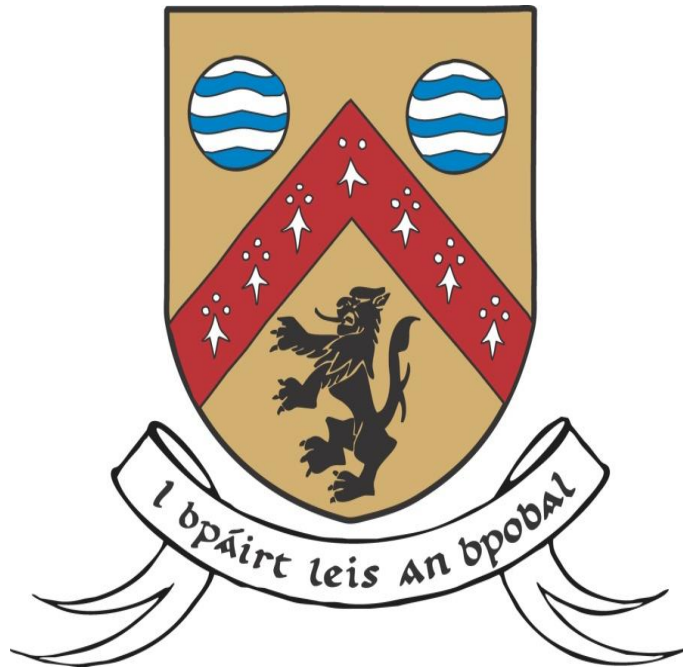


LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE LAOISE



**MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT
MAY 2023
TUARASCÁIL BHAINISTÍOCHTA
BEALTAINE 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 May 2023 is as follows:

FINANCE & ALLOCATIONS NOTIFIED

Expenditure and income to the 30/04/2023 is summarised below:

Service Division	Budget Allocation	Expenditure to 30/04/2023
Housing and Building	€21,247,400	€5,414,957
Road Transportation and Safety	€26,291,600	€2,692,832
Water Services	€3,404,500	€1,100,719
Development Management	€9,586,000	€2,765,306
Environmental Services	€8,677,500	€2,135,798
Recreation and Amenity	€4,990,000	€949,956
Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare	€900,000	€162,781
Miscellaneous Services	€9,498,700	€2,524,277
Central Management Charge	€11,213,300	€2,853,383
Total	€95,809,000	€20,600,009

Service Division	Budget Allocation	Income to 30/04/2023
Housing and Building	€22,725,300	€4,525,058
Road Transportation and Safety	€21,583,000	€962,320
Water Services	€4,502,000	€1,592,594
Development Management	€6,495,500	€1,688,911
Environmental Services	€2,231,000	€443,897
Recreation and Amenity	€1,049,000	€335,091
Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare	€436,000	€52,945
Miscellaneous Services	€11,954,262	€420,322
Superannuation	€720,000	€222,410
Local Property Tax	€9,033,703	€3,011,234
Rates	€14,578,963	€3,546,720
Capital transfer		
Total	€95,308,728	€16,801,503

The Miscellaneous Services Expenditure is broken down as follows:

Service Division	Budget Allocation	Expenditure to 30/04/2023
Machinery Account	€220,000	€72,236
Administration of Rates	€2,211,000	€199,461
Franchise Costs	€104,000	€59,479
Op of Morgue and Coroner Expenses	€130,000	€6,168
Op of Markets and Casual Trading	€3,000	€1,617
Local Representation/Civic Leadership	€987,000	€254,228
Motor Taxation	€226,000	€60,113
Agency & Recoupable Services	€5,617,700	€1,870,975
Total	€9,498,700	€2,524,277

The Central Management Charge Expenditure is broken down as follows:

Corporate Building Costs	€2,038,300	€77,841
General Corporate Services	€1,281,000	€461,724
Information and Communications Tech	€1,738,000	€604,822
Human Resources Function	€1,083,000	€312,845
Finance Function	€761,000	€211,552
Pensions and Lump Sum Costs	€4,312,000	€1,184,599
Total	€11,213,300	€2,853,383

Allocations Notified:

DHLGH – Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with A Disability Scheme	€1,137,150
DHLGH – Disabled Persons Grant and Works in Lieu	€576,990
OPW Minor Flood Mitigation Works funding – Moneymore, Borris in Ossory	€54,000
Anti-Dumping Initiatives Funding 2023	€82,744
DRCD-Community Recognition Fund 2023	€1,014,607
DHLGH - Local Biodiversity Action Fund 2023	€83,035
Department of Health – Healthy Ireland Fund	€75,000

HOUSING AND REGENERATION

SOCIAL HOUSING DELIVERY

Annual Social Housing Delivery Targets under Housing for All

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

Annual Social Housing Delivery Targets under Laois County Council 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 HDAP includes 25 proposed LA Buy and Renew units. These units are not counted f social housing delivery figures.*

Social Housing Schemes Under Construction in 2023

Location	Total No. of Houses	House Types	Constructed by	Comment
Harbour Court, Mountmellick	6	6 No. 2 Bed bungalows	LCC (Construction)	On Site – expected delivery Q2 2023
Moore St, Rathdowney	6	6 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Construction)	On site – expected delivery Q4 2023
Mooreville, Rathdowney	7	3 No. 2 Bed bungalow 4 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Construction)	On site – expected delivery Q1 2024
St. Kieran’s Errill	14	6 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 8 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey	LCC (Construction)	On site – expected delivery Q4 2023
Church Avenue, Stradbally	31	9 No. 4 Bed 2 Storey 20 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 2 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey	LCC (Turnkey)	On site – phased delivery starting Q2 2023

Market Square, Portarlington	18	15 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey 2 No. 2 Bed Apts 1 No. 3 Bed Apt	LCC (Turnkey)	On site – delivery June 2023
Bruach Na Habhainn, Killeen	1	1 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Turnkey)	On Site – Phase 1 (1 unit) delivery Q2 2023
The Orchard, Ballylynan (Phase 3)	1	1 No. 3-Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Turnkey)	On Site – Phase 3 (1 unit) delivery Q3 2023
Oak Park Halting Site	4	4 no. serviced bays	LCC	Contractor on site - Estimated delivery date Q4 2023.
Oldcourt, Ballylinan	1	1 No. 4 bed 1 storey	LCC (Renewal)	On site – expected delivery Q4 2023
Townparks, Rathdowney Rd, Borris-in-Ossory	26	4 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 12 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 10 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey	LCC Turnkey	On site – expected delivery Q4 2024
Harpurs Lane, Portlaoise	44	20 no. 2 bed houses 16 no. 3 bed houses 4 no. 1 bed apt 4 no. 2 bed apt	Respond	On site – expected delivery July 2023.
Ballymorris Green, Portarlington (Ph 1)	34	34 no. 3 bed 2 storey houses	Cluid Housing	Advised of delivery end of May 2023
Ballymorris Green, Portarlington (Ph 2)	12	12 no. 3 bed houses	Cluid Housing	Currently on site – Last phase of scheme – advised that these units will be delivered in early 2024.
Clonrooske Abbey, Portlaoise	18	18 no. 3 bed 2 storey	Cluid Housing	Advised delivery in Q3 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 bungalow	Cluid Housing	3 Phases – on site. Advised that Phases 1 and 2 will be delivered together in Q3 2023 (37 units) Phase 3 to 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 Q3 2023.
The Meadows (old Midland Dairies site), Portlaoise	48	19 no. 3 bed houses 9 no. 4 bed houses 20 no. 2 bed apts	Cluid Housing	Currently on site – expected delivery Q3 2023
Ashewood Walk, Portlaoise	4	3 bed houses	LA Part V	Currently on site – expected delivery Q3 2023
TOTAL	378			

