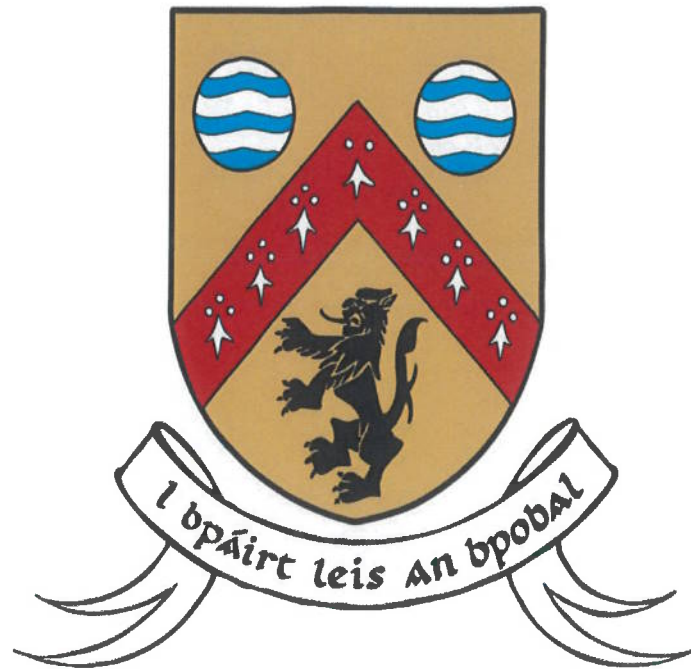


LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL
COMHAIRLE CHONTAE LAOISE



MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT
OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2021
TUARASCÁIL BHAINISTÍOCHTA
DEIREADH FÓMHAIR/SAMHAIN 2021

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

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

Finance, & Allocations Notified

Expenditure and income to the 31/10/2021 is summarised below:

Service Division	Budget Allocation	Expenditure to 31/10/2021
Housing and Building	15,772,000	11,826,214
Road Transportation and Safety	21,225,000	15,845,144
Water Services	3,421,000	2,637,179
Development Management	6,970,000	6,486,452
Environmental Services	7,500,000	5,658,408
Recreation and Amenity	3,926,000	3,067,409
Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare	822,000	516,347
Miscellaneous Services	9,533,000	9,189,688
Central Management Charge	9,714,000	6,828,741
Total	78,883,000	62,055,582

Service Division	Budget Allocation	Income to 31/10/2021
Housing and Building	17,594,000	14,877,832
Road Transportation and Safety	16,749,000	10,623,926
Water Services	4,534,000	3,438,412
Development Management	4,423,000	5,414,574
Environmental Services	1,501,000	1,469,078
Recreation and Amenity	601,000	609,588
Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare	330,000	244,323
Miscellaneous Services	8,126,000	5,571,546
Superannuation	700,000	553,960
Local Property Tax	9,063,079	7,552,565
Rates	14,495,092	9,368,276
Capital transfer	766,829	0
Total	78,883,000	59,724,080

Local Live Public Performance Scheme Round 2	€143,000
Community Activities Fund	€273,048
ORIS Measure 1	€149,569

Housing & Regeneration

Housing for All Construction Programme

Scheme	Units	Progress
Gleann naGlaise, Ballyroan	10	On-Site.
25-30 Moore St., Rathdowney	6	On-Site.

Pattison Estate, Mountmellick	10	On-Site.
Sean Doire, Durrow	22	On-Site.
Coolroe, Ballybrittas (Rural)	1	On-Site.
Harbour Court, Mountmellick	6	Tender evaluation completed. Stage 4 application due in Q4 2021.
Mooreville, Rathdowney	7	Stage 3 approved on 29 th September. Tenders to be advertised in Q4.
St. Kierans Park, Errilli	14	Preferred contractor withdrew tenders. Tenders re-advertised in October.
Clonrooske, Knockmay	11	Revisions made following recent meeting with Portlaoise councillors. Stage 2 to be submitted in Q4
Iona, Abbeyleix Road	9	Draft layout being prepared for discussions with local councillors.
Oak Park Halting Site	4	Tender evaluation complete and site start expected in Q4.
Carraig Glas, Stradbally	26	Part VIII granted. Stage 3 submission due in Q4.
Doonane	6	Stage 1 granted on 1 st November.
Derry Rd. Durrow	18	Stage 1 granted on 17 th October.

Urban Regeneration Programme

Scheme	Units	Progress
Former C.B.S. Site	67	CLUID Housing Association has agreed terms with landowner for turnkey development of 67 units. CALF application supported by Laois Co Co. Commenced with site preparation mid September. Project to be delivered in 3 phases; first stage due for delivery in Q4 of 2022.
Hepburn/Knockmay	54	CLUID Housing Association are progressing this development. Final site layout to be discussed with local councillors prior to submission of Part VIII.
O'Moore Place Regeneration	To be determined	Concept drawings on the proposed development are being prepared for discussion with local councillors.
Convent Site, Portlaoise	51	Stage 2 approved in February 2021. Sophia Housing Association progressing this development with input / guidance from LCC. Site investigations complete but contractor delays were encountered. Enabling works including demolition of structures now complete. Work on the tender package for the Housing and Public Realm Contract for the purposes of submitting a Stage 3 application is ongoing following information gleaned from enabling/site investigation works. Heritage funding obtained by Sophia for roof repairs to the convent building, currently underway.
County Hotel, Portlaoise	10	Stage 1 approval for 11 units Redesign advised, reducing units to 10. Site

		investigation underway (bat and asbestos surveys) to inform a Stage 2 application and Part VIII documents to be prepared. Expected publication of Part VIII planning application Q1 2022.
Vacant Homes Office		12 vacant properties have been acquired by CPO and 8 properties are currently going through the CPO process. A total of 35 applications have been received to date under the Repair & Leasing Scheme. 1 Lease has commenced under the Scheme. 5 applications have been approved to proceed which will yield a total of 9 units of accommodation. 2 applications are currently under consideration. 47 vacant houses identified as being suitable for the provision of social housing and further action may be taken in these cases. A number of properties have been identified as having potential as development sites for social housing and will be examined further.

Turnkey Projects

Scheme	Units	Progress
Main St., Borris-in Ossory	11	Contractors on site. 6 units complete with Phase 2 (5 units) in Q4 2021.
Clonaslee	7	Complete
Church Avenue, Stradbally	31	Revised turnkey application approved by the Department 6 th October 2021. Expected delivery Q4 2022.
Bruach Na Habhainn, Killeen	4	Turnkey application approved by the Department 7 th September. Expected delivery Q3 2022.
The Orchard, Ballylunan	5	Turnkey application approved by the Department 6 th October. Expected delivery Q3 2022.
Market Square, Portarlington	18	Turnkey application approved by the Department 20 th October. Expected delivery Q2 2023.

Approved Housing Bodies Delivery

Scheme	Units	AHB	Progress
Wilton Lawns, Portarlington	2	Respond	Contractor is on site with delivery expected at the end of Q4 2021.
Holdbrook, Portlaoise	20	Cluid	Phase 1 – 10 units – have been delivered. Phase 2 (10 units) to be delivered in September 2022.
Clonrooske Abbey, Portlaoise	32	Cluid	Contractor is on site with the development to be delivered in phases in 2022.
Spa Street, Droughill, Portarlington	26	Oaklee	Expected delivery in February 2022

The Meadows, Mountrath Road, Portlaoise	48	Cluid	CALF funding has been approved for delivery of these units. Delivery is expected in 2023
Ballymorris Court, Portarlington	46	Cluid	Contractor is on site. Expected phased delivery in 2022 and 2023
Harpers Lane, Portlaoise	44	Respond	Contractor is on site. Expected delivery in Q4 2022.
The Maltings & Roselawn	55	Cluid	Contractor is on site. Delivery of 15 houses in Roselawn is expected in 2022 and delivery of 40 apartments in The Maltings is expected in 2023.

Housing For All – Affordable Housing

The Local Government Management Agency, via the Housing Delivery Coordination Office, is currently assisting Local Authorities where an affordability constraint has been identified.

