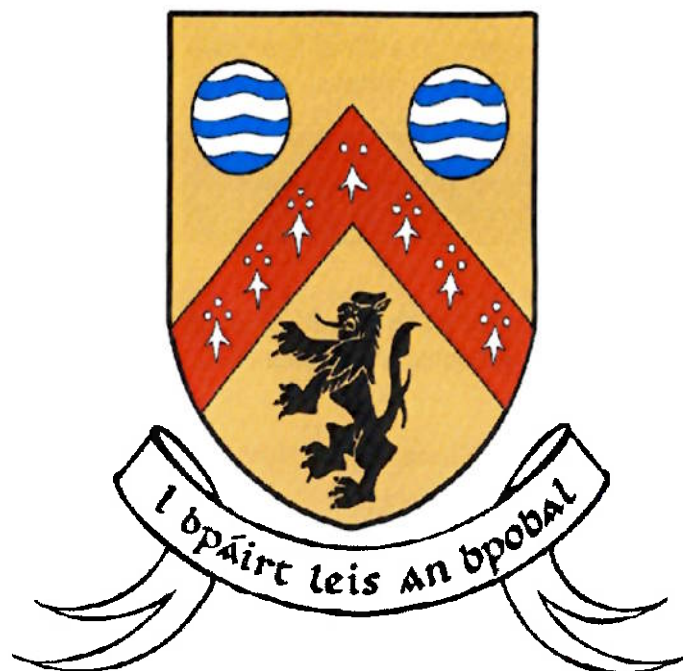


LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL
COMHAIRLE CHONTAE LAOISE



MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT
FEBRUARY 2024
TUARASCÁIL BHAINISTÍOCHTA
FEABHRA 2024

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 2024 is as follows:

FINANCE & ALLOCATIONS NOTIFIED

The Annual Financial Statement for 2023 is currently being prepared. It is expected that it will be finalised for the March meeting of Laois County Council.

Allocations Notified

National Transport Authority Capital Grant Allocations 2024 Active Travel	€3,500,000
Department of Transport – Non National Roads Grants	€13,638,750
Department of Housing: Local Authority Home Loan Allocation	€5,620,000
Enterprise Ireland Allocation for Laois LEO	€1,201,315
Local Enhancement Programme DRCD	€153,591

HOUSING

SOCIAL HOUSING DELIVERY

Annual Social Housing Delivery Targets under Housing for All

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

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Total
Social Housing completions to date	229	286	-	-	-	515

Social Housing Schemes Under Construction in 2024

Location	Total No. of Houses	House Types	Constructed by	Comment
Moore St, Rathdowney	6	6 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Construction)	On site – expected delivery Q2 2024
Mooreville, Rathdowney	7	3 No. 2 Bed bungalow 4 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Construction)	On site – expected delivery Q2 2024
Church Avenue, Stradbally (Ph 2)	11	9 No. 4 Bed 2 Storey 2 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey	LCC (Turnkey)	On site – phased delivery To be delivered by Q2 2024
Bruach Na Habhainn, Killeen	1	1 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Turnkey)	On Site – Phase 1 (1 unit) delivery Q3 2024
Carraig Glas, Stradbally	26	15 no. 2 bed houses 9 no. 3 bed houses 2 no 4 bed houses	LCC (Construction)	On site – expected delivery Q2 2025
The Orchard, Ballylynan (Phase 3)	1	1 No. 3-Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Turnkey)	On Site – Phase 3 (1 unit) delivery Q3 2024
Sruth na Gleanna, Killeshin	1	1 no. 3 bed house	LA Part V	Delivery Q2 2024
Oldcourt, Ballylinan	1	1 No. 4 bed 1 storey	LCC (Renewal)	On site – expected delivery Q3 2024
Townparks, Rathdowney Rd, Borris-in-Ossory	26	4 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 12 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 10 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey	LCC Turnkey	On site – expected delivery Q4 2024
Shannon Street, Mountrath	20	13 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 4 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey	LCC Turnkey	On site – expected delivery Q4 2024
Townparks, Mountmellick	49	28 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 11 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 8 No. 1 Bed 2 Storey 2 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey	LCC Turnkey	On site – expected delivery Q4 2025
Ballymorris Green, Portarlinton (Ph 2)	12	12 no. 3 bed houses	Cluid Housing	Currently on site – Last phase of scheme – advised that these units will be delivered in early Q2 2024.
Clonrooske Abbey, Portlaoise	18	18 no. 3 bed 2 storey	Cluid Housing	Advised Delivery of 12 units Q1 2024 (subject to snags remedied) and 6 units in Q2 2024
Ard Branagh, Portlaoise	6	6 no. 3 bed houses	Circle Housing	Currently on site – expected delivery by Q2 2024

Wallis Street, Mountrath	11	9 no. 2 bed Bungalows 2 no. 2 bed Apts.	Co-Operative Housing	Currently on Site – Expected Delivery Q2 2024
An Lochán, Summerhill, Portlaoise	32	20 no. 1 bed maisonettes 8 no 3 Bed duplexes 4 no 2-3Bed apts	Respond	Currently on site. Phased delivery – social housing is across Phases 3 and 4 overall scheme. Likely total delivery by end of 2024.
Rockview, Portlaoise	47	9 no. 2 bed houses 35 no. 3 bed houses 4 no. 4 bed houses	Oaklee Housing	Currently on site - 3 phases of social housing delivery commencing Q2 2024
TOTAL	275			

