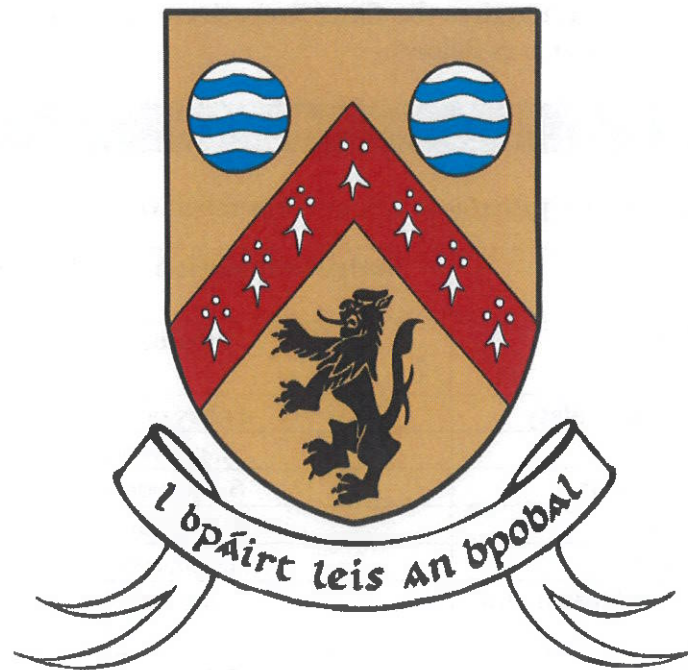


LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE LAOISE



MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT
MAY 2021
TUARASCÁIL BHAINISTÍOCHTA
BEALTAINÉ 2021

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

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

Finance, & Allocations Notified

Expenditure and income to the 30/04/2021 is summarised below:

Service Division	Budget Allocation	Expenditure to 30/04/2021
Housing and Building	15,772,000	4,063,932
Road Transportation and Safety	21,225,000	3,007,319
Water Services	3,421,000	1,021,461
Development Management	6,970,000	2,776,159
Environmental Services	7,500,000	1,989,475
Recreation and Amenity	3,926,000	836,370
Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare	822,000	141,142
Miscellaneous Services	9,533,000	4,452,283
Central Management Charge	9,714,000	2,597,245
Total	78,883,000	20,885,386

Service Division	Budget Allocation	Income to 30/04/2021
Housing and Building	17,594,000	5,261,437.22
Road Transportation and Safety	16,749,000	2,496,979.99
Water Services	4,534,000	1,389,640
Development Management	4,423,000	3,054,802
Environmental Services	1,501,000	479,293
Recreation and Amenity	601,000	351,683
Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare	330,000	84,164
Miscellaneous Services	8,126,000	1,252,458
Superannuation	700,000	210,109
Local Property Tax	9,063,079	4,531,539
Rates	14,495,092	2,150,185
Capital transfer	766,829	0
Total	78,883,000	21,262,290

Allocations Notified

Community Enhancement Programme 2021 (LCDC)	€136,524
D.C.E.D.Y.I Capital Play and Recreation Grant Scheme 2021	€14,541
Disabled persons Grants/Improvement Works in Lieu	€928,524
D.E.C.C. - Landfill remediation works 2021 (Rathdowney Road, Aghanure Landfill, Kilabban)	€60,000
N.T.A. – Outdoor Infrastructure Fund 2021	€490,000
Anti-Dumping Initiative 2021	€90,260
D.R.C.D – Local Improvement Scheme	€270,000

Housing & Regeneration

Rebuilding Ireland Construction Programme

Scheme	Units	Progress
Shannon St., Mountrath	6	Complete
Ballymorris, Portarlinton	22	Complete
Gleann naGlaise, Ballyroan	10	On-Site. Site back open since 12th of April after 4 months closed due to COVID 19 Level 5 restrictions.
25-30 Moore St., Rathdowney	6	On-Site. Site back open since 12th of April after 4 months closed due to COVID 19 Level 5 restrictions.
Pattison Estate, Mountmellick	10	On-Site. Site back open since 12th of April after 4 months closed due to COVID 19 Level 5 restrictions.
Sean Doire, Durrow	22	On-Site. Site back open since 12th of April after 4 months closed due to COVID 19 Level 5 restrictions.
Coolroe, Ballybrittas (Rural)	1	On-Site. Site back open since 12th of April after 4 months closed due to COVID 19 Level 5 restrictions.
Harbour Court, Mountmellick	6	Stage 3 Approved May 20 th 2021
Mooreville, Rathdowney	7	Stage 3 documents to be submitted to Department in Q2 2021.
St. Kierans Park, Errill	14	Stage 4 submission being prepared for the Department. Site start expected next quarter.
Clonrooske, Knockmay	13	Revisions made following recent meeting with Portlaoise councillors. Stage 2 submission being prepared for the Department.
Iona, Abbeyleix Road	9	Draft layout being prepared for discussions with local councillors.
Oak Park Halting Site	4	Tenders returned in April and Site start expected next quarter.

