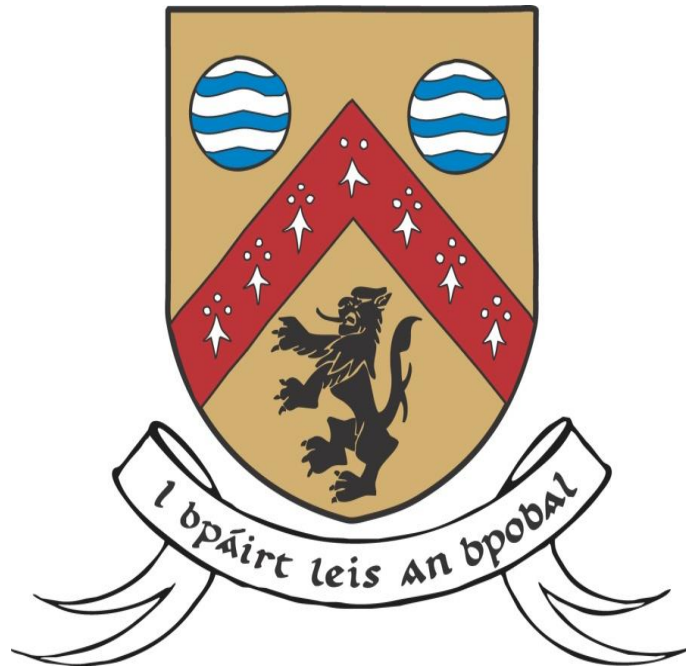


LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL
COMHAIRLE CHONTAE LAOISE



MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT
JUNE/JULY 2024
TUARASCÁIL BHAINISTÍOCHTA
MEITHEAMH/IÚIL 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 a Monthly Management report. The Report for June & July 2024 is as follows:

FINANCE & ALLOCATIONS NOTIFIED

Expenditure and income to the 30/06/2024 is summarised below:

Service Division	Budget Allocation	Expenditure to 30/06/2024
Housing and Building	€30,641,800	€11,836,865
Road Transportation and Safety	€29,636,000	€7,452,504
Water Services	€3,349,000	€1,627,376
Development Management	€10,390,000	€5,576,833
Environmental Services	€11,871,700	€4,696,465
Recreation and Amenity	€5,494,000	€2,365,415
Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare	€955,000	€272,420
Miscellaneous Services	€10,109,500	€4,296,364
Central Management Charge	€11,434,000	€5,130,577
Total	€113,881,000	€43,254,818

Service Division	Budget Allocation	Income to 30/06/2024
Housing and Building	€31,776,000	€15,029,530
Road Transportation and Safety	€24,788,000	€3,100,729
Water Services	€4,410,000	€1,806,861
Development Management	€7,195,000	€5,068,766
Environmental Services	€4,733,400	€880,816
Recreation and Amenity	€1,069,000	€92,662
Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare	€454,000	€61,247
Miscellaneous Services	€11,424,500	€5,490,550
Superannuation	€735,000	€371,698
Local Property Tax	€12,144,172	€6,072,356
Rates	€14,584,066	€9,233,518
Capital transfer	€567,862	
Total	€113,881,000	€47,208,733

The Miscellaneous Services Expenditure is broken down as follows:

Service Division	Budget Allocation	Expenditure to 30/06/2024
Machinery Account	€220,000	€84,332
Administration of Rates	€1,953,000	€197,709
Franchise Costs	€318,000	€365,945
Op of Morgue and Coroner Expenses	€135,000	-€8,940
Op of Markets and Casual Trading	€1,000	€18
Local Representation/Civic Leadership	€1,056,000	€411,012
Motor Taxation	€17,000	€107,516
Agency & Recoupable Services	€6,209,500	€3,138,772
Total	€10,109,500	€4,296,364

The Central Management Charge Expenditure is broken down as follows:

Corporate Building Costs	€1,530,000	€176,684
General Corporate Services	€1,335,000	€696,819
Information and Communications Tech	€1,915,000	€1,182,689
Human Resources Function	€1,257,000	€684,269
Finance Function	€825,000	€341,300
Pensions and Lump Sum Costs	€4,572,000	€2,048,817
Total	€11,434,000	€5,130,577

Allocations Notified June/July 2024

Department of Transport – 2024 Supplementary Restoration Improvement Funding for Regional and Local Roads	€696,500
Department of Environment, Climate Change & Communications – Community Climate Action Programme (Strand 1)	€401,859
Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage – Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People & People with a Disability Scheme	€1,711,089
Department of Rural & Community Development – Local Enhancement Programme to LCDC	€153,591
Department of Rural and Community Development – ORIS Triogue Way – Recreational Enhancement	€200,000
Department of Rural and Community Development – ORIS Durrow Cycle Trails	€492,750

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

Delivery Status

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Total
Social Housing completions to date	229	286	37	-	-	552

Social Housing Schemes Completed 2024

Location	Total no. of Houses	House Types	Constructed by	Comment
Clonroosk Abbey, Portlaoise	18	18 no. 3-bed 2-storey	Cluid Housing	18 units delivered. Tenanted in June 2024.
Church Avenue, Stradbally (Phase 2)	6	4 no. 4-bed 2-storey 2 no. 2-bed 1-storey	LCC (Turnkey)	Tenanting complete in June 2024
Sruth na Gleanna, Killeslin	1	1 no. 3-bed house	LA Part V	Delivery Q2 2024
Rockview, Portlaoise	12	10 no. 3-bed houses 2 no. 4-bed houses	Oaklee Housing	Phase 1 of 3 delivered Q2 2024 – 12 Homes
TOTAL	37			

Social Housing Schemes Under Construction 2024

Location	Total no.	House Types	Constructed by	Comment
Moore St, Rathdowney	6	6 no. 2-bed 2-storey	LCC (Construction)	On site – expected delivery Q3 2024
Mooreville, Rathdowney	7	4 no. 3-bed 2-storey 4 no. apartments (2 no. 2-bed and 2 no. 1-bed)	LCC (Construction)	On site – expected delivery Q4 2024
Church Avenue, Stradbally (Phase 2)	5	5 no. 4-bed 2-storey	LCC (Turnkey)	On site – phased delivery to be delivered by Q3 2024
The Orchard, Ballylynan (Phase 3)	1	1 no. 3-bed 2-storey	LCC (Turnkey)	On Site – Phase 3 (1 unit) delivery Q3 2024

Bruach Na hAbhainn, Killeen	1	1 no. 3-bed 2-storey	LCC (Turnkey)	On Site – Phase 1 (1 unit) delivery Q4 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 of Phase 1 – 8 units Q3 2024 and Phase 2 - 18 units - Q4 2024
Shannon Street, Mountrath	20	13 no. 3-bed 2-storey 7 no. 2-bed 2-storey	LCC Turnkey	On site – expected delivery Q4 2024
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 Q3 2024.
Ard Branagh, Portlaoise	6	6 no. 3-bed houses	Circle Housing	Currently on site – expected delivery in Q3 2024
Wallis Street, Mountrath	11	9 no. 2-bed bungalows 2 no. 2-bed apts.	Co-Operative Housing	Currently on Site – Expected 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
Oldcourt, Ballylinan	1	1 no. 4-bed 1-storey	LCC (Renewal)	Design team and contractor to be appointed – expected delivery Q4 2025
Townspark, 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
Oak Park Halting Site, Portlaoise	4	4 day units and associated works	LCC (Construction)	On site – expected delivery Q1 2025
An Lochán, Summerhill, Portlaoise	32	20 no. 1-bed maisonettes 8 no 3-bed duplexes. 4 no 2-3-bed apts.	Respond	Currently on site. Phased delivery – social housing is across Phases 3 and 4 of overall scheme. Likely total delivery by mid-2025.
Rockview, Portlaoise	35	Balance to deliver: 8 no. 2-bed houses 25 no. 3-bed houses 2 no. 4-bed houses	Oaklee Housing	Currently on site – 3 phases of social housing delivery P1 delivered Q2 2024 P2 12 Homes EDD Q3 2024 P3 23 Homes EDD Q1 2025
Foxburrow, Portlaoise	9	1 and 2-bed apts	Part V - Cluid Housing	On site – Part V agreement to be finalised
Oakvale Way, Stradbally	19	13 no. 1-bed bungalows 6 no. 2-bed bungalows	North and East Housing Association	On site. Delivery Q4 2025

Ballyadams	1	1 no. 6-bed bungalow	LCC (Construction)	Stage 4 approved and works to commence in early Q3 2024.
1 New Road, Portlaoise	1	1 no. 4-bed 1-storey	LCC (Renewal)	On site – expected delivery Q1 2025
6 Emmett Terrace, Mountmellick	1	1 no. 4-bed 1-storey	LCC (Renewal)	On site – expected delivery Q1 2025
TOTAL	273			

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

Location/Scheme	No of units	House Types	To be constructed by	Comment
Clonroosk (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 approval and tender to be advertised in Q3 2024.
“Iona”, 4, 5, & 6 Abbeyleix Road, Portlaoise	7	2 no. 3-bed 2-storey 1 no. 2-bed 2-storey 4 no. 1-bed apt	LCC (Construction)	Stage 3 approved and tender to be advertised in Q3 2024.
Doonane	12	12 no. 3-bed 2-storey	LCC (Construction)	Stage 3 approved and tender to be advertised in Q3 2024.
Derry Road, Durrow	24	9 no. 1-bed 1-storey 4 no. 1-bed apts. 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 to be submitted in Q3 2024.
Tyrrell’s Lands, Stradbally Road, Portlaoise	21	Tenure mix - numbers and house types - to be confirmed in detailed design	LCC Social and Affordable	Stage 2 approved. S179A advertised 16 th July 2024.
Bracklone St, Portarlinton	15	15 no. 2-bed houses	LCC (Construction)	Stage 2 to be submitted and 179A to be advertised in Q3 2024.
Rushall, Mountrath	3	3 no. 3-bed 2-storey	LCC (Construction)	Stage 2 to be progressed in Q3 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 approved. Stage 2 to be progressed in Q3 2024
Main St, Ballinakill	3	2 no. 2-bed 2-storey 1 no. 1-bed apt	LCC (Construction)	Stage 1 approved. Stage 2 to be progressed in Q3 2024
Moanbaun, Mountrath	15	4 no. 3-bed 2-storey 7 no. 2-bed 2-storey 4 no. 2-bed 1-storey	LCC (Construction)	Stage 2 submitted in Q2 2024. S179A advertised 16 th July 2024.
13 and 14 Lakeglen, Portlaoise	2	1 no. 3-bed 2-storey 1 no. 4-bed 2-storey	LCC (Renewal)	Stage 1 approved. Stage 2 to be submitted in Q3 2024 and S179A advertised 16 th July 2024.

