

LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE LAOISE



MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT
JULY 2023
TUARASCÁIL BHAINISTÍOCHTA
IÚIL 2023

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

Section 136(2) of the Local Government Act, 2011 as inserted by Section 51 of the Local Government Reform Act, 2014, requires the Chief Executive to prepare monthly management report. The report for July 2023 is as follows:

FINANCE & ALLOCATIONS NOTIFIED

Expenditure and income to the 30/06/2023 is summarised below:

Service Division	Budget Allocation	Expenditure to 30/06/2023
Housing and Building	€21,247,400	€8,973,136
Road Transportation and Safety	€26,291,600	€8,273,423
Water Services	€3,404,500	€1,673,291
Development Management	€9,586,000	€4,597,217
Environmental Services	€8,677,500	€3,127,822
Recreation and Amenity	€4,990,000	€1,700,563
Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare	€900,000	€215,874
Miscellaneous Services	€9,498,700	€3,866,854
Central Management Charge	€11,213,300	€4,981,135
Total	€95,809,000	€37,409,305

Service Division	Budget Allocation	Income to 30/06/2023
Housing and Building	€22,725,300	€8,384,981
Road Transportation and Safety	€21,583,000	€3,869,402
Water Services	€4,502,000	€2,217,825
Development Management	€6,495,500	€3,094,385
Environmental Services	€2,231,000	€966,945
Recreation and Amenity	€1,049,000	€382,245
Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare	€436,000	€126,856
Miscellaneous Services	€11,954,262	€1,684,650
Superannuation	€720,000	€288,563
Local Property Tax	€9,033,703	€4,516,852
Rates	€14,578,963	€7,705,174
Capital transfer		
Total	€95,308,728	€33,237,878

The Miscellaneous Services Expenditure is broken down as follows:

Service Division	Budget Allocation	Expenditure to 30/06/2023
Machinery Account	€220,000	€107,478
Administration of Rates	€2,211,000	€292,413
Franchise Costs	€104,000	€75,248
Op of Morgue and Coroner Expenses	€130,000	€6,168
Op of Markets and Casual Trading	€3,000	€1,785

Local Representation/Civic Leadership	€987,000	€409,224
Motor Taxation	€226,000	€120,999
Agency & Recoupable Services	€5,617,700	€3,257,478
Total	€9,498,700	€4,270,293

The Central Management Charge Expenditure is broken down as follows:

Corporate Building Costs	€2,038,300	€263,471
General Corporate Services	€1,281,000	€328,966
Information and Communications Tech	€1,738,000	€641,193
Human Resources Function	€1,083,000	€541,325
Finance Function	€761,000	€1,117,669
Pensions and Lump Sum Costs	€4,312,000	€1,799,947
Total	€11,213,300	€4,692,571

Allocations Notified:

Department of Transport – Restoration Improvement Grant	€522,535
Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage - URDF 3 – Long Term Vacancies & Dereliction	€2,000,000

HOUSING AND REGENERATION

SOCIAL HOUSING DELIVERY

Annual Social Housing Delivery Targets under Housing for All

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

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Total
Social Housing completions to date	229	88	-	-	-	317

Social Housing Schemes completed in 2023

Location	Total No. of Houses	House Types	Constructed by	Comment
Market Square, Portarlinton (Vignoles Gardens)	18	15 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey 2 No. 2 Bed Apts 1 No. 3 Bed Apt	LCC (Turnkey)	18 units completed.
Ballymorris Green, Portarlinton (Ph 1)	34	34 no. 3 bed 2 storey houses	Cluid Housing	Phase 2 (12 units) to be completed in early 2024
South Dublin Road, Kilminchy (Dunamaise View)	36	13 no. 2 bed houses 23 no 3 bed houses	Cooperative Housing	Tenanting to commence by end of June.
TOTAL	*88			

Social Housing Schemes Under Construction in 2023

Location	Total No. of Houses	House Types	Constructed by	Comment
Harbour Court, Mountmellick	6	6 No. 2 Bed bungalows	LCC (Construction)	On Site – expected delivery Q3 2023
Moore St, Rathdowney	6	6 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Construction)	On site – expected delivery Q4 2023
Mooreville, Rathdowney	7	3 No. 2 Bed bungalow 4 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Construction)	On site – expected delivery Q1 2024
St. Kieran's Errill	14	6 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 8 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey	LCC (Construction)	On site – expected delivery Q4 2023
Church Avenue, Stradbally	31	9 No. 4 Bed 2 Storey 20 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 2 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey	LCC (Turnkey)	On site – phased delivery starting Q3 2023
Bruach Na Habhainn, Killeen	1	1 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Turnkey)	Currently being constructed offsite – MMC- On Site – Phase 1 (1 unit) delivery Q2 2024
Oak Park Halting Site	4	4 no. serviced bays	LCC	Contractor on site - Estimated delivery date Q4 2023.
Oldcourt, Ballylinan	1	1 No. 4 bed 1 storey	LCC (Renewal)	On site – expected delivery Q4 2023
Townparks, Rathdowney Rd, Borris-in-Ossory	26	4 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 12 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 10 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey	LCC Turnkey	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
Harpurs Lane, Portlaoise	44	20 no. 2 bed houses 16 no. 3 bed houses 4 no. 1 bed apt 4 no. 2 bed apt	Respond	Expected delivery August 2023
Ballymorris Green, Portarlington (Ph 2)	12	12 no. 3 bed houses	Cluid Housing	Currently on site – Last phase of scheme – advised that these units will be delivered in early 2024
Clonrooske Abbey, Portlaoise	18	18 no. 3 bed 2 storey	Cluid Housing	Advised delivery of 6 units in Q3 2023 Delivery date of final 12 units TBC
Goldencroft, Portlaoise (Old CBS site)	67	13 no. 2 bed apts 24 no. 3 bed houses 26 no. 2 bed houses 4 no. 2 bed bungalow	Cluid Housing	Awaiting delivery of Phases 1 and 2 (37 units) in Q3 2023 Phase 3 to be delivered by Q4 2023.
The Meadows (old Midland Dairies site), Portlaoise	48	19 no. 3 bed houses 9 no. 4 bed houses 20 no. 2 bed apts	Cluid Housing	Currently on site – expected delivery Q3 2023
Ard Branagh,	6	6 no. 3 bed houses	Circle Housing	Currently on site –

Portlaoise				expected delivery by end 2023
Ashewood Walk, Portlaoise	4	4 no. 3 bed houses	LA Part V	Contracts signed - expected delivery Q3 2023
Mount Stewart, Summerhill, Portlaoise	4	1 no. 4bed house 3 no 3bed houses	LA Part V	Currently on site - expected delivery Q3 2023
Sruth na Gleanna, Killeshin	5	1 no. 4bed house 3 no 3bed houses	LA Part V	Currently on site - expected delivery Q4 2023
TOTAL	324			