In this regard, an advertisement seeking a Call for Proposals from Home Builders and Housing Developers to enter into Advance Purchase Turnkey Agreements for un-commenced residential developments, primarily for affordable and mixed tenure housing was recently issued by the CCMA to national media in this regard, in which Laois was included.

Laois County Council will prepare a local call for such proposals in the coming weeks. Proposals received and deemed suitable will go through an evaluation process and if appropriate, will then form the basis of an application by the Local Authority for funding under the Affordable Housing Fund to achieve affordability.

Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan

Since 1st February 2018, 127 Rebuilding Ireland Home Loans have been approved, 104 applications have been declined. Reasons for negative outcomes include:

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

HAP

There are currently 935 active HAP tenancies, 318 of which have transferred from rent supplement.

Private House Grants

To the 10th October 2021 the following grants for privately owned houses were approved:

- 110 Housing Aid for Older People Grant Applications approved in the sum of €494,838
- 79 Mobility Aids Grants approved in the sum of €344,360
- 51 Housing Adaptation Grants approved in the sum of €480,140

Grants for Persons with a Disability – Social Housing

To the 12th November 2021, 23 DPG adaptation works and 2 extensions totalling €327,978 are underway or completed.

Private Rented Inspections

Due to Covid-19 restrictions in place since the start of the year, physical inspections were suspended until 14th July 2021. At 12th November, a total of 142 inspections of Private Rented properties have been carried out since physical inspections resumed.

Housing Maintenance

Month	Work Orders Raised	Work Orders Closed	Work Orders Open
January 21	234	234	0
February 21	216	216	0
March 21	252	251	1
April 21	368	363	5
May 21	329	323	6
June 21	301	280	21
July 21	290	253	37
August 21	325	268	57
September 21	338	244	94
October 21	305	102	203
TOTAL (YTD)	2,958	2,534	424

Housing Re-Lets

Month	LA Keys Surrendered	Properties Acquired	Works Completed
January 21	11	1	7
February 21	3	2	7
March 21	7	1	10
April 21	12	0	5
May 21	10	1	7
June 21	7	1	7
July 21	9	2	5
August 21	9	0	6
September 21	5	0	8
October 21	9	0	12
TOTAL (YTD)	82	8	74

NOTE: There are currently 47 vacant units from our existing stock and a further 12 units that the Council acquired recently. Works are either ongoing on these properties or specifications are being prepared for works to be carried out.

The Council has been notified of an allocation towards our costs in refurbishing 63 units over the course of 2021.

Midlands Housing Retrofit Programme:

Budget approval has been granted 160 homes as part of a pilot initiative under the above programme.

The scope of eligible works includes:

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

Houses must achieve a minimum BER rating of “B2” (or Cost Optimal Equivalent).

Tenders for Phase 1 (62 units – Mountain View, Quigley Park and Radharc Alain) has been awarded and works commenced in September.

Tenders for Phase 2 (47 units – Hillview & Derrymore) has been awarded and works are due to commence in November.

Tenders for Phase 3 (51 units – Kirwan Park) has been awarded and works are due to commence in December.

Energy Efficiency/Retrofitting Programme:

Budget approval has been granted for the retrofitting of 31 homes in O'Moore Place, Portlaoise. Planned Maintenance works are being considered as part of a overall planned combined programme.

Tenders returned in October and evaluation is ongoing. Implications regarding costs and consequently timelines in relation to delivery are being considered .

Homeless Presentations

Time Period	Homeless Presentations	Emergency Homeless
16 th September – 11 th November 2021	55	20
Year to Date	207	92

Individuals Accessing	Emergency Accommodation as of 11 th November 2021	Transition Accommodation as of 11 th November 2021
Adults	22	0
Children	8	0

Housing Allocations Year to 11th November 2021

Method of Housing Delivery	Numbers allocated YTD
1 st allocation including new builds/acquisitions LCC	14
2 nd and subsequent allocations LCC including refurbished stock	66
Nominations to Approved Housing Bodies	144
Total Allocations	224

Social Housing List at 19th November 2021

Social Housing Applicants	789
Applicants in receipt of HAP	935
Total	1,724

FORWARD PLANNING PROGRESS REPORT

LAOIS DRAFT COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021-2027

Public Consultation on the Proposed Material Amendments concluded on the 21st October 2021. The Chief Executive Report has been circulated to the Elected members on the 17th November 2021. The process of review will conclude at a Council meeting in December where the plan will be adopted and come into effect in January 2022.

Stradbally Road Lands (TYRRELL'S Lands) MASTERPLAN

Public consultation on the masterplan has now ended. A total of 133 no. submissions were received during the four week Draft Masterplan consultation period between 27 October 2020 and 25 October 2021. A Chief Executives Report is currently being prepared responding to submissions. Once this is prepared it will be brought before the Portlaoise MD for their further consideration and endorsement.

Millbrook CPO

The process of evaluation of the EOI's is currently ongoing. Following a shortlisting exercise, 8 interested parties were invited to visit the site and bring forward more detailed submissions. Further evaluation of these proposals will now be undertaken and it is expected to conclude at the beginning of December 2021.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT REPORT

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMPARATIVE FIGURES FROM 2020 TO 2021

Year	Valid applications from 01/01/2021 – 08/11/2021	Valid applications from 01/01/2020 – 08/11/2020
	605	454

Number of valid applications received:	605
Number of decisions made	612
Number of applications granted:	589 (Decisions to Grant)
Number of applications refused:	23 (Decisions to Refuse) 3.8% refusal rate
Invalid applications returned to applicant:	156 (2021 Invalid Applications)
No of requests to date	402
No of meetings held to date Up to and including the 8 th November 2021	384
Wait time	3.5 weeks

ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

Service Review	2021		2020	
	Oct	Jan - Oct 2021	Oct	Jan - Oct 2020
Total number of new cases subject to complaints that were investigated	8	121	5	75
Number of Warning Letters served	32	240	8	227
Number of Enforcement Notices served	3	61	0	51
No of cases referred for legal proceedings	0	6	0	4
Number of cases in Court(incl adjournments)	8	58	4	38
Number of cases Resolved in Court	0	4	1	3
Number of Files Closed	14	117	12	112
Number of cases on system	177	177	165	165
Enforcement Costs recouped	€ 357.84	€ 10,545.94	€ 1,755.46	€ 5,641.93
Number of Valid Retention Applications Received relating to Enforcement Action	3	38	2	29
Fees received through Valid Retention Applications Received relating to Enforcement Action	€1,833.20	€26,093.92	€760.00	€31,751.48
Legal fees paid	€18,302.40	€37,056.54	€1,047.86	€3,534.10

Heritage Officer Update Report

MRTTT Just Transition Project Conservation and Pollination

Film company will be appointed to record progress with the project. Tenders have been evaluated and a recommendation for appointment made.

Work on the conservation plans is ongoing and minor site works in Offaly are ready to be carried out.

New Heritage Plan

The new draft Laois Heritage and Biodiversity Strategy was approved by Management and the Strategic Policy Committee (7th October) and was placed on public display at Consult Laois until 19th November (extended from 10th November). Following public consultation and any revision required, the plan is on target to go before the full Council for adoption in December.

1) *Raise Awareness:*

- a) All awareness events including Heritage Week, short films about aspects of the heritage of Laois, the *In your Nature* Podcast are all complete.

2) *Connecting Communities – Local Heritage Projects:*

- a) Timahoe Monastic Site – Vegetation management is complete. Tree surgery has been postponed.

- b) Portlaoise Plane events complete
- 3) *Publications – Projects underway include:*
 - a) Fort Protector Conservation Plan – now with the designer and will be completed by year-end.
 - b) Gardening for Biodiversity as Gaeilge – final design now complete, hard copies have been delivered.
 - c) Phase II Rock of Dunamase Book –Phase II complete. Phase III next year will see the book published and launched.

National Biodiversity Action Plan

Wetland Survey desk survey is ongoing by Wetland Surveys Ireland and draft report has been submitted. Work on the Abbeyleix Bog research project is complete.

Conservation Grants

Built Heritage Investment Scheme
Final recoupments due 26th November.

