



# Laois County Council



## Celebrating 125 years of Local Government

*April 2024*



## Comhairle Chontae Laoise Ag Ceiliúradh 125 bliain de Rialtas Áitiúil

*Aibreán 2024*



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## MESSAGE FROM CLLR. PASCHAL MCEVOY, CATHAOIRLEACH, LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL

With a proud record of democratic decision-making over the past 125 years, Laois County Council is preparing for the election of the next council. The 1899 election of a local government should be remembered for clearing a peaceful pathway towards self-determination at national level. The new democratic entity consolidated County Laois as a community of people with a cherished sense of identity borne from broader shared experiences. Laois County Council provided a forum for this community to decide how to serve their local needs.

It is fitting that I should pay tribute to my fellow public representatives over the past 125 years for their dedication and commitment to serving the people of Laois at local, national and European levels. This dedication and commitment has been rewarded and communities right around our County have benefitted from courageous and effective decisions taken in the Council Chamber of Laois over this period of time. This booklet serves to remind us of the beginnings of the organisation and of the important services that continue to be provided on behalf of the people of the County.



*Paschal McEvoy  
Cathaoirleach of Laois County Council*

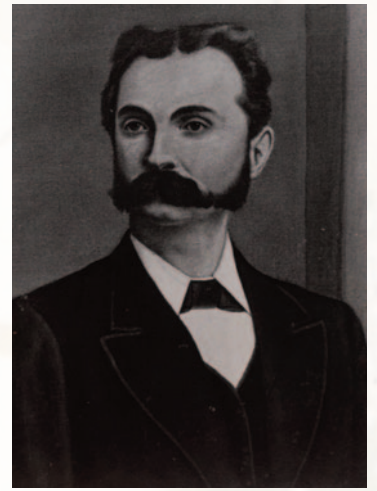
## FIRST MEETING SATURDAY 22<sup>ND</sup> APRIL 1899

The first meeting of Laois County Council took place in the Grand Jury Room of Maryborough Courthouse at 11.30am on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1899. Mr. Richard Bull, Returning Officer and Sub-Sheriff for the Queens County got proceedings underway.

Mr. Patrick A. Meehan was elected Chairperson who accepted by saying:

*'Gentlemen, representatives of Queens County, I have to tender to you the expression of my heartfelt thanks for the honour you have just conferred on me... I don't regard it with the exaltation of an individual. I regard it as a vindication and the exaltation of the Nationalist principles with which I have identified, and in which I have endeavoured to take a man's part of nearly thirty years in Queens County.... Let all of us endeavour to faithfully interpret to the best of our ability the will of the electors who have entrusted us with their confidence.'*

This was the dawning of democracy in County Laois.





*John Mulholland  
Chief Executive of  
Laois County Council*

For 125 years Local Government in Laois has provided a portal through which people can give expression to local identity, to articulate local concerns and to put in train solutions to local challenges. This publication serves as a memento of democratic Local Government in Laois over this timespan. It records in summary fashion some of the landmark achievements of Local Government over that period, delivering public health services to the community, housing, roads, motorways, libraries, playgrounds, drainage schemes and so on. It depicts changes in culture, ideology, society and in local politics. The journey through independence, conflicts, external strife, pandemics and modernisation has all been witnessed through the stable eyes of Local Government since 1899. Most of all, however, this publication is about people. It is a salutation to the many who have come forward from their communities, who as Councillors have entered a very public arena and who have given their time, energy, and commitment to improving the lives of people in Laois. The role of volunteers has also added significantly to the life of communities in Laois. At a personal level I acknowledge, with gratitude, the contribution of legions of men and women who have served on the staff of Laois County Council and who have provided outstanding public service in Laois over one century and a quarter. Local Government is more than a system of administration in political districts. It is essential for the development of a modern, progressive County where participative democracy and accountable decision making are held in high value. It gives me great pleasure, therefore, jointly with Cathaoirleach, Paschal McEvoy to be associated with the publication of this booklet.

Ar aghaidh leis an obair.

# 1899 – 2024 A commemoration of Local Government in Laois

## Rolling back the Years

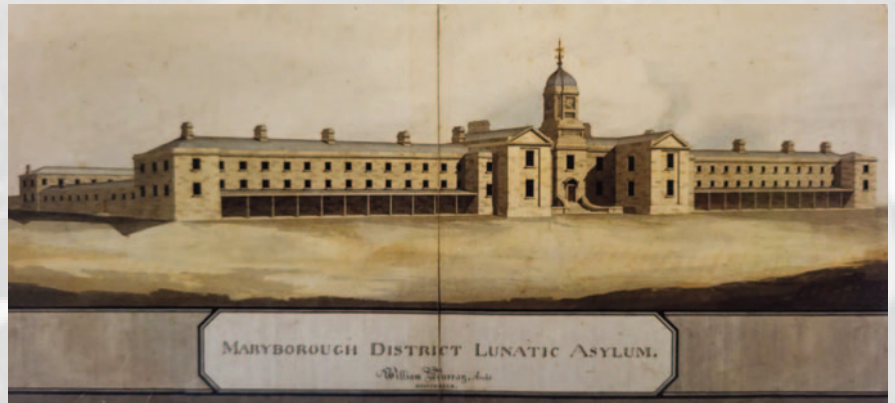
### Laois in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century

#### Tuberculosis

A new sanatorium was opened in May of 1911 by Lord Lieutenant and Lady Aberdeen in the presence of many invited guests including the Chairman of the Council, P.A. Meehan, M.P.

