



LAOIS HERITAGE PLAN  
2014 - 2019



An Chomhairle Oidhreachta  
The Heritage Council



The Laois Heritage Forum wishes to acknowledge the role of the Heritage Council in initiating and supporting the preparation of this Heritage Plan in association with Laois County Council. In addition, the Forum acknowledges the support of the Heritage Council through its contribution to the funding of the post of the Heritage Officer and the implementation of projects under the Laois Heritage Plans 2002-2006 and 2007-2011, in association with Laois County Council.

Is mian le Fóram Oidhreachta Laoise aitheantas a thabhairt don Chomhairle Oidhreachta as an Plean Oidhreachta seo a thionscnamh agus a ullmhú i gcomhlachas le Comhairle Chontae Laoise. Ina theannta sin, aithníonn an Fóram tacaíocht na Comhairle Oidhreachta agus i ag cur le maoiniú phost an Oifigigh Oidhreachta agus ag cur i gcrích tionscadal faoi Phlean Oidhreachta Laoise, i gcomhlachas le Comhairle Chontae Laoise.

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Front Cover

Kingfisher. Photo by Dominic Reddin

Back Cover

View from the Rock of Dunamase (Catherine Casey), Launch of the Lakeland Treasures smartphone app (Midlands Regional Authority), Pond dipping at Brittas Lake on Biodiversity Day (Catherine Casey), Paul Meade playing James Fintan Lalor in the play *From the Sod to the Sky* by Mike Finn, premiered at the James Fintan Lalor Summer School in Portlaoise in 2013 (Michael Scully), Carnation Theatre perform at Abbeyleix Heritage House during Heritage Week (Alf Harvey).

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12<sup>th</sup> Century church with romanesque doorway,  
Killeshin (Martin Doyle)

# Foreword

Heritage not only provides us with a sense of identity and cultural well-being, it is also a key contributor to our economy. As Cathaoirleach of Laois County Council, I am delighted to be associated with the publication of the third Heritage Plan for County Laois, which aims to protect, increase accessibility to, and maximise the value of our heritage by working in partnership to foster an understanding of heritage through participation, education and research.

The enthusiastic participation of community groups and individuals in the process of preparing this plan is evidence of the importance of plans like this one in reconnecting people with their local heritage. The issues raised during consultation – concerns about landscape, wildlife, architecture, quality of life – demonstrate the affinity felt by many people to the very local aspects of their heritage. I am confident that this new plan will build on this connection, bringing heritage to a wider audience around the county, and ensuring that the collective concern of all who experience and value heritage, will help to ensure its future protection.

The Laois Heritage Plan is a working document, with many detailed, specific and achievable actions. Implementing this ambitious plan will require commitment from all the groups involved in the Heritage Forum, from central Government and from the communities of Laois. The continued support of the Heritage Council over the past decade has been instrumental in achieving all the actions that have been carried out to date, and on behalf of Laois County Council, I would like to thank them for their commitment and support. We welcome the challenges of this new Plan and look forward to the realisation of its vision over the coming years.

*John Joe Fennelly*  
Cathaoirleach



I am proud to introduce the third Heritage Plan for County Laois, which will run from 2014 to 2019, and is testament to the ongoing commitment to heritage of Laois County Council's executive and elected members.

The vision of this new plan, to see a County Laois where heritage is at the heart of every home, is an ambitious one, but it is achievable. Much has been achieved through the last two Heritage Plans and I know that the hard work, commitment and enthusiasm of the members of the Laois Heritage Forum, and the wider community mean that even more will be accomplished through this new plan.

Our heritage is not just about where we have come from, it's about our future too. Heritage is a key component of quality of life in our towns, villages and rural communities. It is what makes Laois a great place to live, it is what makes our tourists keep coming back and it is part of what entices companies to do business here. In addition to the conservation of heritage for its own sake, our environment, amenities, heritage sites, parks, gardens, landscapes and streetscapes all make a significant contribution to the well-being of all our residents, visitors and businesses.

This plan is the result of a participative consultation process, stretching over a full year. I wish to congratulate all who have been involved with the development of the Laois Heritage Plan, particularly the Elected Members of Laois County Council and the many organisations and individuals, locally, regionally and nationally, who contributed to the consultation process. The commitment of all the member organisations of the Laois Heritage Forum, and the continued involvement of the Heritage Council in supporting and developing the Laois Heritage Plan must be especially acknowledged. I look forward to working with all of these groups in the implementation of this plan. Finally, I wish to pay tribute to Ms Catherine Casey, Heritage Officer, Laois County Council for the excellent work and significant contribution she has made to this plan and the ongoing appreciation of the heritage of County Laois.

