

This annual action plan sets out actions for 2022 under the objectives of the Laois Heritage and Biodiversity Strategy. Also highlighted are how actions will be sustained in future years, and how delivery of many actions will be across more than one objective.

Areas of Activity	Objectives
Heritage	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Document Laois heritage and biodiversity and ensure that all partners have access to the data, insights and expert guidance required to inform decision-making and guide future investment.2. Build on investment in conservation and biodiversity undertaken to sustain and enhance key built, natural and cultural heritage assets in Laois.3. Support the work of heritage and biodiversity champions and build the capacity of local communities to conserve, commemorate, and celebrate local heritage and strengthen pride of place4. Promote understanding, appreciation, and dialogue; cultivating a collective responsibility to safeguard the heritage and biodiversity of our county and create a sustainable future5. Work with key partners and policy stakeholders to strengthen their understanding of the value and potential in supporting heritage and biodiversity in Laois6. Enhance the integrated experience of heritage and biodiversity at visited sites, and the connections between heritage places across Laois and further afield, to strengthen our sense of place and reveal our storied landscapes7. Target important heritage and biodiversity milestones, connections, stories or developments to raise national/international awareness and appreciation of our county.8. Scope key resource requirements and target investment from local and national sources for delivery of this plan.

In order to deliver on our aims over the life of the strategy, delivery will be targeted under the eight key action areas as set out below:

1. Research, Data Collection and Best Practice

1.1. Carry out phase II of **Laois Wetland Survey**, with funding from the National Biodiversity Action Plan

In subsequent years, we will continue to build on this project; including delivery on:

- Objective 4 - by promoting awareness of the wetlands of Laois through seminars and public events;

- Objective 6 - -by collaborating with communities to connect wetland and biodiversity hotspots;

1.2. **Publish Conservation Plans** for Dysartgallen, Clopook and Kilmanman Graveyards

In subsequent years, we will continue to build on this project; including delivery on:

- Objective 2 by continuing the investment to conserve, sustain and enhance these sites

1.3. Facilitate **Public Access to all heritage data** for Laois through Heritage Maps project

In subsequent years, we will continue to build on this project; including delivery on:

- Objective 4 by building awareness and understanding of the value of Heritage Maps through targeted training sessions for professionals and communities
- Objective 5 - by ensuring continued submission of all biodiversity data collected for Laois to the National Biodiversity Data Centre

2. **Investment in Key Sites and Programmes**

2.1. Ensure **opening Old St Peter's Graveyard Portlaoise to the public** once conservation works are complete

In subsequent years, we will continue to build on this project; including delivery on:

- Objective 4 Promoting awareness and understanding of the history of Portlaoise through events at Old St Peter's

2.2. Contribute to **interpretation of Fort Protector Portlaoise** through Portlaoise Destination Town Project

In subsequent years, we will continue to build on this project; including delivery on:

- Objective 4 – promoting understanding and engagement with the medieval history of Portlaoise
- Objective 7 – by raising awareness of the medieval 16th century Fort Protector in Ireland and beyond

2.3. Collaborate on project to **create visitor facilities at the Rock of Dunamase**, subject to availability of a suitable site

In subsequent years, we will continue to build on this project; including delivery on:

- Objective 4 - Installation of interpretation for the Rock, once a suitable site is located
- Objective 6 – promoting the built, natural and cultural heritage of the Rock and the wider landscape it is part of

2.4. Carry out **urgent conservation works at Donaghmore Workhouse**

In subsequent years, we will continue to build on this project; including delivery on:

- Objective 6 by using Donaghmore to tell part of the story of the famine to a wider national audience

2.5. Continue **support for James Fintan Lalor Homeplace** at Tinakill House

In subsequent years, we will continue to build on this project; including delivery on:

- Objective 4 Promoting awareness of James Fintan Lalor within Laois
- Objective 6 Developing links with overseas groups with an interest in the site, esp. in relation to Peter Lalor in Australia

3. Investment in People and Community-led Heritage and Biodiversity

3.1. **Work with communities in Clopook, Dysart Gallen and Kilmanman** on the new Laois Offaly Conservation and Pollination project, with funding from the Just Transition Fund.

