



Comhairle Chontae Laoise
Laois County Council

**Tuarascáil Bhliantúil
Annual Report
2019**

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JOINT ADDRESS BY THE CATHAOIRLEACH AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE

We are very pleased to present Laois County Council's 2019 Annual Report which outlines the achievements and activities of the Council during the year.

As Cathaoirleach and Chief Executive, we are committed to ensuring that Laois County Council remain focused on service delivery responsibilities and the overall objective of enhancing the quality of life for the people of Laois.

2019 was a year of change for Laois County Council with a new Council taking office in June 2019 following the Local Elections.

The formation of a new Council is a new opportunity to review and plan. In accordance with statutory requirements, a new Corporate Plan 2019-2024 was adopted by the Council in December 2019 and this plan outlines our strategic objectives and provides us with a road map for the next 5 years.

One of the most significant challenges facing Ireland over the coming years is Climate Change. The Laois Climate Change Adaptation Strategy was adopted by Laois County Council in September 2019 and this strategy is the first step in increasing knowledge and understanding of our changing climate and enabling effective responses to the threats posed by climate change. One of the aims in the strategy is to see Portlaoise becoming the first Low Carbon town in Ireland removing the dominance of cars within Portlaoise town centre and addressing the pedestrian experience of the area.

The Council also signed up to the new Climate Action Charter which sets out the direction for local authorities in a bid to tackle climate change. The Council will be required to deliver a 50% improvement in energy efficiency over the next 10 years and ensure all suppliers provide information on their carbon footprint along with steps they plan to take to reduce its impact.

Laois County Council's Business Support Unit working alongside the Local Enterprise Office continued to promote Laois as a place to do business; supporting local businesses and focusing on job creation. LEO plays a key role in supporting entrepreneurship and enterprise development with a total of €358,091 in developmental grant aid, trading online vouchers and technical assistance for micro export grants being approved for 53 businesses in 2019.

2019 was very positive for job creation in the county. The past year witnessed further progress at our land bank at Junction J17, National Enterprise Park, at the IDA Business Park on the Mountrath Road, in the hotel and catering business and in Portarlington and at Knockaroo, Borris in Ossory. These developments together bring the prospect of 350 jobs to our county.

Further progress was made on the delivery of our public housing programme which included the delivery of 95 units under Rebuilding Ireland which exceeded our given target of 86 for the year. We continue to have a very strong pipeline into 2020.

A large number of road maintenance and improvement schemes were carried out during 2019 including the linking of the Abbeyleix Road to the Timahoe Road (Portlaoise Southern Cross Route) that was opened to traffic in November 2019. Works also commenced on the N80 Maidenhead realignment scheme.

Tidy Towns also recorded a successful year for Abbeyleix, Portlaoise, Ballinakill, Ballacolla and Castletown

Finally, we would like to thank the elected members and the staff of Laois County Council for their ongoing co-operation and support and their commitment to serve the people of County Laois.



MISSION STATEMENT

"The Council will lead the sustainable economic, social, cultural and community development of our County and deliver quality public services to the communities we serve"

Mandate

Laois County Council is the Primary Democratically Elected Authority in County Laois which provides an extensive and diverse range of services that impact upon the county's economic, social, environmental, infrastructural, industrial, tourism, and cultural activities. These services include the provision and maintenance of houses, roads, planning and economic development, waste management, environmental protection, recreational activities, libraries, cultural and community development, including recreation and sport. Laois County Council act as agents for the delivery of water and waste water services. The Council is serviced by a large workforce, including the Chief Executive, professional, technical, legal, administrative, financial and outdoor employees.

Council Membership

Laois County Council consists of 19 Elected Members - six members each from the Borris-in-Ossory-Mountmellick and Graiguecullen-Portarlington Municipal Districts and seven members from the Portlaoise Municipal District.



Elected Members with the Chief Executive at Laois County Council AGM in June, 2019

Council Meetings

Council Meetings in 2019 were usually held on the last Monday of each month in the Council Chamber at Áras an Chontae. There were seventeen meetings held in 2019 with no meeting held in August.

Corporate Policy Group (C.P.G.)