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

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 (Construction)	Tender evaluation on-going and construction due to start in Q3 2023
Clonrooske (Knockmay), Portlaoise	12	8 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 3 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 1 No. 3 Bed 1 Storey	LCC (Construction)	Part VIII approved. Stage 3 to be submitted in Q2 2023.
Iona, Portlaoise	7	2 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 1 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 4 No. 1 Bed Apt	LCC (Construction)	Part VIII approved. Stage 3 to be submitted Q2 2023.
Doonane	12	12 no. 3 bed 2 storey	LCC (Construction)	Stage 2 approved. Part VIII exemption. In-committee consultation with MD members will take place in Q2 2023.
Derry Road, Durrow	18	9 No. 1 Bed 1 Storey 4 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 5 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Construction)	18 dwellings and 4 serviced sites. Stage 2 to be submitted in Q2 2023
Ballyadams	1	1 no. 6 bed bungalow	LCC (Construction)	Stage 2 Approved. Part VIII exemption. In-committee consultation with MD members held and site notice erected.
Stradbally Road, Portlaoise	67		LCC Social and Affordable	Stage 1 approved. Design Team appointed. In-committee meeting with MD members to be arranged to discuss proposed design.
Bracklone St, Portarlinton	15	15 no. 2 bed houses	LCC (Construction)	Stage 2 to be progressed in Q2 2023
Rushall Mountrath	2	2 no. 3 bed 2 storey	LCC (Construction)	Stage 1 approved
Maryborough School, Stradbally Road, Portlaoise	11	2 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey 7 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey 2 No. 1 Bed 1 Storey	LCC (Construction)	Stage 1 To Be Submitted in Q2 2023
Main St, Ballinakill	3	2 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 1 No. 1 Bed Apt	LCC (Construction)	Stage 1 approved
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 to be progressed in Q2 2023
1 New Road, Portlaoise	1	1 No. 4 Bed 1 Storey	LCC (Renewal)	Stage 2 approved
6 Emmett Terrace, Mountmellick	1	1 No. 4 Bed 1 Storey	LCC (Renewal)	Stage 2 approved
13 and 14 Lakeglen, Portlaoise	2	1 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 1 No. 4 Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Renewal)	Design Team Appointed and Stage 1 To Be Submitted
Shannon Street, Mountrath	20	13 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey	LCC Turnkey	Submitted to Department for

		4 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey		consideration
Convent Lands, Portlaoise (CAS)	52	33 no 2 bed apts 15 no 1 bed apts 4 no. 2 bed houses	Sophia Housing	Tender (stage 2) for construction advertised – deadline for receipt end of April 2023.
County Hotel, Portlaoise (CAS)	10	8 no. 1 bed apts 2 no. 2 bed apts	Cluid Housing	Propping up works complete Enabling works to commence on site within weeks to inform Part VIII new process.
“Radharc Darach” Hepburn Court, Portlaoise	54	8 no. 2 bed bungalow 12 no. 2 bed 2 storey 34 no. 2 bed 2 storey	Cluid Housing	Site transfer 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 x 2 bed fully accessible apts 12 x 2 bed bungalows 6 x 3 bed house with downstairs bedroom 2 x 4 bed house with downstairs bedroom 2 x 2 bed apts – accessible (ground floor) apts 2 x 1 bed 1 st floor apts 4 x 3 bed 2 storey. 6 x 2 bed 1 st floor apts	Respond Housing	Respond has advised that they are currently preparing a new funding application for this scheme under the new CALF model recently announced. Planned construction to commence mid - August 2023.
TOTAL	368			

AFFORDABLE HOUSING / COST RENTAL

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

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

Discussions ongoing to progress potential affordable units as follows:

Affordable	<i>AHF Application submitted to DHLGH – Potential no of unit yield</i>	<i>Advance Turnkey Purchase arrangement – EOIs received 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	13	71*	8	30 minimum
Cost Rental		27		

*Expressions of Interest received for 71 proposed units across 4 potential schemes, under consideration from the perspective of demand, affordability of price and feasibility of subsidy funding from DHLGH. Not all units may be realised.

**Design Team procured for the design of social and affordable housing on Council owned landbank on the Stradbally Road, Portlaoise. No of affordable units to be determined.

Feasibility of constructing social/affordable units on site at Beladd currently being examined.

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.

Scheme of Priorities for Affordable Housing in Laois

Scheme of Priorities to determine the manner in which affordable units will be offered to applicants considered by the Housing, Planning and Regeneration SPC on 20th April and will be brought for consideration by the members at the May Council Meeting.

REGENERATION / VACANT HOMES

Vacancy Surveys

The Vacant Homes Team has commenced surveying properties identified as being vacant in data supplied by GeoDirectory (via a Dept of Housing initiative). The initial survey will involve assessment of 647 properties located within 1km of a town/village centre. A further 634 properties located more that 1km fr0m a town/village centre will also be surveyed at a later date. Properties will be assessed, and their status updated on a mobile App provided by the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage. The Council will then endeavour to contact the owners of residential properties identified as being vacant in the survey to outline the schemes available to return the properties to use for housing purposes. Where ownership cannot be established, we will continue to make local enquiries in relation to ownership, vacancy history, etc. and use the CPO process to acquire properties deemed to be suitable for social housing where all other means of returning the properties to use have been exhausted.

Vacancy / Regeneration Funding Schemes

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

New parameters for this scheme recently announced.

A grant now of up to a maximum of €50,000, including VAT, available for the refurbishment of vacant properties for use as a principle private residence or to be made available for rent, including the conversion of a property which

has not been used as residential heretofore. A top-up grant of up to €20,000 is also available for properties which are derelict.

Croí Conaithe (Towns) Applications at 30th April 2023

No. of Applications received to date	53
No. Approved	12
No. Approved in Principle	7
Applicants under consideration	31
No. Refused	1
No. Withdrawn by Applicant	2

- **Buy and Renew Scheme**

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

- **Repair and Leasing Scheme**

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

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

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

CPO Activation Programme

Circular 14/2023 provides details on the launch of the CPO Activation Programme. As indicated in the Circular, there is an overall national target of 4,000 properties entering the CPO Activation Programme in 2023. Of these, a target of 400 has been set for properties to enter the Compulsory Acquisition process, where engagement with the owner has not resulted in the vacant or derelict property being brought back into use, to be subsequently used for social housing or made available for sale on the open market.

The Vacant Homes Unit in the Department has advised of individual targets for each local authority for properties to enter the compulsory acquisition process. These targets consider a number of factors, including the level of vacancy in each local authority and the number of properties on the local authority's Derelict Sites Register.

A target of **60 vacant and derelict properties** to enter the Programme and **16 CPOs / Compulsory Acquisitions** to commence in 2023 has been set for Laois County Council. These targets can include vacant and derelict properties where engagement has already taken place / commenced in 2023 and compulsory acquisitions commenced. Additional targets will be agreed with local authorities on an annual basis for future years.

Laois County Council has established a multi-disciplinary team, comprising staff from Housing, Planning and the Town Regeneration Officer, aimed at addressing vacancy and dereliction in the county. This team aims to achieve targets set, by gathering data via the Geodirectory exercise (above), continued engagement with property owners, engagement via derelict sites legislation where appropriate, and action objectives of the Town Centre First Plan for Rathdowney and other town/village plans.

PRIVATE RENTED INSPECTIONS

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

Target for number of inspections in 2023 is **874**.

	Jan - April 2023
No of properties inspected	378
No of notices of works issued	358

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

SERVICED SITES FOR SELF BUILDERS

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

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

The following locations are currently under consideration for serviced sites and/or have advertised sites for sale. Sites to be a minimum of 0.25 acres in size.

Location	No. of Sites	Comment
Ballacolla Road, Durrow	4	Sites currently on the market and application forms submitted to LCC for evaluation.
Gleann na Glaise	4	Sites currently on the market and application forms submitted to LCC for evaluation.
Doonane	2	Stage 1 approved as part of larger housing scheme Part VIII to be progressed in Q1 2023
Derry Road Durrow	4	Stage 1 approved as part of larger housing scheme

		Part VIII to be progressed in Q2 2023
Castletown	9	Proposal. Detailed design currently on-going
TOTAL SITES UNDER CONSIDERATION	23	

HOUSING STOCK

Housing Re-Lets

Month	LA Keys Surrendered	Properties Acquired	Works Completed
January 2023	8	2	6
February 2023	2	2	1
March 2023	10	8	13
April 2023	3	4	9
TOTAL (YTD)	23	16	29

NOTE: There are currently 27 vacant units from our existing stock and a further 10 units that the Council acquired. Works are either ongoing on these properties or specifications are being prepared for works to be carried out.

Housing Maintenance

Month	Work Orders Raised	Work Orders Closed	Work Orders Open
January 2023	504	504	0
February 2023	378	373	5
March 2023	464	400	64
April 2023	357	229	128
TOTAL (YTD)	1,703	1,476	197

Energy Efficiency/Retrofitting Programme:

Address	Properties	Units Commenced	Units Completed	Update
O'Moore Place, Portlaoise	28	21	14	Construction Work has commenced on 21 houses. 15 of these have heating completed and external insulation works complete. Works continuing on remaining houses. To be completed August 2023. One additional property added from last update; 8 O'Moore Place/Green Road, Portlaoise.
Total Properties	28	21	14	

Tenders are currently being evaluated for the 2023 retrofit programme comprising 47 houses. However, because of funding constraints, it is now proposed to commence works in phase as set out below.

Phase 1

- 1) Thornberry, Abbeyleix – 16 units.
- 2) Church Avenue, Stradbally – 9 units.
- 3) Slieve Bloom Park, Clonaslee – 8 units.

Phase 2

- 1) Old School Road, Ballylynan – 7 units.

Phase 3

- 1) St. John's Square, Portlaoise – 7 units.

