

**LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL  
COMHAIRLE CHONTAE LAOISE**



**MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT  
NOVEMBER 2024  
TUARASCÁIL BHAINISTÍOCHTA  
SAMHAIN 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 November 2024 is as follows:

**FINANCE & ALLOCATIONS NOTIFIED**

Expenditure and income to the 31/10/2024 is summarised below:

Service Division	Budget Allocation	Expenditure to 31/10/2024
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Road Transportation and Safety	€29,636,000	€19,886,402
Water Services	€3,349,000	€2,675,813
Development Management	€10,390,000	€10,466,300
Environmental Services	€11,871,700	€8,159,002
Recreation and Amenity	€5,494,000	€4,465,162
Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare	€955,000	€756,698
Miscellaneous Services	€10,109,500	€7,135,370
Central Management Charge	€11,434,000	€9,289,402
<b>Total</b>	<b>€113,881,000</b>	<b>€85,044,261</b>

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Environmental Services	€4,733,400	€1,862,970
Recreation and Amenity	€1,069,000	€254,648
Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare	€454,000	€258,104
Miscellaneous Services	€11,424,500	€6,906,583
Superannuation	€735,000	€638,386
Local Property Tax	€12,144,172	€12,144,712
Rates	€14,584,066	€12,531,794
Capital transfer	€567,862	
<b>Total</b>	<b>€113,881,000</b>	<b>€78,180,221</b>

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Franchise Costs	€318,000	€501,350
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Op of Markets and Casual Trading	€1,000	€18
Local Representation/Civic Leadership	€1,056,000	€712,823
Motor Taxation	€217,000	€184,738
Agency & Recoupable Services	€6,209,500	€5,164,997
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Human Resources Function	€1,257,000	€1,059,128
Finance Function	€825,000	€588,591
Pensions and Lump Sum Costs	€4,572,000	€4,216,680
<b>Total</b>	<b>€11,434,000</b>	<b>€9,289,403</b>

#### Allocations Notified November 2024

Local Enhancement Programme 2024	<b>€173,943.00</b>
Participation Nation Fund 2024	<b>€74,750.00</b>
Department of Rural and Community Development – Dog Control Support Initiative 2024	<b>€58,692.00</b>
Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage – Rural Water Programme (Errill, The Heath & Cullohill)	<b>€271,296.00</b>

## 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

#### *Social Housing Delivered*

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Total
Social Housing completions to date	229	286	103	-	-	618

#### Summary Table of Social Housing Delivery 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 & 3)	11	4 no. 4-bed 2-storey 2 no. 2-bed 1-storey 5 no. 4-bed 2-storey	LCC (Turnkey)	Tenancing complete in Q4 2024
Sruth na Gleanna, Killeslin	1	1 no. 3-bed house	LA Part V	Delivery Q2 2024
Rockview, Portlaoise	47	3 no. 4-bed house 35 no. 3-bed house 9 no. 2-bed house	Oaklee Housing	Phase 1 of 3 delivered Q2 2024 – 12 Homes
Townparks, Rathdowney Rd, Borris-in-Ossory	26	4 no. 3-bed 2-storey 4 no. 1-bed 2-storey 8 no. 2-bed 2-storey 10 no. 2-bed 1-storey	LCC Turnkey	Tenancing will complete in Q4 2024
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>103</b>			

**Summary Table of Social Housing Schemes Under Construction**

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 Q1 2025
Wallis Street, Mountrath	11	9 no. 2-bed bungalows 2 no. 2-bed apts.	Co-Operative Housing	Currently on Site – Expected phased delivery Q4 2024(7 units) and Q1 2025 (4 units)
Shannon Street, Mountrath	20	13 no. 3-bed 2-storey 7 no. 2-bed 2-storey	LCC Turnkey	On site – expected delivery 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
The Orchard, Ballylynan (Phase 3)	1	1 no. 3-bed 2-storey	LCC (Turnkey)	On Site – Phase 3 (1 unit)

				delivery Q2 2025
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 Q2 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	LCC Turnkey	On site – expected delivery Q4 2025



		2 no. 2-bed 1-storey		
Foxburrow, Portlaoise	15	1 and 2-bed apts	La Part V	Delivery Q4 2024
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
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>259</b>			

**Summary Table of Social Housing at Planning, Design or Tender Stage**

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 3 approved and tender advertised in Q4 2024.
French Church St, Portarlington	2	2 no. 2-bed apts.	LCC (Renewal)	Stage 2 to be submitted in Q4 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	Site preparation works currently underway. Expected delivery Q2 2026
Curragh na Mona, Abbeyleix Rd, Portlaoise	39	5 x 2-bed fully accessible apts 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 <sup>st</sup> floor apts 4 x 3-bed 2-storey.	Respond Housing	Construction to commence Q4 2024.

		6 x 2-bed 1 <sup>st</sup> floor apts		
Clonroosk (Knockmay), Portlaoise	12	8 no. 2-bed 2-storey 3 no. 3-bed 2-storey 1 no. 3-bed 1-storey	LCC (Construction)	Tenders returned in October 24 and evaluation is currently on-going.
Doonane	12	12 no. 3-bed 2-storey	LCC (Construction)	Tenders returned in October 24 and evaluation is currently on-going.
"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 Q4 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)	Tender advertised in Q4 with return date of Dec 24.
Moanbaun, Mountrath	17	6 no. 3-bed 2-storey 7 no. 2-bed 2-storey 4 no. 2-bed 1-storey	LCC (Construction)	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	AHB to make CALF application for funding.
Tyrrell's Lands, Stradbally Road, Portlaoise	21	Tenure mix - numbers and house types - to be confirmed in detailed design	LCC Social and Affordable	Stage 3 to be submitted in Q4 2024.
Bracklone St, Portarlinton	11	11 no. 2-bed houses	LCC (Construction)	Stage 2 to be submitted in Q4 2024.
Rushall, Mountrath	3	3 no. 3-bed 2-storey	LCC (Construction)	Stage 2 to be progressed in Q4 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 Q4 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 Q4 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 Q4 2024
Maltings Site, Mountmellick	40	TBC	LCC (Construction)	Stage 1 approved. Stage 2 to be progressed in Q4 2024
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>273</b>			

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING / COST RENTAL

Minimum targets for LCC for delivery of Affordable Purchase/Cost Rental:

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

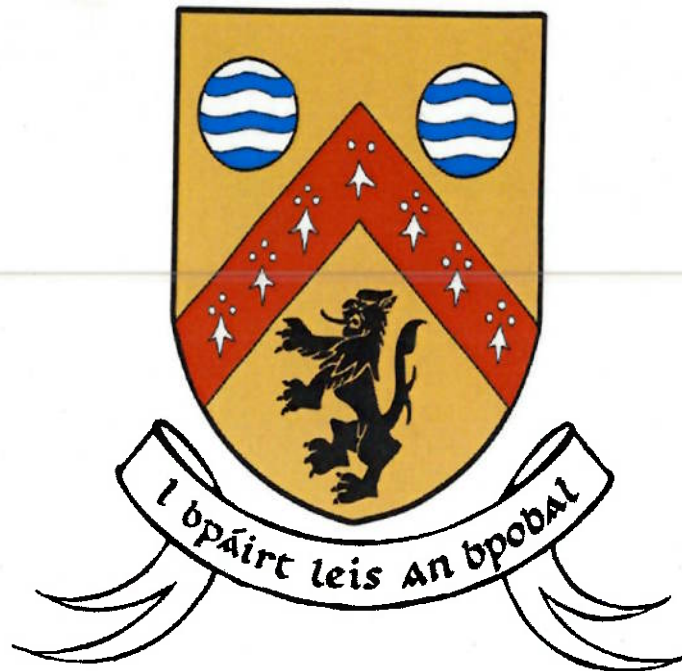
Summary Table regarding Progression of Affordable Units to date

Scheme	Total no of units	Units Sold	Units Approved and to be Sold	Units under consideration	Comment
Kilminchy, Portlaoise	10	3	7		7 buyers identified for remaining units - 3 for delivery in Q4 2024 and 4 for delivery in Q1 2025

An Lochan, Portlaoise	11	2	9		9 buyers identified for remaining units - 5 for delivery in Q1 2025 and 4 for delivery in Q2 2025
Oakvale Meadows, Stradbally	10	0	10		Renewed negotiations with developer which requires update to Dept approval; working through this process
The Maltings, Portlaoise (Cost Rental)	28	28			Managed and tenanted by Cluid
Tyrell's Land, Portlaoise (Council owned site)	42			42	AHF application to be made to Dept following request for tenders for construction of units in early 2025
Portlaoise*	48			48	Under consideration. Unit numbers approximate and subject to agreement on costs prior to AHF application.
Portarlinton*	15			15	Under consideration. Unit numbers approximate and subject to agreement on costs prior to AHF application.
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>105</b>	

