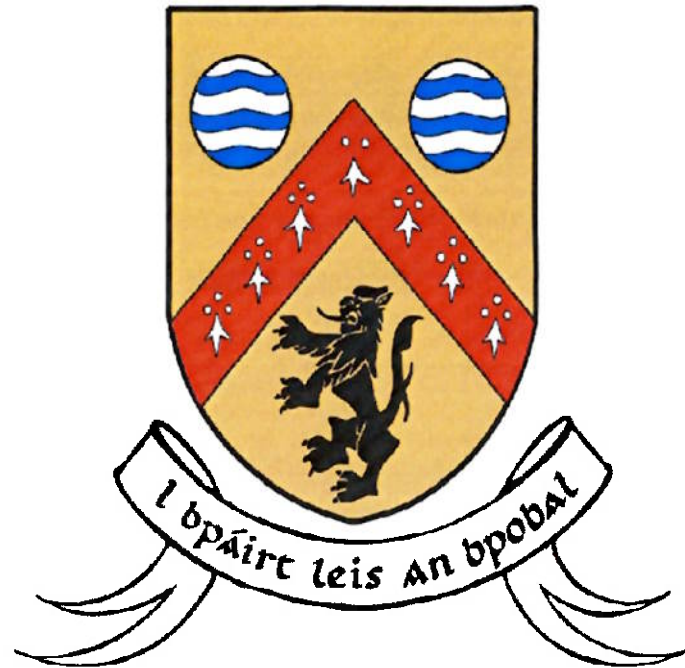


LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL
COMHAIRLE CHONTAE LAOISE



MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT
OCTOBER 2023
TUARASCÁIL BHAINISTÍOCHTA
Deireadh Fómhair 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 October 2023 is as follows:

FINANCE & ALLOCATIONS NOTIFIED

Expenditure and income to the 30/09/2023 is summarised below:

Service Division	Budget Allocation	Expenditure to 30/09/2023
Housing and Building	€21,247,400	14,769,829
Road Transportation and Safety	€26,291,600	18,436,433
Water Services	€3,404,500	3,478,354
Development Management	€9,586,000	7,970,920
Environmental Services	€8,677,500	5,966,826
Recreation and Amenity	€4,990,000	3,877,887
Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare	€900,000	597,290
Miscellaneous Services	€9,498,700	6,629,488
Central Management Charge	€11,213,300	2,274,731
Total	€95,809,000	64,001,759

Service Division	Budget Allocation	Income to 30/09/2023
Housing and Building	€22,725,300	18,372,659
Road Transportation and Safety	€21,583,000	8,568,488
Water Services	€4,502,000	3,431,592
Development Management	€6,495,500	4,955,303
Environmental Services	€2,231,000	1,456,107
Recreation and Amenity	€1,049,000	494,257
Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare	€436,000	161,577
Miscellaneous Services	€11,954,262	6,533,213
Superannuation	€720,000	168,128
Local Property Tax	€9,033,703	6,022,469
Rates	€14,578,963	10,778,354
Capital transfer	€500,272	
Total	€95,809,000	60,942,147

The Miscellaneous Services Expenditure is broken down as follows:

Service Division	Budget Allocation	Expenditure to 30/09/2023
Machinery Account	€220,000	132,564
Administration of Rates	€2,211,000	429,600
Franchise Costs	€104,000	105,688
Op of Morgue and Coroner Expenses	€130,000	-12,412
Op of Markets and Casual Trading	€3,000	1,998
Local Representation/Civic Leadership	€987,000	633,667
Motor Taxation	€226,000	188,338
Agency & Recoupable Services	€5,617,700	5,150,045
Total	€9,498,700	6,629,488

The Central Management Charge Expenditure is broken down as follows:

Corporate Building Costs	€2,038,300	493,129
General Corporate Services	€1,281,000	965,964
Information and Communications Tech	€1,738,000	1,478,576
Human Resources Function	€1,083,000	752,505
Finance Function	€761,000	503,620
Pensions and Lump Sum Costs	€4,312,000	3,131,375
Total	€11,213,300	7,325,169

HOUSING AND REGENERATION

SOCIAL HOUSING DELIVERY

Annual Social Housing Delivery Targets under Housing for All

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

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Total
Social Housing completions to date	229	160	-	-	-	389

Social Housing Schemes completed in 2023

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

Kilminchy (Dunamais View)		23 no 3 bed houses	Housing	
Ashwood Walk, Portlaoise	4	4 no. 3 bed houses	LA Part V	Tenanted
Goldencroft, Portlaoise (Old CBS lands - Ph 1 and 2)	24	24 no. 3 bed houses	Cluid Housing	Tenancing commenced w/b 9 th October
Harpur's Crescent, Portlaoise	44	20 no. 2 bed houses 16 no. 3 bed houses 4 no. 1 bed apt 4 no. 2 bed apt	Respond	Tenancing commenced w/b 9 th October
TOTAL	160			

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 Q4 2023
Moore St, Rathdowney	6	6 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Construction)	On site - expected delivery Q2 2024
Mooreville, Rathdowney	7	3 No. 2 Bed bungalow 4 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Construction)	On site - expected delivery Q2 2024
St. Kieran's Errill	14	6 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey 8 No. 3 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 Q4 2023
Bruach Na Habhainn, Killeen	1	1 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Turnkey)	On Site - Phase 1 (1 unit) delivery Q2 2024
The Orchard, Ballylynan (Phase 3)	1	1 No. 3-Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Turnkey)	On Site - Phase 3 (1 unit) delivery Q2 2024
Oldcourt, Ballylinan	1	1 No. 4 bed 1 storey	LCC (Renewal)	On site - expected delivery Q2 2024
Townparks, Rathdowney Rd, Borris-in-Ossory	26	4 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 12 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 10 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey	LCC Turnkey	On site - expected delivery Q4 2024
Shannon Street, Mountrath	20	13 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 4 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey	LCC Turnkey	On site - expected delivery Q4 2024
Ballymorris Green, Portarlinton (Ph 2)	12	12 no. 3 bed houses	Cluid Housing	Currently on site - Last phase of scheme - advised that these units will be delivered in early 2024
Clonrooske Abbey,	18	18 no. 3 bed 2	Cluid Housing	Advised delivery of 6 units

