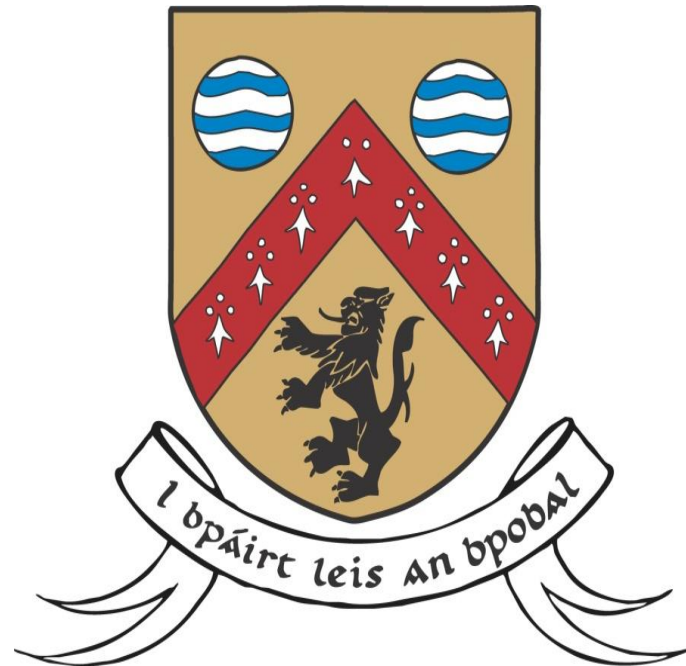


**LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL
COMHAIRLE CHONTAE LAOISE**



**MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT
AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2024
TUARASCÁIL BHAINISTÍOCHTA
LÚNASA/MEAN FÓMHAIR 2024**

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

Section 136(2) of the Local Government Act, 2011, as inserted by Section 51 of the Local Government Reform Act, 2014, requires the Chief Executive to prepare a Monthly Management report. The Report for August & September 2024 is as follows:

FINANCE & ALLOCATIONS NOTIFIED

Expenditure and income to the 31/08/2024 is summarised below:

Service Division	Budget Allocation	Expenditure to 31/08/2024
Housing and Building	€30,641,800	€17,268,925
Road Transportation and Safety	€29,636,000	€13,724,587
Water Services	€3,349,000	€2,122,275
Development Management	€10,390,000	€8,251,364
Environmental Services	€11,871,700	€5,810,147
Recreation and Amenity	€5,494,000	€3,310,088
Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare	€955,000	€437,471
Miscellaneous Services	€10,109,500	€5,560,161
Central Management Charge	€11,434,000	€6,996,984
Total	€113,881,000	€63,482,002

Service Division	Budget Allocation	Income to 31/08/2024
Housing and Building	€31,776,000	€20,210,746
Road Transportation and Safety	€24,788,000	€6,724,592
Water Services	€4,410,000	€2,281,747
Development Management	€7,195,000	€6,478,973
Environmental Services	€4,733,400	€1,379,264
Recreation and Amenity	€1,069,000	€126,940
Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare	€454,000	€126,900
Miscellaneous Services	€11,424,500	€5,620,603
Superannuation	€735,000	€497,275
Local Property Tax	€12,144,172	€8,096,475
Rates	€14,584,066	€11,138,620
Capital transfer	€567,862	
Total	€113,881,000	€62,682,135

The Miscellaneous Services Expenditure is broken down as follows:

Service Division	Budget Allocation	Expenditure to 31/08/2024
Machinery Account	€220,000	€113,217
Administration of Rates	€1,953,000	€319,478
Franchise Costs	€318,000	€470,220
Op of Morgue and Coroner Expenses	€135,000	€2,633
Op of Markets and Casual Trading	€1,000	€18
Local Representation/Civic Leadership	€1,056,000	€547,625
Motor Taxation	€17,000	€141,870
Agency & Recoupable Services	€6,209,500	€3,965,100
Total	€10,109,500	€5,560,161

The Central Management Charge Expenditure is broken down as follows:

Corporate Building Costs	€1,530,000	€390,973
General Corporate Services	€1,335,000	€881,664
Information and Communications Tech	€1,915,000	€1,447,810
Human Resources Function	€1,257,000	€833,449
Finance Function	€825,000	€454,772
Pensions and Lump Sum Costs	€4,572,000	€2,988,316
Total	€11,434,000	€6,996,984

Allocations Notified August/September 2024

Measure 3 of the Town Centre Supports 2024- Mountrath	€50,000.00
Measure 3 of the Town Centre Supports 2024 – Rathdowney	€50,000.00
Community Recognition Fund 2024 – Rathdowney	€65,000.00
Community Recognition Fund 2024 – Mountmellick	€100,000.00
Community Recognition Fund 2024 – Portlaoise	€150,000.00
Community Recognition Fund 2024 – Ballylinan	€70,000.00
Sports Capital Grants 2024 – Portarlinton Leisure Centre	€97,615.00
Sports Capital Grants – Portlaoise Pool Moveable Floor Replacement & Associated Works	€216,278.00

HOUSING AND REGENERATION

SOCIAL HOUSING DELIVERY

Annual Social Housing Delivery Targets under Housing for All

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

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Total
Social Housing completions to date	229	286	57	-	-	572

Social Housing Schemes completed in 2024

Location	Total no. of Houses	House Types	Constructed by	Comment
Clonroosk Abbey, Portlaoise	18	18 no. 3-bed 2-storey	Cluid Housing	18 units delivered. Tenanted in June 2024.
Church Avenue, Stradbally (Phase 2)	6	4 no. 4-bed 2-storey 2 no. 2-bed 1-storey	LCC (Turnkey)	Tenancing complete in June 2024
Sruth na Gleanna, Killeshin	1	1 no. 3-bed house	LA Part V	Delivery Q2 2024
Rockview, Portlaoise	24	10 no. 3-bed houses 2 no. 4-bed houses	Oaklee Housing	Phase 1 of 3 delivered Q2 2024 – 12 Homes
Townparks, Rathdowney Rd, Borris-in-Ossory	8	4 no. 3-bed 2-storey 4 no. 1-bed 2-storey	LCC Turnkey	Phase 1 – 8 units completed.
TOTAL	57			

Social Housing Schemes Under Construction in 2024

Location	Total no.	House Types	Constructed by	Comment
Moore St, Rathdowney	6	6 no. 2-bed 2-storey	LCC (Construction)	On site – expected delivery Q4 2024
Mooreville, Rathdowney	7	4 no. 3-bed 2-storey 4 no. apartments (2 no. 2-bed and 2 no. 1-bed)	LCC (Construction)	On site – expected delivery Q4 2024
Ard Branagh, Portlaoise	6	6 no. 3-bed houses	LA Part V	Currently on site – expected delivery in Q4 2024

Church Avenue, Stradbally (Phase 2)	5	5 no. 4-bed 2-storey	LCC (Turnkey)	On site – phased delivery to be delivered by Q3 2024
Wallis Street, Mountrath	11	9 no. 2-bed bungalows 2 no. 2-bed apts.	Co-Operative Housing	Currently on Site – Expected phased delivery Q3/Q4 2024 and Q1 2025 (4 units)
The Orchard, Ballylynan (Phase 3)	1	1 no. 3-bed 2-storey	LCC (Turnkey)	On Site – Phase 3 (1 unit) delivery Q4 2024
Townparks, Rathdowney Rd, Borris-in-Ossory	18	8 no. 2-bed 2-storey 10 no. 2-bed 1-storey	LCC Turnkey	Phase 2 - 18 units - Q4 2024
Shannon Street, Mountrath	20	13 no. 3-bed 2-storey 7 no. 2-bed 2-storey	LCC Turnkey	On site – expected delivery Q4 2024
Rockview, Portlaoise	23	21 no. 3-bed houses 2 no. 4-bed houses	Oaklee Housing	Currently on site – P3 23 Homes EDD Q4 2024
Ashewood Walk, Summerhill, Portlaoise	3	3 no. 3 bed houses	LCC Part V	On site – expected delivery Q4 2024
An Lochán, Summerhill, Portlaoise	20	8 no. 1-bed maisonettes 8 no 3-bed duplexes. 4 no 2-3-bed apts.	Respond	Currently on site. Phased delivery 12 units due in Q4 2024 and remainder by mid-2025.
Derrymore Gardens, Rushall, Mountrath	3	3 no. 3 bed houses	LCC Part V	On site – expected delivery Q4 2024
Ballymorris Green, Portarlington (Ph 2)	12	12 no. 3-bed houses	Cluid Housing	Currently on site – Last phase of scheme – advised that these units will be delivered Q4 2024.
Carraig Glas, Stradbally	26	15 no. 2-bed houses 9 no. 3-bed houses 2 no 4-bed houses	LCC (Construction)	On site – expected delivery Q2 2025
Convent Lands, Portlaoise (CAS)	52	33 no 2-bed apts. 15 no 1-bed apts. 4 no. 2-bed houses.	Sophia Housing	On site – expected delivery Q4 2025
Oak Park Halting Site, Portlaoise	4	4 day units and associated works	LCC (Construction)	On site – expected delivery Q1 2025
Bruach Na hAbhainn, Killeen	1	1 no. 3-bed 2-storey	LCC (Turnkey)	On Site – Phase 1 (1 unit) delivery Q3 2025

1 New Road, Portlaoise	1	1 no. 4-bed 1-storey	LCC (Renewal)	On site – expected delivery Q1 2025
6 Emmett Terrace, Mountmellick	1	1 no. 4-bed 1-storey	LCC (Renewal)	On site – expected delivery Q1 2025
Oldcourt, Ballylinan	1	1 no. 4-bed 1-storey	LCC (Renewal)	Design team and contractor to be appointed – expected delivery Q4 2025
Townspark, Mountmellick	49	28 no. 3-bed 2-storey 11 no. 2-bed 2-storey 8 no. 1-bed 2-storey 2 no. 2-bed 1-storey	LCC Turnkey	On site – expected delivery Q4 2025
Foxburrow, Portlaoise	15	1 and 2-bed apts	Part V - Cluid Housing	On site – Part V agreement to be finalised
Oakvale Way, Stradbally	19	13 no. 1-bed bungalows 6 no. 2-bed bungalows	North and East Housing Association	On site. Delivery Q4 2025
Ballyadams	1	1 no. 6-bed bungalow	LCC (Construction)	On site – expected delivery Q4 2025
TOTAL	305			

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

Location/Scheme	No of units	House Types	To be constructed by	Comment
13 and 14 Lakeglen, Portlaoise	2	1 no. 3-bed 2-storey 1 no. 4-bed 2-storey	LCC (Renewal)	Stage 1 approved. Stage 2 to be submitted in Q3 2024 and S179A advertised 16 th July 2024.
French Church St., Portarlinton	2	2 no. 2-bed apts.	LCC (Renewal)	Stage 2 to be submitted in Q3 2024 and S179A advertised 16 th July 2024.
“Radharc Darach”, Hepburn Court, Portlaoise	54	8 no. 2-bed bungalows 12 no. 2-bed 2-storey 34 no. 2-bed 2-storey	Cluid Housing	Tender for design/build contract closed on 4 th March. Appointment of contractor by Cluid imminent. They are also progressing enabling works for demolition of the remaining structures and ESB cable diversion works on site.
Curragh na Mona, Abbeyleix Rd, Portlaoise	39	5 x 2-bed fully accessible apts	Respond Housing	Letter of Intent issued to contractor, awaiting return of documentation.