*Peter Carey*  
County Manager

## Réamhrá

Ní hamháin go gcuireann an oidhreacht leis an mórtas cine agus leis an gcultúr, cuirtear go mór freisin le cúrsaí eacnamaíochta. I mo Chathaoirleach dom ar Chomhairle Chontae Laoise, is cúis áthais dom baint a bheith agam leis an tríú Plean Oidhreachta do Chontae Laoise a fhoilsiú. Tá de chuspóir leis an bPlean an oidhreacht a chosaint, feabhas a chur ar chúrsaí áisiúlachta ina leith agus an tairbhe is fearr is féidir a bhaint as an oidhreacht trí oibriú i gcomhar le dreamanna eile chun an tuiscint ar an oidhreacht a chothú trí rannpháirtíocht, oideachas agus obair thaighde.

Is léiriú an pháirt dhíograiseach a bhí ag grúpaí pobail agus ag daoine príobháideacha in ullmhú an phlean seo ar an tábhacht atá le pleananna den sórt seo chun an bhaint atá ag na daoine leis an oidhreacht áitiúil a chothú. Ba léir an ceangal a airíonn cuid mhór daoine leis na gnéithe is cóngaraí dóibh den oidhreacht ar na ceisteanna a tarraingíodh anuas le linn an chomhairliúcháin - imní faoin taobh tíre, an fiadhúlra, cúrsaí ailtireachta agus feabhas an tsaoil. Tá mé cinnte gur treisiú ar an gceangal sin a bheidh sa phlean nua seo, go gcuirfear an oidhreacht ar a súile do bhreis daoine ar fud an chontae agus go gcinnteofar gur cabhair maidir leis an oidhreacht a chosaint san am atá romhainn an spéis atá inti acu sin a dtaitíonn an oidhreacht leo agus a bhfuil meas acu uirthi.

Cáipéis oibre atá i bPlean Oidhreachta Laoise ina leagtar amach an t-iliomad beart sonrach indéanta. Ní mór dúthracht na ndreamanna go léir a bhaineann leis an bhFóram Oidhreachta, idir an Rialtas Láir agus an pobal áitiúil, chun an plean ard-aidhme seo a chur i bhfeidhm. Bhí an cúnamh taca ón gComhairle Oidhreachta le deich mbliana anuas cinniúnach maidir leis na bearta go léir atá curtha i gcrích go dtí seo agus ba mhaith liom thar ceann Chomhairle Chontae Laoise buíochas a ghlacadh leo as ucht a gcuid dúthrachta agus a gcuid cúnamh. Táthar ag cur go fonnmhar chuig a leagtar amach sa Phlean nua seo a bhaint amach agus ag tnúth leis an aisling a bhaineann leis a thabhairt i gcrích i rith na mblianta seo amach romhainn.

*John Joe Fennelly*  
Cathaoirleach



Is ábhar mórtais dom an tríú Plean Oidhreachta maidir le Contae Laoise a chur i láthair. Leanfaidh an plean ar aghaidh idir na blianta ó 2014 go dtí 2019 agus is léargas é ar an dúthracht leanúnach maidir leis an oidhreacht a dhéanann feidhmeannaigh agus comhaltaí tofa Chomhairle Chontae Laoise.

Tá aisling ard-aidhme á leagan amach leis an bplean nua seo, a thabhairt i gcrích go mbeadh an oidhreacht i gcroílár gach teaghlaigh i gContae Laoise, agus is cuspóir é sin ar féidir a bhaint amach. Tá cuid mhór tugtha i gcrích leis an dá Phlean Oidhreachta roimhe seo agus feictear domsa go mbainfear níos mó arís amach tríd an bplean nua le dua, díograis agus díocas chomhaltaí Fóram Oidhreachta Laoise agus an phobail i gcoitinne.

Ní bhaineann an oidhreacht lena ndeachaigh romhainn agus leis sin amháin, baineann sí lena bhfuil amach romhainn chomh maith. Is gné thábhachtach an oidhreacht de chaighdeán an tsaoil i mbailte móra, sráidbhailte agus cheantair tuaithe an Chontae. Is í an oidhreacht a fhágann gur breá an áit é Contae Laoise le maireachtáil inti, is í a tharraingíonn na turasóirí ar ais arís agus is cuid í den mhealladh atá sa Chontae mar áit ag comhlachtaí le dul i mbun gnó. Chomh maith leis an oidhreacht a chaomhnú ar a son féin, cuireann an timpeallacht, na háiseanna, na suíomhanna oidhreachta, na páirceanna, gairdíní, réimsí tíre agus réimsí sráide le maitheas an tsaoil don lucht cónaithe, cuairteoireachta agus gnó sa Chontae.