Portlaoise		storey		in Q3 2023 Delivery date of final 12 units TBC
Goldencroft, Portlaoise (Old CBS site - Phase 3)	30	26 no. 2 bed houses 4 no. 2 bed bungalow	Cluid Housing	Phase 3 to be delivered by Q4 2023.
The Meadows (old Midland Dairies site), Portlaoise	48	19 no. 3 bed houses 9 no. 4 bed houses 20 no. 2 bed apts	Cluid Housing	Currently on site - expected delivery early Q4 2023
Ard Branagh, Portlaoise	6	6 no. 3 bed houses	Circle Housing	Currently on site - expected delivery by end 2023
Mount Stewart, Summerhill, Portlaoise	4	1 no. 4bed house 3 no 3bed houses	LA Part V	Currently on site - expected delivery Q4 2023
Sruth na Gleanna, Killeslin	5	1 no. 4bed house 3 no 3bed houses	LA Part V	Currently on site - expected delivery Q4 2023 and last unit in 2025.
TOTAL	236			

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

Location/Scheme	No of units	House Types	To be constructed by	Comment
Carraig Glas, Stradbally	26	15 no. 2 bed houses 9 no. 3 bed houses 2 no 4 bed houses	LCC (Construction)	Stage 4 approved and construction to start in Q4 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 Q4 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 Q4 2023.
Doonane	12	12 no. 3 bed 2 storey	LCC (Construction)	Stage 2 approved. Part VIII exemption. Stage 3 to be submitted Q4 2023.
Derry Road, Durrow	24	10 No. 1 Bed 1 Storey 5 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 5 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 4 No.2 Bed Apartmts	LCC (Construction)	Stage 2 submitted in Q4 2023. Tender for demolition closed and demolition to commence in early Q4 2023.
Ballyadams	1	1 no. 6 bed bungalows	LCC (Construction)	Stage 3 Approved. Part VIII exemption period complete and Stage 4 to be submitted in Q4 2023.
Stradbally Road, Portlaoise	28	Tenure mix - numbers and house types - to be confirmed in detailed design	LCC Social and Affordable	Detailed design completed Proposed mixed tenure of the scheme to be agreed. Following this a meeting of the MD members will be arranged to discuss design.

Bracklone St, Portarlinton	15	15 no. 2 bed houses	LCC (Construction)	Site investigation surveys on-going and Stage 2 to be progressed in Q4 2023
Rushall Mountrath	3	3 no. 3 bed 2 storey	LCC (Construction)	Site investigation surveys on-going and Stage 2 to be progressed in Q4 2023
Maryborough School, Stradbally Road, Portlaoise	11	2 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey 7 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey 2 No. 1 Bed 1 Storey	LCC (Construction)	Stage 1 To Be Submitted in Q4 2023
Main St, Ballinakill	3	2 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 1 No. 1 Bed Apt	LCC (Construction)	Site investigation surveys on-going and Stage 2 to be progressed in Q4 2023
Moanbaun, Mountrath	15	4 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 7 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 4 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey	LCC (Construction)	Site investigation surveys on-going and Stage 2 to be progressed in Q4 2023
1 New Road, Portlaoise	1	1 No. 4 Bed 1 Storey	LCC (Renewal)	Stage 3 to be submitted in Q4 2023.
6 Emmett Terrace, Mountmellick	1	1 No. 4 Bed 1 Storey	LCC (Renewal)	Stage 3 submitted in Q3 2023.
13 and 14 Lakeglen, Portlaoise	2	1 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 1 No. 4 Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Renewal)	Tender for demolition advertised in Q3 2023.
Beladd, Portlaoise	5	1 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 3 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 1 No. 4 Bed 2 Storey	LCC (Construction)	Design Team to be Appointed and Stage 1 to be submitted in Q4 2023. Tender for demolition of existing properties to be advertised in Q4 2023.
French Church St. Portarlinton	2	2 no. 2 bed apts	LCC (Renewal)	Stage 1 To Be Submitted in Q4 2023.
Townparks, Mountmellick	49	28 No. 3 Bed 2 Storey 11 No. 2 Bed 2 Storey 8 No. 1 Bed 2 Storey 2 No. 2 Bed 1 Storey	LCC Turnkey	Turnkey application submitted to Department in Oct 2023.
Convent Lands, Portlaoise (CAS)	52	33 no 2 bed apts 15 no 1 bed apts 4 no. 2 bed houses	Sophia Housing	Tender evaluation complete, Stage 3 being prepared for submission to Dept for construction budget approval, following which, contractor will be appointed.
County Hotel, Portlaoise (CAS)	10	8 no. 1 bed apts 2 no. 2 bed apts	Cluid Housing	Stage 1 approved under CAS. Surveys carried out so far have outlined significant challenges re the protected

				front façade. A section 57 planning report for the site has been finalised and agreement reached on which buildings on site can be demolished. A conservation report to accompany a S179A planning notification is currently being prepared by LCC with Cluid input as to the challenges on this site. An in-committee meeting with MD members will be arranged as part of this 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 now in Cluid ownership. Tender for construction currently being evaluated. Local residents will be informed by Cluid in relation to phasing of the build and any potential effect of this.
Curragh na Mona, Abbeyleix Rd, Portlaoise	39	5 x 2 bed fully accessible apts 12 x 2 bed bungalows 6 x 3 bed house with downstairs bedroom 2 x 4 bed house with downstairs bedroom 2 x 2 bed apts – accessible (ground floor) apts 2 x 1 bed 1 st floor apts 4 x 3 bed 2 storey. 6 x 2 bed 1 st floor apts	Respond Housing	Revised CALF application currently under review by Dept and a notification expected in the coming weeks. Planned construction to commence mid -Oct 2023 as advised by Respond.
TOTAL	372			

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 approved in principle by DHLGH</i>	<i>AHF Application submitted to DHLGH – Potential no of unit yield</i>	<i>Advance Turnkey Purchase EOI's under consideration Potential No of unit yield</i>	<i>Part V– Potential No of Unit Yield</i>	<i>LCC Construction Potential No of Unit Yield</i>
Affordable	13	11	*76	8	40 minimum
Cost Rental			27		

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

- Local Authority Subsidy Agreement currently being prepared in relation to 13 affordable units recently approved. A survey recently went live on www.laois.ie to ascertain interest in affordable purchase in Stradbally and general promotion of the Local Authority Affordable Purchase Scheme (LAAPS).
- 2 further AHF applications currently being finalised for business case submission to Dept of Housing.
- Design being finalised for social and affordable housing on Council owned landbank on the Stradbally Road, Portlaoise. No. of affordable units to be determined but estimated above at 30-40 units. Funding mechanism for affordable housing on this site still to be determined.