		12 x 2-bed bungalows 6 x 3-bed houses with downstairs bedroom 2 x 4-bed house with downstairs bedroom 2 x 2-bed apts – accessible (ground floor) apts 2 x 1-bed 1 st floor apts 4 x 3-bed 2-storey. 6 x 2-bed 1 st floor apts		Construction to commence Q4 2024.
Clonroosk (Knockmay), Portlaoise	12	8 no. 2-bed 2-storey 3 no. 3-bed 2-storey 1 no. 3-bed 1-storey	LCC (Construction)	Tender advertised in Q3 2024.
Doonane	12	12 no. 3-bed 2-storey	LCC (Construction)	Tender advertised in Q3 2024.
“Iona”, 4, 5, & 6 Abbeyleix Road, Portlaoise	7	2 no. 3-bed 2-storey 1 no. 2-bed 2-storey 4 no. 1-bed apt	LCC (Construction)	Stage 3 approved and tender to be advertised in Q3 2024.
Derry Road, Durrow	24	9 no. 1-bed 1-storey 4 no. 1-bed apts. 1 no. 2-bed 1-storey 7 no. 2-bed 2-storey 3 no. 3-bed 2-storey	LCC (Construction)	Stage 3 approved and tender to be advertised in Q3 2024.
Moanbaun, Mountrath	17	6 no. 3-bed 2-storey 7 no. 2-bed 2-storey 4 no. 2-bed 1-storey	LCC (Construction)	Stage 2 approved. S179A completed and Stage 3 to be submitted in Q4 2024.
County Hotel, Portlaoise (CALF)	10	8 no. 1-bed apts. 2 no. 2-bed apts.	Cluid Housing	Stage 1 approved. S179A completed and tender to be advertised in Q4 2024.
Tyrrell’s Lands, Stradbally Road, Portlaoise	21	Tenure mix - numbers and house types - to be confirmed in detailed design	LCC Social and Affordable	Stage 2 approved. Preliminary Market Consultation advertised in August 2024 to progress development

				strategy for the delivery of the mixed tenure scheme.
Bracklone St, Portarlinton	11	11 no. 2-bed houses	LCC (Construction)	Stage 2 to be submitted in Q3 2024.
Rushall, Mountrath	3	3 no. 3-bed 2-storey	LCC (Construction)	Stage 2 to be progressed in Q3 2024
Maryborough School, Stradbally Road, Portlaoise	11	2 no. 2-bed 1-storey 7 no. 2-bed 1-storey 2 no. 1-bed 1-storey	LCC (Construction)	Stage 1 approved. Stage 2 to be progressed in Q3 2024
Main St, Ballinakill	3	2 no. 2-bed 2-storey 1 no. 1-bed apt	LCC (Construction)	Stage 1 approved. Stage 2 to be progressed in Q3 2024
Beladd, Portlaoise	5	1 no. 3-bed 2-storey 3 no. 3-bed 2-storey 1 no. 4-bed 2-storey	LCC (Construction)	Stage 1 approved. Stage 2 to be progressed in Q3 2024
Maltings Site, Mountmellick	40	TBC	LCC (Construction)	Stage 1 submitted in Q2 2024.
TOTAL	273			

AFFORDABLE HOUSING / COST RENTAL

Minimum targets for Laois issued by Dept of Housing in relation to the delivery of Affordable Purchase / Cost Rental housing by the local authority are as follows:

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	TOTAL
LA Affordable Purchase & Cost Rental Delivery Target	5	7	10	8	8	38

Discussions ongoing to progress potential affordable units as follows:

Affordable	<i>AHF approved in principle by DHLGH</i>	<i>AHF Application submitted to DHLGH – Potential no of unit yield</i>	<i>Advance Turnkey Purchase EOI's under consideration Potential No of unit yield</i>	<i>Part V – Potential No of Unit Yield</i>	<i>LCC Construction Potential No of Unit Yield</i>
Affordable	40	0	*60	8	40 minimum
Cost Rental			28		

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

- 16 units approved for Affordable Purchase Scheme at Kilminchy, Portlaoise. Application portal for units comprising 2- and 3-bedroom houses closed on 4th January 2024. Applications being assessed and passed on to agent when eligible and houses become available. First sale closed on 28th June 2024 with next sale imminent.
- 11 units approved for Affordable Purchase Scheme at An Lochan, Summerhill, Portlaoise. Application portal for units of 3-bedroom houses closed on 11th January 2024. Applications being assessed and passed on to agent when eligible and houses become available.
- 13 units approved for Affordable Purchase in Stradbally. Currently working with developer regarding their Local Authority Subsidy Agreement with LCC. Construction of units not yet commenced.
- Design has been finalised for social (21) and affordable (46) housing on Council owned landbank on the Stradbally Road, Portlaoise. Funding mechanism for developing this site as a mixed tenure scheme is still to be determined.

Call remains open for Expressions of Interest in respect of:

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

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

PRIVATE RENTED INSPECTIONS

Laois County Council is responsible, through inspection, for determining if a property meets the standards for rental accommodation in accordance with the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2019.

The Council has been advised that the 2024 target number of dwellings to be inspected is 892.

	1 st January 2024 – 31 st August 2024
No of Private Rented Inspections	631 (70.7%)
No of notices of works issued	452

The Housing Inspections team can be contacted via email at propertyinspections@laoiscoco.ie.

SERVICED SITES FOR SELF BUILDERS

Laois County Council is actively considering the development of **serviced sites** over the coming years at a number of locations in the county.

In the first instance, eligibility will be determined by criteria as set out under the **Croí Conaithe (Towns) Fund – Ready to Build Scheme (Serviced Sites for New Homes) Scheme**.

Under the scheme, local authorities are supported to make serviced sites in towns and villages available to potential individual purchasers. These sites will be available at a discount on the market value of the site for the building of a property for occupation as the principal private residence of the purchaser. The level of discount to the individual will depend on the level of servicing cost incurred by the local authority before the sale of the site with discounts up to a maximum of €30,000. The amount of such discount will be reflected in the sale price of the site to the purchaser.

The following locations are currently under consideration for serviced sites and/or have advertised sites for sale. Sites to be a minimum of 0.25 acres in size.

Location	no. of Sites	Comment
Ballacolla Road, Durrow	4	3 offers accepted and conveyancing ongoing; 1 contract signed.
Gleann na Glaise, Ballyroan	4	2 offers accepted and conveyancing ongoing; 2 contracts signed.
Doonane	2	Stage 3 approved and tender to be advertised in Q3 2024.
Derry Road Durrow	4	Stage 2 approved, and Stage 3 to be submitted in Q3 2024.
Castletown	9	Proposal. Detailed design currently on-going.
TOTAL SITES UNDER CONSIDERATION	23	

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

HOUSING STOCK

Housing Re-Lets

Month	LA Keys Surrendered	Properties Acquired	Works Completed
January 2024	8	1	4
February 2024	10	0	5
March 2024	5	0	6
April 2024	4	2	11
May 2024	5	0	9
June 2024	7	1	3
July 2024	5	0	10
August 2024	9	1	9
TOTAL (YTD)	53	5	57

NOTE: There are currently 33 vacant units from our existing stock and a further 6 units that the Council acquired. Works are either ongoing on these properties or specifications are being prepared for works to be carried out.

Housing Maintenance

Month	Work Orders Raised	Work Orders Closed	Work Orders Open
January 2024	612	612	0
February 2024	453	453	0
March 2024	374	374	0
April 2024	442	442	0
May 2024	414	414	0
June 2024	308	308	0
July 2024	412	346	66
August 2024	377	163	214
TOTAL (YTD)	3,392	3,112	280

Energy Efficiency/Retrofitting Programme:

The Midlands Retrofit Programme (MRP) was rolled into the Energy Efficiency Retrofit Programme (EERP) in 2022/2023/2024/2025.

A summary of both programmes is outlined in table below.

PROGRAMME	COMMENTS
MRP – 159 Units	159 units completed.
EERP (2021) – 29 Units – O’Moore Place	27 units completed. Remaining 2 to be completed in Q3 2024.
<p>EERP (2022/2023) – Phase 1&2 – 33 Units Thornberry, Church Ave, Slieve Bloom Park, Quigley Park & Other Locations</p> <p>EERP (2022/2023) – Phase 3 – 26 Units St. Fintan’s Tce., Old School Road, St Johns Sq. & Other Locations</p>	<p>Tender evaluation for the 2022 Retrofit Programme comprising 59 houses has been completed. It is now proposed to commence works in phase’s set out below.</p> <p><u>Phase 1</u></p> <p>1) Thornberry, Abbeyleix – 16 units.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works completed in Q4 2023. <p><u>Phase 2</u></p> <p>1) Church Avenue, Stradbally – 7 units.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works completed in Q1 2024. <p>2) Slieve Bloom Park, Clonaslee – 4 units.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works completed in Q2 2024. <p>3) Quigley Park, Rathdowney – 2 units</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works completed in Q1 2024 <p>4) Other Locations – 4 units</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works completed in Q2 2024. <p><u>Phase 3</u></p> <p>1) St Fintans Terrace – 4 units</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works completed in Q1 2024. <p>2) Old School Road, Ballylinan – 9 units</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works completed in Q2 2024. <p>3) St. John’s Square, Portlaoise – 7 units.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works completed in Q2 2024. <p>4) Other Locations – 6 units</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works to be completed in Q3 2024.
<p>EERP (2024) – 55 Units St. Brigid’s Place (Phase 1), Meadowbrook, Imleach, Triogue Court & Other Locations</p>	<p><u>Phase 1</u></p> <p>1) St Brigid’s Place, Meadowbrook, Imleach, Triogue Court & Other Locations. – 55 units.</p> <p>Tenders have been assessed with retrofit works to commence in Q3 2024.</p>
<p>EERP (2025) – 50 Units St. Brigid’s Place (Phase 2), Arderin, Fr. O’Connor Cres., Erkindale Dr., Rossmore View & Various Locations</p>	<p><u>Phase 1</u></p> <p>1) St. Brigid’s Place (Phase 2), Arderin, Fr. O’Connor Cres., Erkindale Dr, Rossmore View & Various Locations. – 50 units.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey works to commence in Q4 2024.

HOUSING NEED

Circular 06/2024 sets out arrangements for social housing acquisitions for 2024 and notifies local authorities that Government have agreed to an increased provision of 1,500 social housing acquisitions. Similar to 2023 the additional acquisitions will focus on properties where a tenant in receipt of social housing supports, including Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) and Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS), and has received a Notice of Termination (NOT) due to the landlord's intention to sell the property. Laois County Council has been given an allocation of 15 for 2024 - This is not a target, but rather to support planning and to allow local authorities to prioritise the acquisitions to be targeted. The Dept has advised they will keep this under review throughout 2024.

From 1st January 2024 – 31st August 2024

Acquisitions completed	5
Acquisitions currently in progress	6
Number of above acquisitions which have Tenants in Situ	6

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

Homeless Presentations

Time Periods	Homeless Presentations Households	Breakdown of Household
1 st July 2024 – 31 st July 2024	27	19 singles & 8 families
1 st August 2024 – 31 st August 2024	21	17 singles & 4 families

Homeless Accommodation

	Emergency Accommodation Households booked at 31 st August 2024	Social Housing allocated from homelessness in July & August 2024
Families	1	0
Single Persons	16	0
TOTAL	17	0

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

Social Housing List at 31st August 2024

TOTAL No of Social Housing Applicants on waiting list	1,610
Proportion of SH applicants availing of HAP supports	(660) = 41.9%

RAS/Leasing Statistics at 31st August 2024

Active RAS tenancies	61
Active short-term leasing tenancies (Social Housing Leasing Scheme)	23
Active Repair & Leasing Scheme tenancies	1
Active long-term leasing tenancies with private landlords/investors	11
Active long-term Mortgage to Rent leasing tenancies with a private company	35

Tenancies Created during the period 1st January 2024 – 31st August 2024

Method of Delivery	no. housed
First allocation of New Build/Acquired unit	41
Relet / Refurbished Stock Allocation	48
Housed via leasing	1
AHB Tenancies created (via new build and relet)	82
TOTAL	172

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

TRAVELLER ACCOMODATION PROGRAMME 2025-2029

Notice of Publication of a Draft Traveller Accommodation Programme 2025-2029 was given in the local papers dated July 2nd, 2024 in accordance with Section 9 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998. Laois County Council, being the relevant Housing Authority specified under the 1998 Act, proposes to adopt a Traveller Accommodation Programme for five years for the functional area of Laois County Council. The invitation for submissions closed on 3rd September 2024 and a Chief Executive's Report will be brought before the members at the October Meeting of Laois County Council. Draft plan will be brought before the members for adoption by the end of the year.

LOANS AND GRANTS

Local Authority Home Loan (LAHL)

No of new Loan Applications received since 1 st January 2024	41
No of 'Live' Applications approved at 31 st August 2024	14
No of Applications refused since 1 st January 2024	10

PRIVATE GRANTS

Housing Adaptation Grants at 31st August 2024

Allocation €1,711,089 (€1,368,871 Exchequer + €342,218 LA Own Funds)

	no. of applications received	no. of applications paid	Value of applications paid	no. of applications currently at work stage	Value of applications currently at work stage
HOP	203	109	€500,944.00	95	€505,480.00
MAG	11	4	€14,970.00	3	€9,150.00
HGD	117	64	€490,905.00	68	€525,567.00
TOTAL	331	177	€1,006,819.00	166	€1,037,197.00

Disabled Persons Grant for Social Housing

DPG works at 31st August 2024

Allocation 2024 (including LA funded portion €58,133)	€581,329
No of applications included on 2024 funding submission to Dept of Housing on 29 th Feb 2024	30
Value of the above proposal	€776,135*
Invoices paid to date – 7 invoices	€108,769.32

**Above figure includes two extensions approved to the value of €214,241 which will be completed by end of the year.*

Queries in relation to Housing Grants should be emailed to housinggrants@laoiscoco.ie

REGENERATION TEAM

Laois County Council multi-disciplinary Regeneration Team, comprising of staff from Housing, Planning, Derelict Sites, and the Town Regeneration Officer are addressing vacancy and dereliction in the county, prioritizing towns in the TCF programme – Rathdowney, Mountrath and Mountmellick and under the URDF 3 programme – Portlaoise .