The Corporate Policy Group is designed to enhance the democratic mandate and policy making role of the elected members. The C.P.G. is supported by the Chief Executive and comprises the Cathaoirleach of the Council and the four Chairs of the Strategic Policy Committees (S.P.C.'s) together with the Cathaoirleach of the Graiguecullen/Portarlington Municipal District. The main function of the C.P.G. is to co-ordinate the work of the different S.P.C.'s and provide a forum where policy decisions affecting the whole Council are agreed for submission to the full Council for decision. The C.P.G. met on 12 occasions in 2019.

Municipal Districts

The following are the details in relation to the number of Municipal District Meetings held in 2019:

Borris-in-Ossory/Mountmellick Municipal District - 11 meetings
Graiguecullen/Portarlington Municipal District - 10 meetings
Portlaoise Municipal District - 13 meetings

MEMBERS OF LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL

MEMBERS OF BORRIS IN OSSORY-MOUNTMELICK MUNICIPAL DISTRICT



Patrick
Bracken
(F.F.)



John
King
(F.G.)



Oliver
Clooney
(F.G.)



Conor
Bergin
(F.G.)



Seamus
McDonald
(F.F.)



James
Kelly
(Non Party)

MEMBERS OF PORTLAOISE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT



Mary
Sweeney
(F.G.)



John Joe
Fennelly
(F.F.)



William
Aird
(F.G.)



Noel
Tuohy
(Labour)



Catherine
Fitzgerald
(F.F.)



Caroline
Dwane Stanley
(S.F.)



Thomasina
Connell
(F.G.)

MEMBERS OF PORTARLINGTON-GRAIGUECULLEN MUNICIPAL DISTRICT



Tom
Mulhall
(F.G.)



Aisling
Moran
(F.G.)



Padraig
Fleming
(F.F.)



Ben
Brennan
(Non Party)



Aidan
Mullins
(S.F.)



Paschal
McEvoy
(F.F.)

Director of Services: Donal Brennan

CORPORATE AFFAIRS/HUMAN RESOURCES

A/Senior Executive Officer

**Human Resources/
Corporate Affairs:**

Evelyn Brownrigg

Corporate Plan

Laois County Council's Corporate Plan 2019 – 2024 was adopted by the Members of the Council in November, 2019.

The Corporate Plan provides the framework for the implementation of a coherent strategy for the development of the county for the period 2019-2024 and was prepared following consultation with employees, elected representatives, community, voluntary and environmental interests, external stakeholders and other public bodies operating at local level.

Customer Charter

Laois County Council's Customer Charter sets out the way in which the Council endeavours to deal with its customers. The document is on display in all public Council Offices and on our website at www.laois.ie. This Charter includes a commitment to equality in service provision and a recognition of the diverse nature of the community we serve. The Charter also includes a Customer Complaints Procedure which may be availed of by any person not satisfied with the quality of service received.

Highlights

- 17th January 2019 Cathaoirleach's Reception in honour of Durrow Development Forum
- 13th February 2019 Civic Reception in honour of Tom Treacy



- 28th February 2019 Cathaoirleach's Reception in honour of The Ossory Show Society



- 21st March 2019 Cathaoirleach's Reception in honour of the Stradbally Community Games, Irish Dancers



- 3rd October 2019 -Civic Reception in honour of Portlaoise Musical Society



The total cost of the above was €4,609.70

Irish Language Scheme

Laois Local Authorities Irish Language Scheme was confirmed by the Minister for Community Rural and

CORPORATE AFFAIRS, HR, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, IT & CLIMATE ACTION

Gaeltacht Affairs and came into effect on 1st December, 2009. The scheme is available to view on our website, www.laois.ie. A new scheme is being prepared.

Laois Local Authorities recognise that our customers have the right to choose to do business with us in their preferred language and they are facilitated in their dealings with us as far as practicable, whether that is through Irish or through English.

If you wish to contact the Council in Irish, please send an e-mail to gaeilge@laoiscoco.ie.

Annual Service Delivery Plan

The Members at their meeting of the Council held on the 28th of January 2019 adopted the Annual Service Delivery Plan for 2019. The implementation of the Plan will be reviewed early in 2020 as part of the process of developing the 2020 Plan. The performance of the Council in relation to the performance indicators as specified by NOAC will also be taken into account.

Partnership

The following were the members of the Workplace Partnership Committee as at 31st December, 2019.