Call remains open for Expressions of Interest in respect of:

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

Queries regarding affordable housing should be emailed to affordablehousing@laoiscoco.ie

REGENERATION / VACANT HOMES

Regeneration Team

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



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

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

Vacancy Surveys

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

The app has shown the following data so far - of the 865 properties surveyed to date (residential and commercial), 518 properties were found to be vacant, with 32 of those found to be derelict.

Housing Section will endeavour to contact the owners of the vacant residential properties and outline the schemes available to return these properties to use for housing. Where ownership cannot be established, local enquiries will continue in relation to ownership, vacancy history, etc. Where all other means of returning the properties to use have been exhausted, use of the CPO process to acquire properties deemed to be suitable for social housing or onward sale to private market will be considered. Suitability for social housing will depend on the need and housing typology of need in particular locations.

Queries regarding vacant properties should be emailed to vacanthomes@laoiscoco.ie

Vacancy / Regeneration Funding Schemes

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

To qualify for the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant, properties must be:

- Vacant for over 2 years
- Built before 2008

Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant Applications at 30th September, 2023

No. of Applications received	100
No. Approved	43
No. Approved in Principle	19
Applicants under consideration	31
No. Refused	3
No. Withdrawn by Applicant	4

Of the 100 applications received to date, 54 properties are in rural locations and 46 properties are located in a town or village. 89 properties are proposed to be used as a principal private residence and 11 to be made available for rent. 30 of the applicant properties were identified as vacant in the Geodirectory Survey Data detailed above. To date, the approved works have been completed on 7 properties and 1 grant has been paid to the applicant. Below are some examples where approved works have been completed.

Lower Rossmore, Killeshin (Before & After)



• **Repair and Leasing Scheme**

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

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

(a) their location in areas of low housing demand or;

(b) the extent of works required exceeded the Scheme limit or;

(c) works were commenced or almost complete before an application was submitted, which is not permitted under the R&L Scheme.

CPO Activation Programme

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

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

At 30 th September 2023	Target	Actual
Vacant and derelict properties that have entered the CPO Activation Programme	60	104
CPO's / Compulsory Acquisitions commenced/completed in 2023	16	4

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**.

	1 st Jan – 30 th September 2023
No of properties inspected	855
No of notices of works issued	733

The Housing Inspections team can be contacted via email at propertyinspections@laiscoco.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	Offers accepted by 2 out of 4 offers made. Services/utilities currently being constructed on site.
Gleann na Glaise, Ballyroan	4	Formal offers to issue in Q4 2023. All services/utilities in place on site.
Doonane	2	Stage 1 approved as part of larger housing scheme Part VIII & Stage 2 to be progressed in Q4 2023
Derry Road Durrow	4	Stage 1 approved as part of larger housing scheme Part VIII & Stage 2 to be progressed in Q4 2023
Castletown	9	Proposal. Detailed design currently on-going
TOTAL SITES UNDER CONSIDERATION	23	

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

HOUSING STOCK

Housing Re-Lets

Month	LA Keys Surrendered	Properties Acquired	Works Completed
January 2023	5	2	6
February 2023	2	2	1
March 2023	6	6	16
April 2023	6	4	9
May 2023	11	2	14
June 2023	5	1	2
July 2023	4	2	6
August 2023	8	0	2
September 2023	5	2	0
TOTAL (YTD)	52	21	56

NOTE: There are currently 22 vacant units from our existing stock and a further 12 units that the Council acquired. Works are either ongoing on these properties or specifications are being prepared for works to be carried out.

Housing Maintenance

Month	Work Orders Raised	Work Orders Closed	Work Orders Open
January 2023	504	504	0
February 2023	378	378	0
March 2023	464	464	0
April 2023	357	357	0
May 2023	440	440	0
June 2023	325	325	0
July 2023	274	270	4
August 2023	409	342	67
September 2023	412	155	186
TOTAL (YTD)	3,563	3,306	257

Energy Efficiency/Retrofitting Programme:

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

A summary of both programmes is outlined in table below.

PROGRAMME	COMMENTS
MRP – 159 Units	159 units completed.
EERP (2021) – 29 Units – (O'Moore Place)	29 units completed.
<p>EERP (2022) – Phase 1&2 – 41 Units (Thornberry, Church Ave, Slieve Bloom Park)</p> <p>EERP (2022) – Phase 3 – 21 Units (St. Fintan's Tce, Old School Road, St Johns Sq.)</p>	<p>Tender evaluation for the 2022 Retrofit Programme comprising 62 houses has been completed. It is now proposed to commence works in phase's set out below.</p> <p>Phase 1</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Thornberry, Abbeyleix – 20 units. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works commenced. <p>Phase 2</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Church Avenue, Stradbally – 12 units. 2) Slieve Bloom Park, Clonaslee – 9 units. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tender awarded and works to commence in Q4 2023. <p>Phase 3</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) St Fintans Terrace – 6 units 2) Old School Road, Ballylinan – 8 units 3) St. John's Square, Portlaoise – 7 units. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tender awarded and works to commence in Q4 2023.
EERP (2023) – 53 Units (St. Brigid's Place, Fr. O'Connor Cres., Erkindale Dr, Rossmore View)	Surveys of the 53 units are under way.

HOUSING NEED

Notices to Quit/Social Housing Acquisitions

All NTQ's are examined on a case-by-case basis and tenants are being dealt with using all social and other housing options available.