Tá an plean seo ina thoradh ar phróiseas comhairliúcháin lánpháirtíochta a bhí ar bun ar feadh bliana. Is mian liom a gcuid oibre a thréaslú leo sin ar fad a raibh baint acu le Plean Oidhreachta Laoise a chur le chéile, go háirithe leis na Comhaltaí Tofa ar Chomhairle Chontae Laoise agus leis na heagraíochtaí agus na daoine ar fad, go háitiúil, go réigiúnach agus go náisiúnta, a rinne cion tairbhe maidir leis an bpróiseas comhairliúcháin. Is dual an dúthracht a léiríonn na heagraíochtaí ar fad a bhaineann le Fóram Oidhreachta Laoise agus an pháirt leanúnach atá ag an gComhairle Oidhreachta, maidir le bonn treise a chur faoi Phlean Oidhreachta Laoise agus cuidiú leis an bhforbairt, a admháil. Táim ag tnúth le hoibriú leis na dreamanna seo go léir maidir leis an bplean a chur i bhfeidhm. Ba mhaith liom, mar fhocal scoir, buíochas a ghlacadh le Catherine Casey Uasal, Oifigeach Oidhreachta Chomhairle Chontae Laoise as an tsár-obair agus an cion mór tairbhe atá déanta aici i ndáil leis an bplean seo agus an meas atá aici ar oidhreacht Chontae Laoise.

*Peter Carey*  
Bainisteoir Contae



Bridge over the River Barrow, Garryhinch  
(Con Murphy)







Ladybird on wild carrot (Tina Claffey)



# Introduction

This is the third Heritage Plan for County Laois, covering the period 2014 to 2019. The vision of this plan is *A County Laois where heritage is at the heart of every home.*

The Mission of the Plan is *to protect, increase accessibility to, and maximise the value of our heritage by working in partnership to foster an understanding of heritage through participation, education and research.*

The plan has been written by the Laois Heritage Forum, in consultation with the people of the county and local, regional and national organisations with an interest in the heritage of Laois.

For the purposes of preparing the Laois Heritage Plan, the Forum has been guided by the Heritage Act (1995), which is the primary piece of legislation governing heritage in Ireland. The Heritage Act also led to the establishment of the Heritage Council (An Chomhairle Oidhreachta).

In the Heritage Act, *National Heritage* is broken down into the following areas and a definition of each is provided: monuments, archaeological objects, heritage objects, architectural heritage, flora, fauna, wildlife habitats, landscapes, seascapes, wrecks, geology, heritage gardens and parks and inland waterways.

## *The Laois Heritage Plan 2002-2006 and 2007-2011*

The first Heritage Plan for County Laois covered the period 2002 to 2006, and was among the first Heritage Plans published nationally. The second Heritage Plan for Laois was published in 2007. The plan was extended to cover 2012 and 2013, to allow full implementation of key actions.

The key achievements of the previous Laois Heritage Plans, with reports on projects delivered through the plans, as well as evaluations of the plans are detailed on [www.laois.ie/heritage](http://www.laois.ie/heritage) and are available from the Laois Heritage Office.

The new Heritage Plan aims to build upon the achievements of the first two plans, while taking account of changes in the local, national and international environment since the publication of previous plans.



## *Laois County Development Plan 2011-2017*

The County Development Plan (2011-2017) for Laois sets out the statutory framework for land-use planning and sustainable development in Laois. The Heritage Plan does not repeat the policy commitments of the County Development Plan, but rather aims to complement this and other plans, providing data and proposing policy for such plans, as well as assisting in raising general awareness among the population.

## **How this plan was written**

With the approval of the Heritage Council, the Laois Heritage Forum took the decision to modify the consultation process involved in preparation of this plan.

In preparing previous plans, two stages of public consultation have been used, with an initial call for submissions at the start of the process, followed by preparation of a draft plan, and a further stage of consultation on the draft. The Forum felt that this and other consultation processes around the county have led to 'consultation fatigue' among the public, and also that the requirements of heritage around the county are quite well known at this stage, so the decision was taken to draft the bones of the Heritage Plan, and then publish this for the public to comment on. This method was approved by the Heritage Council.

The Draft Laois Heritage Plan 2014 -2019 was drafted by Laois Heritage Forum in early 2013 and was published in April 2013. The period of public consultation ran until the end of May 2013. The draft plan was considered by the Planning and Environment Strategic Policy Committee in June 2013.

The Laois Heritage Forum met in October 2013 to consider the results and to edit the plan following the public consultation. The Plan was amended and agreed by the Forum members in November 2013 and formally adopted by Laois County Council in January 2014.

A detailed timetable of the production of the Laois Heritage Plan is at Appendix 2.



### **Appropriate Assessment**

The Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) as transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 requires that all plans and projects must be screened for potential impact on Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Screening aims to establish whether a full Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Directive is required. Screening of the Laois Heritage Plan 2014- 2019 was carried out by Dr. Fiona MacGowan (Consulting Ecologist) on behalf of Laois Heritage Forum and the findings have informed this Plan. Overall it was concluded that the plan would have no significant adverse impact on Natura 2000 sites and that no further assessment was necessary. Several actions were flagged which may when implemented have a negative impact, and it is noted at each of these actions that projects will be Appropriately Assessed at an early stage in the planning of projects. The full AA screening report is published separately on [www.laois.ie](http://www.laois.ie)

Laois Heritage Forum is fully committed to the implementation of the requirements of the Habitats Directive and screening of individual projects for appropriate assessment will also be undertaken where there might be an impact on Natura 2000 sites.