Management Nominees

Kieran Kehoe
(Joint Chair)
Michael Rainey
Bernie Foran
Michael O'Hora
Susan Grant

Union Nominees

Anne Marie Maher
(Joint Chair)
Rosa Bray
Deirdre Alexander
Tom O'Carroll
Edmond Kenny

The Partnership Committee held 2 meetings during 2019.

Freedom of Information (F.O.I.)

The Freedom of Information Act 2014 was enacted on 14 October 2014. It introduced significant changes to the Freedom of Information regime repealing and replacing the Freedom of Information Acts 1997 and 2003 and expanding the scope of FOI to a number of further bodies. It also consolidated, modernised and updated the legislation generally.

Applications received/processed in 2019

Applications on hand at 31st Dec. 2018	2
Applications received in 2019	114
Decisions taken during 2019	106
Applications not continued with	8

Applications dealt with outside of FOI	0
Applications on hand at 31st Dec. 2019	10

Nature of Information sought

Personal (to applicant)	24
Non personal	90
Mixed	0

Appeals

There were 3 appeals to the Information Commissioner in 2019.

Source of Requests

General Public, Solicitors & Others	70
Journalists	44

Performance Indicators

Section 126c of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 sets out the functions of the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) which includes examination of the performance of local government bodies against thirty two indicators.

The report in respect of 2018 was published by NOAC in September 2019.

Laois County Council's performance in each area in 2018 is included in this report in each of the relevant sections.

Reporting of Protected Disclosures

No disclosures were received by the Designated Officer for Protected Disclosures during 2019.

CORPORATE AFFAIRS, HR, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, IT & CLIMATE ACTION

Register of Electors 2020/2021

Dáil Constituency	Presidential Electors	Dáil Electors
Laois-Offaly	53,319	54,086
Kildare South	5,893	5,994
Total	59,212	60,080

European Parliament Constituency	European Electors	Potential European Electors
South	60,807	814

Local Electoral Areas	Number of Electors
Borris In Ossory - Mountmellick	20,618
Graiguecullen - Portarlington	20,562
Portlaoise	<u>21,871</u>
Total:	63,051

Postal and Special Voters

Gardaí	Kildare South	0
	Laois-Offaly	0
Defence Forces	Kildare South	50
	Laois -Offaly	175
Diplomats	Kildare South	2
	Laois-Offaly	3
Physically Disabled	Kildare South	0
	Laois-Offaly	20
Occupation	Kildare South	0
	Laois Offaly	1
Special Voters	Kildare South	0
	Laois-Offaly	15

HUMAN RESOURCES

Recruitment Statistics

A total of 530 people were employed by Laois County Council at 31st December 2019.

During 2019 Laois County Council held 46 competitions, in relation to which the following statistics have been extracted:

Total Applications received	546	
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	Male	Female
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Applicants	268	281
Successful Applicants	117	106

Permanent Appointments/Promotions 2019

	Male	Female
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Appointments	27	16
Promotions	24	26

Work Life Balance Initiatives

Laois County Council continued to implement work/life balance initiatives for staff during 2019. At year-end five employees were availing of the Career Break Scheme, 41 employees were availing of the Work Sharing Scheme, 41 employees availed of the Parental Leave Scheme, 40 employees availed of the Shorter Working Year Scheme and 10 employees availed of Unpaid Leave Scheme.

National Performance Indicators

Performance Indicators in this document come from the National Oversight and Audit Commission Report No.22, published in September 2019, which refers to 2018, as this is the most recent data set available.

In relation to the national performance indicator on the number of working days lost to certified and uncertified illness the following statistics apply.

Total no of wholetime equivalents (WTE) staff at 31/12/2019	422.78
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Certified	3.88%
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Uncertified	0.39%
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The national target for absences on certified and uncertified illness leave is set at 3.5%.

Industrial Relations

Laois County Council continued to maintain good industrial relations during 2019 with no major disputes arising. The Council continues to operate in accordance with the Public Service Agreements in consultation with the relevant Unions.

Employee Training and Development

Laois County Council is committed to the training and development of all our employees in the context of securing the goals and objectives of the council and the skills development of employees. Laois County Council is committed to continuous improvement in service delivery through the personal development of its employees.