Vacant Homes officer update

A Vacant Homes Team survey of properties identified as being vacant in data supplied by GeoDirectory (via a Dept of Housing 2022 initiative) has shown so far - of the **1072 properties surveyed** (residential and commercial), **688 properties were found to be vacant**, with 45 of those also found to have some elements of dereliction.

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

Following the vacancy survey, 30 properties in Portlaoise were identified as potentially suitable for social housing. These properties have been investigated further and correspondence was issued to the registered owners of 19 of the properties. The Vacant Homes team will endeavour to return these properties to use as appropriate.

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

Vacancy/Dereliction Activation Programme

Properties are counted as entering the Vacancy/Dereliction Activation Programme where they have been identified as being vacant or derelict as part of the vacancy survey and where efforts are being made to contact property owners. Properties approved/approved in principle for a Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant are also counted as entering the Programme.

Properties are counted as exiting the Vacancy/Dereliction Activation Programme in the following circumstances:

- Sale of Property by Owner – the property exits the programme once the sale is closed
- Action taken by owner – bringing property back into use following engagement – the property exits the programme when the local authority is satisfied the property has been brought back into use
- Repair and Leasing Scheme – the property exits the programme when the lease commences between the owner and local authority
- Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant (Grant paid) – the property exits the programme when the grant is paid to the applicant
- Buy and Renew – voluntary acquisition – the property exits the programme once the sale is closed
- Property is acquired by the local authority by agreement or by CPO
- Ready to Build Scheme – the property exits the programme once the local authority advertises the serviced site for sale

The following targets have been set for 2024 for Laois County Council:

- 75 properties to enter the CPO Activation Programme, and
- 6 compulsory purchases / compulsory acquisitions to commence.

1st January – 31st August, 2024	
Vacant and derelict properties that have ENTERED the Vacancy/Dereliction Activation Programme including CPO's / Compulsory Acquisitions commenced/completed	62
CPO's / Compulsory Acquisitions commenced/completed	5 – Details below
Vacant and derelict properties that have EXITED the Vacancy/Dereliction Activation Programme	28

Derelict Sites

There are currently 103 derelict sites files open relating to sites across the County. To date in 2024, 9 files have been closed and removed from the Register as improvement works have been carried out.

Vesting Orders have been lodged in the Land Registry for 5 sites following completion of the CPO process:-

1. Bracklone Street Portarlinton
2. 2 sites at Old Knockmay Portlaoise
3. Triogue Manor, Portlaoise
4. Main Street, Stradbally

The Derelict Sites Team also works alongside the Business Support Unit in advising in relation to the incentives available through the BSU and Local Enterprise Office in relation to the reuse of derelict and vacant commercial properties.

It should be noted that GeoDirectory's latest reports shows the county saw a reduction of 0.5% in its commercial vacancy rate. The commercial vacancy rate currently stands at 14% in Laois, which puts the county just below the national average of 14.4%. Laois has seen the largest drop in the number of empty shops in the country.

Vacant Sites

In August the Planning Authority received payment of a vacant site levy, for the years 2020 – 2022, of €33,500 in relation to a vacant site at Crossneen, Graiguecullen.

Vacancy / Regeneration Funding Schemes

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

- Vacant for over 2 years
- Built before 2008

Vacant Property Refurbishment Grants	1 st January – 31 st August, 2024
Number of grant applications received	59
Number of applications APPROVED	29
Number of applications APPROVED IN PRINCIPLE	15
Number of applications REFUSED	3
Number of applications WITHDRAWN	2
Number of grants paid to Applicants	23
Total value of grants paid	€1,122,795

Local Authority Purchase and Renovation Loan

People who wish to purchase and/or renovate a Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant eligible home but cannot get sufficient funding from commercial lenders will now be able to apply to their local authority for a LAPR.

INTEGRATION SUPPORTS AND SERVICES

Laois County Council leads and coordinates the **Laois Community Integration Forum (CIF)**. The Forum, consisting of 23 statutory and voluntary groups/agencies, meets regularly, with 27 meetings held to date, ensuring consistency and efficiency in service delivery and integration supports to new arrivals to our County. The overall numbers resident in the various accommodation centres around Laois remains largely static.

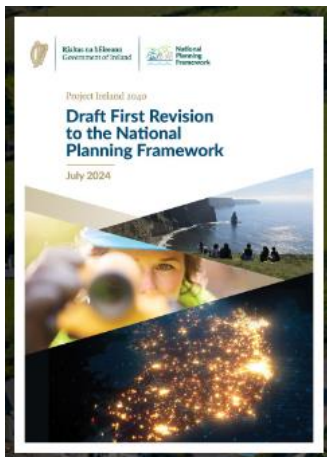
The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) continues with the national consolidation of its Ukrainian Accommodation portfolio. As a result a small number of Ukrainian citizens (15 approx) are being relocated in September from Durrow and Mountmellick to other centres outside of Laois.

The Council continues to assist DCEDIY in the sourcing of temporary accommodation for Ukrainian displaced persons, providing liaison locally in relation to vacant buildings and sites suitable for medium to long term accommodation solutions. The Council also continues to allocate privately offered/pledged accommodation (e.g Offer A Home Scheme) to Ukrainian families, with 72 Ukrainian households having been assisted with accommodation locally through this mechanism to date.

The Council's Integration Support Office (LAIT) continues to coordinate service delivery and integration supports to all those in need of such services. Onsite one to one clinics continue, engagement with CIF members, local agencies and service providers to deliver supports and training is arranged, such as swimming lessons and school places for children and driving training course in Abbeyleix. The LAIT liaises with DCEDIY on an ongoing basis. Events and activities for children in the various emergency accommodation centres throughout the county were arranged by the Integration Office, in conjunction with other CIF member agencies, over the school holiday period. Laois LAIT in collaboration with Portarlinton Library also recruited participants for 'Literacy through Chess' programme at the library.

PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT, ARTS & HERITAGE

National Planning



The National Planning Framework (NPF), is the overarching policy and planning strategy for the social, economic and cultural development of Ireland.

The Draft Revision focuses on the need to update the Framework in order to appropriately reflect changes to government policy that have taken place since its initial publication six years ago, such as climate transition, regional development, demographics, digitalisation and investment and prioritisation.

Laois County Council made a submission to the Draft revised NPF on the 12th September 2024.

Local Area Plans



Carlow-Graiguecullen Draft Joint Urban Local Area Plan 2024-2030

The joint local area plan was adopted at the Council meeting of **29th July 2024** following consideration of the Chief Executive report on the submissions received during the public consultation phase. The JULAP came into effect on September 9th 2024.

The Plan is available at the following link
<https://laois.ie/departments/planning/development-plans/carlow-craiguecullen-joint-urban-local-area-plan-2024-2030/>

Draft Portlaoise Local Area Plan 2024-2030

The Chief Executives report on the submission received during the public consultation was considered by the members at a special meeting on September 10th 2024. Material alterations

of the draft LAP have now arisen and these will go on public display for a 4 week period from September 30th 2024.

Development Management Report

E-Planning Project	81% of the applications received for the period from the 1/1/2024 to the 11/09/2024 have been made online – 526 applications out of a total of 650 applications received during this period		
Planning Applications	Year	Valid applications from 01/01/2024 – 11/09/2024	Valid applications from 01/01/2023– 11/09/2023
		403	383
Total Number of valid applications received:	403		
Number of decisions made	350		
Invalid applications returned to applicant	250		
Number of applications granted:	336 (Decisions to Grant)		
Number of applications refused:	14 (Decisions to Refuse) 4% refusal rate		
No of appeals to ABP	13		
PRE PLANNING			
No of requests to date	255		
No of meetings held to date	232		
Wait time	1 - 2 Weeks		

Planning Enforcement

Current year	2024		2023	
Service Review	Aug	Jan - Aug	Aug	Jan - Aug
Total number of new cases subject to complaints that were investigated	15	92	14	112
Number of Warning Letters served	21	261	22	304
Number of Enforcement Notices served	25	87	7	80
No Of cases referred for legal proceedings	0	1	0	11
Number of cases in Court(incl adjournments)	0	40	0	43
Number of cases Resolved in Court	0	10	0	9
Number of Files Closed	8	67	4	77
Number of cases on system	167	167	177	177
Enforcement Costs recouped	€ 400.00	€ 3,996.24	€ 500.00	€5,419.76
Number of Valid Retention Applications Received relating to Enforcement Action	7	17	2	24
Fees received through Valid Retention Applications Received relating to Enforcement Action	€3,645.20	€8,844.76	€1,428.24	€34,625.01
Legal fees paid	€0.00	€4,153.48	€3,295.16	€14,171.92

BROADBAND – DIGITAL PROJECTS

NBI UPDATE

The total number of Premises passed in Laois = 12874 (8426 Residential, 2234 Commercial & Residential, 1776 Farm and 438 Commercial.

- 29% of Premises (3,746) - have HSB connected to date.
- 56% of Premises (7,254) - now available to pre order connection.
- 7% of Premises (763) – Network build in progress.
- 8% of Premises (1020) – Survey pending.

STEM OFFICER POSITION

Under the Just Transition Fund, Pobal have announced - *The Midlands Local Authorities (Laois, Longford, Offaly and Westmeath) are allocating dedicated resources for 18 months to realise sectoral ambitions, in line with the objectives for the region’s Regional Enterprise Plan, including the Midland pathway to transition to a net-zero economy, Midlands Ireland Placemaking Programme and the Midlands Ireland Regional Food and Drink Strategy.*

Sean Morris has been appointed STEM Officer for Laois County Council and commenced on the 16th September 2024.

MIDLAND ICT CLUSTER

At the Midlands ICT meeting in Tullamore, an update to the Skills and Talent Working Group on Education – Early pathways to ICT and proposal of programmes for the coming School year was given. The 4 Broadband Officers were congratulated on our recent win @ the Digital Town



Awards.



ARTS

Culture Night 2024

The annual Culture Night launch took place on the 29th August 2024 in Aras an Chontae. Culture Night /Oíche Chultúir is a national moment, celebrating culture, creativity, and the arts, and seeks to actively promote the belief that this rich and varied culture is alive, treasured and nurtured in people's lives, today and every day.

Entry to all events is free to the public. Local groups, musicians, artists, and venues have come together to make this a night to remember for everyone in the county.



Film Production in Laois

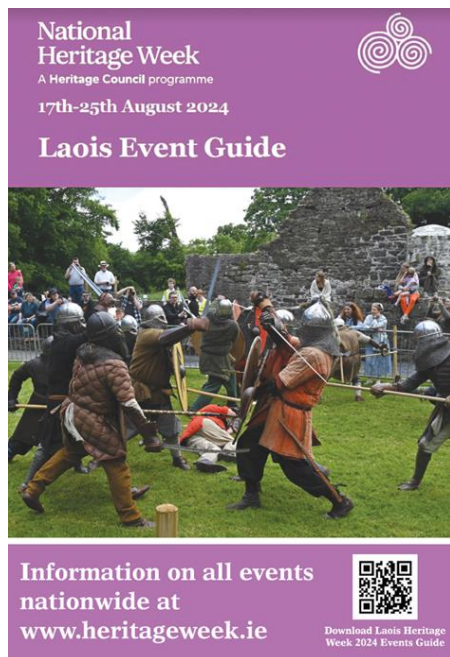
During the summer, the Arts Office and Roads Dept assisted the following film companies with their productions

Restoration at Grayson Manor was made in the county and used local actors and amateur performers as well as a crew of national professional actors and artistic team. It will be released in 2026.


Wall to Walls, a BBC series filmed a scene in Abbeyleix Main Street, in July.

HERITAGE:


Heritage Week 2024 in Laois



National
Heritage Week
A Heritage Council programme
17th-25th August 2024
Laois Event Guide



Information on all events
nationwide at
www.heritageweek.ie



Download Laois Heritage
Week 2024 Events Guide

Almost 50 events took place in Laois for Heritage Week 2024. Many of these events occurred on multiple dates or throughout the week. The Laois Heritage Office produced a digital [Laois Heritage Week 2024 Events Guide](#) available on the Laois Heritage website.

