

LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE LAOISE



MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT
MARCH 2023
TUARASCÁIL BHAINISTÍOCHTA
MARTA 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 March 2023 is as follows: -

FINANCE & ALLOCATIONS NOTIFIED

Expenditure and income to the 28/02/2023 is summarised below:

Service Division	Budget Allocation	Expenditure to 28/02/2023
Housing and Building	€21,247,400	€2,349,848
Road Transportation & Safety	€26,291,600	€1,020,261
Water Services	€3,404,500	€423,160
Development Management	€9,586,000	€1,209,755
Environmental Services	€8,677,500	€516,811
Recreation and Amenity	€4,990,000	€87,377
Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare	€900,000	€71,842
Miscellaneous Services	€9,498,700	€917,533
Central Management Charge	€11,213,300	€1,226,847
Total	€95,809,000	€7,823,435

Service Division	Budget Allocation	Income to 28/02/2023
Housing and Building	€22,725,300	€3,136,498
Road Transportation & Safety	€21,583,000	
Water Services	€4,502,000	€850,166
Development Management	€6,495,500	€834,058
Environmental Services	€2,231,000	€154,612
Recreation and Amenity	€1,049,000	€305,067
Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare	€436,000	€34,956
Miscellaneous Services	€11,954,262	€116,703
Superannuation	€720,000	€106,322
Local Property Tax	€9,033,703	€0
Rates	€14,578,963	€178,139
Capital transfer	500,272	
Total	€95,809,000	€5,716,521

Allocations Notified:

Department of Heritage, Local Government & Heritage – Built Heritage Investment Scheme 2023	€94,450
Department of Transport - Bike Week	€23,827.61

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

Annual Social Housing Delivery Targets under the Council's Housing Delivery Action Plan

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

**Total figure of 925 units published in the Housing Delivery Action Plan includes 25 proposed LA Buy and Renew units. These units are not counted for social housing delivery figures.*

Social Housing Schemes Under Construction

These are included in Appendix 1.

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

These are included in Appendix 2.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING / COST RENTAL

Minimum targets for Laois County Council issued by the Department of Housing for the delivery of Affordable Purchase / Cost Rental housing are:

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

Discussions are ongoing to progress potential affordable units as follows:

Affordable	Advance Turnkey Purchase arrangement – EOI received Potential No of unit yield	Part V – Potential No of Units Yield	LCC Construction Potential No of Unit Yield
Affordable	53	8	TBC*
Cost Rental	27		

* A Team has been appointed for the design of social and affordable purchase housing on the Council owned landbank on the Stradbally Road, Portlaoise.

Call remains open for Expressions of Interest in respect of:

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

Social Housing Acquisitions

In accordance with Circulars issued by the Department of Housing throughout 2022 there are amended procedures to support a more streamlined response by local authorities in securing appropriate social housing acquisitions in specific cases where tenants on social housing supports are in receipt of a notice to quit. The Council can acquire a rented house that is for sale on the market to provide:

- one-bedroom units to align with Housing First;
- properties that allow persons / families to exit homelessness and
- specific housing for individuals with a disability or other priority needs.

This is subject to the acquisition being in line with acquisition cost guidelines as advised by the Dept of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH).

The DHLGH issued Circular 08/2023 on the 13th March 2023. This sets out arrangements for social housing acquisitions for 2023. An additional 1,300 acquisitions in 2023 are to be focused on the acquisition of homes where a HAP or RAS tenant has received a Notice of Termination, due to the sale of the property.

This Council has been provided with an initial allocation of 10 such acquisitions. This is not a target, but rather to support planning and to allow local authorities to prioritise the acquisitions to be targeted.

The Council will continue to deal with requests to accommodate tenants experiencing threats of eviction and to purchase houses in which they currently live, but each case will be considered on its merits having regard to:

1. The household circumstances of the private rented tenant (applicant) which requires validation, tenant's history regarding rent, anti-social issues, specific need, etc. and where possible all accommodation options available will be explored and,
2. in terms of the acquisition of a property, criteria such as availability on the open market, sale price, condition and estate management generally will have to be examined.

Temporary Exemptions from the Part VIII Planning Approval Process

The Planning and Housing Authorities have been notified by Circular Letter Housing 09/2023 and Planning PL 01/2023, dated 10th March 2023, of the enactment of a temporary exemption for local authorities from the 'Part 8' approval process to construct housing developments on local authority and designated State owned lands zoned to include residential use. This is effective from 8 March 2023.