Historic Structures Fund projects

Final recoupments due 26th November.

Applications for the **Built Heritage Investment Scheme and Historic Structures Fund for 2022** have opened already and details are on the Laois.ie website.

Community Monuments Fund

Community Monuments Fund for conservation of archaeological sites – all six applications were successful in securing funding from Dept Housing, Local Government and Heritage. All projects are now complete.

The Community Monuments Fund for 2022 will be launched shortly by Minister Malcolm Noonan.

Creative Ireland

Heritage and Landscape Training “Know your Locality”

Online training course in local heritage (with Creative Ireland funding) held over 5 evenings in September. The course went very well and a second course will be held with Creative Ireland funding in early 2022. An field trip was held at the Rock of Dunamase on Sunday 31st October.

Ronnie Mathews Archive

The archivist has started work on cataloguing the Ronnie Mathews archive, temporarily housed at Bloom HQ.

Portlaoise Plane and Col Fitzmaurice Commemoration

James Fitzmaurice Commemoration Group are planning a Festival of Flight for next year featuring the Portlaoise Plane, the Fitzmaurice archive and the Music Generation Laois music piece. We are working with MGL in the planning of this.

Town and Village Renewal and Regeneration Projects

Urban Regeneration Portlaoise: Old St Peter’s Graveyard

Work at Old St Peter’s is complete.

Portlaoise Destination Town

The design element of the project is due to be completed before Christmas with signage to be manufactured and installed before mid-2022.

Timahoe TVRS

Design Team led by Lotts Architecture for conservation work at Timahoe have been appointed and initial site meetings have been held. Works due to be complete May 2022.

Stradbally TVRS

Design team for Stradbally Bridge element of the TVRS has been appointed. Meetings have been held with the community on other elements of the project and discussions with Community Section and Area Office are ongoing.

BROADBAND OFFICERS REPORT

1. National Broadband Ireland (NBI)

Section 254 Licences have been applied for in the Eastern Municipal Area to provide pole network for rollout. NBI are currently working on the Programme of works for rollout in the county. NBI are engaging with LCC in relation to above and in relation to hedge cutting.

2. WIFI for EU.

Roll out of the WIFI project has commenced in Portarlinton and meetings with Business Association Rep has been facilitated with the Contractor. Further discussions will enable the selection of properties for installation of the equipment and roll out.

Local Enterprise & Economic Development

Local Enterprise Office (LEO):

There continues to be a steady demand for LEO supports as follows:

- €405,582 approved in grant aid to 18 Laois businesses
- 1033 owners/managers/employees participated on LEO training programmes
- 173 potential entrepreneurs have participated on Start Your Own Business Courses to-date
- 209 Laois businesses have availed of mentoring to-date in finance, marketing, exporting, HR & health & safety.
- 46 Trading Online Voucher approvals to the value of €145,124
- 17 Laois Companies currently taking part in a Green for Micro programme
- 27 Laois companies currently taking part in the Client Stimulus Programme

Business Support Unit:

- Portlaoise Façade Enhancement Scheme: 13 applications received
- Portarlinton Façade Enhancement Scheme: 47 applications received
- Town & Village Streetscape Enhancement Scheme 2021: 65 applications received

RATE WAIVERS: Quarter 4 of 2021

On the 12th October 2021, a further rates waiver scheme was announced for the final quarter of 2021. This waiver applies to businesses in the hospitality, leisure, entertainment and tourism related sectors. €420,123 has been applied to those specified businesses.

NTA – Bus Shelter Enabling Works

Funding in the amount of €70,007.00 has been secured for bus shelter works at 5 no. locations in county Laois. The locations are as follows;

- Mountrath x 2,
- Portlaoise (Kilminchy) x 2
- Ballybrittas x 1

Outdoor Seating and Accessories fund

The Outdoor Seating and accessories fund provides a level of financial support to tourism and hospitality businesses to purchase or upgrade equipment to provide additional outdoor seating. The fund closed to new applications on 8th October 2021 and is administered by the Roads Department. The table below sets out the level of interest in Laois.

Expressions of Interest	105
Ineligible	20
Grants Paid to date	65
Value of grants paid	€200,579.71
Applications in process	20

Flood Relief Culvert at Shannon Stream, Mountrath

On the 5th November 2021 An Bord Pleanála issued planning consent, with conditions, for an overflow, flood relief culvert at the Shannon Stream, Shannon Road, Mountrath, Co. Laois. Works are underway to deliver the Scheme, all with a view to enhancing flood protection measures for local properties.

River Drainage Maintenance

Overview

2020 represented the first in a new multi-annual works programme for the provision of river drainage maintenance services in County Laois. The adoption of the multi-annual approach allows for the various environmental and ecological assessments, which are required to inform and underpin physical works, to be prioritised and put in place, prior to any river bank vegetation clearance and/or in-river works being completed. This approach is required to comply with statutory provisions.

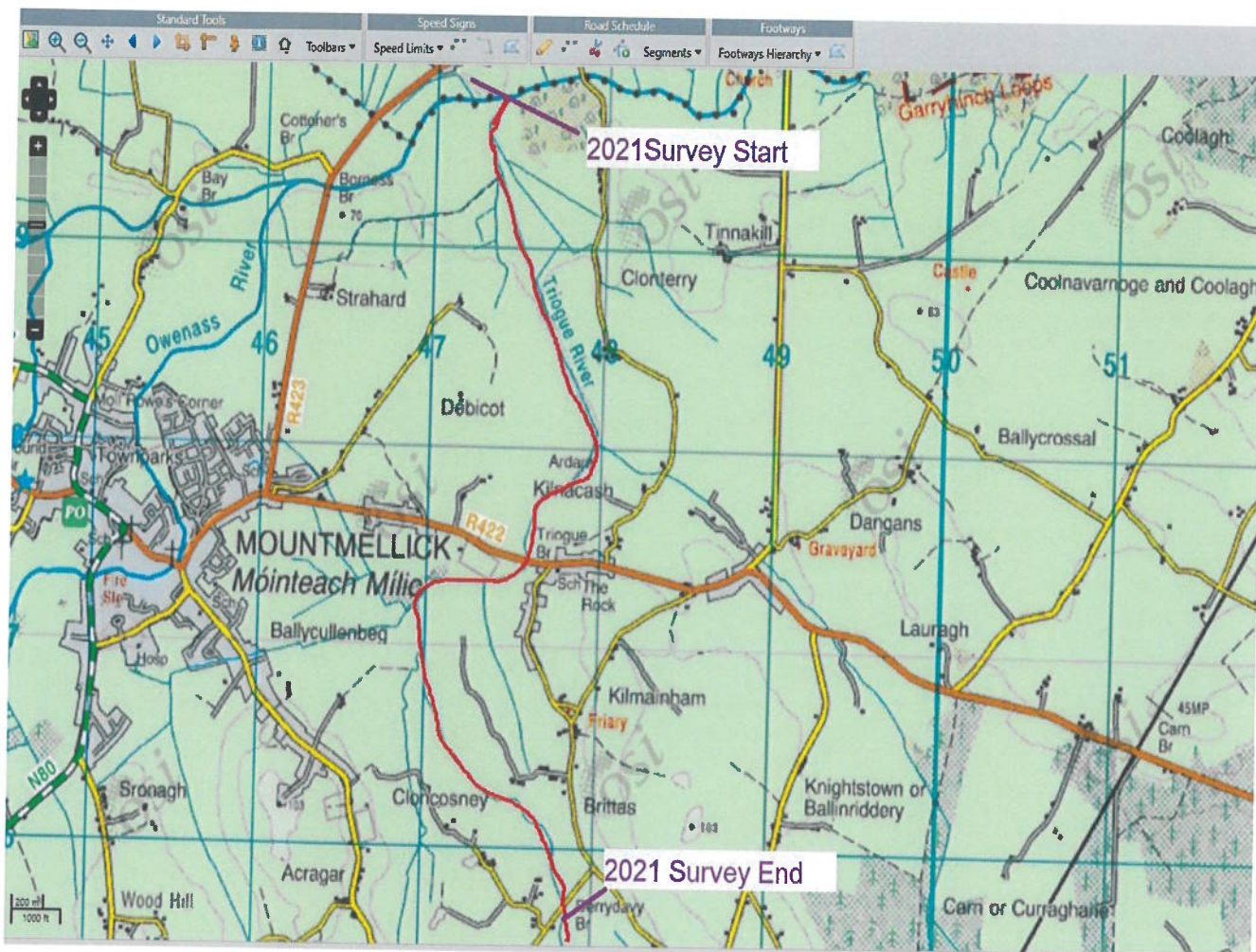
By the end of 2021 approximately €300,000 will have been spent in the calendar year on river drainage maintenance measures. Unspent funds will be capitalised and carried forward to 2022 and beyond as the extent of consented-to works continues to broaden.