The annual training programme is primarily based on the training needs identified through staff Team Development Plans and Personal Development Plans as part of the Performance Management Development System process. The Programme also incorporates Health & Safety requirements, National FETAC programmes, third level open learning programmes and business related seminars/workshops as they arise.

Total expenditure on training was €471,796 (inclusive of expenditure for Fire Services). A comprehensive training programme was delivered throughout 2019. A sample of the training programmes provided is as follows:-

- Safepass
- Confined Spaces (High Risk)
- Confined Spaces (Medium Risk)
- Manual Handling
- Location of Underground Services
- Sharps Training
- Legionella Awareness
- Certificate in Road Management Programme
- Chlorine Handling
- Roads Services Supervisor Training
- 3600 Excavator Training
- Pesticides Training
- Road Opening and Reinstatement
- Driver CPC Training
- First Aid Refresher
- Defibrillator Training
- Load Security
- Signing, Lighting and Guarding
- Lawnmower/Strimmer Training
- Forklift Training
- Line Manager Training
- Mini Digger Training
- Environmental Noise Monitoring Training

Open Learning Programme

Laois County Council will try, subject to available resources, to facilitate and support employees wishing to pursue third level open learning courses that are relevant to and contribute to the business development of both the council and the employee's role and responsibilities. A number of the open learning programmes where facilitated during 2019 as follows:-

- Certificate/Diploma in Local Government with the IPA
- Leadership in Local Government with the IPA
- Introduction to CAD with Carlow IT
- IPASS Certificate in Payroll Techniques
- Certificate in Building Control Management with Carlow IT
- Certificate in Public Procurement with the IPA
- Degree in Business Management with Carlow IT
- BA Business with Athlone IT

Staff Policies

In line with best practice in Human Resource management, the Council has developed a suite of HR staff policies of which the following were introduced or revised during 2019:

- Induction Policy
- Work-sharing Scheme for local authority employees

Equality and Supporting Diversity

Laois County Council is an equal opportunity employer and is committed to a broad range of policies, practices and procedures which aim to recognise individual contribution and performance, develop each individual's capability and give everyone an equal opportunity to use his/her talent and realise his/her potential.

INFORMATION COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

Head of Information Systems:

Pat Grassick

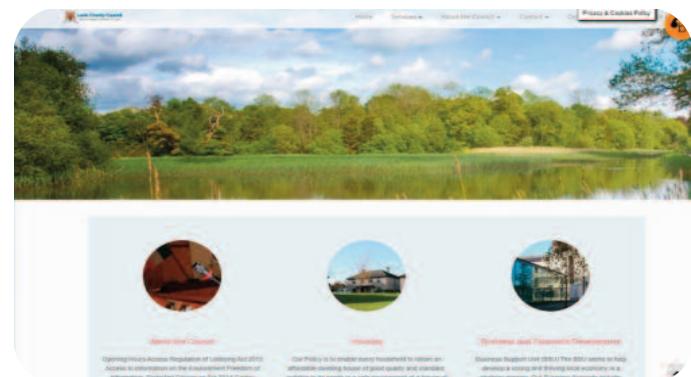
The Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Department comprises 10 staff members and manages the Council's ICT infrastructure, software systems and websites. This includes the server Datacenter, desktop and laptop computers, mobile phones and the wired and wireless network communication equipment in County Hall, Area Offices, Libraries and other Council locations throughout the county.

The ICT Department provides technical support to all other Council sections and to the members of Laois County Council and is responsible for the implementation, maintenance, management and security of the Council's ICT systems. In excess of 5,500 technical support calls were handled by ICT support staff in 2019, demonstrating the value of ICT support in the delivery of services by the Council.

The ICT Department is committed to a policy of continuous improvement of ICT services, both within the Council itself and to the public who avail of the Council's services.

Council Website - Laois.ie

The Council website provides a source of information and news items relating to Council activities. In 2019 over half a million views were counted on the Laois.ie website. Planning again proved to be the most popular area for users of our website with close to 7,000 page views per month on planning related content. Job Vacancies, Housing and Library services also proved popular pages for visitors.



A redesign of the Connect2Laois website was completed in partnership with the Business Support Unit of the Council to refresh the main page and add con-

tent to highlight the investment opportunities in Laois.