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

Location/Scheme	No of units	House Types	To be constructed by	Comment
Clonrooske (Knockmay), Portlaoise	12	8 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 3 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 1 No. 3 Bed 1 Storey	LCC (Construction)	Stage 3 submitted in Q4 2023.
Iona, Portlaoise	7	2 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 1 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 4 No. 1 Bed Apt	LCC (Construction)	Stage 3 submitted in Q4 2023.
Doonane	12	12 no. 3 bed 2 storey	LCC (Construction)	Stage 3 submitted Q1 2024.
Derry Road, Durrrow	24	9 No. 1 Bed 1 Storey 4 No.1 Bed Apartmts 1 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey 7 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 3 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Construction)	Stage 2 approved and Stage 3 currently being progressed.
Ballyadams	1	1 no. 6 bed bungalow	LCC (Construction)	Tender evaluated on-going and Stage 4 to be submitted in Q1 2024.
Stradbally Road, Portlaoise	21	Tenure mix - numbers and house types - to be confirmed in detailed design	LCC Social and Affordable	Part VIII to be progressed in Q1 2024. Funding mechanism for mixed tenure scheme to be agreed.
Bracklone St, Portarlinton	15	15 no. 2 bed houses	LCC (Construction)	Site investigation surveys on-going and Stage 2 to be submitted in Q1 2024
Rushall, Mountrath	3	3 no. 3 bed 2 storey	LCC (Construction)	Site investigation surveys on-going and Stage 2 to be progressed in Q1 2024
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 Submitted in Q1 2024.

Main St, Ballinakill	3	2 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 1 No. 1 Bed Apt	LCC (Construction)	Demolition works to commence in Q1 and Stage 2 to be progressed in Q1 2024
Moanbaun, Mountrath	15	4 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 7 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 4 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey	LCC (Construction)	Site investigation surveys on-going and Stage 2 to be submitted in Q1 2024
1 New Road, Portlaoise	1	1 No. 4 Bed 1 Storey	LCC (Renewal)	Tender evaluation on-going and Stage 4 to be submitted in Q1 2024.
6 Emmett Terrace, Mountmellick	1	1 No. 4 Bed 1 Storey	LCC (Renewal)	Tender evaluation on-going and Stage 4 to be submitted in Q1 2024.
13 and 14 Lakeglen, Portlaoise	2	1 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 1 No. 4 Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Renewal)	Demolition works completed on site.
Beladd, Portlaoise	5	1 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 3 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 1 No. 4 Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Construction)	Design Team to be Appointed and Stage 1 to be submitted in Q1 2024. Demolition of existing properties to be completed in Q1 2024.
French Church St. Portarlinton	2	2 no. 2 bed apts	LCC (Renewal)	Stage 1 To Be Submitted in Q1 2024.
Maltings Site, Mountmellick	30	TBC	LCC (Construction)	Design Team to be Appointed and Stage 1 to commence in Q1 2024.
Convent Lands, Portlaoise (CAS)	52	33 no 2 bed apts 15 no 1 bed apts 4 no. 2 bed houses	Sophia Housing	Construction preparation of ground commenced on 19 th February. Contractor on site
County Hotel, Portlaoise (CALF)	10	8 no. 1 bed apts 2 no. 2 bed apts	Cluid Housing	Stage 1 approved. S179A planning notification currently being prepared. An in-committee meeting with MD members will be arranged as part of S179A notification process. This scheme will be progressed with a CALF application for funding.
"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	Tender for design/build contract closes on 4 th March. Cluid is currently progressing an enabling works contract for demolition of the remaining structures and ESB cable diversion works on site.

Curragh na Mona, Abbeyleix Rd, Portlaoise	39	5 x 2 bed fully accessible apts 12 x 2 bed bungalows 6 x 3 bed house with downstairs bedroom 2 x 4 bed house with downstairs bedroom 2 x 2 bed apts – accessible (ground floor) apts 2 x 1 bed 1 st floor apts 4 x 3 bed 2 storey. 6 x 2 bed 1 st floor apts	Respond Housing	Revised CALF application currently under review by Dept; notification expected in the coming weeks.
TOTAL	320			

AFFORDABLE HOUSING / COST RENTAL

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

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

Discussions ongoing to progress potential affordable units as follows:

Affordable	<i>AHF approved in principle by DHLGH</i>	<i>AHF Application submitted to DHLGH – Potential no of unit yield</i>	<i>Advance Turnkey Purchase EOI's under consideration Potential No of unit yield</i>	<i>Part V – Potential No of Unit Yield</i>	<i>LCC Construction Potential No of Unit Yield</i>
Affordable	40	0	*60	8	40 minimum
Cost Rental			28		

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

- 13 units approved for Affordable Purchase in Stradbally. Currently working with developer regarding their Local Authority Subsidy Agreement with LCC. Construction of units not yet commenced.
- 16 units approved for Affordable Purchase Scheme at Kilminchy, Portlaoise. Application portal for units comprising 2- and 3-bedroom houses closed on 4th January 2024. Applications currently being assessed, and potential purchasers will be advised to the developer's agent in the coming weeks and months as properties are ready for sale.
- 11 units approved for Affordable Purchase Scheme at An Lochan, Summerhill, Portlaoise. Application portal for units comprising 2- and 3-bedroom houses closed on 2nd February

2024. Applications currently being assessed, and potential purchasers will be advised to the developer's agent in the coming weeks and months as properties are ready for sale.

- Design has been finalised for social (21) and affordable (46) housing on Council owned landbank on the Stradbally Road, Portlaoise. Funding mechanism for this developing this site as a mixed tenure scheme is still to be determined.

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 in respect of social/affordable housing.

Queries regarding affordable housing should be emailed to affordablepurchase@laoiscoco.ie

PRIVATE RENTED INSPECTIONS

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

The Council has not yet been advised of the target number of Private Rented Inspections for 2024.