Carraig Glas, Stradbally	26	Stage 2 granted. Part VIII expected to be advertised in Q2.
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Urban Regeneration Programme

Scheme	Units	Progress
Former C.B.S. Site	67	Part VIII granted. CALF funding application to be submitted in Q2 2021.
Hepburn/Knockmay	54	Cluid Housing Association are progressing this development. Revised site layout submitted for 54 units.
O'Moore Place Regeneration	To be determined	The landowner is working with an Approved Housing Body and concept drawings on the proposed development are being prepared.
Convent Site, Portlaoise	51	Stage 2 approved in February 2021. Site investigations complete. Enabling works contract has been tender with work expected this summer.
County Hotel, Portlaoise	11	Stage 1 approval for 11 units granted on 4/9/20. Redesign required following engagement with the Department of Heritage. Discussions ongoing with the Department of Housing on the redesign. Meeting to be arranged with local councillors on completion of those discussions.
Vacant Homes Office		<p>A total of 254 properties have been investigated by the Vacant Homes Officer following reports of vacancy by Council Members and other Elected Representatives, members of the public or via www.vacanthomes.ie and applications under the Repair & Leasing Scheme and Buy & Renew Scheme. A total of 29 applications have been received to date under the Repair & Leasing Scheme of which 5 are currently under consideration.</p> <p>The Vacant Homes Officer has carried out an initial inspection on 225 vacant dwellings to date. Following this inspection, no further action has been deemed necessary in 110 cases due to the properties being found to be occupied, undergoing works by the owners or in a location of low housing need and unsuitable for social housing.</p> <p>71 vacant houses have been identified to date as being suitable for social housing due to the type of house and location and further action may be taken in these cases. 40 properties have been identified as having potential for use as development sites for social housing and these sites will be examined further.</p> <p>12 vacant properties have been acquired by CPO and 5 properties are currently going through the CPO process.</p>

Turnkey Projects

Scheme	Units	Progress
Expressions of interest		The Council has invited expressions of interest from the public in respect of the supply of newly completed homes as turnkey projects.
Main St., Borris-in Ossory	11	Contractors on site. 6 units complete with Phase 2 (5 units) in Q4 2021.
Clonaslee	7	Complete
Church Avenue, Stradbally	31	Turnkey application approved by the Department 4 th March 2021. Expected delivery Q4 2022.

Approved Housing Bodies Delivery

Scheme	Units	AHB	Progress
Borris Road, Portlaoise	36	Tuath	Complete
Bellingham, Portlaoise	30	Cluid	Contractor is on site. 24 of the 30 units have been delivered. Phase 5 (6 units) expected delivery end of Q2 2021.
Ballickmoyler Road, Graiguecullen	20	Co-Operative Ireland	Complete
Doirin Alainn, Ballylinan	12	North & East	Complete
The Glen (Phase 2) Kilnacourt Portarlinton	18	Co-Operative Ireland	Contractor is on site. Expected delivery at the end of May 2021 beginning of June 2021
Wilton Lawns, Portarlinton	2	Respond	Contractor is due to commence on site in May with delivery expected at the end of Q4 2021.
Lake Drive Kilminchy	10	Co-Operative Ireland	Contractor is on site with expected delivery at the end of May 2021
Holdbrook, Portlaoise	20	Cluid	Contractor is on site. Phase 1 (10 units) to be delivered at the end of May 2021 Phase 2 (10 units) to be delivered in June 2022.
Clonrooske Abbey, Portlaoise	32	Cluid	Contractor is on site. Phase 1 (14 units) expected delivery in July 2021. Delivery was delayed due to issues with services being connected. Phase 2 (6 units) expected delivery in Q4 2021 Phase 3 (12 units) expected delivery in Q2 2022
Spa Street, Droughill,	26	Oaklee	Contractor is back on site.

Portarlington			Expected delivery in February 2022
The Meadows, Mountrath Road, Portlaoise	48	Cluid	CALF funding has been approved for delivery of these units. Delivery is expected in Q1 2023
Ballymorris Court, Portarlington	46	Cluid	CALF funding has been approved for delivery of these units. Expected delivery in 2022 and 2023
Harpers Lane, Portlaoise	44	Respond	Contractor is due to commence on site in June 2021 with expected delivery in Q4 2022.

In addition to the units outlined in the above tables the Housing Department are also in discussion with various AHB's regarding the delivery of further Social Housing units throughout the county. The total number of units currently under discussion in the county, in addition to the units mentioned above, is 509 broken down by MD area as follows –

- Portlaoise MD – 310
- Borris in Ossory/Mountmellick MD – 111
- Portarlington/Graigucullen MD – 88

Refugee Resettlement Programme

There is currently 1 family remaining to be housed under our Refugee Resettlement Programme. It is anticipated that this tenanting will now be able to take place in July and this will see us completing our overall Refugee Resettlement Programme to house 22 families.

Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan

Since 1st February 2018, 104 Rebuilding Ireland Home Loans have been approved. 92 applications have been declined. Some of the reasons for negative outcomes include:

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

HAP

There are currently 966 active HAP tenancies, 299 of which have transferred from rent supplement.

Private House Grants

To the 17th May, 2021 the following grants for privately owned houses were approved:-

- 57 Housing Aid for Older People Grant Applications in the sum of €238,868
- 38 Mobility Aids Grants have been paid in the sum of €161,200
- 27 Housing Adaptation Grants have been paid in the sum of €207,190

Private Rented Inspections

Due to Covid-19 restrictions in place inspections are being carried out virtually.