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

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## AFFORDABLE HOUSING / COST RENTAL

Minimum targets for LCC for delivery of Affordable Purchase/Cost Rental:

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LA Affordable Purchase & Cost Rental Delivery Target	5	7	10	8	8	38

### Summary Table regarding Progression of Affordable Units to date

Scheme	Total no of units	Units Sold	Units Approved and to be Sold	Units under consideration	Comment
Kilminchy, Portlaoise	10	3	7		7 buyers identified for remaining units – 3 for delivery in Q4 2024 and 4 for delivery in Q1 2025

An Lochan , Portlaoise	11	2	9		9 buyers identified for remaining units - 5 for delivery in Q1 2025 and 4 for delivery in Q2 2025
Oakvale Meadows, Stradbally	10	0	10		Renewed negotiations with developer which requires update to Dept approval; working through this process
The Maltings , Portlaoise (Cost Rental)	28	28			Managed and tenanted by Cluid
Tyrell's Land, Portlaoise (Council owned site)	42			42	AHF application to be made to Dept following request for tenders for construction of units in early 2025
Portlaoise*	48			48	Under consideration. Unit numbers approximate and subject to agreement on costs prior to AHF application.
Portarlinton *	15			15	Under consideration. Unit numbers approximate and subject to agreement on costs prior to AHF application.
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>105</b>	

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



Call remains open for Expressions of Interest in respect of:

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

Queries regarding affordable housing should be emailed to [affordablepurchase@laiscoco.ie](mailto:affordablepurchase@laiscoco.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 <sup>st</sup> January 2024 – 31 <sup>st</sup> October 2024
No. of Dwellings inspected	712 (79.8 %)
No of notices of works issued	522

The Housing Inspections team can be contacted via email at [propertyinspections@laiscoco.ie](mailto:propertyinspections@laiscoco.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.

The following locations are currently complete, in progress or under consideration.

Sites to be a minimum of 0.25 acres in size.

### *Serviced Sites Completed:*

Location	No. of Sites	Comment
Ballacolla Road, Durrow	4	Sites fully serviced.
Gleann na Glaise, Ballyroan	4	Sites fully serviced.
<b>SITES COMPLETED</b>	<b>8</b>	

***Serviced Sites In Progress:***

Location	No. of Sites	Comment
Doonane	2	Tenders returned in October 24 and evaluation currently on-going. Site boundary fencing to be installed on site in Q4 2024.
Derry Road, Durrow	4	Tender currently advertised with return date in Q4 2024 and evaluation to commence in Q4 2024. Site boundaries to be installed on site in Q4 2024.
<b>SITES IN PROGRESS</b>	<b>6</b>	

***Serviced Sites Under Consideration:***

Location	No. of Sites	Comment
Castletown	9	Proposal. Detailed design currently on-going.
Clonaslee	2	Proposal.
<b>SITES UNDER CONSIDERATION</b>	<b>11</b>	

Housing Department are actively reviewing possible other sites for consideration to be included in this scheme.

Queries regarding serviced sites should be emailed to [servicedsites@laoiscoco.ie](mailto:servicedsites@laoiscoco.ie)

## **HOUSING STOCK – RELETS, MAINTENANCE AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY**

### **Housing Re-Lets**

Month	LA Surrendered	Keys	Properties Acquired	Works Completed
January 2024	7		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	4
July 2024	5		0	10
August 2024	9		1	9
September 2024	0		0	8
October 2024	2		0	4
<b>TOTAL (YTD)</b>	<b>54</b>		<b>5</b>	<b>70</b>

NOTE: There are currently 21 vacant units from our existing stock and a further 5 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	412	0
August 2024	377	365	12
September 2024	449	320	129
October 2024	550	338	212
<b>TOTAL (YTD)</b>	<b>4,391</b>	<b>4,038</b>	<b>353</b>

**Energy Efficiency/Retrofitting Programme:**

PROGRAMME	COMMENTS
MRP - 159 Units	159 units completed.
EERP (2021) - 28 Units - O'Moore Place	28 units completed.
EERP (2022/2023) - Phase 1&2/33 Units Thornberry, Church Ave, Slieve Bloom Park, Quigley Park & Other Locations	<p>Tender evaluation for the 2022 Retrofit Programme comprising 59 houses has been completed.</p> <p><u>Phase 1</u></p> <p>1) Thornberry, Abbeyleix - 16 units.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works completed in Q4 2023.</li> </ul> <p><u>Phase 2</u></p> <p>1) Church Avenue, Stradbally - 7 units.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works completed in Q1 2024.</li> </ul> <p>2) Slieve Bloom Park, Clonaslee - 4 units.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works completed in Q2 2024.</li> </ul> <p>3) Quigley Park, Rathdowney - 2 units</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works completed in Q1 2024</li> </ul>

<p>EERP (2022/2023) – Phase 3/26 Units St. Fintan’s Tce., Old School Road, St Johns Sq. &amp; Other Locations</p>	<p>4) Other Locations – 4 units</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works completed in Q2 2024.</li> </ul> <p><u>Phase 3</u></p> <p>1) St Fintans Terrace – 4 units</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works completed in Q1 2024.</li> </ul> <p>2) Old School Road, Ballylinan – 9 units</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works completed in Q2 2024.</li> </ul> <p>3) St. John’s Square, Portlaoise – 7 units.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works completed in Q2 2024.</li> </ul> <p>4) Other Locations – 6 units</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works completed in Q4 2024.</li> </ul>
<p>EERP (2024) – 61 Units St. Brigid’s Place (Phase 1), Meadowbrook, Imleach, Triogue Court &amp; Other Locations</p>	<p>Tender evaluation for the 2024 Retrofit Programme comprising 61 houses has been completed.</p> <p><u>Phase 1</u></p> <p>1) St Brigid’s Place(Phase 1)– 18 units,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work commenced in Q4 2024.</li> </ul> <p>2) Meadowbrook – 17 units,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work to commence in Q1 2025.</li> </ul> <p>3) Imleach – 16 units,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work to commence in Q1 2025.</li> </ul> <p>4) Triogue Court – 4 units Works to be completed in Q4 2024.</p> <p>5) Other Locations. – 6 units.</p>
<p>EERP (2025) – 50 Units St. Brigid’s Place (Phase 2), Arderin, Fr. O’Connor Cres., Erkindale Dr., Rossmore View &amp; Various Locations</p>	<p>Funding approved for 50 units to commence in 2025.</p> <p><u>Phase 1</u></p> <p>1) St. Brigid’s Place (Phase 2), Arderin, Fr. O’Connor Cres., Erkindale Dr, Rossmore View &amp;</p>

	Various Locations. – 50 units. • Survey works to commence in Q4 2024.
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## HOUSING NEED

Circular 06/2024 sets out arrangements for social housing acquisitions for 2024 and Laois County Council has been given an allocation of 15 for 2024. This is not a target, but rather to support effective planning in the provision of services and to allow Local Authorities to prioritise acquisitions.

### Acquisitions from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 – 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024

Total Acquisitions completed (all categories)	5
Acquisitions currently in progress (all categories)	6
Number of above acquisitions which have <i>Tenants in Situ</i>	6

*Queries regarding acquisitions should be emailed to [housingdelivery@laoiscoco.ie](mailto:housingdelivery@laoiscoco.ie)*

### Homeless Presentations

Time Periods	Homeless Presentations Households	Breakdown of Household
1 <sup>st</sup> October 2024 to 31 <sup>st</sup> October 2024	27	19 singles & 8 families

### Homeless Accommodation

Emergency Accommodation Households booked at 31 <sup>st</sup> October 2024	
Families	1
Single Persons	16
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>

*Homeless related queries should be emailed to [homeless@laoiscoco.ie](mailto:homeless@laoiscoco.ie) or [housinglcc@laoiscoco.ie](mailto:housinglcc@laoiscoco.ie)*

### Social Housing List at 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024

TOTAL No of Social Housing Applicants on waiting list	1,606
Proportion of SH applicants availing of HAP supports	658 41%

### RAS/Leasing Statistics at 31<sup>st</sup> October 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 from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 - 31<sup>st</sup> October 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)	111
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>201</b>

*Queries regarding Housing Allocations should be emailed to [housingallocations@laoiscoco.ie](mailto:housingallocations@laoiscoco.ie)*

## TRAVELLER ACCOMODATION PROG. 2025-2029

This is a specific item on the November 2025 Agenda with a view to adoption of the TRAVELLER ACCOMODATION PROGRAMME 2025-2029.