Beladd, Portlaoise	5	1 no. 3-bed 2-storey 3 no. 3-bed 2-storey 1 no. 4-bed 2-storey	LCC (Construction)	Stage 1 approved. Stage 2 to be progressed in Q3 2024
French Church St., Portarlinton	2	2 no. 2-bed apts.	LCC (Renewal)	Stage 1 approved in Q1 2024. Stage 2 to be progressed in Q3 2024 and S179A advertised 16 th July 2024.
Maltings Site, Mountmellick	30	TBC	LCC (Construction)	Stage 1 submitted in Q2 2024.
Convent Lands, Portlaoise (CAS)	52	33 no 2-bed apts. 15 no 1-bed apts. 4 no. 2-bed houses.	Sophia Housing	Currently on site.
County Hotel, Portlaoise (CALF)	10	8 no. 1-bed apts. 2 no. 2-bed apts.	Cluid Housing	Stage 1 approved. S179A advertised 16 th July 2024.
“Radharc Darach”, Hepburn Court, Portlaoise	54	8 no. 2-bed bungalows 12 no. 2-bed 2-storey 34 no. 2-bed 2-storey	Cluid Housing	Tender for design/build contract closed on 4 th March. Appointment of contractor by Cluid imminent. They are also progressing enabling works for demolition of the remaining structures and ESB cable diversion works on site.
Curragh na Móna, Abbeyleix Rd, Portlaoise	39	5 x 2-bed fully accessible apts 12 x 2-bed bungalows 6 x 3-bed houses 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	Funding approved Q2 2024
TOTAL	317			

AFFORDABLE HOUSING / COST RENTAL

Minimum targets for Laois County Council, issued by Dept. of Housing, in relation to the delivery of Affordable Purchase / Cost Rental housing 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.*

- 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 being assessed and passed on to agent when eligible and houses become available. **First sale closed on 28th June 2024 with next sale imminent.**
- 11 units approved for Affordable Purchase Scheme at An Lochan, Summerhill, Portlaoise. Application portal for units of 3-bedroom houses closed on 11th January 2024. Applications being assessed and passed on to agent when eligible and houses become available.
- 13 units approved for Affordable Purchase in Stradbally. Currently working with developer regarding the Local Authority Subsidy Agreement with LCC. Construction of units not yet commenced.
- Design has been finalised for social (21) and affordable (46) housing on Council-owned landbank on the Stradbally Road, Portlaoise. Funding mechanism for developing this site as a mixed tenure scheme is still to be determined. S179A Notice published 16/07/2024.

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 been advised that the 2024 target number of dwellings to be inspected is 892.

	1st January 2024 – 30th June 2024
No of Private Rented Inspections	490
No of notices of works issued	377

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

SERVICED SITES FOR SELF BUILDERS

Laois County Council is pursuing the development of serviced sites 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. Sites to be a minimum of 0.25 acres in area.

The following locations are under consideration for serviced sites and/or have advertised sites for sale.

Location	no. of Sites	Comment
Ballacolla Road, Durrow	4	3 offers accepted and conveyancing ongoing; 1 contract signed.
Gleann na Glaise, Ballyroan	4	2 offers accepted and conveyancing ongoing; 2 contracts signed.
Doonane	2	Stage 3 approved and tender to be advertised in Q3 2024.
Derry Road Durrow	4	Stage 2 approved, and Stage 3 to be submitted in Q3 2024.
Castletown	9	Proposal. Detailed design currently on-going.
TOTAL SITES UNDER CONSIDERATION	23	

Queries regarding serviced sites should be emailed to servicedsites@laoiscoco.ie

HOUSING STOCK

Housing Re-Lets

Month	LA Keys Surrendered	Properties Acquired	Works Completed
January 2024	8	1	4
February 2024	10	0	5
March 2024	5	0	6
April 2024	4	2	11
May 2024	5	0	9
June 2024	7	1	3
TOTAL (YTD)	39	4	38

NOTE: There are currently 33 vacant units from our existing stock and a further 6 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 2024	612	612	0
February 2024	453	453	0
March 2024	374	374	0
April 2024	442	442	0
May 2024	414	349	65
June 2024	308	124	184
TOTAL (YTD)	2,603	2,354	249

Energy Efficiency/Retrofitting Programme

The Midlands Retrofit Programme (MRP) was rolled into the Energy Efficiency Retrofit Programme (EERP) in 2022/2023/2024/2025.

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. Remaining 2 to be completed in Q3 2024.
EERP (2022/2023) – Phase 1&2 – 33 Units Thornberry, Church Ave, Slieve Bloom Park, Quigley Park & Other Locations	Tender evaluation for the 2022 Retrofit Programme comprising 59 houses has been completed. It is now proposed to commence works in phase's set out below. Phase 1 1) Thornberry, Abbeyleix – 16 units. • Works completed in Q4 2023.
EERP (2022/2023) – Phase 3 – 26 Units St. Fintan's Tce., Old School Road, St Johns Sq. & Other Locations	Phase 2 1) Church Avenue, Stradbally – 7 units. • Works completed in Q1 2024.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2) Slieve Bloom Park, Clonaslee – 4 units. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works completed in Q2 2024. 3) Quigley Park, Rathdowney – 2 units <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works completed in Q1 2024 4) Other Locations – 4 units <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works completed in Q2 2024. <p>Phase 3</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) St Fintans Terrace – 4 units <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works completed in Q1 2024. 2) Old School Road, Ballylinan – 9 units <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works completed in Q2 2024. 3) St. John’s Square, Portlaoise – 7 units. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works completed in Q2 2024. 4) Other Locations – 6 units <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works to be completed in Q3 2024.
EERP (2024) – 55 Units St. Brigid’s Place (Phase 1), Meadowbrook, Imleach, Triogue Court & Other Locations	<p>Phase 1</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) St Brigid’s Place, Meadowbrook, Imleach, Triogue Court & Other Locations. – 55 units. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenders have recently been returned for the two Lots and are currently being assessed with retrofit works to commence in Q3 2024.
EERP (2025) – 50 Units St. Brigid’s Place (Phase 2), Arderin, Fr. O’Connor Cres., Erkindale Dr., Rossmore View & Various Locations	<p>Phase 1</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) St. Brigid’s Place (Phase 2), Arderin, Fr. O’Connor Cres., Erkindale Dr, Rossmore View & Various Locations. – 50 units. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey works to commence in Q4 2024.

HOUSING NEED

Circular 06/2024 sets out arrangements for social housing acquisitions for 2024 and notifies local authorities that Government has agreed to an increased provision of 1,500 social housing acquisitions. Similar to 2023, the additional acquisitions will focus on properties where a tenant in receipt of social housing supports, including Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) and Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS), and has received a Notice of Termination (NOT) due to the landlord’s intention to sell the property. Laois County Council has been given an allocation of 15 for 2024 - This is not a target, but rather to support planning and to allow local authorities to prioritise the acquisitions to be targeted. The Dept has advised they will keep this under review throughout 2024. The Table below summarises the position as of end June 2024.

Acquisitions completed	5
Acquisitions currently in progress	5
Number of above acquisitions which have Tenants in Situ	7

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

Homeless Presentations

Time Periods	Homeless Presentations Households	Breakdown of Household
1 st May 2024 – 31 st May, 2024	28	19 singles & 9 families
1 st June, 2024 – 30 June, 2024	19	15 singles & 4 families

Homeless Accommodation

	Emergency Accommodation Households booked at 30 th June 2024	Social Housing allocated from homelessness in May & June 2024
Families	7	3
Single Persons	18 (4 hostel)	0
TOTAL	25	3

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

Social Housing List at 30th June 2024

TOTAL No of Social Housing Applicants on waiting list	1,627
Proportion of SH applicants availing of HAP supports	(688) = 42.3%

RAS/Leasing Statistics at 30th June 2024

Active RAS tenancies	62
Active short-term leasing tenancies (Social Housing Leasing Scheme)	23
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	35

Tenancies Created during the period 1st January 2024 – 30th June 2024

Method of Delivery	no. housed
First allocation of New Build/Acquired unit	13
Relet / Refurbished Stock Allocation	32
Housed via leasing	1
AHB Tenancies created (via new build and relet)	82
TOTAL	128

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

TRAVELLER ACCOMODATION PROGRAMME 2025-2029

Notice of Publication of a Draft Traveller Accommodation Programme 2025-2029 was given in the local papers dated July 2nd, 2024 in accordance with Section 9 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998, Laois County Council, being the relevant Housing Authority specified under the 1998 Act, proposes to adopt a Traveller Accommodation Programme for five years for the functional area of Laois County Council. The Draft Traveller Accommodation Programme 2025-2029 is available for public inspection during normal business hours from 2nd July 2024 to 2nd September 2024 at the Council offices and public libraries.

A copy of the Draft Traveller Accommodation Programme 2025-2029 is also available on the Laois County Council website www.laois.ie. The latest date for submissions is 16:00 hrs on Tuesday 3rd September 2024.