- New unique events such as the 'Brigid in Bloom Festival' were held in Bloom HQ Mountrath, which was supported with funding from the Laois Heritage Office and Laois Creative Ireland.
- Details of the guide, event posters, and the week's events were mentioned in a Heritage Week article in the Leinster Express in the build up to Heritage Week.
- In Portlaoise Library, a dedicated Heritage Week information point was set up with all the relevant information. On the first Saturday of Heritage Week a student undertaking work experience with the heritage office was at this information point to provide information to the public (this was a pilot of might be done in the future).





Fig 2. A selection of images from Heritage Week 2024 in Laois; Guided Tour of the Rock of Dunamase with Brian Hodkinson (previous Director of Excavations on the site), Ballykilcavan Farm Walk, film screening of ‘How Ireland Saved Motorsport – the story of 1903 Gordon Bennet Cup Race’ at Dunamase Arts Centre, Talk on ‘The History of the Abbeyleix Stream’, and Heritage Trains at the Stradbally Woodland Railway.

Borris in Ossory Mountmellick Municipal District

The RI Programme for the Borris- in-Ossory Moutnmellick Municipal District is 75% complete. Three of the remaining five roads are to be completed prior to the end of September. Following this there will be two roads requiring completion on the programme.

Restoration Improvement Grant		
Road Number	Road Name and/or Townland Name	Status
R430	Woodbrook, Mountrath	Complete
L-5556	Ballyedmond	Complete
R422	Harbour Street to Connolly Street	Complete
L-5655	Shanahoe	Complete
L-5753	Archerstown	Complete
L-6002	Brittas	Complete
L-5076	Paddock	Complete
R433	Tintore to Ballacolla	Complete
L-1005	Ross to The Cut	Complete
L-1031	Cappanarrow to Lacca	Complete
R433	Rathdowney Town	Tender Documents currently been completed
L-6098	Cloncannon	Drainage Works to be completed prior to strengthening
L-1050	Marymount	Complete
L-16322	Garryduff, Clough	Complete
L-20978	Forest, Mountmellick	Works reprogrammed for end of September – Road Recycling
L-5675	Cloneagh to Trumera	Works reprogrammed for end of September – Road Recycling
R434	Swan Cross, Durrow	Complete
L-6007	Cloonagh More	Works reprogrammed for end of September – Road Recycling
L-1510	Kilmartin Knock	Complete

Former National Road Funding

The Borris in Ossory Mountmellick Municipal District were grant funded for one Former National Road Rehabilitation scheme in 2024, namely the N7 Pike of Rushall. These works are fully complete.

Former National Road		
Road Number	Location	Status
R445	N7 Pike of Rushall	Complete

Restoration Maintenance

The Restoration Maintenance Programme is 100% complete. All works apart from the R433 were carried out by the Laois County Council Direct Labour Surface Dressing Crew.

Restoration Maintenance Grant		
Road Number	Road Name and/or Townland Name	Status
R-433	Tintore to Ballacolla	Complete
L-1050	Marymount Camross	Complete
L-1652	Kilbrickan, Mountrath	Complete
L-16322	Garryduff Clough	Complete
L-5630	Corraun, Aghaboe	Complete
L-2014	Derrylemoge, Rosenallis	Complete
L-1510	Kilmartin , Knock	Complete
L-21123	Iry Ballyfin	Complete
L-6098	Cloncannon Mountmellick	Complete
L-1031	Cappanarrow to Lacca	Complete
L-1561	Graiguard Rathdowney	Complete
L-1561	Srahbaun, Rathdowney	Complete
L-61302	Dangans Mountmellick	Complete
L-5753	Archerstown	Complete

Bridge Restoration Works

Two of the five programmed bridges for 2024 are complete to date. Killeen Civil Engineering have commenced construction on the replacement of the Clonmeen Bridge, significant rock has been encountered and will delay the overall Programme of the works.

Laois County Council direct labour crew carried out significant repairs and reconstruction to the parapet walls on Brittas Bridge with further works to the culverts to be identified and programmes following inspections.

Works to be completed on Knocks Bridge will require the repair and reconstruction of the parapet walls which will be undertaken by Municipal District crews.

Bridge Programme	
Location	Status
L-1670 Forest Bridge	Complete
L-5638 Wooden Bridge	Complete
L-6002 Brittas Bridge	Parapet walls, awaiting culvert inspection and repair
L-5550 Clonmeen Bridge	Construction Commenced
L-2018 Knocks Bridge	Parapet Wall replacement

National Road Safety Improvement Schemes

Two scheme's were grant funded for Safety Improvement Works from TII in 2024, namely N80 Fingletons and N80 Rathilig. The N80 Fingeltons safety scheme was completed in July 2024. The N80 Rathilig Junction improvement was completed in September 2024. The objective of both schemes was to improve sightlines and junction definition from the minor road junction onto the N80.

National Road Overlay Schemes

Pavement Asset Repair and Renewal Schemes (PARR)

Laois County Council received funding for two separate PARR schemes in 2024. The first scheme was the N77 Course to Dunmore was completed in April 2024. The second scheme is the N78 Ballylehane Lower to Farnans Scheme and is awaiting the installation of road studs. This scheme consisted of over 5km of road strengthening and surface replacement including significant drainage works.

HD28 Schemes (Renewing Skid Resistance)

Laois County Council was granted funding for two HD28 schemes in 2024, N78 Coonbeg and N80 Grange Upper. The works consist of 3km of surface course replacement. Additionally, 500 metres of the N78 Coonbeg has been identified for strengthening. Laois County Council are currently in the process of appointing the successful contractor with works programme for commencement in October 2024.

Graigucullen/Portarlinton Municipal District

Restoration Improvement Grant (Strengthening) Allocation €2,139,248			
Road Number	Road Name and/or Townland Name	Length of work (m)	Status
L-38501-0	Coolglass	800	Works Completed by Thomas Murphy & Sons (Machinery) Ltd.
L-3857-0	Shanragh/Kilfeacle	550	Works completed by Plazamont Ltd.
L-3897-28	Monavea/Gortahile - Bilboa	700	Works completed by Plazamont Ltd.
L-7974-0	Aghanure Road, Ballylinan	800	Works completed by Plazamont Ltd.
L-3976-82	Shrule	500	Works Completed by Thomas Murphy & Sons (Machinery) Ltd.
L-3976-44	Ballyfoyle Crossroads - Ballyfoyle	1350	Works Completed by Thomas Murphy & Sons (Machinery) Ltd.
R-429-21	Killeen - Coolanagh Cross	900	Works Completed by Thomas Murphy & Sons (Machinery) Ltd.
L-3978-0	Castletown - Cullenagh Cross	1100	Works Completed by Thomas Murphy & Sons (Machinery) Ltd.
L-7981-17	Cullenagh Cross to Old Court, Ballylinan	1000	Works Completed by Thomas Murphy & Sons (Machinery) Ltd.
L-7970-0	Milltown Road, Ballylinan	220	Works completed by Plazamont Ltd.
	The Swan	300	

R-430-274			Works Completed by Roadstone Ltd.
L-7860-0	Wolfhill (Daly's Cross north of Hacketts Hill)	300	Works completed by Plazamont Ltd.
L-7871-0	The Glen Road (Modubeigh - Gregory's Crossroads)	550	Works completed by Plazamont Ltd.
L-7775-0	Cremorgan/Ballygormill South	550	Works completed by Carroll Quarry Ltd.
L-38511-0	Aghoney / Fossy	500	Works Completed by Thomas Murphy & Sons (Machinery) Ltd.
L-38401-0	Fossy Mountain	600	Works completed by Carroll Quarry Ltd.
L-7178-0	Derryounce/Droughill	238	Works Completed by Roadstone Ltd.
L-7178-0	Treascon/Pine Villa to County Boundary	450	Works completed by Carroll Quarry Ltd.
L-31542-0	Emo/Morett	1200	Works completed by Carroll Quarry Ltd.
L-7938-0	Rathmore - Garrans	500	Works completed by Carroll Quarry Ltd.
L-3817-4	Cappakeel	500	Works completed by Carroll Quarry Ltd.
L-3155-0	Emo Court (section 1)	450	Works completed by Carroll Quarry Ltd.
L-3155-0	Emo Court (section 2)	240	Works completed by Carroll Quarry Ltd.
L-71763-0	Killinure - Clonanny	400	Works completed by Carroll Quarry Ltd.
R-419-43	Alley Cross to Coolbanagher	150	Works completed by Carroll Quarry Ltd.
L-7950-0	Inch/Curraclone Bridge	250	Works completed by Carroll Quarry Ltd.
Restoration Maintenance Grant (Surface Dressing) Allocation €685,710			
Road Number	Road Name and/or Townland Name	Length of work (m)	Status
	Outstanding Surface Dressing for 2024 Completion		Works completed by Plazamont Ltd.
L-7959-0	Ballyadams to Cappanafeacle	500	Works Completed by Thomas Murphy & Sons (Machinery) Ltd.
L-39764-0	Barrowhouse (Crossroads -Church)	671	Works Completed by Thomas Murphy & Sons (Machinery) Ltd.

L-39762-0	Dunbrin	310	Works Completed by Thomas Murphy & Sons (Machinery) Ltd.
L-7979-0	Rossena	1000	Works Completed by Thomas Murphy & Sons (Machinery) Ltd.
L-3973-0 / L3975-0	Carlow Road, Ballylinan (at Junction with Aghanure Road)	300	Works Completed by Thomas Murphy & Sons (Machinery) Ltd.
L-3837	Timogue Crossroads – Oldmill	1,800	Works Completed by Thomas Murphy & Sons (Machinery) Ltd.
L-7950-0	Curraclone Church towards Border	2200	Works Completed by Thomas Murphy & Sons (Machinery) Ltd.
L-38171-0	Ballyduff – Moyanna / Killeen	1,740	Works Completed by Thomas Murphy & Sons (Machinery) Ltd.
L-3932-0	Fishermans Inn to Motorway Bridge	2,200	Works Completed by Thomas Murphy & Sons (Machinery) Ltd.
L-7916-0	Ballyhide	350	Works planned for 24 th Sept by Thomas Murphy & Sons (Machinery Ltd).
L-38781-0	Turra Hill	700	Works planned for 25 th Sept by Thomas Murphy & Sons (Machinery Ltd).
L-7914-0	Springhill, Killeslin	800	Works planned for 2 nd October by Carroll Quarry Ltd.

Land Drainage – Barrow

Location	Status
Barrow Drainage (E)	Vacuum Silt Removal Works on Stradbally River Completed.



Stradbally River at N80 Bridge, Stradbally - Before Silt Removal Works Commenced



Vacuum Silt Removal Works Completed at Stradbally River at N80 Bridge, Stradbally



Maidenhead Culvert (Coolanowle Stream) Before Removal of Deposited Material



Maidenhead Culvert (Coolanowle Stream) Following Removal of Deposited Material

2024 Safety Improvement Works on Regional and Local Roads

Road Number	Location	Status
R-420-M	R424/R420 Junction, Lea Road, Portarlinton	Safety Improvement Works Completed
L-7161-0/L-7162-0/L-3153-25	Skeagh Crossroads, Portarlinton	Contractor to confirm if they can deliver/ install a flashing sign in 2024. Other safety improvement works (roadmarkings) have been carried out across the MD.



New Safety Improvement Works Completed at the R420/R424 Junction, Lea Cross, Portarlinton

2024 Former National Road Rehabilitation Works

Road Number	Location	Status
R445-0	R445 at junction R420	Works Completed by Roadstone Ltd.



Resurfacing Works Completed on R445 (Former N7) - View Towards Monasterevin

Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience Works 2024

Location	Status
L-3840-25 Orchard	Works Completed by Killeen Civil Engineering Ltd.
L-7894-0 The Strand	Works Completed by CHM Ltd.



Two new vehicle restraint barriers installed on the L-7894-0 at The Strand

Approved Project 2024 for Municipal District
New Footpath at Timahoe National School



New Footpath for National School - Works in Progress August 2024



New Footpath for National School - September 2024

PORTLAOISE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT

PROGRESS UPDATE SCHEDULE OF MUNICIPAL DISTRICT WORKS 2024

ROADS, TRANSPORTATION AND SAFETY

Portlaoise Municipal District has responsibility for the maintenance and repair of 510 km of public roads. These are a combination of national, regional and local roads.