From 1st January – 30th September 2023:

Acquisitions completed	14
Acquisitions currently in progress	8
No. of above that have Tenants in Situ	9
Acquisitions under consideration from EOI's submitted	23

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

Homeless Presentations

Time Period	Homeless Presentations	Breakdown of Household
1 st September to 30 th September 2023	24	12 families, 12 singles

Homeless Accommodation

	Emergency Accommodation Households booked at 30 th September 2023	Social Housing allocated from homelessness in September 2023
Families	8	2
Single Persons	15 (2 hostel)	1
TOTAL	23	3

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

Social Housing List at 30th September 2023

TOTAL No of Social Housing Applicants on waiting list	1,676
Proportion of SH applicants availing of HAP supports (789)	47%
Proportion of HAP tenants transferred from Rent Supplement (113)	14.3%

RAS/Leasing Statistics at 30th September 2023

Active RAS tenancies	70
Active short-term leasing tenancies (Social Housing Leasing Scheme)	26
Active Repair & Leasing Scheme tenancies	1
Active long-term leasing tenancies with private landlords/investors	11
Active long-term Mortgage to Rent leasing tenancies with a private company	29

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

Method of Delivery	No. housed 1 st January – 30 th September 2023
First allocation of New Build/Acquired unit	54
Relet / Refurbished Stock Allocation	53
Housed via leasing	0
Nominations to AHB – 1 st of January – 30 th of September 2023	209
TOTAL	316

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

LOANS AND GRANTS

Loans

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

No of Loan Applications received since scheme commenced in January 2022	101
No of Applications approved since scheme commenced in January 2022	40
No of Applications refused since scheme commenced in January 2022	26*

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

PRIVATE GRANTS

Housing Adaptation Grants at 30th September 2023

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

	No. of applications received to 30/09/2023	No. of applications paid by 30/09/2023	Value of applications paid by 30/06/2023	No. of applications currently at work stage	Value of applications currently at work stage
HOP	147	97	€444,270	54	€256,260
MAG	13	10	€ 29,246	6	€ 30,200
HGD	138	45	€292,568	56	€438,297
TOTAL	298	152	€766,084	116	€724,757

Disabled Persons Grant for Social Housing

DPG works at 30th September 2023:

Allocation 2023 (including LA funded portion)	€641,100
No of new applications received to 30/09/2023	27
No of Works approved to date (incl 2 extensions*)	39
Value of approved works to date	€504,468.

**It should be noted that extensions costing over €75,000 will only proceed subject to Dept approval and planning if required. Currently, 1 extension (value €144,000) will not proceed in 2023. 2 extensions are planned to commence in 2023. Should planned extensions not complete in 2023, it will not be possible to draw down allocated funding in the current year.*

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 19 meetings held to date, ensuring consistency and efficiency in service delivery and supports to new arrivals to our county from Ukraine. The most recent data indicates there are approximately

1455 displaced Ukrainian citizens in the County. Approximately 500 of these are in accommodation centres such as hotels, guesthouses, hostels, and refurbished properties, with the remainder in privately sourced or pledged accommodation.

In addition to the above number and following the signing of a contract between DCEDIY and the owner of the Stradbally Estate on 1st September last, an emergency/ transitional site commenced operation on 5th September for a period of 6 weeks, with a maximum occupational capacity of 750.

The update on this site is as follows:

- The last 18 BOTPs departed from the Stradbally site at 11.00hrs on Saturday 14/10/23. The site is now vacated.
- The site was in use from 5/9/2023 to 14/10/2023.
- A total of 745 BOTPs stayed at Stradbally, 227 of which were children.
- The average stay was just over 2 weeks.
- The highest number on site on any one night was 471 on 20/9/23
- The tents will remain, but the hope is that they will not be needed any further
- In a parallel development, beneficiaries of temporary protection has received notification that the Department of Children, Equality, Integration & Youth from 6th November plans to stand up a “winter ready” contingency site for 32 weeks with a maximum capacity of 950
- This winter-ready accommodation on Stradbally Estate is to consist of own-door, en-suite, heated and insulated cabins, enclosed within large marquee-type structures that are also heated, containing all ancillary facilities. The overall site will be surrounded by secure fencing.
- The winter-ready accommodation will be located on an area separate from the current tented accommodation, which will be removed once the cabins are ready.

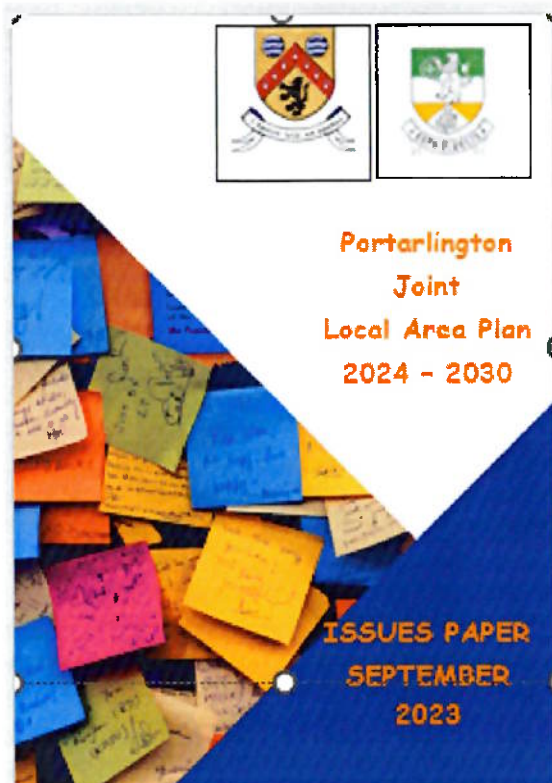
In the aftermath of Storm Agnes and the persistent bad weather being experienced, the Council made a grant of €4000 available to Laois Integration Network for humanitarian relief measures at the site.

The Council continues to assist DCEDIY with the temporary accommodation of Ukrainian arrivals to our county, as well as providing liaison locally in relation to vacant buildings and sites suitable for medium to long term accommodation solutions.

The Council also continues to allocate privately pledged/offered accommodation to Ukrainian families, with 51 households having been provided with accommodation through these mechanisms to date.

Site works are continuing at the 42 Modular Homes project in Rathdowney. DCEDIY have said that it anticipates that residents will move onto the site early to mid-November 2023.

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT



In attendance were local elected members, staff from each local authority and members of the general public. A lively debate ensued.

Topical issues were discussed including land use zoning, infrastructure, flood risk, access, transport, housing supply, support services, connectivity, employment, heritage.