This measure will allow for the accelerated delivery of social, affordable and cost-rental housing by local authorities in strictly defined circumstances where the following criteria are satisfied:

- the land is owned by the local authority or another specified State Body;
- the land is zoned for residential development;
- the proposed development does not materially contravene the development plan or local area plans;
- the proposed development is in accordance with the Council's housing strategy;
- the land is serviced or will be serviced with the necessary supporting infrastructure or facilities within the timeframe of the development;
- the proposed development is not required to undergo EIA or AA under the Habitat's Directive and
- the development works are commenced no later than 31st December 2024

The central role elected members play in setting the overarching framework for the development of their local areas remains in place. They retain their approval powers under 'Part 8' for all other forms of local authority own development proposals i.e. roads, bridges, waste facilities, swimming pools, fire stations, libraries, and any other development works with a cost exceeding €126,000.

The following projects will fall under this exemption during 2023 / 2024:

- 1) Housing Development Newtown Doonane
- 2) Housing Development Moanbaun, Mountrath
- 3) Housing Development Derry Road, Durrow
- 4) Housing development Bracklone Street, Portarlington
- 5) Single house at Ballyadams
- 6) Housing Development County Hotel, Portlaoise
- 7) Housing Development Beladd, Portlaoise
- 8) 1 New Road, Portlaoise
- 9) 6 Emmett Terrace, Mountmellick
- 10) Housing Development Main Street, Ballinakill
- 11) Rushall, Mountrath
- 12) 2 houses in Lakeglen, Portlaoise
- 13) 2 units French Church Street, Portarlington
- 14) Housing Development Tyrrell Lands, Portlaoise

I will be required to formally notify you of the proposed housing development prior to issuing a site notice and newspaper notice. This notification must be issued at least eight weeks prior to the commencement of works.

Social and affordable housing developments, which do not meet the criteria set out or are not commenced by the end 2024, will be subject to the standard Part 8 process.

REGENERATION / VACANT HOMES

Vacancy / Regeneration Funding Schemes

- **Croí Conaithe (Towns) Fund Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant**

No. of Applications received to 28 th February 2023	35
No. finally Approved	7
No. Approved in Principle	2
No. refused	1
No. withdrawn by Applicant	1
No. under consideration	24

- **Buy and Renew Scheme**

- This scheme enables the Council to recoup costs where we acquire a property that needs major refurbishment, beyond the limits of our acquisition cost ceilings.

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

PRIVATE RENTED INSPECTIONS

	February 2023	Total to date in 2023
No of properties inspected	64	149
No of notices of works issued	73	152

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

SERVICED SITES

The Council has opened a survey to establish the level of interest in serviced sites among prospective home buyers in the county and, in general, their preferred locations. Eligibility will be determined by criteria set out under the Croí Conaithe (Towns) Fund – Ready to Build Scheme (Serviced Sites for New Homes) Scheme.

The survey can be located on the links below:

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

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

The following locations are currently under consideration for serviced sites.

Location	No. of Sites	Comment
Ballacolla Road, Durrow	4	Sale of sites to be advertised in Q1 2023
Gleann na Glaise, Ballyroan	4	Sale of sites to be advertised in Q1 2023
Doonane	2	Stage 1 approved as part of larger housing scheme Part VIII to be progressed in Q2 2023
Derry Road Durrow	4	Stage 1 approved as part of larger housing scheme Part VIII to be progressed in Q2 2023
Castletown	9	Detailed design currently on-going
TOTAL	23	

There are ongoing discussions in relation to a site in Abbeyleix and Ballyroan.

HOUSING STOCK

Housing Re-Lets 2023

Month	LA Keys Surrendered	Properties Acquired	Works Completed
January	9	2	6
February	2	2	0
TOTAL (YTD)	11	4	6

NOTE: There are currently 30 vacant units from our existing stock and a further 13 units that the Council acquired. Works are either ongoing on these properties or specifications are being prepared for works to be carried out.

Housing Maintenance 2023

Month	Work Orders Raised	Work Orders Closed	Work Orders Open
January	504	465	39
February	378	261	117
TOTAL (YTD)	882	726	156

Energy Efficiency / Retrofitting Programme

Address	Properties	Units	Units	Update
		Commenced	Completed	
O'Moore Place, Portlaoise	28	17	13	13 houses fully complete and awaiting final BER. 17 houses with heating and external insulation works completed. Boxing of pipes to be completed.
Total Properties	28	17	13	

NOTE A: Department Retrofitting funding for 47 units at a cost of €1,299,987 has been approved. Surveys of the properties listed below commenced in Q3 2022 and tenders were advertised in Q1 2023, with a closing date of the 24th March 2023.