## LOANS AND GRANTS

### Local Authority Home Loan (LAHL)

No of new Loan Applications received since 1 <sup>st</sup> January 2024	41
No. of 'Live' Applications approved at 31 <sup>st</sup> October 2024	14
No of Applications refused since 1 <sup>st</sup> January 2024	10



**PRIVATE GRANTS**  
**Housing Adaptation Grants at 31<sup>st</sup> October 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	273	153	€736,654.00	85	€433,849.00
MAG	17	5	€17,720.00	3	€10,600.00
HGD	167	93	€701,905.00	68	€498,492.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>457</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>€1,456,279.00</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>€942,941.00</b>

**Disabled Persons Grant for Social Housing**

**DPG works at 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024**

Allocation 2024 (including LA funded portion €58,133)	€581,329
No of works approved in 2024 – adaptations (including 2 extensions)	46
Value of the above works	€579,653*

*Balance will required to fund cost of Occupational Therapy reports required for works in 2024.*

*Queries in relation to Housing Grants should be emailed to [housinggrants@laoiscoco.ie](mailto:housinggrants@laoiscoco.ie)*

## **REGENERATION TEAM**

Laois County Council 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 Office 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 1,080 properties surveyed (residential and commercial), 695 properties were found to be vacant, with 47 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](mailto: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.

<b>Vacancy/Dereliction Activation Prog 1<sup>st</sup> January – 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024</b>	
Vacant and derelict properties that have ENTERED the Vacancy/Dereliction Activation Programme including CPO's / Compulsory Acquisitions commenced	68
CPO's / Compulsory Acquisitions commenced/completed	5 – Details below
Vacant and derelict properties that have EXITED the Vacancy/Dereliction Activation Programme	38

### Derelict Sites

There are currently 102 derelict sites files open relating to sites across the County. To date in 2024, 11 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 <sup>st</sup> January – 31 <sup>st</sup> October, 2024
Number of grant applications received	70
Number of applications APPROVED	33
Number of applications APPROVED IN PRINCIPLE	18
Number of applications REFUSED	3
Number of applications WITHDRAWN	4
Number of grants paid to Applicants	33
Total value of grants paid	€1,782,555

*Amendment to Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2024*

Circular 34/2024 issued by the Department of Housing 11<sup>th</sup> November 2024 advises as follows:

The Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant currently provides funding for works under a number of different categories, as outlined in the application form and scheme outline. The work category 'Services' includes plumbing; heating; ventilation; power; lighting; telecommunications; and smoke/CO2 detection.

While no specific reference is made to fossil fuel boilers, grant funding for such boilers could currently be provided under the 'Services' category of works.

From 1st January, 2025, EU Member States shall not provide any financial incentives for the installation of stand-alone boilers powered by fossil fuels. Accordingly, (per EU/2024/1275), the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant will no longer provide funding for the installation of a standalone fossil fuel boiler for new applications from 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2024.

#### **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 28 meetings held to date, ensuring consistency and efficiency in service delivery and integration supports to new arrivals to our county.

The Council hosted, on behalf of the Laois Community Integration Forum, a successful and well attended information event for employers on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2024, at Aras an Chontae. This event informed employers and potential employers on the full suite of support services available when employing new arrivals to our county, and provided a valuable networking opportunity.

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 were relocated in October from emergency accommodation arrangements at Portlaoise and Abbeyleix to other centres, including centres outside of Laois. This consolidation during 2024 has led to a reduction in the number of Ukrainian accommodation Centres around Laois, which now stands at 5. DCEDIY also confirmed in recent weeks that an IPAS centre in Portarlinton, is now no longer under contract.

With the cessation of the refurbishment programme for vacant buildings, effective from 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024, DCEDIY no longer require Council support in the sourcing of such temporary accommodation for Ukrainian displaced persons.

The Council continues however, to allocate privately offered accommodation under the Offer A Home Scheme to Ukrainian families, with 75 Ukrainian households having been supported by Council in securing privately arranged accommodation to date.

The Council's Integration Support Office continues to coordinate service delivery and integration supports to all those in need of such services. This includes for onsite one to one clinics, engagement with CIF members, local agencies and service providers to deliver supports such as English classes, Safe Pass and Manual Handling training and information sessions.

Weekly clinics take place in Áras an Chontae for international protection applicants and programme refugees from Syria, who arrived to Laois under the 2015 and 2019 resettlement programmes.

Accommodation Centre residents are encouraged and supported to participate in and volunteer at local events, including Culture Night activities in Rathdowney and Portarlinton and the Global Solidarity Run on 19<sup>th</sup> October last, in conjunction with Vicarstown Parkrun.



## PLANNING

### Local Area Plans

#### Graiguecullen/Carlow

- The Graiguecullen/Carlow Joint Urban Area Plan (JULAP) 2024 – 2030 has been completed and was adopted by Laois County Council on the 29<sup>th</sup> July 2024 and by Carlow County Council on the 30<sup>th</sup> July 2024 respectively.
- It came into effect on 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> September 2024 respectively.

#### Portlaoise

- The Draft Portlaoise Local Area Plan 2024 – 2030 has been prepared. The Chief Executives Report, on the submissions received following public consultation, was considered at a Special Meeting on the 10<sup>th</sup> September 2024.
- Preparation of the Chief Executives report on the submissions received [9 no.] at Material Alterations of the draft LAP is underway. This will be issued to the Members for their considerations and for statutory decision at the December 2024 Monthly Meeting.

#### Portarlinton

- Preparation of the draft Portarlinton JLAP 2024-2030 has been completed. The draft Plan is now on public display from 12<sup>th</sup> November through 24 December 2024.

#### Mountmellick

- The draft Mountmellick LAP 2024-2030 is at an advanced stage and likely to be published early 2025.



## Summary of Development Control Statistics

<b>E-Planning Project</b>	82% of the applications received for the period from the 1/1/2024 to the 13/11/2024 have been made online – 693 applications out of a total of 839 applications received during this period		
<b>Planning Applications</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Valid applications from 01/01/2024 – 13/11/2024</b>	<b>Valid applications from 01/01/2023– 13/11/2023</b>
		<b>522</b>	<b>462</b>
Total Number of valid applications received:	522		
Number of decisions made	432		
Invalid applications returned to applicant	321		
Number of applications granted:	451 (Decisions to Grant)		
Number of applications refused:	17 (Decisions to Refuse) 3.9% refusal rate		
No of appeals to ABP	17		
<b>PRE-PLANNING</b>			
No of requests to date	315		
No of meetings held to date	291		
Wait time	1 - 2 Weeks		

## Summary regarding Planning Enforcement

<u>Current year</u>	<u>2024</u>		<u>2023</u>	
	<u>Oct</u>	<u>Jan - Oct</u>	<u>Oct</u>	<u>Jan - Oct</u>
<b>Total number of new cases subject to complaints that were investigated</b>	14	119	6	129
<b>Number of Warning Letters served</b>	13	309	41	367
<b>Number of Enforcement Notices served</b>	17	118	1	88
<b>No of cases referred for legal proceedings</b>	0	3	5	16
<b>Number of cases in Court(incl adjournments)</b>	2	44	8	56
<b>Number of cases Resolved in Court</b>	0	10	0	11
<b>Number of Files Closed</b>	16	93	38	127
<b>Number of cases on system</b>	168	168	143	143
<b>Enforcement Costs recouped</b>	€ 1,882.00	€ 7,467.84	€ 1,517.93	€9,237.90
<b>Number of Valid Retention Applications Received relating to Enforcement Action</b>	7	25	4	32
<b>Fees received through Valid Retention Applications Received relating to Enforcement Action</b>	€20,944.20	€30,091.46	€4,324.80	€45,010.31
<b>Legal fees paid</b>	€0.00	€4,153.48	€27.06	€15,635.54

## 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.

### MIDLAND ICT CLUSTER AND STEM OFFICER

The Launch of the Just Transition Fund was held at The Cube on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> October. The Fund was launched by Minister Eamonn Ryan – Transport, Environment, Climate and Communications and Minister Peter Burke – Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

Funded by the Just Transition Fund, 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 Regional Enterprise Plan, including the Midland Pathway to a Net-Zero Economy, Midlands Ireland Placemaking Programme and the Midlands Ireland Regional Food and Drink Strategy.