LOANS

Local Authority Home Loan (LAHL)

No of new Loan Applications received since 1 st January 2024	30
No of 'Live' Applications approved at 30 th June 2024	14
No of Applications refused since 1 st January 2024	10

GRANTS

Housing Adaptation Grants (for Private Homes) at 30th June 2024

Allocation €1,711,089 (€1,368,871 Exchequer + €342,218 LA Own Funds)

	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	158	74	€345,336.50	80	€398,702.00
MAG	5	2	€8,720.00	2	€8,950.00
HGD	84	45	€340,597.50	60	€484,061.50
TOTAL	247	121	€694,654.00	142	€891,713.50

Disabled Persons Grant for Social Housing

DPG works at 30th June 2024

Allocation 2024 (including LA funded portion €58,133)	€581,329
No of applications included on 2024 funding submission to Dept of Housing on 29 th Feb 2024	30
Value of the above proposal	€776,135

LAOIS AGE FRIENDLY HOMES PROGRAMME

Minister for Mental Health and Older People, Mary Butler along with Minister for Local Government and Planning, Alan Dillon, launched the national rollout of the Healthy Age Friendly Homes (HAFH) programme on 10th July 2024. The launch marked the official opening of the programme in each of the country's 31 local authorities and the publication of the final evaluation report of the programme's pilot phase.

The cross-sectoral nature of this programme is the first of its kind, with key partners including the Department of Health, Health Service Executive (HSE), Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Age Friendly Ireland, and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). It is envisaged that HAFH will assist up to 10,500 older adults nationally each year through timely interventions and supports for older people to remain in their own homes, with an estimated annual saving of €41.5 million to the State through the prevention of hospitalisation and early or unnecessary admission to long-term residential care.

The HAFH coordinator for Laois has been in the post since March 2024 and 36 home based assessments have been conducted between March and June, generating individual support plans for each, a number of which included submission of home adaption grants, warmer homes schemes applications and provision of Senior Alert Alarms.

The HAFH coordinator has also been focused on increasing awareness about the HAFH programme in Laois through networking with local services and agencies, voluntary groups and stakeholders. Various presentations about the programme have been held in the local libraries and active retirement groups across the county.

This resulted in a significant increased interest in the programme In Laois.

Healthy Age Friendly Homes Programme	Period Jan 2024 to June 2024
Referrals Received	119
Home Visits	36
Percentage of services utilised in 6 Domains	
1. Housing %	18.25%
2. Community %	3.5%
3. Health %	31%
4. Technology %	10.5%
5. Finance %	1.75%
6. Energy/Climate %	35%
Top 3 Referral Sources	1.Frailty Team – A&E Portlaoise Hospital
	2.Primary Care Teams
	3.Self-referrals

REGENERATION TEAM

Laois County Council has established a multi-disciplinary Regeneration Team, comprising staff from Housing and 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.

Derelict Sites

The Derelict Sites Register is maintained by the Planning Staff. In conjunction with the Town Regeneration Officer, the Derelict Sites Team is working on sites in both Rathdowney and Mountrath.

Currently

- Total number of derelict sites entered onto Register to date in 2024 – 41
- Total number of files on hand: 103
- New files opened in 2024: 10
- Files closed 2024: 9

CPO Activation

Vesting Orders for the following Sites have now been submitted to the Council's Solicitors for registration in the Land Registry.

1. 2 sites at Old Knockmay Road Portlaoise,
2. 26 and 27 Triogue Manor, Portlaoise
3. 15 Bracklone Street, Portarlinton
4. Main Street, Stradbally

The Derelict Sites Team also works alongside the Business Support Unit in advising in relation to the incentives available through the BSU and Local Enterprise Office in relation to the reuse of derelict and vacant commercial properties.

Vacancy Surveys

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 **1054 properties surveyed** (residential and commercial), **680 properties were found to be vacant**, with 44 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

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.

Properties are counted as exiting the Vacancy/Dereliction Activation Programme in the following circumstances:

- Sale of Property by Owner – the property exits the programme once the sale is closed
- Action taken by owner – bringing property back into use following engagement – the property exits the programme when the local authority is satisfied the property has been brought back into use
- Repair and Leasing Scheme – the property exits the programme when the lease commences between the owner and local authority
- Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant (Grant paid) – the property exits the programme when the grant is paid to the applicant
- Buy and Renew – voluntary acquisition – the property exits the programme once the sale is closed
- Property is acquired by the local authority by agreement or by CPO
- Ready to Build Scheme – the property exits the programme once the local authority advertises the serviced site for sale

The following targets have been set for 2024 for Laois County Council:

- 75 properties to enter the CPO Activation Programme, and
- 6 compulsory purchases / compulsory acquisitions to commence.

1st January – 30th June, 2024	
Vacant and derelict properties that have ENTERED the Vacancy/Dereliction Activation Programme including CPO's / Compulsory Acquisitions commenced/completed	34
CPO's / Compulsory Acquisitions commenced/completed	5
Vacant and derelict properties that have EXITED the Vacancy/Dereliction Activation Programme	16

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

Vacant Property Refurbishment Grants	1 st January – 30 th June, 2024
Number of grant applications received	49
Number of applications APPROVED	21
Number of applications APPROVED IN PRINCIPLE	12
Number of applications REFUSED	3
Number of applications WITHDRAWN	2
Number of grants paid to Applicants	16
Total value of grants paid to date in 2024	€853,219

Below are some examples of the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant being used to return properties to use.

Cashel, Portlaoise - Before & After



Durrow - Before & After



INTEGRATION SUPPORTS AND SERVICES

Laois County Council leads and coordinates the **Laois Community Integration Forum (CIF)**. The Forum, consisting of 23 statutory and voluntary groups/agencies, meets regularly, with 26 meetings held to date, ensuring consistency and efficiency in service delivery and integration supports to new arrivals to our county. The overall numbers resident in the various accommodation centres around Laois remains largely static.

The Town Hotel, Portlaoise is no longer under contract with DCEDIY and was vacated mid-July. Approximately 60% of the Ukrainian residents there were in continuing need of state supported accommodation and were provided with alternative accommodation elsewhere. The remaining 40% secured accommodation privately or were assisted by Council staff in securing accommodation locally, under 'Offer A Home'.

Laois County Council continues to assist DCEDIY in the sourcing of temporary accommodation for Ukrainian displaced persons, providing liaison locally in relation to vacant buildings and sites suitable for medium to long term accommodation solutions. The Council also continues to allocate privately offered/pledged accommodation (e.g Offer A Home Scheme) to Ukrainian families, with 71 Ukrainian households having been assisted with accommodation locally through this mechanism to date.

The Council's Integration Support Office continues to deliver its programmes for the coordination of service delivery and integration supports to all those in need of such services. Onsite one to one clinics continue, relevant training is arranged and provided and open to other local service providers to attend, and liaison with DCEDIY is ongoing. Events and activities for children in the various emergency accommodation centres throughout the county are currently being arranged and scheduled by the Integration Office, in conjunction with other CIF member agencies, over the school holiday period

The Integration and Ukrainian Support Teams recently hosted a range of events countywide to mark 'Refugee Week' which took place from 17th- 23rd June 2024, details set out below:

Other Integration Supports provided:

Art Exhibition, Rathdowney Library

The Council's Integration team arranged an art exhibition in Rathdowney Library, showcasing the artwork from two diverse art groups in Rathdowney, facilitated by the LOETB.

The 'Our Home' Art Exhibition featured works highlighting the theme of home from their diverse perspectives and was the culmination of exemplary examples of integration and collaboration working in a small, rural town. The community in Rathdowney have welcomed new arrivals from Ukraine to the Modular Homes facility and the International Protection applicants to the Commercial Inn Direct Provision Centre. The ladies at this Centre were assisted by the Team in joining Rathdowney Tidy Towns and participated in a number of Clean Ups locally. Also, through the interventions of the Integration Team, the Ossory Cycling club provided cycling lessons to them, with bikes provided by Laois Sports Partnership. The Fáilte Isteach English conversation classes, arranged locally by Laois Partnership, are well attended and some of the new arrivals now volunteer as tutors.

The Art exhibition, a flagship event for Refugee week, was officially launched by Minister Joe O'Brien on 13th June and there were artistic performances on the night from Portlaoise-based poet Dagogo Hart, and a musical performance by Rathdowney Men's Shed, under the direction of Denise Boyle, Music Generation Laois. The art exhibition was open to the public at Rathdowney Library during Refugee Week and until the end of June.



Eid A-Adha Celebrations 2024

Laois County Council's Integration team, in collaboration with Laois Integration Network and Syrian families in Laois, arranged a celebration for Eid Al-Adha on Monday, 17th June in the Heath Golf Club, Portlaoise. Eid Al Adha is an important Islamic holiday, comparable to Christmas in its religious significance and communal celebrations. The event was organised to reconnect with Syrian families from previous Resettlement Programmes in Co. Laois and other Syrian families in the county seeking international protection, were also invited to join the celebrations. The event was attended by more than 30 Syrian and Irish families in Laois, members of the Heath Golf Club and staff from Cluid Housing Association. Cllr Paschal McEvoy, Cathaoirleach, Mr. Simon Walton, Chief Executive and Sheikh Ahmad Halawa Imam, of Alrahman Mosque welcomed the guests and presented the children with gifts, sponsored by Cluid Housing Association. Young musicians from Portlaoise Comhaltas played some traditional Irish tunes and the children had lots of fun with outdoor play, face painting and games.



Human Library events in Portlaoise Library and Portarlinton.

The Human Library, which started in Denmark in 2000, is a library where real people are on loan to readers. It is designed to build a positive framework for conversations that can challenge stereotypes and prejudices through dialogue. A place where difficult questions are expected, appreciated and answered. Readers heard amazing stories from refugees, asylum seekers and migrants from around the world.