### **Public Consultation**

A report on the public consultation process with details of issues raised by the public has been prepared by the Heritage Officer and is available separately on [www.laois.ie/heritage](http://www.laois.ie/heritage). All submissions were fully considered by the Laois Heritage Forum in the revision of the draft plan, and every effort has been made in this final plan to reflect the views and concerns of the public. Details of those who contributed to the public consultation are at Appendix 3.

### **How the plan will be implemented**

The plan will form the basis for the work of the Heritage Office and the Heritage Forum for the coming years. Each year a work programme will be drafted based on the contents of the plan and current priorities. This will be used to apply for funding for various projects from the Heritage Council and other sources. A report on the year's actions will be published at the end of each year.

Implementation of the Heritage Plan will be through a detailed annual work programme, agreed with the Heritage Council, overseen by the Laois Heritage Forum and co-ordinated on a day to day basis by the Heritage Officer of Laois County Council.

Local heritage and community groups have been involved in preparation of the Heritage Plan and their continued support and participation is vital for its successful implementation. It is hoped that local groups and organisations will remain active partners in the implementation of the Heritage Plan actions. Opportunities to work in co-operation with partners within and outside the county will be taken wherever possible.

### **Funding**

Budgets, detailed timetables and partners for individual projects will be agreed by the Laois Heritage Forum and detailed in the annual work programme. A detailed report on progress each year will also be made available.

For previous Heritage Plans, a large proportion of the funding for implementation has come from the Heritage Council. Laois Heritage Forum is very grateful for the continued valuable support of the Heritage Council, which operates a Heritage Plan Grant Scheme. However it is sensible to also broaden out the funding base of the Laois Heritage Plan, and every opportunity will be taken to explore alternative funding streams for heritage projects, in particular those that may allow for a degree of multi-annual planning.

### **Laois Heritage Forum**

The membership of Laois Heritage Forum is drawn from communities, elected members and agencies and groups involved with aspect of the heritage of County Laois. Current membership of the Forum is shown in Appendix 1. It is important that the Forum is representative of a wide range of interests and also that it is representative of the community of Laois. For this reason, the membership of the Forum will be reviewed in the early stages of implementation of this plan.





In order to have an effective working forum, numbers on the Laois Heritage Forum are limited. However, public participation from as wide a base as possible is important in the implementation of this plan and the conservation of heritage in Laois. A wider group meeting will be held, to which all groups and individuals with an interest in any aspect of the heritage of the county will be invited. This group will feed into the implementation of the Laois Heritage Plan.

### How progress will be measured

It is essential to the success of any plan that its impact be monitored and evaluated. Ongoing monitoring will allow changes to be made to implementation of the plan as necessary, and evaluation at the end of the plan delivery period will allow the results of the plan to be quantified.

### Guiding principles

Certain principles underpin all the objectives of the Heritage Plan and will be borne in mind at all stages of implementation.

The principles of *Sustainable Development* will be applied to all actions undertaken by the Laois Heritage Forum. An accepted definition of sustainable development is *Development which meets the need of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.*

The principles of *Social Inclusion* will be applied at all times. In particular, every effort will be made to ensure that all events undertaken as part of the delivery of this plan reflect the interests of the socially and culturally diverse community of the county, and are accessible to people of all abilities.

The UNECE (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe) Convention on Access to Information, *Public Participation* in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, usually known as the Aarhus Convention, entered into force in 2001 and was ratified by Ireland in 2013. The Aarhus Convention grants the public rights regarding *access to information, public participation and access to justice*, in

governmental decision-making processes on matters concerning the local, national and transboundary environment. The principles of Aarhus will be applied in all actions undertaken by the Laois Heritage Forum.

The Laois Heritage Forum will work to identify opportunities for *co-operation with communities* and organisations within Laois and in surrounding counties in relation to implementation of the Heritage Plan. This will be especially relevant in the case of projects involving shared natural features, such as the Slieve Bloom Mountains and the Rivers Barrow and Nore. Co-operation will also be important in the area of tourism and in relation to monuments in State ownership, particularly the Rock of Dunamase.

### Availability of resources and expertise

Laois Heritage Forum believes that in order for the principles of heritage conservation to be fully integrated to the day to day operation of Laois County Council, the appointment of full-time, suitably qualified staff will be necessary in the areas of *inter alia* Archives, Architectural Conservation and Biodiversity.

However, the Forum recognises that the provision of such staff is an operational matter for Laois County Council, and is dependent on resources. The Forum will work to address all areas of heritage in the County, mindful of the fact that specialist professional expertise will need to be accessed at certain times.



Learning about marine life during Heritage Week, Mountmellick Library (Alf Harvey)



# Statement of Vision and Mission

## Vision

A County Laois where heritage is at the heart of every home.

## Mission

To protect, increase accessibility to, and maximise the value of our heritage by working in partnership to foster an understanding of heritage through participation, education and research.