In parallel, in addition to supporting economic development and having regard to the Just Transition Fund's heavy emphasis towards education and future skills, a Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM) Officer position has also been filled in each of the Midlands Local Authorities. This will enable expansion of award-winning regional STEM education programmes, such as Dream Space and VEX Robotics, to over 280 Primary and Secondary Schools across the region. The programme will also support investment in digitalisation and equipment for schools.



# HERITAGE

## 1. Laois Heritage Office General Updates:

- **WWI Remembrance Event**

The Heritage Officer supported IUNVA (Irish United Nations Veteran's Association) to hold the annual WWI Remembrance Event in Portlaoise on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> November.



## 2. Heritage Grants Update:

### **JUST TRANSITION – Conservation and Pollination**

- This 3-year project based on the conservation of six medieval churches in Laois and Offaly is now complete. The final recoupment claim was submitted on the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024. A video documenting the project will be shown at the Laois Heritage Seminar on the 7<sup>th</sup> December (details below).

### **CONSERVATION GRANTS: [Historic Structures Fund (HSF) & Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS)]**

- 2024 projects completed and recoupment claims sent to the department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

### **COMMUNITY MONUMENT FUND**

- All projects on schedule for completion.





**Before and after images from Clonkeen Church and Graveyard, Abbeyelix, one of the recently completed 2024 CMF (Community Monuments Fund) Projects.**

### **3. Heritage Office Upcoming Events:**

#### **Annual Laois Heritage Seminar**

This annual Laois Heritage Seminar will take place on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> December in the Midlands Park Hotel from 10:00 – 12:30. It will include an overview of projects and activities undertaken by the Heritage Office in 2024 with a number of talks from people and groups involved in these projects.

## Arts

### Public Art Programme Coordinator

Vincent O'Shea was recently appointed as Percent for Art Programme Coordinator in respect of new housing schemes in Rathdowney and Errill. This will be a two-stage commission process, which will involve creating a long-list of collaborative artists who will be shortlisted by a selection panel. A community engaged approach is proposed, with a focus on artists who will work with communities in Rathdowney and Errill.

### Finscéal Exhibition



The Laois Arthouse, Stradbally, Co Laois, presented the exhibition, *Finscéal – The legend of St. Brigid in words and images* (4 Nov – 28 Nov) bringing together a collection of artworks and performance from local, national, and international artists. The exhibition emerged from an art class in Stradbally with tutor and curator, Orla Mc Donagh.

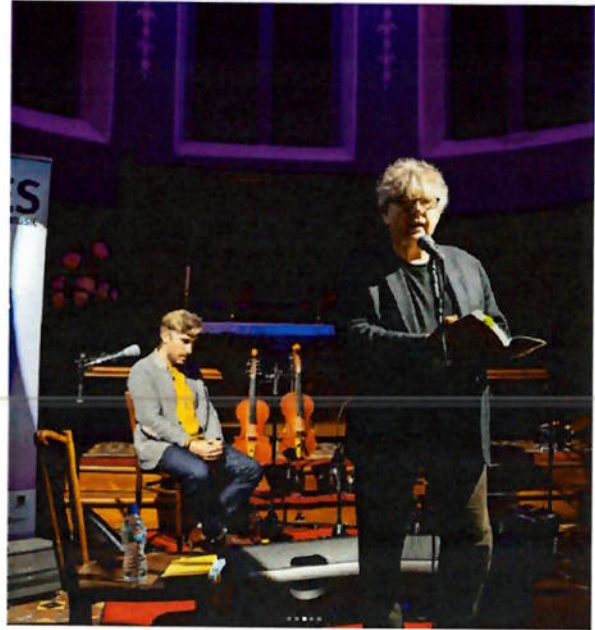
The exhibition also included three illustrated poetry books by 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> Class students from Ballyfin N.S, who worked with poet Ann Egan through the Laois Arts Artist in Residence scheme 2024,



Leaves Festival, the annual celebration of writing and music, each November, run by the Laois Arts Office, Laois County Library Service and Laois Chamber / Tourism, took place in venues throughout County Laois from 6 - 9 November, and involved a programme of **20 events including: readings, workshops, films, panel discussions and live music.**

The festival highlight was an evening of poetry and music featured Pulitzer and T.S. Eliot prize winning poet **Paul Muldoon**, master fiddle player **Caoimhín Ó'Raghallaigh** and the legendary accordionist **Brendan Begley** at **St. Peter's Church of Ireland**.

Author **Kevin Curran**, whose book *Youth* was chosen for **One County One Book** initiative, facilitated several workshops and talks in various locations around the county including Portlaoise Library, Mountmellick Library, the Dunamaise Arts Centre and the Midlands Prison engaging with adult and second level student audiences.



Other events included a screening of **Alan Gilsenan's** recently released documentary on Paul Muldoon, **Laoithe is Lirici / A Life in Lyrics**, at Dunamaise Arts Centre; a spoken word event with **Dagogo Hart** and guests Isabel Dwyer and Tanya Bridgman at **Kavanagh's Pub Main St, Portlaoise** and a closing event with novelist **Niall Williams** and musician **Mike Hanrahan** of Stockton's wing fame at **Preston House, Abbeyleix**.



**Measure for Measure Exhibition** An exhibition by Laois Arthouse resident artist Stephanie Deady (2022 – Dec 2024) will open on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> December, with formal opening by Kevin Kavanagh of Kevin Kavanagh Gallery, Dublin.

This exhibition marks the end of Stephanie's residency at the Laois Arthouse which has facilitated Stephanie to produce a new body of work for exhibition nationally and internationally. Stephanie is a native of Co. Laois and a graduate of Limerick School of Art and Design living and working in Limerick.



## Mural, Laois Art House



The *Salmon of Knowledge*, mural which was specially commissioned by Laois Arts from Street Art Link was installed recently on the exterior of Laois Arthouse and Library Stradbally.

The mural depicting the Salmon of Knowledge is by artist SATR and was executed and installed on SATR's behalf by artists Cormac Dillon. This project was funded through Creative Ireland Laois.

## Measure for Measure Exhibition

### Lions Club Peace Poster Exhibition

On Monday 11<sup>th</sup> Nov Laois Arts launched its annual Peace Poster Competition exhibition in conjunction with Laois Lions Club. Eighteen artworks highlighting international peace, by students representing 9 National Schools from around the county, are now on display in County Hall. The exhibition was formally opened by Cathaoirleach Padraig Fleming and Lions Club President Seán Cruise. The competition winner was Abigail Blood, Marlborough National School.



Roadworks Scheme 2024 is at an advanced stage of delivery. The RWS was approved to an overall sum of approximately €30 million. Some of the projects, forming part of the Scheme, are illustrated below.

**Active Travel Scheme, Borris Road, Portlaoise:**



**Active Travel Scheme, Canal Road – Arlington Estate, Portarlinton - Pedestrian/Cycle Link:**





**Triogue Way, Portlaoise:**



**Bus Stop Improvement Schemes – The Swan**





Road resurfacing R430 Carlow Road Abbeyleix



Carpark Surfacing, Ballinakill Swimming Pool





## Road Surfacing Works in Progress at Springhill, Killeshin



## Countywide Replacement and Maintenance of Road Signs





**Safety Works at Clonaghadoo National School**



**Knocks Bridge Parapet Wall Repairs**



### Local Enterprise Office Update – November 2024

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:

- €60,000 was approved in grant aid to 4 businesses with potential to create 5 new jobs. Financial grant support is available for clients in the manufacturing or internationally traded services sector through the Feasibility, Priming and Business Expansion Funds.
- Businesswomen from across Laois, Longford, Offaly, and Westmeath recently came together at the Crypt in St Mel's Cathedral, Longford to celebrate National Women's Enterprise Day (NWED). Organised by the Local Enterprise Offices in Laois, Longford, Westmeath and Offaly, over 150 Midlands-based businesswomen attended the midlands event held on Thursday, 17th October.
- 26 businesses were set up to avail of 1-1 mentoring. The LEO Mentor programme has been designed to give clients the benefit of an expert business practitioner's experience. Under this programme, clients are matched with a mentor who can provide both practical and strategic advice to help with decision making.
- 9 training courses were delivered to 127 participants. To assist the small business community in meeting the challenges of the business world, LEOs provide a wide range of high-quality training supports which are tailored to meet specific business requirements. These include start your own business programmes, marketing focused programmes, HR and financial management programmes etc.
- 7 Trading Online Vouchers (TOV's) were approved to bring a total of 26 to date this year. The Trading Online Voucher is a financial incentive to small businesses to develop or enhance their ability to trade online.
- 1 business was approved for Technical Assistance for Micro Exporters (TAME) Export Grants. The 'Technical Assistance for Micro Exporters' grant is available through Local Enterprise Office Laois to help more small businesses develop products and services that will unlock export markets.
- 1 business was approved for the Green for Business programme. Green for Business is a fully funded programme that helps small businesses take the first step towards becoming more sustainable. It provides access to a green consultant who develops a tailored sustainability roadmap for each participating business.
- 1 business received approval for an Energy Efficiency grant. The Energy Efficiency Grant helps small businesses to invest in technologies and equipment with 75% of eligible costs from a minimum grant of €750 to a maximum of €10,000.