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

Location/Scheme	No of units	House Types	To be constructed by	Comment
Carraig Glas, Stradbally	26	15 no. 2 bed houses 9 no. 3 bed houses 2 no 4 bed houses	LCC (Construction)	Tender evaluation complete. Stage 4 due to be submitted and construction due to start in Q3 2023
Clonrooske (Knockmay), Portlaoise	12	8 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 3 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 1 No. 3 Bed 1 Storey	LCC (Construction)	Part VIII approved. Stage 3 to be submitted in Q3 2023.
Iona, Portlaoise	7	2 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 1 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 4 No. 1 Bed Apt	LCC (Construction)	Part VIII approved. Stage 3 to be submitted Q3 2023.
Doonane	12	12 no. 3 bed 2 storey	LCC (Construction)	Stage 2 approved. Part VIII exemption. In-committee consultation with MD members on 13/7/23.
Derry Road, Durrow	24	10 No. 1 Bed 1 Storey 5 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 5 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 4 No.2 Bed Apart	LCC (Construction)	Site investigation surveys & detailed design on-going and Stage 2 to be progressed in Q3 2023. Tender for demolition also to be advertised in Q3 2023.
Ballyadams	1	1 no. 6 bed bungalow	LCC (Construction)	Stage 2 Approved. Part VIII exemption period complete and Stage 3 to be submitted in Q3 2023.
Stradbally Road, Portlaoise	28 approx	Tenure mix numbers and houses types to be confirmed in detailed design	LCC Social and Affordable	Design Team appointed. Site investigation and topographical surveys are currently being carried out on site. Upon completion of same (Q3 2023), a detailed design for a scheme will be produced and will include

				proposed mixed tenure of the scheme. Following this a meeting of the MD members will be arranged to discuss design.
Bracklone St, Portarlinton	15	15 no. 2 bed houses	LCC (Construction)	Site investigation surveys ongoing and Stage 2 to be progressed in Q3 2023
Rushall Mountrath	2	2 no. 3 bed 2 storey	LCC (Construction)	Site investigation surveys ongoing and Stage 2 to be progressed in Q3 2023
Maryborough School, Stradbally Road, Portlaoise	11	2 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey 7 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey 2 No. 1 Bed 1 Storey	LCC (Construction)	Stage 1 To Be Submitted in Q3 2023
Main St, Ballinakill	3	2 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 1 No. 1 Bed Apt	LCC (Construction)	Site investigation surveys ongoing and Stage 2 to be progressed in Q3 2023
Moanbaun, Mountrath	15	4 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 7 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 4 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey	LCC (Construction)	Site investigation surveys ongoing and Stage 2 to be progressed in Q3 2023
1 New Road, Portlaoise	1	1 No. 4 Bed 1 Storey	LCC (Renewal)	Stage 2 Approved. Part VIII exemption period complete and Stage 3 to be submitted in Q3 2023.
6 Emmett Terrace, Mountmellick	1	1 No. 4 Bed 1 Storey	LCC (Renewal)	Stage 2 Approved. Part VIII exemption period complete and Stage 3 to be submitted in Q3 2023.
13 and 14 Lakeglen, Portlaoise	2	1 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 1 No. 4 Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Renewal)	Design Team Appointed and Stage 1 To Be Submitted in Q3 2023. Tender for demolition to be advertised in Q3 2023.
Beladd, Portlaoise	5	1 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 3 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 1 No. 4 Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Construction)	Design Team To Be Appointed and Stage 1 To Be Submitted in Q3 2023. Tender for demolition to be advertised in Q3 2023.
French Church St. Portarlinton	2	2 no. 2 bed apts	LCC (Renewal)	Stage 1 To Be Submitted in Q3 2023.
Convent Lands, Portlaoise (CAS)	52	33 no 2 bed apts 15 no 1 bed apts 4 no. 2 bed houses	Sophia Housing	Tender evaluation ongoing. AHB to advise of construction commencement date.
County Hotel, Portlaoise (CAS)	10	8 no. 1 bed apts 2 no. 2 bed apts	Cluid Housing	Stage 1 approved under CAS. Site investigation and building condition surveys currently being carried out

				<p>on site.</p> <p>On completion of surveys Cluid can confirm their revised cost plan and detailed design.</p> <p>Surveys carried out so far have outlined significant challenges re the protected front façade which will be taken into account for the finalisation of the cost plan.</p> <p>A section 57 planning report for the site has also been finalised and an agreement has been reached on which buildings on site can be demolished.</p> <p>Revised cost plan and detailed design to be completed in Q3 2023.</p>
“Radharc Darach” Hepburn Court, Portlaoise	54	8 no. 2 bed bungalow 12 no. 2 bed 2 storey 34 no. 2 bed 2 storey	Cluid Housing	Site transfer being concluded. Local residents will be informed by Cluid in relation to phasing of the build and any potential effect of this.
Curragh na Mona, Abbeyleix Rd, Portlaoise	39	5 x 2 bed fully accessible apts 12 x 2 bed bungalows 6 x 3 bed house with downstairs bedroom 2 x 4 bed house with downstairs bedroom 2 x 2 bed apts – accessible (ground floor) apts 2 x 1 bed 1 st floor apts 4 x 3 bed 2 storey. 6 x 2 bed 1 st floor apts	Respond Housing	Revised CALF application currently under review by Dept. Planned construction to commence mid -August 2023.
TOTAL	322			

AFFORDABLE HOUSING / COST RENTAL

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

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

Discussions ongoing to progress potential affordable units as follows:

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

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

- Initial design being considered for social and affordable housing on Council owned landbank on the Stradbally Road, Portlaoise. No of affordable units to be determined but estimated above at 30-40 units.
- Initial design for up to 5 social/affordable units on site at Beladd currently being examined. Tender for demolition of houses on site to issue shortly.

Call remains open for Expressions of Interest in respect of:

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

REGENERATION / VACANT HOMES

Regeneration Team

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



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

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

Vacancy Surveys

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

The app has shown the following data so far - of the 698 properties surveyed to date, 400 properties were found to be vacant, with 23 of those found to be derelict.

Next step in this process will be to endeavour to contact the owners of the vacant residential properties and outline the schemes available to return these properties to use for housing. Where ownership cannot be established, local enquiries will continue in relation to ownership, vacancy history, etc. Where all other means of returning the properties to use have been exhausted, use of the CPO process to acquire properties deemed to be suitable for social housing will be considered.

Vacancy / Regeneration Funding Schemes

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

Croí Conaithe (Towns) Applications at 30th June, 2023

No. of Applications received	77
No. Approved	24
No. Approved in Principle	11
Applicants under consideration	36
No. Refused	3
No. Withdrawn by Applicant	3

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

- **Repair and Leasing Scheme**

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

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

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

CPO Activation Programme

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

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

At 30th June 2023	Target No of CPO	Number of CPOs actual
Vacant and derelict properties that have entered the CPO Activation Programme	60	65
CPO's / Compulsory Acquisitions commenced in 2023	16	1

PRIVATE RENTED INSPECTIONS

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

Target for number of inspections in 2023 is 874.

	Jan - June 2023
No of properties inspected	574
No of notices of works issued	476

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	Evaluation of applications is on-going. Services/utilities currently being constructed on site.
Gleann na Glaise	4	Evaluation of applications is on-going. All services/utilities in place on site.
Doonane	2	Stage 1 approved as part of larger housing scheme Part VIII & Stage 2 to be progressed in Q3 2023
Derry Road Durrow	4	Stage 1 approved as part of larger housing scheme Part VIII & Stage 2 to be progressed in Q3 2023
Castletown	9	Proposal. Detailed design currently on-going
TOTAL SITES UNDER CONSIDERATION	23	

HOUSING STOCK

Housing Re-Lets

Month	LA Keys Surrendered	Properties Acquired	Works Completed
January 2023	6	2	6
February 2023	2	2	1
March 2023	6	5	16
April 2023	6	4	9
May 2023	10	2	14
June 2023	6	1	2
TOTAL (YTD)	36	16	48

NOTE: There are currently 21 vacant units from our existing stock and a further 14 units that the Council acquired. Works are either ongoing on these properties or specifications are being prepared for works to be carried out.

Housing Maintenance

Month	Work Orders Raised	Work Orders Closed	Work Orders Open
January 2023	504	504	0
February 2023	378	378	0
March 2023	464	464	0
April 2023	357	348	9
May 2023	440	372	68
June 2023	325	169	156
TOTAL (YTD)	2,468	2,235	233

Energy Efficiency/Retrofitting Programme:

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

A summary of both programmes is outlined in table below.