*“Passion is lifted from the earth itself by the muddy hands of the young; it travels along grass-stained sleeves to the heart. If we are going to save environmentalism and the environment, we must also save an endangered indicator species: the child in nature.”*

Richard Louv, *Last Child in the Woods*





## Objectives and Actions

### Objective 1: Increase understanding of the heritage of Laois

Raising awareness of heritage through all facets of society has been an aim of the Laois Heritage Forum since its inception and remains important. With rapidly changing technologies and tools for communication, there has been a great change in the methods by which our message can be communicated and it is important that the Forum keeps up to date with the communication tools being widely used throughout society exploiting the internet, Smartphone apps and other technologies to spread the message that heritage is important for all our lives. It is acknowledged however that the method of communicating a message should not become more important than the message itself and traditional methods of communication, such as books, seminars and personal contacts will remain relevant.

The Laois Heritage Forum places great importance on the value of formal and informal systems of education at all stages of life in the development of understanding of our heritage. Actions relating to education aim to emphasise the importance of structured life-long education in promoting a deep knowledge, love and understanding of heritage. The point is made that education programmes should involve not only imparting knowledge and information, but must seek to modify behaviour and develop lifestyles that are harmonious with the wise use of our heritage.

1. Carry out an evaluation of current levels of awareness of heritage in Laois, to create a baseline from which to assess the impact of future communications work. Develop and implement a Heritage Communications strategy targeted at identified groups of stakeholders, to maximise efficient use of resources.
2. Develop the Laois Heritage website and use as a showcase for the heritage of Laois, the work of the Forum and as a portal allowing access to other sources of heritage information, including the Heritage Council's Heritage Map Viewer and the websites of State agencies which display valuable data on the heritage of the County.
3. Continue to raise awareness of the benefits of new technology for interpretation of heritage sites – run training in the development of interpretation using new technology, in association with Laois Partnership.
4. Disseminate information on the heritage of the County through the use of digital technologies such as Smartphone apps, multi-media presentations (audio, video guides, etc.) and social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Pinterest, etc.
5. Continue publication of books, posters and leaflets on various aspects of the heritage of Laois (both by theme and by target group).
6. Investigate the feasibility of developing downloadable applications to increase awareness of heritage sites, e.g. Laois Gardens Trail, and important monuments, e.g. Rock of Dunamase.
7. Continue to organise conferences, talks and seminars on heritage-related topics, including the annual *Celebrating Laois Heritage Conference*. Target staff of Laois County Council through awareness raising seminars and workshops at lunchtime.
8. Promote the commemoration of important historical people from Laois (e.g. Thomas Prior, Lucy Franks, William Dargan, Staples family, Bartholomew Mosse, Helen M. Roe) and groups of people (e.g. the Quakers, Huguenots). Work with other groups promoting such people at a national level wherever possible, e.g. the National Committee for Science and Engineering Commemorative Plaques.
9. Continue to promote wider awareness of all aspects of heritage in Laois through participation in national programmes and events such as Heritage Week, Water Day, Biodiversity Day and Tree Week.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Some Actions of the Heritage Plan may involve increased visitor usage to sites of heritage interest. There is a possibility that some of these sites will be in or close to Natura 2000 sites and therefore individual projects will be screened to assess their impact in the Natura 2000 site at project planning stage.





10. Work to promote awareness of the Nore Pearl Mussel, a species only known from a short stretch of the River Nore, mostly within County Laois, which is threatened with extinction. Support the stakeholders in implementing the River Nore sub-basin management plan, which aims to develop measures to improve water quality within the River Nore and prevent the imminent extinction of the Nore Pearl Mussel.
11. Use co-operative projects to promote awareness of the importance and value of sites and settlements that cross county boundaries (such as the Slieve Blooms, the Rivers Barrow and Nore and boundary towns, including Graiguecullen and Portarlinton).
12. Liaise with Teagasc and the Farming Organisations to produce and distribute heritage related information of relevance to the farming community. Support the work of Teagasc in co-ordinating the delivery of agri environmental awareness events for farmers, to raise awareness of wildlife habitats, watercourses, farm built heritage (architecture and archaeology) and traditional orchards.
13. Work with the National Museum to identify and raise awareness of artefacts of importance from Laois and encourage display of suitable artefacts in the County.
14. Support efforts to promote heritage-related tourism, including in the Slieve Blooms and in particular Eco-tourism. Work with Laois Tourism and other tourism groups to promote and maximise the economic and tourism value of our heritage, particularly harnessing the goodwill and publicity associated with existing festivals and events.<sup>2</sup>
15. Work with, among others, Comhaltas Ceoiltoirí Éireann to celebrate and promote the work of those involved with traditional musical and dance, oral-heritage and folklore.
16. Liaise with Adult Education providers including Laois Teachers Education Centre to develop and provide education courses on different aspects of heritage.
17. Promote participation in heritage awareness-raising programmes for schools, such as the Laois Heritage Society's *Schools Heritage Project*, which covers both Primary and Secondary Schools, and the Heritage Council's *Heritage in Schools* programme.
18. Identify partners and promote programmes for training in traditional skills and crafts, such as building with lime mortar, agricultural and other traditional rural skills (thatching, threshing, harness-making, butter-making, weaving, basket-making, rope-making, boat-building).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Some Actions of the Heritage Plan may involve increased visitor usage to sites of heritage interest. There is a possibility that some of these sites will be in or close to Natura 2000 sites and therefore individual projects will be screened to assess their impact in the Natura 2000 site at project planning stage.