In recent years Elected Members have set aside approximately €500,000 per annum to support the provision of drainage maintenance services in County Laois. In the first instance these funds are to be targeted at the 7 Drainage Districts for which Laois County Council holds specific statutory responsibilities.

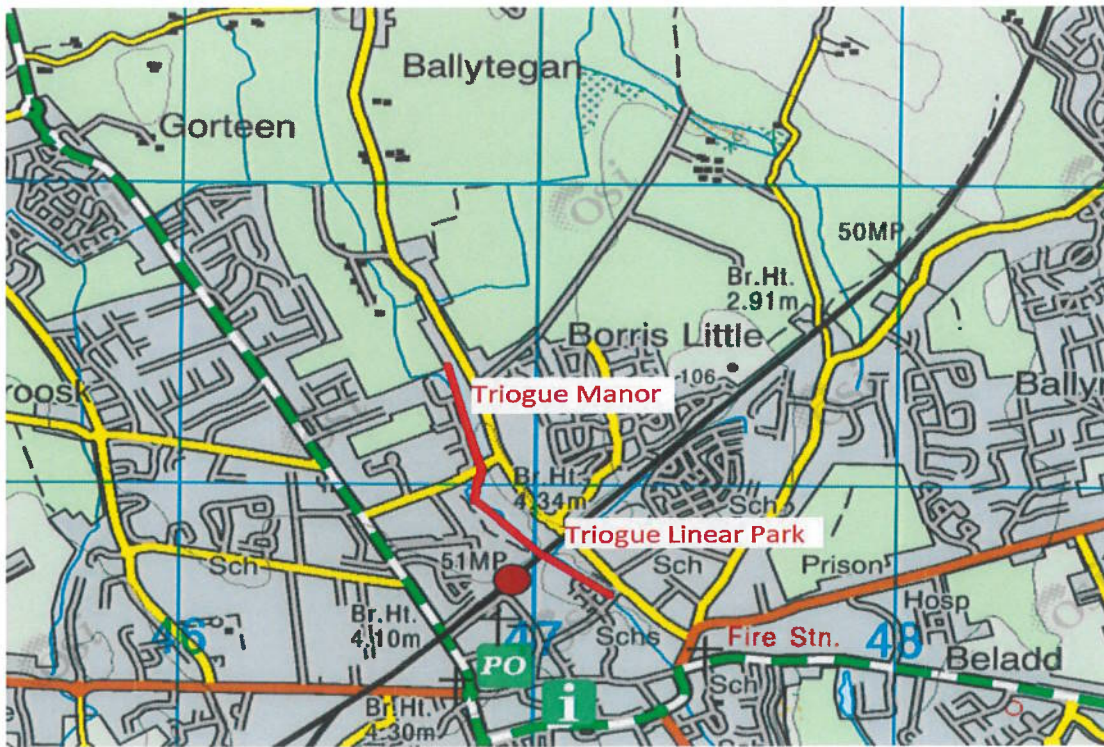
Summary of Works undertaken in 2021

Portlaoise MD;

- a) Triogue Environmental/Ecological Baseline Assessment - Baseline Ecology Assessment with a view to consents for specific works in 2022



b) Survey Removal of vegetation debris and deadwood - Triogue Manor and Triogue Linear Park