PROGRAMME	COMMENTS
MRP – 159 Units	159 units completed.
EERP (2021) – 28 Units – (O'Moore Place)	13 units completed. Remaining 15 units due to be completed in Q3 2023.
EERP (2022) – Phase 1&2 – 41 Units (Thornberry, Church Ave, Slieve Bloom Park)	<p><u>Phase 1</u></p> <p>1) Thornberry, Abbeyleix – 20 units.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 units surveyed and tender awarded to contractor with works to commence in Q3 2023. <p><u>Phase 2</u></p> <p>1) Church Avenue, Stradbally – 12 units.</p> <p>2) Slieve Bloom Park, Clonaslee – 9 units.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21 units surveyed and tender awarded to contractor with works to commence in Q3 2023.
EERP (2022) – Phase 3 – 21 Units (St. Fintan's Tce, Old School Road, St Johns Sq.)	<p><u>Phase 3</u></p> <p>1) St Fintans Terrace – 6 units</p> <p>2) Old School Road, Ballylinan – 8 units</p> <p>3) St. John's Square, Portlaoise – 7 units.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21 units surveyed and tender awarded to contractor with works to commence in Q3 2023.
EERP (2023) – 53 Units (St. Brigid's Pl, Fr. O'Connor Cres., Erkindale Dr, Rossmore View)	Surveys of the 53 units is under way and tender for retrofitting works to be advertised in Q3 2023 for completion in 2024.

HOUSING NEED

Notices to Quit/Social Housing Acquisitions

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

From 1st January – 30th June 2023:

Acquisitions completed	12
Acquisitions currently in progress	8
Acquisitions under consideration	14
No. of above that have tenants in situ	17

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

Homeless Presentations

Time Period	Homeless Presentations	Breakdown of Household
1 st May – 30 th June 2023	23	16 singles, 2 couples 5 families

Homeless Accommodation

	Emergency Accommodation Households booked at 30 th June 2023	Social Housing allocated from homelessness in June 2023
Families	6	1
Single Persons	13	1
TOTAL	19	2

Social Housing List at 30th June 2023

TOTAL No of Social Housing Applicants on waiting list	1,743
Proportion of SH applicants availing of HAP supports (822)	47%
Proportion of HAP tenants transferred from Rent Supplement (128)	15.5%

RAS/Leasing Statistics at 30th June 2023

Active RAS tenancies	70
Active short-term leasing tenancies (Social Housing Leasing Scheme)	26
Active Repair & Leasing Scheme tenancies	1
Active long-term leasing tenancies with private landlords/investors	11
Active long-term Mortgage to Rent leasing tenancies with a private company	27

Applicants housed during the period 1st January – 30th June 2023

Method of Delivery	No. housed 1 st January – 30 th June 2023
First allocation of New Build/Acquired unit	40
Relet / Refurbished Stock Allocation	39
Housed via leasing	0
TOTAL	79

Nominations to AHB - 1 st January – 30 th June 2023	107
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Total homes provided in 1 st half of year	186
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LOANS AND GRANTS

Loans

Local Authority Home Loan (LAHL) at 30th June 2023

No of Loan Applications received since scheme commenced in January 2022	88
No of Applications approved since scheme commenced in January 2022	32
No of Applications refused since scheme commenced in January 2022	24*

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

Private Grants

Housing Adaptation Grants at 30th June 2023

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

	No. of applications received to 30/06/2023	No. of applications paid by 30/06/2023	Value of applications paid by 30/06/2023	No. of applications currently at work stage	Value of applications currently at work stage
HOP	104	51	€225,235	60	€276,170
MAG	11	8	€24,189	5	€24,200
HGD	84	16	€129,320	54	€423,608
TOTAL	199	75	€378,744	119	€723,978

Disabled Persons Grant for Social Housing

DPG works at 30th June 2023:

Allocation 2023 (including LA funded portion)	€641,100
No of new applications received to 30/06/2023	21
No of Works approved to date (incl 3 extensions)	33
Value of approved works to date	€524,816

Upon assessment, it is noted that completion of the full programme in 2023 will require additional Department funding, which will be sought in Q3 2023.

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

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE TO REFUGEES FLEEING CONFLICT

Laois County Council continues to lead and coordinate the Laois Ukrainian Community Response Forum. The Forum, consisting of 23 statutory and voluntary groups/agencies, meets regularly, with 17 meetings held to date, ensuring consistency and efficiency in service delivery and supports to new arrivals to our county from Ukraine. The most recent data indicates there are approximately 1033 displaced Ukrainian citizens in the County. Approximately 314 of these are in accommodation centres such as hotels, guesthouses, hostels, and refurbished properties, with the remainder in privately sourced or pledged accommodation.

With the pending establishment of a Laois County Council Integration Support Service, the remit of the Forum is being broadened to ensure efficient delivery of services to all refugees fleeing conflict.

The Council continues to assist the International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS - under the auspices of Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, DCEDIY) with the temporary accommodation of Ukrainian arrivals to our county, as well as providing liaison locally in relation to vacant buildings and sites suitable for medium to long term accommodation solutions.

The Council continues to allocate privately pledged/offered accommodation to Ukrainian families, with 48 households having been provided with accommodation through these mechanisms to date.

Site works are continuing at the 42 Modular Homes project in Rathdowney. DCEDIY have indicated a revised date of October 2023 for handover of the site to them from OPW.

PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT, ARTS & HERITAGE

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

Portarlinton Joint Urban Area Plan

Planning Staff have prepared an issues paper in conjunction with Offaly County Council and will brief the Portarlinton and Edenderry MD in relation to public Consultation on the 25th July 2023. Public Consultation will run in relation to the issues during August / September 2023. Public Notices will advise on this during August.

REGENERATION

URDF Call 3 - Derelict sites

Call 3 is a key initiative in operationalising the Government's Town Centre First policy and the wider National Planning Framework (NPF) compact growth objectives to support the growth of our towns and urban areas with an increased number of new homes and to activate underutilised building stock in these areas.

This fund specifically applies to the Town of Portlaoise which has a population greater than 10,000.

It will also integrate with existing coordinated Government measures that are tackling building vacancy and dereliction including the Croi Conaithe Refurbishment Grant, the Planning Exemption for commercial to residential use and the CPO Activation Programme amongst others.

In reviewing each submission and the variety of properties submitted, it has been decided that the initial focus of the programme should be on those properties;

- (i) located within town centre areas zoned as Mixed Use or City/Town/village Centre
- (ii) that will provide, as part of their ultimate end use, some element of residential use.

Local authorities can only use the fund to target the acquisition of long term vacant (>2 years) and derelict properties which are either not on the market for sale or to which the market has not responded and which are on their approved acquisition programme. This is necessary to prevent local authorities competing with other potential buyers of vacant or derelict properties and mitigate against the risk of property price inflation arising from the programme.

Laois County Council identified 11 properties within Portlaoise Town Centre which met the criteria eligible for this scheme.