<sup>3</sup> There is the potential that some of these programmes may involve building projects. In the cases where they are in or adjacent to Natura 2000 sites then specific Appropriate Assessment Screening will be required.



## Objective 2: Record the heritage of Laois

Gathering data on the built, natural and cultural Heritage of County Laois has been a priority since the first Heritage Plan for Laois was adopted in 2002. Acknowledging the limited resources that are likely to be available to the Forum through this plan period, it is important to maximise the impact of the Forum, and so this goal focuses on prioritising actions, detailing some surveys that will be carried out during this plan period and supporting other organisations in gathering data including the Biodiversity Data Centre.

19. Audit existing surveys/inventories of heritage relating to Laois. Use these to develop and implement a prioritised programme for research and surveys where there are gaps in knowledge, in partnership with national and regional bodies. Continue to support the Heritage Council's Heritage Map Viewer and use this to highlight gaps in heritage data.
20. Carry out an audit of County Geological Sites, using existing resources such as data held by the Geological Survey of Ireland, and the recent publication *The Geology of Laois and Offaly* by Dr. John Feehan. Use the results of this audit to inform County Development Plan policy in relation to geological heritage.
21. Carry out visual impact and viewshed analysis of selected cultural heritage sites in Laois, including the Rock of Dunamase, to assess the impact on their integrity of developments in the surrounding area. Use the results of these studies to inform planning policy.
22. Initiate survey of local and traditional place – and fieldnames throughout the county, working with, among others, schools and the Community Forum.
23. Support Bord na Móna in the implementation of the Bord na Móna Biodiversity Action Plan 2010-2015, which includes plans to carry out a baseline ecological survey of its various properties within Laois.
24. Support Coillte in carrying out surveys of designated Biodiversity sites in its ownership and sites selected for inclusion in the various LIFE-Nature Programmes around the county.
25. Support the National Parks and Wildlife Service in protecting important sites for biodiversity and carrying out ecological survey work throughout Laois.
26. Work with NGOs such as the Irish Peatland Conservation Council, Bat Conservation Ireland, The Irish Wildlife Trust, BirdWatch Ireland and others in promoting awareness and collecting biodiversity data for Laois.
27. Create awareness of the impacts and importance of Invasive Species. Record locations and submit data to the National Biodiversity Centre. Provide information to landowners and managers to reduce or slow the spread of alien invasive species.





### Objective 3: Protect and promote active conservation of the heritage of Laois

Protection of the heritage of Laois is at the core of the vision for heritage in the County. The methods by which the Heritage Plan can bring about protection include through awareness raising and data collection as outlined in Objectives 1 and 2. However specific actions can work to directly ensure conservation and protection of the heritage of the county and these are outlined here.

28. Establish inter-disciplinary working group to progress the conservation, management and future presentation of the nationally important 16th Century Fort Protector in Portlaoise. Encourage and support research by Laois Heritage Society to raise awareness of the first colonial plantation in the English-speaking world.
29. Work with relevant agencies and individuals to promote opportunities for ecological rehabilitation of disturbed sites such as quarries, landfills, cutaway peatland and forestry.<sup>4</sup>
30. Support the valuable existing network of museums throughout the County while continuing to support in principle the development of a County Museum. Assist and encourage museums working towards the Heritage Council's Museums Standards and Accreditation Programme.
31. Promote best practice in care, conservation, maintenance and recording of the valuable traditional shopfronts of Laois.
32. Continue to work with communities to ensure the ongoing conservation and maintenance of graveyards.
33. Encourage and facilitate research into significant Anglo-Norman Castles at Lea and Dunamase and the Viking Fort at Dunrally near Vicarstown.
34. Promote the conservation and reuse of publicly owned historic properties. Support owners of derelict or under-used historic buildings with the aim of promoting their conservation and return to use for the benefit of the community.<sup>5</sup>
35. Work with Bord na Móna and the Abbeyleix Bog Committee in their work to conserve and develop educational opportunities at Abbeyleix Bog, and provide advice when required through the Technical Advisory Group.
36. Promote the active conservation of regionally and locally important wildlife sites and ecological corridors linking them, while continuing to support the National Parks and Wildlife Service in its activities to protect nationally and internationally important wildlife sites and species.
37. Review Views and Prospects in the Laois County Development Plan, to ensure these sites which are important in the landscape of the County and any others which require protection are adequately mapped, delineated and protected. Develop policies to ensure that these areas are protected from inappropriate development through the Laois County Development Plan and related strategies.
38. Ensure that heritage concerns remain to the fore in the review of the County's Landscape Character Assessment and the Laois Wind Energy Strategy. Work with the Heritage Council to ensure that the policy recommendations of the Report *The Onshore Windfarm Sector in Ireland – Planning in Harmony with Heritage*<sup>6</sup> are implemented at county level.
39. Support the development of Architectural Conservation Areas in Laois through collection of data, promotion of community participation and awareness raising.