Housing Maintenance

Month	Work Orders Raised	Work Orders Closed	Work Orders Open
January 21	234	227	7
February 21	216	213	3
March 21	252	234	18
April 21	367	192	175
TOTAL (YTD)	1,069	866	203

Month	Work Orders Raised	Work Orders Closed	Work Orders Open
January 20	517	517	0
February 20	341	341	0
March 20	228	228	0
April 20	120	120	0
May 20	205	205	0
June 20	278	278	0
July 20	287	287	0
August 20	286	282	0
September 20	359	359	0
October 20	369	365	4
November 20	286	281	5
December 20	296	274	22
TOTAL JAN to DEC	3,572	3,541	31

NOTE: Since April 12th 2021 routine maintenance requests are now being attended to.

Housing Re-Lets

Month	LA Keys Surrendered	Properties Acquired	Works Completed
January 21	8	0	7
February 21	2	1	6
March 21	3	2	9
April 21	10	1	4
TOTAL (YTD)	23	4	26

Month	LA Keys Surrendered	Properties Acquired	Works Completed
January 20	4	2	10
February 20	6	4	8
March 20	9	3	6
April 20	4	1	11
May 20	7	0	11
June 20	4	1	12
July 20	7	0	8
August 20	10	2	3
September 20	12	5	13
October 20	9	1	15
November 20	4	0	5
December 20	2	0	10
TOTAL JAN to DEC	78	19	112

NOTE: There are currently 30 vacant units from our existing stock and a further 14 units that the Council acquired recently. Works are either ongoing on these properties or specifications are being prepared for works to be carried out.

The Council has been notified of an allocation towards our costs in refurbishing 50 units over the course of 2021.

Funding to support Disabled Persons living in Council houses

The Council has also been notified of an allocation of €928,524 from the Department of Housing towards works to support disabled persons living in Council houses. The Council are required to contribute €103,169 of its funds in addition to this allocation. These works will proceed throughout the year.

Midlands Housing Retrofit Programme

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

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

Houses must achieve a minimum BER rating of “B2” (or Cost Optimal Equivalent). All surveys are now complete and feedback continues to be positive from residents. Tenders for Phase 1 (62 houses) were returned in March 21 and evaluation is ongoing. Tenders for Phase 2 (98 houses) are due to be advertised in Q2 2021.

Homeless Presentations

Time Period	Homeless Presentations	Emergency Homeless
April 17 th -May 12 th 2021	19	1
Year to Date	64	28

Individuals Accessing	Emergency Accommodation as of 12 th May, 2021	Transition Accommodation as of 12 th May 2021
Adults	11	6
Children	3	6

Housing Allocations Year to 18th May 2021.

Method of Housing Delivery	Numbers allocated
1 st allocation including new builds LCC	6
2 nd and subsequent allocations LCC including refurbished stock	41
Nominations to Approved Housing Bodies	39
Total Allocations	86

Social Housing List at 18th May 2021

Social Housing Applicants	864
Applicants in receipt of HAP	966
Total	1830

Planning, Development and Heritage

FORWARD PLANNING PROGRESS REPORT

Portarlinton Regeneration Strategy 2030

The Draft Strategy was placed on public display from 28th April 2021 – 24th May 2021.

A Public Webinar was held on the 17th May, where the Consultants for the project outlined the Strategy actions and held a Q&A session. This was well attended by over 30 participants.

17 Submissions were made to the Draft Strategy which will now be considered by the Consultants. A CE report will be prepared on the Submissions and circulated to the MD members with proposed amendments, if any.

Transboundary Environmental Public Consultation

Decision on the extension of the operational life of the Doel 1 & 2 Nuclear Power Plants, located near the Port of Antwerp, Belgium

Each planning authority in Ireland has recently received a copy of correspondence from the Belgian Ministry of Energy, Environment and Sustainable Development to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) relating to a proposed 10 year extension to the operational life of the Doel 1 & 2 nuclear power plants, located near the Port of Antwerp in Belgium.

The correspondence from the Belgian Ministry of Energy, Environment and Sustainable Development can be accessed in the “Documents” section at the following link [gov.ie - Transboundary Environmental Public Consultation - Decision on the extension of the operational life of the Doel 1 & 2 Nuclear Power Plants, located near the Port of Antwerp, Belgium \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie/en/transboundary-environmental-public-consultation-decision-on-the-extension-of-the-operational-life-of-the-doel-1-2-nuclear-power-plants-located-near-the-port-of-antwerp-belgium/)

A printed copy of these documents is available for public inspection during office hours in each local authority office from Wednesday 28 April 2021. However, due to the effects of COVID19 inspection of these documents may be by appointment only. It is advised that contact is made with your local authority prior to travelling to view the documentation, in order to clarify if you need to make an appointment. A copy may be purchased from the authority at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of copying.

Making submissions or observations

A submission or observation in relation to the potential transboundary environmental effects of the development may be made in writing or by e-mail to the Planning Section in the planning authority for the area in which the person lives or the head office of the body concerned is located (transboundarysub < transboundarysub@laoiscoco.ie >). All submissions or observations must –

1. be titled “Transboundary environmental public consultation – Doel 1 & 2 Nuclear Power Plants”,
2. include the name and address of the person, authority or body making the submission or observations and the name of the person, if any, acting on behalf of that person, authority or body, and;
3. include reasons, considerations and arguments on which the submission or observations is based.