At the Council meeting held on the 13th June 1912 the following scheme was submitted for the treatment of tuberculosis in the County that:

*'The existing sanatorium in the County Infirmary grounds be acquired for the purpose of a dispensary, and the sum of £300 be paid to the Infirmary Committee for the buildings and reconstruction work to be done.'*



#### Roads

'James Quinlan was appointed roads overseer in August 1915 at a wage of 10 shillings per week' – At the time the County was divided into four areas.



A gang of men was appointed to the various sections and in some instances two to three gangs worked a section. Gravel for road repairs was excavated manually from the gravel pits around the county and was transported by horse and cart to the desired locations.

#### 1921 Troubled Times

Following the signing of the Treaty and the resulting split in the Government forces the County gradually became embroiled in Civil War. These were confusing and dangerous times in a troubled Ireland. Laoighis did not entirely escape the fallout from conflict. On a number of occasions **rate collectors for the County were robbed** of their collections and the County Surveyor and his crews spent much time repairing bridges and roads that had been damaged by the various forces. Workers in the employment of the County Council were also threatened with violence if they were perceived to be defying any of the

orders' of the different factions.

At the meeting of the County Council, on 2nd of April 1922, the county surveyor reported that *'many of the bridges which had been impassable had been repaired. Since that date, 19 bridges had been destroyed or rendered impassable. Three of the bridges had been partly destroyed during the 'terror''*.

### 1926

On the 17th of August 1926, the temporary appointment of a County Librarian was approved, on a rate of £250pa and the library received a grant of £2000 from the Carnegie Trust for the maintenance and capital works of the library. The first library in Portlaoise was situated in what is now the Courthouse. Trinity educated and Protestant, Miss Helen Roe was the first female, Protestant librarian in the Irish Free State.



*Steam Rolling on the Clonaghadoo Road 1948 Jack Dunne and Joe Dooley.*



*Ms. Helen Maybury Roe*

### 1930s

#### General Hospital Building, 1933

The construction of the new County Hospital was also in the news and the Leinster Express reported in September 1934:

*'Messrs. Scott & Good architects, submitted a block plan showing the area required was 6 acres for the site of the hospital, which will have a total capacity of 74 beds, and will cost approximately £65,000, and situated a short distance from the town'.*



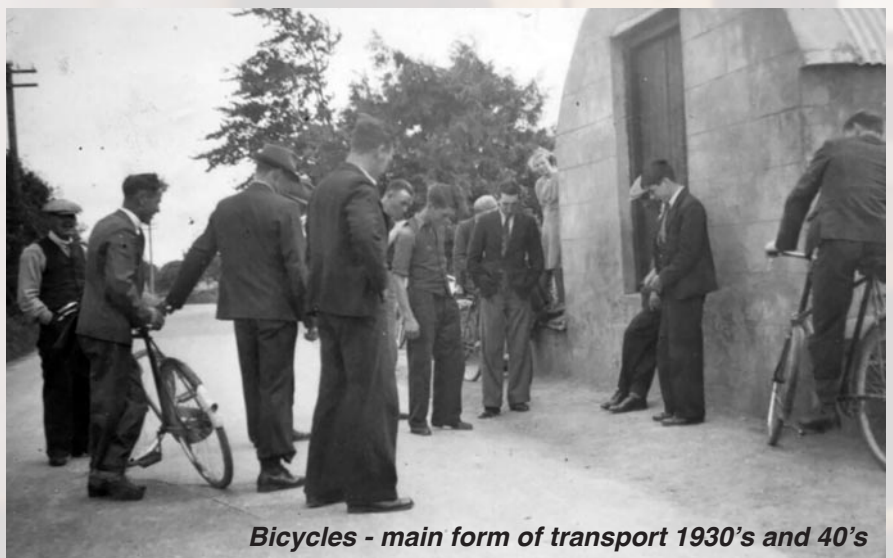
*Laois County Council members 1918.*

## During the War Years

At a meeting of the County Council dated 12th December 1943 the following proposal from Mr. O.J Flanagan which was seconded by Mr. Wm Bolton (Timahoe) and resolved: *'That the Minister for Supplies be asked to provide **bicycle tyres** for County Councillors to attend meetings and who have long distances to travel in discharge of their duties'*. Ireland slowly adjusted to life after the war and it was not until 1948 that the country and indeed the County Councils could actively involve themselves in schemes such as housing or road works.

Laois County Council, approved the plans submitted by the architect Mr. Frank Gibney, for four new housing schemes in non-municipal towns. This meant that work will start on building much needed houses. The scheme provided for a total of 303 new houses.

Under this new scheme Mountmellick area will have 64 new houses, Portarlinton 49, Rathdowney 32,



*Bicycles - main form of transport 1930's and 40's*



Mountrath 22, Stradbally 20 and Durrow 15. **Bathrooms will be an added facility in these houses.**

County Councillors realised very early that enormous changes would have to be made in the upkeep of the road network.

Throughout the decade large sums of money continued to be spent on the purchase of machinery so that by the end of the 1950's, Laois County Council could proudly boast of some of the best roads in Ireland.



*Marian Avenue completed in 1954 at a cost £1474 per house*



*Crushing stone at Cashel, Ballyroan 1950's James Deegan and Joe Dooley.*

The Council's ambitious housing programme was located all around the County and aimed at providing both in the rural and urban areas. On 26<sup>th</sup> August 1950 the Leinster Express reported:

*'The 52 new houses being built at Borris Road, Portlaoise, will soon be ready for occupation. This will be the first post-war town housing scheme to be completed in Laois'* Throughout this time the question of financing housing schemes posed a serious problem especially with relation to the increased burden that these schemes would place on the rates.