Regional and Local Road Maintenance and Improvement

Restoration Improvement Grant (Strengthening)			
Road Number	Road Name and/or Townland Name	Length of work (m)	Status
L-2113	Ballina	700	Works substantially complete.
L-7830	Ballycarroll	700	Works substantially complete.
L-81115-0	Briar Hill	160	Works complete.
L-6695	Clonboyne Clonkeen	500	Works substantially complete.
L-27781	Cloncullane	700	Works substantially complete.
L-2110	Clonreher	700	Works substantially complete.
L-6772	Dysart	700	Works substantially complete.
L-1738	Ironmills Kilrush	700	Works substantially complete.
L-2120	Knocknagroagh	600	Works substantially complete.
L-16568	Knocknamoe	225	Works to commence in October. (SMA)
L-2112	Pallas Big	700	Works substantially complete.
L-6136	Rathnamanagh	700	Works substantially complete.
L-67702	Summerhill Lane	550	Works substantially complete.
L-6719	Tullore	700	Works substantially complete.
R-430	Ballinakill Road	245	Works to commence in October. (SMA)
L-63101	Bridge Street	70	Works complete.
R422	Kilmainham	300	Works substantially complete.
L-21207	Station Road	170	Works to commence in October.
Restoration Maintenance Grant (Surface Dressing)			
Road Number	Road Name and/or Townland Name	Length of work (m)	Status
L-6695	Clonboyne Clonkeen	750	Works substantially complete.
L-77921	Knockbaun Spink	750	Works substantially complete.
R-429	Ballydavis	750	Works substantially complete.
R-427	Ballyheyland	750	Works substantially complete.
R-425	Ballyroan	750	Works substantially complete.
R-426	Cappoley	750	Works substantially complete.
R-432	Raggettstown	750	Works substantially complete.

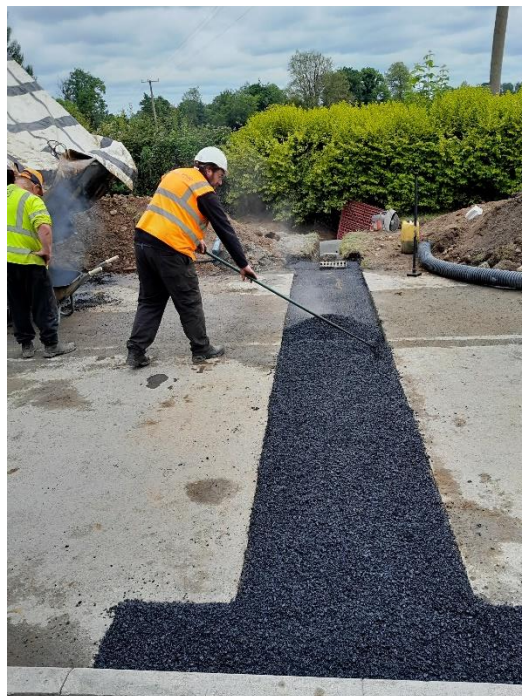


Road strengthening works at Clonreher & Tullore

Scheme Name	Works Description	Status
Local Road Maintenance	Maintenance of local roads including minor road repairs, drainage works and general maintenance duties	Works ongoing
Discretionary Maintenance	Maintenance of regional and local roads including minor road repairs, drainage works and general maintenance duties	Works ongoing
Road Drainage Works	Alleviation of drainage issues by new works/remedial works	Works ongoing



New footpaths, Liogard, Portlaoise



Drainage works, Abbeyleix



Drainage works, Ross



Drainage works, Clonreher

Land Drainage – Barrow

Location	Status
Barrow Drainage (C)	
Glendownes Lake – Removal of silt, deadwood and debris.	Works ongoing
River Triogue – Preparation of NIS: Ecology surveys and prioritisation of works locations	Works ongoing

2024 Safety Improvement Works on Regional and Local Roads

Road Number	Location	Status
R-433-43 / L-1652	Crookedwood Cross, Abbeyleix	Works complete.
R-425-0	Ballyroan Road, Abbeyleix in the vicinity of the graveyard (Phase 2) to complete scheme	Works complete.

R-430-169/L-3777-26	Ballypickas Cross	Works to commence in October. (SMA)
R-430-148/L-6719-27	Cobbler's Hill Crossroads, Abbeyleix - Substitute Scheme R430 / L-7797 Boleybeg Cross Roads Replace concrete post and rail fence with passively safe timber bollards.	Works to commence in October. (SMA)
R-427/R-425	Cashel, Portlaoise (Near Cashel Pump)	Works to commence in October. (SMA)
R-425	Cashel, Portlaoise (Near rear of Rockview Walkways)	Works complete.



Safety Improvement works at R425 Ballyroan Rd, Abbeyleix

2024 Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience Works

Works	Status
Reinstate hydraulic capacity in attenuation lake at Glendownes Portlaoise L-81002-0	Works ongoing.
Crubeen Ballyroan on the R425 (Tynan) protection of regional road and properties	Works to commence in October. (SMA)
R425 Cappoley road protection measures	Works complete.
Monaclear, Ballinakill L-5735-11 road protection measures	Works complete.
Cleanagh, Spink, Abbeyleix L-7792 road protection measures	Works complete.
Doory, Ballyroan L-2778 road protection measures	Works complete.
Boston Lane, Boley Lower L16562 road protection measures	Works complete.
R425 Heritage House, Abbeyleix road protection measures on embankment	Works complete.

Councillors' Discretionary Funding 2024

Works	Status
Footpaths	Works ongoing
Public Lights	Works ongoing
Traffic Calming	Works ongoing
Road Speed Detection Signs	Works ongoing

ENVIRONMENTAL WORKS	
Works	Status
Roads Environmental Works – Portlaoise	Works ongoing
Operation of Street Cleaning – Portlaoise	Works ongoing

RECREATION AND AMENITY

Works	Works Description	Status
Parks (maintenance of public open spaces)	Maintain public open spaces in presentable and usable condition, including mowing, strimming, edging, sweeping footpaths, pruning trees and hedges, litter picking.	Planting complete. Maintenance works ongoing
Portlaoise Town Planting Scheme	Works include planting and weeding of roundabouts, entrance beds, planters and hanging baskets in conjunction with Portlaoise Tidy Towns. Includes winter and summer planting scheme.	

Community Involvement Schemes

Works	€	Status
Lake Glen Footpaths	€49,000	Works ongoing
Marina Avenue Traffic Calming	€50,150	Works ongoing
Parnell Crescent Car Parking Bays and Footpaths	€49,140	Works ongoing

Local Improvement Schemes

Works	€	Status
LIS 2024 – Ralish, Abbeyleix	€22,227	Works substantially complete
LIS 2024 – Ballymullen, Abbeyleix	€19,672	Works substantially complete
LIS 2024 – Ladywell, Ballinakill	€58,510	Works substantially complete

Active Travel



Triogue Way Phase 2 Parks Section nearing completion



Mountrath Accessible Bus Shelter

Portlaoise E Bike Scheme info to the end of August 2024



3,514

Trips since operations commenced

Commenced 30th July 2024

8,799

Distance travelled in km since operations commenced

Commenced 30th July 2024

1,038

Unique users since operations commenced

Commenced 30th July 2024

LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE

Demand continues to be high for LEO supports across all areas. We are currently on target to meet key metrics set by Enterprise Ireland at the start of the year. Since our last update the following supports have been delivered to new and existing entrepreneurs:

- 4 businesses were approved for Technical Assistance for Micro Exporters (TAME) Export Grants.
- 4 Trading Online Vouchers (TOV's) were approved to bring a total of 19 to date this year.
- 58 businesses were set up to avail of 1-1 mentoring.
- 8 training courses were delivered to 123 participants.
- 1 business was supported to engage in the *LEAN for Business* Programme.
- 8 businesses were supported to engage in the *Green for Business* Programme.
- 4 businesses were approved for Energy Efficiency grants.
- 1 business was assisted to access Micro Finance Ireland (MFI) loan funding.

LAOIS TASTE PROMOTIONAL VIDEO

Work is ongoing on a new promotional video which will showcase the best of what Laois has to offer in terms of food, drink and tourism.

INVEST LAOIS WEBSITE

Work is ongoing on the new Invest Laois website which will be a brochure website in terms of what Laois has to offer as a place to live, work, visit, invest and do business.

GRANTS AND SUPPORTS

To-date, 26 **Shop Front** grant applications have been received with 22 approved, 3 refused and 1 in progress. 30 applications under the **Façade Enhancement Scheme** have been received with 29 approved and 1 in progress. 3 shop fit out grant applications have been approved with 7 applications received under the **Business Incentive Scheme**, 4 of which have been approved and 3 in progress. This Scheme gives businesses a 3 year reduction on their rates if they open up in a premises that has been vacant for 6 months or more.

**WASTE MANAGEMENT, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION & RURAL WATER
MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT – MAY & JUNE 2024**

1. Kyletalesha Landfill, Transfer Station & Civic Amenity Sites:

Normal services continue at Kyletalesha Landfill Facility and Civic Amenity Site. Landfill monitoring and aftercare maintenance is on-going. All monitoring results are being submitted to the EPA. The facility is being operated in compliance with the facility’s EPA waste license. The Portarlinton Civic Amenity Site continues to be managed and operated by Bord na Mona. Laois County Council carries out regular inspections of the facility.

2. Bring Banks:

Tonnages of 2024 collected recyclable material is in Table 1 below.

Month	Tonnage	Month	Tonnage	Month	Tonnage
Jan	174.00	May	150.32	Sept	
Feb	123.50	June	131.49	Oct	
Mar	116.11	July	153.27	Nov	
Apr	130.56	Aug	128.82	Dec	
Annual Total			1136.37 Tonnes		

Table 1 – 2024 Bring Bank Tonnages

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

3. Waste Management, Complaints & Litter Management:

a) Waste Enforcement & Complaints

Table 2 below details the number and types of complaints received to the end of August 2024.

Nature	Number	Nature	Number
Waste Management/Enforcement	395	Air	38
Litter	316	Noise	21
Water	83	Waste Infrastructure	307
Total		1160	

Table 2 – Environmental Complaint Register

b) Litter Fines

Month	Number	Month	Number	Month	Number
Jan	22	May	12	Sept	
Feb	3	June	8	Oct	
Mar	5	July	3	Nov	
Apr	5	Aug	5	Dec	
Annual Total			55		

Table 3 – 2024 Litter Fines

c) Illegal Dumping

Figures in Table 4 below includes for illegal dumping clean-ups by litter wardens and by contractors.

Month	Tonnage	Month	Tonnage	Month	Tonnage
Jan	26.22	May	53.24	Sept	
Feb	14.84	June	19.14	Oct	
Mar	18.86	July	11.12	Nov	
Apr	13.36	Aug		Dec	
Total Tonnage			156.78		

Table 4 – Illegal Dumping Cleanups

4. Waste Management & Enforcement:

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

5. Environmental Protection

a) Protect the Water Quality Status in all Water Bodies

- On-going farm inspections in at-risk catchments.
- On-site investigations of complaints relating to water quality and/or water pollution.
- On-going assessment of planning applications with regard to water quality protection.

b) Air & Noise:

- All noise and air complaints are being investigated.
- On-going assessment of planning applications with regard to air quality and noise pollution protection.

6. Domestic Wastewater Treatment System Grants (DWWTS)

- DWWTS inspection requests received, and inspections carried out to the 31st August 2024:

Number of inspection requests received	79
Number of inspection requests that did not qualify for an inspection	7
Number of inspections carried out	58
Number of inspections remaining to be carried out	14
Number of Advisory Notices served	44
Number of inspections carried out that do not require an Advisory Notice and so do not qualify for the grant.	14
Number of Old Advisory Notices inspected and closed off for non-compliant	8
Number of Old Advisory Notices still open	14
Number of Grants Paid to Date	9

Table 5 – DWWTS Data

7. 2024 Anti-Dumping Initiatives (ADIs)

ADI funding (€79,220) approved by the Department. Approved initiatives which are ongoing include:

Prevention, Detection and Prosecution of Waste Offences Using CCTV

The Environment Section of Laois County Council are currently finalising the DPIA for CCTV installation for the first location prior to submission to the oversight board.”

Bikes for Africa

76 bikes were collected from the public on the 27th July 2024 and repaired by Frontline Bikes who are a social enterprise who train recovering addicts in bike repairs. 10 of these bikes are to be used by the Student Bike Library project in Laois with the remaining scheduled for shipping to the Olive Branch for Children in Tanzania.

Targeted Areas Summer Blitz

Targeted Areas Summer Blitz. Ten residents’ groups/tidy towns groups availed of the skips for community clean ups with approx. 23 tonnes of waste disposed of through the project.

Mattress Waste Amnesty – Friday August 3rd, 2024

729 mattresses and 218 bed bases were collected free of charge from the public for recycling through this initiative.

8. Rural Water – Multi Annual Programme 2024 to 2026

- Funding under the Rural Water Multi Annual Programme 2024 -2026 has been submitted to the Department. Further updates will be provided when notification of funding is received.