A total of €2 million has been approved to pursue the acquisition of these and /or other properties to remedy dereliction and vacancy within Portlaoise Town Centre.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE

E-Planning Project	E-Planning has been live since 11 th November 2022 56% applications in 2023 have been made online – 249 on line out of total 441 applications made to date in 2023.			
Planning Applications	Year	Valid applications from 01/01/2023	Valid applications from 01/01/2022-30/06/2022	
		30/06/2023	-	
		273		305
Total Number of valid applications received:	273			
Invalid applications returned to applicant	168			
TOTAL TO DATE IN 2023	441			
Number of applications granted:	271(Decisions to Grant)			
Number of applications refused:	10 (Decisions to Refuse) 3.5% refusal rate			
PRE PLANNING				
No of requests to date	156			
No of meetings held to date	130			
Wait time	2.5weeks			

ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

Current year	2023		2022	
	June	Jan - June	June	Jan - June
Total number of new cases subject to complaints that were investigated	18	82	10	67
Number of Warning Letters served	53	240	63	219
Number of Enforcement Notices served	9	66	8	26
No Of cases referred for legal proceedings	2	10	3	6
Number of cases in Court(incl adjournments)	7	38	5	32
Number of cases Resolved in Court	3	8	2	7
Number of Files Closed	19	66	11	109
Number of cases on system	158	158	136	136
Enforcement Costs recouped	€ 1,205.84	€ 4,669.76	€ 3,808.30	€7,520.26

Number of Valid Retention Applications Received relating to Enforcement Action	0	18	2	24
Fees received through Valid Retention Applications Received relating to Enforcement Action	€0.00	€6,594.63	€454.50	€21,071.80
Legal fees paid	€6,681.36	€10,482.47	€128.80	€19,324.76

HERITAGE:

Timahoe Heritage Centre

Heather Humphreys T.D. Minister for Rural and Community Development formally opened the Heritage Centre on the 17th July 2023.

LOCAL ENTERPRISE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

LEO Update – July 2023

- €118,000 was approved in grant aid to 4 businesses with potential to create 9 new jobs.
- 2 trading online voucher applications approved
- 12 businesses set up to avail of 1-1 mentoring.
- 6 training courses were delivered to 134 participants.
- 1 additional company signed up for the LEAN for Micro programme
- 1 new Laois business was assisted to access Micro Finance Ireland (MFI) loan funding.

Business Support Unit (BSU) Update – July 2023

- Business Incentive Scheme: maps are currently being prepared to extend the scheme in Killenard.
- Abbeyleix Streetscape Scheme - 51 applications were received. 32 have been approved with works commencing. 2 are in progress awaiting further documentation. 6 are not proceeding and 11 applicants did not meet the criteria.
- Shop Front Grant Scheme - 9 applications have been received to date this year. 4 have been approved, 1 refused and 4 in progress. There are also 8 applications from the 2022 Scheme that were brought forward into the 2023 Scheme to allow sufficient time for the works to be carried out.
- Shop Fit-out Grant Scheme: 2 applications have been received to date this year and both have been approved.
- Business Incentive Scheme: 4 applications have been received to date this year. 2 have been approved, 1 refused and 1 in progress.
- Killeslin Hub: Works commenced 26th June 2023.

ROADS, TRANSPORTATION, DRAINAGE & PUBLIC REALM

Restoration Improvements Works Programme

The delivery of the annual restoration improvement works programme is ongoing. The Department of Transport recently provided additional funding in the sum of €522,535 (or 8.8%), under circular RW10/2023. The additional allocation is in recognition of the increased costs being experienced in delivering the works programme for Regional & Local roads. The additional allocation will in the first instance ensure the completion of the approved programme of works with

additional roads considered should funds become available. The increase brings the total allocation to Laois County Council under the Restoration Improvement category for 2023 to €7.44m as per the table below.

Local Authority	Initial RI 2023 allocation	Additional RI amount	Revised RI 2023 allocation
Laois	€6,920,500	€522,535	€7,443,035

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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

Normal services continue at Kyletalesha Landfill Facility and Civic Amenity Site. Landfill monitoring and aftercare maintenance is on-going. All monitoring results are being submitted to the EPA.

2. **Bring Banks:**

Tonnages of 2023 collected recyclable material is in Table 1 below.

Month	Tonnage	Month	Tonnage	Month	Tonnage
Jan	164.24	May	156.04	Sept	0
Feb	129.06	June	126.87	Oct	0
Mar	140.63	July	0	Nov	0
Apr	119.26	Aug	0	Dec	0
Annual Total			836.10 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 to the end of June 2023.

Nature	Number	Nature	Number
Waste Management/Enforcement	328	Air	23
Litter	185	Noise	20
Water	29	Waste Infrastructure	6
Total	516		

Table 2 – Environmental Complaint Register

b) **Litter Fines**

Month	Number	Month	Number	Month	Number
Jan	11	May	5	Sept	0
Feb	9	June	7	Oct	0
Mar	4	July	0	Nov	0
Apr	3	Aug	0	Dec	0
Annual Total			39		

Table 3 – 2023 Litter Fines

39 litter fines issued to date, 16 fines paid in full, 6 fines are going to court with remaining 17 fines being successfully appealed or dropped due to insufficient evidence.

c) **Illegal Dumping**

Tonnes of material collected to the end of June 2023 is 167 tonnes.

4. **Waste Management & Enforcement:**

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

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

Since the beginning of 2023 Waste Enforcement Officers have carried out 180 household waste inspections in various housing schemes in Portlaoise, Mountrath & Portarlinton.

Some of these inspections were multi agency inspections assisted by Housing, An Garda Siochana & the ISPCA/Dog Warden.

6. **Anti-Dumping Initiatives:**

The Free Bulky Waste Amnesty will be held on Saturday 29th July 2023 at Portlaoise Rugby Club from 9.30 – 15.30, with a maximum of 2 items per vehicle for domestic customers only. The items accepted are bed bases, mattresses, couches, chairs & tables which must be clean and dry.

Adds were placed in local papers, on social media and on local signage around the County.



7. **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.

Uisce Éireann

Members are advised that the Service Level Agreement between Laois County Council and Irish Water (now Uisce Éireann) terminates on 27th of July 2023.

In effect this means that Uisce Éireann has taken over full control and accountability for water and waste water services in Laois. While a certain number of eligible staff will fall under the direction and management of Uisce Éireann it is the case that from the effective date (27/07/2023) Laois County Council will have no statutory function or authority in water services.

Water Services Laboratory

Laois County Council Water Laboratory is accredited to the international standard ISO 17025:2017 'Requirements for the competency of testing and calibration Laboratories' since 26th October 2016. The Laboratory is inspected at least annually by the national regulatory body INAB (Irish National Accreditation Board) to ensure all sampling and testing undertaken by the Laboratory is being conducted competently in compliance with specifications in ISO 17025:2017. The most recent INAB inspection occurred on 18th and 19th April 2023 and the Laboratory has retained its existing accreditation and also gained an additional accreditation for Enterococci, which is an important microbiological test for drinking water safety. Accreditation provides confidence to our customers that the Laboratory operates to the highest possible standard. The Laboratory is currently on target to test 4,500 samples in 2023 and as part of our strategy this will be increased to 10,000 samples within the next 3 years to cater for increased demand from neighbouring local authorities. To accommodate this increased throughput there has been substantial investment in Laboratory equipment and the provision of additional resources.

An automated run to waste system recently installed at the Knocks WTP to address periodic raw water turbidity issue.

Multi Annual Rural Water Programme

It is expected that the Department will issue details of the next Rural Water Programme later this year. Construction is continuing in Rosenallis on the Goodwin Estate Group Sewerage Scheme.

Well Grants

There has been 32 well grant applications received to date in 2023 for grant aid assistance to improve private water supplies to domestic households.

The Domestic Lead Remediation Grant Scheme

The grant for the Domestic Lead Remediation Grant Scheme is no longer means tested and is available for both public and private water supplies. This grant provides 100% financial assistance (max of €5,000) to eligible applicants to replace lead piping and fittings in a house, that is occupied as the applicant's normal place of residence.

Fire and Emergency Services

To date (30th June 2023), Laois County Fire & Rescue Service attended 363 emergency incidents, consisting of 137 fires, 161 special service incidents and 65 false alarms.