## 1960s Developments

The Library Service in Laois came to prominence at this time especially after the appointment of a Library Advisory Committee on the proposal of Councillor O. J. Flanagan.

The County Secretary intimated that agreement had been reached with the **Irish Worsted Mills Ltd.** for the purchase by the

Council of land at Knockmay, Portlaoise, for the sum of £5,000. It was anticipated that the cost of acquiring land and access to it together with other expenses will bring the all in cost to £6,000. The site will, in the first instance be reserved to industrial purposes.



## Public Convenience

The 1960s were notable also for the controversy that continued throughout the whole decade with regard to the provision of a public convenience for Portlaoise.

Despite continuous discussions over the decade it was not until late 1970s that this matter was finally settled as was reported in the Leinster Express on the 15th August:

*'Following years of debate, an important event will take place in Portlaoise within a month or so - the opening of the town's first public toilet. But there will*



*be no official ceremony to mark the occasion and, therefore, whoever initiates the convenience will probably remain anonymous'!*

*The toilet was located at Tower Hill on part of the site now occupied by the Millview Housing Estate. It was subsequently closed and eventually demolished in 1996.*



## **Industrial Development**

Employment prospects for the people of Laois, particularly Portlaoise seemed to be improving rapidly as can be seen in the Leinster Express, dated 11th November 1972.

The Industrial Development Authority approved, a grant to a German Company, Herman Etschied OHG, for the establishment of a plant in Portlaoise to manufacture stainless steel equipment.

Mr. P.J. Lalor, T.D. pointed out that this factory, along with two other industries which had been acquired for Portlaoise, the Tretorn and Compac factories, would provide total employment for about 700 people in the Portlaoise area.

This, he said, augured well for the town and surrounding districts.

## **Tourism and Heritage - The early years**

The cause for Tourism and Heritage took a substantial leap forward during the 1970s.

In September 1974 it was agreed by the members that the Council bring to the notice of Bord Failte and other interested bodies, the tourist and recreational potential of Granstown Lake, Ballacolla and that the Department



*Rock of Dunamase  
- The Redmond Collection.*

# Members Roll of Honour

## 1899

William Phelan  
John Byrne  
Patrick Brennan  
Denis Boland  
Laurence Thomas Kelly  
Arthur McMahon  
John Treacy  
Michael Fitzpatrick  
James McMahon  
Lord Bernard Edward Barnaby  
Castletown  
Patrick O'Flanagan  
John Williams  
Thomas Breen  
Patrick A. Meehan  
William McEvoy  
John Dowling  
Patrick Brennan  
Patrick Doran  
Daniel Quigley  
Denis Shaughnessy  
William Dunne  
**COUNCILLORS CO-OPTED**

J.J. Aird

James Conroy

### **DISTRICT COUNCIL CHAIRMEN:**

Arthur McMahon  
Thomas Timmins  
Matthias McWey  
James Dunne  
Thomas Lowry  
Colonel Cosby  
H.C. White  
Edmund Dease

## 1902

John McMahon  
John Byrne  
Patrick Brennan  
Denis Boland  
Thomas Lowry  
Arthur McMahon  
Francis Corbett  
Michael Fitzpatrick  
James McMahon  
Thomas Farrell  
Patrick O'Flanagan  
John Williams  
Thomas Breen  
P.A. Meehan  
Patrick Morrin  
John Dowling  
Patrick Brennan  
Joseph Lyons  
Richard Dooley  
Daniel Quigley  
Denis Shaughnessy  
William Dunne  
**DISTRICT COUNCIL CHAIRMEN:**  
Arthur McMahon

Thomas Timmons  
James Dunne  
Michael Shortall  
Edward P. Hughes  
**COUNCILLORS CO-OPTED**  
James Ramsbottom  
James Conroy

## 1905

John McMahon  
P. Brennan (Clontico)  
A. McMahon (Cuddagh)  
F. J. Corbett  
James McMahon  
P. C. Flanagan  
T. Breen  
J. Dowling  
F. Keating  
D. Quigley  
P. Brennan (Ballyharmon)  
**DISTRICT COUNCIL CHAIRMEN:**  
A. McMahon (Colt)  
T. Timmons  
J. Dunne  
E. P. Hughes  
J. Fitzgearld  
**COUNCILLORS CO-OPTED**

James Conroy  
James Ramsbottom.

## 1908

John McMahon  
P. Brennan (Clontico)  
A. McMahon (Cuddagh)  
Michael Fitzpatrick  
James McMahon  
J. Campion (Resigned at  
AGM 15th June 1908)  
P. O'Flanagan  
P.A. Meehan  
P. Brennan (Bohernaseer)  
F. Keating  
John Byrne  
J. Ramsbottom  
T. Lowry  
F. Corbett  
J. Williams  
T. Breen  
J. Dowling  
P. Morrin  
R. Dooley  
D. Quigley  
D. Shaughnessy  
A. Conroy  
**DISTRICT COUNCIL CHAIRMEN:**  
J. Dunphy  
T. Timmons  
J. Dunne  
J. Fitzgearld  
P. Byrne  
**COUNCILLORS CO-OPTED**

A. McMahon (Colt) James Conroy  
6th June 1908 John Byrne,  
Cuffsboro co-opted to fill vacancy  
caused by resignation of R.J.  
Campion.