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

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

The following 53 units are being considered in 2023:

- 1) St Brigid's Place, Portlaoise – 26 units.
- 2) Fr O'Connor Crescent, Mountrath – 11 units.
- 3) Erkindale Drive, Durrrow – 6 units.
- 4) Rossmore View, Graiguecullen – 10 units.

(NOTE: The above estates were prioritised based on property age and Municipal District Area.)

There will be a match funding requirement to complete all the retrofitting works which will depend on the tender prices returned. Once this proposal has been approved by the Dept, we will commence surveys of properties to inform the tender for works.

HOUSING NEED

Homeless Presentations

Time Period	Homeless Presentations	Household Breakdown
1 st January – 28 th February 2023	46	31 singles 15 families

Homeless Accommodation 2023

	Emergency Accommodation booked at 28 th February	Social Housing allocated from homelessness to 28 th February
Families	7	1 (AHB)
Single Persons	12	11 (LCC 4; AHB 3; Homeless HAP 4)
TOTAL	19	12

Social Housing List at 28th February 2023

No of Social Housing Applicants on waiting list	1,747
Proportion of SH applicants availing of HAP supports	49%
Proportion of HAP tenants transferred from Rent Supplement	13%

RAS/Leasing Statistics at 28th February 2023

Active RAS tenancies	76
Active short-term leasing tenancies (Social Housing Leasing Scheme)	28
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 2023:

Method of Delivery	No. housed In February	Year to Date
First allocation of New Build/Acquired unit	1	1
Relet / Refurbished Stock Allocation	9	15
Nominations to AHB housing from which a tenancy was created	0	1
Housed via leasing	0	0
TOTAL	10	17

LOANS AND GRANTS

Local Authority Home Loan (LAHL) at 28th February 2023

No of applications received to date	68
No of applications approved to date	30
No of applications refused to date	22

Grants at 28th February 2023

Housing Adaptation Grants - Allocation €TBC

	No. of applications received	No. of applications paid	Value of applications paid	No. of applications at work stage	Value of applications at work stage
HOP	26	15	€62,800	50	€247,985
MAG	9	3	€10,300	7	€30,100
HGD	23	3	€18,500	23	€208,620
TOTAL	58	21	€91,600	80	€486,705

Disabled Persons Grant for Social Housing

Allocation 2023 (including LA funded portion)	€TBC
No. of new applications received in February	2
No. of applications received year to date	5

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

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE TO REFUGEES FLEEING CONFLICT

The most recent data indicates there are 896 displaced Ukrainian citizens in the County. Approximately 300 of these are in accommodation centres such as hotels, guesthouses and hostels, with the remainder in privately sourced or pledged accommodation.

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 details nationally in relation to vacant buildings and sites suitable for medium to long term accommodation solutions.

The Council continues to allocate privately pledged accommodation to Ukrainian families, both in shared settings with a host family and in matching vacant properties offered under the 'Offer A Home' campaign. In excess of 35 families have been provided with accommodation through these mechanisms to date.

Site works have commenced on the 42 Modular Homes project in Rathdowney, with occupancy expected by mid-year.

COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Final figures for 2022 are now available for Housing completions and commencements in 2022 using the Regional Development Monitor

Housing Commencements (private and social units)

Year 2022-542 units (106 of which are one-off units)

Source Building Control Management System (BCMS)

Housing Completions (private and social units)

Year 2022 – 474 residential units

All data has been sourced from the CSO new dwelling completions quarterly publication available on the Regional Development Monitor – Connection data provided to the CSO by ESB network Connections. This is supplemented with data from Eircode, Geodirectory, BER Data, etc.

A review of the Housing strategy/HNDA will be carried out in 2023 to consider the implications of revised census figures and housing activity in the county.

The review will assist in the making of the Local Area Plans for Graiguecullen, Portarlinton, Portlaoise and Mountmellick.

LOCAL AREA PLANS

Graiguecullen / Carlow Joint Urban Area Plan

The Draft Plan, Local Transport Plan and associated SEA are currently being prepared.

Portlaoise LAP

A briefing with the Portlaoise MD will be held to discuss the Chief Executives report on the issues raised during the 1st Stage of Consultation.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

Planning Applications – January 1st – March 16th, 2023:

Valid planning applications	108 (116 same period in 2022)
Number of decisions made	112
Invalid applications returned to applicant	76
Number of decisions to grant	108
Number of applications refused	4
Refusal Rate	3.6%
Number of appeals to An Bord Pleanala	5
Pre-Planning	
Number of requests to date	50
Number of meetings held	30

ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

	Feb	Jan – Feb
Number of new cases subject to complaints that were investigated	11	23
Number of Warning Letters served	50	70
Number of Enforcement Notices served	16	35
No of cases referred for legal proceedings	1	3
Number of cases in Court (including adjournments)	10	11
Number of cases resolved in Court	1	1
Number of files closed	7	18
Number of cases on system	4	148
Enforcement Costs recouped	€70.00	€90.00
Number of Valid Retention Applications Received relating to Enforcement Action	4	6
Fees received through Valid Retention Applications relating to Enforcement Action	€2,461.70	€3,921.13
Legal fees paid	€537.67	€1,155.13

Rathdowney Town Centre First Plan

The first meeting of the Town Team was held on the 23rd of February 2023. The Town Centre First Plan is currently being prepared.