In addition, LCC has recently issued a tender for Energy Consultancy services for a further 53 houses this year. The Council is currently preparing its submission for the continued programme of retrofitting homes and to this end the Council has been advised that funding will be made available for up to 65% of last year's programme. LCC has been provisionally approved of funding with an average of €36,000/unit.

The 53 units in the following estates are being considered in 2023:

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

HOUSING NEED

Social Housing Acquisitions

To date there have been 65 Notices to Quit reported to Laois County Council. All NTQ's are examined on a case-by-case basis and tenants are being dealt with using all social and other housing options available.

By the end of April 2023, Laois County Council completed 23 acquisitions, progressing 12 acquisitions currently; 13 of these properties have tenants in situ. A further 18 properties are under consideration.

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

Homeless Presentations

Time Period	Homeless Presentations	Breakdown of Household
1 ^s April – April 30 th 2023	11	5 singles, 6 families

Homeless Accommodation

	Emergency Accommodation booked at 30 th April 2023	Social Housing allocated from homelessness in April 2023
Families	9	2
Single Persons	10	5
TOTAL	19	7

Social Housing List at 30th April 2023

TOTAL No of Social Housing Applicants on waiting list	1,748
Proportion of SH applicants availing of HAP supports	47%
Proportion of HAP tenants transferred from Rent Supplement	15%

RAS/Leasing Statistics at 30th April 2023

Active RAS tenancies	71
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 the period 1st January – 30th April 2023

Method of Delivery	No. housed 1 st January – 30 th April 2023
First allocation of New Build/Acquired unit	22
Relet / Refurbished Stock Allocation	26
Nominations to AHB housing which created a tenancy	41
Housed via leasing	0
TOTAL	89

Refusal Statistics

As part of a data gathering exercise in advance of the review of the Scheme of Allocations, refusal rates have been calculated.

01/01/2022 to 31/12/2022	
Offers Made	383
Refusals	63
Refusal Rate	16%
Q1 2023	
Offers Made	204
Refusals	21
Refusal Rate	10.3%

** Applicants refused properties due to many reasons which include: (i) their location in relation to current schools attended by children; (ii) poor public transport; (iii) not liking the area; (iv) no back garden; (v) not preferred location.*



Minister Darragh O'Brien, Minister for Housing, Local Government & Heritage at the official opening of 10 No. 2 bed 2 storey units, 8 No. 3 Bed 2 storey Units & 4 No. 2 Bed 1 storey Units at Seandoire, Durrow



Minister Darragh O'Brien, Minister for Housing, Local Government & Heritage at the official opening of 21 residential units at Doireann Alainn, Ballylinan

LOANS AND GRANTS

Loans

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

No of Loan Applications received since scheme commenced in January 2022	76
No of Applications approved since scheme commenced in January 2022	30
No of Applications refused since scheme commenced in January 2022	22

Private Grants

Housing Adaptation Grants at 30th April 2023

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

	No. of applications received to 30/04/2023	No. of applications paid by 30/04/2023	Value of applications paid by 30/04/2023	No. of applications currently at work stage	Value of applications currently at work stage
HOP	68	38	€165,660	41	€196,970
MAG	11	7	€21,660	6	€26,729
HGD	45	10	€76,720	43	€374,948
TOTAL	124	55	€264,040	90	€598,647

Disabled Persons Grant for Social Housing

DPG works at 30th April 2023:

Allocation 2023 (€576,990 Exchequer + €64,110 LA Own Resources)	€641,100
No of new applications received to 30/04/2023	11

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

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE TO REFUGEES FLEEING CONFLICT

Laois County Council continues to lead and coordinate the **Laois Ukrainian Community Response Forum**. The Forum, consisting of 23 statutory and voluntary groups/agencies, meets regularly, with 15 meetings held to date, and ensures consistency and efficiency in service delivery and supports to new arrivals to our county from Ukraine. The most recent data indicates there are approximately **990** displaced Ukrainian citizens in the County. Approximately 336 of these are in accommodation centres such as hotels, guesthouses, hostels, and refurbished properties, 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/offered accommodation to Ukrainian families, with 45 families having been provided with accommodation through these mechanisms to date.

Site works are well underway at the 42 Modular Homes project in Rathdowney. DCEDIY have indicated they expect handover of the site from OPW by June/July.

PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT & HERITAGE

Residential Zoned Land Tax

An evaluation of all submissions has been made, including a determination as to whether or not the subject lands shall be retained in scope for the purposes of the RZLT. No amendments were made to the lands included in the RZLT based on the submissions received.

Notification of 9 appeals against the decision to include lands on RZLT map has been received from An Bord Pleanala.

DEVELOPMENT CONTRIBUTION SCHEME

A draft Scheme for the period 2023-2029 has been prepared and is on display from May 22nd to July 4th 2023 during which time submissions can be made. Notification to this effect has been sent to the Minister, the Elected Members, Local TD's and other relevant bodies.

The timeline for the draft scheme is as follows:

Public Notice in Newspaper		16 th May 2023
Public Display	Not less than 6 weeks	22 nd May – 4 th July 2023
Presentation to Members		31 st May 2023
Preparation of the CE Report and circulation to Council not later than 4 weeks after end of public display period	Not later than 4 weeks	4 th July – 31 st July 2023
Consideration and Resolution by Members not later than 6 weeks after receipt of Chief Executives report	Not later than 6 weeks	31 st July – 10 th September 2023

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE

E-Planning Project	EPlanning has been live since 11 th November 2022		
Planning Applications	Year	Valid applications from 01/01/2023 – 08/05/2023	Valid applications from 01/01/2022– 08/05/2022
		181	214
Total Number of valid applications received:	181		
Number of decisions made	187		
Invalid applications returned to applicant	120 (2023 invalid applications)		

Number of applications granted:	181 (Decisions to Grant)
Number of applications refused:	6(Decisions to Refuse) 3.2% refusal rate
No of appeals to ABP	13
PRE PLANNING	
No of requests to date	115
No of meetings held to date	70
Wait time	2.5 Weeks

ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

Current year	2023		2022	
Service Review	Apr	Jan - Apr	Apr	Jan - Apr
Total number of new cases subject to complaints that were investigated	8	49	7	42
Number of Warning Letters served	30	137	48	140
Number of Enforcement Notices served	10	52	6	17
No Of cases referred for legal proceedings	1	8	1	2
Number of cases in Court(incl adjournments)	6	21	0	23
Number of cases Resolved in Court	4	5	0	4
Number of Files Closed	10	41	39	89
Number of cases on system	152	152	137	137
Enforcement Costs recouped	€ 915.00	€2,205.00	€ -	€3,156.98
Number of Valid Retention Applications Received relating to Enforcement Action	3	14	7	14
Fees received through Valid Retention Applications Received relating to Enforcement Action	€ 954.50	€5,659.63	€ 9,480.00	€15,377.50
Legal fees paid	€ 790.90	€3,331.25	€ 719.55	€6,640.32

BROADBAND – DIGITAL PROJECTS

Implementation of the Digital Strategy

The Digital Strategy 2021-2024 is under review with the following programme of projects underway in 2023 under the following strategic aims:-

Strategic Aim 1 : Facilitate development of high speed Broadband and Digital infrastructure across the County

Continuing to work with NBI in delivering broadband infrastructure – 29 licences approved in 2021/2022 – 77% premises to be connected by Q4 2023

Strategic Aim 2: Increase the availability of on line services to businesses, other organizations and citizens

All Business applications available on website.
Training online for LEO to business with Hybrid the way forward.
PPN group applications and Newsletter on line.

EPlanning live – November 2022 – planning applications can be made on line
Consultation portal available to the public to make submissions on Local Authority plans and projects

Strategic Aim 3 :Promote the benefits of being connected digitally to the world and support our citizens in acquiring the skills they need to do so.

Vex Robotics.

The **Vex Robotics Program** has been rolled out in 4 schools to date. Scoil Eoin Phóil II Naofa Ballyroan, Shangnamore Barrowhouse, Camross and Emo.

A very successful County competition took place on Monday 24th of April in *Scoil*/Eoin Phóil II Naofa Ballyroan, with was overseen by Ray Bell and David Hodge from Vex Robotics and Dean Hodge STEM office Offaly County Council. All schools are preparing for the All-Ireland finals will take place in Castlebar on Thursday 1st of June. This project including the board game, coding and the Robot has been funded by the DRCD. It is proposed to roll out to more schools in September.



Launch of ICT Midlands Cluster

The Midland ICT cluster – (Laois, Offaly, Longford and Westmeath) was launched in The Midlands Park hotel on Thursday 27th of April. 4 students from Scoil Eoin Phoil Naofa Ballyroan exhibited on the day with a lot of interest from all sectors of business in the midlands as well as a visit from Minister Simon Coveney.



Computer Science in Secondary schools.