The deadline for the receipt of written submissions or observations by the planning authority under this transboundary consultation process is **close of business on Wednesday 23 June 2021** at the latest. Submissions or observations will not be individually acknowledged or responded to by the planning authority. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage will not accept submissions or observations in relation to the consultation.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT REPORT

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMPARATIVE FIGURES FROM 2020 TO 2021

Year	Valid applications from 01/01/2021 – 08/05/2021	Valid applications from 01/01/2020 – 08/05/2020
	240	160

2021 PERFORMANCE	
Number of valid applications received:	240
Number of decisions made	211
Number of applications granted:	202 (Decisions to Grant)
Number of applications refused:	9 (Decisions to Refuse) 3.75% refusal rate
Invalid applications returned to applicant:	67 (2021 Invalid Applications) 27.9%
Pre planning	
No of requests to date	192
No of meetings held to date Up to and including the 8 th May 2021	171
Wait time	2 weeks

ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

2021 <u>Service Review</u>	2021		2020	
	Apr	Jan - Apr 2021	Apr	Jan - Apr 2020
Total number of new cases subject to complaints that were investigated	13	50	4	21
Number of Warning Letters served	46	90	0	131
Number of Enforcement Notices served	10	41	0	23
No Of cases referred for legal proceedings	1	3	0	1
Number of cases in Court(incl adjournments)	0	17	4	18
Number of cases Resolved in Court	0	1	0	1
Number of Files Closed	9	49	0	52
Number of cases on system	170	170	170	170

Enforcement Costs recouped	€ 550.00	€4,636.24	€ -	€1,491.24
Number of Valid Retention Applications Received relating to Enforcement Action	5	14	1	16
Fees received through Valid Retention Applications Received relating to Enforcement Action	€ 465.00	€2,912.00	€ 2,080.00	€6,668.28
Legal fees paid	€ 5,580.20	€14,140.04	€ -	€1,613.76

Heritage Officer Update Report

Just Transition Fund Project Conservation and Pollination

Final letter of offer has been received from the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications. The total grant is €748,000. The total project cost is €880,000. The project will see restoration of medieval churches at three sites in Laois (one in each MD) and three in Offaly, and also management to enhance graveyards for pollinators, and training of local communities.

National Biodiversity Action Plan

Application for funding under the National Biodiversity Action Plan for 2021 and 2022 has been successful as follows:

- Wetlands Survey to the amount of €37,273 (€14,323 in 2021 and €22,950 in 2022)
- Biodiversity Awareness campaign to the amount of €17,297 (€13,047 in 2021 and €4,250 in 2022)

Community Monuments Fund

A total of 6 application were submitted to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage by the deadline. In addition, Laois County Council is a partner in an application submitted by Carlow County Council to remove the Robert Hartpole Effigy from Portarlinton Town Park and restore it to Carlow County Museum.

Funding Awarded

Built Heritage Investment Scheme

We are dealing with property owners regarding conservation grants under BHIS. Although 12 properties were awarded funding, one or two may not now go ahead so funding will be reallocated. The total fund available in Laois is €72,000.

Historic Structures Fund

Two applications from Laois were successful in getting HSF Funding:

- Lea Church of Ireland Church Portarlinton €50,000
- Presentation Convent Portlaoise €50,000

UPCOMING EVENTS

Abbeyleix Climate Action Walk Launch online 15th May

A virtual walk in Abbeyleix with QR codes triggering newly commissioned animations and films on Climate Change will be launched online on 15th May. The event will be streamed live on Laois Heritage Office Facebook page and the new videos will also be visible on a Story map at <https://laois.ie/climate>

Biodiversity Week, 17th 23rd May

For public health reasons the celebration of Biodiversity Week will involve online and media promotions. A series of Biodiversity interviews will feature on the Will Faulkner show each morning on Midlands 103 during the week.

BROADBAND OFFICERS REPORT

1. National Broadband Ireland (NBI)

A special meeting was held on Monday 10th May in which NBI presented to the Council giving an update on the Programme of works and rollout in the county.

2. WIFI for EU.

A tender in relation to the provision of WIFI infrastructure (equipment, installation and maintenance and support) in the following locations was advertised on ETenders with the closing date 23rd April 2021. Assessments and evaluation of Tenders to be carried out to award contract for the following vouchers

1. Voucher A - Portlaoise
2. Voucher B - Clonaslee / Mountmellick
3. Voucher C - Abbeylaxey
4. Voucher D – Portarlinton

3. Broadband Connection Points (BCP's)

Broadband connection Points are available to the public as outdoor facilities currently due to public health guidelines at

- Vicarstown Community Centre
- Oisín House Rossmore Killeslin
- Emo “Old School” Community Centre
- Donaghmore Workhouse and Agriculture Museum.

There is a 5th BCP applied for:

- Shanganamore Community Centre Barrowhouse – PENDING.

An indoor facility will be made available once the premises open to the public. Funding has been secured to develop these locations under the TVRS scheme for the provision of desks/ chairs, screens, IT equipment, Health and safety equipment for compliance with public health, etc. This will improve the offering at these locations to visitors and users of the facilities.

4. IoT – Internet of Things.

Investigating options of IoT in relation to Environmental Monitoring .



Millbrook House, Abbeyleix

On the 5th of May 2021 a vesting order was made to enable Laois County Council to take ownership of the 19th century Millbrook House, a protected structure at high risk of becoming further endangered and falling into ruin. The making of the vesting order followed a long period of engagement with the owner to bring about necessary remedial works to the building. The Council used its statutory powers under Section 59 of the Planning & Development Act, 2000 and had already secured a Compulsory Purchase Order in May 2020 through An Bord Pleanála.