HERITAGE

Conservation Grants

Laois County Council was advised of an allocation of €94,450 on the 9th of March under the Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS). The following projects were successful:

Ref	Structure	Grant Awarded
BHIS/LS01	"Newtown Mill Newtown House & Mill, Newtown, Durrow Co. Laois"	€15,000
BHIS/LS02	Portrane House Stradbally Road, Portlaoise	€15,000
BHIS/LS03	Preston House Boutique Ltd. Abbeyleix Co. Laois	€15,000
BHIS/LS04	Thatched House Rathmakelly	€4,750
BHIS/LS05	RIC Barracks Clonaslee	€15,000
BHIS/LS06	Fisherman's Inn, Fisherstown	€7,500
BHIS/LS07	Cuffsborough House, Ballacolla	€11,100
BHIS/LS08	Former Goods Shed Abbeyleix	€11,100

Local Enterprise Office

- A Laois business was approved for a Technical Assistance for Micro Exporters grant to assist them to exhibit their products at a specialist expo in London.
- Five trading online voucher applications have been approved since the last reporting period and 2 are being processed.
- 72 Laois businesses availed of 1-1 mentoring.
- 9 training courses were delivered to a total of 171 participants. We also held a seminar on the Temporary Business Energy Support Scheme (TBESS) energy scheme and a lunch and learn event with the Chamber to explore Lean and Green options.
- 2 additional companies are participating in the Lean for Micro Programme.
- 4 additional companies have applied for the Green for Micro Programme
- 2 Laois businesses are participating in the Digital Start programme which is supporting eligible companies to embed digitization in their business.
- 1 new Laois business was assisted to access Micro Finance Ireland (MFI) loan funding.
- 540 students from seven Laois schools took part in the Student Enterprise Programme and 84 students made it to the Laois County Final on March 14 in the Midlands Park Hotel, Portlaoise. 3 local finalists will go forward to represent Laois at the National Finals being held in Croke Park on Friday 5th May.
 - In the Junior Category, Sarah-Kate Dunne from Portlaoise College with her business Golden Flame Wax Works;
 - In the Intermediate Category, Dan Bergin, Hannah Clancy, Róisín Bradley, and Erin Costigan from Heywood Community School with their business Bud to Bloom and
 - In the Senior Category Daniel Aylward, Aidan Lynam, Brian Carroll, Evan Farrell, and Donil Mathew from Heywood Community School with their business Hurlr.
- Enterprise Week took place from 6th of March to 10th March. The week-long programme included five national “Spotlight” events as well as a full schedule of local events including training, themed mentoring clinics and other public talks with industry experts.

The key local events were Blaise Brosnan – Optimise your Business Bottom Line during these inflationary times in Bloom HQ, Dr Diane Cooper - International Women’s Day Event in the Midlands Park Hotel and Blathnaid Bergin - LEAN in the food industry in the Maldron Hotel.

Business Support Unit (BSU)

The Vacant Commercial Property Incentive Scheme is being extended to Portarlington and will be launched in April in collaboration with Laois Chamber Alliance and the Portarlington Business Group. A priority list of towns to extend the scheme to is being drawn up.

The BSU is working with Laois Taste to promote Laois as a Food and Drinks Destination. The BSU was successful in acquiring funding in the sum of €8,593 from the Department of Agriculture in respect of a project to further develop and promote Laois Taste.

The BSU will be working with the digital hubs in 2023 on a marketing campaign to attract remote workers to the hubs in Laois. €50,000 was received for this project.

ROADS, TRANSPORTATION, DRAINAGE & PUBLIC REALM

N77 Abbeyleix Road (Portlaoise) Rehabilitation and Enhancement Scheme

Following public procurement processes, contracts were signed on the 10th March for the delivery of this scheme. The contractor appointed to complete the works is Arkil Ltd.

The Scheme is 2km in length, from the M7 (J17) Interchange to the roundabout at JFL Avenue and represents an investment of almost €4 million on the N77. The works are funded by Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and are set to commence in the coming weeks. A more detailed programme will be published prior to the commencement of works.