The issues paper is available online and at Council offices.

Work on preparation of the Graiguecullen / Carlow Joint Urban Area Plan and Portlaoise Local Area Plan is continuing. In addition, ABTA Plans for both towns are nearing completion.

Portarlinton Joint Urban Area Plan

A very successful public information session to kickstart the public consultation period was held on Oct 4th in Portarlinton Library.

A number of people attended.

Development Contribution Scheme

The Draft Development contribution scheme was adopted by the members at a special council meeting on 6th September 2023. An Ad was placed in the local papers advising that scheme was adopted and that it will come into force on 20th October 2023.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE

E-Planning Project	E-Planning has been live since 11 th November 2022 61% applications in 2023 have been made online – 417 online applications out of total 676 applications made to date in 2023.			
Planning Applications	Year	Valid applications from	-	Valid applications from
		01/01/2023 05/10/2023		01/01/2022- 05/10/2022
		420		469
Total Number of valid applications received:	420			
Invalid applications returned to applicant	257			
Number of applications granted:	410(Decisions to Grant)			
Number of applications refused:	17 (Decisions to Refuse) 3.9% refusal rate			
PRE PLANNING				
No of requests to date	254			
No of meetings held to date	242			
Wait time	2 weeks			

ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

Current year	2023		2022	
	Sept	Jan - Sept	Sept	Jan - Sept
Service Review				
Total number of new cases subject to complaints that were investigated	11	123	7	92
Number of Warning Letters served	22	326	51	326
Number of Enforcement Notices served	7	87	2	32
No Of cases referred for legal proceedings	0	11	0	6
Number of cases in Court(incl adjournments)	5	48	6	43
Number of cases Resolved in Court	2	11	0	7
Number of Files Closed	12	89	6	129
Number of cases on system	175	175	143	143
Enforcement Costs recouped	€	€	€	€7,520.26

	2,300.21	7,719.97	-	
Number of Valid Retention Applications Received relating to Enforcement Action	4	28	5	40
Fees received through Valid Retention Applications Received relating to Enforcement Action	€6,060.50	€40,685.51	€7,274.40	€40,286.10
Legal fees paid	€1,436.56	€15,608.48	€175.20	€20,236.70

LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Local Enterprise Office Update – October 2023

- 2 Trading Online Voucher applications approved.
- 20 businesses set up to avail of 1-1 mentoring.
- 10 training courses were delivered to 128 participants.
- 9 Laois business owners enrolled in the Owner Manager Development Programme.
- 1 Laois business was approved for an Energy Efficiency grant.
- 1 Laois business was assisted to access Micro Finance Ireland (MFI) loan funding.

Business Support Unit (BSU) Update – October 2023

- The BSU participated at the recent pop-up clinic in Mountrath prior to the launch of the Vacant Commercial Property Incentive Scheme on 31st October 2023.
- The BSU will launch the Vacant Commercial Property Incentive Scheme in Mountmellick on 15th November 2023.
5 applications were received to date this year under the Business Incentive Scheme. 2 were approved and in progress. 1 was refused. The Business Incentive Scheme has been extended to Killenard; it was approved at the Municipal District meeting on the 13th September 2023. Abbeyleix Streetscape - 51 applications were received and 32 were approved. 30 were completed. The scheme is now closed.
- Shop Front Grant Scheme: 22 applications were received, 16 were approved, 2 were refused and 4 are in progress.
- Shop Fit-out Grant Scheme: The 2 applications received to date this year have been approved.

ROADS, TRANSPORTATION, DRAINAGE & PUBLIC REALM

Annual Road Works Scheme 2023 progress update

Borris in Ossory Mountmellick Municipal District
Restoration Improvement Grant (Strengthening)

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	Complete
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
R-440	Rushin Road	1200	Complete
R-434	Swan Cross, Durrow	1000	Contract awarded. Works to be completed by end November
L-5578	Parknahown, Cullahill	1200	Complete
L-6130	Portnahinch, Mountmellick	1200	Complete
L-1005	Ross to The Cut	1200	Complete
R-422	The Rock to Mountmellick	900	Complete

Restoration Maintenance Grant (Surface Dressing)

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

*Portarlington Graiguecullen Municipal District
Restoration Improvement Grant (Strengthening)*

Road Number	Road Name and/or Townland Name	Length of Work (m)	Status
L3857-0	Kilfeacle	500	Binder Course completed. Double surface dressing outstanding
L-7958-18	Ballyadams (Rahin/Fallaghmore towards Castle junction)	550	Binder Course completed. Double surface dressing outstanding.
L-79551-0	Ballyadams (Quarry Entrance towards School)	550	Completed
L-7797	Garryglass / Ballintlea Lower	120	Completed
L-3991-0	Killeen to Killabban	1000	Binder Course completed. Double surface dressing outstanding.
R-429-21	Killeen to Coolanagh	650	Binder Course completed. Double surface dressing still outstanding
L-3992-0	Grange/Shrulle	1200	Binder Course and 6mm coat completed. 10mm surface dressing outstanding
L-3839-47	Luggacurren (St.Josephs Cemetery to Bush Hill)	600	Completed
L-3858-34	Glosna Road; Doyle's Cross to Shanragh Junction	1500	Completed
L-38582-0	Aghadreen	545	Binder Course completed. Double surface dressing outstanding
L-78601-0	Slatt Upper (Hackett's Hill)	300	Binder Course completed. Double surface dressing outstanding
L-7833	Aghanure Road, Ballylinan	250	Binder Course completed. Double surface dressing outstanding.
L-7175-0	Lake Road out to Portarlington - Monasterevin Road	630	Completed
L-7936-0	Coolroe Ballybrittas Bartie's Crossroads	320	Completed
L-39301-0	Bellgrove to Rathdaire Lake Ballybrittas	800	Completed
R419-74	R419 at Kilbride Bridge	215	Completed
L-7819-0	Park Ballymaddock (Section 1)	220	Completed
L-7819-0	Park Ballymaddock	100	Completed

	(Section 2)		
L-7178-0	Treascon/Pine Villa	450	Completed
R-419-106	R419 Foxcroft St to Railway Bridge (Portlaoise Road)	550	Completed
R-419-143	R419 Edenderry Road (adj.Mc Mahons)	100	Completed
L-3817-25	Garrymaddock	1200	Completed

