**COMHAIRLE CHONTAE LAOISE**

**LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Candidate Information Booklet**

**(Please read carefully)**

**Post of:**

**Biodiversity Officer – Fixed Term Contract**

**-**

**Closing Date: 4.00pm**

**1st November 2024**

**Completed Application Forms (3 copies) should be submitted to:**

**Human Resources Department**

**Laois County Council**

**Áras an Chontae**

**Portlaoise**

**Co. Laois**

**And 1 copy emailed to** **hr@laoiscoco.ie**

**Subject line: Ref 24/43**

### **COMHAIRLE CHONTAE LAOISE - LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **POST OF: Biodiversity offcier – FIXED TERM CONTRACT**

**THE COMPETITION**

Laois County Council invites applications from suitably qualified persons, who wish to be considered for inclusion on a panel for the role of Biodiversity Officer from which specific purpose, fixed term, temporary and where applicable Acting-up vacancies may be filled.

**THE ROLE**

The Biodiversity Officer will promote, manage and co-ordinate biodiversity related activities in the county. The Biodiversity Officer will play a pivotal role in the ongoing review and implementation of the County Heritage and Biodiversity Action Plan (2022 – 2027). The role involves activation of local communities, businesses, schools, and all interested stakeholders and raising awareness of biodiversity in County Laois and requires an ability to engage with the public as part of a team within Laois County Council. The Biodiversity Officer will also be responsible for drafting and implementing any future plans in relation to biodiversity.

**QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE POST**

**CHARACTER**

Candidates must be of good character.

**HEALTH**

Candidates shall be in a state of health such as would indicate a reasonable prospect of ability to render regular and efficient service. For the purpose of satisfying the requirements as to health, it will be necessary for successful candidates, before they are appointed, to undergo at their own expense a medical examination by a qualified medical practitioner to be nominated by the Local Authority. On taking up appointment the expense of the medical examination will be refunded to candidates.

**CITIZENSHIP**

Candidates must, by the date of any job offer, be:

1. A citizen of the European Economic Area (EEA). The EEA consists of the Member States of the European Union, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway; or
2. A citizen of the United Kingdom (UK); or
3. A citizen of Switzerland pursuant to the agreement between the EU and Switzerland on the free movement of persons; or
4. A non-EEA citizen who is a spouse or child of an EEA or UK or Swiss citizen and has a stamp 4 visa; or
5. A person awarded international protection under the International Protection Act 2015, or any family member entitled to remain in the State as a result of family reunification and has a stamp 4 visa or
6. A non-EEA citizen who is a parent of a dependent child who is a citizen of, and resident in, an EEA member state or the UK or Switzerland and has a stamp 4 visa.

**EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE**

## Education, training, experience, etc.

**Copy of educational results must be submitted with your application form to confirm your eligibility for the post.**

**Each candidate must, on the latest date for receipt of completed application forms -**

(a) Hold a recognized degree (at least level 8 in the National Framework of Qualifications) in a subject relevant to biodiversity including but not limited to environmental science, ecology, earth/natural sciences, zoology, botany or natural resources management;

(b) After attaining the qualification referred to in (a) above, have at least 5 years relevant satisfactory experience of scientific work in biodiversity, sustainable development goals, biodiversity, energy and climate action; and

(c) Possess a high standard of technical training relevant to the areas of natural sciences and natural resources management.

**Candidates should also be able to demonstrate the following –**

* Knowledge of current local government issues, priorities, concerns and future direction
* Relevant administrative experience at a sufficiently high level
* Ability to work within a team effectively
* Experience in assessment and administration of funding programmes
* Experience of compiling, preparing and presenting reports, presentations, correspondence etc.
* Competence & experience of financial and budget management
* Knowledge and experience of operating ICT systems
* Relevant experience in supporting the formulation and implementation of strategies, plans, studies, and processes including stakeholder engagement
* Previous experience in community engagement
* Project management skills
* Experience of organising and managing events
* Knowledge in the biodiversity area
* A good understanding of climate change adaptation and mitigation challenges relevant to Local Authority function
* Experience in grant application promotion, assessment and administration

**Driving Licence**

When required to do so holders of the office will be required to drive a motor car in the course of their duties and should therefore, hold a full driving licence for class B vehicles free from disqualification and medical limitations.

**DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The principal duties and areas of responsibility of the Biodiversity Officer may include but are not limited to the following:

* Prepare, manage and implement a Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan in parallel with the

County Heritage and Biodiversity Strategy and with cross referencing to the County Climate Action Plan and County Development Plan;

* Establish a County Biodiversity forum;
* Facilitate the implementation of government initiatives in relation to biodiversity and national plans and programmes that are developed to support the implementation of the National Biodiversity Plan,such as the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan;
* Advise the Local Authority on biodiversity related issues and the Authority’s obligations in relation to protecting biodiversity;
* Work with Local Authority staff to assist in advancing the restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems and support ecosystem services in within the Local Authority Area;
* Assist Local Authority departments in integrating biodiversity into their actions and policies, for

example through training, supporting information dissemination;

* Promote new biodiversity initiatives based on best conservation practice;
* Work with Local Authority led projects and provide advice to colleagues on the management of

ecological resources such as urban woodlands, wetlands, parks, verges, wild flora grasslands and

open areas in a biodiversity-friendly manner;

* Raise awareness of biodiversity, natural capital and ecosystems services and issues affecting

biodiversity in the Local Authority, including climate change with a broad range of groups;

* Commission biodiversity related research, audits and surveys and provide data obtained to the

NBDC and NPWS in a suitable format for reporting purposes.

* Apply for and deliver biodiversity projects under the Heritage Council funding and National

Biodiversity Action Plan and other sources available sources of funding.

* Work closely with the County Heritage Office on a programme of public engagement for biodiversity through Field Clubs, Environmental Groups/NGOs, National Heritage Week, Summer Schools and other public events.
* Be an active participant/member in the County Heritage Forum, Creative Ireland team and Council climate action group.

The above specification is not intended to be a comprehensive list of all duties involved and consequently, the post holder may be required to perform other duties as appropriate to the post which may be assigned to him/her from time to time and to contribute to the development of the post while in office.

# **KEY COMPETENCIES**

**Candidates will be expected to demonstrate sufficient evidence within their application and at interview under each competency.**

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| Strategic Management and Change |
| Strategic Ability | * Displays the ability to think and act strategically. Can translate strategy into operational plans and outputs. Evaluates capacity and performance against objectives. Demonstrates innovation and creativity to secure successful strategic outcomes.
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| Networking and Representing | * Demonstrates the ability to source, develop and maintain positive and beneficial relationships with relevant interests.
* Demonstrates the ability to sustain a positive image and profile of the local authority.
 |
| Bring About Change | * Demonstrates flexibility and an openness to change. Develops and initiates change management programmes to meet end objectives. Influences others and fosters commitment to change.
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| Delivering Results |
| Problem Solving and Decision Making | * Demonstrates the ability to act decisively and make timely, informed and effective decisions.
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| Operational Planning | * Demonstrates the ability to deliver strategic objectives in an efficient and effective manner.
* High level of administration skills and budget management.
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| Communicating Effectively | * Demonstrates the ability to recognise the requirements of and the outcomes of effective communication.
* Demonstrates effective verbal and written communication skills
 |
| Personal Effectiveness |
| Resilience and Personal Well Being | * Demonstrates appropriate and positive self-confidence.
* Demonstrates the ability to operate effectively in an environment with significant complexity and pace.
* Demonstrates strong judgement and problem-solving skills and effecting or influencing behavioural change.
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| Knowledge & Understanding of the role/of local government |
| Knowledge & Understanding of Role | * Demonstrates understanding of the role of Biodiversity Officer in the context of wider local authority service delivery
* Demonstrates knowledge & understanding of the structure and functions of local government
* Demonstrates knowledge of current local government issues, future trends and strategic direction of local government
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**THE PRINCIPAL TERMS & CONDITIONS**

1. **PARTICULARS:**

Laois County Council are looking to form a panel from which the full-time fixed term contract post may be filled. Laois County Council reserves the rights to, at any time, assign an employee to any premises in use by the Council now or in the future.