N80 Kyletalesha to Mountmellick Phase 2 Pavement Rehabilitation Scheme

Tenders have been received and are currently under assessment for the rehabilitation of 5.2km of pavement to extend works undertaken in 2022.

Annual Road Works Scheme 2023

This is being presented for the Members' consideration at this month's meeting.

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.

The Kyletalesha Landfill Monitoring Committee had a scheduled meeting on the 10th March 2023.

2. **Bring Banks:**

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

Month	Tonnage	Month	Tonnage	Month	Tonnage
Jan	164.24	May	0	Sept	0
Feb	129.06	June	0	Oct	0
Mar	0	July	0	Nov	0
Apr	0	Aug	0	Dec	0
Annual Total			293.30 Tonnes		

Table 1 – 2023 Bring Bank Tonnages

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

a) **Waste Enforcement & Complaints**

Table 2 details the number and types of complaints received to the end of February 2023.

Nature	Number	Nature	Number
Waste Management/Enforcement	132	Air	7
Litter	89	Noise	2
Water	10	Waste Infrastructure	2
Total	242		

Table 2 – Environmental Complaints Register

b) **Litter Fines**

Table 3 details the number of fines issued to the end of February 2023.

Month	Number	Month	Number	Month	Number
Jan	11	May	0	Sept	0
Feb	4	June	0	Oct	0
Mar	0	July	0	Nov	0
Apr	0	Aug	0	Dec	0
Total			15		

Table 3 – 2023 Litter Fines

- c) **Illegal Dumping**
Tonnes of material collected for 2023 is 50 tonnes.

4. 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. These include:

- Investigation ongoing into wastewater discharges to the lakes at Kilminchy,
- On-going assessment of planning applications with regards to water quality protection.

b) Air & Noise:

All noise and air complaints are being investigated.

5. EPA Annual Returns – Recommended Minimum Criteria for Environmental Inspections (RMCEI) and Farm Surveys

The 2022 RMCEI Returns and the 2023 RMCEI Plan was submitted on the 28th February 2023.

The 2022 Farm Survey National Inspection spreadsheet was completed and submitted to the Department and the EPA by the 28/02/2023.

Emergency Planning, Fire Services & Flood Relief

In 2023 (to date) the Laois County Fire & Rescue Service attended 127 emergency incidents consisting of 45 fires, 62 special service incidents and 20 false alarms.

Turnout by Station*:

Portlaoise – 51	Portarlinton - 21	Stradbally – 11	Mountmellick – 29
Abbeyleix – 13	Mountrath – 20	Durrow – 9	Rathdowney – 7

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

New Fire Station in Stradbally

Following the preparation and submission of a brief to the NDFEM in December 2022, approval has now been received to progress the appointment of an architect led design team. The procurement process for this appointment will start shortly.

WATER SERVICES AND RURAL WATER

Disinfection/PH Control Programme

Civil works progressing in Meelick, Derryguile, Kyle, Five Wells, Derrymoyle and Lough WTPs. Mechanical, Electrical, Instrumentation, Control and Automation works progressed at the Strand, Knocks, Derryguile, Lough, Kyle, Five Wells, Clonin Hill, Derrymoyle, Ballyroan and Meelick Wastewater Treatment Plant (WTP).

ESB supply upgrade currently being progressed for Five Wells. Design for Kilminchy, Fermoy, Castle Durrow, Drim and Camross Waste Treatment Plants currently being progressed by CWL/Uisce Eireann (UE). An automated run to waste system recently installed at the Knocks WTP to address periodic raw water turbidity issue.

Irish Water Small Towns & Villages Growth Programme

Uisce Eireann is currently considering the options and pricing report for Ballyroan. Planning and design works are ongoing for Ballinakill and Borris in Ossory.

Mountmellick and Portarlington DAP

Survey works to be progressed throughout 2023.

East and Midlands Ground Water Programme

Workshop for Portarlington Water Supply, the Swan WTP supply and the Knocks WWTP supply with NOD/UE/LCC now complete.

Inlet Works Storm and Sludge Programme

Ballyroan WWTP Upgrade – Workshop 2 with UE/LCC/Conway Engineering has been completed and works are expected to progress in 2023.

Networks and Water Conservation

First fix, find and fix and lead replacement work will continue into 2023.

Mains rehabilitation works currently ongoing in Portarlington and Mountrath which will provide a safer, more secure water supply by minimising the frequency of bursts and improving the resilience of the network.

National WWPS Programme

Bob's Bar Pump Station project is currently with Uisce Eireann at design estimation stage, awaiting conclusion of any potential environmental impacts.