It is now open to the Council to offer the premises for sale by public tender subject to conditions including price and timeframe for completion of essential weatherproofing and restoration works .

Local Enterprise & Economic Development

Demand continues to be high for LEO supports as follows:

- €174,4426 approved in grant aid to 10 Laois businesses
- 658 owners/managers/employees participated on LEO training programmes
- 122 potential entrepreneurs have participated on Start Your Own Business Courses to-date with 15 of those taking part in a Start Your own Tourism Business and looking to capitalise on opportunities that the Slieve Bloom Cycle Way and the Blueway may present
- 112 Laois businesses have availed of mentoring to-date in finance, marketing, exporting, HR & health & safety.
- 30 tourism & hospitality businesses have attended workshops in preparation for re-opening

THE SMALL BUSINESS ASSISTANCE SCHEME COVID (SBASC)

This scheme closed on 21st April 2021. 51 completed applications have been received. 33 applications have been paid, 17 rejected and 1 remains to be finalised.

Further details, including the go-live date for Q2, will be announced shortly. Those who applied under Phase 1 are still eligible to apply for a second payment of €4,000 if they continue to meet the criteria.. Closing date for Phase 2 applications will be 21 July.

Roadworks Scheme 2021

The Annual Road Works Scheme 2021 was for the Members’ consideration at April 2021 Monthly Meeting. Work has commenced delivering the Road works Scheme across all three Municipal Districts.

Local Improvement Scheme 2021

Funding in the sum of €270,000.00 has been announced by DRCD. Further funds may be made available to those local authorities who realise early delivery of the initial priority list to a value of €270,000.

National Transport Authority – Active Travel 2021

Funding recently announced under the NTA Active Travel Scheme 2021 totalling €3,283,000 for various projects in County Laois. Engagement with the NTA is ongoing to advise the delivery of the Schemes.

Outdoor Seating and Accessories Grant Scheme 2021

The Failte Ireland/Laois County Council Outdoor Seating and Accessories for Tourism & Hospitality Business Scheme will provide a level of financial assistance to tourism and hospitality businesses across the county to purchase and/or upgrade equipment to provide additional outdoor seating and, therefore, increase their outdoor dining capacity for the summer of 2021.

Grant aid available is 75% of the cost of the equipment to a max of €4,000. The scheme is open between 12th April and 30th September 2021. The scheme is being led by the Roads Section, with the assistance of Planning Section and the Business Support Unit.

Smarter Travel

Tender assessments for the appointment of a contractor to complete recently approved Part 8 proposals for the development (part) of the Triogue Bluway are complete. Works will commence in the coming weeks.

Additional Outdoor Infrastructure Fund 2021

Funding has been announced under the NTA Additional Outdoor Infrastructure fund. Interventions under this scheme are summarised below and are targeted towards public realm interventions that will include reassignment of existing space to provide additional outdoor space for amenities such as public seating and dining.

Project Name	Allocation
Market Square, Portlaoise –	€50,000
Lyster Square, Portlaoise –	€100,000
Lower Main Street, Portlaoise	€100,000
O’Connell Square, Mountmellick	€100,000
Mountrath	€65,000
Court Square, Stradbally	€75,000
	€490,000

Environment & Environmental Protection

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

Normal services continue at the Kyletelesha Landfill & Civic Amenity Site.

(a) Transfer Station & Civic Amenity Site:

Both waste reception areas are busy, and the waste quantities received are greater than Quarter 1 of 2020. Since the Council took full control of the site in August 2021 the management and operation of the facility is progressing satisfactorily

Landfill Aftercare Monitoring:

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

2. Portarlington Civic Amenity Site:

This facility is operated and managed under contract with AES (Ireland) Ltd.

3. Historic Unregulated Waste Disposal Sites:

The Department of the Environment has allocated €60,000 to Laois County Council for the engagement of Environmental Consultants to re-assess Site Investigations previously carried out (2009/2011) on a number of Tier 1 & Tier 2 Historic Unregulated Landfill Sites at:

- Aghanure
- Killabban
- Rathdowney Road, Durrrow

Tender evaluation is nearing completion and appointments will be made in the coming weeks

4. Bring Banks:

There are 42 Bring Bank sites provided in the county. A total of 789.45 tonnes of recyclable material is recorded to 23rd May 2021.

5. Waste Enforcement & Litter:

Environmental Complaint Register

Complaint Type	Litter	Abandoned Cars	Waste Enforcement incl. C&D	Management & Infrastructure (Bring Banks)	Air	Water	Noise	Vet	Total
Jan	10	2	53	1	2	2	1	2	73
Feb	8	3	71	1	1	4	2	2	92
March	38	5	93	2	3	8	2	1	152
April	43	1	78	2	4	5	1	5	139
May to 24/05/21	17	4	52	0	5	11	5	1	94
Total	116	15	344	6	15	30	13	11	550

- 2021 – 550 complaints logged for investigation to 24th May 2021.
- 2021 – 55 fixed penalty notices issued to date, for breaches of Litter Pollution Act, 1997
- Notices – One Section 9 (Litter Pollution Act) and four Section 55 Notices under the Waste Management Act have issued to date in 2021 regarding unauthorised litter or waste activities. Waste Enforcement Officers are working to resolve issues where possible, but all cases will be pursued through Courts as necessary.

6. Illegal Dumping:

Incidents of illegal dumping continues to be reported and removed from areas around the County



Dumping at Catholes and Ballypickas. Both clean-ups carried out in May 2021.