Computer Science training for Secondary School teachers has commenced with 2 modules been offered in this school year to May 23 with 4 remaining modules to be rolled out in the school year Sept '23 to May '24. This will allow schools to offer Computer Science to Leaving Cert students in the future. 3 Laois schools have signed up to the 1st rollout and it is hoped to get more on board in the future.

This is an initiative been piloted by Laois Co.Co., Offaly Co.Co., LOETB and ATU Donegal.

Laois County Council hosted the in-person workshop on Saturday 11th of March in conjunction with the LOETB office in Lyster Sq. Portlaoise.

STEM in Primary and Secondary Schools.

Midland ICT skills has been set up within the Midland region of County Councils through the BBO's – Laois, Offaly, Longford and Westmeath in association with Ericsson Athlone. The proposal is to engage with schools primary and secondary schools to introduce and rollout STEM projects.

The following schools have started this program at the start of May:

1. Killeshin NS.
2. St. Colmans NS Stradbally.
3. Muire Naofa Castlecuff Clonaslee.
4. Rath NS.

It will be further rolled out in September '23 to more schools.

Consultations ongoing at present with PPN re programmes / courses that could be facilitated in our BCP's.

ARTS

Laois Bealtaine Festival 2023

For the month of May the following programmes were active

- A four-week memoir workshop course entitled 'Digging' led by Eileen Casey, took place Laois Arthouse, Stradbally.
- Roots & Shoots, the nationwide programme of Visual Arts events for the national Bealtaine Festival, an artist documentary film 'Dawn to Dusk' about the artists' collective, Na Cailleacha was screened at Dunamais Arts Centre.
- An artist training session, led by Sarah Thornton, 'Socially Engaged Arts with Older People' focused on understanding and delivering best practice when working creatively with older people
- Dunamais Arts Centre hosted Bealtaine Open Mic and Laois Activations Network Art Exhibition 'Forward Always Forward'.

Trip to Emo Court for the Ukrainian Community

A bus trip to Emo Court for the Ukrainian Community who undertook art classes funded under the Ukrainian Health and Wellbeing Fund took place which included a two-hour guided tour by one of the gardeners.



Poetry Day

Poetry Day Ireland was celebrated in Mountmellick Library with readings by local poets; Dr. Arthur Broomfield, Ann Egan, Declan Furlong, Mountmellick and Laura Murphy and contributions from the audience.

The Laois Arts Office made a presentation- both to Dr. Arthur Broomfield and Amanda Hyland, manager of Mountmellick Library of framed copies of Dr Broomfield's poem, "The Spirit of Mountmellick Speaks". This will be displayed permanently in the library.

Spontaneous People / Spontaneous Paintings

Spontaneous People / Spontaneous Paintings - a two-person exhibition brought together works by artists Diana Chambers and Seamus Morton at Laois Arthouse, Stradbally.



Creative Ireland

Cruinniú na nÓg 10th June 10am – 1pm

Programming has been arranged by the Arts Office for several events at the Laois Arthouse & Library. A Print Making workshop by Adelle Hickey; The City of the Dreams, a workshop creating a model city using geometric shapes by Evgeny Chubatyy and Sustainable Textile Art by Niamh Bakker. In the library writers John Whelan will read from his book 'The Last Beekeeper' and Paul Timoney will deliver a workshop.

Illuminations

Following on from the training delivered to older artists in 2022 and 2023, an artist training session, led by Sarah Thornton, 'Socially Engaged Arts with Older People' focused on understanding and delivering best practice when working creatively with older people. It took place in the Dunamais Arts centre as part of the Bealtaine festival.

Culture Night 22nd September

An art production team has been appointed for a large-scale public event in Stradbally. This event will start in the dusk and comprise of an illuminated parade with music and participation by local children, older people, and members of the disabled community. It will conclude outside the library, with illuminations projected on the outside of the building.

A separate exhibition and concert will also take place in the Arthouse and Library, following the parade aimed at an adult audience.

Summer Art Programme

The artist delivering the programme this year is Bridget Flannery. The programme is entitled *Looking/Seeing/Making* and takes place in the Malthouse, Stradbally, Co Laois.

The four-day course runs from **Tuesday 13th June to Friday 16th June from 10:30am-4:00pm** with an official exhibition opening at **5pm on Friday 16th June**.

HERITAGE

Midlands Just Transition Project Conservation and Pollination Works

Cloppook, Dysartgallen, and Monasteroris (in Offaly) essentially finished. Works continuing at Kilmanman, Kilbride and Kilmurryely. On schedule to be finished in 2023.

Training & Education:

Biodiversity workshops: booking underway with participants from each community. Ecologist Dr Fiona Mac Gowan will provide bespoke workshops to each site, delivering feedback on the previous biodiversity reports and providing advice on practical measures.

Communications: The videography started onsite filming biodiversity session and a schools workshop. Each online lecture was also recorded which Crannog will edit before making them available to host online.

Biodiversity Week

Laois Heritage Office promoted awareness of Laois biodiversity during Biodiversity week from the 19th – 28th May 2023.

Events are organised throughout the county on wildlife photography, pristine rivers, biodiversity-themed family craft, and a display of images from Abbeyleix Bog

In partnership with Offaly and Westmeath County Councils, adds will run on Midlands radio from 22nd May until 16th June across three local authorities.

Laois Biodiversity Week Events 2023

19th – 28th May



FRIDAY 19th MAY
Dusk Chorus at Abbeyleix Bog
 7:00pm meeting in the Manor Hotel carpark
 Organiser: Birdwatch Ireland (Laois Branch)

THURSDAY 25th MAY
'The Little Blue Dot on the Delour' – Talk on pristine rivers + macroinvertebrate identification
 3:00pm meeting at the Poet's Cottage, Camross
 Organiser: Camross Tidy Towns, Laois Heritage Office, & LAWPRO – the Local authority Waters Programme

THURSDAY 25th MAY
Talk on Wildlife Photography by Heather Rice
 7:00pm – 8:00pm Portlaoise Library
 Organiser: Laois Heritage Office

SATURDAY 27th MAY
Biodiversity-Themed Family Craft - Bug Collage
 From 12noon Abbeyleix Library
 Organiser: Vera Quinn, Abbeyleix Library

ALL WEEK
Nature Photography Display - showcasing images of the stunning biodiversity of Abbeyleix Bog
 All Day Abbeyleix Library
 Organiser: Fiona Dunne, Abbeyleix Bog Project
 Photography by: Tina Claffey and Richard Duff



List of 'Laois Biodiversity Week Events 2023' which was shared on social media.

Laois Biodiversity Action Fund 2023

Code	Project Type	Project Details	Grant
LBAF-LS-23-4	Biodiversity Enhancement	Project to install a demonstration biodiversity garden at Laois Education Centre , to benefit local biodiversity but primarily to act as a practical learning tool to demonstrate to teachers/ educational staff the benefits of gardening for biodiversity at their own school and provide ideas/ practical tips to develop similar projects.	€34,000
LBAF-LS-23-3	IAS Treatment	Multi-annual project to further contribute towards the achievement of favourable conservation condition of the habitats and species on the site and optimisation of the ecosystem services provided by these habitats and species through the upscaling of the invasive management processes and activities on Abbeyleix Bog.	€10,071 [€11,766 in 2024]
LBAF-LS-23-5	Biodiversity Training	The Heritage Officer /Biodiversity Officer (once appointed) will organise and deliver training to heighten the awareness of Biodiversity to a number of stakeholders:	€8,500

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Staff of Laois County Council in the first instance · The Heritage Forum · Laois Business Support Unit / Laois Chamber 	
LBAF-LS-23-1	Pollinator Awareness	Pollinator Awareness Radio Ads	€6,375
LBAF-LS-23-2	Biodiversity Awareness	Biodiversity Awareness on the Portlaoise Orbital Route.	€24,089
		TOTAL	€83,035

Connecting Communities – Local Heritage Projects

Timahoe:

- Vegetation Management is ongoing for the year at Timahoe, with a six week mowing rotation being used to allow pollinator plants to flower and set seed before cutting to keep down woody plants.
- The School of Irish Archaeology Workshops for children at the Timahoe Heritage Festival are happening again on the June Bank Holiday weekend.

Gordon Bennett Event – Film launch on 16th June at 7:30 in Visual, Carlow. Minister Noonan attending.

Old St Peters Graveyard: Official re-opening on 13th June at 3.30pm.

LOCAL ENTERPRISE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- 5 trading online voucher applications approved
- 29 businesses set up to avail of 1-1 mentoring.
- 8 training courses were delivered to a total of 69 participants.
- 2 additional companies signed up for the Green for Micro programme
- 2 businesses were signed up for the Digital Start Programme
- 1 new Laois businesses was assisted to access Micro Finance Ireland (MFI) loan funding.
- 3 student finalists from Heywood and Portlaoise College were supported and assisted with preparations to go forward to represent Laois at the National Student Enterprise Finals which were held in Croke Park on 5th May. Heywood Students Daniel Aylward, Donil Mathew and Evan Farrell from Heywood Community School won 3rd overall in the Senior Category for their bicycle hurley holder product *hurlr*.