WWBG PS Growth Programme (Eastern Region) Stage 2 - Borris Road PS

The estimated construction completion is Q3, 2025. Planned timeframe for WS 4 is September 2023. The Colliers Lane scope item (and other potential advanced works) may be progressed earlier and will be determined during the detail design phase.

Taking in Charge

We continue to work with UI for them to take the outstanding legacy estates in charge. 10 no. estates have been progressed and referred to the Planning Section and work is ongoing on the remaining 7 no. estates.

Work is progressing on transitioning of Moyadd Group Water Scheme to Uisce Eireann and this scheme will be taken in charge in 2023.

Multi Annual Rural Water Programme

Projects under the current programme, 2019 – 2021, are being completed. The Department has advised that details of the next Rural Water Programme will be issued in due course.

Application and feasibility studies for Vicarstown and Cullohill, submitted to the Department on the 15th of September for funding under Measure, A8 (Wastewater Collection and Treatment Needs for Villages and Settlements without access to Public Wastewater Services) are being reviewed and adjudicated upon.

Construction has commenced in Rosenallis on the Goodwin Estate Group Sewerage Scheme.

Well Grants

13 applications have been 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.

CORPORATE

A Civic Reception in honour of Mr. Teddy Fennelly was held on 23rd February 2023.

Laois Public Participation Network (PPN)

Laois PPN in collaboration with Portlaoise Tidy Towns and Trees on the Land, held a Laois PPN Climate Action Event – “Free Native Irish Trees” on March 3rd in Portlaoise. Several hundred native Irish trees were handed out to Laois PPN Member Groups free of charge.

Laois PPN provided free Social Media Training to Groups in Laois on the 15/03/23.

Laois PPN’s County Plenary took place online on Tuesday the 21/03/2023.

Climate Action and Community Strategic Policy Committee

A meeting of the Climate Action and Community Strategic Policy Committee was held on the 6th March 2023.

County Laois Joint Policing Committee

A meeting of the County Laois Joint Policing Committee was held on the 13th March.

Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP)

The LECP is about to commence public consultation on the 10 draft high level goals. This will give the public and stakeholders an opportunity to have their say on the Plan.

World of Work Educational Partnership Programme 2022/23

A ‘Day in the Life’ session took place at Áras an Chontae on the 2nd March 2023, where the 2nd year Students from Portlaoise College attended the Council Chamber. Staff members from the Council spoke to the students about their roles in the Council and how they progressed their careers. The session was very informative and gave students a chance to see the diverse career options available in local authorities.



A Playful City Study Visit

A Playful City took part in a cycling study visit with Laois County Council staff members and parents from the Portlaoise Cycle Bus Group. A Playful City is a not-for-profit focused on engaging communities to create more playful, healthy and inclusive public places. Laois County Council made a submission for project funding to the *Creative Climate Action Fund II: Strand 2 - Ignite* in March.

Laois Federation of Tidy Towns (LFTT)

The Laois Federation of Tidy Town's Annual General Meeting was held in the Castle Arms Hotel, Durrow on the 23rd February 2023 and was attended by 46 people representing 26 groups. A new chairperson, treasurer and committee were appointed. The LFTT were presented with bee boxes and materials for Clean Up Laois Week by the Portlaoise Men's Shed.

Laois County Council Climate Action Video Series

The Climate Action Team produced a 14-part video series on climate action, recognising the activities of Laois County Council towards sustainability across a range of services and functions including pollinators, housing retrofit, active travel, Green Public Procurement and Information Technology.

Healthy Laois

A two day "Healthy Laois – Self Breast Check Training" event for staff was held on Thursday 2nd and Friday 3rd March 2023, during which 6 training sessions were facilitated by Ms Carol Scott, Breast Cancer Ireland Outreach Co-Ordinator.

Sport & Leisure Section

Operation Transformation (OT)

A note of appreciation has been received from the Operation Transformation production team thanking the staff of Laois County Council for their efforts to support the OT programme 2023.

Ukrainian Community Walks

The Sport & Leisure Section organised and delivered 2 community walking events for Ukrainian families in partnership with local groups in Stradbally (110 attendees) and Abbeyleix (80 attendees) with further walks planned for March 2023. The Sport & Leisure Section worked closely with Laois Partnership, Laois Volunteers & Healthy Laois to deliver this initiative.

Bike Week Funding 2023

Laois County Council has received a notification of funding of €23,827.61 for Bike Week 2023 which will facilitate the delivery of events countywide from May 13th – 21st 2023.