Emergency Planning and Fire Services

In 2024, to date, (11th September) Laois County Fire & Rescue Service attended 517 emergency incidents, consisting of 132 fires, 269 special service incidents and 116 false alarms.

Turnout by Station:

Portlaoise - 241	Portarlinton - 91	Stradbally - 95	Mountmellick - 74
Abbeyleix - 53	Mountrath - 67	Durrow - 53	Rathdowney - 45

Retained Fire Services in Ireland – A Review of Recruitment and Retention and the Future Sustainability of Service Delivery

The WRC Agreement, signed in September 2023, provides for 100 retained fire fighters in County Laois. Since the WRC Agreement was signed (Sept 2023), 17 retained fire fighters have been recruited/appointed to Fire and Emergency Services in County Laois. This increases the existing compliment of retained fire fighters to 82. Rostered operations are now in place in 5 of the 7 Fire Stations in County Laois. Approximately half of the appointees are persons returning to the service, following the introduction of the WRC Agreement.

At end-September 2024, there are 18 retained fire fighter vacancies to be filled. There are 10 individuals currently proceeding through the final stages of recruitment i.e. Garda vetting and Medical. A further 6 applications are also to hand.

Any person interested in pursuing a role in the Fire and Emergency Services is encouraged to contact the Council for additional information.

Station	Establish-ment Pre WRC	Establish-ment Post WRC	Current	Vacancies	Awaiting Appointment	Awaiting Interview	Rost-ered	Returned/ Returning Staff
Portlaoise	12	16	15	1	1	4	Yes	
Portarlinton	9	12	11	1	0	1	Yes	1
Rathdowney	9	12	8	4	2	0	Yes	5
Durrow	9	12	10	2	0	0	Yes	
Mountmellick	9	12	12	0	0	1	Yes	
Mountrath	9	12	11	1	0	0	Yes	1
Abbeyleix	9	12	6	6	6	0	Yes	2
Stradbally	9	12	9	3	1	0	Yes	
	75	100	82	18	10	6		9

Civil Defence

Volunteers

Civil Defence continues to provide ongoing training and upskilling for volunteers. As of 11th September 2024, the unit has **53** active volunteers who all meet the Minium Training Standards of the Department of Defence.

Activity Report January 1st – 11th September 2024

- 108 Deployments & Events
- 80 Training Events

These included 15 missing person operations, 3 supports to the Ukrainian response, 90 community events.

Fleet & Facilities

In September Laois Civil Defence alongside other departments in Laois Co Co have started a trial with HVO fuel in some of our vehicles to work towards reducing the units carbon output. This trial is in line with initiatives identified in the councils Climate Action Plan, the LGMA Local Authority Fleet, Strategy to Decarbonisation suite of measures and the EU's Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulation (AFIR) aimed to support the transition to more sustainable modes of transport.

Additional funding has been approved from the Department of Defence for upgrading storage systems on one of the unit's vehicles and the replacement of one of the units Drones. These works are due to be completed in Q4 2024.

Finance

The 2024 grant application from the Department of Defence has been completed and the Dept grant to be paid for 2024 is €115,000. We are expecting this to be transferred over the coming weeks.

Laois PPN

10 Year Anniversary of PPN's:

This year marks the 10th Year Anniversary of the establishment of the PPN's Nationally. Laois PPN Secretariat and staff marked the 10th Year Anniversary of PPNs in the wonderful Roundwood House nestled in the Slieve Bloom Mountains. Laois PPN is the main link between Laois County Council and the 650+ Community Groups in Laois.



(L-R) Dan Bergin Laois PPN Co-Ordinator, Nina Horan Laois PPN Secretariat Member, John Oxley Laois PPN Chairperson, Ann Fleming Laois PPN Secretariat Member and Donal O'Shea Laois PPN Secretariat Member Celebrating 10 Years of the PPN at Roundwood House.

MRPPN hosted by Laois PPN:

Delegates from across the Midlands received a warm welcome to County Laois at the wonderful Castle Durrow, for the MRPPN meeting hosted by Laois PPN. The MRPPN is the Midlands Regional Public Participation Network which consists of Laois, Offaly, Westmeath, Kildare, Meath, and Longford. The MRPPN is an opportunity for PPN's to share knowledge, best practice and work together to support Community Groups across their regions.

On the night Laois PPN give a presentation on the annual Laois Community and Voluntary Awards, which are hosted by Laois County Council in collaboration with Laois PPN being sponsored by People First Credit Union.



Laois PPN hosted the MRPPN Meeting at Durrow Castle with invited attendees from Kildare PPN, Longford PPN, Meath PPN, Offaly PPN, and Westmeath PPN.

Laois PPN -Heritage Week 2024 – Tour Round the Tower Timahoe



Roghan Headen of Tigh Mochua Le Cheile provided a guided Tour around the site and Timahoe Round Tower for Laois PPN Member Groups during National Heritage Week 2024.

Laois PPN were delighted to welcome Laois PPN Member Groups to Timahoe, Co. Laois for a "Tour Round the Tower" event held during National Heritage Week. It was a fantastic opportunity to showcase this special Heritage Site in our County, with Timahoe Round Tower being one of the finest examples of a restored Round Tower in Ireland.

Laois Comhairle na nÓg

Due to the Electric Picnic and Leaving certs results there were no Comhairle meeting during the month of June. Comhairle members did however meet twice in August. Laois Comhairle currently have 15 active members. As part of team building exercise, members went to Go Quest, an indoor activity centre in Dublin. It was a fun day out for all with members getting to work together as a team through various games and activities.

Members are currently working on creating materials that addresses the topic of education (videos, infographics) with will form part of the annual youth conference. Preparations have begun for the conference taking place on Monday 21st October in the Midlands Park Hotel. A preparatory meeting will take place on Thursday 17th October which aims to have all schools represented and staff / volunteers' prepared for staffing the event.



Age Friendly

Age Friendly Train Station

Ballybrophy Train Station is set to become Laois' first Age Friendly train station. This is following works completed by Irish Rail at Ballybrophy after a walkability audit which was reviewed by a technical group with representatives from Age Friendly Ireland, Irish Rail and TFI local link Laois Offaly.

Ballybrophy will also be the first station of 10 stations selected by Irish Rail to seek Age Friendly recognition.

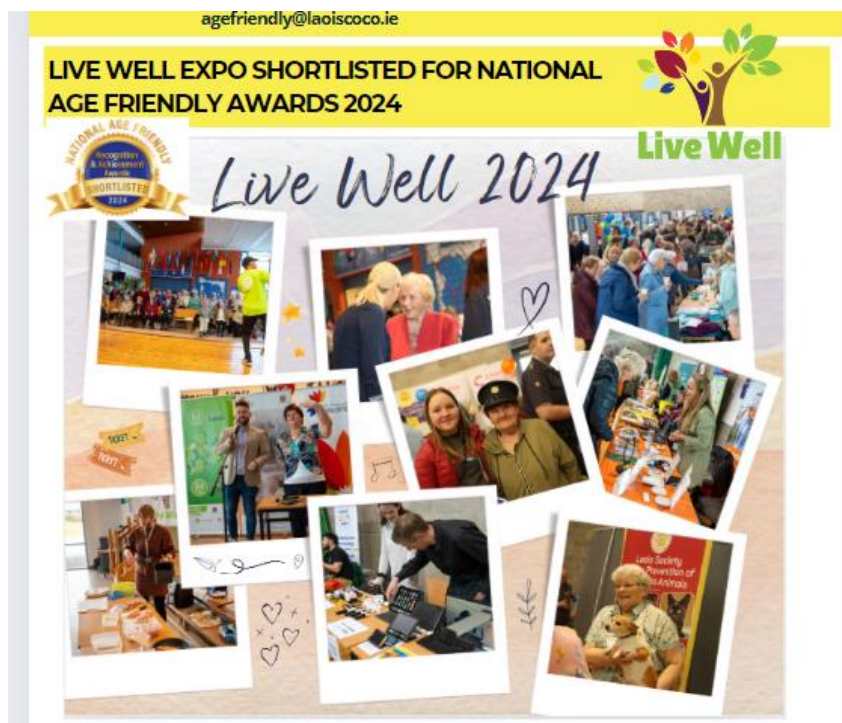
As part of our discussions, service gaps were identified in connectivity, and these are being addressed through ongoing discussions with delivery partners with a view to providing connecting services to and from this rural station in the county.



National Age Friendly Awards

The Live Well Expo which took place in April 2024 has been shortlisted for an Age Friendly recognition award in the communications category. The shortlisting alone is a testament of work undertaken and recognition of the quality of the event from a communications perspective. It is because of the quality of content i.e. exhibitors, speakers, demonstrations, health screenings and of course the large number of attendees on the day to avail of all the information that the nomination was possible.

Judging of the event takes place in the Council Chambers on Friday 20th September from 1pm to 2.30pm where we expect a large audience to attend. Tom Curran of Age Friendly Laois and Emma O Connor of Healthy Laois will give presentations on the initiative and there will be an opportunity for attendees to give their opinions on the initiative, whether as an attendee or an exhibitor.



<https://agefriendlyireland.ie/national-age-friendly-recognition-and-achievement-awards/>



Age Friendly Alliance meetings

Laois Age Friendly Alliance have recently had their third meeting of 2024 – these meetings continue to be well attended and the Age Friendly strategy actions continue to be updated.

Age Friendly Sports Taster Day

On the 26th September, a group of 30 older residents will visit Sports Ireland Campus in Blanchardstown to both see demos and participate in a range of Age- Friendly sports. The European Week of Sport promotes participation in sport and physical activity and aims to raise awareness about the numerous benefits of both. It encourages European citizens to “BeActive”, not only during the Week, but to stay fit all year long.

Intergeneration event in collaboration with Comhairle na n-Óg

The intergenerational event which took place in the Parish Centre on the 19th July produced a video which can now be viewed from link below:-

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=33Nr6lDRjLw>

Pride of Place 2024



Abbeyleix Bog Project Impresses Judges at Pride of Place 2024

A shining example of community-driven conservation, the Abbeyleix Bog Project showcases the powerful impact of local efforts in climate action and biodiversity.

The Abbeyleix Bog Project represented Laois proudly in the 2024 Pride of Place awards on Thursday, 25th July. Nominated in the special Climate Action and Biodiversity category, the project drew significant attention as the community gathered at the Abbeyleix Manor Hotel to welcome the IPB All Island Pride of Place Competition 2024 judges who judge on a voluntary basis.

Mr. Declan Nelson, judge and former Local Authority Chief Executive, opened the event by highlighting the Pride of Place competition's goal since 2003: to celebrate communities that unite to enhance their environment and quality of life. He praised Abbeyleix for its previous achievements and the strong sense of community.

Volunteers Garry Luttrell and Des Finnermore presented the history and achievements of the Abbeyleix Bog Project. Garry detailed the project's origins and its evolution into a successful community-led conservation initiative, supported by up to 100 volunteers. The project's focus on restoration, education, and recreation was evident in the comprehensive presentation. Des Finnermore discussed the bog's diverse habitats and its crucial role in climate action, noting that peatlands have a higher carbon absorption potential than rainforests. The presentation included a captivating video with drone footage, showcasing the bog's beauty and the community's dedication.

Mrs. Martina Moloney, judge and former Local Authority Chief Executive, commended the project, describing the presentation as exceptional and noting the community's strong commitment and diverse activities. She highlighted the recovery of the active raised bog from 1% to 13.5% as a significant achievement.

The winners of the IPB All Island Pride of Place Competition 2024 will be announced on Saturday, 2nd November, at the Gala Dinner and Award Ceremony at The Hillgrove Hotel, Monaghan. The Abbeyleix community eagerly await the results, hopeful for a well-deserved win.

Laois Connects

The Laois Connects 2024 Health & Wellbeing Programme, led by Laois County Council will take place from the 7th October to the 13th of October 2024. Events are taking place throughout the county and there should be something for everyone in the schedule of events.

The Laois Connects 2024 Programme is a collaboration between Laois County Council, Laois Sports Partnership, Laois PPN, HSE, Mental Health Ireland, Portlaoise Youth and Family Resource Centre, Mountmellick Community School, LOETB, Healthy Laois, Laois Libraries, Dunamaise Arts Centre, Laois Volunteer Centre and Youthwork Laois.

Healthy Laois



Musical Memories.

Musical Memories Programme is significantly underway with weekly sessions occurring in both the Maryborough Centre and Triú Aois with a variety of singers and musicians working with the residents. Emma OConnor was welcomed to a recent session in Triu Aois which hosted three singer/ musicians from Music Generation who are the Action Partner. Feedback was enormously positive from both the residents and carers and the visit underscored the vital place music has in health and wellbeing.