Turnout by Station*:

Portlaoise – 166	Portarlinton - 60	Stradbally – 69	Mountmellick – 63
Abbeyleix - 39	Mountrath – 52	Durrow – 32	Rathdowney – 36

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

New Fire Station in Stradbally

A tender competition is currently being held to appoint the Design Team. First Stage suitability submissions (restricted process to pre-qualify architect led design teams) had a closing date of 10th July 2023. Submissions are currently being assessed and the invitation to tender will issue before the end of August 2023.

Mountmellick Fire Station upgrade

Part VIII documents are currently being prepared by the Design Team and will be brought forward to the Municipal District Committee in the coming weeks.

Civil Defence

Volunteers

Civil Defence continues to provide ongoing training and upskilling for volunteers. As of 18th July, all volunteers meet the minimum training standard requirements, as required by the Department of Defence.

Laois Civil Defence has run two intake programs in 2023 and currently has 45 Active Volunteers, plus a further 7 currently completing the induction program. This will bring the total number of active volunteers to 52 by August 2023. This is an increase of 19 active volunteers.

Activity Report January to June 2023

- 45 Community Operations
- 10 Missing Person Search Activities
- 7 Supports to the Ukrainian Crisis

Facilities / Health & Safety

Minor upgrade projects continue to take place in the Stradbally unit and across the fleet to create safe systems of work and provide for safety in the unit. Additional systems such as electronic vehicle defect forms and equipment inspection forms continue to be rolled out across the unit. In July, the Road Safety Authority carried out an inspection of the unit’s vehicles and fleet operations. The RSA scored the assessment at 100%, with no infringements or defects noted. This has embellished the Laois Civil Defence RSA risk rating to the 96th Percentile. There was 1 reported minor accident by a volunteer in June 2023.

Funding

The annual Civil Defence grant claim has been completed for 2023 and the operational grant received for 2023 is €100,567.79 The required 70% spend for 2023 will be €115,000.

In addition, the following grant funding has been secured:

- Funding towards Personal Protective Equipment €2,900
- Funding to support the fit out of a new headquarters €150,000 (30,000 over 5 years)
- Funding towards the fit out of an operational support vehicle €20,000
- Funding toward volunteers competing in the World Rescue Competition €2,400

VEMS

Civil Defence will roll out a new Volunteer Equipment Management System in July 2023. A lot of work has been carried out locally creating equipment registers, updating volunteer details, and verifying data before the go live date.

River Drainage Maintenance Programme 2023

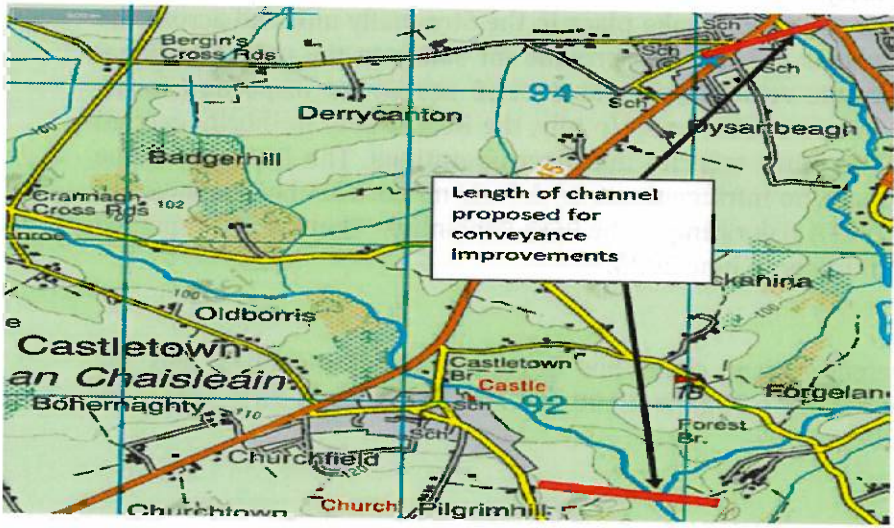
Funding;

LCC funding

Laois County Council has allocated funding in the amount of €358k for the area of river drainage maintenance for 2023. This funding is utilised to fund necessary environmental and ecological surveys/reports and subsequent works.

OPW Funding;

Supplementary to LCC funds, the following grants have recently been approved by the OPW for Minor Flood Mitigation Works in County Laois.

<p>OPW Minor Flood Mitigation Works funding – Phase 3 of the River Nore between Abbeyleix and Durrow. Approved works include the removal of deadwood/debris and pruning of trees. The funding will cover multiple locations on the river Nore as follows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Section 1; M7 to New Bridge - Section 2; Mash River to Poormans Bridge - Section 3; De Vesci Estate - Section 4; Watercastle to Coilte - Section 5; Erkina to Tallyho Bridge 	<p>€63,000</p>
<p>OPW Minor Flood Mitigation Works funding – Whitehorse River Mountrath. Approved works include the removal of deadwood/debris and pruning of trees.</p> 	<p>€58,500</p>

OPW Minor Flood Mitigation Works funding – Moneymore, Borris in Ossory County Laois. Approved works include construction of embankment to protect residential properties.

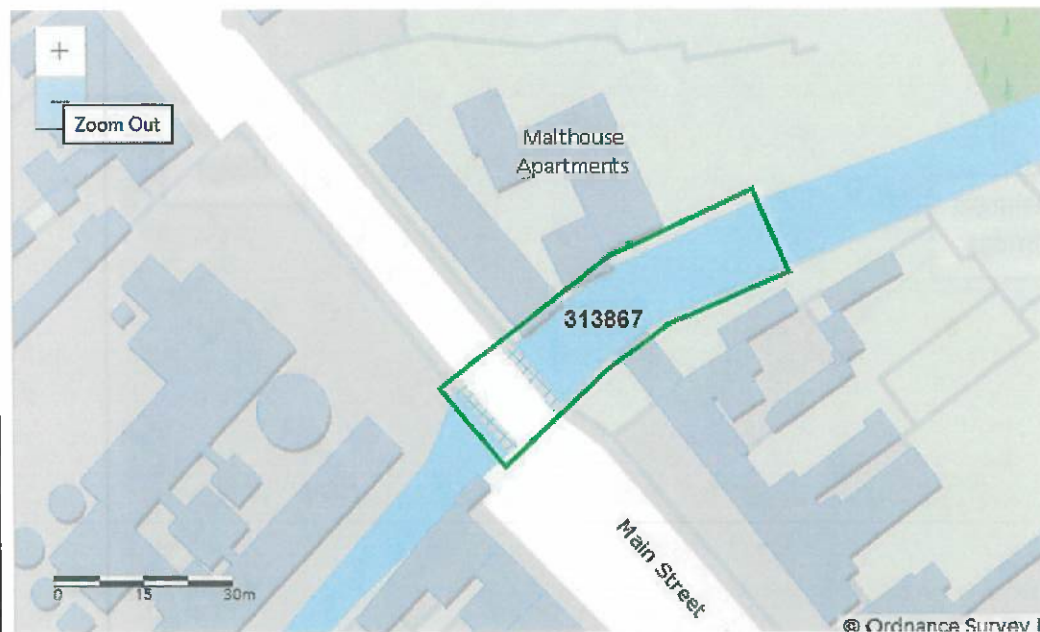
€54,000



Statutory Approvals

To date in 2023 the following projects have received approval from An Bord Pleanala;

Bridge at N80 Main Street, Stradbally; Vacuum Silt Removal at Stradbally River (N80 Bridge). Approved by ABP on 27/06/2023



The following is a list of projects, to be undertaken in 2023, subject to satisfactory weather conditions etc;

Clonaslee Bridge – Screening for Appropriate Assessment; removal of vegetation and sediment above water level.