## 1911

Patrick A. Meehan  
P. Brennan  
A. McMahon (Cuddagh)  
M. Fitzpatrick  
J. Bergin  
J. Toomey  
P. Brennan (Ballyharmon)  
R. Dooley  
D. Shaughnessy  
T. Timmons  
J J Aird  
J. Byrne  
**COUNCILLORS CO-OPTED**  
A. McMahon (Colt)  
J. Conroy (Forest)  
Arthur Hume co-opted on 13th  
June to fill the vacancy caused by  
the death of Patrick A. Meehan.

## 1914

John Byrne  
Patrick Brennan (Clontico)  
Thomas Lowry  
Michael Fitzpatrick  
James McMahon  
Ernest F. Mercier  
Thomas Breen  
John McEvoy  
Jack Delaney  
Dennis Shaughnessy  
E. Poole  
Thomas Timmons  
Paul Maher  
Paul Kennedy  
James Devoy  
James Conroy  
F. J. Corbett  
John Bolger  
John Williams  
James Aird  
Michael Drury  
Arthur Costello  
Daniel Quigley  
John Dunphy  
Patrick Byrne  
John Fitzgerald  
**COUNCILLORS CO-OPTED**  
George Senior  
Arthur Hume  
1917  
NAME:  
John Byrne  
D. Kennedy  
P. Brennan (Clontico)

J. Devoy  
J. Conroy  
F.J. Corbett  
M. Fitzpatrick  
J. MacMahon  
E.F.Mercier  
J. Williams  
P.J. Meehan  
J. McEvoy  
M. Drury  
J. Delaney  
D. Quigley  
D. Booth  
E.J. Poole  
J. Walsh  
A.Hume  
W.P. Aird  
T. Lowry  
T. McHugh  
P. Maher  
J. Bolger  
Thomas Breen  
Arthur Costello  
John Dunphy  
T. Timmins  
J. Fitzgerald  
P. Conlan  
**COUNCILLORS CO-OPTED**  
Mr. William Odlum

**1920**  
James MacMahon  
Arthur Costello  
Richard Hipwell  
James Conroy  
James Lewis  
Peter Daly  
Joseph P.Lynch  
Ed. Grace  
Denis Phelan  
James Hughes  
Edward Poole  
Michael Phelan  
William Fleming  
Michael Collier  
Garrett Kelly  
William Bowe  
William Kelly  
Andrew Murray  
Joseph Muldowney  
Denis Booth  
Heney Byrne  
Ernest Mercier  
John Campion  
William Fleming  
Joseph Delaney  
Thomas McHugh  
Michael Sheridan  
E.Shelly  
1925  
NAME:  
William P. Aird  
John Byrne

Laurence Brady  
Martin Cashin  
John Cummins  
James Conroy  
Joseph Delaney  
Peter Daly  
Terence Delaney  
James Dwyer  
George N. Jessop  
Daniel Kennedy  
Thomas Territt  
Ernest Mercier  
William Cobbe  
Michael Phelan  
Richard Hipwell  
Abraham Bailey  
Edward McEvoy  
Thomas Grace  
John Twomey  
William Kelly  
Thomas Tynan  
Edward Lacey  
William Webster  
James Moore  
James Conroy  
Andrew Nolan  
Michael Culleton  
Kieran Phelan  
Edward Poole  
J. Finlay

**1928**  
M. Phelan  
D. Kennedy  
K. Begadon  
P. Daly  
J. Finlay  
J. Dwyer  
M. Cashin  
J. Byrne  
J. Neary  
J. Fleming  
P. Brennan  
M. Leech  
W. Kelly  
J. Daly  
J. Hughes  
T. Territt  
J. Delaney  
W. Aird  
J. Cummins  
G. N. Jessop  
E. Ryan  
D O'Connor  
W. Webster  
T.Tynan  
H. M. Smith  
J. Twomey  
W. H. Cobbe  
J. O'Connell

**1942**  
J. Finlay

P. Daly  
J.A. Quigley  
T. Bowe  
Michael McGrath  
Michael Campion  
Charles Fitzpatrick  
Richard Hipwell  
Thomas Territt  
John Delaney  
Daniel Dunne  
John Gill  
Jos Delaney  
Odlum  
Seamus O Dubhlaigh  
Michael P. Collier  
William Bolton  
William Rochford  
T. Connelly  
O. J. Flanagan  
E. J. Breen  
P.J.Gorry  
John Moloney  
Jacob Thompson  
**COUNCILLORS CO-OPTED**  
Michael Phelan, Donaghmore  
co-opted in place  
of John Finlay (deceased).