*Portarlington Graiguecullen Municipal District
Restoration Maintenance Grant (Surface Dressing)*

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

Portlaoise Municipal District

Restoration Improvement Grant (Strengthening)

Road Number	Road Name and/or Townland Name	Length of work	Status
		(m)	
L-56582-0	Cromoge	300	Complete
L-2680	Doon	830	Complete
R-425-48	Ballyroan - hard shoulder	200	Complete
R-427	Pass	830	Complete
R-422	Kilmainham	830	Complete
R-432	Ballinakill	342	Complete
L-81108	Pallas Little	300	Complete
L-6693	Roskelton Clonadacasey	830	Complete
R-426	New Road	220	Works scheduled for November
L-27781-0	Cloncullane	500	Complete
L-77974	Heywood Demesne	250	Complete
L-81017	Beechfield	200	Substantially Complete
L-5733	Clonking Lisbigney Curraghacronacon	830	Scheme Substituted for L-5734 Bandra due to Irish Water proposed works. Complete
L-26965-0	Burnwood Clonaddadoran	320	Complete
L-81018	Colliers Way	100	Works scheduled for November
L-2115-0	Rossleighan Gorteen	830	Complete

Restoration Maintenance Grant (Surface Dressing)			
Road Number	Road Name and/or Townland Name	Length of work (m)	Status
L-2117-0	Kyletalesha	800	Complete
L-77973-0	Clohogue	800	Complete
L-81112-0	Cappoley Lane	166	Complete
L-81113-0	Clonkeen	225	Complete
L-2133	Knightstown	800	Complete
L-2112	Pallas Big Clonrooske	800	Complete
R-430	Ballyglishen Ralish	800	Complete
R-426	Moyadd	500	Complete
R-427	Ballyheyland	800	Complete

Overall Works Programme Status

- 87 Schemes Proposed
- 75 Schemes Complete
- 11 Schemes Ongoing
- 1 Scheme Substituted
- 37 Km of Local & Regional Road Strengthened
- 39KM of Local & Regional road Surfaced Dressed

Railway Street Transportation Hub, Portlaoise



Work is complete and car parking area to be transferred to Laois County Council imminently



Bus, Rail, Cycling, Walking, Electric vehicles & E bikes being provided for.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

1. **Kyletalesha Landfill, Transfer Station & Civic Amenity Site, Portlaoise:**
Landfill monitoring and aftercare maintenance is on-going. All monitoring results are being submitted to the EPA.

A new traffic management layout directing all traffic (transfer station, recycling centre & landfill) over the weighbridge to facilitate a single point of payment was introduced in September.

2. **Bring Banks:**
Tonnages of 2023 collected recyclable material is in Table 1 below.

Month	Tonnage	Month	Tonnage	Month	Tonnage
Jan	164.24	May	156.04	Sept	105.02
Feb	129.06	June	126.87	Oct	0
Mar	140.63	July	116.05	Nov	0
Apr	119.26	Aug	165.44	Dec	0
Annual Total			1,222.60 Tonnes		

Table 1 – 2023 Bring Bank Tonnages

The bring bank facilities in the county are being inspected and maintained by Environment Staff.

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

a) **Waste Enforcement & Complaints**

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

Nature	Number	Nature	Number
Waste Management/Enforcement	418	Air	31
Litter	281	Noise	31
Water	45	Waste Infrastructure	11
Total		817	

Table 2 – Environmental Complaint Register

b) **Litter Fines**

Month	Number	Month	Number	Month	Number
Jan	4	May	5	Sept	7
Feb	10	June	7	Oct	0
Mar	3	July	10	Nov	0
Apr	4	Aug	7	Dec	0
Annual Total			57		

Table 3 – 2023 Litter Fines

c) **Illegal Dumping**

Tonnes of material collected is 262 tonnes.

4. **Waste Management & Enforcement:**

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

5. **Anti-Dumping Initiatives 2023:**

A number of Bulky Waste Amnesty events have been delivered by the Environment Section (Refer to Table 4 below). Bed bases, mattresses, couches, chairs & tables were collected.

Venue	Mattresses (Number)	Bulky Goods (Tonnes)
Portlaoise (Rugby Club)	570	27.50
Mountmellick	240	12.00
Portarlinton	40	15.00
Portlaoise (Kyletalesha)	250	110.00
Housing Estates	50	30.00
Total	1,150	194.50

Table 4 – 2023 Litter Fines

Specific housing estates were targeted in Portlaoise, Graiguecullen, Portarlinton, Borris-in-Ossory and Mountmellick.

6. **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.

Emergency Planning, Fire Services & Flood Relief

To date (30th Sept 2023), Laois County Fire & Rescue Service attended 554 emergency incidents, consisting of 191 fires, 266 special service incidents and 97 false alarms.

Turnout by Station*:

Portlaoise – 250	Portarlinton - 96	Stradbally – 110	Mountmellick – 102
Abbeyleix - 71	Mountrath – 77	Durrow – 65	Rathdowney – 57

*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. A restricted tender competition was held to pre-qualify design teams. 3 architect-led design teams have been qualified and a Stage 2 tender competition will be circulated to tender parties in the coming weeks.

Mountmellick Fire Station upgrade

Approval to go to tender for the upgrade has been sought from the NDFEM but no approval provided to date. The Part VIII document has been completed by Tobin Consulting Engineers and will be brought forward in the coming months.

Civil Defence

Volunteers

Civil Defence continues to provide ongoing training and upskilling for volunteers. As of 10th October, all volunteers meet the minimum training standard requirements, as required by the Department of Defence.

Activity Report January to October 2023

- 83 Community Events
- 19 Missing Person Search Activities
- 8 Supports to the Ukrainian Crisis

Facilities

Civil Defence continues the transition to new Headquarters, at the Kew Lew Industrial Estate. In October 2023 the service moved out of its rented accommodation in the Portlaoise Enterprise Centre and training activities are now taking place in the new premises in Kew Lew.