Business Support Unit (BSU) Update – May 2023

- The Vacant Commercial Property Incentive Scheme, in collaboration with Laois Chamber Alliance, the Portarlinton Business Group and Offaly County Council, is being extended to Portarlinton. The initiative was formally launched on 9th May.
- Business Incentive Scheme: maps are currently being prepared to extend the scheme in Killenard.

- Abbeyleix Streetscape - 45 applications were received, 28 have been approved with works commencing, 6 in progress awaiting further documentation and 11 applicants did not meet the criteria.

The Portlaoise Innovation Centre DAC The Cube

Members are informed that the CUBE building at Tower Hill, Portlaoise is now fully tenanted. US owned company 'Demand Science' headquartered in Massachusetts USA has taken up occupancy of the second floor. Their core business is to enable organisations to find the right business solutions and prospects faster and to target in market buyers across the world through facilitating business-to-business contact. Approximately 40 staff from Demand Science will use the CUBE as their work base bringing the total number of workers in the Cube to 75 people.

ROADS, TRANSPORTATION, DRAINAGE & PUBLIC REALM

Annual Road Works Scheme 2023 progress update

Portlaoise Municipal District

Restoration Improvement Grant (Strengthening) Allocation €1,896,217

Road Number	Road Name and/or Townland Name	Length of work (m)	Status
L-56582-0	Cromoge	300	Contract awarded. Works are due to be completed by end of June.
L-2680	Doon	830	Contract awarded. Works are due to be completed by end of June.
R-425-48	Ballyroan - hard shoulder	200	Contract awarded. Works are due to be completed by end of July.
R-427	Pass	830	Contract awarded. Works are due to be completed by end of June.
R-422	Kilmainham	830	Contract awarded. Works are due to be completed by end of June.
R-432	Ballinakill	342	Advance drainage works commenced. Tender for surfacing works to issue before end of May
L-81108	Pallas Little	300	Contract awarded. Works are due to be completed by end of June.
L-6693	Roskelton Clonadacasey	830	Contract awarded. Works are due to be completed by end of June.
R-426	New Road	220	LCC not proceeding with resurfacing of road at Timahoe Road at KWS Works are due to diversion route for N77 works. LCC to identify alternatives sections of road on the R426 closer to JFL Avenue.
L-27781-0	Cloncullane	500	Contract awarded. Works are due to be completed by end of June.
L-77974	Heywood Demesne	250	Complete
L-81017	Beechfield	200	Tender to issue before end of May
L-5733	Clonking Lisbigney Curraghacronacon	830	Irish Water have indicated intentions to upgrade a water main on this section of road in summer 2023. LCC to confirm exact details of project and probability of the IW project receiving funding in 2023.

L-26965-0	Burnwood Clonaddadoran	320	Works are due to be completed by end of June.
L-81018	Colliers Way	100	Tender to issue before end of May
L-2115-0	Rossleighan Gorteen	830	Works are due to be completed by end of June.

Restoration Maintenance Grant (Surface Dressing) Allocation €380,749

Road Number	Road Name and/or Townland Name	Length of work (m)	Status
L-2117-0	Kyletalesha	800	Contract awarded. Works are due to be completed by end of June.
L-77973-0	Clohogue	800	Contract awarded. Works are due to be completed by end of June.
L-81112-0	Cappoley Lane	166	Contract awarded. Works are due to be completed by end of June.
L-81113-0	Clonkeen	225	Contract awarded. Works are due to be completed by end of June.
L-2133	Knightstown	800	Contract awarded. Works are due to be completed by end of June.
L-2112	Pallas Big Clonrooske	800	Contract awarded. Works are due to be completed by end of June.
R-430	Ballyglishen Ralish	800	Contract awarded. Works are due to be completed by end of June.
R-426	Moyadd	500	Contract awarded. Works are due to be completed by end of June.
R-427	Ballyheyland	800	Contract awarded. Works are due to be completed by end of June.

Borris in Ossory Mountmellick Municipal District

Restoration Improvement Grant (Strengthening) Allocation € 2,920,451

Road Number	Road Name and/or Townland Name	Length of work (m)	Status
R434	Aghaboe to Hand Cross	1460	Complete
L-6002	Brittas, Clonaslee	1300	Complete
L-1553/L5552	Cappalanan	1000	Contract awarded. Works to be completed by end September
L-1660	Carrowreagh to Aghduff	925	Complete
L-1070	Castlebrack	1070	Complete
L-1620	Castletown Village	590	Complete
L-1633	Clough to Leap	1120	Complete
L-1598	Grantstown, Ballacolla	600	Complete
L-1652	Killeany to Shanahoe	500	Complete
L-1517	Killesmeestia	1200	Complete

L-1075	Paddock Deerpark	1200	Contract awarded. Works to be completed by end September
R-434	Swan Cross, Durrow	1000	Contract awarded. Works to be completed by end September
Road Number	Road Name and/or Townland Name	Length of work (m)	Status
L-5578	Parknahown, Cullahill	1200	Complete
R-422	Parnell Street to Sarsfield Street, Mountmellick	400	Contract awarded. Works to be completed by end September
L-1005	Ross to The Cut	1200	Contract awarded. Works to be completed by end September
R-422	The Rock to Mountmellick	900	Complete

Restoration Maintenance Grant (Surface Dressing) Allocation €738,041

Road Number	Road Name and/or Townland Name	Length of work (m)	Status
R-440	Roundwood Mountrath	2914	Works programmed for completion by mid July
L-5758	Cullahill Mountain	1847	Complete
L-1536	Lisduff Errill	1250	Works programmed for completion by mid July
L-1596	Kildellig, Rathdowney	3831	Works programmed for completion by mid July
L-1050	Marymount Camross	1868	Works programmed for completion by mid July
L-1005	The Cut Glendineoregan, Clonaslee	1230	Works programmed for completion by mid July
L-1517	Killesmeestia	580	Works programmed for completion by mid-July
L-1652	Killeany Shanahoe	570	Works programmed for completion by mid July
L-1633	Clough to Leap	500	Works programmed for completion by mid July
L-5578	Parknahown	500	Complete
L-5032	Carrowreagh to Aghduff	1000	Works programmed for completion by mid July
L-5613	Sentry Hill to Kilcotten	2760	Works programmed for completion by mid July

Portarlinton Graiguecullen Municipal District

Restoration Improvement Grant (Strengthening) Allocation €1,990,896

Road Number	Road Name and/or Townland Name	Length of Work (m)	Status
L3857-0	Kilfeacle	500	Works tendered and currently awarding the contract.
L-7958-18	Ballyadams (Rahin/Fallaghmore towards Castle junction)	550	Works tendered and currently awarding the contract.
L-79551-0	Ballyadams (Quarry Entrance towards School)	550	Works tendered and currently awarding the contract.
L-7797	Garryglass / Ballintlea Lower	120	Framework Tender, awaiting start from contractor.
L-3991-0	Killeen to Killabban	1000	Works tendered and currently awarding the contract.
R-429-21	Killeen to Coolanagh	650	Works tendered and currently awarding the contract.
L-3992-0	Grange/Shrulle	1200	Works tendered and currently awarding the contract.
L-3839-47	Luggacurren (St. Josephs Cemetery to Bush Hill)	600	Works tendered and currently awarding the contract.
L-3858-34	Glosna Road; Doyle's Cross to Shanragh Junction	1500	Works tendered and currently awarding the contract.
L-38582-0	Aghadreen	545	Works tendered and currently awarding the contract.
L-78601-0	Slatt Upper (Hackett's Hill)	300	Works tendered and currently awarding the contract.
L-7833	Aghanure Road, Ballylinan	250	Works tendered and currently awarding the contract.
L-7175-0	Lake Road out to Portarlinton - Monasterevin Road	630	Works tendered and currently awarding the contract.
L-7936-0	Coolroe Ballybrittas Bartie's Crossroads	320	Works tendered and currently awarding the contract.
L-39301-0	Bellgrove to Rathdaire Lake Ballybrittas	800	Works tendered and currently awarding the contract.
R419-74	R419 at Kilbride Bridge	215	Works tendered and currently awarding the contract.
L-7819-0	Park Ballymaddock (Section 1)	220	Works tendered and currently awarding the contract.
L-7819-0	Park Ballymaddock (Section 2)	100	Works tendered and currently awarding the contract.
L-7178-0	Treascon/Pine Villa	450	Works tendered and currently awarding the contract.
Road Number	Road Name and/or Townland Name	Length of Work (m)	Status

R-419-106	R419 Foxcroft St to Railway Bridge (Portlaoise Road)	550	Advance drainage works programmed with surfacing contractor to commence the 2nd week in June.
R-419-143	R419 Edenderry Road (adj.Mc Mahons)	100	Contractor commencing at the start of June
L-3155-0	Emo Court	720	Works tendered and currently awarding the contract.
L-3817-25	Garrymaddock	1200	Works tendered and currently awarding the contract.