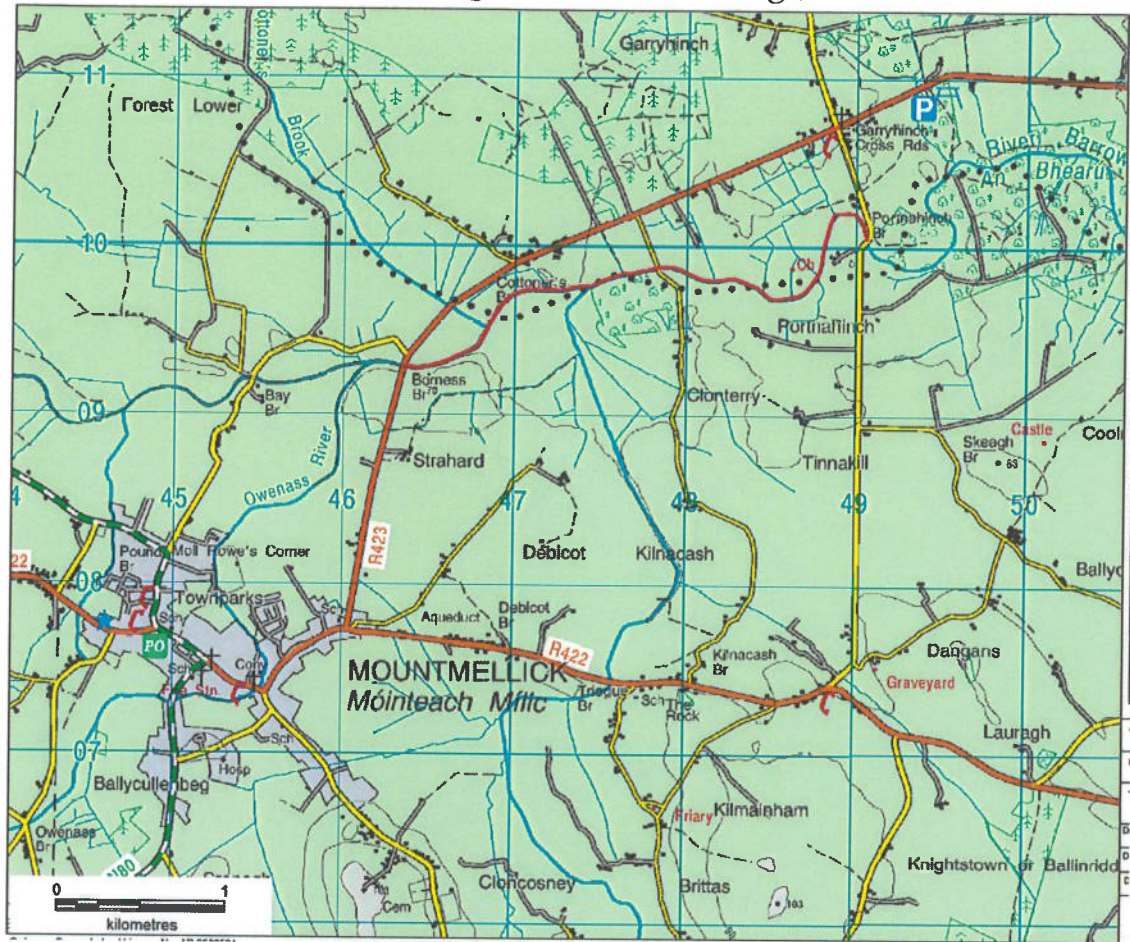


c) Kilminchy lakes outfall through Colliers Lane & The Hermitage estate

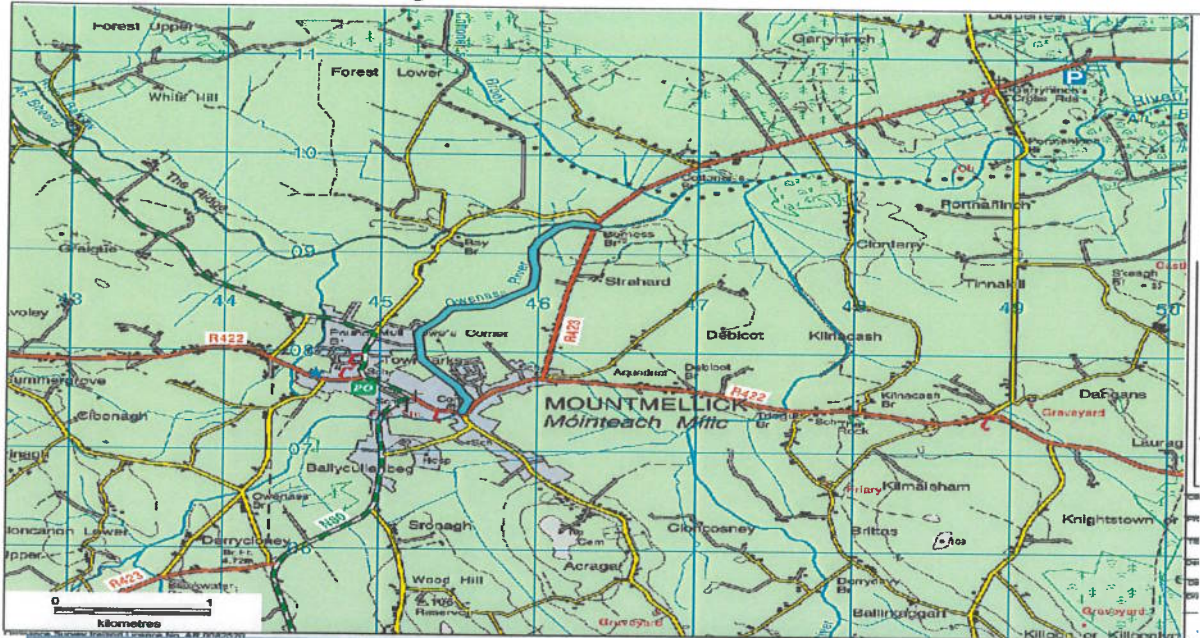


Borris-in-Ossory Mountmellick MD;

a) River Barrow (Boreness Bridge to Portnahinch Bridge)



b) River Owenass; Silt & Vegetation removal



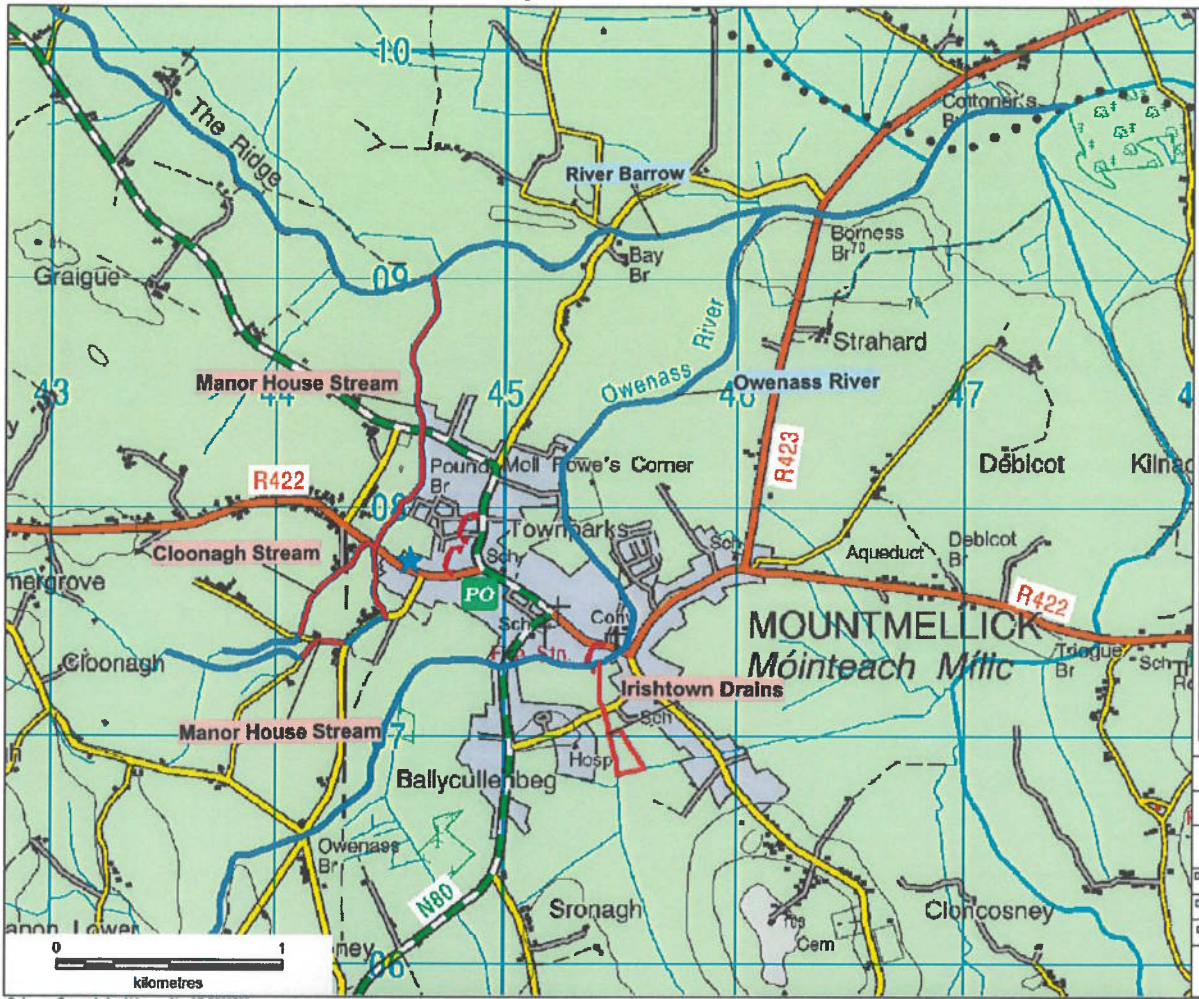
c) River Owenass; Irishtown Bridge, Mountmellick Silt Removal



d) River Oweness; Convent Bridge, Mountmellick Silt Removal



e) Mountmellick Drains; silt and vegetation removal



Portarlington Graiguecullen MD

- a) River Barrow between Stradbally River confluence and the Blackford Stream confluence. Overall length of the River Barrow improved was c.800m. This involved silt removal above the water line in the Barrow.



River Barrow between Stradbally River and Blackford Stream ~ Before



River Barrow between Stradbally River and Blackford Stream ~ After

- b) River Barrow between Belan and the M7 Motorway. Overall length of the River Barrow improved was c.2.5km. This involved silt removal above the water line in the Barrow.



River Barrow between Belan and the M7 Motorway ~ Before



River Barrow between Belan and the M7 Motorway ~ After

- c) Timogue River between Poles Bridge and the Stradbally River. Overall length of the Timogue River improved was c.500m. This involved silt removal and vegetation removal along the riverbank, the removal of localised silt build-up immediately downstream of Poles Bridge, strimming of bankside vegetation and the pruning/ removal of a willow tree causing an obstruction.



Timogue River (Poles Bridge to Stradbally River) ~ Before



Timogue River (Poles Bridge to Stradbally River) ~ After

- d) Stradbally River (Stradbally to Garrans Bridge). Tree pruning /removal of fallen trees.



Stradbally River (trees encroaching into river and fallen trees) ~ Before



Stradbally River (trees encroaching into river and fallen trees) ~ After

Updates on Flood Relief Schemes

1. Mountmellick Flood Relief Scheme

Design works are progressing on this Scheme following the community consultation process on the Emerging Preferred Options earlier this year. The design of the Mountmellick Flood Relief Scheme is complex taking account of the myriad of water courses influencing the flood relief zone. Very significant learnings regarding key flood influences arose from Storms Ciara, Denis and Jorge in Q1 2020. The next key milestones for the project will be the publication of the preferred option, local community consultation regarding same and subsequent submission to An Bord Pleanála.