Local Elections

ICT support was provided in preparation for and throughout the Local Elections via the Register of Electors and the eCount system. The provision of ICT equipment and accounts to the incoming elected representatives was also undertaken.

Systems Upgrades

ICT completed the upgrade the key Housing and Planning systems to the latest versions. This is a significant step forward and future proofs the Council in the provision of services to the public in these key areas. Further system upgrades were completed to move from legacy operating system versions which had gone end of life.

An upgrade program on laptop devices was completed to ensure compliance with security policies. The upgrade of the uninterruptible power supply in our main server room was undertaken to protect the ICT provision of services in the event of a mains power failure.

Domain Migration

In 2019 the ICT staff undertook the migration of all user accounts, servers and services, previously managed from the centralised local government domain, to a newly constructed local domain. The local domain will now manage the access to the Council data and authenticate users locally.

ICT Security

The area of cyber security is constantly evolving and advancement in this area continued in 2019. A mobile device management system was rolled out to protect data stored on and accessible from mobile devices. This will provide a secure basis for the further mobilisation and digitisation of services in 2020.

**Arts, Culture, Community & Climate Action
Strategic Policy Committee**

Director of Services: Donal Brennan

Chair: John King, M.C.C.

Members **Sectoral**

Padraig Fleming, M.C.C.	Ruth Sullivan (PPN, Community/Voluntary)
Tom Mulhall, M.C.C.	Bobby Delaney (PPN, Environment)
James Kelly, M.C.C.	Donald Scully (Agriculture Farming Pillar)
Oliver Clooney, M.C.C.	Michael Gorman (PPN Social Inclusion) Ann Fingleton (PPN Business/Commercial)

LAOIS LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (LCDC)



Laois Local Community Development Committee was established in September 2014 for the purposes of developing, co-ordinating and improving a coherent and strategic approach to Local Community Development.

The Local Community Development Committee comprises representatives of both public and private sectors and has primary responsibility for co-ordinating, planning and overseeing local & community development in the County.

The LCDC oversees the implementation of:

- Social Inclusion Community Action Programme (SICAP)
- Community objectives in the Local Economic & Community Plan
- Implementation of the Laois Local Development Strategy operated under the LEADER Programme 2014 - 2020 in partnership with the local authority (financial partner) and local development company (implementing

partner).

- SICAP Programme 2018-2022 – Laois Partnership Company are the implementing partner.
- Healthy Ireland - Strand 3 Round 1 Grant in the sum of €246,050 received from the Department of Health for the period 1st July 2019 to 30th June 2021.
- Laois LCDC approved funding in respect of 90 applicants totalling €145,686.00 in respect of the Department of Rural & Community Development Community Enhancement Programme in 2019. This included funding for 5 mens sheds.
- The LEADER Programme 2014 – 2020 enables rural communities and partners to actively engage and direct the local development of their area. Almost €8m of LEADER funding will be invested in innovative community and private enterprise projects throughout Laois. Laois Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) has responsibility for the delivery of the Programme. The key Implementation Partner (IP) is Laois Partnership Company (LPC). There were 35 projects approved by the LAG during 2019.

LAOIS PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORK



2019 was another successful year for the Laois Public Participation Network with membership of the network rising to 549 by year end. In addition to the PPN Resource Worker, Laois PPN were delighted to secure the appointment of a PPN Support Worker in August 2019. This was made possible by the continued support of the Department of Rural & Community Development and Laois County Council.

Laois PPN's Disability Special Interest Group held an "Access for All" Disability Workshop which resulted in a comprehensive report being created and submitted on behalf of those present. Work with this group is ongoing with a number of events planned for 2020. In quick succession Laois PPN held their annual Funding & Resources Workshop in the Midlands Park Hotel, with 180 members in attendance, this being one of their biggest events on the 2019 calendar.

