg members and have arranged an online consultation meeting. They have also made contact with all the schools in the County. The aim is to have representation from every school in the County.

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth had given approval for funding in the sum of €5,869.16 under the Comhairle na nÓg Capital Grant for ICT Hardware Scheme 2020. 14 headset are on hand and 14 I-pads are due to arrive in February 2021.

Age Friendly Update

- The Age Friendly Alliance had their first meeting of 2021 on 21st January 2021
- The older peoples Forum had their first ever virtual meeting on 29th January 2021. This was our first meeting since February 2020. Further meetings are planned.
- The Chatters and Matters radio show continues.
- The Age Friendly Business Recognition Scheme has restarted. The first workshop for local business owners was delivered by Zoom on Wednesday 10th February. A second workshop is planned for the 4th March to coincide with Local Enterprise week.
- We purchased and received 6 Age Friendly Acorn Tablets from a HSE grant. These are being allocated to residential care homes.

Community Funding

Town & Village Renewal Scheme 2020 - Funding approval was given for 5 applications in early January totalling €383,375 as follows:

- Rathdowney - €79,303 - Ergonomic designed suite of 6 individual offices, 6 co working spaces; learning and training room spaces; break out space of 6,000 sq ft and doubling as facility for 'market trading' at weekends; Hydroponic Gardening. Project Lead: Denise Rainey
- Stradbally - €99,514 - conserve the bridge at the centre of the village; implement public realm improvements; enhance biodiversity by creating wildflower meadows, installing pollinator friendly planting, and erecting nest boxes for swifts. Project Lead: Catherine Casey.
- Timahoe - €100,000 - Conservation and upgrading of the Community-run Heritage Centre in the former Church of Ireland in Timahoe, to protect the fabric of the historic building and provide facilities and heritage interpretation for tourists and local people. Project Lead: Dom Reddin Administrative Officer/Catherine Casey, Heritage Officer
- Broadband (Vicarstown, Emo, Killeslin, Donaghmore, Camross) - €45,000 - Provide 5 Broadband Connection Points (BCPs) with ICT equipment, office furniture, screening and sanitisers to maximise the potential of High Speed Broadband services. **Project Lead:** Antoinette Brennan, Broadband Officer

- **Durrow** - €59,558 - Network, computer equipment, furnishings and general equipment and fitting out of Community Centre so it can be used. Project Lead: Elaine Moore A/Administrative Officer
- **Community Resilience Fund** - launched in November 2020, the Keep Well Campaign is aimed at helping people - individuals & communities - to keep up their resilience & wellbeing through an especially challenging winter and through to spring. People are being encouraged to plan some “self-care” every day or week to get them through the winter and will be supported with information and resources to help them to do so. The campaign is well under way, radio advertising, advert in local media and regular weekly posts to Social Media are taking place. Activities have been adapted where required to fit with the current Covid-19 Guidelines, some activities have been completed while others are progressing as planned.
- **Covid-19 Emergency Fund- Round 2** €46,811 was allocated in December 2020 under this scheme. The CEP sub-committee of the LCDC convened on Wed 3rd Feb to appraise applications. In total 54 application were received seeking funding to the value of €125,918.54. 35 applications were received and went forward to the February LCDC meeting for approval.

Climate Action: -

- Carbon Footprint Study of Portlaoise- The Siemens team presented the results of the Carbon Footprint study for the Town of Portlaoise. The focus topics for this presentation included the assessment of Register of Opportunities and their impact on the overall carbon footprint in Portlaoise. The team received feedback on the report and work is continuing to finalise the report.
- Sustainable Energy Community in Portlaoise – Meetings ongoing to move from the learn phase through to the energy masterplan phase. Community Charter has been drafted and agreed and Evaluation Comparison Tool has been completed.
- Attention of Members is drawn to the training organized by the CARO offices for 26th February and which will be provided remotely by Limerick Institute of Technology; All Members are encouraged to attend.