<sup>4</sup> In the cases where rehabilitation projects are in or adjacent to Natura 2000 sites then Appropriate Assessment Screening will be required of individual projects.

<sup>5</sup> Projects will need individual assessment to ensure that no populations of bats or barn owls known to be using buildings are negatively impacted.

<sup>6</sup> The Heritage Council (2013) *The Onshore Wind Farm Sector in Ireland: Planning in Harmony with Heritage*. Policy Research Paper. Volume 1 – Draft Final Report, October 2013. Researched and written by Alison Harvey and Kate Moloney. Accessed at [http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Planning/2013/windfarm\\_Overview.pdf](http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/Planning/2013/windfarm_Overview.pdf), 26th November 2013.



#### Objective 4: Promote community participation in heritage plans and projects

Promotion of active participation in all aspects of decision making relating to heritage will ensure that communities are engaged with their local heritage, educated about its importance and empowered to take action as necessary to protect that heritage. Through the period of this plan, Laois Heritage Forum will work to promote full community participation in the implementation of the plan and to ensure that the principles of the UNECE Aarhus Convention on access to Environmental Information are fully upheld in Laois. While these principles run across all aspects of the plan, community participation is seen as sufficiently important to require specific Actions.

40. Review membership of the Laois Heritage Forum, in consultation with the Heritage Council and all agencies, groups and communities with an interest in the heritage of the County to ensure that the Forum remains vibrant, effective and representative of all groups with an interest in the Heritage of County Laois.
41. Develop and convene a regular Heritage Summit, to which all groups with an interest in the heritage of the county will be invited, to work together on developing specific heritage policies and projects, to allow all groups to fully participate in the implementation of the plan, and to integrate heritage to the work of groups with a primary focus on other areas (sports, youth, community development, etc.).
42. Support the participation of individuals and the community in recording heritage data of all types (natural, built and cultural) by providing information, guidance and structured training. Investigate the provision of training for community volunteers and local heritage champions. Promote *Citizen Science* programmes which aim to involve everyone in the collection of scientific data.
43. Promote the importance of the National Biodiversity Data Centre and encourage submissions of wildlife records by the public, to help build up a better picture of the distribution and trends of wildlife in Ireland.
44. Support the Heritage Council in promoting the implementation of the UNECE Aarhus Convention in Laois, under the headings of Access to Environmental Information; Public Participation in Environmental Decision Making; and Access to Environmental Justice.

*“In poetically well built museums, formed from the heart’s compulsions, we are consoled not by finding in them old objects that we love, but by losing all sense of time.”*

Orhan Pamuk, *The Museum of Innocence*



### Objective 5: Promote enjoyment and accessibility of heritage

Access, both physical and intellectual, to heritage sites and objects of all kinds is a vital part of promoting their protection. While acknowledging that progress has been made in recent years, and mindful of the rights of landowners, Laois Heritage Forum will work to improve accessibility of heritage sites within County Laois. While acknowledging that the lack of a County Archivist puts Laois at a considerable disadvantage in relation to conservation of archives and provision of service to the public, work will be carried out to improve accessibility of collections and archives relating to the County. Where physical access is limited, new technologies will be explored, to bring understanding of archives, heritage objects and sites to a wider audience using digitisation, modelling and related technologies.

45. Publish a list with accompanying maps of heritage sites which are open to the public in Laois. This to be published online with interactive mapping.
46. Research and implement methods to increase the accessibility of the Laois Local Studies collection, through use of digital technologies.
47. Work with landowners and communities to develop or improve positive and appropriate access to heritage sites such as archaeological monuments, local wildlife areas, etc.<sup>7</sup>
48. Raise awareness of Laois heritage and promote accessibility through hosting and supporting public events at heritage sites, both publicly and privately owned.<sup>7</sup>
49. Investigate development of a Geological Heritage Trail using the recent publication *The Geology of Laois and Offaly* by Dr. John Feehan, and the results of the Survey outlined in Action 20.<sup>7</sup>
50. Support the maintenance of existing way-marked ways and other recreational routes in Laois, and promote development of new walking and cycling routes in association with communities, landowners and State agencies. Promote the principle of heritage audits of routes and interpretation of heritage features along recreational routes. Work with Forward Planning and Sports Office to promote development of high quality new cycling and walking routes in association with communities, landowners and State Agencies.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Some Actions of the Heritage Plan may involve increased visitor usage to sites of heritage interest. There is a possibility that some of these sites will be in or close to Natura 2000 sites and therefore individual projects will be screened to assess their impact in the Natura 2000 site at project planning stage.