In 2019 Laois PPN participated in over 90 scheduled events/meetings/training. Laois PPN collaborated with other PPN's from the Midlands Area to delivery on cross-county projects including the very successful Environmental Showcase Event. Laois PPN was also afforded the opportunity to make a number of submissions during the year all of which are available to be viewed on the PPN website. Some of the activities undertaken by Laois PPN in 2019 include:

- CPR Training
- SPC Consultation
- Irish Sign Language Training (ISL)
- Disability Consultation
- Monthly Secretariat Meetings
- Funding Workshops in each MD
- Secretariat & Representative Elections
- Laois CONNECTS

LAOIS COMMUNITY & VOLUNTARY AWARDS 2019

The heroes of local communities across the County were celebrated by Laois County Council in association with Laois Public Participation Network, sponsored by People First Credit Union for the 10th Anniversary Gala Community and Voluntary Awards. The Awards are hosted to recognise the tremendous contribution made by community and voluntary groups to life in County Laois.

All nominees were recognised as having made a significant difference within and beyond their local community, through giving of their time, co-operation, their imagination and hard work to achieve rewards of successful clubs, events and fundraising within the community. Each group and individual was congratulated on the night and presented with a certificate acknowledging their contribution to community and voluntary effort in Laois.

All group winners received €500 and a trophy, while group runners up received €250. The Winner of the Unsung Hero received a trophy and a voucher for €100.

List of Prize Winners

ENVIRONMENT CATEGORY

WINNER:	People's Park Campus Management Committee
Runner Up:	Cottage Market Sub Committee 2 Mountrath Community Forum

CHILDREN & YOUTH CATEGORY

WINNER:	Mountrath Scout Group
Runner Up:	Portlaoise LGFA

ARTS, CULTURE & HERITAGE

WINNER:	Mountmellick Embroidery Museum Committee
Runner Up:	Yarn Bombing Mountmellick

HEALTHY & ACTIVE CATEGORY

WINNER:	Laochra Laois
Runner Up:	Laois Defibrillator

SOCIAL INCLUSION CATEGORY

WINNER:	Down Syndrome Ireland Laois Branch
Runner Up:	Vicarstown Youth Group

AGE FRIENDLY CATEGORY

WINNER:	Borris in Ossory Social Services
Runner up:	Portlaoise Active Retirement

UNSUNG HERO AWARD

WINNER:	Donal O'Shea
Runner up:	Maureen Bradley

Educational Partnership

The Skills at Work programme is run in conjunction with Laois County Council, Portlaoise College and Business in the Community. The programme is aimed at 5th Year Students and aims to encourage school completion as well as the importance of considering third level education as a viable option for all students. This year students visited Laois County Council where employees of the Council discussed their careers and the routes they took to get to where they are today. The Human Resources section of the Council help with CV preparation, Interview Skills training as well as mock interviews. Students also had a site visit to the Fire Station in Portlaoise where they were given a talk by Fire Personnel and a tour of the Fire Station. 27 students from Portlaoise College participated in this programme in 2019. At the end of the programme students participated in a 'Wrap Session' where they told Laois County Council and Busi-

ness in the Community what they enjoyed and what they would like changed in this programme.



National Community Day-The Big Hello!

National Community Day-The Big Hello was held for the first time over the May Bank Holiday weekend, 2019.

The initial funding was allocated from the Department of Rural & Community Development and due to the overwhelming response from community groups throughout the county, the Laois Local Community Development Committee supplemented with additional funding to ensure the maximum amount of community events could benefit from The Big Hello!

The success of this initiative lay in local communities coming together to plan events that work best for their community, for example Family fun/Community days in Camross, Mountrath, Stradbally, The Swan and Ballyroan. The Big Hello! speaks to everyone in an inclusive and open way. From a vintage run to afternoon tea, this allowed a chance for people to foster a sense of helping each other by coming together and building relationships, not just on that day, but all year round.

Laois Comhairle na nÓg

Laois Comhairle na nÓg strives to represent young people in Laois and aims to make their voices heard in a real way among the adult decision makers in our county, allowing the future generation to help to make our county a better place to live, work and visit. Co-ordinated by Foróige, in association with Laois County Council, the 15 young members of Laois Comhairle na nÓg met 14 times in 2019. The Comhairle is tasked with the provision of feedback to the young people across the county and does this in a number of ways, including through its links with the secondary schools, Youthreach, youth groups and at its AGM,

which was held on the 18th November, 2019. The AGM was attended by 93 young people from across Laois. Laois Comhairle were consulted on 4 policies/Strategies/Plans and attended Dáil na nÓg on Saturday 23rd November 2019 which was held in Leinster House in celebration of 100 years of democracy in Ireland and the sitting of the first Dáil.