Restoration Maintenance Grant (Surface Dressing) Allocation €685,710

Road Number	Road Name and/or Townland Name	Length of Work (m)	Status
L-78772-0	Boglane, Aghreena	700	Works tendered and currently awarding the contract.
L-3976-133	Knockbeg Road	1000	Works tendered and currently awarding the contract.
L-39522-0	Millers Road Vicarstown	750	Works tendered and currently awarding the contract.
L-7814-0 / L-7815-24	The Heath to Stradbally by Killone to Byrnes Dismantlers	1550	Works tendered and currently awarding the contract.
L-7160-0	Emo Graveyard to KN Road	872	Works tendered and currently awarding the contract.
L-3931-0	Ballybrittas to Bellegrave Road	1120	Works tendered and currently awarding the contract.
R427-84	R427 Cork Road, Stradbally	945	Works tendered and currently awarding the contract.
L-7833-0	Black Door, Stradbally	1850	Works tendered and currently awarding the contract.
L-39323-0	Coolroe Castle	1180	Works tendered and currently awarding the contract.
L-3159-0 / L-3171-0	O'Dempseys GAA towards Rathmiles Avenue	924	Works tendered and currently awarding the contract.
L-7950-19 / L-7951-0	Curraclone Church towards Vicarstown	1930	Works tendered and currently awarding the contract.
L-39331	Courtwood Bridge to Fisherstown Bridge (alongside Canal)	1710	Works tendered and currently awarding the contract.



Recently completed road strengthening works on the R639 Durrow



Emergency bridge repairs ongoing on Forest Bridge following retaining wall collapse



N77 Abbeyleix Road Pavement, Safety & Active travel scheme progressing to programme.



Works commenced on Restoration Improvement Programme in Portlaoise Municipal District in Cloncullane, Ballyroan



Completed footpath works in Ballyroan in advance of Restoration Improvement works.

Rural Bus Shelters

Laois County Council has received an allocation of €275,000 from the NTA for Bus Shelter Enabling Works.

A procurement process has been undertaken and a contractor appointed for these advance works.

Laois County Council will manage the delivery of the enabling works only with the shelters to be supplied and installed under a separate contract in place between the NTA & their approved supplier.

Works are expected to commence in June in Ballybrittas followed by Kilminchy. Further locations where shelters are to be installed throughout the remainder of 2023 are Mountrath, Mountmellick, Stradbally and Ballylinan.

Portlaoise Town Bus Service

The detailed design work for the stopping locations has now been completed and the road safety audit process has now commenced. Laois County has written to the NTA seeking approval to progress to the works tender stage for the provision of the bus stop infrastructure while noting that the NTA will in parallel conduct the procurement process for the provision of an operator for the service.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

1. **Kyletalesha Landfill, Transfer Station & Civic Amenity Site, Portlaoise:**
Normal services continue at Kyletalesha Landfill Facility and Civic Amenity Site. Landfill monitoring and aftercare maintenance is on-going. All monitoring results are being submitted to the EPA.
2. **Bring Banks:**
Tonnages of 2023 collected recyclable material is in Table 1 below.

Month	Tonnage	Month	Tonnage	Month	Tonnage
Jan	164.24	May	0	Sept	0
Feb	129.06	June	0	Oct	0
Mar	140.63	July	0	Nov	0
Apr	119.26	Aug	0	Dec	0
Annual Total			553.19 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 4 below details the number and types of complaints received to the end of April 2023.

Nature	Number	Nature	Number
Waste Management/Enforcement	221	Air	12
Litter	149	Noise	11
Water	17	Waste Infrastructure	2
Total		412	

Table 2 – Environmental Complaint Register

- b) **Litter Fines**

Month	Number	Month	Number	Month	Number
Jan	11	May	0	Sept	0
Feb	9	June	0	Oct	0
Mar	4	July	0	Nov	0
Apr	3	Aug	0	Dec	0
Annual Total			27		

Table 3 – 2023 Litter Fines

c) Illegal Dumping

Tonnes of material collected to the end of April 2023 is 80.50 tonnes.

d) Clean-Up Laois Week

The clean-up took place between Monday 17th April to Friday 21st April 2023. The collection of the gathered material was sponsored by Bord na Mona and by A1 Metal Recycling Ltd. The tonnage collected is not yet available.

4. Waste Management & Enforcement:

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

5. Anti-Dumping Initiatives:

Department funding of €82,744 has been approved for 2023. The approved projects are:

- 2 No. Bulky Waste Amnesties – Portlaoise & Portarlington
- Illegal Waste Disposal Awareness Billboard Campaign
- Ballot Bins

6. Historic Landfill Sites:

Department funding of €41,900 has been approved for 2023 for the appointment of consultants to undertake environmental assessments of historic landfills at Kilbreedy and Kilmainham.

7. Environmental Protection

a) Protect the Water Quality Status in all Water Bodies

On site investigations of complaints in relation to water quality/water pollution are being carried out by Environmental staff.

- On-site investigations of complaints in relation to water pollution.
- On-going assessment of planning applications with regards to water quality protection.

b) Air & Noise:

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

WATER SERVICES AND RURAL WATER

Water Services Laboratory

Laois County Council Water Laboratory is accredited to international ISO 17025:2017 standard accreditation. The Laboratory is inspected at least annually by INAB to ensure all sampling and testing undertaken by the Laboratory is being conducted competently in compliance with specifications

in ISO 17025. The most recent INAB inspection occurred on 18th and 19th April 2023 and the Laboratory has retained its existing accreditation and also gained an additional accreditation for Enterococci, which is an important microbiological test for drinking water safety.

Portlaoise Water Supply

Laois County Council in conjunction with Uisce Eireann, recently contracted Briody Well Drillers to carry out maintenance/remediation works at the Portlaoise Derrygarron Wellfield. The rehabilitation resulted in a significant improvement in the quality of source water, reduced reliance on the filtration treatment process and a substantial increase in water supply yield. To facilitate this work, the Derrygarron Wellfield was taken out of commission for three weeks, whereby new wells, in the Coolbanagher Wellfield, brought into service. The works undertaken at the two Wellfields has significantly enhanced the resilience of the Portlaoise Public Water Supply to summer droughts etc. The works also support capacity issues to support a growing population and expanding local economy.

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 Water Treatment Plant (WTP).

ESB supply upgrade currently being progressed for Five Wells. Design for Kilminchy, Fermoy, Castle Durrow, Drim, Donaghmore, Cloghogue and Camross Water 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.

Uisce Éireann Small Towns & Villages Growth Programme

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

Mountmellick and Portarlinton DAP

Survey works to be progressed throughout 2023.

Inlet Works Storm and Sludge Programme

Ballyroan WWTP Upgrade – Workshop 4 with UE/LCC/Conway Engineering has been completed and works are expected to progress in Q3 of 2023/Q1 of 2024.

Networks and Water Conservation

First fix, find and fix and lead replacement work is continuing in 2023. Mains rehabilitation works currently ongoing in 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

Pump Station (Bob's Bar) A preferred option has been identified with Uisce Éireann.

Taking in Charge

Uisce Éireann have advised that the Moyadd Group Water Scheme, connected to the Swan Public Water Supply Scheme was taken in charge by Uisce Éireann on 3rd May 2023.

Multi Annual Rural Water Programme

Projects under the current programme, 2019 – 2021, are being completed. It is expected that the Department will issue details of the next Rural Water Programme in mid 2023.

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. No response received as of yet from the Department.

Construction is continuing in Rosenallis on the Goodwin Estate Group Sewerage Scheme.

Well Grants

There has been 22 well grant applications received to date in 2023 for grant aid assistance to improve private water supplies to domestic households.

The Domestic Lead Remediation Grant Scheme

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

Emergency Planning, Fire Services & Flood Relief

To mid-May 2023, Laois County Fire & Rescue Service attended 194 emergency incidents, consisting of 73 fires, 91 special service incidents and 30 false alarms.

Turnout by Station*:

Portlaoise – 92	Portarlinton - 35	Stradbally – 34	Mountmellick – 35
Abbeyleix - 22	Mountrath – 26	Durrow – 12	Rathdowney – 11

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

New Fire Station in Stradbally

Following approval of Part 8 proposals, Laois County Council has recently received 'NDFEM approval in principle, for the construction of a new Fire Station at Stradbally.' Laois County Council has now prepared a design brief for the project with a view to the appointment of a design team to oversee the detailed design, tendering and construction of the new Fire Station. The procurement process to appoint the design team will commence towards the end of May 2023.