In subsequent years, we will continue to build on this project; including delivery on:

- Objective 3 – by working with local communities to conserve and develop these sites

3.2. Continue to work with the community at **Timahoe Monastic Site** to manage the landscape and buildings on site, with input from the Town and Village Renewal Scheme.

In subsequent years, we will build on this project. Objectives to be determined in consultation with Laois Heritage Forum, based on initial research

3.3. Contribute to management and delivery of public realm and biodiversity enhancement in **Stradbally**, with Town and Village Renewal Scheme funding

In subsequent years, we will build on this project. Objectives to be determined in consultation with Laois Heritage Forum.

3.4. **Manage ongoing community heritage conservation projects** and other important sites as may arise throughout the year, in partnership with relevant community groups and elected members.

In subsequent years, we will build on these projects. Objectives to be determined in consultation with Laois Heritage Forum, based on initial projects.

4. Engagement and Education

4.1. Plan, promote and deliver a full programme of events for Laois during **Heritage Week, August 2022**, in collaboration with members of the Culture Team and local communities

In subsequent years, we will continue to build on this project; including delivery on:

- Objective 8 – by securing resources for projects and events to be showcased by the wider community
- Objective 2 - by ensuring investment in key heritage sites is maintained and used to make these sites publicly accessible

4.2. Collaborate with Midlands Science, Science Foundation Ireland, Laois Libraries and others to deliver events for **Science Week** that promote understanding of and engagement with the built, natural and cultural heritage of Laois.

In subsequent years, we will continue to build on this project; including delivery on:

- Objective 8 – by securing resources for projects and events to be showcased by the wider community
- Objective 7 - by identifying and promote innovations, science and technology from Laois to a wider audience

4.3. Promote awareness of the importance of biodiversity through the **Nature Podcast planned in partnership with BirdWatch Ireland** and Offaly County Council, and continued promotion of garden biodiversity and the mental health benefits of getting out in nature.

In subsequent years, we will continue to build on this project; including delivery on:

- Objective 1 - by targeting future data collection and research to ensure the biodiversity of the county is recorded
- Objective 5 – by building on public awareness of biodiversity with information on how people can take action for biodiversity

4.4. Provide **advice and support** to local authority staff, Elected Representatives and communities on all aspects of heritage. Assist elected members, LCC staff, communities and individuals in accessing expertise and funding as required to conserve and promote Laois built, natural and cultural Heritage, including Community Heritage Projects through the Heritage Council

In subsequent years, we will continue to build on this project; including delivery on

- Objective 5 - by advocating for conservation and appreciation of Laois and Irish heritage among decision makers
- Objective 8 - by using awareness of the importance of heritage to target resources

4.5. Continue promotion of the benefits of nature, through continuation of the In Your Nature podcast and reprints of the Gardening for Biodiversity booklet, colouring book and Irish edition.

In subsequent years, we will build on this project. Objectives to be determined in consultation with Laois Heritage Forum, based on initial research

5. Policy and Advocacy

5.1. Publish, distribute, promote and implement the **Laois Heritage and Biodiversity Strategy 2021-2026**.

In subsequent years, we will continue to build on this project; including delivery on:

- Objective 4 - by using seminars, workshops, social and traditional media to promote awareness of the strategy and its implementation
- Objective 8 – by using the strategy to leverage additional resources for Laois

5.2. Take an active part in promoting and implementing the **National Heritage Plan Heritage Ireland 2030** (when published).

In subsequent years, we will continue to build on this project; including delivery on:

- Objective 4 – by raising awareness of Heritage Ireland 2030
- Objective 3 – by using the recommendations of Heritage Ireland 2030 to support work with communities on all aspects of heritage

5.3. **Deliver on the local aims of the National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP)** in Laois with the Assistance of NBAP funding.