	1 st January 2024 – 31 st January 2024
No of Private Rented Inspections	41
No of notices of works issued	23

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

SERVICED SITES FOR SELF BUILDERS

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

In the first instance, eligibility will be determined by criteria as set out under the **Croí Conaithe (Towns) Fund – Ready to Build Scheme (Serviced Sites for New Homes) Scheme**. Under the scheme, local authorities are supported to make serviced sites in towns and villages available to potential individual purchasers. These sites will be available at a discount on the market value of the site for the building of a property for occupation as the principal private residence of the purchaser. The level of discount to the individual will depend on the level of servicing cost incurred by the local authority before the sale of the site with discounts up to a maximum of €30,000. The amount of such discount will be reflected in the sale price of the site to the purchaser. The following locations are currently under consideration for serviced sites and/or have advertised sites for sale. Sites to be a minimum of 0.25 acres in size.

Location	No. of Sites	Comment
Ballacolla Road, Durrow	4	4 offers accepted and conveyancing ongoing.
Gleann na Glaise, Ballyroan	4	4 offers accepted and conveyancing ongoing. All services/utilities in place on site.
Doonane	2	Stage 3 submitted in Q1 2024
Derry Road Durrow	4	Stage 2 approved and Stage 3 currently being progressed.
Castletown	9	Proposal. Detailed design currently on-going

TOTAL SITES UNDER CONSIDERATION	23	
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Queries regarding serviced sites should be emailed to servicedsites@laoiscoco.ie

HOUSING STOCK

Housing Re-Lets

2023	LA Keys Surrendered	Properties Acquired	Works Completed
TOTAL (YTD)	77	23	91

Month	LA Keys Surrendered	Properties Acquired	Works Completed
January 2024	8	1	2
TOTAL (YTD)	8	1	2

NOTE: There are currently 34 vacant units from our existing stock and a further 13 units that the Council acquired. Works are either ongoing on these properties or specifications are being prepared for works to be carried out.

Housing Maintenance

2023	Work Orders Raised	Work Orders Closed	Work Orders Open
TOTAL (YTD)	4,799	4,641	158

Month	Work Orders Raised	Work Orders Closed	Work Orders Open
January 2024	612	463	149
TOTAL (YTD)	612	463	149

Energy Efficiency/Retrofitting Programme:

The Midlands Retrofit Programme (MRP) was rolled into the Energy Efficiency Retrofit Programme (EERP) in 2022/2023/2024.

A summary of both programmes is outlined in table below.

PROGRAMME	COMMENTS
MRP – 159 Units	159 units completed.
EERP (2021) – 29 Units – (O'Moore Place)	27 units completed.
	Tender evaluation for the 2022 Retrofit Programme comprising 62 houses has been completed. It is now proposed to commence works in phase's set out below.

<p>EERP (2022) – Phase 1&2 – 41 Units (Thornberry, Church Ave, Slieve Bloom Park)</p> <p>EERP (2022) – Phase 3 – 21 Units (St. Fintan’s Tce, Old School Road, St Johns Sq.)</p>	<p><u>Phase 1</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Thornberry, Abbeyleix – 20 units. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works completed in Q4 2023. <p><u>Phase 2</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Church Avenue, Stradbally – 12 units. 2) Slieve Bloom Park, Clonaslee – 9 units. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works to be completed in Q1 2024. <p><u>Phase 3</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) St Fintans Terrace – 6 units 2) Old School Road, Ballylinan – 8 units 3) St. John’s Square, Portlaoise – 7 units. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works to be completed in Q2 2024.
<p>EERP (2023) – 53 Units (St. Brigid’s Place, Fr. O’Connor Cres., Erkindale Dr, Rossmore View)</p>	<p><u>Phase 1</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) St Brigid’s Place – 16 units. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works to commence in Q3 2024. <p><u>Phase 2</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Fr O’Connor Cres – 11 units. 2) Erkindale Drive – 6 units. 3) Rossmore View – 10 Units <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works to be commence in Q4 2024.

HOUSING NEED

From 1st January – 31st January 2024:

Acquisitions completed	1
Acquisitions currently in progress	5
No. of above that have Tenants in Situ	2

Queries regarding acquisitions should be emailed to housingdelivery@laoiscoco.ie

Homeless Presentations

Time Period	Homeless Presentations Households	Breakdown of Household
1 st January 2024 – 31 st January, 2024	20	13 singles 7 families

Homeless Accommodation

	Emergency Accommodation Households booked at 31 st January, 2024	Social Housing allocated from homelessness in January, 2024
Families	8 (1 hostel)	1
Single Persons	18 (3 hostel)	2
TOTAL	26	3

Homeless related queries should be emailed to homeless@laoiscoco.ie or housinglcc@laoiscoco.ie

Social Housing List at 31st January 2024

TOTAL No of Social Housing Applicants on waiting list	1,545
Proportion of SH applicants availing of HAP supports	(722) = 46.7%

RAS/Leasing Statistics at 31st January 2024

Active RAS tenancies	64
Active short-term leasing tenancies (Social Housing Leasing Scheme)	24
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	33

Tenancies Created during the period 1st January – 31st January 2024

Method of Delivery	No. housed
First allocation of New Build/Acquired unit	1
Relet / Refurbished Stock Allocation	3
Housed via leasing	0
AHB Tenancies created (via new build and relet)	34
TOTAL	38

Queries regarding Housing Allocations should be emailed to housingallocations@laoiscoco.ie

LOANS AND GRANTS

Local Authority Home Loan (LAHL)