Mountmellick Fire Station upgrade

Approval to go to tender for the upgrade has been sought from the NDFEM but no approval provided to date.

Fire Service capital funding by the National Directorate for Fire & Emergency Management

New Paratech trench rescue and urban search and rescue equipment (USAR) to the value of €90,000 has been received by LCFRS. Training in the use of this new equipment was delivered by the manufacturer/supplier in early May and is now operational.

A second-hand Mitsubishi Fuso lorry to the value of €25,000 is added to the Fire Services fleet and is operational as a technical response rescue unit and as a carrier for the newly delivered urban search and rescue equipment.

Civil Defence

Internal and external layout options are under consideration following recent agreement on the purchase of premises at Kea Lew, Portlaoise.

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

Community

Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP)

The Public Consultation period on the 10 LECP High Level Goals concluded on Friday 14th April. All submissions have been reviewed, and a report has been prepared.

Public Consultation for the **Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP)**, the **Local Development Strategy (LDS)** and the **Local Authority Climate Action Plan (LACAP)** took place throughout May. An online survey was widely circulated and 7 public workshops were held across Laois at locations in Rathdowney, Mountmellick, Abbeyleix, Portarlinton, Portlaoise, Ballylinan and one virtual workshop. Local communities and businesses have been given the opportunity to have a meaningful input into the plans. The workshops to date have been well attended with very useful engagement and feedback from attendees.

Community Recognition Fund

On Thursday 18th May, successful applications under the Community Recognition Fund 2023 were announced. Laois County Council received an allocation of €1,014,607 in respect of 48 successful projects approved under the fund. Details of the approved projects are as follows:-

List of Successful Applications under the Community Recognition Fund

County	Area/Group	Project	Amount Awarded
Laois	Abbeyleix Community Garden Abbeyleix	Garden benches for community garden	€800
Laois	Abbeyleix AFC Abbeyleix	Walkway around track	€7,900
Laois	South Laois Beekeepers Abbeyleix	Landscaping	€2,000
Laois	Jellytots Community Crèche Abbeyleix	Shelter to provide outdoor space for use as a sensory classroom/area	€4,000
Laois	Abbeyleix Bog Project Abbeyleix	Build a dipping pond	€1,900
Laois	Laois Down Syndrome Abbeyleix	Purchase of Occupational Therapy Equipment	€4,500
Laois	Abbeyleix Parish Hall Abbeyleix	Upgrade Parish Hall to include exterior and interior painting	€2,000
Laois	St Lazerian's GAA Abbeyleix	Replace and resurface all-weather training area	€4,700
Laois	Abbeyleix Park Development Committee	Surfacing Park Walkways/Trail	€19,994
Laois	Emo Sports field Committee Emo	Extension of Community Centre to provide on ground floor: 1. New and improves changing rooms 2. Sanitary accommodation 3. Shower facilities	€151,587
Laois	Rath NS Emo	1. New outdoor furniture 2. Groundworks to prepare the surface for classroom 3. Purchase native hedgerows and plant same	€10,000

Laois	Rath/Ballybrittas Development Association Emo	1. Landscape works 2. Purchase large flower planters 3. Purchase native flowers	€15,250
Laois	Clonaslee High Nelly Club Clonaslee	High Nelly Restoration	€2,000
Laois	Clonaslee United Clonaslee	Full Size adult goals	€3,000
Laois	Clonaslee St Manman's GAA Clonaslee	Lighting for walking track	€15,000
Laois	Clonaslee Tidy Towns Clonasee	Bus Shelter	€9,876
Laois	Clonaslee Community Hall Clonaslee	1. Installation of Fire doors/frames 2. Conversion of toilets to wheelchair accessible toilets	€14,050
Laois	Clonaslee Badminton Club Clonaslee	Badminton Equipment	€1,000
Laois	Irish Country Roads and Culture Trail Durrow	Purchase electric bicycles	€10,000
Laois	Lions Durrow AFC Durrow	Carpark	€24,300
Laois	Harps GAA Club Durrow Internal Ref:49	Install Astro Turf surface on ball wall area	€17,317
Laois	Mountmellick AFC Mountmellick	Portable full size goals	€4,000
Laois	Sarsfields Ladies LGFA Mountmellick	1. Mannequin Set 2. Speed Tracks 3. Ball Rounders	€700
Laois	Mountmellick ICA Mountmellick	Upgrade front entrance, replace front door, ramps	€7,685
Laois	Mountmellick Men's Shed Mountmellick	Roof repairs	€9,600
Laois	Portarlinton GAA Community Centre Portarlinton	Upgrade toilets to include baby changing facility Upgrade kitchen facilities	€30,000
Laois	Portarlinton Lawn	Create car park area	€10,000

	Tennis Club Portarlington		
Laois	Portarlington Rugby Club Portarlington	New surfaces on lands to facilitate pitches and all weather training facilities, car parking, gym and Club house for all	€30,000
Laois	Port Art Collective Portarlington	1. Gazebo 2. Folding Tables/Chairs 3. Embroidery Hoops, needles & wool	€2,200
Laois	Portarlington Concert Band Portarlington	Purchase musical equipment, printer and laptop	€10,885
Laois	Coderdojo Portarlington	Purchase laptops, projectors, marquee	€5,000
Laois	Laois Leisure – Portarlington	1. Scrolling Display Boards 2. Training Equipment 3. Ruth Lee sinking manikins for Lifesaving training 4. Pace clocks plus safety covers 5. Smart Screens & Digital signage	€68,678.77
		6. Flooring replacements 7. Store reel for lane ropes 8. Landscaping 9. Replacement of Spinning Bikes 10. Van ram wheelchair bike	
Laois	Rathdowney Errill Activity & Wellness Hub Rathdowney	1. Youth Café – Purchase Furniture 2. Girl Guide – Purchase Equipment 3. Arts Group – Purchase pop-up stage and retractable seating 4. Rathdowney/Errill Juvenile GAA Purchase new equipment and training gear to include jerseys, goal posts, nets, plastic hurls, sliotars and training poles 5. Clover United FC -purchase equipment to incl goals, jerseys, footballs and training equipment 6. Rathdowney/Errill Activity Hub – Purchase pop up gazebo, stainless steel tea/coffee flasks 7. Ossory Cycle-Purchase pop up gazebo, stainless steel tea/coffee flasks 8. Rathdowney/Errill Senior GAA – Construct Walking Track	€59,707.50
Laois	Rathdowney Community Centre CLG Rathdowney	1. Upgrade all window and doors 2. Upgrade toilets 3. Install Solar panels	€87,497.50
Laois	Portlaoise GAA	Purchase digital scoreboard	€10,000

	Portlaoise		
Laois	Laois LABS Flag Football Portlaoise	Purchase Jerseys	€800
Laois	Portlaoise Sports Hall Portlaoise	1. Upgrade heating system 2. Upgrade alarm system and exit doors 3. Replace wooden floor 4. Replace wall padding	€68,084
Laois	Music Generation Portlaoise	Equip musical space	€5,000
Laois	Cos na hAbhann/ Bruch na hAbhann Portlaoise	Recreational and biodiversity enhancement to include: 1. Planting trees and shrubs 2. Insert pathways 3. Lighting 4. Outdoor exercise unit 5. Seating 6. Polytunnel	€10,000
Laois	Portlaoise FRC Portlaoise	Purchase: 1. Jerseys 2. Balls 3. Training Equipment	€2,500
Laois	Laois Leisure – Portlaoise	1. Multilingual welcome and safety messaging to enhance the experience for a multi-national society. 2. Ruth Lee sinking manikins	€4,600
Laois	Laois School of Music Portlaoise	1. Signage 2. Bluetooth speaker 3. Grand Piano cover	€6,000
Laois	Downtown Portlaoise	Feature lighting for laneways project	€30,000
Laois	Laois County Council Portlaoise	Cycle training area	€40,000
Laois	St. Brigid’s Place Residents Assoc Portlaoise	1. Lighting around walkway 2. Landscaping	€40,000
Laois	Ballylinan Community Ballylinan	Development of local amenities to include the community hall and playground	€55,764.16
Laois	St. Abban’s Athletic Club Various areas throughout the county	Land acquisition	€36,000

Laois	TFI Local Link Laois/Offaly Various areas throughout the county	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rathdowney - bus stop poles to highlight services – 3 no. required 2. Durrow - Replace existing 2 poles which are for old services no longer in operation 3. Abbeyleix - Replace existing 2 poles 4. Portlaoise - Replace existing 8 poles 5. Mountmellick - Replace existing 1 pole and adding 2 more where services are currently stopping but no infrastructure in place 6. Clonaslee - No existing bus stop poles to highlight services. 4 no. required for 2 stop locations 7. Portarlinton existing bus stop poles to highlight services 3 no. required 	€8,000
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Laois Comhairle na nÓg

Comhairle meetings continue weekly. The group are currently working on their Podcast. They are also recruiting new members with the main focus on young people from small and larger towns and villages across Laois. Laois Comhairle na nÓg were nominated for an award at the Laois /Offaly Garda Youth Awards ceremony in April.