Laois Africa Day

Laois Africa Day was launched on Tuesday 21st May 2019 in Aras An Chontae. Prior to the main daytime event, there was a screening of the film "Queen of Katwe" in Dunamaise Arts Centre with 350 people in attendance. The Laois African Support Group then made three school visits and met 446 students in total. They gave a talk on African Culture which included children getting to experience African drums with the group who came dressed in traditional African attire. The children were introduced to African music in a very creative active session where they also got to participate in "mini trampolining".



Laois Africa Day was held on Saturday 1st June at Portlaoise Parish Centre with over 750 people in attendance throughout the day. The main stage was host to many different acts with DJ Matt providing African Beats throughout the day along with Gospel Singers, African Dancers, an Irish Dancer and a fashion show with traditional African clothes which were described for the audience. The best dressed com-

petition was very popular with winners in the Best Family, Best Group, Best Male, Best Female and Best Irish Dressed in African Dress. Marquees were in place holding a variety of activities for young and old including henna tattooing, hair braiding, face painting, pottery making, African board games and African Drumming. The food tent proved very popular with a variety of foods on offer from all parts of Africa.

Pride of Place 2019

Laois was represented in the 2019 IPB All Island Pride of Place Competition by Bloom HQ Mountrath. Pride of Place recognises initiatives taken by local communities to create pride in their area and celebrates the vital contribution that community groups make to society.

Bloom HQ Mountrath celebrated their Prize of Special Winner in the Creative Place Initiative category in the annual competition organised by Co-operation Ireland and sponsored by IPB Insurance. The award was received by Martin Meade, Eddie Phelan, Andrea Dearing, Samantha Hayes, Joey Hearns, Ed Dunne and Gina Reidy.

Cohesive Community effort transformed an 1809 disused convent, renovated by locals, into an expressive, colourful, high tech workspace. Imaginative planning created work, training, wellness and community facilities on site and the relationship between them breeds long term sustainability.

Dubbed the 'Oscars of the Community Sector' the Pride of Place awards promotes and celebrates the best in community development and recognises the selfless efforts of people in making their local neighbourhoods better places to live, work and socialise.

The Gala Awards Ceremony was attended by the Chief Executive, John Mulholland and Carmel McNicholl, Senior Executive Officer. The Cathaoirleach was represented on the night by Cllr. James Kelly and representatives from Mountrath Community Forum were also present.



Joint Policing Committee

The County Laois JPC met 3 times in 2019; March, October and November. At the October meeting the members were informed of the formation of a CCTV Federation made up of 13 Community Alert Groups in the County.

Elected Members Fund

The Community Projects (Elected Members) Fund provided financial assistance to 102 groups/organisations county wide via applications recommended by Elected Members in 2019.

COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS/SOCIAL INCLUSION

Laois County Council partnered with stakeholders in respect of the following projects during 2019:

- Community Coaching Programme
- Laois Sports Partnership Social Inclusion Disability Programme
- Laois Integration Network
- Laois Asylum Migration Integration Service Integration supports for new communities, e.g residents of the Direct Provision Centre at Emo.
- Development of the Laois Integration Strategy led by Laois Partnership

LAOIS CONNECTS

Laois Connects, mental health awareness week, with over 30 free events took place from 6th-13th October 2019. A comprehensive programme available for all ages was on offer throughout the week including a talk by acclaimed author Stella O'Malley, an evening with Boxer Eric Donovan and a workshop for parents of teens. Walks and runs were held across Laois in addition to a Bikeathon for Cycle Against Suicide, Healing Events, Workshops and Discussions.

The programme is coordinated by the Council in association with Laois Sports Partnership, Mental Health Ireland, HSE, Laois Offaly ETB and involved youth and sports representatives from across the County.

Laois Resettlement Interagency Working Group

The first meeting of the Laois Resettlement Interagency Working Group took place on 26th June 2019. Respond Housing were appointed Programme Implementer following a procurement process. A Resettlement Support Worker and Intercultural Worker have

been appointed and the initial families allocated to Laois have now been housed by Cluid Housing. The Program is proving very successful and will conclude in early 2020.