No of new Loan Applications received since 1 st January 2024	5
No of 'Live' Applications approved and awaiting action at end of January 2024	9
No of Applications refused since 1 st January 2024	0

PRIVATE GRANTS

Housing Adaptation Grants at 31st January 2024

Allocation €TBA

	No. of applications received	No. of applications paid	Value of applications paid	No. of applications currently at work stage	Value of applications currently at work stage
HOP	17	12	56,765.00	58	320,259
MAG	0	2	8,720.00	1	5,200

HGD	5	5	32,762.50	60	477,805
TOTAL	22	19	98,247.50	119	803,264

**Disabled Persons Grant for Social Housing
DPG works at 31st January 2024:**

Allocation 2024 (including LA funded portion)	€TBA
No of applications included on 2024 funding submission to Dept of Housing on 29 th Jan 2024	30
Value of the above proposal	€776,135

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

REGENERATION TEAM

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



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

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

Derelict Sites

The Derelicts sites register is maintained by the Planning Staff. In conjunction with the TRO, the Derelict sites team are working on sites in both Rathdowney and Mountrath as indicated on the maps above.

Currently

- Total No of Derelict sites entered onto Register to date in 2024 – 31
- Total No of Files on hand: 94
- 1 new file opened to date in 2024
- 3 files closed to date in 2024

CPO Activation

Notice of intention to CPO issued to landowners and also in the Leinster Express dated the 20th February for the following sites (Closing date for receipt of submissions – 22nd March 2023)

- 2 sites at Old Knockmay Road Portlaoise,
- 26 and 27 Triogue Manor, Portlaoise
- 15 Bracklone Street, Portarlington
- Main Street, Stradbally

The Derelict sites Team also works along side the Business Support Unit in advising in relation to the incentives available through the BSU and LEO office in relation to the reuse of derelict and vacant commercial properties.

Vacancy Surveys

Arising from a Vacant Homes Team survey of properties identified as being vacant in data supplied by GeoDirectory (via a Dept of Housing 2022 initiative) has shown so far - of the **961 properties surveyed** (residential and commercial), **584 properties were found to be vacant**, with 39 of those also found to have some elements of dereliction. The Housing Section will endeavour to contact the owners of the vacant residential properties and outline the schemes available to return these properties to use for social housing. Where ownership cannot be established, local enquiries will continue in relation to ownership, vacancy history, etc. Where all other means of returning the properties to use have been exhausted, use of the CPO process to acquire properties deemed to be suitable for social housing may be considered.

Suitability for social housing will depend on the need and housing typology of need in particular locations. Queries regarding vacant properties should be emailed to vacanthomes@laoiscoco.ie

Vacancy/Dereliction Activation Programme

Circular 14/2023 provided details on the launch of the Vacancy/Dereliction Activation Programme. A target of **60 vacant and derelict properties** to enter the Programme and **16 CPOs / Compulsory Acquisitions** to commence/complete in 2023 was set for Laois County Council. Targets for 2024 have not been issued to date.

Properties are counted as entering the Vacancy/Dereliction Activation Programme where they have been identified as being vacant or derelict as part of the vacancy survey and where efforts are being made to contact property owners. Properties approved/approved in principle for a Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant are also counted as entering the Programme. The Derelict Sites Team and the Vacant Homes Officer have cross referenced any common properties from both register and survey in an effort to determine the number of properties activated for the purpose of potential CPO.

	2023		2024	
	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
Vacant and derelict properties that have entered the Vacancy/Dereliction Activation Programme	60	153*	N/A	3***
CPO's / Compulsory Acquisitions commenced/completed	16	4**	N/A	0

(* 85 Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant Approvals/Approvals in Principle, 34 Vacant Homes Office correspondence, 34 Derelict Sites correspondence)

(** 3 CPO acquisitions completed in 2023 and 1 CPO commenced)

(*** 2 Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant Approvals/Approvals in Principle, 1 Vacant Homes Office correspondence)

Vacancy / Regeneration Funding Schemes

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

- Vacant for over 2 years
- Built before 2008

Total number of Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant Applications

	2024	2023
Number of grant applications received	6	121
Number of applications APPROVED	1	65
Number of applications APPROVED IN PRINCIPLE	1	20
Number of applications REFUSED	0	5
Number of applications WITHDRAWN	0	4
Number of grants paid to Applicants	3	6

PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT, ARTS & HERITAGE

COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The 2 year report on the Implementation of the objectives of the Laois County Development is currently under preparation and will be circulated to the Council for the March Council meeting.

Draft Local Area Plans

Draft Graiguecullen / Carlow Joint Urban Area Plan (JULAP)

The Draft Plan and various associated appendices including SEA, AA, SFRA and LTP were on display for a 6-week period through 5th February 2024. Two public information sessions were held in relation to same. 72 no. submissions were received and preparation of the Chief Executives Report is now underway.

Draft Portlaoise Local Area Plan

The Draft Plan and associated appendices has been finalized and will go on public display for a 6-week period from early March 2024.

Draft Portarlinton Joint Local Area Plan

ended on 19th October 2023. A total of 38 submissions were made. A Chief Executives report in respect of the 28 submissions made to Laois County Council has been completed. Writing of the draft Plan is now commencing.

Draft Mountmellick Local Area Plan took place over a 4-week period through 5th February 2024. An Issues Paper was prepared and a public information session was held on January 23rd 2024. 11 no. submissions were made at pre-draft stage. A CE report is now being prepared on the submissions received and will be circulated to the MD members for their noting.