Creating Playful Spaces Project

Creating Playful Spaces in Cois na Habhann/ Bruach na Habhann LCC Housing Estate, Portlaoise and CRF Funding has enabled the continuation of the Creating Playful Spaces in Cois na Habhann/ Bruach na Habhann LCC Housing Estate, Portlaoise.

The 5th of September saw the culmination of the residents artistic efforts being erected following a summer of workshops with artist Monica OMeara, whilst a mixture of semi mature hardened trees have also been planted which has greatly improved the visuals of these housing estates. The project is a collaboration with Healthy Laois, LCC Sports and Leisure Section and Laois Partnership with an official Launch planned in early October.

Camross Lunch Clubs

Plans have now been finalised with Laois Partnership and Healthy Laois to pilot Lunch clubs in Camross and Portarlinton. This proposal is a collaboration with Tom Curran, Age Friendly Laois and will be actioned by Laois Partnership in conjunction with Healthy Laois.

Little Book of Memories

Age Friendly Laois and Healthy Ireland are working on an intercounty project with Longford County Council & Library and funded by Creative Laois. A joint meeting took place on Friday 30th August with all parties and a focused Consultation will take place on Wednesday 25th September.



Rathdowney Town Team

The Healthy Laois Coordinator also attended an event in Rathdowney on 3rd September in the Clochar Centre from 3-6pm organised by the Rathdowney Town Team to help provide information on grants and the range of supports available to community groups.

Town Centre First & Rural Regeneration

Rathdowney

Rathdowney Town Team have been successful in acquiring funding for the following projects:-

- €218,119 was allocated the Department of Rural & Community Development under the **Town and Village Renewal Scheme** to enhance the public realm and to improve accessibility and connectivity in the town centre
- €50,000 has been allocated by the Department of Rural & Community Development under the **Town and Village Project Development Measure Scheme**, to enable the Town Team to look at a re- design of the Town Square which will include an improved public realm and a community event space
- €11,412 has been awarded under the **Community Climate Action Fund**
- €65,000 has been awarded under the **Community Recognition Fund** to provide enhanced facilities in the Clochar Community Centre

The Town Regeneration Officer in association with the town team organised an information afternoon in the Clochar Centre on Tuesday 3rd September. The event was targeted at businesses and community groups to advise them on the range of grants and supports that were available. Various sections in the local authority such as the Local Enterprise Office, Business Support Unit, Vacant homes Office, Age Friendly were all in attendance in addition to Laois Partnership Company. The event was very well attended.

Mountrath

- €250,000 was allocated by the Department of Rural & Community Development under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme to regenerate the town centre including improvements to the facility which hosts the monthly farmers markets, public realm works and landscape works in the town square and on Patrick Street.
- €50,000 has been allocated by the Department of Rural & Community Development under the Town and Village Project Development Measure Scheme, to enable the Town Team re- design the Town Square
- €6,845 was granted under the Community Climate Action Fund
- €10,000 was awarded by the Irish Architecture Foundation to enable the Mountrath Town Team examine how the White Horse River amenity could contribute to the regeneration of the Town Square. This project has completed the consultation phase. Community workshops and online surveys were used to gather feedback from the local community. The architect Joseph Mackey will then use this feedback to proceed to the next stage which is looking at design solutions to link the river to the town centre.

Mountmellick

A town team has been set up in Mountmellick which is representing all the major stakeholders in the town. The first step for the team will be to adopt a Town Centre First Plan for the Town. A notice was place on etenders seeking submissions. The successful tenderer will be appointed after the end of September.

Town Centre First Town Team Support Fund

€10,000 was allocated to Mountrath and Ballylinan town teams by the DRCD for capacity building activities and any data collation and research initiatives for the Town.

Ballylinan Town Team
Mountrath Town Team

Durrow Community Enterprise Hub

The Part VIII for the revised design for the hub was approved in July. The consultants are now preparing the detailed design and preparation of tender documents for the construction contract.

Refurbishment of Courthouse in Borris in Ossory

Site Investigation works were completed in July and August. The Consultants are now working on Stage 2B which will be completed by the end of September. Tender Documents being prepared for construction contract.

CLIMATE ACTION AND ENVIRONMENT AWARENESS

Gum Litter Taskforce Roadshow Visits Portlaoise

Now in its 17th year, the Gum Litter Taskforce campaign is a collaboration between Food Drink Ireland, the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, the chewing gum industry, and local authorities. The taskforce met with representatives from Laois County Council and Portlaoise Tidy Towns to promote proper gum disposal and raise awareness about the environmental and financial impacts of gum litter.



Gash Gardens Tour with the Laois Federation of Tidy Town

On 10th July, members of the Laois Federation of Tidy Towns participated in a workshop at Gash Gardens, Castletown, where a Tidy Towns adjudicator shared valuable gardening tips. Mary Keenan, owner of Gash Gardens, guided the group through her gardens, showcasing some of her favourite plants and trees. Participants received insights into perennial planting, weed-suppressing plants, and the use pollinator friendly hedging options.



Laois Federation of Tidy Towns Biodiversity Garden Tour

The Laois Federation of Tidy Towns, in collaboration with the Green Team from Midlands Park Hotel, took part in an informative tour of the Biodiversity Garden at the Laois Education Support Centre, led by garden designer Dee Sewell. The tour aimed to increase awareness of biodiversity among educators and the wider community. This initiative aligns with the Portlaoise Low Carbon Town (PLCT) project and the "Town in a Garden" concept, both promoting sustainable living and the integration of green spaces into urban areas. The garden project was funded through the Local Biodiversity Action Fund.

Greening of Durrow Scarecrow Festival

As part of the Durrow Scarecrow Festival, the Climate Action Team arranged for The Food Cloud Kitchen trailer to host a free talk on food waste, followed by the serving of dishes made from rescued produce. Food Cloud, a non-profit organisation, works to combat climate change and food insecurity by redistributing surplus food. This event highlighted how delicious meals can be created using leftover food.

Durrow Scarecrow Festival was the first event in Laois to participate in the Green Your Festival Laois pilot project, which aims to help organisers create greener events. The official Green Your Festival Laois kit will be launched next month.



Anti-Litter Campaign Cinema Advert

An anti-litter cinema advert which was filmed in Portlaoise was shown before all screenings at Portlaoise Cinema for six weeks, reached an audience of 21,000 viewers.. The video can be viewed online: [Love Portlaoise Keep It Clean, Keep It Green! - Version 5.mp4 - Nextcloud \(vimar.ie\)](#)



Our Shared Plate

The Climate Action Team is engaged in multiple climate resilience projects aimed at promoting food security and sustainability within local communities.

One such project is called My Shared Plate, a project funded by Pobal delivered in collaboration with NeighbourFood and Healthy Ireland Laois are working with 3 groups:

Spring Crecent Rathdowney

- O Moore's Place
- Portlaoise Women's Shed



**supporting neighbourhoods
to eat together**

Smarter Travel Cluster

On 17th July, Transport for Ireland (TFI) introduced its Smarter Travel Workplace programme to local businesses at Laois Chambers. The programme supports businesses in developing travel plans that promote sustainable commuting options such as cycling, walking, and carpooling. By reducing single-occupancy car trips, these plans aim to minimise environmental impact and improve employee wellbeing.

Smarter Travel Mark

Laois County Council have embarked on a journey towards attaining Smarter Travel Mark. A survey conducted by Laois County Council in July 2024 revealed that 77% of respondents

currently commute via single-occupancy cars, but 57% expressed an interest in walking more, and 43% showed an interest in cycling. The results will inform the creation of a comprehensive travel plan incorporating both behavioural changes and infrastructure improvements.

Community Climate Action Fund

In August, successful applicants to the Community Climate Action Fund were notified of their funding awards, with €465,000 granted to 16 groups across all municipal districts.

Unsuccessful applicants have been invited to work with the Community Climate Action Officer to prepare for Phase 2.

The majority of the projects will commence in September, including initiatives such as solar PV installations, LED lighting upgrades, community building retrofits, and the establishment of Laois' first community bike library. These projects not only contribute to climate action but also foster healthier lifestyles and strengthen community bonds.

Table: Applications recommended for funding under Strand 1 of the Community Climate Action Programme in Laois County Council Area.

Lead Community Group Partner	Project Name	Project Overview
Abbeyleix Community Garden	Rainwater harvesting	Installation of rainwater harvesting system with gravity fed irrigation for Community Garden
Camross Community Association	Energy upgrade of community hall	Completing Community Hall retrofit with roof insulation and installation of LED lighting.
Portlaoise Laois Teachers' Climate Action Committee	Grow me Local	Fit out of existing Polyunnel with professionally designed fully accessible planting areas and rainwater harvested irrigation system.
Mountrath Tidy Towns Association	Fully accessible Dry Toilet system, including wormery	Installation of a fully accessible dry toilet system including wormery
Mountmellick Men's Shed	Climate proofing Mountmellick Mens Shed	Installation of PV Solar
Monavea St Abbans Athletic Club	Action Energy Abbans	Supply and installation of webapp hardware for the control of lighting etc in club.
Rathdowney Vision CLG	Rathdowney Vision for a Sustainable Community	Installation of PV Solar. Bike repair station and bike parking. For community garden the installation of a rainwater harvesting butt and rotating composting bin.
Mountrath Community Forum	Greening Macra Hall	Installation of a Bike Stop in a prominent site in Mountrath town centre, hosting a bike repair station with bike parking all under a weatherproof shelter.

O'Dempseys GFC, Ballybrittas	"Green Trails"	Full LED retrofit of all 53 light fixtures in clubhouse.
Abbeyleix Park Development Committee	Implementation of Smart Plan for Fr Breen Sports Park	Accessing renewable energy with installation of PV Solar and enhancing efficiency with smart sensors and smart controls for heating systems furthering the implementation of the Smart Plan for Fr Breen Park (2023). Installation of segregated waste bins and bike parking as recommended in Fr Breen Park Greening Studies Report (2024).
Portarlinton Business Association Sustainability Group	Portarlinton Community Bike Library	A community bike library where people can borrow from a range of electric bikes, suiting various needs. The lending period is for several months so people can trial a viable alternative to car use for their shorter, more local journeys with a view to purchasing their own e-bike if they find it beneficial.
Clonad GAA	Cluainfhada GAA - Téimis Glas!	Continuing their GAA Green Club development with installation of PV Solar and retrofit of clubhouse with LED lighting. Biodiversity friendly planting, weed control and seeds. To support the circular economy a portable open cabinet for attractive and efficient display for club gear swaps.
Laois Federation of Tidy Towns	Green Your Festival kit	Green Your Festival Kit to be lent out to small festivals in though out Laois in support of their efforts to become sustainable events. The kit will contain equipment including solar charging battery pack (to replace traditional diesel generators). It will reduce waste generated at festivals with reusable pint cups (to replace single use disposables) and mobile water refill units (to reduce single use plastics).
Portlaoise Tidy Towns	Greening Lyster Square	Peoples Parklet or a "mini park" built by Portlaoise Mens Shed installed. This Parklet will combine seating, rain garden biodiversity planting and bike parking. The project will also install a surface level rain garden in Lyster Square that will lessen and filter extreme weather rainfall entering the drainage system.
Ballyroan Community Development CLG	Ballyroan Community Site - Old Boys schools building retrofit for use as community facility	Ballyroan Community Space - Old Boys schools building retrofit for use as community facility with Bike Stop in original bike shelter of school hosting parking and repair station. Compost Bins on site and throughout village for plant cuttings.

Heath GAA	The Heath GAA Climate and Environmental Action Plan	Insulation walls and ceilings, replace doors and windows and biodiversity planting
-----------	--	--

Energy Awareness Week

Laois Energy Awareness Week, organised by Laois County Council, took place from 2nd to 6th September, providing valuable advice and support to homeowners on energy efficiency and retrofitting. As part of the event, the LOETB NZEB and Retrofit Mobile Training Rig was stationed at Laois Shopping Centre, offering attendees hands-on demonstrations and information.

The week featured a variety of activities, including expert advice on energy-efficient home improvements from representatives of SEAI, KORE Retrofit, and Electric Super Homes Ireland. Local lending institutions were also on hand to provide information on green loan options for energy-saving projects.

In addition, LOETB hosted two educational courses during the week. On Wednesday, there was an "Introduction to the Circular Economy," followed by a full-day "NZEB Fundamentals" course on Thursday, which covered sustainable building practices and steps towards achieving NZEB (Nearly Zero Energy Building) compliance.