Waste Enforcement continue to issue Waste Bye Law letters requesting refuse collector details to various problematic areas within the County.



**Ballymacken Stradbally Rd,
Small truck load of rubbish dumped in
river and surrounding area**

7. Anti-Dumping Initiatives 2021

Support of Government funding through the Anti-Dumping Initiative 2021 facilitates a multi-faceted approach in tackling the issue of illegal dumping.

Laois County Council was awarded €90,260 for four projects. See details in table below.

Project No.	Project Title	Total Amount Approved (€)
1	Extended National Spring Clean and Autumn Blitz*	25,000.00
2	UAV/Drone technology and audio devices	15,760.00
3	Bulky Waste Amnesty	20,000.00
4	Clean up of Bog Areas- Cloninagh/Errill/ Clonreher Bogs	29,500.00
Total		€90,260.00

Table 2 – Approved 2021 ADI Projects

8. RMCEI (Recommended Minimum Criteria for Environmental Inspections)

The 2021 RMCEI plan will need to be reviewed at the end of Q2 2021. The mid-year review will include for a reduction in the number of Waste Management Inspections due to recent staff changes etc.

9. Clean-Ups by volunteers, Tidy Towns groups

Community Groups continue to Clean up litter, rubbish with some areas experiencing large scale dumping. Although Clean Up Laois Week did not officially go ahead this year, Environment staff continue to assist groups by providing litterpickers, gloves, bags and the pick up of these bags.

200 bags full of rubbish including sheets of asbestos, furniture and building supplies which had been dumped in three Laois bogs have been recovered by school children, Tidy Towns group and Coillte at a big clean up recently.



Errill Tidy Towns & Local School Children completing large scale clean-up

10. **Anti-Dog Fouling Campaign**

The Anti-Dog Fouling Campaign was officially launched by Cathaoirleach Catherine Fitzgerald in Pairc on Phobail on May 5th 2021.

Anti Dog Fouling social media campaigns continued on Facebook and Laois County Council Website alerting the public of the dangers and unsightliness of dog Fouling.

A half minute add on the issues of dog fouling has been recorded and will air over the next couple of weeks on Midlands Radio 3.



Pictures taken at the launch of the Anti Dog Fouling Campaign in Pairc on Phobail on May 5th 2021.

11. **Environmental Protection:**

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

On site investigations of complaints in relation to water pollution are being carried out by Environmental staff in compliance with Health and Safety and Covid-19 control measures.

- Investigation ongoing into surface water discharges to the lakes at Kilminchy.
- Investigation into unauthorised wastewater discharges in the Triogue River at Abbyleix road, Portlaoise
- Investigation into unauthorised wastewater discharges in the Triogue River at Kyletalesha, Portlaoise
- On-going assessment of planning applications with regards to water quality protection
- Regulation of Discharge Licensed Companies

ii) **Air & Noise:**

- On site investigations of complaints in relation to air and noise are being carried out by Environmental staff in compliance with Health and Safety and Covid-19 control measures.
- Several Advisory Notices under the Water Pollution Acts 2007 & 2012 have been served relating to domestic wastewater treatment systems.

- In 2021 (to 17th May 2021), Laois County Fire & Rescue Service attended 161 emergency incidents consisting of 89 fires, 46 special service incidents & 26 false alarms.

Turnout by Station*:

Portlaoise -64	Portarlinton - 45	Stradbally - 21	Mountmellick - 24
Abbeyleix - 14	Mountrath - 13	Durrow - 17	Rathdowney - 10

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

Fire Services Capital Programme

- Planning & design is continuing for the Mountmellick Fire Station upgrade, a, €150,000 project, which consists of a fire service drill tower & new concrete yard to the rear of the fire station. The current suspension of non-essential construction activity has delayed the progress of this project.
- In recent months Elected Members were advised of an allocation of €140,000 for the acquisition of a new Water Tanker to support Fire Services operations in County Laois. The tender competition has closed & the order has been placed with HPMP Fire. Delivery is expected in mid-2021
- A tender competition for new PPE has also closed & the order has been placed with Hunter Apparel Solutions for an initial order of 140 sets of fire kit. Fire kit was rolled out to all operational personnel on Friday 21st May 2021



The old and the new :- Portarlinton fire Crew after being issued their new fire kit

Risk Based Management - Nearest Available Resource Project

- In accordance with the recently issued Circular Fire 01/2021, Laois County Council has established the Senior Project Group to oversee this project. A Working Technical Group has been established and is engaging with stakeholders to amend townland pre-determined attendances in accordance with the nearest available resource concept.

CIVIL DEFENCE

- Civil Defence have provided key assistances, servicing requirements of the HSE, the Community Forum Call Centre and other local agencies. Civil Defence taskings have been scaled back due to volunteers returning to work & operations being scaled back nationally.