Human Library events in Portlaoise and Portarlinton Libraries

Cleaning Our Home towns with Tidy Towns groups

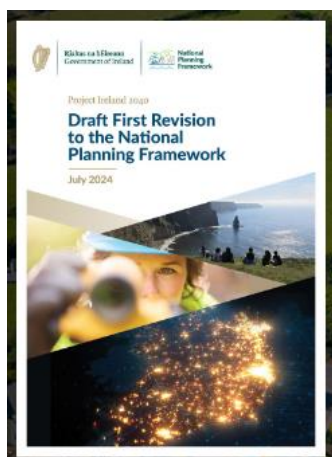
As a part of the refugee week, the Laois Integration team encouraged all new residents in Laois to show their love for their new home and join with local Tidy Towns groups. Litter picking and cleaning sessions were arranged with Portarlinton, Abbeyleix and Portlaoise Tidy Towns. There was a great uptake, and many newcomers came to support Tidy Towns efforts on the day. Each session finished with many refuse bags filled and new connections made after over a cup of tea and friendly chats.



Cleaning Up with Tidy Towns groups in Abbeyleix, Portlaoise and Portarlinton.

PLANNING

National Planning



The National Planning Framework (NPF), is the overarching policy and planning strategy for the social, economic and cultural development of Ireland.

The Draft Revision focuses on the need to update the Framework in order to appropriately reflect changes to government policy that have taken place since its initial publication six years ago, such as climate transition, regional development, demographics, digitalisation and investment and prioritisation.

In accordance with Section 20C(6) and Section 20C(7) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended), members of the public are invited to share their views by making a submission or observation on the Draft Revised NPF during the consultation period from **Wednesday 10th July 2024 up to 5pm on Thursday 12th September 2024** (both dates inclusive).

Local Area Plans

1. Carlow-Graiguecullen Draft Joint Urban Local Area Plan 2024-2030

The amendments to the JULAP went on public display for a 4-week period from **14th May through to 12th June 2024**. A Chief Executives report on the submissions received was prepared and submitted to the members for their consideration on **8th July 2024**. The local area plan is scheduled for adoption at the Council meeting to be held on **29th July 2024**.

2. Draft Portlaoise Local Area Plan 2024-2030

The **Draft Portlaoise Local Area Plan** and associated appendices was finalized and went on public display for a 6-week period from **15th May through to 26th June 2024**. Two public information sessions were arranged for **5th and 12^h June 2024** respectively. Thirty-eight submissions were made. The preparation of the Chief Executives report is underway. This must be prepared and issued to the members for their consideration by not later than **6th August 2024**.

Development Management Report

E-Planning Project	81% of the applications received for the period from the 1/1/2024 to the 10/7/2024 have been made online – 409 applications out of a total of 506 applications received during this period		
Planning Applications	Year	Valid applications from 01/01/2024 – 10/07/2024	Valid applications from 01/01/2023– 10/07/2023
		303	289
Total Number of valid applications received:	303		
Number of decisions made	236		
Invalid applications returned to applicant	201		
Number of applications granted:	226 (Decisions to Grant)		
Number of applications refused:	10 (Decisions to Refuse) 4.2% refusal rate		
Files scanned up to	Up to date		
Referrals to Area Offices (working days):	within 14 days achieved		
No of appeals to ABP	10		
PRE PLANNING			
No of requests to date	174		
No of meetings held to date	149		
Wait time	2 Weeks		

Planning Enforcement

Current year	2024		2023	
Service Review	June	Jan - June	June	Jan - June
Total number of new cases subject to complaints that were investigated	15	66	18	82
Number of Warning Letters served	14	188	53	240
Number of Enforcement Notices served	0	37	9	66
No Of cases referred for legal proceedings	0	1	2	10
Number of cases in Court(incl adjournments)	5	35	7	38
Number of cases Resolved in Court	1	8	3	8
Number of Files Closed	14	44	19	66
Number of cases on system	164	164	158	158
Enforcement Costs recouped	€ -	€ 3,596.24	€ 1,205.84	€4,669.76
Number of Valid Retention Applications Received relating to Enforcement Action	1	8	0	18
Fees received through Valid Retention Applications Received relating to Enforcement Action	€202.56	€4,654.56	€0.00	€30,196.57
Legal fees paid	€135.30	€2,277.93	€6,681.36	€10,482.47

BROADBAND – DIGITAL PROJECTS

NBI UPDATE

The total number of Premises passed in Laois = 12874 (8426 Residential, 2234 Commercial & Residential, 1776 Farm and 438 Commercial.

- 26% of Premises (3312) - have HSB connected to date.
- 54% of Premises (7013) - now available to pre order connection.
- 10.5 % of Premises (1342) – Network build in progress.
- 1.5% of Premises (185) – Survey completed.
- 8% of Premises (1022) – Survey pending.

STEM OFFICER POSITION

Under the Just Transition Fund, Pobal have announced - *The Midlands Local Authorities (Laois, Longford, Offaly and Westmeath) are allocating dedicated resources for 18 months to realise sectoral ambitions, in line with the objectives for the region’s Regional Enterprise Plan, including the Midland pathway to transition to a net-zero economy, Midlands Ireland Placemaking Programme and the Midlands Ireland Regional Food and Drink Strategy.*

The **Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM) Officer – Grade V - 1 position available in each of the following Local Authorities – Laois, Offaly, Westmeath and Longford** (Fixed Term Contract up to 31st March 2026), These positions have been advertised in early June with Interviews to follow.

DIGITAL TOWN AWARDS 2024

The Midlands Cluster applied for the Digital Town Awards in the “Digital Education” section and won **Overall Winner Award**, and the **Digital Education Award** on the 24th May 2024, this was a collaborative effort led by the Broadband/Digital Officers from Laois, Longford, Offaly and Westmeath, showcasing pioneering digital education initiatives in STEM subjects through programmes such as VEX Robotics, Microsoft Dream Space, The STEM Passport for Inclusion, First Lego League, Minecraft, Podcasting and Digital Media Skills.



ARTS DEPARTMENT

Quercu Artists Talk - On Wednesday June 4th Roger Bennett, the world renowned woodturner (originally from Knockaroo, Co Laois) was in conversation with Alan Meredith, about his exhibition Quercu, at the Laois Arthouse. The event was well attended and well received.

Laois Youth Theatre – National Festival of Youth Theatre Residential



The members of the Laois Youth Theatre, based in Portlaoise, were accepted onto a prestigious weeklong residential course in Kilkenny College hosted and run by Youth Theatre Ireland. Laois Arts and Laois County Council covered the cost of the programme including costs towards two facilitators Pauline Dunne and Ash Greene who trained in advance and travelled to Kilkenny to supervise the group on the trip. The NFYT is the largest gathering of youth theatres in Ireland a unique experience that provides young people with a fantastic opportunity to learn new skills, work with specialist facilitators and get to know young people from youth theatres across the country.

For Young People

National Festival of Youth Theatres

Cruinniú na nÓg took place on Saturday 10th of June with the Laois

Arthouse hosting two events in conjunction with Creative Ireland for children. Young people who attended enjoyed learning art skills such as coffee painting and engaged in a wall hanging workshop which focused on sustainable and recycled materials.

The exhibition **Staidéar Neamhbheo | Still Life** by artist Paddy Critchley opened recently in the Laois Arthouse on Friday 5th of July.



In advance of that, Paddy Critchley facilitated LCC's Adult Summer Arts Programme. Paddy Critchley facilitated a group of fourteen artists, from Laois, Offaly and beyond, sharing his knowledge and experience of still life painting, at the Malthouse Stradbally. The programme entitled **Staidéar Neamhbheo | Still Life** comprised a four-day course from Tuesday 2nd to Friday 5th July followed by exhibition of this work at the Laois Arthouse Stradbally.

Annual Road Works Scheme 2024 Progress Update

Graigucullen/Portarlington Municipal District

Restoration Improvement Grant (Strengthening) Allocation €2,139,248			
Road Number	Road Name and/or Townland Name	Length of work (m)	Status
L-38501-0	Coolglass	800	Works tendered and contract awarded. Thomas Murphy & Sons. commencing works first week in August.
L-3857-0	Shanragh/Kilfeacle	550	Works tendered and contract awarded. Plazamont Ltd. to complete works by end-July/first week in August.
L-7916-0	Ballyhide	350	Works tendered and contract awarded. Thomas Murphy & Sons. commencing works first week in August.
L-38781-0	Turra Hill	700	Works tendered and contract awarded. Thomas Murphy & Sons. commencing works first week in August.
L-7914-0	Springhill, Killeshin	800	Works tendered and contract awarded. Thomas Murphy & Sons. commencing works first week in August.
L-3897-28	Monavea/Gortahile - Bilboa	700	Works tendered and contract awarded. Plazamont Ltd. to complete works by end-July/first week in August.
L-7974-0	Aghanure Road, Ballylinan	800	Works tendered and contract awarded. Plazamont Ltd. currently carrying out binder course works (commenced 16/7/24).
L-3976-82	Shrule	500	Works tendered and contract awarded. Thomas Murphy & Sons. commencing works first week in August.
L-3976-44	Ballyfoyle Crossroads - Ballyfoyle	1350	Works tendered and contract awarded. Thomas Murphy & Sons. commencing works first week in August.