In subsequent years, we will continue to build on this project; including delivery on:

- Objective 4 – by raising awareness of the aims of the National Biodiversity Action Plan and how it is being delivered in Laois
- Objective 3 – by using the recommendations of the National Biodiversity Action Plan to target resources for biodiversity recording, conservation and promotion

5.4. Contribute to the development of strong heritage **networks** at local and national level through the Laois Heritage Forum and the Local Authority Heritage Officer Network.

In subsequent years, we will continue to build on this project; including delivery on:

- Objective 4 – by raising awareness of the built, natural and cultural heritage of the county via the member organisations of the Heritage Forum
- Objective 7 – by researching and developing projects to champion the heritage of Laois at a wider national level

5.5. Collaborate with Culture Team and Creative Ireland to deliver on the aims of the **Creative Ireland** programme in Laois.

In subsequent years, we will build on this project. Objectives to be determined in consultation with Laois Heritage Forum, based on development of the Culture Team and the Creative Ireland programme as appropriate

5.6. **Collaborate with the Laois County Council Climate Action Team** to deliver on the aims of the Laois Climate Action Plan and relevant Sectoral Adaptation Plans.

In subsequent years, we will build on this project. Objectives to be determined in consultation with Laois Heritage Forum, based on local and national action plans.

6. Place-making and Connecting Landscapes

6.1. Promote the use of Conservation Plans as a way to capture the full public and social value of the heritage of a place to the community that takes care of it, commencing with Conservations Plans for Graveyards at Clopook, Kilmanman and Dysart Gallen, and Fort Protector, all to be published in 2022.

In subsequent years, we will continue to build on this project; including delivery on:

- Objective 4 – by publication and promotion of conservation plans for sites of all types

6.2. **Complete and publish the Guide book to the Rock of Dunamase** (in partnership with Wordwell Books).

In subsequent years, we will continue to build on this project; including delivery on:

- Objective 4 – by promoting awareness of the book and the site through targeted communications work and public talks

7. **Championing Laois**

7.1. Work in Partnership with the Col Fitzmaurice Commemoration Committee to **conserve the Fitzmaurice Archive and to organise the Laois Festival of Flight in April 2022** to celebrate the importance of the story of innovation of the Portlaoise Plane and the Fitzmaurice story.

In subsequent years, we will continue to build on this project; including delivery on:

- Objective 3 – by collaborating with the community to promote awareness of Fitzmaurice and pride in the innovation and aviation history of Laois
- Objective 4 – by organising public engagement events to promote the Fitzmaurice and Portlaoise Plane stories

8. **Targeting Resources**

8.1. Work in partnership with the Heritage Council to **source funds for and deliver the actions** of the Laois Heritage and Biodiversity Strategy while also delivering on key Heritage Council priorities at local level

In subsequent years, we will continue to build on this project; including delivery on:

- Objective 5 – by working to strengthen links between the Heritage Council and the local authority, focusing on delivering on Heritage Council priorities at local level

8.2. **Manage the operation of Community Monuments Fund** in Laois, depending on funding from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, working with communities to secure conservation, interpretation and planning for management of archaeological monuments in their area.

In subsequent years, we will continue to build on this project; including delivery on:

- Objective 3 – by supporting the work of communities (both geographic and communities of interest) in sourcing funding for the development of community archaeological projects in the county
- Objective 4 – by raising awareness and building capacity among groups who have not availed of Community Monuments funding to date, through targeted training

8.3. Assist communities and groups in Laois in developing projects and sourcing funding through mechanisms such as the **Heritage Council Community Heritage Grants Scheme**

In subsequent years, we will continue to build on this project; including delivery on:

- Objective 3 – by supporting the work of communities (both geographic and communities of interest) in sourcing funding for the development of community archaeological projects in the county
- Objective 4 – by raising awareness and building capacity among groups who have not availed of Community Monuments funding to date, through targeted training