Aghaboe Church of Ireland,  
Abbey and graveyard (Catherine Casey)

# Appendix 1. Membership of Laois Heritage Forum 2014

Listed here are the organisations currently represented on Laois Heritage Forum, along with the individual representatives in 2014. While the organisations on the Forum have remained relatively constant (with some additions) over the period since 2002, the individual representatives have occasionally changed. The members of the current Forum would like to acknowledge the crucial input to the Heritage Plan process of all previous members of the Forum.

Some recommendations on the make-up of the Forum were made during the evaluation of the plan and the public consultation process. These will be addressed through a review of membership of the Heritage Forum during the life-time of the plan.



NAME	REPRESENTING
Matt Barrett	County Community Forum
John Bonham MCC	Laois Tourism
Martina Bracken	LCC Environment Section
Noreen Byrne	Laois Federation of Tidy Towns
Mick Dowling	Slieve Bloom Association and County Community Forum
Teddy Fennelly	Laois Heritage Society
John Finlay	Irish Farmers Association
Ciara Flynn	National Parks and Wildlife Service
Bernie Foran	Laois County Library Service
Anne Goodwin	Laois Partnership
Richard Jack	Coillte
Mary Lalor	County Community Forum and Laois Heritage Society
Michael Lalor MCC	County Development Board and Community Forum
Con Maloney	Teagasc
Mark McCorry	Bord na Móna
Angela McEvoy	Laois County Council Forward Planning Section
Michael Parsons	Heritage Council
Martin Phelan, MCC	Laois County Council



## Appendix 2. Plan Preparation Timetable

DATE	ACTION
January 2013	Heritage Forum Workshop to agree visions and mission, draft objectives
February 2013	Heritage Forum Workshop to write draft plan
13 <sup>th</sup> March 2013	Laois Heritage Forum meeting (Kilkenny) Agreement of timetable and draft plan
2 <sup>nd</sup> April 2013	<i>Start of Public Consultation Period</i>
April – May 2013	Publication and distribution of Draft Laois Heritage Plan Invitation to public, local groups and national and regional agencies to comment. Public and local consultation meetings held. Online questionnaire published and promoted.
31 <sup>st</sup> May 2013	<i>Revised End of Public Consultation Period</i>
10 <sup>th</sup> June 2013	Presentation of Heritage Plan to Planning and Environment Strategic Policy Committee
12 <sup>th</sup> June 2013	Heritage Forum Meeting
October 2013	Preparation of report on Public Consultation
31 <sup>st</sup> October 2013	Heritage Forum Meeting
November 2013	Revision of Heritage Plan based on Consultation and Forum Meeting
December 2013	Plan due for adoption – Council Meeting postponed
January 2014	Adoption of Heritage Plan by Laois County Council



# Appendix 3. Submissions received during public consultation



## Community Groups

Abbeyleix Business and Community Development Forum (Brian Maher)

Abbeyleix Heritage Company (Sinead Marshall)

## Individuals

Andy Cole	Louise Quinn
Chris Miller	Margaret Delaney
Margaret Scully	Margaret Phelan
Maureen Culleton	Mervyn Ross
Michael Lynch	Michael Guiney
Ronan Fitzpatrick	Mick Byrne
Tracey Hood	P J Goode
Agnes McLoughlin	P J Tynan
Anne Burke	Pauline D Conroy
Bernard Dunne	Philip Crean
Chris Uys	Philip O'Reilly
Colm Ward	Ray Conroy
Daniel Dunne	Rosaleen Conroy
David Kennedy	Sean Cain
Elisabeth Mulhall	Sinead Murray
Ger Nolan	Mairead Johnston
Joseph Kennedy	
Julie Scully	

In addition, 19 submissions were received via the online survey (Survey Monkey) in which the respondents chose not to give their name, or indicated a preference that their name not be published.

## Non-Governmental Organisations and Professional Bodies

Archives and Records Association Ireland Region (Vera M Orschel)

BirdWatch Ireland Laois Branch (Charles Tweney)

Comhaltas Ceoltoirí Éireann, Portlaoise Branch (P J Phelan)

Institute for Conservator-Restorers in Ireland (Maighrhead McParland)

IPCC (Tadhg O'Corcora)

Irish Georgian Society (Emmeline Henderson)

Irish Society for Archives (Raymond Refaussé)

Keep Ireland Open (Roger Garland)

Laois Environmental Action Forum (Theresa Carter)

Laois Wind Energy Awareness Group (Dermot Conroy)

Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland (Alistair Lings)

Mountmellick Heritage Society (Mary O'Brien)

People over Wind (Margaret Keating)

Presbyterian History Society of Ireland (Valerie Adams)

Save the Midlands (Martina Mooney)

## State Agencies

Geological Survey of Ireland (Sophie Preteseille)

The Heritage Council (Beatrice Kelly and Isabell Smyth)

Laois County Council Environment Section (Ann-Marie Kelly)

Limerick Museum (Brian Hodkinson)

*“Here is your country.*

*Cherish these natural wonders, cherish the natural resources,  
cherish the history and romance as a sacred heritage,  
for your children and your children’s children”*

Theodore Roosevelt



An Chomhairle Oidhreachta  
The Heritage Council



For further information contact:

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