### STRADBALLY FAÇADE ENHANCHMENT SCHEME

In 2024, the Business Support Unit launched a new initiative in Stradbally, a façade enhancement painting scheme, open to occupiers of commercial and residential properties. This scheme has been very successful with 25 applications approved including 4 local authority houses. Grant payments are being progressed and the project is now complete.

### GRANTS AND SUPPORTS

The BSU continue to process Grant Schemes such as the Shop Front, Façade Enhancement, Shop Fit-out and Business Incentive Schemes. We have received 28 shop front grant applications so far this year - 24 approved, 3 refused and 1 in progress. We have received 5 applications under the Façade Enhancement Scheme – 4 approved and 1 not proceeding. We have received and approved 3 shop fit out grant applications. We have received 7 applications under the Business Incentive Scheme – 4 approved, 2 in progress and 1 not proceeding. 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	112.94
Feb	123.50	June	131.49	Oct	130.52
Mar	116.11	July	153.27	Nov	
Apr	130.56	Aug	128.82	Dec	
<b>Annual Total</b>			<b>1351.53 Tonnes</b>		

**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 October 2024.

Nature	Number	Nature	Number
Waste Management/Enforcement	546	Air	46
Litter	325	Noise	25
Water	53	Waste Infrastructure	332
<b>Total</b>		<b>1327</b>	

**Table 2 – Environmental Complaint Register**

**b) Litter Fines**

Month	Number	Month	Number	Month	Number
Jan	22	May	12	Sept	12
Feb	3	June	8	Oct	6
Mar	5	July	3	Nov	
Apr	5	Aug	5	Dec	
<b>Annual Total</b>			<b>81</b>		

**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	12.74
Feb	14.84	June	19.14	Oct	17.16
Mar	18.86	July	11.12	Nov	
Apr	13.36	Aug	26.24	Dec	
Total Tonnage			195.76		

**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 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024:

Number of inspection requests received	94
Number of inspection requests that did not qualify for an inspection	10
Number of inspections carried out	76
Number of inspections remaining to be carried out	8
Number of Advisory Notices served	56
Number of inspections carried out that do not require an Advisory Notice and so do not qualify for the grant.	20
Number of Old Advisory Notices inspected and closed off for non-compliant	9
Number of Old Advisory Notices still open	13
Number of Grants Paid to Date	13

**Table 5 – DWWTS Dat**

## 7. Rural Water – Multi Annual Programme 2024 to 2026

Approval for a number of projects under the MARWP 2024-26 has been received from the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage. These projects were approved under the following funding measures;

- Measure A1: Source Protection for Existing Private Group Water Schemes;
- Measure A2: Water Treatment Provision, Improvements and Capital Replacement (existing private group water schemes);
- Measure A3: Amalgamation and/or Rationalisation (existing private group water schemes);
- Measure A6: Taking-in-charge of Group Water Schemes and Group Sewerage Schemes; and
- Measure A7: Community Water Connections and Community Wastewater Connections.

Funding was announced for projects proposed by **Errill GWS, The Heath GWS and Cullohill GWS** under Measures A1, A2, A3, A6 and A7 of the Rural Water Programme 2024-2026. Correspondence has issued to the Group Schemes informing them of the announcement and **€271,296.00** is the total value of the current funding announcement.

A further funding announcement in relation to remaining Measures is awaited.

## 8. Department of Rural and Community Development funding for the Dog Control Support Initiative 2024

Laois County Council were allocated **€58,692** by the Department of Rural and Community Development in November 2024, under the **Dog Control Support Initiative 2024**.

The Council will work with the ISPCA who provide the Dog Warden Service and Dog Pound Services to consider eligible expenditure.

## 9. Laois County Council Laboratory

Laois Co Co Laboratory is an internationally accredited facility under ISO 17025:2017 'General requirements for the competency of testing and calibration laboratories'. There is a statutory inspection of the Laboratory annually by our regulator the Irish National Accreditation Board (INAB) comprising technical experts from the disciplines of both analytical chemistry and microbiology, to ensure our testing activities continually satisfy the requirements of ISO 17025:2017 and that we are producing test results that are both credible and legally defensible.

Following our recent inspection INAB informed us on 25<sup>th</sup> October we continue to retain our accreditation and thus are operating to the highest standards. Since becoming accredited on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2016 the Laboratory has performed satisfactorily in all its annual statutory inspections which is testament to the skills, commitment, professionalism of Laboratory staff and the unrelenting support provided to the Laboratory by Senior Management.



## **10. River Drainage Maintenance Programme 2024**

The following photographs illustrate progress in 2024 in the area of River Drainage Maintenance.