1. **PROBATION:**

Where a person who is not already a permanent employee of this local authority is appointed, the following provisions shall apply:

1. There shall be a period after appointment takes effect, during which such a person shall hold the position on probation;
2. Such period shall be ten months’ but the Chief Executive may, at his/her discretion, extend such period;
3. Such a person shall cease to hold the position at the end of the period of probation, unless during this period the Chief Executive has certified that the service is satisfactory;
4. There will be ongoing assessments during the probationary period. Employment may be terminated by either party during probation or at the end of the probationary period on one week’s notice.
5. **SALARY:**

The salary shall be fully inclusive and shall be as determined from time to time. Holders of the office shall pay to the local authority any fees or other monies (other than their inclusive salary) payable to or received by them by virtue of their office or in respect of services which they are required by or under any enactment to perform.

**The salary scale for the post of Biodiversity Officer is analogous to the post of Executive Engineer/Scientist and is: €57,909 - €80,498 (LSI2) -** Circular **EL 03/2024** refers.

In accordance with EL 02/2011 persons who are not serving local authority employees must be placed on the minimum of the scale. Where a person being appointed is a serving local authority employee normal starting pay rules will apply. The rate of remuneration may be adjusted from time to time in line with government policy.

1. **WORKING HOURS:**

The standard working week will be 35 hours. The role may require flexible working hours and may occasionally include evening and weekend work for which overtime will not be paid but time-off-in-lieu will be available.

1. **ANNUAL LEAVE:**

30 days per annum.

**6. RESIDENCE**

The holder of the position shall reside in the district in which his/her duties are to be performed or within a reasonable distance thereof.

1. **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

The Council shall work to promote a culture of equality and to develop equality and recruitment policies and procedures to ensure that all candidates are selected on merit. The Council shall endeavour to ensure that the selection process does not provide unjustifiable advantage or disadvantage to any particular candidate or group of candidates. The recruitment and selection process shall embrace genuine equality of opportunity, and this will be integral to the process by which appointments are made.

1. **GARDA VETTING**

Garda vetting is required for certain roles within Laois County Council. Failure to complete a Garda vetting form on request may prevent your employment with Laois County Council. In the event of an unsatisfactory Garda declaration being received Laois County Council reserves the right not to commence employment. In the event of an existing employee changing role as a result of promotion of Laois County Council reserves the right to withhold promotion, and also to investigate if further sanction/disciplinary action is warranted on foot of disclosure on a case-by-case basis.

1. **RECRUITMENT**

Selection of candidates for appointment shall be by means of a competitive interview.

1. **Shortlisting Process**

 The local authority may decide, by reason of the number of persons seeking admission to a competition, to carry out a shortlisting procedure. The number of persons to be invited, in these circumstances, to interview, shall be determined by the local authority from time to time having regard to the likely number of vacancies to be filled. The local authority may at its discretion, decide that such shortlisting will be based on qualifications, relevant experience and information submitted on the application form.In that regard, candidates should ensure they provide detailed and accurate information in completing the form. Alternatively, the local authority may at its discretion decide to shortlist by way of preliminary interview.

1. **Competitive Interview**

 Selection of candidates for appointment shall be by means of a competitive interview. The competitive interview shall be conducted by or on behalf of the local authority. The Council is committed to a process of selection on merit, based on fair and open competition.  The criteria for judging suitability and ranking will be related directly to the qualification, attributes and skills required to undertake the duties and responsibilities to the standard required in the post.

**c)** **Panels**

 Following completion of interviews, panels may formed, the duration of which is at the discretion of the Council. While a panel remains in force, offers of temporary or permanent employment may be made subject to confirmation of qualifications and satisfying clauses in relation to health, character, or other requirements of the particular post. Persons to whom an offer of employment is made must take up duty within **1 month** from the date of offer, or such extended period as the Council may agree, otherwise, the Council may decide not to appoint them.