Residential Zoned Land Tax

The draft RZLT in-scope maps for **calendar year 2024** were prepared and issued to the Dept. by deadline date of 1st February 2024. No submissions have been received to date.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT REPORT

E-Planning Project	65% of the applications received in 2023 have been made online - 564 online applications out of total 864 applications in 2023		
Planning Applications	Year	Valid applications from 01/01/2024 08/02/2024	Valid applications from 01/01/2023- 08/02/2023
		43	39
Total Number of valid applications received:	43		
Number of decisions made	44		
Invalid applications returned to applicant	30		
Number of applications granted:	44 (Decisions to Grant)		
Number of applications refused:	0 (Decisions to Refuse)		
Referrals to Area Offices (working days):	within 14 days achieved		
No of appeals to ABP	1		
PRE PLANNING			
No of requests to date	44		
No of meetings held to date	32		
Wait time	1.5 Weeks		

ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

Current year	2024		2023	
Service Review	Jan		Jan	
Total number of new cases subject to complaints that were investigated	11		12	
Number of Warning Letters served	25		20	
Number of Enforcement Notices served	4		19	
No Of cases referred for legal proceedings	0		2	
Number of cases in Court(incl adjournments)	7		1	
Number of cases Resolved in Court	1		0	
Number of Files Closed	5		11	

Number of cases on system	148	144
Enforcement Costs recouped	€ 650.00	€ 20.00
Number of Valid Retention Applications Received relating to Enforcement Action	0	2
Fees received through Valid Retention Applications Received relating to Enforcement Action	€0.00	€1,459.43
Legal fees paid	€540.06	€617.46

BROADBAND - DIGITAL PROJECTS

Vex Robotics. – V5 Programme.

The TY class took part in the Regional Competition on Tuesday 23rd of January in Tullamore. There was a total of 26 teams with Clonaslee Collage finishing 10th overall going out at quarter final stage.

Vex Robotics.

The Vex IQ Robotics Competitions for primary schools in 2024 are as follows: -

A. RECF Midlands Regional VEX Robotics competition took place in Mucklagh Community Centre, Offaly R35 DN02 - **Thursday 8th February** with all winners going forward to the All-Ireland Championships in Cork in May.

B. The Midlands LA Competitions are as follows:

- Emo National School Laois – Wednesday 6th March. (1st time ever an event will be held in Laois).
- Gallen Community School Offaly – Wednesday 20th March.
- Sacred Heart School Tullamore Offaly - Thursday 21st March.

LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

2024 LEO BUDGET ALLOCATIONS

Laois County Council has been notified of the Enterprise Ireland 2024 budget allocation for the Local Enterprise Office. €1,201,315 has been received in funding for the year.

MINISTERIAL VISIT

Minister Neale Richmond, Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, with special responsibility for Business, Employment and Retail, visited the Local Enterprise Office on Friday 16th February. The minister met with LEO staff and representatives from Laois Chamber Alliance, Laois Hub Collective and The CUBE followed by a meeting with a few LEO clients.

LOCAL ENTERPRISE WEEK

Small businesses and aspiring entrepreneurs in Co. Laois will have the opportunity to sample 14 events aimed at helping them to start or grow their business as part of this year's Local Enterprise Week. The initiative of the Local Enterprise Offices nationwide, supported by Enterprise Ireland and the local authorities, takes place from the 4th to 8th March.

While there are hundreds of events taking place nationally during the week, including two National Spotlight events that are available for free online, there are also plenty of events in Laois open to all to attend, the majority of which are in person, with great presenters and great networking opportunities.

This year's programme of events includes "Be Brave – Take Your Business to the Next Level", a unique opportunity to glean insights from Pearse Flannery, author of the no.1 bestseller business book 'Grabbing your Oyster', in Preston House, Abbeyleix on Wednesday 6th March at 7 pm.

A Women in Business Networking lunch will take in Durrow Castle on Friday 8th March to celebrate International Women's Day.

Throughout the week, a diverse range of training programmes and mentoring clinics will be available to meet the needs of small businesses.

PROMOTIONAL VIDEOS

The Business Support Unit is currently working on the development of a number of promotional videos for the county.

ROADS, TRANSPORTATION, DRAINAGE & PUBLIC REALM

2024 Regional & Local Roads Allocations

The regional and local roads allocations for 2024 were announced on the 15th February.

Allocations are generally in line with those in 2023 with minor adjustments between the respective schemes. The Laois County Council Annual Roadworks Programme for 2024 will be presented at the March meeting as in previous years.

Laois County Council	
Restoration Improvement	€7,037,000
Restoration Maintenance	€962,500
Supplementary Restoration Maintenance	€842,000
Discretionary Grant	€1,878,000
Bridge Rehabilitation	€525,000
Specific Imp. Grant	€100,000
Safety Improvement Works	€328,000
PSCI: Survey Support	€17,000
Training Grant	€32,000
Drainage Works	€425,500
Former National Roads	€700,000
Cycle Signs	€3,300
Speed Limits (Housing Area Signage)	€11,500
Speed Limits (Rural Speed Limit Signage)	€35,400
Climate Change Adaptation & Resilience Works	€422,500
Community Involvement Scheme	€319,050
Total Allocation	€13,638,750

National Roads Funding

Transport infrastructure Ireland allocations for 2024 are awaited and once received they will be included in the Annual Roadworks Programme for the March Meeting.

NTA Active Travel Funding

The NTA allocations for 2024 were announced on the 7th February 2024 and when funding through additional NTA funding Streams (Bus Stop Enhancement Programme) the overall allocation is generally in line with the allocations for 2023. Further details of the respective schemes will be provided in the Annual Roadworks Programme.