In the interim various measures have been provided by Laois County Council to enhance local flood resilience;

- a) Procurement, delivery and shared purchase of 61 Individual Property Protection Barriers in Mountmellick Town (more available on request),
- b) Road Raising, Culvert upgrades and local drainage maintenance measures throughout Mountmellick Town,
- c) Significant vegetation and silt clearance along the Owenass River and River Barrow,
- d) New Pump purchased to support flood management and
- e) Water level gauges on the Pound River (Manor Road and Chapel Street) to advise the implementation of appropriate local flood response measures.

Whilst none of the 5 items listed above, individually or in combination, represent a flood relief scheme, they do (and have) enhanced local resilience to flood events and will compliment and support the Flood Relief Scheme, when in place.

2. Portarlinton Flood Relief Scheme

Data capture and design works are progressing on this Scheme. Topographic survey field work is complete on the 3 works elements awarded. Time sensitive ecological baseline surveys have commenced with subsequent tenders awarded for additional, specific and identified species surveys. Works are progressing on the various chapters of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (Land, Visual Impact Assessment, Archaeology etc.). Contract awarded for the completion of CCTV survey and this survey is ongoing. The Hydraulic model build for the scheme has commenced. First public engagement event for the Scheme has commenced and will be officially launched week beginning the 29th November, 2021.

3. Clonaslee

Progress Meeting No. 11 was held on the 4th November, 2021. Topographic survey field work is complete and data deliverables received. Detailed Ecology survey works (Bat, Otter, Crayfish etc.) completed. Constraints study received and under review. Hydraulic Model build advancing.

4. Mountrath

The OPW are currently undertaking a Scheme Viability Review for Mountrath Flood Relief Scheme. Pending completion of that Review, Mountrath is not a funded flood relief scheme.

Separately delivery of two minor flood relief works schemes, one to deal with localised, specific flood risk in Shannon Street (approved by An Bord Pleanála on 5th November) and the other to provide for sewer diversion on Patrick Street are being delivered at present. Works are underway for Shannon Street and a contractor is instructed to commence works on Patrick Street to relocate the steel-encased pipe/sewer which crosses the eye of the bridge on Patrick Street

5. Portlaoise

OPW have commenced a Scheme Viability Review for the Area For Assessment, assisted by Laois County Council's Capital Project Office. Pending completion of that Review, Mountrath is not a funded flood relief scheme.

1. **Kyletelesha Landfill, Transfer Station and Civic Amenity Site, Portlaoise:**
Normal services continue at the Kyletelesha Landfill Facility. A Waste Licence Review is to be undertaken for the continued acceptance of C&D waste materials. An environmental consultant will be appointed in the coming weeks.
2. **Portarlinton Civic Amenity Site:**
This facility is operated and managed under contract with Bord Na Mona Recycling.
3. **Historic Unregulated Waste Disposal Sites:**
The Environmental Site Assessments for the 3 unregulated waste disposal sites (Aghanure, Killabban & Rathdowney Road, Durrow) are nearing completion and O’Callaghan Moran & Associates, Environmental Consultants, are preparing the final report for each site.
4. **Bring Banks:**
A total of 1,621.63 tonnes of collected recyclable material is recorded to the 12th November 2021.
5. **Waste Enforcement & Litter Management:**

(a) **Waste Enforcement**

Table 1 below details the number and types of complaints received to date by the Environment Section.

Complaint Type	Litter	Abandoned Cars	Waste Enforcement incl. C&D	Management & Infrastructure (Bring Banks)	Air	Water	Noise	Vet	Total
Total	164	28	567	9	44	49	23	20	905

Table 1 - Environmental Complaint Register

- 2021 - 905 complaints logged for investigation to end of October 2021.
- 2021 – 76 fixed penalty notices issued to date, for breaches of Litter Pollution Act, 1997
- Notices – Two Section 9 notices under the (Litter Pollution Act) and four Section 55 Notices under the Waste Management Act have been issued to date in 2021 regarding unauthorised litter or waste activities. Waste Enforcement Officers are working to resolve issues where possible, but all cases will be pursued through Courts as necessary.

6. **Illegal Dumping:**

Waste Enforcement continue to tackle illegal dumping in various problematic areas within the County in accordance with current legislation. Enforcement efforts are limited by virtue of the current prohibition on the use of CCTV etc.

Table 2 below shows quantities of illegally dumped waste collected between 01/01/2021 and the 31/10/2021.

Illegal Dumping Cleanups – 2021					
Tonnages					
Month	Contractor	Litter Wardens	Month	Contractor	Litter Wardens
January	31.92	6.5	June	14.50	6.6
February	12.60	22.49	July	10.00	9.6
March	65.58	13.48	August	12.35	5.26
April	25.02	11.8	Sept	25.04	8.96
May	29.14	13.62	October	21.8	11.1
Total Collected			357.36 Tonnes		

Table 2 – Quantities of Illegally Dumped Waste Collected

7. Anti-Dumping Initiatives 2021

All 2021 ADI projects are completed and claim submitted.

- a) **Extended National Spring Clean/Autumn Blitz 2021**
Completed during September 2021 in conjunction with Tidy Towns and kindly sponsored by Bord Na Mona.
- b) **UAV/Drone technology and Audio Device**
The audio messaging device (AMD) is currently installed at Bruders Bridge, Portlaoise to tackle the high level of illegal dumping occurring in this area. There is a lot of positive feedback on the effectiveness of this device.

Two UAV's purchased and training completed. Drones to be used when the appropriate legislation is enacted.
- c) **Bulky Waste Amnesty**
Over 300 mattresses collected and approx. 40 tonnes of Bulky household waste were collected from targeted problem areas of frequent illegal dumping in advance of Halloween bonfires. The positive result of this was evident in smaller & safer levels of Bonfire activity in these areas.
- d) **Clean up of Bog Areas – Cloninagh/Errill Bogs**
Work completed on Cloninagh & Errill Bog.

8. Anti-Dog Fouling Campaign

- An active dog fouling awareness billboard campaign was run from the 6th to 19th September at 3 locations throughout the County.
- Around 36 new dog fouling signs and 34 Mutt Mitt Dispensers have been erected around the County over the last month.
- The Green Dog Walkers Forms are online since August 2021 where a further 138 Laois resident dog walkers have signed up. A thank you letter, goody pack and instructions on how to report dog fouling incidences was posted to each participant.
- Weekly Anti Dog Fouling posts are being posted on social media.
- Laois County Council continues to support local residents and Tidy Towns Group with the provision of mutt mitt dispensers and bags at numerous locations around Laois.

9. Anti Litter/Anti Graffiti

An Anti Litter/Anti Graffiti themed mosaic was designed and created by the children of Dunamaise College Portlaoise at Portlaoise Leisure Centre in conjunction with the Sports office and Environment Section. The mosaic was unveiled on Monday 22nd November by Councillor Conor Bergin.



10. Bonfire Night 2021:

Bonfire night is used by some members of the public to burn unwanted waste such as mattresses and furniture. However due to the running of the Bulky Waste Amnesty under the Anti-Dumping Initiative prior to Halloween and the success of this. The amount of bonfires and size of these were on a much smaller scale to previous years. Kirwan Park Mountmellick 2020 three lorry loads of Bonfire material was removed by the Council compared to 2021 where a small scale of material was gathered.

Bonfire awareness social media campaigns, with viewers in the region of 5,119 continued during the month of October on Facebook and Laois County Council Website, alerting the public to the dangers of Bonfires and how to report incidences of same.

11. Environmental Protection:

a) Protect the Water Quality Status in all Water Bodies:

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

- Investigation ongoing into surface water discharges to the lakes at Kilminchy.
- Investigation into unauthorised wastewater discharges in the Triogue River at Kyletalesha, Portlaoise
- On-going assessment of planning applications with regards to water quality protection
- Regulation of Discharge Licensed Companies.
- Several Advisory Notices under the Water Pollution Acts 2007 & 2012 have been served relating to domestic wastewater treatment systems and continue to be enforced.
- Implementation of Water Framework Directive

b) Air & Noise:

- In conjunction with the EPA, an NO₂ (Nitrogen Dioxide) monitoring survey is being carried out in the towns of Abbeyleix, Durrow and Cullahill to quantify prevailing air quality. Diffusion tubes were erected at 20 locations across the region on the 6th July and will be monitored for six months.