Arts Update

Laois Arthouse, Stradbally:

level 5 meant artists living outside the environs of Stradbally are unable to use their studios

Arts Awards and Opportunities

Following advertisement and promotion applications are being received for Arts Act Grants, the Tyrone Guthrie Centre Bursary, Artists in Schools Scheme and expression of interest for Laois Culture Night 2021. Closing date for applications 26th of February 2021. Adjudication process to be carried out online.

Laois Youth Theatre

Online workshops took place with the Portlaoise YT Groups and within the Covid-19 restrictions in December. Due to lockdown restrictions these will need to continue into 2021 in partnership with the Dunamaise Arts Centre.

Platform 31

The national project application and selection process has concluded with artist Ella de Burca selected as the Laois recipient of a grant of €8K - a national opportunity for artists to develop

their practice and test new ideas of collaboration, research, audience development, place-making and sharing their work. Designed to support and offer career development for 31 mid-career artists (one artist in each of the 31 local authorities around Ireland funded nationally)

Creative Ireland Laois Update

For 2021 Creative Laois's budget allocation is €160,161 (including €15K for Laois Cruinniú na nÓg - Ireland's national day of free creativity for children and young people on June 12) from the Creative Ireland Programme (2017-2022). Creative Laois is also invited to apply for additional funding including the Positive Ageing and Creative Wellbeing Scheme, and Creative Engagement Climate Action Community Fund: (Through cultural and creative projects, individual and community awareness of the need for climate-related behavioural change).

Sport & Leisure Update

- **Laois County Council managed playgrounds:** Only essential repairs and weekly inspections are being carried out at all Laois County Council managed play facilities given the current COVID 19 restrictions.
- **Playground Development:** Part V111 Application prepared for Borris-in-Ossory playground & MUGA
- **Community Resilience Funding** – Splash into Spring campaign has commenced for month of February 2021 to encourage families into the outdoors and post their videos/photos
- **Portlaoise Leisure Centre:** Refurbishment works are currently ceased due to COVID restrictions at Portlaoise Leisure Centre.
- **Portarlington Leisure Centre** is currently closed in line with Level 5 restrictions.
- **Sports Capital Grant Scheme** Sport & Leisure Officer is actively advising and assisting 30 + community groups and sports clubs with applications including the delivery of on-line workshops and preparing a number of applications on behalf of Laois County Council

Local Government Payroll and Superannuation Shared Services Centre

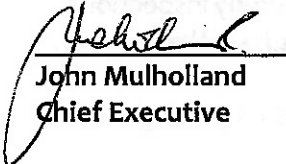
- There are currently 85 employees based in the My-Pay shared services centre.
 - Waves 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 were completed on schedule with Longford, Roscommon, Westmeath, Leitrim, Laois, Offaly, Galway, Carlow, Monaghan, Cavan, Kildare, Meath, Kilkenny, Louth, South Dublin, Tipperary, Kerry, Wicklow, Mayo, Donegal, Sligo, Fingal, Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown Clare County Councils, Limerick and Waterford City & County Councils and Galway and Cork City Councils now live in My-Pay.
 - The LGMA and the East & Midlands Regional Assembly are also being paid from My-Pay.
 - The implementation of Wexford County Council is now commencing and is expected to be complete in March 2021.
 - The following are the statistics on the project up to 17th February 2021:

Value of Payments	€4.328M
Number of Payments	5,090,966
Number of Pay Groups Paid	10,780
Number of Payroll Runs	6,153
 - The Superannuation service pilot with Laois, Carlow and the LGMA has been completed. There are currently 20 local authorities live and this will increase to 30 by the end of 2021

- My-Pay has been chosen to administer the new single public service pension scheme on behalf of the sector. We are currently providing the service for the 20 sites who are live for the Superannuation service. The remaining sites are scheduled to come on board in 2021
- My-Pay have achieved the ISAE 3402 (international standard for service organisations) The Type 2 Report has issued to the Chief Executive of all clients. This will be renewed annually.

Chief Executive's Orders

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


John Mulholland
Chief Executive

18/02/2021