R-429-21	Killeen - Coolanagh Cross	900	Works tendered and contract awarded. Thomas Murphy & Sons. commencing works first week in August.
L-3978-0	Castletown - Cullenagh Cross	1100	Works tendered and contract awarded. Thomas Murphy & Sons. commencing works first week in August.
L-7981-17	Cullenagh Cross to Old Court,	1000	Works tendered and contract awarded. Thomas Murphy & Sons. commencing works first week in August.
L-7970-0	Milltown Road, Ballylinan	220	Works tendered and contract awarded. Plazamont Ltd. to complete works by end-July/first week in August.
R-430-274	The Swan	300	Works Completed by Roadstone Ltd.
L-7860-0	Wolfhill (Daly's Cross north of Hacketts Hill)	300	Works tendered and contract awarded. Plazamont Ltd. to complete works by end-July/first week in August.
L-7871-0	The Glen Road (Modubeigh - Gregory's Crossroads)	550	Works tendered and contract awarded. Plazamont Ltd. to complete works by end-July/first week in August.
L-7775-0	Cremorgan/Ballygormill South	550	Works tendered and contract awarded. Carroll Quarry Ltd. commencing works end-July.
L-6774-23	Cremorgan/Raheenduff	500	Works tendered and contract awarded. Carroll Quarry Ltd. commencing works end-July.
L-38511-0	Aghoney / Fossy	500	Works tendered and contract awarded. Thomas Murphy & Sons. commencing works first week in August.
L-38401-0	Fossy Mountain	600	Works tendered and contract awarded. Thomas Murphy & Sons. commencing works first week in August.
L-7178-0	Derryounce/Droughill	238	Works Completed by Roadstone Ltd.
L-7178-0	Treascon/Pine Villa to County Boundary	450	Works tendered and contract awarded. Carroll Quarry Ltd. commencing works end-July.
L-31542-0	Emo/Morett	1200	Works tendered and contract awarded. Binder Course completed. Double surface

			dressing to be completed by Carroll Quarry Ltd.
L-7938-0	Rathmore - Garrans	500	Works tendered and contract awarded. Carroll Quarry Ltd. commencing works end-July.
L-3817-4	Cappakeel	500	Works tendered and contract awarded. Carroll Quarry Ltd. commencing works end-July.
L-3155-0	Emo Court (section 1)	450	Works tendered and contract awarded. Binder Course completed. Double surface dressing to be completed by Carroll Quarry Ltd.
L-3155-0	Emo Court (section 2)	240	Works tendered and contract awarded. Binder Course completed. Double surface dressing to be completed by Carroll Quarry Ltd.
L-71763-0	Killinure - Clonanny	400	Works tendered and contract awarded. Carroll Quarry Ltd. commencing works end-July.
R-419-43	Alley Cross to Coolbanagher	150	Works tendered and contract awarded. Carroll Quarry Ltd. commencing works end-July.
L-7950-0	Inch/Curraclone Bridge	250	Works tendered and contract awarded. Carroll Quarry Ltd. commencing works end-July.
Restoration Maintenance Grant (Surface Dressing) Allocation €685,710			
Road Number	Road Name and/or Townland Name	Length of work (m)	Status
	Outstanding Surface Dressing for 2024 Completion		11 out of the 12 outstanding road locations Completed.
L-7959-0	Ballyadams to Cappanafeacle	500	Works tendered, contract awarded. Murphy & Sons to complete first week in August.
L-3899-0	Kilgorey	690	Works tendered, contract awarded. Murphy & Sons to complete first week in August.
L-39764-0	Barrowhouse (Crossroads - Church)	671	Works tendered and contract awarded. Thomas Murphy & Sons. commencing works first week in August.
L-39762-0	Dunbrin	310	Works tendered and contract awarded. Thomas Murphy & Sons. commencing works first week in August.
L-7979-0	Rossena	1000	Works tendered, contract awarded. Murphy & Sons to complete first week in August.

L-3973-0 / L3975-0	Carlow Road, Ballylinan (at Junction with Aghanure Road)	300	Works tendered, contract awarded. Murphy & Sons to complete first week in August.
L-3837	Timogue Crossroads – Oldmill	1,800	Works tendered, contract awarded. Murphy & Sons to complete first week in August.
L-7950-0	Curraclone Church towards Border	2200	Works tendered, contract awarded. Murphy & Sons to complete end-July.
L-38171-0	Ballyduff – Moyanna / Killeen	1,740	Works tendered, contract awarded. Murphy & Sons to complete end-July.
L-3932-0	Fishermans Inn to Motorway Bridge	2,200	Works tendered, contract awarded. Murphy & Sons to complete end-July.

Land Drainage – Barrow

Location	Status
Barrow Drainage (E)	Vacuum Silt Removal Works on Stradbally River Completed.



Vacuum Silt Removal Works Completed at Stradbally River at N80 Bridge, Stradbally

2024 Safety Improvement Works on Regional and Local Roads

Road Number	Location	Status
R-420-M	R424/R420 Junction, Lea Road, Portarlington	Safety Improvement Works Completed
L-7161-0/L-7162-0/L-3153-25	Skeagh Crossroads, Portarlington	Tendering underway



New Safety Improvement Works Completed at the R420/R424 Junction, Lea Cross, Portarlington

2024 Former National Road Rehabilitation Works

Road Number	Location	Status
R445-0	Junction R420	Works Completed by Roadstone Ltd.



Resurfacing Works Completed on R445 (Former N7)

Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience Works 2024

Location	Status
L-3840-25 Orchard	Killeen Civil Engineering Ltd. commencing works first week in August.
L-7894-0 The Strand	Works Completed by CHM Ltd.



New vehicle restraint barriers installed on the L-7894-0 at The Strand

Approved Project 2024 for Municipal District

New Footpath at Timahoe National School



New Footpath from Timahoe National School to Hillview- Works in Progress July 2024

Portlaoise Municipal District

Regional and Local Road Maintenance and Improvement

Restoration Improvement Grant (Strengthening)			
Road Number	Road Name and/or Townland Name	Length of work (m)	Status
L-2113	Ballina	700	Binder Course completed. Surface dressing to be completed in July/August.
L-7830	Ballycarroll	700	Binder Course completed. Surface dressing to be completed in July/August.
L-81115-0	Briar Hill	160	Works complete.
L-6695	Clonboyne Clonkeen	500	Tender awarded & works to commence in July
L-27781	Cloncullane	700	Binder Course completed. Surface dressing to be completed in July/August.
L-2110	Clonreher	700	Binder Course completed. Surface dressing to be completed in July/August.
L-6772	Dysart	700	Binder Course completed. Surface dressing to be completed in July/August.
L-1738	Ironmills Kilrush	700	Tender awarded & works to commence in July.
L-2120	Knocknagroagh	600	Binder Course completed. Surface dressing to be completed in July/August.
L-16568	Knocknamoe	225	Tender awarded & works to commence in August/September.
L-2112	Pallas Big	700	Binder Course completed. Surface dressing to be completed in July/August.
L-6136	Rathnamanagh	700	Binder Course completed. Surface dressing to be completed in July/August.
L-67702	Summerhill Lane	550	Tender awarded & works to commence in July.
L-6719	Tullore	700	Binder Course completed. Surface dressing to be completed in July/August.
R-430	Ballinakill Road	245	Tender awarded & works to commence in August.
L-63101	Bridge Street	70	Tender awarded & works to commence in July.
R422	Kilmainham	300	Tender awarded & works to commence in July.
L-21207	Station Road	170	Works to commence in September.

Restoration Maintenance Grant (Surface Dressing)			
Road Number	Road Name and/or Townland Name	Length of work (m)	Status
L-6695	Clonboyne Clonkeen	750	Tender awarded & works to commence in July/August
L-77921	Knockbaun Spink	750	Tender awarded & works to commence in July/August
R-429	Ballydavis	750	Tender awarded & works to commence in July/August
R-427	Ballyheyland	750	Tender awarded & works to commence in July/August
R-425	Ballyroan	750	Tender awarded & works to commence in July/August
R-426	Cappoley	750	Tender awarded & works to commence in July/August
R-432	Raggettstown	750	Tender awarded & works to commence in July/August



Road strengthening works at Clonreher & Tullore



New footpaths, Liogard, Portlaoise

Drainage works, Abbeyleix

2024 Safety Improvement Works on Regional and Local Roads



Safety Improvement works at R425 Ballyroan Rd, Abbeyleix

2024 Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience Works

Works	Status
Reinstate hydraulic capacity in attenuation lake at Glendownes Portlaoise L-81002-0	An Bord Pleanála approval received 5th July. Works to commence Q3/Q4 2024
Crubeen Ballyroan on the R425 (Tynan) protection of regional road and properties	Tender awarded & works to commence in August.
R425 Cappoley road protection measures	Works complete.
Monaclear, Ballinakill L-5735-11 road protection measures	Works complete.
Cleanagh, Spink, Abbeyleix L-7792 road protection measures	Works to be completed Q3/Q4 2024
Doory, Ballyroan L-2778 road protection measures	Works complete.
Boston Lane, Boley Lower L16562 road protection measures	Works complete.
R425 Heritage House, Abbeyleix road protection measures on embankment	Works complete.

Borris in Ossory Mountmellick Municipal District

Restoration Improvement Grant		
Road Number	Road Name and/or Townland Name	Status
R430	Woodbrook, Mountrath	Complete
L-5556	Ballyedmond	Complete
R422	Harbour Street to Connolly Street	Complete
L-5655	Shanahoe	Complete
L-5753	Archerstown	Works Programmed in early August – Carrolls Quarry
L-6002	Brittas	Complete
L-5076	Paddock	Complete
R433	Tintore to Ballacolla	Complete
L-1005	Ross to The Cut	Works Programmed in early August – Carrolls Quarry
L-1031	Cappanarrow to Lacca	Complete
R433	Rathdowney Town	Site Investigation currently been undertaken
L-6098	Cloncannon	Drainage Works to be completed prior to strengthening
L-1050	Marymount	Complete
L-16322	Garryduff, Clough	Complete
L-20978	Forest, Mountmellick	Works programmed for late August – Road Recycling
L-5675	Cloneagh to Trumera	Works programmed for late August – Road Recycling
R434	Swan Cross, Durrow	Complete
L-6007	Cloonagh More	Works programmed for late August – Road Recycling
L-1510	Kilmartin Knock	Complete



Tintore to Ballacolla Restoration Improvement Works

Former National Road Funding

The Borris in Ossory Mountmellick Municipal District were grant funded for one Former National Road Rehabilitation scheme in 2024, namely the N7 Pike of Rushall. These works are fully complete.

Former National Road		
Road Number	Location	Status
R445	N7 Pike of Rushall	Complete



FNR Pike of Rushall

Restoration Maintenance

The Restoration Maintenance Programme is 78% complete. All works apart from the R433 were carried out by the Laois County Council Direct Labour Surface Dressing Crew.