Public Water and Wastewater Capital

The following capital works have been approved by Irish Water:

- **STVGP-Ballyroan WwTP** –LCC capital work is now complete. IW Asset Strategy has recently confirmed that they will proceed with the expansion of the treatment plant capacity, as planned and tendered in 2019. These works will be completed under the Small Towns and Villages Growth Programme.
- **Durrow** – bring an additional production borewell into service in Fermoy – M + E works substantially complete, bringing of new borewell into supply ongoing. Installation of larger 6-inch pump with a 4-inch motor and associated works now complete. Other contractor on site completing testing - flow, level, quality - of the new production well. Provision of a storage/blend tank and booster pump set also being discussed with IW.
- **Coolbanagher** – Irish Water intend to commission PW9 only. Currently with Asset Delivery – NOD currently reviewing with Irish Water again regarding bringing into service. Proposal for Emergency intervention for the Portlaoise Public Water Supply compiled by LCC Water Services Department and sent to Irish Water.
- **Disinfection/PH control program:** The Strand WTP – boil water notice has been issued for this WTP, upgrade works as part of the Laois/Offaly disinfection programme intended to be completed by the end of May/June 2021, with a 30-day process-proving period by the end of June/July 2021. Design also progressing at present for Derryguile, Five-Wells, Kilminchy, Kyle, Lough, Derrymoyle, Knocks and Ballyroan WTPs.
- **Castletown WwTP** – Inlet Works Storm and Sludge Program, new storm tank and sludge holding tank intended to be installed on site by the end of 2021. Hazop meeting for this took place on the 19th of May. Replacement of fixed decanter with moving decanter is delayed. The actuator for this will not now be delivered until the last week of May meaning installation will not commence until mid-June.
- **Doolough Wells** - Works have been completed on site at Doolough. The wells are now pumping into supply. The plant is working in automatic, taking it's run signal from Corrig Reservoir.
- **Leakage Reduction Programme** – Mains Rehabilitation works ongoing at present in Portlaoise, Stradbally and Abbeyleix. Find & Fix leak detection being carried out in Portarlinton and Portlaoise. Meter installation works progressing within Portlaoise.
- **Staff Welfare Units** – provision of a welfare unit is being progressed in Ballinakill. There are currently 6 no. units in place in Kyle, Ballylinan, Ballyroan, Fermoy, Derryguile and Borris in Ossory.
- **Single Public Utility (SPU)**- transfer details to be agreed by July 2021. WRC discussions, transfer of staff and IR issues associated with this is currently the main focus. Framework should be agreed in the coming weeks.
- **Irish Water Regional Structure**-The existing 3 Region Asset Operations Structure was no longer suitable and required a rebalancing activity which would allow for an increased focus on Irish Water's asset base and service delivery. The 4 New Regions are:

1. East,
2. South East Midlands,
3. South West,
4. North West.

The proposed implementation date is the 1st of July 2021 for the 4 Region structure.

Multi Annual Rural Water Programme 2019-2021

Measure 2 -Public Health Compliance

- **The Heath GWS:** Work is in progress and is 30% complete.
- **Strategic Options Report:** This report has been completed and will be submitted to the Department when approved.

Measure 3 - Enhancement and Water Conservation

- **Heath GWS:** Work is in progress and is 40% complete.

Measure 5 – Transition of Existing Group Water Schemes to Irish Water

- Work ongoing to complete the takeover of the following schemes: Kilbride, Ullard & Dereen:

Measure 6 - Community Water and Wastewater Connections

- **Wastewater Community Connection at Goodwin Estate:** Tender now closed, and submissions are being evaluated and a recommendation prepared.

Railway Mews, Portarlinton: Surveying for misconnections started prior to Christmas and found that a small number of connections are blocked with grease. Surveying contractor has confirmed that they will recommence when Level 5 restrictions are lifted.

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

CORPORATE

Work is now commencing on preparations for the draft 2022/2023 Register of Electors.

COMMUNITY

Covid-19 Community Response

Covid-19 Helpline

To date (30.03.2020 – 16.05.2021) the helpline has received **792 calls**.

Calls Received 2020: 732

Calls Received 2021: 60

Breakdown of Calls Received in 2021:

Calls Jan 2021: 24

Calls Feb 2021: 13

Calls March 2021: 13

Calls April 2021: 10

Calls May 2021: 0 to date

Calls received in 2021 remain low, accounting for 60 of the 792 calls received to date. This ongoing reduction in calls received can be attributed to the easing of restrictions, the roll out of the COVID Vaccination programme and local groups taking a proactive lead in their communities assisting the most vulnerable.

Public Participation Network

MRPPN (Midland Regional PPN) Meeting

The quarterly meeting of the MRPPN took place on the 21st of April 2021. A presentation given by Paddy Buggy covered the PPNs role and the work of its 600+ Member Groups in “Rebuilding” our County post Covid19 from a Work, Recreation, Age Friendly Business and Laois Tourism perspective.

National Volunteering Week

National Volunteering Week runs from 18th of May to the 23rd of May 2021. Laois PPN are promoting National Volunteering Week across their social media.

Laois PPN also attended the launch of the Laois Volunteer Centre, which took place during National Volunteering Week.

Comhairle na nÓg

Comhairle na nÓg now has 16 members and meets weekly online. The current schools are represented:

- Scoil Christ Ri
- St. Fergals
- Mounthrath Community School
- Colaiste Iosagain
- Heywood Community School
- Clonaslee College
- Dunamase College (from May 2021)
- CBS Portlaoise (from May 2021)
- Portlaoise College (from May 2021)

Both Portlaoise and Mountmellick Family Resource Centres are also participating.

A full committee is now in place with nominations made to all local and national representative bodies.

-Community Resilience Fund /Keep Well Campaign

Laois County Council, under the CRF Fund have activated and continue to deliver on key actions under the themes of Staying Connected and Switching Off and Being Creative with a budget allocation of €67,225 which has been fully allocated to various initiatives. On social media the Keep Well campaign has made 307 posts, having 214,662 interactions. The Keep Well programme has been extended to the 30th June 2021. All initiatives will be completed by that date.