**1945**  
William Bolton  
Patrick Doyle  
William Knowles  
Thomas O'Connor  
Thomas Campion  
Michael Collier  
Kevin Croke  
John Delaney  
Daniel Dunne  
John F. Gill  
Richard Miller  
Seamus O'Dublaigh  
Thomas Territt  
Edward Breen  
Denis Corcoran  
Oliver J. Flanagan  
Patrick J. Gorry  
John Maloney  
Thomas Bowe  
Michael J Campion  
Peter Daly  
William Dowling  
Michael McGrath  
John Phelan  
Joseph Quigley  
**COUNCILLORS CO-OPTED**  
Michael Collier  
Denis P. Corcoran  
Thomas White for Peter Daly  
(deceased) Michael McCormack for  
John Moloney (deceased)

**1950**  
Michael J. Campion





John Costigan  
John Egan  
Patrick Maher  
James Phelan  
Joseph Quigley  
Thomas White  
William Bolton  
William Knowles  
James Moran  
William Rochford  
Henry Byrne

Thomas Campion  
Charles Delaney  
Terence Dunne  
John F. Gill  
Edmund McCluskey  
Seamus O'Dubhlaigh  
Thomas Territt  
Gerard Harkin  
Edward Breen  
Oliver J. Flanagan  
William Goodwin  
Patrick J. Garry  
Michael Moloney

**COUNCILLORS CO-OPTED**

Edward Bergin for M.J. Campion  
(deceased)  
Laurence Lynch for Gerard Hardin  
(resigned)  
Laurence Dunne for Thomas Territt  
(deceased)  
Edward Reddin for E.J. Breen  
(resigned)

**1955**

Edward Bergin  
William Cashin  
John Costigan  
Kieran Maher  
Peadar Maher  
James Phelan  
Joseph Quigley  
William Knowles  
Joseph Fleming  
James J. Martin  
William Joseph Rochford  
Henry Byrne  
Thomas Campion  
Charles L. Delaney  
Laurence Dunne  
John F. Gill  
Thomas Keenan  
Martin Kelly  
Laurence Lynch  
Eamonn Mc Cluskey  
Patrick Delaney  
Oliver J. Flanagan  
William Goodwin  
Michael Moloney  
Michael Moloney

**COUNCILLORS CO-OPTED**

Charles McDonald for Charles  
Delaney

(deceased)  
William Headon for William Knowles  
(resigned)  
Patrick J. Gorry for Joseph Behan  
(resigned)  
James Kelly for John Costigan  
(deceased)  
Christopher Horan for P.J. Gorry  
(deceased)

**1960**

Edward Bergin  
William Cashin  
James Phelan  
Joseph Quigley  
J. Costigan  
Patrick J. Lalor  
K. Maher  
James J. Martin  
William J. Rochford  
William Knowles  
J. O'Neill  
Thomas Campion  
Joseph Carroll  
Laurence Dunne  
Thomas Keenan  
Eamonn McCluskey  
Charles B. McDonald  
John F. Gill  
John Behan  
Henry Byrne  
Michael Moloney  
Oliver J. Flanagan  
William Goodwin  
P. Delaney  
Joseph Behan

**1967**

Edward Bergin  
Christopher Finnegan  
Liam Hyland  
James Kelly  
Patrick J. Lalor, T.D.  
James Phelan  
Joseph Quigley  
William Fleming  
William P. Headon  
Senator James J. Martin  
William J. Rochford  
William Aird  
James Buggie  
Thomas Campion  
Joseph Carroll  
John F. Gill  
Thomas Keenan  
Laurence Lynch  
Eamonn McCluskey  
Senator Charles McDonald  
John J. Breen  
Patrick Delaney  
Oliver J. Flanagan, T.D.  
William Goodwin  
Michael Moloney

**COUNCILLORS CO-OPTED**

John J. O'Reilly for Eamonn  
McCluskey (deceased)  
Michael Loughman for P.J. Lalor T.D.  
(resigned)  
Henry Byrne for J.F. Gill (deceased)

**1974**

Liam Hyland  
Patrick J. Lalor  
Patrick Phelan  
James Kelly  
Partick Quinn  
James Phelan  
Christopher J. Finnegan  
Seamus Martin  
William Fleming  
James Cooney  
Martin Rohan  
Joseph Carroll  
Thomas Keenan  
Jeremiah Lodge  
Joseph Dunne  
Ned Kelly  
Charles B. McDonald  
John J. O'Reilly  
James Buggie  
John Hosey  
Oliver J. Flanagan  
Michael Moloney  
David Goodwin  
Christopher Horan  
Patrick Delaney

**COUNCILLORS CO-OPTED**

Eamonn Rafter for Deputy P.J. Lalor  
(resigned)

**1979**

Liam Hyland  
Eamon Rafter  
Patrick Phelan  
James Kelly  
Sean Jacob  
James Phelan  
William Mansfield  
John Daly  
William Fleming  
James Cooney  
Martin Rohan  
Joseph Carroll  
Thomas Keenan  
Jeremiah Lodge  
Joseph Dunne  
Ned Kelly  
Michael Nerney  
John O'Reilly  
James Buggie  
John Hosey  
Oliver J. Flanagan  
Michael Moloney  
David Goodwin  
Christopher Horan  
Michael Lalor



**COUNCILLORS CO-OPTED**

John Moloney for Michael Moloney

**1985**

Liam Hyland  
Fintan Phelan  
James Kelly  
Sean Jacob  
James Phelan  
William Mansfield  
Edward Kirwan  
Mary Wheatly  
Charlie McDonald  
James Cooney  
Martin Rohan  
Thomas Keenan  
Jeremiah Lodge  
Joseph Dunne  
William Aird  
John Hosey  
Oliver J. Flanagan  
John Moloney  
David Goodwin  
Seamus McDonald  
Joseph Digan  
Raymond Cribben  
Michael Nerney  
Ned Kelly  
James Buggie

**COUNCILLORS CO-OPTED**

John Fitzgibbon for John Hosey (deceased)  
Pat McMahan for Sean Jacob (deceased)  
Patrick Bray for Ned Kelly (deceased)  
Charles Flanagan for O.J. Flanagan (deceased)