Table A: Laois County Council

Active Travel Investment Grants: 2024 Allocations

Project Code	Project Name	2024 Allocation
<u>Laois County Council</u>		
LS/21/0003	Father Browne Avenue Cycle Scheme, Portlaoise	€ 50,000
LS/21/0006	Active Travel Scheme, Dublin Road, Portlaoise	€ 50,000
LS/21/0018	Low Cost Junction Tightening / Pedestrian Crossing Schemes	€ 200,000
LS/21/0020	SRTS - St Paul's N.S., Mountmellick	€ 50,000
LS/22/0001	Portlaoise Local Transport Plan	€ 75,000
LS/22/0004	Active Travel Office - Staff Costs	€ 330,000
LS/23/0024	Rapid Deployment - R445 Mountrath Rd, Portlaoise	€ 300,000
LS/23/0012	Active Travel, Permeability Scheme, Mountmellick	€ 300,000
LS/23/0018	Active Travel, Permeability Scheme, Portarlinton	€ 5,000
LS/23/0025	Active Travel Scheme, Borris Rd, Portlaoise	€ 400,000
LS/23/0028	Triogue Way, Portlaoise - Phase 2- Parklands	€ 750,000
LS/23/0029	Triogue Way, Portlaoise - Phase 3 -Trogue way to N80	€ 60,000
LS/23/0027	SRTS - Camross National School, Camross -R2	€ 150,000
LS/24/xxxx	Park and Stride, Summerhill, Portlaoise	€ 30,000
LS/24/xxxx	Active Travel Scheme, Station Road & Canal Road, Portarlinton	€ 200,000
LS/24/xxxx	Shared e-bike enabling works	€ 50,000
Total:		€ 3,000,000
Allocations Through Other NTA Funding Streams		
LS/24/xxxx	Bus Stop Enhancement Programme	€ 500,000
Subtotal:		€500,000
Total:		€3,500,000

Safe Routes to School Programme

Scoil Mhuire, Ballyroan Road, Abbeyleix

Following the completion of a Road Safety Impact Assessment in 2022 for the Ballyroan Rd, Abbeyleix, specialists were appointed to carry out a more detailed survey, and prepare preliminary designs and options report to deal with safety issues identified in the RSIA. High vehicular speeds and poor VRU infrastructure were the main issues identified. In line with this, an allocation was provided for Scoil Mhuire under the SRTS programme to deliver on a variety of interventions to improve the route for school pupils and free up pedestrian space at the front of school environment.

Following An Taisce's liaison with the school and LCC a delivery plan was issued, which contained a variety of recommendations focused on active travel.

In conjunction with An Taisce and the NTA, LCC prepared a design, which when approved saw the following interventions delivered:

- School Zone outside Scoil Mhuire, comprising pencil bollards and coloured line marking
- 2 new raised zebra crossings either side of the school
- junction tightening works at 3 estates
- side road junction improvements
- raised table and speed ramps

Average speeds in the area were reduced by **between 21% and 31%** with significant reductions also seen in the highest speeds recorded, the resultant scheme has given school pupils, parents and residents a safer environment to walk and cycle. The success of the scheme has been highlighted on the National Safe Routes to Schools newsletter for February 2024.

The graphic on the following page highlights the positive difference the scheme has made.

Speed Surveys

- Location 1: vicinity of Laburnum Court
- Location 2: between Abbey Crescent and Golf Club
- Location 3: north of Fairways estate

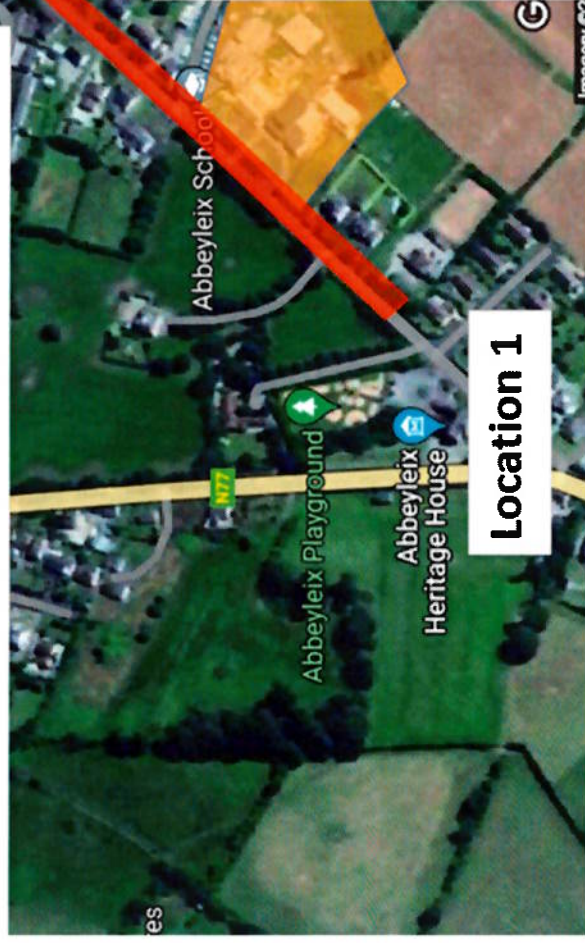
Scoil Mhuire Primary School



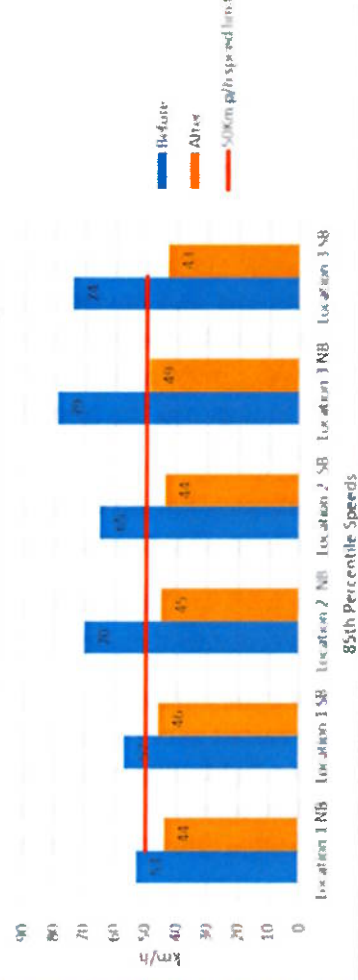
SRTS Scheme Extents (Gateway & Front of School)