Training

Training courses completed in October 2023 included:

- Missing Person Search Responder
- PHECC First Aid Response Instructor
- QQI Level 6 Manual Handling Instructor
- Rescue3 Swiftwater & Flood Responder Instructor recertification
- ISA National Powerboat Course

VEMS

The Department of Defence have launched the volunteer portal of their new Volunteer & Equipment Management system. In October this has been rolled out to all Laois volunteers giving them access to their records such as training certificates, deployment history etc.

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

COMMUNITY

Laois Public Participation Network

Laois PPN held a “Woodland Wellness Walk”, for Laois Connects week. The walk took place on Tuesday the 10th of October which is World Mental Health Day.

Laois PPN have secured delivery of the Property Marker. The property marker is a crime prevention initiative that will support Community Groups across Laois. This was funded under the Community Support Fund 2022. Laois PPN will arrange to make the property marker available to Community Groups in towns and villages across Laois over the coming months.

Laois Comhairle na nÓg

Laois Comhairle na nÓg held their Pod Cast on Discrimination on Saturday 14th October in the Youth Café at 6 pm.

Community Projects (Elected Members) Fund 2023

Over 80 community groups have received funding from the Community Projects (Elected Members) Fund 2023.

Laois Connects

Laois Connects took place during the week beginning 9th October with good attendance across a variety of events. A screening Lakelands at Dunamais Theatre and panel discussion for students attracted a full house with some well-known Laois GAA names on the panel along with Ailish Dunne, former Laois Paralympian, Leona McManus from Jigsaw and facilitator Ann Marie Kelly. The Ross King talks for schools also proved popular as did the Eric Donovan talk at Portlaoise College on the 13th October. Over 80 people attended the “ Parenting the Tech Savvy Child “ Webinar, which shows the demand for such information.

<https://laois.ie/laois-connects-2023-programme/>

Community & Voluntary Awards 2023

84 nominations were received for the Community and Voluntary Awards 2023, with the ceremony taking place on Friday 3rd November in the Midlands Park Hotel. Once again, the awards are being hosted in association Laois Public Participation Network being sponsored by People First Credit Union. The application process has now closed with the nominations currently being judged by various independent PPN judges.

Healthy Laois

Laois Pride Week -Midlands LGBT+ with the support of Healthy Laois ran a weeklong programme of event to mark Laois Pride Week 2023 culminating in a Pride Parade on Saturday September 17th 2023. These events promoted opportunities to support those within the community, whilst encouraging acceptance.

Laois Make Way Day.

Laois County Council and Healthy Laois, led four Make Way Day events across Laois in Portarlinton, Portlaoise, Mountrath and Vicarstown to look at accessibility for all on Friday

22nd September 2023 while an additional team of Transition Students from Mountmellick Community School examined Mountmellick town.

Laois Make Way Day has brought the disability and wider community together and given us time to question and think about how we can make life easier for our friends and family as they age, as they acquire disabilities and for those born with differing abilities.

Town Centre First

Rathdowney

The Town Centre First Plan for Rathdowney is currently being finalised with the final plan due to be submitted to the Department by 20th October 2023. Roadplan consulting engineers have been engaged to provide preliminary designs for one of the transformative projects contained in the TCF plan. The Town Team have submitted an expression of interest for the 2023 Town and Village Renewal Scheme.

Mountrath

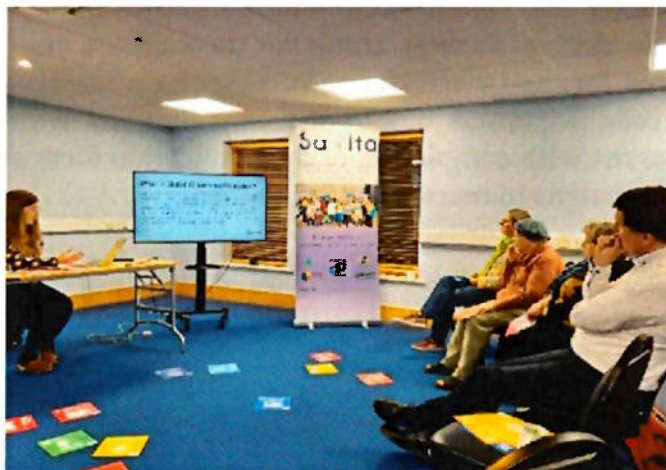
The Mountrath Town Team have re-established and have met several times since the “Sustainable Communities Plan” was launched in April. They are currently working on a landscape plan for the Town.

Tidy Towns

Laois County Council arranged transportation for the attendees of the National Tidy Town Awards, held on October 6th at Croke Park. Abbeyleix Tidy Towns claimed the coveted "Ireland's Tidiest Town 2023". Portlaoise Tidy Towns secured a Gold Medal, Durrow Tidy Town received a Bronze Medal, and Ballinakill Tidy Town earned an Endeavour Award. All 20 County Laois groups that entered the national competition amassed additional points this year, underscoring their dedication to community improvement. Laois County Council's Climate Action Section continues to support the Laois Federation of Tidy Towns through organisation of bespoke workshops and seminars. Earlier this year organised one-to-one consultations with Tidy Towns Adjudicators to assist with completion of the application form as well as recent promotional campaigns to recruit new volunteers.



Sustainable Development Week 23rd Sep – 1st Oct The Climate Action Section organised and supported events to celebrate this second national Sustainable Development Week. Laois Libraries were supported in hosting school and community workshops with Irish Aid. The Climate Action Section directly organised 2 events on Wednesday 27th September, one for LCC staff and another for members of Laois Environmental Network, Laois Federation of Tidy towns and the PPN. Both sessions were delivered by Saolta, a Global Citizenship Education programme with the goal to increase accessibility, quality and effectiveness of global citizenship education within the adult and community education sector.



Community SDG workshop



Free bedtime story books for children



Laois County Library Service are delighted to introduce *Free bedtime story books* and library card wallets for all children of 4 years and under, to pick up and keep at their local Laois County Library .This exciting initiative aims to engage all parents of young children to read stories with them at bedtime. From the 6th of October, parents and their children can pop into their local library to pick up their free bedtime story book and join the library. Bedtime story books are available in English and Irish. Reading bedtime stories to children has many benefits including supporting a close parental bond, developing children’s language and their imagination. First 5, Little Book at Bedtime is an action of First 5 Whole of Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families.