**1991**

Liam Hyland  
Kieran Phelan  
James Kelly  
Eamon Rafter  
Larry Kavanagh  
William Mansfield  
Martin J. Phelan  
Mary Wheatly  
John Robert Moran  
James Cooney  
James Francis Daly  
Thomas Keenan  
Jeremiah Lodge  
Joseph Dunne  
William Aird  
Tom Jacob  
Charles Flanagan  
John Anthony Moloney  
Michael Lalor  
Joseph Digan  
Raymond Cribben  
Cathy Honan

Teresa Mulhare  
James Buggie

**COUNCILLORS CO-OPTED**

James Deegan for James Buggy (deceased)  
Fintan Phelan for Liam Hyland, M.E.P. (resigned)  
Martin Rohan for James Cooney (deceased)

**1999**

Kieran Phelan  
Seán Fleming  
John Joe Fennelly  
Michael Lalor  
Martin Rohan  
Marty J Phelan  
John Bonham  
James Deegan  
Ray Cribbin  
Michael Turley  
Michael Costello  
Michael Rice  
John Moran  
James Daly  
Mary Wheatly  
John Moloney  
Seamus McDonald  
David Goodwin  
Joe Digan  
Joe Dunne  
Willie Aird  
Charlie Flanagan  
Mary Sweeney  
Jerry Lodge  
Catherine Fitzgerald

**COUNCILLORS CO-OPTED**

Bill Delaney for Sean Fleming  
Brendan Phelan for Kieran Phelan  
Paddy Bracken for John Moloney  
John Dunne for Joe Dunne (deceased)

**2004**

John Joe Fennelly  
Michael Lalor  
Brendan Phelan  
John Bonham  
Larry Kavanagh  
Bill Delaney  
Marty J Phelan  
James Deegan  
Ray Cribbin  
Paul Mitchell  
Michael Turley  
John Moran  
James Daly  
Dick Miller  
Michael Rice  
David Goodwin

Paddy Bracken  
Seamus McDonald  
Michael Moloney  
Willie Aird  
Brian Stanley  
Mary Sweeney  
Tom Jacob  
Jerry Lodge  
Catherine Fitzgerald  
**COUNCILLORS CO-OPTED**  
Gearldine Delaney for Bill Delaney (deceased)  
John Turley for Michael Turley (deceased)  
Laurence Kavanagh Jnr. for Larry Kavanagh (deceased)

**2009**

John Joe Fennelly  
Michael Lalor  
John King  
Brendan Phelan  
Marty J Phelan  
John Bonham  
James Deegan  
Ray Cribbin  
Paul Mitchell  
Tom Mulhall  
John Moran  
James Daly  
Ben Brennan  
Padraig Fleming  
David Goodwin  
Paddy Bracken  
Seamus McDonald  
Pat Bowe  
Willie Aird  
Brian Stanley  
Mary Sweeney  
Rotimi Adebari  
Jerry Lodge  
Catherine Fitzgerald  
Kathleen O'Brien  
**COUNCILLORS CO-OPTED**  
Lisa Delaney for Pat Bowe (deceased)  
Caroline Dwane-Stanley for Brian Stanley.

**2014**

James Kelly  
David Goodwin  
John King  
Brendan Phelan  
Paddy Bracken  
Seamus McDonald  
Ben Brennan  
John Moran  
Tom Mulhall  
Aidan Mullins  
Paschal McEvoy  
Padraig Fleming  
Willie Aird

Caroline Dwane Stanley  
Mary Sweeney  
John Joe Fennelly  
Noel Tuohy  
Catherine Fitzgerald  
Jerry Lodge  
**COUNCILLORS CO-OPTED**  
Pauline Madigan for Jerry Lodge (deceased)

**2019**

James Kelly  
Ollie Clooney  
John King  
Conor Bergin  
Paddy Bracken  
Seamus McDonald  
Ben Brennan  
Aisling Moran  
Tom Mulhall  
Aidan Mullins  
Paschal McEvoy  
Padraig Fleming  
Willie Aird  
Caroline Dwane Stanley  
Mary Sweeney  
John Joe Fennelly  
Noel Tuohy  
Catherine Fitzgerald  
Thomasina Connell  
**Councillors Co-Opted**  
Barry Walsh for Mary Sweeney  
PJ Kelly for Tom Mulhall  
Marie Tuohy for Noel Tuohy

of Lands be requested to make the lake and woodland available as a public amenity.

Among the developments listed were the Barrow Valley and Slieve Bloom Amenity Area. Among discussion was the development of Granstown Lake.

In May 1976 details of the progress with regard to the Slieve Bloom project were brought before the Council. By this time car parks were either complete or near completion at The Cut, Clonaslee, Glendine Valley and Glinks Hill, while picnic areas and viewing points were provided at Bawnree Cottage and Capard Ridge. Road surfacing was taking place at several locations to allow easier access for both pedestrians and cars. The Council was informed that the expenditure of £25,000 would be met 50% by Bord Failte, and 16% by Offaly County Council.