Ballyroan Rd 50km/h speed limit



Before & After Speed Survey 85th %
for SRTS Scheme Scoil Mhuire Abbeyleix



Scheme photos (before and after):





Scoil Phadraig Naofa Mountmellick

The completed scheme has been well received and consists of:

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



Raised Zebra Crossing



WASTE MANAGEMENT & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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

- Landfill monitoring and aftercare maintenance is on-going. All monitoring results are being submitted to the EPA. The facility is being operated in compliance with the facility's EPA waste license.

2. **Bring Banks:**

Tonnages of 2024 collected recyclable material is in Table 1 below.

Month	Tonnage	Month	Tonnage	Month	Tonnage
Jan	174.00	May		Sept	
Feb		June		Oct	
Mar		July		Nov	
Apr		Aug		Dec	
Annual Total			174 Tonnes		

Table 1 – 2023 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) **Waste Enforcement & Complaints**

Table 2 below details the number and types of complaints received in 2023.

Nature	Number	Nature	Number
Waste Management/Enforcement	93	Air	6
Litter	51	Noise	1
Water	7	Waste Infrastructure	6
Total		164	

Table 2 – Environmental Complaint Register

b) **Litter Fines**

Month	Number	Month	Number	Month	Number
Jan	10	May		Sept	
Feb		June		Oct	
Mar		July		Nov	
Apr		Aug		Dec	
Annual Total			10		

Table 3 – 2023 Litter Fines

c) **Illegal Dumping**

No figure available at present.

4. **Waste Management & Enforcement:**

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

5. Environmental Protection

a) **Protect the Water Quality Status in all Water Bodies**

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

b) **Air & Noise:**

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

6. **New Grant Schemes, Regulations & Deposit Return Schemes**

• **Domestic Wastewater Treatment System Grants**

- Commencement Date – 01st January 2024.
- 3 Property Owners were inspected in January 2024. All 3 will be eligible for the grant.
- 10 Property Owners have expressed an interest in an inspection. Next inspections will take place in March following submission of RMCEI Plan.
- 2 callers have been informed they would not qualify for the grant (i.e. GAA Club and a property owner who wanted to move septic tank due to a boundary issue

Following a workshop on the above grant schemes the Department advised that they will issue an advice note with a list of frequently asked questions to all Local Authorities.

• **The Deposit Return Scheme (DRS)**

- Commencement Date – 01st February 2024.

7. **Rural Water – Multi Annual Programme 2024 to 2026**

The Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage have issued a circular to Councils regarding the Multi Annual Rural Water Programme (MARWP) 2024 to 2026 inviting the council to make applications for funding.

The majority of measures in the MARWP are aimed at supporting Group Water Schemes. There are 9 individual funding measures available:

- Source Protection for existing private Group Water Schemes
- Water Treatment Provision, Improvements and Capital Replacement (existing private Group Water Schemes)
- Amalgamation and/or Rationalisation (existing private Group Water Scheme)
- Improvement of Infrastructure including Water Conservation (existing private Group Water Schemes)
- Extensions to existing Group Water Schemes and the Development of new Standalone Group Water Schemes

- Taking in charge of Group Water Schemes and Group Sewerage Schemes
- Community Water Connections and Community Wastewater Connections
- Innovative Demonstration Projects
- Wastewater collection and treatment needs for villages and settlements without access to public wastewater services
- The deadline for submission of applications for funding to the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage is the 12th April 2024.

The Multi Annual Programme 2024 – 2026 has been advertised on the Council website, Social Media and in the Leinster Express and Laois Nationalist papers inviting applications for funding under the various funding measures available under the scheme.

The Rural Water Monitoring Committee met in February to discuss the new programme and support groups applying for funding.

Contact has been made with all Group Water Schemes in Laois to inform them of the scheme and to encourage submission of funding applications.

A no of expressions of interest have already been received.

The Council will make its submission to the Dept for funding for the new programme by April 12th 2024.

National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy

The making of a Waste Management Plan is an Executive Function, under Section 22 of the Waste Management Act 1996.

The process for the development of a new, National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy has been underway since late 2021. The process has been co-ordinated by the Regional Waste Management Planning Offices. Currently, there are three Regional Waste Management Plans (Connaught, Ulster, Southern & Eastern Midlands), with designated Lead Authorities and, associated, Regional Waste Management Planning Offices RWMPO's.

Local Authorities are required to evaluate existing plans after 5 years. Existing Plans were evaluated in 2021 and the evaluation recommended that a single national waste management plan be prepared collectively by all Authorities. Taking account of national waste policy, the new plan was titled the National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy.

On 21st February, 2024, the Chief Executive made an Order giving statutory effect to the **National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy 2024-2030**.