**Mountmellick - Irishtown Bridge/Convent Bridge; removal of vegetation and sediment above water level.**



Irishtown Bridge, Before



Irishtown Bridge, After





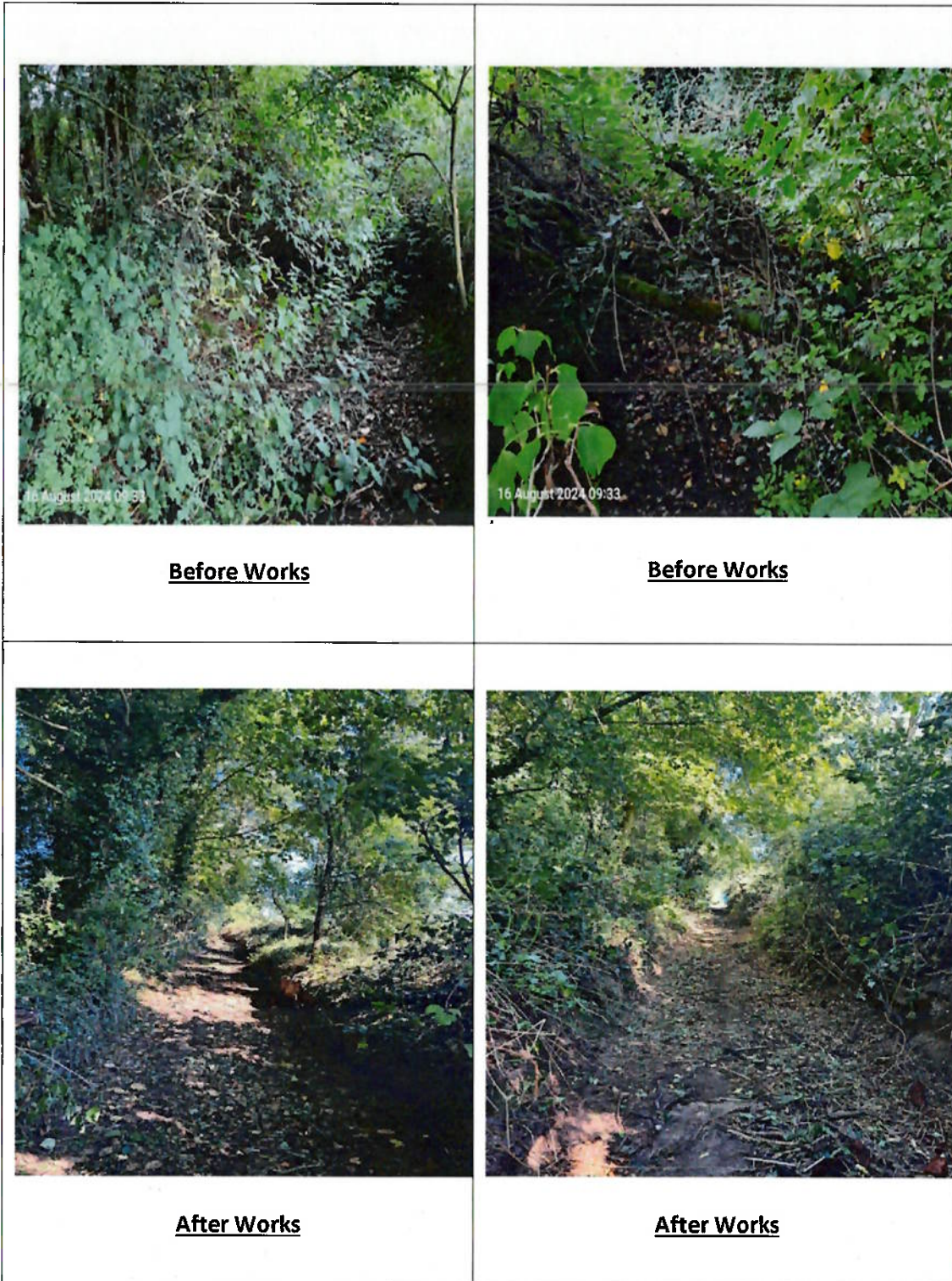
Covent Bridge, Before



Covent Bridge, After



**Mountmellick Drains; removal of vegetation and sediment above water level.**





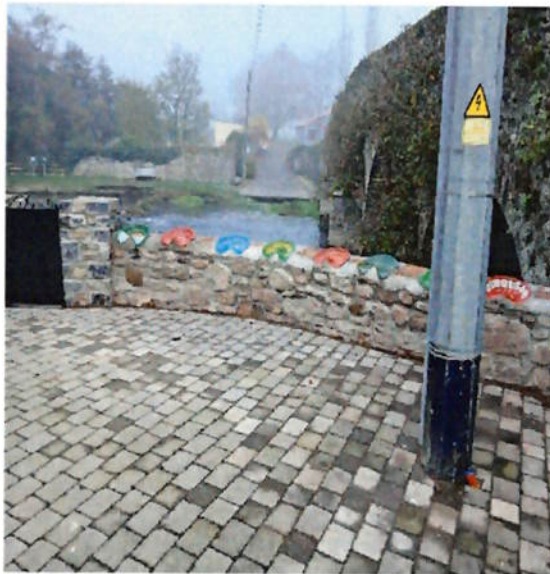
**Repair of Collapsed Wall, Durrow, Co. Laois**



**Before Works**



**Before Works**



**After Works**



**After Works**



**Bridge at N80 Main Street, Stradbally; Vacuum Silt Removal at Stradbally River (N80 Bridge).**



Before



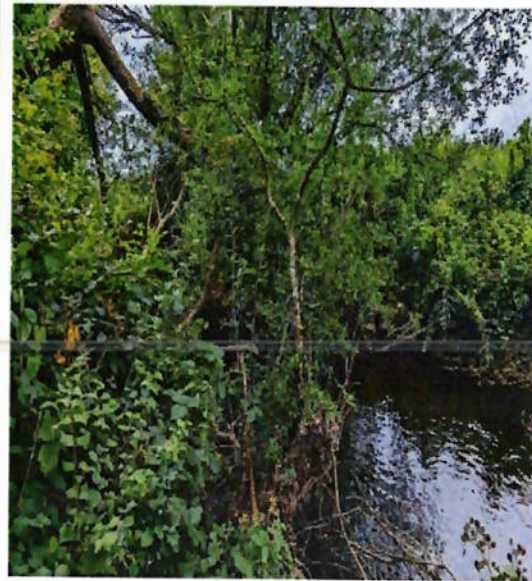
After



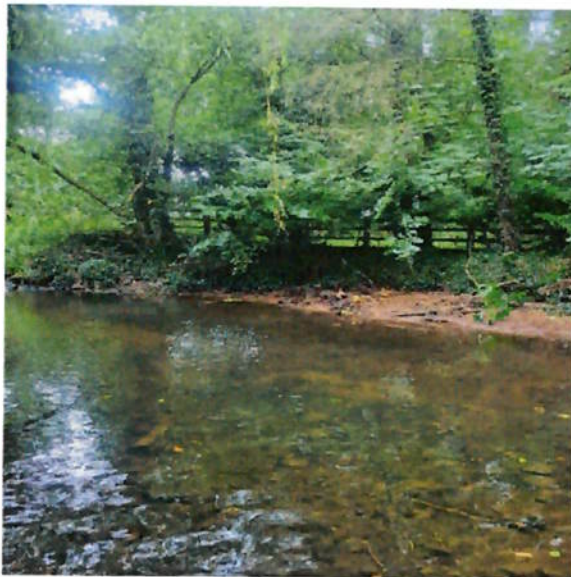
**Whitehorse River, Mountrath; removal of vegetation and sediment above water level.**



**Before Works**



**Before Works**



**After Works**



**After Works**



**Portnahinch Bridge; removal of build up of stone and gravel**



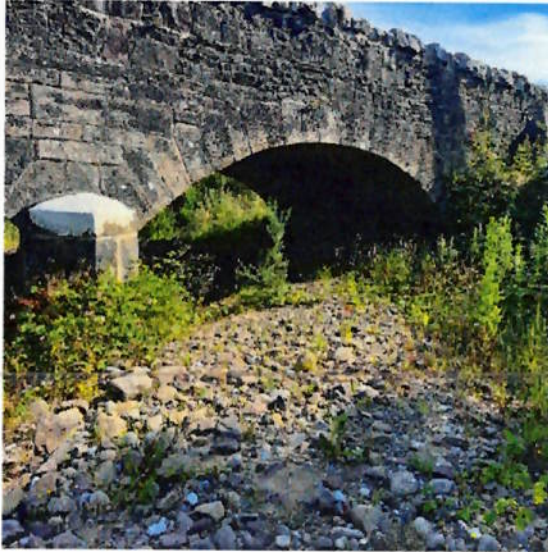
Before



After



**Tinnahinch Bridge; removal of build up of stone and gravel**



**Before Works**



**Before Works**



**After Works**



**After Works**



**Maidenhead Culvert; removal of buildup of stone and gravel**



Before



After



**Glendowns Lake, Portlaoise; removal of build up of silt and vegetation**



Before



After

**OPW Minor Flood Mitigation Works: River Nore, Phase 4, Tinweir to county bounds.** Removal of deadwood/debris and pruning of trees that were causing restrictions on approximately 3.5km of the River Nore in South Laois from the townland of Tinweir off the N77 to Laois County bounds with Kilkenny.

## Emergency Planning and Fire Services

### Fire Service Operations

In 2024, to date, (8<sup>th</sup> Nov) Laois County Fire & Rescue Service attended 655 emergency incidents, consisting of 171 fires, 354 special service incidents and 130 false alarms.

#### **Turnout by Station\*:**

Portlaoise -296	Portarlinton - 123	Stradbally – 127	Mountmellick – 87
Abbeyleix - 71	Mountrath – 83	Durrow – 65	Rathdowney – 57

### Retained Fire Services in Ireland – Recruitment and Rostering

For information, as of 8<sup>th</sup> November 2024, there are 13 permanent vacancies in the Laois retained fire service. This is based on the new compliment of 100 retained firefighters (up from 75) in the 8 fire stations, following the WRC Agreement. Open recruitment is ongoing to recruit more fire-fighters, with 8 applications currently on file.

The WRC Agreement, signed in September 2023, provides for 100 retained Fire Fighters in County Laois. Since the WRC Agreement came into being, 22 retained fire fighters have been recruited, increasing the compliment of retained fire fighters to 87. Rostered operations are now in place in all 8 Fire Stations. There are 13 vacancies still to be filled with 4 applicants in the final stages of recruitment (Garda Vetting, Medical etc.) and a further 8 applicants awaiting interview.

Approximately 12,000 hours of training has been carried out in 2024.

### Fire Prevention & Community Fire Safety

- 110 Fire Safety Certificate applications received to date.
- 474 Fire safety consultations with consultants and member of the public.
- 35 “During Performance Inspections” carried out.
- 21 Fire inspections carried out under the Fire Services Acts 1981 & 2003
- 48 Intoxicating Liquor licences applications processed.
- 82 Fire Safety Certificate search requests processed.



## Civil Defence

### Volunteers

Civil Defence continues to provide ongoing training and upskilling for volunteers. As of 5<sup>th</sup> November 2024, the unit has 52 active volunteers who all meet the Minimum Training Standards of the Department of Defence.

### Activity Report January 1<sup>st</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> November 2024

- 123 Deployments & Events
- 101 Training Events

These included 18 missing person operations, 4 supports to the Ukrainian response, 101 community events.

### Winter Training Programme

The units' winter weekly training programme has started with several courses ongoing at present such as First Aid Response, People Handling, Lifejacket Competence and training of additional instructors in Search Management and Missing Person Search Response. The unit's new headquarters has allowed for the expansion of weekly training sessions with a number of different disciplines running back-to-back each week.