ARTS & CULTURE

Ukrainian Adult Art Classes

Adult art classes for Ukrainians have commenced in Clonaslee, Portlaoise and Portarlington. In Portlaoise, the group are designing and creating a mindful art journal with Artist Orla McDonagh. In Clonaslee and Portarlington, Artist Fiona Fitzpatrick is guiding participants through art techniques, including drawing, painting, and mixed media to create personal artwork that celebrates the art of Ukraine's culinary traditions.

Sightless Cinema

Sightless Cinema is a collaborative audio theatre project by theatre-maker Ciarán Taylor with people who have sight loss. Workshops have commenced. A final production made up of a selection of short, recorded audio plays, and a live audio production will be presented in Dunamais Arts Centre, Solstice Arts Centre, and Civic Tallaght during November 2023. This project is funded by the Arts Council, Laois, South Dublin & Meath County Arts Offices, supported by Solstice Arts Centre, Dunamais Arts Centre and The Civic, Tallaght, the National Council of the Blind of Ireland and Contact Studio.

Creative Ireland Laois Culture & Creativity Strategy 2023-2027

The Creative Ireland Laois Culture & Creativity Strategy 2023-2027 was launched at Farnleigh House by Ms Catherine Martin, Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport & Media and Mr. Kieran O'Donnell, Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage. In attendance were Cathaoirleach Thomasina Connell, Chief Executive, John Mulholland and Arts Officer, Muireann Ní Chonaill.



Pictured Muireann Ní Chonaill Arts Officer, Cathaoirleach Thomasina Connell and Chief Executive John Mulholland

Library Services

Libraries Celebrated World Book Day

Laois County Library service celebrated World Book Day promoting the libraries and their services with promotions and events. Some are listed below.

Mountmellick Library held themed storytelling sessions for local schools.

Mountrath Library hosted a storytelling and workshop with Agrikids to communicate a safety message with children.

Library Talks and Events

Laois Libraries held a free online history talk on the 21st of March with Professor Laurence Cox and Associate Professor Catherine Candy. The talk focussed on the role of Irish people as agitators against imperialism and as agents of decolonisation in British-controlled South Asia.

Portlaoise Library hosted a talk for Astronomy Week on the 22nd of March to a packed audience. The talk on Astrophotography and lunar photography with Tom O'Hanlon Media was attended by members of local camera clubs and clubs from Waterford, Wexford and Kildare.


Portlaoise Library hosted an evening of song and dance to promote Seachtain na Gaeilge Featuring Gaelscoil Portlaoise, Comhaltas Portlaoise, Tadhg Flynn from Mountmellick Comhaltas, Portlaoise Library's Ciorcal Comhrá group and the Lynam School of Dancing.

As part of International Women's Day Portarlinton Library facilitated a workshop by Karen and Irina from the Laois Volunteer Centre and Anna from the Offaly Domestic Violence Support Services Tullamore.

Abbeyleix Library Art Gallery this month features an exhibition by Jo Howard called "Out of the Midlands". "Out of the Midlands" is like a travelogue, a series of snapshots of places in a small section of the midlands. It is work that has come out of Jo's time on the Laois-Kildare border and is inspired by the bogs, trees and history of Bord Na Mona.

This month the Gallery in Mountmellick Library hosts the Laois based artist Orla McDonagh. The collection represents those marginalised in society, living and looking alternative. The pieces are acrylic painted works and ceramic pieces and have not been exhibited before. The exhibition was launched on Tuesday March 7th.