Restoration Maintenance Grant		
Road Number	Road Name and/or Townland Name	Status

R-433	Tintore to Ballacolla	Complete
L-1050	Marymount Camross	Complete
L-1652	Kilbrickan, Mountrath	Complete
L-16322	Garryduff Clough	Complete
L-5630	Corraun, Aghaboe	Complete
L-2014	Derrylemoge, Rosenallis	Complete
L-1510	Kilmartin , Knock	Complete
L-21123	Iry Ballyfin	
L-6098	Cloncannon Mountmellick	Complete
L-1031	Cappanarrow to Lacca	Complete
L-1561	Graiguard Rathdowney	Complete
L-1561	Srahbaun, Rathdowney	Complete
L-61302	Dangans Mountmellick	
L-5753	Archerstown	



Restoration Maintenance LCC Direct Labour Crew



Micro-surfacing Ballyfin

Bridge Restoration Works

Two of the five programmed bridges for 2024 are complete to date with the tender period for the Clonmeen Bridge Replacement currently at tender evaluation stage.

Laois County Council direct labour crew carried out significant repairs and reconstruction to the parapet walls on Brittas Bridge with further works to the culverts to be identified and programmes following inspections.

Works to be completed on Knocks Bridge will require the repair and reconstruction of the parapet walls which will be undertaken by Municipal District crews.

Bridge Programme	
Location	Status
L-1670 Forest Bridge	Complete
L-5638 Wooden Bridge	Complete
L-6002 Brittas Bridge	Parapet walls, awaiting culvert inspection and repair
L-5550 Clonmeen Bridge	Under tender evaluation
L-2018 Knocks Bridge	Parapet Wall replacement

National Road Safety Improvement Schemes

Two scheme's were grant funded for Safety Improvement Works from TII in 2024, namely N80 Fingeltons and N80 Rathilig. Both Schemes have been tendered with a successful contractor appointed to complete both. The N80 Fingeltons safety Scheme was completed in July 2024. The scheme objective is to improve sightlines and junction definition from the minor road junction onto the N80 at a location 3km west of Stradbally. The works required the removal of a hedgerow, realignment and setting back of a stone wall, reinstatement of the pavement and reinstatement of lands belonging to adjoining landowner.



N80 Fingeltons Safety Improvement Scheme

The N80 Rathilig scheme is due to commence in the coming weeks and consistS of the improvement of available sightlines from a minor road junction onto the N80, 16km south of Stradbally.

National Road Overlay Schemes

Pavement Asset Repair and Renewal Schemes (PARR)

Laois County Council received funding for two separate PARR schemes in 2024. The first scheme was the N77 Course to Dunmore was completed in April 2024. The scheme consisted of 25,000 sqm of re-surfacing with HRA. The second scheme is the N78 Ballylehane Lower to Farnans Scheme (almost complete).



N78 Ballylehane Lower to Farnans works ongoing.

HD28 Schemes (Renewing Skid Resistance)

Laois County Council was granted funding for two HD28 schemes in 2024, N78 Coonbeg and N80 Grange Upper. The works consist of 3km of surface course replacement. Additionally, 500 metres of the N78 Coonbeg has been identified for strengthening. These schemes have been tendered and are currently undergoing tender evaluation.

Active Travel

Active Travel Scheme, Mountrath Road, Portlaoise

Reallocation of road space to construct two new segregated cycle lanes on both sides of the road between the junctions of the Mountrath Rd/Western Orbital and Mountrath Rd/Rockdale

The scheme will be substantially complete by the end of July.



Active Travel Scheme, Borris Road, Portlaoise

This scheme entails the reallocation of road space to construct two new segregated cycle lanes on both sides of the road from the roundabout junction at The Grange estate for a distance of 400m. In addition, the scheme will see the installation of zebra crossings on all arms of the roundabouts at the Secondary School Campus and at the junction of Borris Rd/Colliers Lane. Construction of 4nr bus stops will take place also as these will serve the impending Portlaoise town bus service.

The scheme is ongoing with the segregated cycle lanes to be substantially complete by the end of August.

Accessible Bus Stops & Shelters

Installation of two new accessible bus stops with bus shelters installed at Patrick Street, Mountrath. Scheme is substantially complete with line marking and steel barriers yet to be installed.



Capital Projects Office



The Fort Outdoor Performance & Event Space officially opened on Thursday 18th July. The official opening was celebrated with the debut performance of the Laois Community Choir.



Junction Improvements & Pedestrian Bridge installation Green Mill Lane



J17 National Enterprise Park Western Arm works progressing towards completion

LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE

Local Enterprise Office Update – June / July

- €55,000 was approved in grant aid to 3 businesses with potential to create 4 new jobs.
- 2 businesses were approved for Technical Assistance for Micro Exporters (TAME) Export Grants.
- 2 Trading Online Vouchers (TOV's), to the value of €29,357, were approved to bring a total of 14 to date this year
- 62 businesses were set up to avail of 1-1 mentoring.
- 11 training courses were delivered to 125 participants.
- 2 businesses were supported to engage in the *LEAN for Business* Programme.
- 1 business was supported to engage in the *Digital for Business* Programme
- 10 businesses were supported to engage in the *Green for Business* Programme.
- 3 businesses were assisted to access Micro Finance Ireland (MFI) loan funding.

Business Support Unit (BSU) Update – June / July

INVEST LAOIS WEBSITE

The Business Support Unit is continuing to work with the Consultants Annertech and the Council's IT Department in developing the new Invest Laois website which will be a brochure website in terms of what Laois has to offer as a place to live, work, visit, invest and do business. Potential investors will be able to see the opportunities, infrastructure and supports available for businesses. The new Invest Laois Logo has been designed.

STRADBALLY FAÇADE ENHANCHMENT SCHEME

In 2024. the Business Support Unit launched a new initiative in Stradbally, a façade enhancement painting scheme open to occupiers of commercial and residential properties. This scheme has been very successful with 27 applications received, including 4 local authority houses, 25 applications have been approved and 2 are being evaluated.

GRANTS AND SUPPORTS

The BSU continue to process Grant Schemes such as the Shop Front, Shop Fit-out and Business Incentive Schemes.

MARKETING PROJECT (Department of Rural & Community Development Fund)

The BSU have completed this project which included a promotional video of Laois and remote working.

WASTE MANAGEMENT, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION & RURAL WATER MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT – MAY & JUNE 2024

1. Kyletalesha Landfill, Transfer Station & Civic Amenity Sites:

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. The facility is being operated in compliance with the facility’s EPA waste license.

The Portarlington Civic Amenity Site continues to be managed and operated by Bord na Mona. Laois County Council carries out regular inspections of the facility.

2. Bring Banks:

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

Month	Tonnage	Month	Tonnage	Month	Tonnage
Jan	174.00	May	150.32	Sept	
Feb	123.50	June	131.49	Oct	
Mar	116.11	July		Nov	
Apr	130.56	Aug		Dec	
Annual Total			825.97 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 2024.

Nature	Number	Nature	Number
Waste Management/Enforcement	314	Air	28
Litter	269	Noise	15
Water	71	Waste Infrastructure	192
Total	889		

Table 2 – Environmental Complaint Register

b) Litter Fines

Month	Number	Month	Number	Month	Number
Jan	22	May	12	Sept	
Feb	3	June	8	Oct	
Mar	5	July		Nov	
Apr	5	Aug		Dec	
Annual Total			55		

Table 3 – 2024 Litter Fines

c) Illegal Dumping

Figures in Table 4 below includes for illegal dumping clean-ups by litter wardens and by contractors. No figures available to date for May and June.

Month	Tonnage	Month	Tonnage	Month	Tonnage
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Jan	26.50	May		Sept	
Feb	14.86	June		Oct	
Mar	18.86	July		Nov	
Apr	13.34	Aug		Dec	
Total Tonnage			73.56		

Table 4 – Illegal Dumping Cleanups

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-going farm inspections in at-risk catchments.
- On-site investigations of complaints relating to water quality and/or water pollution.
- On-going assessment of planning applications with regard to water quality protection.

b) Air & Noise:

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

6. Domestic Wastewater Treatment System Grants (DWWTS)

- DWWTS inspection requests received, and inspections carried out to the 30th June 2024:

Number of inspection requests received	62
Number of inspection requests that did not qualify for an inspection	3
Number of inspections carried out	40
Number of inspections remaining to be carried out	19
Number of Advisory Notices served	31
Number of inspections carried out that do not require an Advisory Notice and so do not qualify for the grant.	9
Number of Old Advisory Notices inspected and closed off for non-compliant systems	7
Number of Old Advisory Notices still open	15
Number of Grants Paid to Date	4

Table 5 – DWWTS Data

7. 2024 Anti-Dumping Initiatives (ADIs)

ADI funding (€79,220) approved by the Department. Approved initiatives include:

- Prevention, Detection and Prosecution of Waste Offences Using CCTV
- Bikes for Africa

- Targeted Areas Summer Blitz
- Mattress Waste Amnesty – Friday August 3rd 2024

8. Rural Water – Multi Annual Programme 2024 to 2026

- Funding under the Rural Water Multi Annual Programme 2024 -2026 has been submitted to the Department. Further updates will be provided when notification of funding is received.

9. Uisce Éireann;

Local Representative Support Desk (LRSD)

Local representatives who have any queries relating to water services can contact Uisce Éireann through their Local Representatives Support Desk. This service is staffed Monday – Friday from 9am to 5.30pm. It is also responsible for issuing all proactive project updates and press releases to local elected representatives across the country every day.

Outside of usual business hours, the 24/7 customer Uisce Éireann care line is available for urgent queries via the same phone number 0818 178 178 and calls from local representatives to this number are prioritised and take precedence in the contact centre.

Local Representative Support Desk Contact Information:

By Phone: **0818 178 178**

By Email: localrepsupport@water.ie

By Post: **Uisce Éireann, PO Box 860, South City Delivery Office, Cork.**

Emergency Planning and Fire Services

Turnout by Station

In 2024, (to 30th June) Laois County Fire & Rescue Service attended 386 emergency incidents, consisting of 102 fires, 208 special service incidents and 76 false alarms.