Emergency Planning, Fire Services & Flood Relief

- In 2021 (to 12th November), Laois County Fire & Rescue Service attended 423 emergency incidents consisting of 195 fires, 153 special service incidents & 75 false alarms.

Turnout by Station*:

Portlaoise – 158	Portarlinton - 91	Stradbally – 54	Mountmellick – 98
Abbeyleix - 44	Mountrath – 49	Durrow – 47	Rathdowney – 34

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

Fire Services Capital Programme

- Planning & design is continuing for the Mountmellick Fire Station Upgrade, a €150,000 project, which consists of a fire service drill tower & new concrete yard to the rear of the fire station. The design tender process is now closed and Tobin Consulting Engineers have been appointed as consultants & PSDP for the upgrade work.
- In recent months Elected Members were advised of an allocation of €140,000 for the acquisition of a new Water Tanker to support Fire Services operations in County Laois. The tanker chassis has been delivered to HPMP Fire, who are now in the process of building the body. Delivery of the body is expected late 2021 or early 2022.

Public Water and Wastewater Capital

The following capital works have been approved by Irish Water:-

Durrow – bring an additional production borewell into service in Fermoy – M + E works substantially complete, borewell being tested currently and pumped to waste. Provision of a storage/blend tank and booster pump set also being discussed with Irish Water.

Coolbanagher – PW09 was pumped to waste first with a sample being taken for testing and then to production for a brief period to check the sustainable yield of the well. Currently PW09 is on standby to be used when required. Irish Water now progressing with developing well PW07 and PW08.

Disinfection/PH control programme - Civil works have now commenced in Derryguile, Kyle, and Lough WTP. MEICA works have also been progressed at Knocks, Derryguile and Ballyroan WTP. Site works are also intended to progress substantially at Five Wells WTP before the end of the year with upgrade works progressing at Derrymoyle and Kilminchy WTP early in 2022.

Castletown WwTP – Inlet Works Storm and Sludge Program, new storm tank and sludge holding tank intended to be installed on site by the end of 2021. New decanter installed and commissioned. A budget for the repair/replacement of the leaking outfall pipe was received from Irish Water. A meeting was held with Mountrath Golf Club and access agreed. The outfall pipe was exposed and leaking section was replaced and reinstated. The situation will be monitored over the next few months to ensure that this has resolved the issue.

Containerised unit program – UV containerised unit along with break tank have been installed on site with the commissioning/testing/process proving now complete. Disinfection upgrade works due to commence on site by CWL on the 15/11/2021.

Leakage Reduction Programme – Find & Fix leak detection being carried out at present in Portarlinton West, Portlaoise and Graiguecullen. ANB submitted by LCC to Irish Water for replacement of 150mm dia. asbestos watermain 900m long in the Swan supply due to ongoing watermain bursts in the area. A list of Mains Rehab, BYS and Lead Replacement projects have recently been submitted by LCC Water Services Department to IW to obtain some feedback with respect to potential funding for these works.

Taking in Charge

Continue working with IW to take the 22 no. outstanding legacy estates in charge by IW - already taken in charge by LCC. Approx. 1/3rd of these will require considerable funding to upgrade the water services assets.

Multi Annual Rural Water Programme 2019-2021

Measure 2 -Public Health Compliance

- The Heath GWS: Work in progress.

Measure 3 - Enhancement and Water Conservation

- Ballacolla GWS: proposal for funding for a project which involves the laying of a water main and associated valves and reconnections to existing customer connections, submitted to the Department for approval.
- Heath GWS: Work in progress.

Measure 6 - Community Water and Wastewater Connection

- New GWS at Shanboe: Work in progress,
- Goodwin Estate, Rosenallis: Contractor being appointed currently following tender process.

All claims have been paid to GWSs and all recoupment documents submitted to Department for payment.

Well Grants – Applications continue to be processed. 35 applications have been received to date in 2021.

Laboratory - Staff continue working a shift pattern to foster social distancing within the Laboratory. All required testing will be carried out during 2021 and the sample throughput is anticipated to be 4,500. A new more efficient and secure laboratory information management system (LabWorks) was installed in January. Significant capital investment in instrumentation to improve testing capabilities continues and the purchase of a Graphite Furnace Spectrometer has been processed. Work to maintain the existing customer base and seek and secure new business from neighbouring Local Authorities, LAWPRO and LCC's Environment Section in accordance with market opportunities is ongoing.

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

CORPORATE

The 2022/2023 Draft Register of Electors has been published. The Claims Court is due to be held on the 3rd December 2021.

Laois Covid-19 Community Response

Covid-19 Helpline

To date (30.03.2020 – 29.10.2021) the helpline has received 818 calls.

Call Breakdown

Calls Received 2020 – 732

Calls Jan 2021 – 24

Calls Feb 2021 – 13

Calls March 2021 – 13

Calls April 2021 – 10

Calls May 2021 - 0

Calls June 2021 – 3

Calls July 2021 – 4

Calls August 2021 – 7

Calls September 2021 – 9

Call October 2021 – 3

On the 29th October the Dept communicated that given the most recent Government decisions in relation to the reopening of the economy and society, as well as the fall in demand for the services provided under the Community Call initiative, it is considered the appropriate time to inform local authorities that there is no longer a need to continue the operation of their Community Response Fora. This instruction was issued on the basis and understanding that

- Any calls to helplines are re-routed through normal local authority services and managed accordingly, and
- Community Response Fora can be quickly re-initiated at local authority level should they be required, based on public health advice.

PPN organised Walks/Tours

A guided walk of Ballyadams Castle near Ballylinan, led by Laois Archaeologist and Chair of Laois Heritage Society, Sean Murray took place on the 2nd October. This castle is one of the tallest manmade structures in Laois at 6 storeys high, with views from the top all the way to Athy.

A Memorial Walk in remembrance of the late Mick Dowling RIP was held on Sunday 17th October at the Ridge of Capard.

PPN Member Groups also attended a walk at Roundwood House, Mountrath on Sunday 24th October and discovered the wild treasures Ireland has to offer in Autumn with wild food expert Mary Bulfin.

Scam Awareness Talk

The issue of Scam Awareness was raised at the September Meeting of the JPC, and arising from same Laois PPN organised a Scam Awareness Talk in association with An Garda Siochana. The online event took place on Wednesday 13th October.

Laois Connects

This year the Laois Connects Programme took place from the 1st October to the 31st of October 2021. Traditionally the programme would have been implemented over a one-week period but with the impact of the pandemic, the initiative was extended to make the programme as accessible to as many people as possible. In total 96 events were provided by 24 organisations in a blend of formats. A small sample of these events were Wellness Workshops, Tai Chi Yoga, Wellbeing through Art, Felt making workshop, Balance & Mobility Classes, A talk with Rory (Rory's Stories) and many more.

Laois Community and Voluntary Awards

The Cathaoirleach of Laois County Council, Cllr. Conor Bergin, launched the 2021 Laois Community & Voluntary Awards. The purpose of the awards is to acknowledge groups and individuals who, through their commitment to voluntary and community activities, have played a significant role in enhancing the quality of life in their communities. Closing date for applications is 19th November 2021.

Laois Comhairle na nÓg

Laois Comhairle na nÓg held their AGM online again this year on 4 November 2021. It was attended by 71 students from all the secondary schools in Laois as well as members from Mountmellick and Portlaoise Family Resource centres, members of Youth Work Ireland Laois, Youth Reach Mountmellick, Cllr Conor Bergin, Chairperson of Laois County Council and members of the Steering Committee. It was a great success. 2 members of Laois Comhairle na nÓg will record their TED talks this month.

Community Activities Fund

This funding scheme was announced by the Department on 11th November 2021, with an allocation to Laois LCDC of €273,048. Full details are awaited from DRCD, on receipt of which the Scheme will be advertised and open for applications.

Abbeyleix On The Double

Laois County Council conveys its congratulations to the Abbeyleix Tidy Towns Committee following their outstanding success in winning the "Tidiest Small Town" category in the annual Tidy Towns Competitions sponsored by Super Valu.