Chief Executive's Orders

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



Gerry Murphy
Deputy Chief Executive

March 23rd, 2023

Appendix 1

Social Housing Schemes Under Construction

Location	No. of Houses	House Types	Constructed by	Comment
Harbour Court, Mountmellick	6	2 Bed bungalows	LCC	On Site – delivery Q2 2023
Moore St, Rathdowney	6	2 Bed 2 Storey	LCC	On site – delivery Q4 2023
Mooreville, Rathdowney	7	3 No. 2 Bed bungalows 4 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey	LCC	On site – delivery Q1 2024
St. Kieran's, Errill	14	6 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 8 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey	LCC	On site – delivery Q4 2023
Church Avenue, Stradbally	31	9 No. 4 Bed 2 Storey 20 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 2 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey	LCC (Turnkey)	On site – delivery Q3/Q4 2023
Market Square, Portarlinton	18	15 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey 2 No. 2 Bed Apts 1 No. 3 Bed Apt	LCC (Turnkey)	On site – delivery Q2 2023
Bruach Na hAbhainn, Killeen	1	3 Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Turnkey)	On site – delivery Q2 2023
The Orchard, Ballylynan (Phase 3)	1	3 Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Turnkey)	On site – delivery Q3 2023
Oak Park Halting Site	4	Serviced bays	LCC	TAU funded scheme Contractor due back on site in April 2023; due for completion in Q4 2023.
Oldcourt, Ballylynan	1	4 bed 1 storey	LCC	On site – 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 – delivery Q4 2024
Ballymorris Green, Portarlinton (Ph 1)	34	3 bed 2 storey	Cluid Housing	Due for delivery Q2 2023
Harpur's Lane, Portlaoise	44	20 no. 2 bed houses 16 no. 3 bed houses 4 no. 1 bed apts 4 no. 2 bed apts	Respond	On site – delivery Q2 2023
Ballymorris Green, Portarlinton (Ph 2)	12	3 bed houses	Cluid Housing	On site – delivery early 2024
Clonrooske Abbey, Portlaoise	18	3 bed 2 storey	Cluid Housing	Delivery Q2 2023
Goldencroft, Portlaoise (Old CBS site)	67	13 no. 2 bed apts 24 no. 3 bed houses 26 no. 2 bed houses 4 no. 2 bed bungalows	Cluid Housing	On site - 3 Phases Phases 1 and 2 (29 units) will be delivered in Q2 2023. Phase 3 (38 units) will be delivered by Q4 2023

South Dublin Road, Kilminchy	36	13 no. 2 bed houses 23 no 3 bed houses	Cooperative Housing	On site – 3 phases for delivery commencing Q2 2023
The Meadows (old Midland Dairies site), Portlaoise	48	19 no. 3 bed houses 9 no. 4 bed houses 20 no. 2 bed apts	Cluid Housing	On site – delivery Q3 2023
TOTAL	374			

Appendix 2

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

Location/Scheme	No of Houses	House Types	To be constructed by	Comment
Carraig Glas, Stradbally	26	15 no. 2 bed houses 9 no. 3 bed houses 2 no 4 bed houses	LCC	Tender evaluation on-going; construction due to start in Q2 2023
Clonrooske (Knockmay), Portlaoise	12	8 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 3 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 1 No. 3 Bed 1 Storey	LCC	Part VIII approved. Stage 3 to be submitted in Q2 2023.
Iona, Portlaoise	7	2 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 1 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 4 No. 1 Bed Apts	LCC	Part VIII approval on Council Agenda for March
Doonane	12	3 bed 2 storey	LCC	Stage 2 approved. Proceeding to planning in Q2 2023
Derry Road, Durrow	22	9 No. 1 Bed 1 Storey 4 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 5 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey	LCC	Stage 2 to be submitted in Q2 2023
Ballyadams	1	6 bed bungalow	LCC	Stage 2 Approved
Bracklone St, Portarlinton	15	2 bed houses	LCC	Stage 2 to be progressed in Q2 2023
Rushall Mountrath	2	3 bed 2 storey	LCC	Stage 1 submitted in Q1 2023
Maryborough School, Stradbally Road, Portlaoise	11	2 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey 7 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey 2 No. 1 Bed 1 Storey	LCC	Stage 1 To be submitted in Q1 2023
Main St, Ballinakill	3	2 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 1 No. 1 Bed Apt	LCC	Stage 1 To be submitted in Q2 2023
Moanbaun, Mountrath	15	4 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 7 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 4 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey	LCC	Stage 2 to be progressed in Q2 2023
1 New Road, Portlaoise	1	4 Bed 1 Storey	LCC	Stage 2 approved
6 Emmett Terrace, Mountmellick	1	4 Bed 1 Storey	LCC	Stage 2 approved
13 and 14 Lakeglen, Portlaoise	2	1 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 1 No. 4 Bed 2 Storey	LCC	Design Team appointed and Stage 1 To Be submitted
Convent Lands, Portlaoise (CAS)	52	33 no 2 bed apts 15 no 1 bed apts 4 no. 2 bed houses	Sophia Housing	Stage 3 approved; Construction tender published on 20 th March '23
County Hotel, Portlaoise (CAS)	10	8 no. 1 bed apts 2 no. 2 bed apts	Cluid Housing	Awaiting cost plan to inform next steps and planning
“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	Site transfer in progress. Construction to commence in Q2 2023. 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 no. 2 bed fully accessible apts 12 no. 2 bed bungalows 6 no. 3 bed house with downstairs bedroom 2 no. 4 bed house with downstairs bedroom 2 no. 2 bed apts – accessible (ground floor) 2 no. 1 bed 1 st floor apts 4 no. 3 bed 2 storey 6 no. 2 bed 1 st floor apts	Respond Housing	Tender for construction extended to 30 th March; Respond awaiting review of the CALF Funding model by the Dept of Housing which will dictate how this scheme is funded.
TOTAL	285			