Community Enhancement Programme 2021

€136,524 was allocated to Laois LCDC for distribution. The Scheme is now advertised and open for applications with a closing date of Friday 11th June at 4pm

TVRS 2021

Town and Village Renewal Scheme 2021 is now open for applications with a closing date of Friday 4th June at 4pm.

Climate Action

Laois Federation of Tidy Towns been awarded €11,326 under Community Heritage Grant for a Pilot Laois Tidy Towns Built Heritage and Climate Change Baseline Study. There are 5 participating Tidy Towns groups-Laois County Council will provide co-funding.

Environmental Awareness

Green Schools- Nine Green Flag Assessments were completed virtually including 1 school being assessed for their first Green Flag and 8 renewal assessments

ARTS & CULTURE

Laois Bealtaine Programme

Caring and Sharing - three hospitals St. Vincents Mountmellick, Abbeyleix District Hospital and St. Brigids Hospital Shaen have made their selection from submitted work by Laois Arthouse artists – this work to be presented and installed in memory of the people that were lost during the pandemic. All the work including the selected work is now on exhibition at the Gallery and online for the public to view.

Writing Course

A very popular 4 week online Short Story Writing Course with writer Pauline Clooney commenced on Monday 10th May – the course is fully booked and a waiting list is now in place for a further course when the writer is available.

Creative Ireland Laois

The launch of a new interactive Climate Action Walk in Abbeyleix (funded by the Keep Well campaign) took place on May 15th. This was an end of residency project by science communicator in residence for the Abbeyleix Climate Action Project, Dr Niamh Shaw, who has been working with members of Abbeyleix Tidy Towns since September 2018.

SPORT & LEISURE UPDATE

- **Laois County Council managed playgrounds:** Works has commenced on Coolrain Playground (CLÁR Project)
- **DCEDIY** - Playground Capital Grant of €14, 541 was awarded for Phase2 Accessibility Upgrades of 3 playgrounds-Dun Spraioi, Portlaoise, Mountrath & Stradbally.
- **ORIS 2021** - Measure 1 ,2 & 3 - Applications now being sought for a maximum of 7 Measure 1, 3 Measure 2, 1 Measure 3 and 1 Project Development Measure. Closing Dates - Wednesday, 30th June 2021 for Measure 1, and Friday, 30th July 2021 for Measures 2 & 3 & the Project Development Measure.

LIBRARY

1. Portlaoise, Portarlinton, Mountrath, Mountmellick , Abbeyleix and Rathdowney libraries reopened for “browsing by appointment library services “ on week commencing **Monday 10th May**. Durrow and Stradbally Libraries are offering a call and collect service.
For more details on services check www.laois.ie/library
2. Portlaoise New Library -Construction has re-commenced on the new library since 4th of May 2021.
3. European Direct Information Center -Portlaoise Library
Laois County Library Service has been successful in its application to host an European Direct Information Center in Portlaoise Library for a further period of 2021-2025 . The centre is one of 8 in the country , with funding provided for an information hub and EU events to create awareness of EU matters and communicate information on Europe in the region.
4. Some Event highlights in May 2021











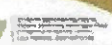


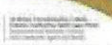
Laois Libraries were delighted to welcome the renowned John MacKenna for a series of talks on music. The series began with the music and poetry of Leonard Cohen. John collaborated with Cohen, a friend of his for over 30 years, on “Between your Love and Mine”, using Leonard’s words and music to create a requiem. A fascinating talk was attended online by over 25 participants Other artists that were covered in the series were Mary Chapin Carpenter, Paul Simon and Gretchen Peters. Email mountmellicklibrary@laoiscoco.ie to book your



Clayotic workshops(online) was hosted by Portlaoise library on the 19th of May 2021. Participants collected a Clayotic kit from Portlaoise Library and tuned in on the day to follow a step by step tutorial to make a beautiful mini 3 dimensional floral Picture .

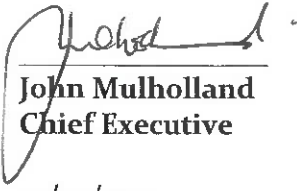
History talks -Decade of Centenaries

The following local history talks were organised and hosted as part of the decade of centenaries online with good attendances and local interest.

LAOIS DECADE OF CENTENARIES <i>Online Lecture Series with Laois County Libraries</i>	LAOIS DECADE OF CENTENARIES <i>Online Lecture Series with Laois County Libraries</i>	LAOIS DECADE OF CENTENARIES <i>Online Lecture Series with Laois County Libraries</i>
BRIGHT YOUNG THINGS Flappers and Bohemians in the 1920s <i>with Elaine Sisson</i>	SPORT IN TIME OF WAR How Laois won the 1915 All-Ireland hurling championship <i>with Paul Rouse</i>	CANON O'HANLON Reflections on the Bicentenary of His Birth <i>with Tony Delaney</i>
		
Thursday 27 th May, 8.00pm via Zoom Email library@laoiscoco.ie to register	Thursday 13 th May, 8.30pm via Zoom Email library@laoiscoco.ie to register	Thursday 20 th May, 8.00pm via Zoom Email library@laoiscoco.ie to register
  	  	  

Chief Executive's Orders

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



John Mulholland
Chief Executive

27/05/2021