**d) References/Documentary Evidence**

Each candidate may be required to submit as references the names and addresses of two responsible persons to whom he/she is well known but not related. Candidates may be required to submit documentary evidence to the local authority in support of their application.

1. **COMMENCEMENT**The local authority shall require a person to whom an appointment is offered to take up such appointment within a period of not more than one month and is he/she fails to take up the appointment within such period or such period or such longer period as the local authority in its absolute discretion may determine, the local authority shall not appoint him/her.
2. **RETIREMENT**

The Single Public Service Pension Scheme (“Single Scheme”) as provided by the Public Service Pensions (Single Scheme and Other Provisions) Act 2012 commenced with effect from 1st January 2013. The act introduces new pension and retirement provisions for **new entrants** to the public service appointed on or after 1st January 2013. Pension age set initially at 66 years; this will rise in step with statutory changes in the SPC age to 67 years in 2021 and 68 years in 2028. The compulsory retirement age of 70 applies. Otherwise the retirement age of the relevant Scheme applies. It should be noted that candidates who are in receipt of a Public Service Pension and are rehired in any paid capacity by a Public Service Body may be liable to have their pension abated. Prior to appointment successful candidates will be obliged to complete a Declaration in relation to previous Public Pensionable Employment.

1. **SUPERANNUATION**

The superannuation contributions of relevant scheme will apply.

1. **SICK LEAVE**

The terms of the Public Service Sick Pay Scheme will prevail.

1. **RIGHT TO INFORMATION AND REVIEW**

The Council is committed to offering feedback and information to candidates. Any candidate who wishes to do so may request to have a decision or the process reviewed. Any such request must be submitted in writing, stating the grounds of the request and this must be submitted to hr@laoiscoco.ie within five working days of the date of notification of a relevant decision.

1. **OTHER**

Appointments to the Council are subject to satisfactory checks with regard to references, qualifications, medical examinations, and Garda Vetting, as applicable.

1. **GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATIONS**

**Laois County Council is committed to protecting your personal data and we comply with our obligations under the Data Protection Acts, 1988 – 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations.**

**Basis for Processing your Personal Information**

The basis for processing your personal data is to process your application for the position you have applied for with Laois County Council under the Terms of the Employment (Information) Act 1994 and Human Resources Department policies and procedures. Personal data sought for the purpose of recruitment will include your name, your contact details including email address and mobile number, particulars of education, details regarding your record of employment, details of referees and confirmation of if you require an employment permit/visa or work authorisation. When your application form is received, we create a computer record in your name, which contains much of the personal information you have supplied.  This personal record is used solely in processing your candidature.  You are entitled to obtain at any time, a copy of information about you, which is kept on computer.

**Sharing of Information**

Outside of the relevant recruitment team, the information provided in your application form will only be shared for progressing the competition for which you have applied for, with a designated short listing and/or interview board.   If, following the competition, you are placed on a panel and offered a position, the information provided in your application form will form part of your Personnel File and may be used for deciding the post to which you are assigned. Furthermore, should you be offered a position and subsequently confirm your interest in the position, the information provided on your application form will be used to request service records, employment references and/or character references as required.

**Storage period**

Your application will be retained for one year from the date a panel for this position is formed.  In exceptional circumstances panels can be extended for an additional year and your personal data will be kept until the extension has expired (usually a further one year, rarely two years).    You will be notified if the panel has been extended after one year and the new expiry date of the panel.  Applications which are unsuccessful at interview stage will be retained for one year.  Applications that are not progressed to interview stage will be destroyed post competition. If you do not furnish the personal data requested, Laois County Council will not be able to progress your application form for the competition for which you are applying. Laois County Council’s Privacy Statement can be assessed at: <https://laois.ie/privacy-statement/>

**Any attempt by a candidate, or by any person(s) acting at the candidate’s instigation, directly or indirectly, by means of written communication or otherwise influence in the candidate’s favour, any member or employee of the Council or person nominated by the County Council to interview or examine applicants, will automatically disqualify the candidate for the position being sought. Expenses incurred by candidates in attending interview etc., will be at the candidates own expense.**

**Laois County Council is an equal opportunities employer.**