### Volunteers

Recruitment of new volunteers is underway with an induction course planned for November. This recruitment process will aim to increase volunteer numbers to 60 by the end of Q4 2024.

Grant aid has been secured from the Department of Defence for the purchase of new water rescue PPE for several volunteers. This grant has upgraded PPE which has reached End of Life.

### Fleet

The trail use of Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil as a fuel source for our vehicles has been going well. Currently there are 4 Civil Defence vehicles using this fuel with no performance issues to date.

### Finance

The 2024 grant payment has been received from the Department of Defence. The grant allocation for 2024 is €115,000 less deductions of €3,547.24 for Insurance. The total payment received was €111,452.76

The unit is currently receiving an accommodation grant towards the fit out of the new Headquarters building in Portlaoise from the Department of defence which was €30,000 per year over 5 years. The first two years payments have been already drawn down and the Department have now confirmed that the remaining 3 years payments will be paid in 2024 allowing the works to progress sooner. The remaining balance due in 2024 is €90,000.



### **Laois Connects 2024**

This annual health and wellbeing initiative took place from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> October. This year saw events take place throughout the county, run out by our various partners.

Laois Sports Partnership delivered a wide range of events including sequence Dance, Chair Pilates/yoga, Jiving, Wheelchair rugby, All-inclusive fun days, Aqua Aerobics, Boccia/Target games and Vicarstown Parkrun

Laois Volunteer Centre in collaboration with Mountmellick Community School joined forces and plan to hold a community and voluntary Expo for young people from 11am - 2.30pm, on Wednesday, November 20<sup>th</sup> in Mountmellick Community School.

The Dunamase Arts Centre held a number of events including a live podcast of Bressie's "Where is my mind " which featured Dr Eddie Murphy. They also provided a schools movie screening of " The Sparrow " for Transition year students . Director of the movie Michael Kinirons joined the students after the movie for what was a great Q and A session.

The Sport & Leisure team provided Willow weaving and ceramic workshops in a number of libraries along with a leisure cycle and Tai Chi while Laois Libraries provided sound meditation in Portlaoise Library.

The Climate Action team and Age Friendly Laois collaborated to provide a Wellness walk in Emo Court and the HSE worked with GROW and Laois Partnership to provide a three week community education programme around mental health.

The Sing for Joy choir held an event in Portlaoise also and Portlaoise family Resource Centre hosted a mindfulness workshop.

Laois PPN organised a guided walk in Glenbarrow to connect with people and nature. The benefits of walking outdoor activities were highlighted also with listing of all the walking groups that are active in the county.

### **Pride of Place 2024**

Abbeyleix Bog Project won the Pride of Place All-Island Climate Award. This prestigious honour was celebrated at a grand event hosted by Monaghan County Council, highlighting the outstanding impact of the Abbeyleix Bog Project on national environmental efforts.

The judging panel, who visited Abbeyleix Bog on 25th July, were deeply impressed by the quality of the presentation, the immersive bog tour, and the extraordinary spirit of volunteerism evident throughout Abbeyleix.





Abbleix Bog members accepting their award at the All Island Pride of Place Awards

### **2024 Community and Voluntary Awards**

The annual Community and Voluntary awards took place on Friday the 8<sup>th</sup> November in the Midlands Park Hotel. Attended by over 280 people, the event celebrated volunteerism and community groups in Laois. Attendees were treated to a wonderful performance by the young members of Camross Comhaltas group as they arrived at the venue with “Libra” string quartet providing light entertainment during the meal. Justin Treacy, RTE and Emo native proved a brilliant MC as he introduced the nominees and announced the winners and runners up. As ever, the atmosphere was electric and groups and individuals from all over Laois awaited the announcements. The category winners and runners up are as follows.

#### **Arts, Culture and Heritage**

Winner: Irish Steam Preservation Society

Runner Up: Timahoe Male Choir

#### **Sports**

Winner: Laois Labs Flag Football Club

Runner Up: St Abban’s AC

#### **Climate Action**

Winner: Portarlinton Tidy Towns

Runner Up: Rathdowney Men’s Shed

### **Best Kept Residential Estate**

Winner: Droimnin Retirement Village Residents Association

Runner Up: Oakleaf Place Residents Association

### **Health and Wellbeing**

Winner: The Thomas Hayes Trust- Teac Tom

Runner Up: Cuisle Centre, Portlaoise

### **Social Inclusion**

Winner: PATH- Portlaoise Action to Homeless

Runner Up: Electric Picnic Residents Committee

### **Junior Volunteer of the Year**

Winner: Tommy & Sarah Doyle

Runner Up: Saoirse Oxley

### **Unsung Hero**

PJ Phelan





### Make Way Day

On Friday, September 27th, community members came together to celebrate Make Way Day, an initiative aimed at promoting accessibility for people with disabilities. This year's theme, *"The Spirit of the Olympics in Laois,"* embraced the Olympic values of inclusivity, solidarity, and fair play by highlighting the need for accessible public spaces for all.

Healthy Laois hosted a large group of participants in Páirc an Phobail, Portlaoise. The groups undertook an assessment of the Park and provided valuable feedback in addition to learning insights into the accessibility issues faced daily by our citizens in Laois and improving awareness of this.



### Our Shared Plate

Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> October saw a collaborative event led by Laois Partnership, in conjunction with Healthy Laois. This event took place during the Climate Action Week and National Composting Week at the community allotment at O'Moore Place, Portlaoise. This space has bloomed through the green-fingered skill of residents, who have volunteered to restore life to what was once part of a derelict patch of land. The event was very well attended by locals of all ages who shared some of the harvested food and experiences of the resident gardeners, coupled with a tour of the gardens and facilities by the volunteers, a composting workshop and two cooking demonstrations kindly provided by Eunice Burns.



## **Town Centre First & Rural Regeneration**

### **Rathdowney**

The Rathdowney Town Team went on a site visit to view projects in Kildare Town and Naas on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2024. The Town Team were accompanied by the Denise Rainey, TRO and Ken Morley, S.E.E. They met with representatives from Kildare County Council and Town Team members in both Naas and Kildare to view town centre projects – Market Square Kildare Town and Poplar Square Naas- to acquire learnings with advancing similar projects in their own town.

The trip was hugely beneficial for Town Team members and Council officials alike.

### **Mountrath**

The Mountrath Town Team accompanied the Rathdowney Town Team on the site visit mentioned above on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2024. Again, they found the site visit very informative. The Mountrath Town Team have also commenced a programme of capacity building with an experienced trainer to increase their effectiveness as a town team.

### **Mountmellick**

The consultants SLR Consulting Ltd have been appointed to prepare the Town Centre First Plan for Mountmellick. The Consultants had their initial meeting with the Mountmellick Town Team on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> November.

### **Ballylinan**

A new Town Team has been set up in Ballylinan village. 3 meetings have been held to date. The South Eastern Technological University has been appointed to conduct a health check for the Town and work has commenced on same.

## **CLIMATE ACTION AND ENVIRONMENT AWARENESS**

### **Laois Climate Action Festival 2024**

The Laois Climate Action Festival 2024 ran from 6<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> October, featuring 50 free events and effectively showcasing climate action initiatives by Laois County Council alongside contributions from partner organisations, including The Cube, Laois Libraries, PPN, Laois Connects, Laois Chamber Alliance, and Dunamais Theatre. Themes across the festival ranged from food waste reduction and upcycling to the circular economy, biodiversity, sustainable gardening, and climate awareness, engaging the public through hands-on workshops, interactive sessions, and community events.

Key highlights included Applefest Abbeyleix, praised for its family-focused atmosphere and promotion of local produce, and the Farm Hazardous Waste Collection, which drew

significant engagement with 170 farmers participating. Upcycling workshops such as Brat Bhríde Scarf Upcycling and Denim Upcycling emphasized circular economy principles, with attendees appreciating the practical focus and requesting future seasonal themes. Biodiversity and gardening events offered participants valuable skills to apply at home, with positive feedback on their practical, educational content.

One of the highlights of the festival was Colm O'Regan's comedy show Climate Worrier at the Comedy Club at PJ Kavanagh's Pub. A published author of a book of the same



name Colm brought humour to the anxieties surrounding climate change, offering audiences an entertaining yet thoughtful perspective on sustainable living.