In so doing, it is noted that Abbeyleix fell short by one solitary point in winning the overall national title. Laois County Council salutes the hard work and commitment of the Abbeyleix Tidy Towns Committee and its volunteers.

The Council is also pleased to note that the collaboration between Laois County Council and Abbeyleix Tidy Towns achieved a first place category award for the Abbeyleix Community

CLIMATE ACTION

Reuse Month Videos

October was Reuse Month. We produced a series of online Reuse Month videos showcasing local repair and reuse businesses featuring Taz from The Useless project funded by the EPA under LAPN fund. These videos collectively received over 50k views on Social Media.

Energy Upgrades to Council buildings

Laois County Council completed a number of energy efficiency improvement works to council buildings which were part funded under the Better Energy Communities Grant from SEAI. Solar PV panels were installed on Portarlinton Leisure Centre, new BMS systems were installed in County Hall and Portlaoise Leisure Centre. Internal and external LED lighting retrofits were installed in County Hall which will result in 68% reduction of energy consumption for these fittings.

SPORT & LEISURE UPDATE

- ORIS Funding Announcements October 2021 - Under Measure 1 LCC was successful in securing funding of €149,569 for 7 Community projects for walking trail upgrading and development
- Works at Portlaoise Leisure Centre are progressing, and the management company is currently recruiting staff. Portlaoise Leisure Centre pool opened on the 22nd of November 2021 to facilitate the local swimming club. The Swimming Club are being facilitated with 13 hours per week from next week.
- External inspection of all Laois County Council playgrounds was carried out in October 2021 and resulting maintenance works have commenced

ARTS & CULTURE

In the Open | Faoin Spéir – Local title Re:CENTRING –

A large (socially distanced) crowd enjoyed the first of the 7 programmes that took place in Stradbally presented by the DAC and the Arts Office under the Faoin Speir funding scheme. This event included outdoor performances and exhibitions highlighting local talent, and a headline performance by Jack L at the Malthouse in Stradbally.

Laois Connects Event

Laois Arthouse Atrium, Stradbally was a hive of creative activity on Tuesday 26th October as a small group of people enjoyed a safe and relaxing feltmaking workshop with textile artist Marie McGarry, as part of the Laois Connects programme 2021.

Laois Arthouse

The 10 year commemoration of the Arthouse programme is progressing with an overwhelming participation from artists who have had connections to the Arthouse as they returned over 60 works of art in the form of identically sized canvases of their original work as well as a small number of other artworks. This work is now documented and will be included in a special catalogue. A launch of an exhibition of the work and catalogue will take place on Saturday 4th Dec at 2pm.

The Leaves Festival

A fantastic line up of events including readings/discussions, theatre productions, writers in schools and workshops was presented from 2nd to the 7th Nov in partnership with the Dunamais Arts Centre. Highly accomplished writers and panels presented at the Dunamais Arts Centre as well as some online events, all in line with Covid restrictions.

Local Live Performance Scheme

Phase 1 of this funding strand has now completed. A Gala event to screen all the videos which not only assisted the performing artists but showcases the beauty and potential the

county has for film and tourism purposes, will take place in Dunamais Arts Centre on the 25th of November 2021.

Phase 11 – Under this funding programme Laois will avail of a further funding allocation of €143,000 made available by the Dept of Arts. A comprehensive programme of events is planned to take place around the county by the end of 2021.

Creative Ireland Laois Music Generation Laois's Musical Memories is an intergenerational Song-Singing Project for schools, community groups and care settings. Phase 3 was launched on Oct 21 at Laois Music Centre and will include project lead and musician Nuala Kelly working with Portlaoise and Mountmellick Men's Sheds and their grandchildren, and children from Paddock and Rath National Schools and their grandparents.

Laois Heritage Office and Laois County Library Service announced the commencement of work on the Ronnie Mathews Archive Collection and the appointment of professional archivist, Orlagh Connaughton from Eneclann, Ireland's leading history and heritage company. Tim Mathews, son of the late Ronnie Mathews was at the photo call on Nov 11th at Bloom HQ Mountrath where the archive is being temporarily stored.

The Library Services welcome all borrowers back into our libraries, with PC usage and study spaces now available in most branches. In order to comply with social distancing requirements, we will have a reduced capacity so please check with your local library or visit <https://laois.ie/departments/libraries/> for more details.

Art Exhibitions

Our Mountmellick and Abbeyleix branches have beautiful art exhibitions in their galleries each month. For November, Mountmellick Library hosted an exhibition by Laois Quilters of quilts in different styles and techniques made by their members. Abbeyleix Library will be hosting an exhibition by Abbeyleix Photography Club in the gallery for the month of December.

Europe Direct Center Annual Soapbox Competition -Portlaoise Library

Portlaoise Library are delighted to host our annual Europe Direct Soapbox competition again. The regional soapbox competition is organised every year by the Europe Direct Information Centre based at Portlaoise Library. The topic is "*Lies, damned lies and statistics – establishing the truth is impossible in today's world of misinformation, disinformation and propaganda*". This year, we will again be using an online format. Participants are invited to send us their 3-minute presentations by video. These will then be viewed by the panel of judges who will choose a winner and runner up. To register your interest, please email europedirect@laoiscoco.ie for more details.

Historian in Residence

Laois County Library is delighted to commence its third Historian-in-Residence Programme with the appointment of Terry Dunne as the new Laois Historian-in-Residence. The aim of the residency is to reflect national policy on commemorations at a local level, bringing to life the experience of all sections of Laois society a hundred years ago. Utilising the resources and archives of Laois County Library, Terry is developing a research and engagement programme that will explore various aspects of Laois history in the revolutionary period. The residency is supported by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media and Laois County Council under the Community Strand of the 2021 Decade of Centenaries Programme.

Ronnie Mathews Archive Collection

Laois County Library is delighted to announce that work is commencing on the Ronnie Mathews Collection. The collection, acquired earlier this year by Laois County Council, will be processed in conjunction with Eneclann, Ireland's leading history and heritage company. Orlagh Connaughton, a professional archivist with Eneclann, will list the collection contents and physically reorganise the records to facilitate future access and display.

The archive collection of Portarlinton historian Ronnie Mathews was acquired by Laois County Council in 2021. Ronnie Mathews, a well-known historian and author of several books on Portarlinton, had collected documents, maps and artefacts relating to the town over his whole life, and the collection also includes some items collected by his father. The material is now being carefully archived and catalogued by the Laois County Library Service, and arrangements made for any necessary conservation. Funding has been made available through the Creative Ireland Programme (2017 - 2022) for essential archiving and cataloguing work, as we prepare the material to be made available for research and for future display.

Online Events and Programmes

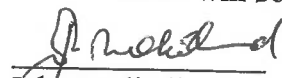
- Laois Library Services funded by the Dormant Accounts Fund joined forces with Offaly Libraries and hosted a series of online Parent Support Webinars for - November - Highlights included "Raising Resilient Children" with Dr. Mary O'Kane," Social Anxiety: Helping teenagers navigate the post-pandemic world" with Dr. Helen Vaughan, and "Managing Fussy Eating for your School-Aged Child" with Caroline O'Connor from Solid Start.
- Free Online Spanish Classes continue each Saturday via Zoom
- Healthy Ireland Online Talks via ZOOM continue with talks on subjects such as "Mindful Eating", "Menopause", "Social anxiety and teenagers" and "Future Proofing your Brain and Brain Health". History Animator Michael Moylan held an interactive talk on Zoom "Everyday life in the 1920's".

First 5 Little Library Bags

Libraries in the county will be distributing a "First 5 little library bag" to each Early Learning Center in the county during November and December. Each bag contains 5 books, one as Gaeilge and four in English and other helpful resources developed by Barnardos. The initiative is a collaboration between Public Libraries, Dept. of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and funded by The Dormant Accounts and will develop links between early learning care and the local library to encourage a love of books.

Chief Executive's Orders

- A schedule of Chief Executive Orders signed during the month of October/November 2021 will be circulated.


John Mulholland
Chief Executive

November 25th 2021