SPORT AND LESIURE

Community Recognition Fund Projects

Cois na hAbhann/ Bruach na Habhann – ‘Creating Playful Spaces’ was awarded €10,000 under the Community Recognition Fund 2023 and is based on the delivery of the first phase of the landscape plan agreed with residents to enhance the estates. This phase completed at the end of August 2024, saw the installation of semi mature trees on the estate entrance and community spaces. Additionally, it involved an 8-week art programme with ceramic artist Monica O’Meara and 20 children from the estates which resulted in the creation of 3 ceramic wall art pieces based on local biodiversity which were erected in communal areas. Over the coming weeks, thanks to a contribution of paint from the Housing Section it is hoped to work with the children and their parents to paint walls that will form a backdrop to the artwork. Excellent relationships are developing with local children and their parents. This project is also supported by Healthy Laois and Laois Partnership SICAP programme and it is hoped that further funding will be sourced to complete the plan.



Artist Monica O’Meara with one of the 3 Ceramic Outdoor Wall Art pieces created by the children of Cois/ Bruach na hAbhann



Photo of Trees Installed Cois/ Bruach na hAbhann

Ballylinan Playground Upgrade was awarded €55,750 to refurbish the 12-year old playground. The works which were completed in August 2024, consisted of the installation of an accessible toilet unit to replace the demountable unit that was beyond repair. Additionally, new play equipment was purchased and installed and new safety surfacing and access paths installed throughout the playground. The focus of the refurbishment was the enhancement of inclusive play value and the works completed are of a very high standard.



Images of some of the new equipment & accessible toilet – Ballylinan Playground

Community Recognition Fund (CRF)

Under CRF 2024 Laois received an allocation of €1,012,996 with €962,346.20 allocated for projects and €50,649.80 as an administrative allocation. A total of 68 expressions of interests were received seeking funding in excess of €13 million.

Under CRF 2024 there are three application windows for LCC to submit proposals to the Dept. Under window 1 the following groups were successful in receiving funding totaling €385,000:

Laois	Portlaoise	Laois County Council - St. Marys Hall Portlaoise	St. Mary's Sports Hall - Works on Roof	€150,000
Laois	Rathdowney	Laois County Council	Necessary Works at Clochar Community Centre to include: Development of outdoor terrace to create an event space for groups - Development of Outdoor Equipment Storage facilities for Community Groups - Painting of Building	€65,000
Laois	Ballylinan	Ballylinan GAA	Development of a Community Walking Track	€70,000
Laois	Mountmellick	Laois County Council	Land Acquisition for community use	€100,000
Laois Total				€385,000

Library Update

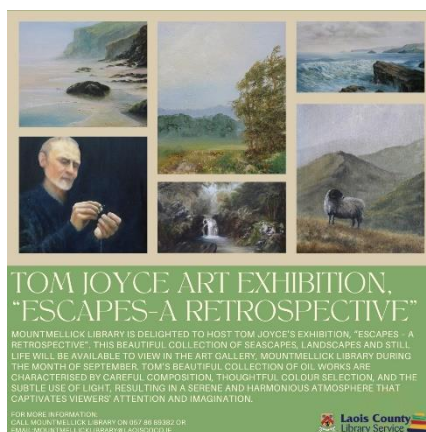
C-pen readers

C-Pen Reader Pens are now available to borrow from your local Laois Library. C-Pens are reading tools designed to improve & enhance reading & learning. The C-Pen scans and reads text aloud and is beneficial to anyone with dyslexia, aphasia or vision problems.

They can be borrowed on an adult library card at your local branch. Please contact your local library for more details <https://laois.ie/depar.../libraries/libraries-opening-hours/>

Art gallery Mountmellick library

For the month of September, Mountmellick Library is hosting an exhibition by Tom Joyce entitled "Escapes" a retrospective a beautiful collection of seascapes, landscapes and still life available to view in the Gallery during library opening hours.

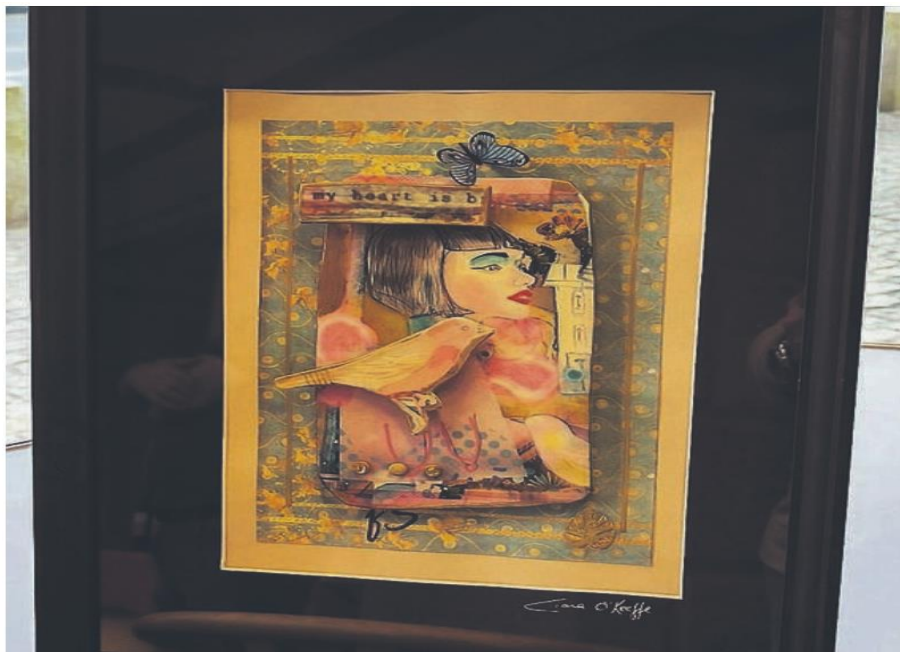


Art Gallery Abbeyleix library

The gallery are library is excited to host an award-winning ceramicist for the month of September and that Ciara's works are high-end, unique and wonderfully detailed.

Ciara O'Keeffe holds a Post-Graduate Certificate in Cultural & Creative Entrepreneurship from Trinity College (2020) and a BA in Ceramics from the Limerick School of Art & Design (1999).

Ciara's work has been featured in World of Interiors Magazine (July 2022, The Who is Who of Art and Design (2018) and Anthology Magazine (Spring 2018). "Each piece is a testament to the enduring human spirit and the journey from suffering to self-realisation. The intricate designs and vibrant colours illustrate the beauty and the strength found in survival and self-acceptance".



Laois and Offaly Libraries - Parenting Programme-Autumn 2024

Laois Libraries together with Offaly Libraries are delighted to co-deliver a series of free talks and workshops for parents in the libraries for Autumn 2024. Supported by Laois Offaly Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC), the Parenting Support Programme invited experts to discuss a broad range of parenting topics currently impacting our children.

The aim of the programme is to give parents simple and practical strategies to help them build healthy relationships with their children and confidently manage issues as they arise.

The programme has been running in September 2024. The full programme of events can be viewed

[Parenting Support Programme – Laois County Council](#)



Sustainable Development Goals -Library talks

For the month of September Portlaoise library has hosted series of free sustainable talks for the public, all were well attended =details below

- Anna from **Big Sky Flowers** held an engaging adult workshop on the essentials of compost making.
- Aoife Munn hosted a free FREE workshop in Portlaoise Library demonstrating how to create your own soap, wax wraps and biodegradable garden pots.
- Furniture Upcycling Demonstration event. Furniture Artist Marianne Heaphy hosted a workshop on how to utilise the essential techniques of prepping, priming, painting, decoupage and stencilling to transform an ordinary piece of furniture into a stunning work of art.



Donna Mullen, author of *Make Your Home a Nature Reserve* will host an inspiring talk on September 28th how to turn any space—whether it's a garden, field, or window box—into a sanctuary for wildlife! 🐝🦋 Drawing from her personal experience of creating a nature reserve at her own home, Donna will offer practical tips on supporting bees, butterflies, hedgehogs, bats, and even snails.

Culture Night September 20th 2024

Culture Night took place on Friday the September 20th around the Country. The library held the events below showcasing music and culture of Laois

- Mountmellick Library - Between screenings of the 1995 Mountmellick Famine film, and the Screenings of Tiny Plays, Mountmellick Comhaltas performed an ensemble of Trad music in Mountmellick Library.
- Abbeyleix Library hosted Internationally acclaimed classical musicians David Vesey and Alina Obreja , they held a concert duet on Piano and Cello. The performance featured music inspired by the night, was engaging experience for music lovers of all levels.
- Portlaoise Library experienced an Enchanting Evening of Italian Opera & Irish Songs! The Drawing Room Opera Company showed their incredible talents of Paul Linehan (tenor) and Mary Flaherty (soprano), accompanied by David Wray on piano playing a delightful mix of popular opera, Neapolitan favourites, and timeless Irish classics



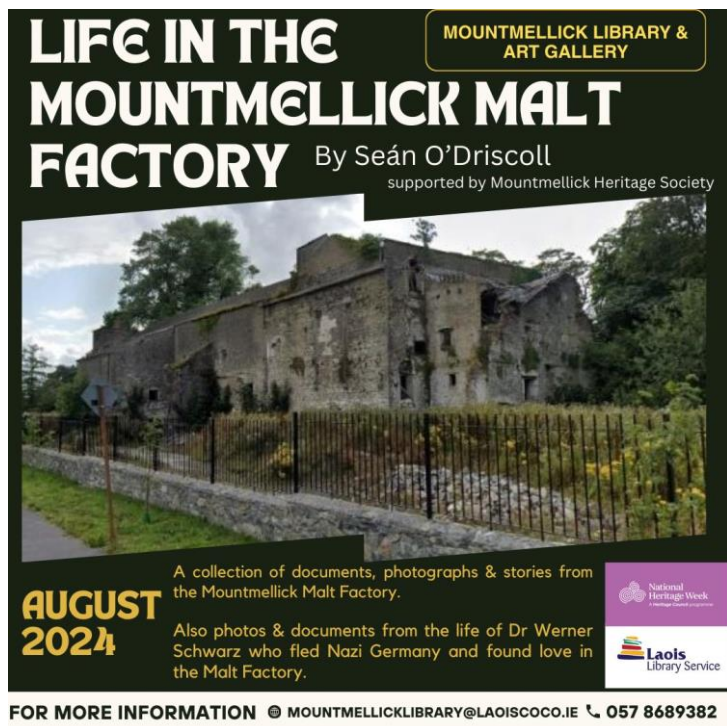
Stradbally Library and arthouse were treated to half hour performance on Uilleann Pipes, Harp and Fiddle. The acclaimed performers played blended mix of traditional Irish music, and newly composed tunes in the trad style. The music was followed by storytelling from Michelle



Heritage week @Laois County Library Services

Libraries throughout the county took part in Heritage week 2024 . Highlights of the weeks this year include

During August Mountmellick hosted a display of documents, photographs & stories from the Mountmellick Malt Factory. Also included photos & documents from the life of Dr Werner Schwarz who fled Nazi Germany and found love in the Malt Factory.



LIFE IN THE MOUNTMELLICK MALT FACTORY By Seán O'Driscoll
supported by Mountmellick Heritage Society

MOUNTMELLICK LIBRARY & ART GALLERY

AUGUST 2024

A collection of documents, photographs & stories from the Mountmellick Malt Factory.

Also photos & documents from the life of Dr Werner Schwarz who fled Nazi Germany and found love in the Malt Factory.

National Heritage Week
Laos Library Service

FOR MORE INFORMATION @ MOUNTMELLICKLIBRARY@LAOISCOCO.IE ☎ 057 8689382

Biodiversity specialist Albert Nolan visiting Portlaoise Library on discovering our hidden wildlife -Bats and moths



Celebrating the launch of *Beneath the Sky of Stars* by Eileen Casey and the Laois Writers at Stradbally Library:



Children had the opportunity to get hands-on with the medieval past, as they joined Donna Gilligan from Scéal Heritage to create medieval ring brooches, a common piece of jewellery worn by men, women, and children in the Middle Ages. Workshops were held in Durrow, Stradbally and Rathdowney

Willow Wonder hosted workshops on the ancient art of weaving, using willow and other natural materials. These workshops were held in Mountrath, Abbeyleix and Portarlinton Libraries.





Portarlington Arts & Heritage Group speaking at Portarlington Library on preserving the towns buildings and architecture



Environmental/illustrator Gordon D'Arcy visited Abbeyleix Library:



Chief Executive's Orders

- ✚ A schedule of Chief Executive Orders signed during the month of August & September will be circulated.

Simon Walton
Interim Chief Executive

September 25th 2024