### **New Home for Laois County Council**

In December 1981, The Leinster Express and Nationalist described the move of the administrative staff into their luxurious new office complex:

*'What a complete change from the old Council offices and at last Laois has a modern complex to put it on the map. The four storey County Hall, as it has been christened, is even more impressive inside than it is externally. It was no wonder that there was an air of pride matching the luxurious interior when the Council staff moved in on Tuesday at their new starting time of 9 am. The ladies on the staff were looking the part with their uniforms which they themselves provided at their own expense. The spirit was high all round. The carpets, tinted windows, car park, landscaping, furniture and open plan sophistication of*



*President Hilary addresses Laois County Council 1984.*



*Laois County Council 1981.*

*the building throughout; the lifts, canteen and balcony; the marble counter reception with a full information service; the planning and motor tax offices to the right and left of the entrance on the ground floor make for a sharp contrast to the cold, stoned floor, disjointed Courthouse on the Main Street - at last the county has a showpiece'.*

The formal opening of the complex was held in May 1982 when Mr. Tom Keenan, M.C.C., Chairman of the County Council cut the tape.

### **Housing Investment - a continuing challenge**

In May 1980, the first 60 houses of the Council housing scheme at Knockmay were officially opened by Mr. G. Connolly, T.D. Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, the housing scheme was the first stage of the development of 70 acres of land acquired by Laois County Council approximately 10 years previous, the development, in addition to local authority housing, included a church, schools, community centre, headquarters for the Vocational Education Committee, private housing, open spaces and games facilities.

Throughout the 1980's during a period of financial bleakness the Council did indeed strive to provide necessary housing and housing schemes were constructed at Mountmellick, Errill, Portarlinton, Abbeyleix, Ballybrittas, Clonaslee, Durrow and Rathdowney.

A housing progress report in September 1985 detailed the following facts:

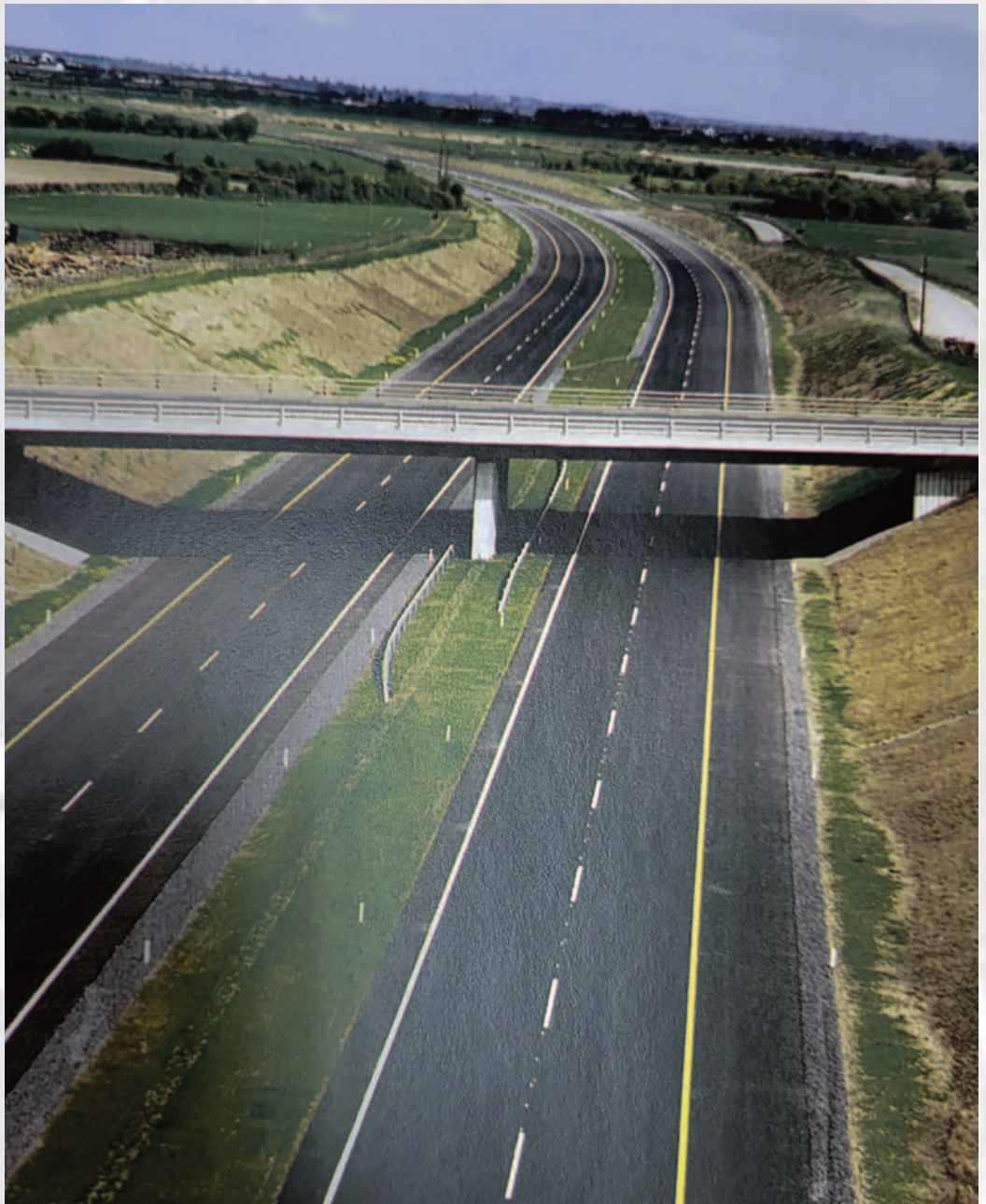
Number of Houses Constructed and Occupied  
1980-1985:

1980	128
1981	77
1982	53
1983	92
1984	54
1985	43



## Reform and Expansion 1990's

The Portlaoise By-Pass was at a stage where the route had been selected and a motorway scheme had been prepared. The scheme was submitted to the Minister for the Environment in 1990 for his approval. This project was to become at that time the most significant development ever undertaken by the Council culminating in its construction, completion and official opening in May of 1997.