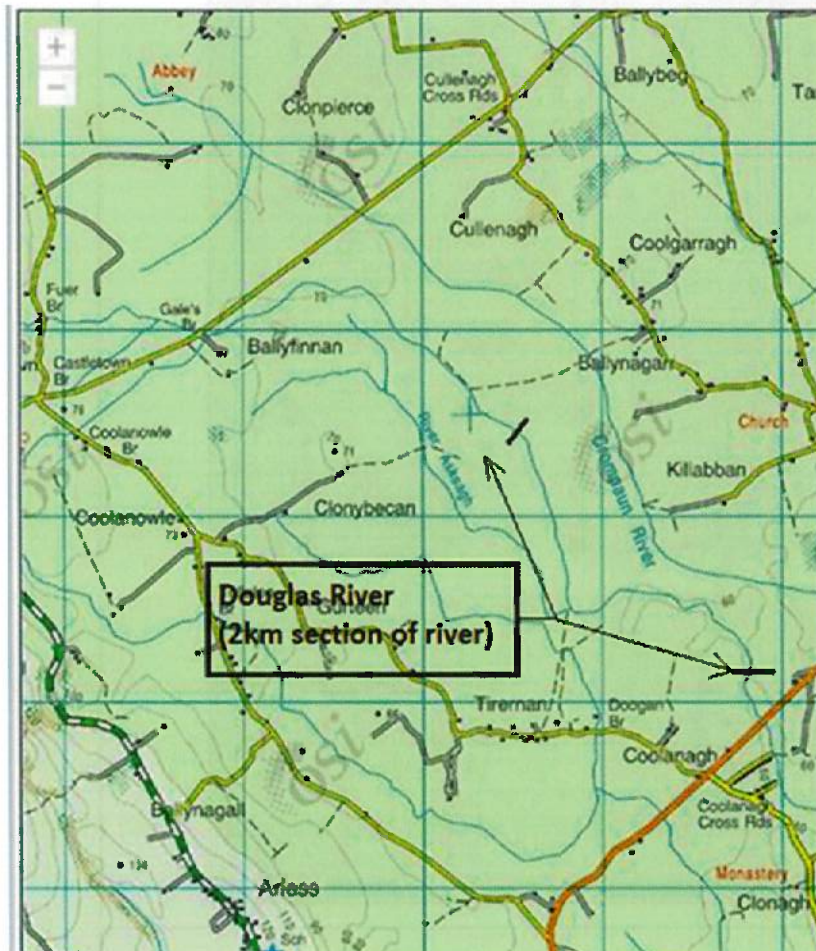
Convent Bridge / Irishtown Bridge – Screening for Appropriate Assessment; removal of vegetation and sediment above water level.



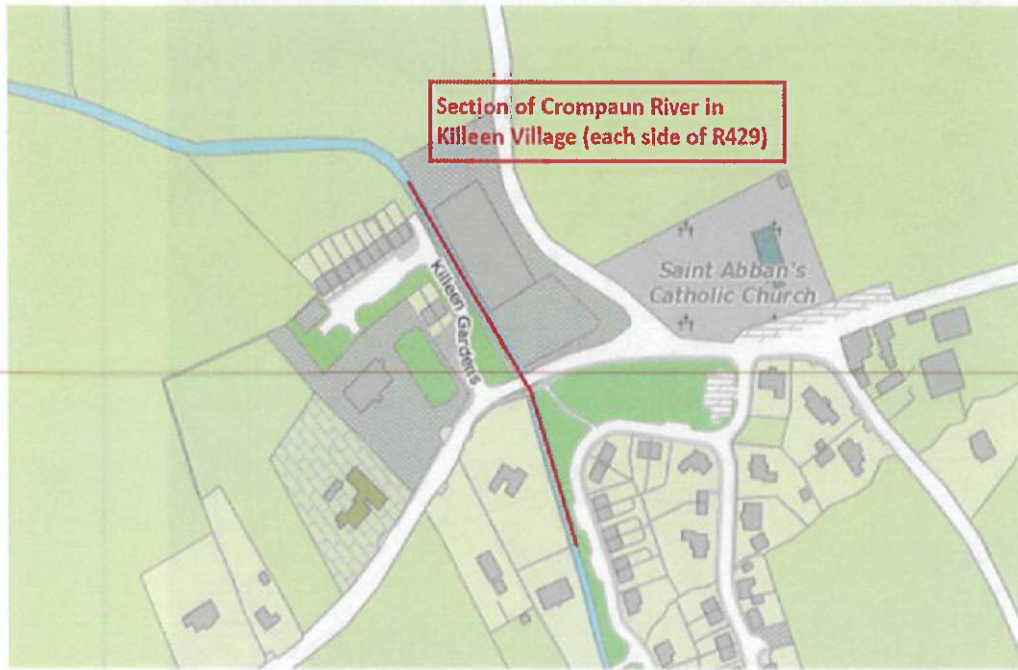


River Triogue – Portlaoise (Kyleclonhobert) to River Barrow Confluence; removal of blockages

River Douglas; removal of vegetation and sediment above water level.



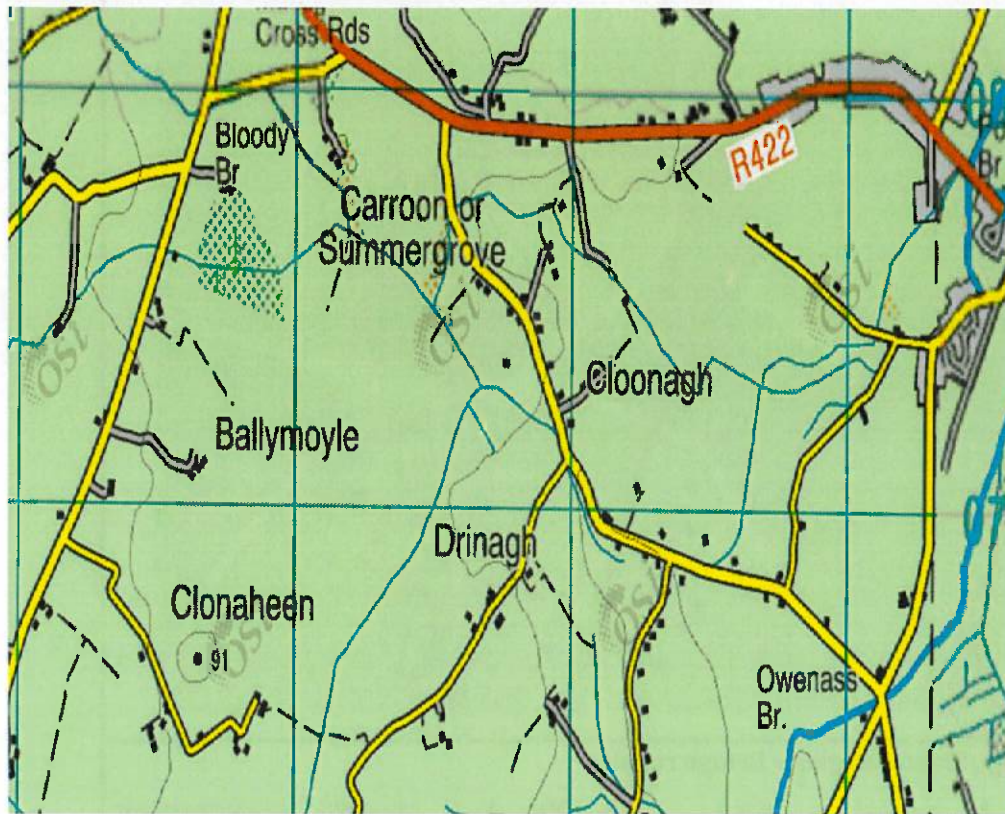
River Cropaun – Killeen Village; removal of vegetation and sediment above water level.