The festival closed with the Laois premiere of the documentary Mrs Robinson at Dunamais Theatre. Mary Robinson is one of the foremost advocates internationally for climate justice. This screening was followed by a "Climate Inspirations" panel, featuring Laois climate advocates, including Tom Pople (CEO of BE IMPACTFUL and Climate Cocktail Club founder), Stephen McEvoy, Sarah Bennett (An Taisce Climate Ambassador), and Laura Kirwan (a nutritionist with a PhD in Sustainable Diets who is speaking on this topic at COP29 ).

Each panellist shared personal motivations for climate action, inspiring attendees to engage more deeply with sustainability.

Feedback from festival participants highlighted the engaging formats, practical learning, and strong sense of community throughout. The festival demonstrated Laois County Council's commitment to climate action through collaboration and education, positioning Laois as a proactive leader in sustainable community engagement.

### Over 60s Climate Course



Jacinta Barrins a former UN diplomat is hosting a 6-week climate course starting in November for the Over 60s in Portlaoise. Jacinta created the course with her age group in mind. Jacinta is a passionate advocate for climate conservation. She believes in the urgent need to protect our planet and address the pressing issues of climate change. Her dedication to raising awareness and promoting sustainable practices serves as an inspiration to many. Jacinta's work highlights the importance of taking action now; regardless of age, to preserve our environment for future generations.

### National Tidy Towns Awards

The SuperValu Tidy Towns Awards ceremony, held on 1st November 2024 at Croke Park, celebrated the outstanding achievements of Laois Tidy Towns groups, with 24 communities participating and each group either maintaining or improving their previous results.

Abbeyleix Tidy Towns, last year's national winner, was awarded County First Place and a Gold Medal, underscoring their continued commitment to environmental enhancement and community pride. Durrow Tidy Towns achieved County Second Place with a Silver Medal and the Waters and Communities Special Award for their work preserving local waterways. Portlaoise Tidy Towns took County Third Place and a Gold Medal in their population category, also winning the National Tree Project Award for their greening efforts. Killeshin Tidy Towns received the Endeavour Award for the most significant improvement from the previous year.





## LOCAL AUTHORITY CLIMATE FORUM CONFERENCE- AGENTS FOR CHANGE



On November 5<sup>th</sup> Climate Action Teams from the 31 Local Authorities attended the Agents For Change forum to share initiatives and developments that they could bring back to their own counties, and to take part in a skill and resilience development session. The forum was sponsored by IPB

Insurance and hosted in the Midlands Park Hotel, Portlaoise by Laois County Council.

Suzanne Dempsey, Climate Action Co-ordinator presented to Climate Action Staff from across Ireland on her experience of delivering Portlaoise Low Carbon Town Project as it was designated as a demonstration decarbonising zone in previous National Climate Action Plans.

Dr. Quentin Crowley of Trinity College Dublin highlighted the pilot course Systems Innovation for Sustainable Enterprises and Communities (SISEC), developed in partnership with Laois County Council. Run over three months in early 2024 in Portlaoise. This course brought together 40 participants from 32 organisations from public, private, and voluntary sectors, creating a model of community-based learning that other local authorities expressed interest in adopting.

Vanessa Langford, Marketing Manager at Midlands Park Hotel, shared her experiences as a participant on the SISEC course, particularly applying Systems Thinking from the course to her work and personal sustainability efforts through the hotel's "Champions for Change" Green Team.

Megan Best, CEO of Native Events, spoke about greening festivals, referencing Native Events' work with Laois County Council to develop the "Green Your Festival Kit" for sustainable event management.

## Portlaoise Travel Cluster Project



On November 7th, 50 students and their teachers from six Portlaoise primary schools gathered at the Council Chamber as part of the Portlaoise Travel Cluster Project to discuss creating safer, healthier, and more sustainable school journeys. Facilitated by Green-Schools Travel Officers Michèle Castiaux and Chiara Hanrahan, the forum enabled students to share achievements from the October "Walk to School" week and to plan for upcoming events such as Clean Air Week and the Winter Walk.

Laois County Council is sponsoring the implementation of the Green-Schools Travel theme across ten mainstream schools in Portlaoise, aiming to increase sustainable travel among students. This initiative integrates proven strategies from the national Green-Schools Travel programme, including travel audits, student surveys, educational workshops, and mapping exercises. By promoting walking, cycling, scooting, and the use of public or shared transportation, the program encourages a shift toward active, eco-friendly commuting options. This approach not only fosters healthier habits among students but also reduces local traffic congestion and emissions, supporting broader climate and sustainability goals for Laois.

This project builds on recommendations from the 2020–2021 School Sustainable Travel Study, in Portlaoise funded by Laois County Council. The Portlaoise Travel Cluster Project represents a strategic effort to implement those recommendations, fostering a shift towards active, sustainable school travel in Portlaoise.

## Presentation to Laois TY students for the DREAMBIG programme



Laois County Council are partnering in the DREAMBIG Program in the Midlands and as part of this 26 TY students from Laois secondary schools visited the Council Chamber on 11<sup>th</sup> November to hear from the Climate Action Section of Laois County Council on what is happening and how to get involved in local climate

action.

Through the DREAMBIG program, students gain knowledge, engage in hands-on experience, and are guided in pursuing careers in the Midlands manufacturing sector. The visit to the Chamber offered the group an opportunity to hear from Sam Mc Leod, Environmental Awareness Officer and Karen Moore, Community Climate Action Officer about the climate action and sustainability work that goes on in their local government. The students took part in a workshop to help them find opportunities to apply their interests and skills to climate action.

### Laois Federation Tidy Town Awards

The Laois Federation Tidy Towns Awards 2024 celebrated the remarkable achievements of community groups across the county, recognizing their contributions to environmental sustainability, heritage preservation, and community involvement. Here's a summary of the key winners:

- **Best Streetscape: Ballacolla** – Known for its vibrant floral displays, new notice board, and eco-friendly grass verges that support pollinators.
- **Best Landscaping: Clonaslee** – Impressive approach roads, stone walls along the river, and the beautiful Brittas Woods, with a nod to the town's heritage.
- **Best Floral Display: Durrow** – Stunning year-round floral displays, with Durrow continuing to shine since its 1966 Tidy Towns involvement.
- **Best Heritage Feature: Mountmellick** – Rich in history, especially highlighted through the Mountmellick Embroidery Museum and storytelling by local historian Paddy Buggy.
- **Best Biodiversity Project: Portlaoise** – Outstanding biodiversity efforts, including the planting of 30,000 native trees and the creation of pollinator-friendly environments.
- **Best Community Involvement Project: Stradbally** – A strong sense of community with initiatives like "Adopt a Planter" and biodiversity projects at the Ballymore/N80 junction.
- **Best Newcomer: Rosenallis** – Newly established group making a significant impact, notably in restoring old stone walls and showcasing strong community spirit.



- **Best Litter Control: Borris-in-Ossory** – Exceptional litter control efforts, complemented by a new mural that enhances the town’s appeal.
- **Overall Impression Village: Killeen** – A newly transformed village, turning a former litter black spot into a stunning floral haven.



**Overall Impression Town: Abbeyleix** – Recently crowned Ireland’s Tidiest Town for 2023, Abbeyleix is a model of community spirit, with beautiful streetscapes and an exemplary community garden.

The evening also recognized the collective effort of all 35 Tidy Towns groups in Laois, showcasing their dedication to enhancing the beauty and sustainability of their communities. The event concluded with a heartfelt thank you to all participants, with anticipation for next year’s continued success.

## SPORT AND LEISURE

### Participation Nation Outdoor Fund 2024

Laois Sports Partnership in partnership with Laois County Council have received a funding boost from the new Participation Nation Outdoor Fund and the Community Foundation Ireland Biodiversity Fund. A total of €74,750 has been awarded to install 3 v 3 basketball courts at Páirc an Phobail, outdoor gym equipment at Riverview Apartments, Portlaoise and associated biodiversity works.

### Parks Green Flag Awards

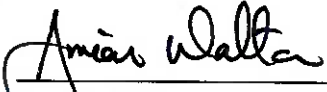
Laois has secured a Green Flag Award, announced on November 8<sup>th</sup> 2024 for Páirc an Phobail and a Community Green Flag Award for Fr Breen Park, Abbeyleix. The People’s Park Portarlinton was not entered into the awards in 2024 due to upgrading works in progress.

### **Portarlinton Playground**

Work has commenced on the refurbishment of Portarlinton Playground by contractors Sole Sports & Leisure, with an estimated completion date of end of December 2024.

### **Chief Executive's Orders**

- ✦ A Schedule of Chief Executive Orders signed during the month of November will be circulated.

  
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Simon Walton  
Interim Chief Executive

20<sup>th</sup> November 2024