World of Work Educational Partnership Programme 2022/23

At a thoroughly enjoyable concluding session held at Portlaoise College on 20th April 2023, the students received Certificates of Achievement for completing the programme and gave feedback on their experiences of the programme to Laois County Council Staff.



CLIMATE ACTION

Tidy Towns

Billy Flynn and Sharon Eastwood who are both experienced Tidy Towns Adjudicators delivered two days of one-to-one advisory clinics to 18 Tidy Towns groups on 17th and 18th April in County Hall. The consultations involved a desk review by the TT Adjudicators of the 2022 submissions, in advance of the clinics and then personalised feedback and recommendations on how to improve and maximise points for the competition going forward. This was delivered via one-to-one sessions. In addition, Ann O'Leary, a Tidy Towns adjudicator with over 40 years of experience conducted walkabouts and gave feedback and advice to Abbeyleix Tidy Towns and Portlaoise Tidy Towns, who were both Medal winners in the National Competition in 2022 .

A Playful City

A Playful City conducted a community survey on interventions to create more playful, healthy and inclusive public places in the pilot area near the Summerhill and Holy Family school campuses. 500 survey responses have been received to date. They also held in person co-creation workshops with pupils and parents.

Laois Environmental Network

Laois Environmental Network workshop on the new Community Climate Action Fund was held on 10th May and was attended by 14 people representing 10 groups. Project ideas were developed and the draft application forms worked through.

Local Biodiversity Action Fund (LBAF)

Laois County Council was awarded €34,000 under the Local Biodiversity Action Fund (LBAF) for a Biodiversity Demonstration Garden at Laois Education Centre, which will act as a learning tool for teachers that attend the Centre for training. It will showcase practical actions that schools can develop to support biodiversity across the region.

Local Authority Climate Action Plan (LACAP)

Four half day workshops for LCC Staff were held from 8th to 12th May, as part of the consultation phase of the preparation of the Local Authority Climate Action Plan (LACAP). The purpose of the workshops was to develop actions for the LACAP, specific to each section.

During May, public consultation workshops on the Local Authority Climate Action Plan were carried out in conjunction with consultation workshops on

both the County Laois Local Development Strategy (LDS 2023 – 2027) and Laois Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP 2023 - 2028). An online survey was widely circulated, and 7 public workshops were held across Laois at locations in Rathdowney, Mountmellick, Abbeyleix, Portarlinton, Portlaoise, Ballylinan and one Virtual Consultation event.

Age Friendly Laois

Laois Age Friendly attended the National Older Persons Council convention in Tralee on the 11th and 12th May, 2023. The theme of the event was “ Re-connecting”. It was an informative event and was attended by all Age Friendly Programme Managers.

Meath County Council are currently recruiting up to 44 Healthy Age Friendly Homes co-ordinators nationwide. The successful candidates will be accommodated within each local authority .

Sport & Leisure Section

National Bike Week

As part of Bike week, 45 events were safely delivered in Co Laois by various community groups and schools around which included key events such as a Symposium on the Future of Cycling in Rural Ireland, SVT Festival of Cycling and a Portarlinton Bike ‘tivity Day and School Cycle Challenge. Participant numbers increased dramatically on previous years helped by an investment in positive promotion of events.



Garda Information Stand on Bike Theft Prevention in Abbeyleix & The Swan NS



Mr. Simon Walton, Director of Services meeting cyclists from Portlaoise College



Symposium on the Future of Cycling in Rural Ireland at Durrow Castle

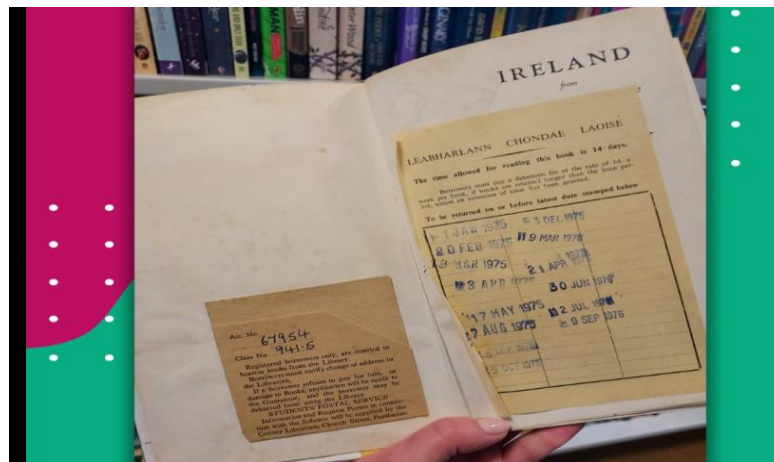


Downtown Portlaoise – Cycle to Work & Rothar Rogues – Handlebars of Friendship

Library Services

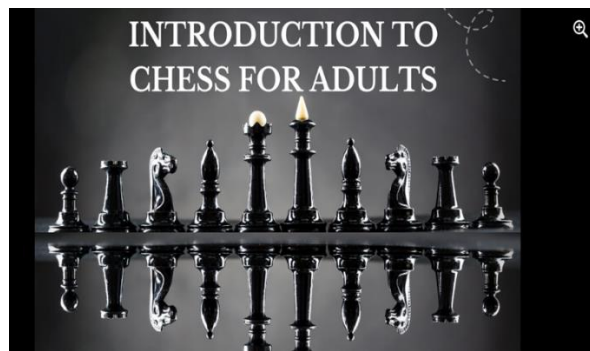
Laois County Library Service featured on RTE online channels and other national social media platforms with a feature on a long overdue library book . (see post below)

*“ it is never too late to return your library books. A long-lost library book has found its way home to us in Portlaoise Library after 47 years!
Fines for overdue books were abolished in 2019. So if you have any long-lost library books to return to the library, you can do so completely guilt free”*



During May Laois County Library Service celebrated Bealtaine events and activities -highlights included:

- Portarlington Library hosted an introductory chess workshop for adults on Wednesday May 17th 3:30-5pm



- Europe Direct and Portlaoise Library hosted a Sustainable Self-Care workshop with The Sustainable Life School. This workshop focussed on the importance of nature and making time for ourselves, including how to reduce the packaging/ plastic in our bathroom, focusing on skincare, dental, hair, hygiene care and makeup. Participants got a chance to make their own face scrub.
- Rathdowney Library Hosted a Talk in the library on Wednesday the 17th of May in association with the Department of Social Protection about The Irish State Pension System.



Mountmellick Library hosted an Art Workshop. Mary Slevin, Artist, from Mount Henry Art Studio on Saturday the 13th of May

- Mountrath Library hosted an Introductory session to Mindful Printmaking with Dominika Stoppa. This workshop was an introduction to mindful printmaking at home with minimal tools. Each participant will print a greeting card using pre-carved blocks of lino. Lino printing, or linocut, is an accessible and popular relief printmaking technique. This class was open to all artistic skill levels. Booking required as places are limited.
- Mountmellick library hosted a Bealtaine Poetry Circle on Friday 19th May at 11 a.m. which celebrated poetry and drama.
- Free Flower arranging and wreath making workshops in partnership with the LOETB took place in all libraries and were very attended.



The Gallery in Mountmellick Library is delighted to host for the month of May, Heather and Nadia Rice. The exhibition, “Wildflowers from the Slieve Bloom Mountains”, will consist of ink drawings, photographs and textiles. The wildflowers chosen all have traditionally been valued for their healing powers. The exhibition was launched on Tuesday May 2nd at 6.00 p.m.



Biodiversity Week 19th -28th of May 24.

Portlaoise and Abbeyleix library are hosting events in partnership with Laois Heritage Office .

Abbeyleix library are hosting a display of Nature Photography in the Gallery showcasing Abbeyleix Bog by Tina Calfey and Richard Duff organised By Fiona Dunne, Abbeyleix Bog Project . A free “Bug Collage “ event was held on Saturday the 27th of May in Abbeyleix Library to support the initiative .

Portlaoise Library hosted a wildlife photography talk by Heather Rice on Thursday the 24 of May @7pm.

New County Library

External works and construction works continued on the new library during May 2023. Interior finishes, IT cabling, heating and lift commissioning have been completed . Library Shelving and furniture installation will be completed in early June and delivery of library stock for the library spaces will then commence with a planned opening date to the public in early July .

Chief Executive's Orders

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

John Mulholland
Chief Executive

May 25th 2023