Kilfeacle bridge, River Douglas – Bridge repairs



Drinagh Mill Race Emergency Repair



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

CORPORATE

Civic Reception for Mr. Seamus Dooley in recognition of being awarded the Presidents Lifetime Achievement Award by Basketball Ireland held on Thursday 27th July 2023.

Laois Public Participation Network

Walking Biodiversity Tour of Portlaoise

Laois PPN in collaboration with Portlaoise Tidy Towns held a Walking Biodiversity Tour of Portlaoise on the evening of Tuesday the 27th of June. The walk was led by Ecologist Dr. Fiona McGowan, who co-authored the recently launched new Biodiversity Action Plan 2023 - 2028. Attendees learned about the many positive steps taken to enhance biodiversity in Portlaoise including changed grass mowing regimes, natural wildflower meadows, pollinator friendly planting and thousands of native trees planted across the town. Attendees at the biodiversity walk received nature swatches from the National Biodiversity Centre, courtesy of Laois PPN

Portlaoise Tidy Towns with the support of Laois County Council have enhanced biodiversity in Portlaoise making it a great place to live work and visit. This event is part of Laois PPNs over all Climate Action Project 2023.

Joint Oireachtas on Environment and Climate Change.

The Joint Oireachtas on Environment and Climate Change requested a report on the present Climate Activities of PPNs and their member groups and the potential for them to mobilise further Climate Action.

Laois PPN was selected to contribute to a workshop on this report which took place on Saturday the 1st of July. Laois PPNs Climate Action Project 2023 was selected as one of 3 case studies on the potential positive impact and role the PPN could play nationally on Climate Action. Laois PPNs Climate Action Project 2023 is a year long calendar of events which aims to share knowledge, educate, and inspire Climate Action in our Community.

Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP)

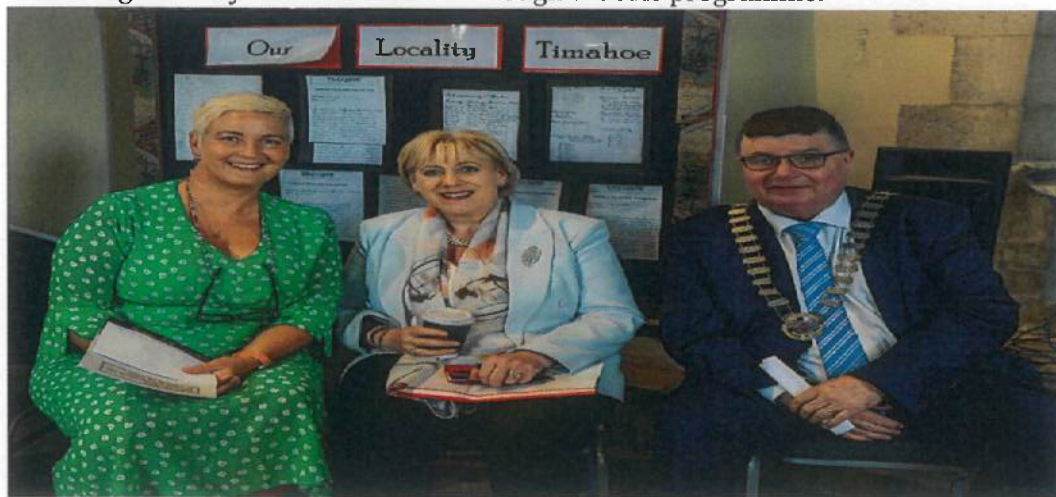
Stakeholder engagement on the development of LECP Objectives and Actions has commenced and is ongoing.

Laois Comhairle na nÓg

Comhairle na nÓg members met once in the month of June, a three week break was taken to accommodate members sitting exams. It is hoped to organise a team building exercises for the young people during the summertime. Two Comhairle na nÓg members represented Laois on the 4th July for the regional networking event in Dublin. Some of the Comhairle na nÓg members have volunteered to give talks about Comhairle na nÓg in their previous primary school with the aim of recruiting new members. So far two young people have gone to St. Colmans National School and gave a talk. A short article about Comhairle na nÓg has been written by one of the Comhairle members which has been sent to PPN to be included in their monthly newsletter.

Minister Heather Humphreys , T.D., Minister for Rural and Community Development visited the county on Monday, 17th July for a number of official engagements. In Mountmellick she was welcomed by the Committee from the Mountmellick Arts Centre led by its Chairperson, Mr Ger Lynch for the official unveiling of the Arts Centre; this centre had been supported through the Town and Village Renewal Scheme. The Minister was presented with a piece of Mountmellick Yarnbombing by Committee Member, Ms Martina Horan.

The Minister also visited Carrigmeal Woodlands Walk where she unveiled the new Wellbeing Amenity that was funded through theOris programme.



Minister Humphreys at Timahoe

The Minister then travelled to the Heritage Village of Timahoe, where she was welcomed by the Timahoe Heritage Committee led by its Chairperson, Ms Mary O' Dwyer. The Minister was invited to perform the official unveiling of the TVRS funded the Timahoe Centre. The Minister concluded her visit to Laois by launching the commencement of refurbishment works for the Market House, Portarlington which is being funded under the Rural Regeneration Development Fund. .

Pride of Place 2023 – Judging Day- 19th & 20th July

Laois showcased its community champions superbly on Wednesday and Thursday, 19th & 20th July, when the villages of Camross (nominated group for 2023- Population Category- under 500-Camross Community Association) , Stradbally, Vicarstown a & Timahoe (nominated group for 2023- Community Health & Wellbeing Category- SVT Activity & Wellness Hub)) greeted the judges in the IPB All Island Pride of Place Competition 2023 – Mr Edward Sheehy & Mr Declan Nelson.

There was no mistaking the pride of local people when they displayed for the judges all that they have done, and continue to do, to make their local community a better place to live, work and visit.



Pride of Place Presentation Camross

The visit commenced in Camross, with the Judges being welcomed into the village on horse drawn carriage to be greeted by Fr Brian Griffin at the Fr Lalor Complex and then enjoyed a walk along the brook in front of the idyllic setting of the Poets Cottage led by Johanna Mc Donald, Tidy Towns. The judges enjoyed a video presentation on the developments in Camross and presentations were made by the Camross Community Association committee. The Judges were taken on a tour of the national school led by the students and Principal; this was then followed a visit to the Community hall filled with local groups and their produce. The visit continued with a tour of the Activity park. The judges planted a tree in the Community Garden with some children and spoke with LAWPRO in relation to biodiversity and the fauna life in the rivers and the protection of same.. The Judges travelled to the Parish Church in a Vintage car, where they enjoyed some hymns from the Camross. The judges proceeded to the Old Cemetery; The visit to Camross culminated in a wreath laying ceremony by the Poets family representative at the grave side of the Poet Patrick Ryan. .

The Pride of Place tour continued on Thursday 20th July where they visited the “Stradbally-Vicarstown- Timahoe Activity & Wellness Hub”.

The judges commenced their visit in Stradbally Library & Courthouse where the SVT Activity & Wellness Hub Committee gave a presentation charting their journey and programmes offered.

The locations visited by the judges included Stradbally Playground, the local Cricket Club, Cosby House, Carrigmeal Woodland, old schoolhouse Vicarstown and the Barrow Blueway.