Portlaoise – 175	Portarlinton - 71	Stradbally – 72	Mountmellick – 62
Abbeyleix - 43	Mountrath – 45	Durrow – 39	Rathdowney – 32

Retained Fire Services in Ireland – WRC Agreement

The WRC Agreement, signed in September 2023, provides for 100 retained fire fighters in County Laois. Since the WRC Agreement was signed (Sept 2023), 16 retained fire fighters have been recruited/appointed to Fire and Emergency Services in County Laois. This increases the existing compliment of retained fire fighters to 81. Rostered operations are now in place in 5 of

the 7 Fire Stations in County Laois. 9 of the 16 appointees are persons returning to the service following the introduction of the WRC Agreement.

At end-July 2024, there are 19 retained fire fighter vacancies to be filled in the Laois. There are 10 applications to hand, and assessments will be conducted in the coming weeks, with a view to additional appointments.

Any person interested in pursuing a role in the Fire and Emergency Services is encouraged to contact the Council for additional information.

New Fire Station in Stradbally

The detailed design and cost plan has been submitted to the NDFEM for approval. Approval enables the project to proceed to tender.

Civil Defence

Volunteers

Civil Defence continues to provide ongoing training and upskilling for volunteers. As of 30th June 2024, the unit has **52** active volunteers who all meet the Minium Training Standards of the Department of Defence.

Activity Report January 1st – 30th June, 2024

- 63 Deployments & Events
- 60 Training Events

These included 8 missing person operations, 3 supports to the Ukrainian reponse, 45 community events & 6 medical responses.

Fleet & Facilities

All unit operations are now active again from the HQ in Kew Lew after the Local Elections in June. Quotes are being sought at present for upgrades to the electrical installation in the building, repairs to minor leaks from the roof and plans for the next phase of the refit of the building.

To increase the safety within our fleet we have started random voluntary safety inspections of vehicles with the RSA which is additional to annual maintenance and inspections already in place. Additionally, we are working with the procurement section at present to trial HVO fuel as a replacement to diesel in our fleet and equipment with an aim to reducing the units CO2 emissions.

Finance

The 2024 grant application from the Department of Defence has been submitted and we are awaiting confirmation of the 2024 grant and subsequent drawdown. Several dry suits and other PPE items for water-based operations have reached end of life and need to be disposed of. A recent grant application to the Department of Defence has been successful for funding of replacement PPE for 6 volunteers.

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

Local Enhancement Programme 2023-2024

Laois LCDC received an allocation €153,591.05 under the Local Enhancement Programme 2023/2024. 61 Groups were successful in their application under the general LEP allocation in addition to 17 women's groups. All groups have been notified with some claims already being submitted.

Laois PPN



Laois PPN held a 'Pedal Vintage' event during Bike Week 2024. Matt Doyle of Pedal Vintage Bike Hire in Durrow welcomed Laois PPN Community Member Groups from around Laois to a Laois PPN Pedal Vintage event. Matt provided Vintage-Style Bicycles and led the family friendly cycle through the Durrow Area. A great way to participate in Bike Week 2024 and promote Active Travel as part of our Climate Action Project

World Bee Day 2024

Laois PPN Member Groups were warmly greeted by the Dunamaise Beekeepers Association on 'World Bee Day 2024' during 'Biodiversity Week 2024'.

The Laois PPN event took place at the Dunamaise Beekeepers Association Apiary on the Cosby Estate, Stradbally. The Dunamaise Beekeepers Association was established in 1975 and their members are a wealth of knowledge which they enthusiastically shared with attendees on the evening.

Attendees were provided with Bee Suits allowing them to get an up-close experience of the hives. Laois PPN provided attendees with a Biodiversity Swatch of their choice from the Irelands Biodiversity Series, produced by the National Biodiversity Data Centre.



Age Friendly

Age Friendly Laois, LOETB, Portlaoise Family Resource Centre and Music Generation Laois collaborated to deliver an intergenerational project. The community choir which was formed was made up of 160 people of different ages and nationalities with the age range from 18 to 80!!

The choir rehearsed for 8 weeks in both the music centre and in Portlaoise Family Resource centre. On the 18th of July, the choir had its debut performance at the new Fort Outdoor performance and event space. This event marked the official opening of the venue and a crowd of 500 + were there to enjoy the performance.



On the 19th of July, the Parish Centre in Portlaoise saw Age Friendly Laois and Comhairle na n-Og join up for an Intergenerational Day. This event saw members of the OPC teaming up with members of Comhairle to discuss various topics and issues.

The aim of intergenerational work such as this is to break down stereotypes on either side, to foster understanding and respect and to combat agism. At the start of the event, the age friendly Ireland agism awareness campaign was highlighted and a short video was shown to introduce the day, which saw 40 people attend on the day!



Pride of Place 2024

This year's Pride of Place judging day will take place on Thursday, 25th July. Abbeyleix Bog Project CLG are entered in the new "Climate Action and Biodiversity" category. Preparations are underway to wow the judges with this great amenity.

Laois Connects

The Laois Connects group met for the first time to discuss plans for Laois Connects 2024. A decision was taken to set a theme of "Connecting" for this year and the various agencies and groups are planning the activities for a week in October. It was decided that interactive activities work best for people as some events last year.



Healthy Laois has secured funding of €6,020 from the Creative Ireland Programme Office at the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport, and Media. This programme is an extension of the existing Healthy Ireland funded Musical Memories Programmes and will bring inclusive sessions of Music and Song to members of our community living in care homes and led by a professional team of musicians and choral directors from Music Generation Laois.

Climate Action

Annual Monitoring and Reporting (M&R) Submission

The annual M&R energy data was submitted to SEAI by the deadline on 5th July. The data for 2023 shows that Laois County Council has achieved a 51.2% improvement in energy efficiency since the baseline date (2019); This represented a further 3.7% improvement from 2022. This means that the Council has already met its 2030 target of 50% improvement in energy efficiency. There is a separate greenhouse gas (GHG) target based on a baseline of 2016-2018. The Council emissions for 2023 were measured as 2.6 million kilograms of CO_{2eq} which is a 37% reduction from the baseline figure of 4.2 million kg of CO_{2eq}. However, by 2030 the Council needs to further reduce its GHG emissions to around 1.2 million kg of CO_{2eq}.

Biodiversity Demonstration Garden Opening



The Biodiversity Demonstration Garden at Laois Education Centre opened on 14th June. This garden, designed as a living classroom, showcases various biodiversity projects replicable in schools. The centre supports over 200 schools, providing CPD training for teachers. The garden features a landscape plan by Dee Sewell and bespoke signage by Juanita Brown and Barry Reynolds, linked via QR codes to online resources. This project, funded by the Local Biodiversity Action Fund, aligns with the Portlaoise Low Carbon Town initiative and the "Town in a Garden" concept, promoting sustainable living. The self-guided walk aims to promote awareness and understanding of biodiversity among teachers and the broader community.

Greener Together Launch



The "Greener Together" newsletter, supporting the Portlaoise Low Carbon Town Project, was launched at County Hall on 24th June. The launch event saw attendance from various local organisations and businesses committed to sustainability, including IPS, HSE, Laois Chamber Alliance, Greenfield Global, Mochua Print, the Department of Agriculture, and the Midlands Park Hotel. The newsletter will spotlight contributions from these organisations and provide resources for enhancing sustainable practices. Additionally, organisations like LOETB, The Cube, Laois Libraries, Local Enterprise Office Laois, and Laois Education Support Centre were highlighted for offering sustainability training. The Laois Volunteer Centre also participated, offering to organise CSR events for local businesses, further fostering community engagement.

Picture Our Future Exhibition

The "Picture Our Future" exhibition at Portlaoise Library in June attracted 10,000 visitors and included 11 workshops. The exhibition merged art with climate action communication, driving creative public engagement. The event culminated in a celebration night on 24th July, attended by 40 people, including SISEC graduates, course tutors, artists, and the public. Highlights included interactive workshops and significant public engagement, promoting climate action awareness. The weekly Ciorcal Comhrá group and the Tidy Towns clean-up activity were notable events during the exhibition.



Litter Characterisation Study and Anti-Litter Campaign

The Climate Section arranged for a waste characterisation analysis on litter bin contents and litter collected by Tidy Towns. The analysis revealed that 30% of the waste was household waste and 30% was food waste. A trial with free recycle/food bins provided by Bin Belly will commence soon. An anti-litter campaign video will be shown before all showings at Portlaoise Cinema for six weeks, reaching 21,000 viewers, with an advertising cost of £5,000. An artist-created "Tree of Trash" is currently on display at the library, enhancing public awareness about litter issues. The campaign also includes bespoke anti-litter poster campaigns to address the sources of litter, ensuring the public understands the impact of improper waste disposal and encouraging responsible behaviour. The study's results will determine the feasibility of on-street recycle bins.

Laois Federation of Tidy Towns (LFTT) Visit to Gash Gardens



The LFTT visited Gash Gardens on 10th July, where Mary Keenan, Proprietor, and former Tidy Towns Adjudicator, provided advice on planting that minimises the need for weed control and thus reduces maintenance and pesticide or herbicide use. This visit is part of our ongoing efforts to incorporate sustainable gardening practices in public spaces. Keenan's insights included selecting native plants that require less maintenance and exploring alternative weed control methods that are environmentally friendly.

Sport & Leisure

National Play Day/Recreation Week

Funding was awarded of €3,000 for the delivery of National Play Day/Recreation Week and a series of events were delivered in Vicarstown, Mountrath and Borris in Ossory. Additional events were assisted at Direct Provision centres where equipment and materials were provided in partnership with inclusion team during July 2024



Parks Tennis 2024

Parks Tennis is being delivered in July 2024 in partnership with three community groups in Mountmellick, Mountrath and Vicarstown with excellent attendance.