READING MATTERS is a new campaign launched by Children's Books Ireland and aims to drive home the importance of reading in creating a welcoming, inclusive and open society.

Collect your **FREE** children's reading guide 'Reading Matters' from your local Laois library. This booklet features 286 titles published in 2023 with reviews in Irish and English. There is a great selection of fiction and non-fiction books for ages 0 to 15+, Irish titles are marked with a shamrock symbol.



Culture Night -Library Event highlights

The library service programmed in collaboration with the Arts office Culture Night events as below.

Portlaoise Library -launch of Per cent per "Fragments of Space and Time " Art by David Beattie followed by a performance of the Ukrainain Choir.



Laois Africa Support Group staged performance through music and dance, poetry, storytelling and food at the Portlaoise Library during Culture Night brought to you by The Arts Council in partnership with Laois County Council.



Mountmellick Art Collective group in Mountmellick library hosted an evening of art, poetry, film, fiction, memoir and musical produced by the Collective.

Portarlinton Library was the first stop on Port Art Collection Art trail featuring a talk and workshop by David Butler a well known and published animator

Abbeyleix Library held a Cryptozoology event for young readers headed by artist Mick Minogue here on to talk us through all the crazy creatures we never knew existed.

Positive Ageing Week (PAW) is an initiative by Age Action

Contributions of older people were celebrated during the week and to promote their agency. Libraries throughout the county hosted events

Memoir Writing workshops were held in Portarlinton and Portlaoise Libraries Everyone has a book in them, the adage goes - the trick is knowing what parts of your life to leave in. This two-hour workshop was hosted in conjunction with the LOETB.

Activator Poles session was held on Monday, 9th October at 11.00am in Portlaoise Library - Provided by Laois Sports Partnership, Activator Poles are a great way to get active, improve mobility, and core strength and is a great way to be socially active.

Portlaoise New Library, Main Street.

We have been delighted to welcome all of our customers both old and new to our new library building on the main street . Since reopening in our new premises there have been over 38,000 visits to the library and over 27,000 books and library items have been issued !

Event and Activity Highlights for October include

Ta Tum Tum - Early years workshop This early years Samba workshop took place on Tuesday, 10th October at 12pm

PUPPET SHOW (Saturday, October 21st at 11am and 2.30pm): This Fun, interactive Puppet Show provided by Partykidz was a s 'panto-style' puppet show and showcased energetic storytelling and musical numbers .

HALLOWEEN STORYTIME (Wednesday, October 25th at 4pm): Join us in Portlaoise Library for some SpoOokyyyy (and some not so spooky) Halloween stories. Halloween costumes are a must!! Booking Essential



FAMILY FUN MUSIC GAMES AND ACTIVITIES 0-3 YEARS (Portlaoise Library, Wednesday, October 25th at 3pm): In this workshop , fun and exciting interactive music activities, promotes learning and literacy with sound games and stories with our voices and home instruments (Musical instruments provided).

MINDING YOUR CHILD'S MENTAL HEALTH, PUBERTY, SEXUALITY AND GENDER (Portlaoise Library, Wednesday, October 18th at 7pm): Zarah Doyle of AsIAM facilitated this one-hour lecture as part of our Healthy Ireland Programme.

Memoir Workshops

Mountmellick Library and Art Gallery

Laois based artist **Aileen O'Donovan** launched her exhibition "All Endings Have a Beginning" on Tuesday October 3rd at 6 p.m. in the Gallery in Mountmellick Library. Aileen uses mixed media to bring 3-d effects to her paintings and is inspired by her environment and nature.



Caroline Conway Art Workshop

Artist Caroline Conway hosted a workshop in Mountmellick Library on Thursday 19th October 2-4 p.m. , inspired by Mountmellick local heritage including flora and fauna, architecture, landscape, archaeology. Caroline will demonstrate how to make heritage scenes (enhanced with some Christmas motifs) and forms part of the

Launch of Heritage Illuminations at Mountmellick's Georgian square as part of Mountmellick's Christmas Tree on Fri Dec 1, 2023.

Portarlington Library

As part of Laois Connects "Overcoming Performance anxiety"-a talk by with Kevin Begley was held on Wednesday 11th Oct 7pm. This was fascinating talk on helping teens deal with Performance Anxiety in sport.

"Encounters" by local photographer Frank Smith. As official photographer of Borris House Festival of Writing, Frank has met and captured many of the artists,writers, musicians and thinkers who have appeared at the festival. On display during library open hours.



Portarlington Library Book Club meets each month -new members welcome
Portarlington Junior Book Club The junior book club is back after the summer break. Meeting on the last Wednesday of the month this club is suitable for 9-12year olds. Booking is essential call 057 8643751 or email portarlingtonlibrary@laoiscoco.ie

Baby Book Club Baby Book Club returned on Oct 11th at 10:30am Booking is essential call 057 8643751 or email portarlingtonlibrary@laoiscoco.ie

Knitting Club Meets every Friday morning 10:30am-12:30 . All skill levels from beginner to advanced are welcome!

Abbeyleix Library and Art gallery

Art Gallery – the gallery is hosting an exhibition by artist Aisling Hennessy from Laois. Her work blends dreamlike washes with organic forms and gestured mark making to explore the seen and unseen. Her work is inspired by her emotions, the ethereal and the Earth in an attempt to explore her curiosity with the layering and contrasts within life. Aishling will be sharing the month with the 5th Year Art Class from Heywood School .

The LOETB Staying Connected Digital Skills Course continues 11am-1.30pm. Call the library to book a place.

Mountrath Library

Mountrath Children's Book Festival: Author Visits took place by Shane Hegarty and Helena Duggan (School Bookings).

A New Baby & Toddler Play morning takes place every Wednesday morning at Mountrath Library. This is an open play session for babies and toddlers. Creative toys are placed in a circle on the floor to encourage children to socialise under the supervision of their parent or guardian. Tea/Coffee provided. Last few places remaining contact 057/8756378 for further details. The **Junior Graphic novel book group** for ages 9-12 will meet fortnightly at 4pm on Wednesday 4th and 18th October. The books chosen for this month's discussion are *Tamsin and the Deep* and *Leon the Extraordinary*.

Chief Executive's Orders

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



John Mulholland
Chief Executive

October 16th 2023