Laois Federation of Tidy Towns Seminar in Camross

The Laois Federation of Tidy Towns held a seminar on 19th June 2023 which brought together community groups, environmental enthusiasts, and local organizations to explore opportunities for community engagement, sustainable practices, and biodiversity conservation. The seminar took place at the Camross Community Hub. The event featured distinguished speakers who provided valuable insights into various initiatives and funding opportunities available to Tidy Towns Groups including Karen Moore, Community Climate Action Officer, Regina Dunne, Tourism Development Executive with Laois Chamber Alliance and Caitriona Ryan, Manager of the Laois Volunteer Centre. The seminar's agenda included a tour of Camross led by Johanna McDonald Steenkist, offering participants an up-close look at the village's beauty and environmental projects



Community Climate Action Officer

The Community Climate Action Office has been actively meeting groups and conducting site visits for potential projects under the Community Climate Action Fund around County Laois. To date 13 groups have been met in person along with 25 online consultations.

Gum Litter Taskforce Launch

The national Gum Litter Taskforce Roadshow visited Portarlinton on the 14th July and was attended by Cathaoirleach Paschal McEvoy, Portarlinton Tidy Towns Committee Members and Emily Doyle, Litter Warden. Initiated in 2007, the Gum Litter Taskforce is a collaboration between Food Drink Ireland, the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, the chewing gum industry, and local authorities to achieve a long-term sustainable solution to the irresponsible disposal of chewing gum litter, through education and awareness campaigns that encourage behavioural change. Research published recently to coincide with the National Launch of the 2023 GLT Campaign revealed that 87% of people now report proper gum disposal, versus 49% when the campaign began in 2007– an increase of 77.5%,

demonstrating the positive impact the campaign has had on attitudes towards gum litter.

Website Update

Climate Action pages of website have been updated and now include Climate Action Video Series and information on Community Climate Action Fund and Portlaoise Low Carbon Town Project.

Energy Performance

The *Annual Report 2022 on Public Sector Energy Performance* has recently been published. The document contains reports on energy efficiency improvements across the public sector for the year 2021.

While 2021 was a Covid year where consumption was reduced especially in the Leisure Centres, the figures for Laois County Council were:

- Energy Efficiency: 59% improvement from baseline
- Greenhouse gas improvement(from non-electricity sources): 52% under baseline
- Greenhouse gas improvement overall: 40% under baseline.

These figures put Laois County Council at the top of the list for local authorities for energy efficiency in 2021. While the expected figures for 2022 will naturally show increased consumption due to increased activity, we would expect the efficiency measure for 2022 to be around 47% as against a 2030 target of 51%.

The Council has recently entered into a “Pathfinder” Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the SEAI for projects out to 2030. This MOU will mean that the Council will be eligible for up to 50% grant funding for certain energy projects (rather than the normal 30%) from the SEAI. The Pathfinder process will concentrate locations of high energy use within the Council’s operations and buildings.

Town & Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS)

The Town & Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS) for 2023 has been recently announced. The scheme provides funding for projects that make our towns and villages more attractive and sustainable.

The scheme is administered through the Local Authority, who are required to work closely with local communities and local businesses to develop and implement proposals that can make a lasting impact in revitalising rural towns and villages across the country.

Applications

The final closing date for the submission of applications by the Council to the Department under the TVRS this year is 10th November 2023.

The Council will in the coming weeks be issuing a “call for proposals” to Communities for this year’s TVRS. These proposals will then undergo a shortlisting process and the Council will work with the selected community groups to finalise the submissions to the Department.

Each Local Authority has been invited to submit applications of varying scale under the 2023 Scheme as follows:

- 4 applications funding €20,000 to €250,000
- 1 application funding €20,000 to €500,000

Types of activities that may be supported under the 2023 Town and Village Renewal Scheme include:

- Regeneration projects that assist in revitalising our rural towns and villages, in line with the Town Centre First Policy, through planned and sustainable regeneration and development projects that will drive greater economic activity and footfall, address vacancy and dereliction and ensure the re-use of heritage and other existing buildings
- There is a new option introduced under the 2023 Scheme for the acquisition of land in town centres which supports local authorities for the development of town regeneration / community focused projects
- Renovation or refurbishment to existing community centres
- Projects to support vibrant and sustainable island communities on Ireland's inhabited offshore islands.
- Projects to support the establishment of town or village centre markets
- Projects to develop town / village centre plazas, public outdoor dining spaces, parks, green spaces (including allotments and community gardens) and recreational spaces/amenities in town centres to make them vibrant hubs for community enjoyment, and to increase footfall for local businesses.
- Projects to support the upgrade and enhancement of shopfronts and street facades (including murals) in towns and villages.
- Projects that bring vacant and derelict buildings and sites back into use as multi-purpose spaces.
- Projects that bring vacant properties in town centres back into use as Remote Working Hubs, where there is a demonstrable local need.
- Enhancement of heritage assets (e.g. local museums/tourism attractions focused on historical aspects of the area, heritage sites/buildings, etc.) located in towns and villages, including energy efficiency measures.

Sport & Leisure Section

ORIS Programme

Minister Humphries opened Corrigmeal Woodland Walks & Outdoor Learning Centre on July 17th. This project has received 3 ORIS grants since 2019

National Play Day & Recreation Week

Following a successful application DCEDIY allocated €3,000 to Laois County Council to deliver events to celebrate National Play Day & National Recreation Week. 6 events are planned with 3 delivered to date



National Recreation: Scarecrow Making Workshop



National Play Day: Storytelling Vicarstown

Playground - Borris in Ossory Playground & Doonane

Borris in Ossory Playground & MUGA was officially opened by An Cathoirleach Thomasina Connell on 19th June. The development with an estimated overall cost of €280,000 is being used extensively by locals and visitors to the area

Doonane's refurbished playground was re-opened on June 30th, following the establishment of local playground committee. An official re-opening will take place in early September when schools return.



New County Library

The new County Library was officially opened on Monday the 17th of June 2023 by Minister Heather Humphreys, Minister of Rural and Community Development.

It offers an enhanced and expanded library service for everyone in County Laois. The new library is not only a place to borrow books, study or perform a task,

Portlaoise Library will also be a place to relax and recharge in the heart of the town. It will be a welcoming free space for the community and visitors. It will facilitate the provision of educational and cultural information, provide free digital access to WIFI, PCs and a range of free events . Occupying a central location on the Main Street the library will form a significant element of The Cultural Quarter development in the historic core of Portlaoise showcasing and promoting the Fort Protector and Fitzmaurice Place.

The newly constructed building provides public space in excess of 1,600 square metres. The ground floor area has general lending services with books, media and other library stock with separately definable areas for adults, and children. The first floor provides study spaces, teen section, a dedicated local history reading room, and a community room which will cater for community events and group activities. Book storage and staff offices will be housed on the second floor.

Since opening to the public on Tuesday the 18th July the library has welcomed a large number of visitors and locals. Very high numbers of books have been issued as well as members of the public browsing and using the computers and the newly installed “magic table”.

Over the first three days of public opening (18th July to 20th July) over 4,000 people visited the library and more than 300 people signed up as new library members.

The all in cost of the library including construction, fit out, shelving , furniture, pc’s and mechanical and electrical components is €7.1m including VAT . Were the original site purchase cost to be included the figure is €7.56 million. The Council received €3.035m from the Department of Rural and Community Development for the project and €125k towards additional book stock. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage has provided a funding line up to €2.7m under the Urban Regeneration and Development fund for this project. The out turn cost Laois County Council for the construction of the building stands at under €2million.

For insurance purposes the Council has been required to revalue the building at current market prices; this process has yielded a valuation of over €11m for the building – which is €4m more than was spent on its construction.





Summer Stars – our Summer Reading Programme is continuing in all of our libraries. To date we have had over 1000 children signing up to do the summer reading. All of our Libraries have organised a full range of free activities, storytimes and fun reading events to encourage children to join the library and read over the summer.

Chief Executive's Orders

- ✚ A schedule of Chief Executive Orders signed during the month of July 2023 will be circulated.

John Mulholland
Chief Executive

July 26th 2023