Parks Tennis Vicarstown 2024

ORIS 2023

Laois County Council were awarded funding of €200,000 under Measure 2 for the Triogue Way Recreational Enhancement and funding of €492,750 under Measure 3 for Durrow Cycle Trails. Funding agreements were signed and returned to DRCD in June 2024

County Outdoor Recreational Plan

Funding of €30,000 was granted to Laois County Council for the development of a County Outdoor Recreational Plan. The funding agreement was signed and returned to DRCD in July 2024. Quotations are currently being sought from suitably experienced consultants to develop the plan with a closing date of August 16th 2024

External Playground Inspections

The 6 monthly external playground inspection is taking place in July 2024. The reports will be forwarded to Laois County Council by the end of July and this will guide any additional maintenance works to year end.

Library Update

Portlaoise New Library Celebrates a successful first year on Main Street.

Portlaoise Library, Main Street celebrated its first year of operation in its new premises on Main Street, Portlaoise on Wednesday, 17th of July 2024. The library service hosted events throughout the day to celebrate a successful year of library activities, events, and usage by our local community.

Since opening, the library has welcomed over 148,000 customers, issued over 90,000 items of library stock in this period. In comparison to the usage in the old Library our usage has more than doubled. Apart from increasing our lending and browsing services, Portlaoise Library has attracted high usage from all our communities, including from local schools with over 126 class visits from schools during the year giving a total of 2,778 pupils visiting with their teachers and classmates. Adult events and educational workshops continue to be well supported with a total of 614 separate events being held in our community and meeting rooms in the new library. The library continues to offer a host of digital services including wireless printing access, photocopying and scanning facilities, free Wifi and PC booking available in the library. There is also a huge range of online lending options for eBooks, eAudiobooks and eNewspapers with your free library membership.



Laois Library Service celebrated Refugee Week (17th - 23rd June) with a number of open events in libraries and had the opportunity to meet people from all over the world who have made Laois their home. Portlaoise Library was designated as the first Library of Sanctuary in Ireland, and played host to a Human Library. Visitors engaged in conversations with real people, celebrating the diversity of being human. Many thanks to the Integration Office of Laois County Council for their collaboration on this project



Summer Stars the free national reading programme for children that takes place in all public libraries in Ireland over the summer returns to Laois Libraries for 2024 . It runs from 7th June to 31st August this year for children up to 12 years. To date over **1000** children have signed up to the reading challenge in Laois with each library providing a broad range of fun and educational workshops for children to encourage reading and literacy over the summer months.



We are delighted to invite every child who will start primary school or home school this September to come to the library to collect their Little Library Bag to mark this special occasion. Each bag contains a beautiful book and a wallet to hold your library card. The Little Library Bag initiative is a collaboration between libraries, the Department of Rural and Community Development, and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth as part of the First 5 Strategy

[Laois Local Studies History Talks @Portlaoise New Library](#)

Portlaoise Library are hosting a number of talks in Portlaoise New library during July

- The History of Cricket in Laois 1833-1923 held on Weds, 3rd July at 7pm
- Women's Activism in Laois from 1914 to 1923 held on Weds, 10th July at 7pm
- Kevin O'Higgins: His Friends and Enemies held on Weds, 24th July at 7pm
- Land and Labour in Laois from 1904 to 1924 on Weds, 31st July at 7pm

Current Exhibitions in Abbeyleix and Mountmellick

Abbeyleix Library Art gallery is delighted to host an exhibition of photographs by the Noreside Camera Club Abbeyleix/Mountrath and District throughout the month of July. A large collection of photographs depicting a range of subjects from landscapes, flora and fauna, and portraits can be viewed. All welcome to come and visit.

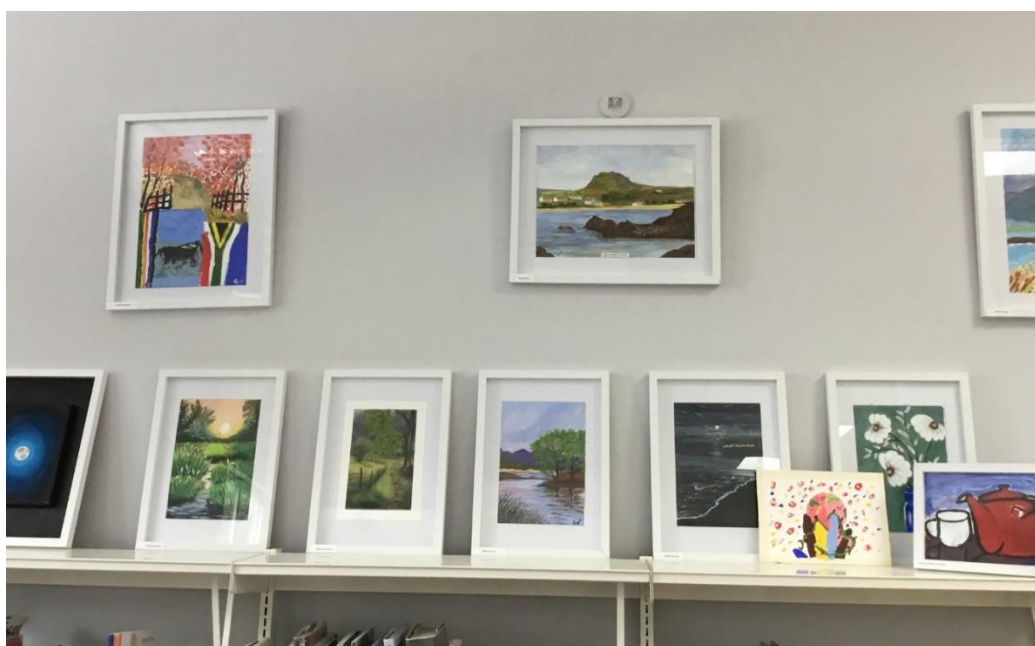
The Gallery in Mountmellick Library is delighted to host from 5th July the artist Orla McDonagh. Based in the Midlands Orla works in a diverse practice, painting, drawing and constructing work in ceramics and textiles.(see below)



Art Exhibition @Rathdowney Library

Our Home”, an exhibition displaying a wide range of artworks by refugees who have found their new home in Rathdowney. Paintings captured the meaning of ‘home’ to the artist, with each piece telling a story in displacement, belonging and community.

The art pieces are currently on display in Rathdowney Library



Bogs and Book Project@ Abbeyleix Library

As part of our EU funded “Bogs and Books” project in supported by the Europe Challenge 2024 , a Laois library county-wide children’s writing competition as attached will be running over the next month .

**Books 'n' Bogs
Kids & Teens Creative
Writing Competition**

Are you interested in the history or science behind local boglands? Or maybe you have an idea for a fictional story set on the bog?

Laois Libraries want to hear **YOUR** story!
Anyone under the age of 15 years old can submit a piece of writing (max. 500 words) on the theme of *The Bogs of Laois!*

Prizes will be awarded in 2 categories: 8-11 years and 12-15 years. First prize will be a €50 voucher!

Whatever your interest or writing style, let your imagination run wild - we want to read them all!

Scan the QR code for competition rules and entry details!

The Europe Challenge

REPEAT

European Cultural Foundation

Laois County Library Service

Cruinniú na nÓg 2024

On June 15th we celebrated Cruinniú na nÓg, our national day of creativity with over twenty children’s events spread across the county. Hundreds of children and adults attended what was a very successful day. Thanks to all who collaborated with us to deliver such as wonderful day of creativity and fun.



Fun and creativity with Mountmellick Family Resource Centre

Heritage through Art update

February last, Creative Laois announced a grant scheme for communities and artists to work together in exploring and presenting aspects of Laois's heritage through varying art forms. There were seventeen successful applications this year and the following projects were completed during June and July.

Mountmellick Arts Collective hosted their first heritage festival on July 12th-14th. They included the following as part of their event. A heritage Mural, a Multiscreen Art Installation which advocated for the cultural and social value of film archives- local films, archival materials, and archival footage also a number of 10-minute plays with a local heritage theme.



A heritage film at Mountmellick old cinema.

The Stradbally Vicarstown Timahoe Community Group's project involves the development and creation of art objects in Vicarstown, Stradbally, Timahoe Co Laois, inspired by local legends and historical events. Their work is being organised in workshops with the participation of artists, volunteers of all ages, and in cooperation with local schools.



A tree stump carving of St Mochua at Timahoe

Abbeyleix Bog Project worked with artist Alison McEvoy using Abbeyleix Bog as inspiration and the main location to hold an arts festival on the Bog during the month of July. The 'Of Hands' festival explored the bog landscape through paint, sculpture, ceramics, written and spoken word.



The Of Hands Festival on Abbeyleix Bog

Rossmore Killeshin Development Association held their heritage event in June. The aim of this committee is to increase the tourist and local knowledge by showcasing the history, flora, and fauna of the surrounding area. Local Historian Pat Whelan researched and delivered a talk on Coalmining in Rossmore on June 28th to a large attendance.

BREAKING NEWS **Oisín House & Park** **SPECIAL EDITION**

UNEARTING HISTORY!

THE STORY OF ROSSMORE MINES

OISIN HOUSE AND PARK WELCOMES YOU TO AN EVENING OF EXPLORING THE ROSSMORE MINES.

A journey through time to uncover the legacy of the old mines that once echoed with the sounds of pickaxes and the shouts of miners. These mines, now silent and forgotten by many, were once the lifeblood of Rossmore, shaping its landscape, economy, and communities.



DATE:
26/06/2024

TIME:
8PM

VENUE:
OISIN HOUSE & PARK

ADMISSION:
FREE

GUEST SPEAKER:
LOCAL AUTHOR
PAT WHELAN

Lois County Council * Clár Éire Ille Creative Ire Programm

Other projects

Creative Laois were delighted to work with our Climate Action department in launching the Picture Our Future Exhibition in Portlaoise Library during the month of June. This exhibition is currently at County Hall and is a must see for all.



Creative Laois also supported Dunamais Arts Centre with the J Mac MUA Makeup x Art Exhibition which was launched on July 12th. This exhibition is currently open at the Dunamais Centre.

Chief Executive's Orders

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

Simon Walton

Simon Walton
Interim Chief Executive

July 24th 2024