The Portlaoise Motorway By-Pass is 16km in length and runs south of the town. It consists of 12 bridges and 12.5 km of two-lane motorway and was constructed at a cost of £48 million.



*Portlaoise Water Supply Improvement Scheme, May 1998.*

## Laois County Council – the new Millenium



### **Dunamais Arts Centre- May 1999**

The opening of the Dunamais Theatre and Centre for the Arts by Ms. Síle De Valera, Minister for Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and The Islands took place in May 1999. Under the ownership of Laois County Council the 240 seated Theatre provided the much needed facilities for arts and cultural infrastructure in Laois.

### **Electric Picnic 2004**

The first event licence granted by Laois County Council for the Electric Picnic was in 2004. The Electric Picnic began as a one-day event in 2004, with 10,000 concert-goers before growing to a weekend-long festival and 70,000 people converging on Laois each year for the past 20 years.



### **Abbeyleix Library 2008**

Construction of the new library and art gallery was completed in May 2008 and the library was opened to the public in June 2008. The official opening was performed by John Gormley, T.D., Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. The Library (formerly Market House) was built in the mid 1800's and Abbeyleix Fire service occupied the ground floor and the library service was housed on the upper floor prior to its re-development in 2008.



### **M7/M8**

On 28<sup>th</sup> May 2010 the final section of the new Dublin to Cork motorway opened in Co Laois - bypassing the towns of Abbeyleix, Durrow and Cullahill shortening the journey for motorists by up to 45 minutes at peak times. The new M7-M8 motorway opened to traffic four months ahead of schedule. The opening of 41km of motorway was a vital link in the development of a high quality road network throughout Co Laois, connecting Co Laois to Dublin, the Midwest, the South and the North through a high quality reliable road transport corridor which paved the way for increased economic growth and prosperity.



## 2016 Centenary Celebrations

In 2016, Laois commemorated the centenary of the 1916 Rising.

## J17 National Enterprise Park

In 2018 Laois County Council launched the Toghher Area Masterplan. The vision for the J17

National Enterprise Park

was to deliver a viable economic zone, as a National Enterprise Park, focused particularly on heavy, light and ICT industry, distribution, logistics and other uses associated with the transport industry. This has the potential to be a major boost to the economy of Portlaoise through enterprise and employment and to contribute to the growth of the County and the Region as a whole. The vision by Laois County Council has come to fruition with numerous businesses now in operation, employing over 500 people.



J17 - National Enterprise Park



### **Urban Regeneration Development Fund (URDF)**

The URDF is currently funding 3 projects in Portlaoise with a total funding allocation of over €18.2 million.

Under Call 1 in 2019, Laois County Council was awarded over €9 million of URDF funding for public realm works under two projects, 'A Cultural Quarter' and 'A Low Carbon Town'. In 2021, the Department approved an additional funding of over €160k towards the Cultural Quarter project.

In 2021, under Call 2 of the URDF, the Department provisionally allocated €9 million in funding to Laois County Council for the 'Placemaking for a Low Carbon Town' project which follows on from the Call 1 project.

### **New County Library**

This project was for the provision of a new county library in Portlaoise and received funding of €2,787,253 from the URDF along with €3,000,000 from the Department of Rural and Community Development. This project is now complete and was officially opened by Minister Heather Humphries in July 2023.





## World Ploughing Championships

Laois welcomed the World Ploughing Championships in 2022, one of the largest outdoor events in Europe. It attracted over 270,000 visitors in 2022 with over 1,700 exhibitors on site to Laois. Competitors from all over the world converged on Laois and Laois County Council held a reception in honour of the world ploughing organisation and the national ploughing association.



## Covid-19 Pandemic

In March 2022, a little over two years since the Covid-19 pandemic arrived in Ireland and changed our lives, Laois County Council organised a dignified ceremony in Portlaoise to remember all those who have lost their lives during the pandemic and to pay tribute to those who contributed to how we faced the challenges together.



## Ukrainian Response

At the start of 2022, little did we know that the invasion of Ukraine would result in one of the largest displacements of people since the second World War. A dedicated Ukrainian Response Team was established within the Council to provide the necessary supports and address the challenges arising. The Council continues to meet its obligations and support the humanitarian response effort.

## Housing

A record number of almost 500 individuals and families were given low-cost rental social homes in 2023 in the County. Laois County Council are currently two years into our Housing for All four-year

programme, have already exceeded the targets set by Government of 534 new homes by 2026, having reached 515 after just two years.

Laois County Council launched its first Local Authority Affordable Purchase Scheme in Portlaoise in December 2023. A total of 16 new houses were available in Kilminchy, Dublin Road, Portlaoise under the scheme.



*New County Library Portlaoise opening 2023.*

### **Laois into the future**

Laois County Council is operating with its largest ever Budget in 2024. The spending plan of €114 million is an increase of €18 million on 2023. This a far cry from the early years of local government in Laois. Since its foundation on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1899 Laois County Council has faced and overcome many difficult situations. Who knows what the next 125 years hold.....



*The Grand Jury Room - the Courthouse, Portlaoise.  
The original venue for meetings of Laois County Council.*

HIBERNIAN HOTEL

KELLYS HOTEL

TAYLORS

S70 451