Emergency Planning, Fire Services & Flood Relief

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

For information, as of 16th February 2024, there are 33 permanent vacancies in the Laois retained fire service. This is based on the new compliment of 100 retained firefighters (up from 75) in the 8 fire stations, following the WRC Agreement. 22 prospective new staff are currently at various stages of the recruitment process. Recruitment is ongoing to recruit more fire-fighters.

New Fire Station in Stradbally

Following approval of Part 8 proposals, Laois County Council has recently received 'NDFEM approval in principle, for the construction of a new Fire Station at Stradbally.' Laois County Council has appointed NODE Architecture as the lead consultant. The contract was signed on Friday 16th February 2024.

Mountmellick Fire Station upgrade

Part VIII documents have been completed by Tobin Consulting Engineers and presented to the Borris-in-Ossory – Mountmellick Municipal District Committee. Part VIII public consultation will commence on 1st March, 2024.

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

Local Enhancement Programme 2023-2024

Laois received an allocation €153,591.05 under the Local Enhancement Programme 2023. This total amount comprises:

- €127,922.54 Capital funding for use towards carrying out necessary repairs and improvements to facilities, energy efficiency type projects, purchase of equipment etc for communities.
- €25,598.51 capital funding ring-fenced for Women's Groups

The fund will be administered by Laois LCDC. Community groups can now make applications online. Further information available here <https://laois.ie/departments/community/grants/local-enhancement-programme-2023-2024/> Closing date for receipt of applications is Wednesday, 21st February 2024 at 4.00pm

Community Projects (Elected Members) Fund 2024

The application forms for Community Projects (Elected Members) Fund 2024 are now available by emailing dce@laoiscoco.ie

World of Work Programme 2023 – 2024

This programme has commenced with 2nd year students in Portlaoise College. In February, an introduction session on the functions of Laois County Council was delivered. Other sessions will follow.

Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme 2024-2028

The Contract for the new SICAP programme 2024-2028 was signed on the 20th December 2023 with Laois Partnership Company being appointed as the Implementing Partner for the new programme effective from the 1st January 2024. The 2024 general SICAP Annual Budget was confirmed in the amount of €763,980 with an additional €143,123 being allocated to New Arrivals. The 2023 Annual Performance Review was completed with the Annual Progress Report and the Review expected to be approved by the LCDC at the February Meeting.

Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2023-2028

The Laois LECP framework document is being prepared and it is envisaged that the document will come before the March Council meeting for LA approval.

Age Friendly Laois

Age Friendly Laois and Healthy Laois are preparing for the return of the *Live Well* Expo in Portlaoise College on Thursday 4th April, from 1pm to 6pm. In excess of 60 stands have been confirmed so far, and Speakers are being engaged for the day. Laois' Age Friendly Ambassador, Mrs Anna May McHugh will officially launch the Expo again this year. Approximately 1000 attended this event in 2023 and similar numbers are expected this year. The new Laois Age friendly guide to services in Laois has been distributed to all Libraries. These are available on request and to download via Laois.ie Age Friendly page.

Healthy Ireland

Smarter Travel Workplace Staff Survey.

Healthy Ireland and the Climate Action team are collaborating on a Smarter Travel Workplace Survey with the National Transport Authority. The main aim is to promote and support active and sustainable commuting for employees. This survey will assist in establishing staff opinion on travelling to work. This is a first step and will provide a Model to be expanded to other workplaces in Laois.

Community Climate Action Fund

Applications for the Community Climate Action Fund close on the 11th March, 2024.

To support Laois communities in submitting their application for funding towards the development of their holistic project, an online webinar was held on Tuesday evening, 20th February. The event attracted over 40 registrations and the groups in attendance, received valuable insights and inspiration for potential community climate action projects (event was recorded and will be hosted on laois.ie). The interest in this event demonstrates the importance Laois communities place on addressing the challenges of climate change at the grassroots level, in their localities.

COMMUNITY CLIMATE ACTION FUND

20 FEB You are invited to **CLIMATE ACTION PROJECTS**
ONLINE WEBINAR | 7:00 PM

Get Inspired with examples of projects for your community group to apply with to this fund.

Hear from climate action experts:

Dr Karen Moore: Community Climate Action Officer, Laois County Council

Aoife Munn: community activator, lecturer and environmentalist

To register email kmoore@laoiscoco.ie

Finish @ 8.30pm

Community Energy | Travel | Food and Waste | Shopping and Recycling | Local Climate and Environmental Action

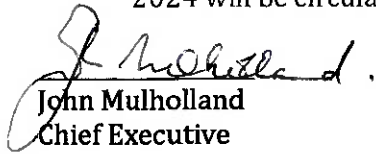
Systems Innovation for Sustainable Enterprise and Communities Course



In February, the Systems Innovation for Sustainable Enterprise and Communities (SISEC) course undertook a visit to Portlaoise Prison and convened a half day in-person training facilitated by IKC3 - Ireland's Knowledge Centre for Carbon, Climate, and Community Action, in collaboration with Laois County Council. This innovative endeavour aims to develop a pilot community-based education programme. During the visit, insights were gathered from 45 local participants representing diverse sectors and educational backgrounds. Together, they navigated through immersive learning phases, constructing a portfolio of projects aimed at assisting Laois County Council in their critical task of decarbonising the Portlaoise Town. As this dynamic collaboration unfolds, each participant plays a vital role in the pursuit of sustainable change, contributing innovative solutions to propel the community towards a greener, more resilient future. With each stride, progress is made towards achieving a collective vision of a thriving, low-carbon society, driven by knowledge, unity and a shared purpose.

Chief Executive's Orders

- ✦ A schedule of Chief Executive Orders signed during the month of February 2024 will be circulated.


John Mulholland
Chief Executive

February 21st 2024