Town & Village Renewal Scheme 2019

During 2019 the Department of Rural and Community Development approved funding of €870,094 for 11 projects in Laois under the Town & Village Renewal Scheme, which were carried out in 2019. A further €437,761.00 was approved by DRCD in 2019 for 5 more projects around the County.

Laois Age Friendly Programme

The Laois Age Friendly Programme is a local implementation of the World Health Organisation Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme.

The programme strives to create an inclusive, equitable society in which older people can live full, active, valued and healthy lives and the programme is guided by the Laois Age Friendly County Strategy 2016 - 2021.

Activities during 2019 included:

- Walkability study in Mountrath
- Community Engagement day with Gardai in Mountmellick
- National Older Peoples Conference in Donegal in May
- Laois Defibrillator Project headed by retired consultant Peter Naughton which has resulted in defibrillators being available 24/7 in many towns across the county.

Healthy Ireland



The Healthy Ireland fund was created by the Department of Health to establish and support the implementation of Healthy Ireland programmes and projects which improve the health and well-being of Ireland over the coming generation. In 2018,

Laois LCDC qualified for €75,000 in funding through Healthy Ireland. This funding was distributed through Laois LCDC to our Action Partners during 2019, for implementation of a range of programmes, targeted at different groups throughout the county. All actions undertaken under the programme are guided by the

Healthy Laois Plan 2018-2020. Activities and projects undertaken through the Healthy Ireland fund Round 2 include:

- A Positive Pathways Programme, created by Youth Work Ireland Laois, aimed at helping young people obtain information on how to enhance their mental health and to have an awareness of relevant services and supports available to them.
- Laois Partnership developed a Healthy Communities programme that was rolled out in two towns in Laois to groups of adults and young people. Participants took part in classes such as zumba, tai chi, self defence, basic first aid and mindfulness. The Integration Unit of Laois Partnership designed and implemented a structured play programme for children of Asylum seekers living in Laois.
- Laois Sports Partnership implemented 3 different actions through Healthy Ireland funding. These included providing cardiac rehab training in collaboration with a local gym, activity sessions for schools throughout Laois, and delivering exercise classes using Nordic poles which give stability to participants thereby including people who may not usually be able to partake in such exercise activities.
- The medium of music was used to bring together young people in Laois with those who are living in direct provision in the county through the Laois Integration Choir and Youth Work Ireland Laois.
- Laois County Council Sports Section delivered an Active Parks Programme which was run across three locations with a different activity every three weeks.

Climate Action

The Laois Climate Change Adaption Strategy was adopted by members of Laois County Council in September 2019. This Strategy is the first step in increasing knowledge and understanding of our changing climate, and enabling effective responses to the threats posed by climate change. Further development of the plan is required in tandem with national plans and policy. It is important to ensure that climate adaptation considerations are mainstreamed into all plans and policies and integrated into all operations and functions of the local authority.



Laois Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024

Portlaoise has secured funding in 2019 for the development of initiatives which will see Portlaoise becoming the first Low Carbon town in Ireland. The aim of the Low Carbon Town is to remove the dominance of cars within the Portlaoise town centre and address the pedestrian experience of the area. The Council will be investing an estimated €2.7million over the next three years to make the Low Carbon Town a reality.

Laois County Council also signed up to the new Climate Action Charter which sets out the direction for local authorities in a bid to tackle climate change. Laois County Council must establish a procedure for “carbon-proofing” major decisions, programmes and projects, including investments in transport and energy infrastructure. The Council will be required to deliver a 50% improvement in energy efficiency over the next 10 years, and ensure all suppliers provide information on their carbon footprint along with steps they plan to take to reduce its impact. This will include deep retrofits of local authority buildings and social housing stock, cycle network plans for all major cities; training for local authority staff; and the roll out of electric vehicle charging networks.



Environmental Awareness & Community Initiatives

Environment Awareness Initiatives continued to be delivered throughout 2019 and saw complementary partnerships continuing to develop. Additional supports (e.g. grants and workshops) were offered to schools and other community groups. Such supports complement national awareness initiatives and are tailored for a local delivery.

Community Grant Schemes

Under the Community Grant Scheme 2019, funding was awarded to 95 groups for projects to benefit the environment and enhance local amenities.

Burial Grounds

The Community Section has responsibility for 27 active burial grounds within the county. Improvement works were carried out on a number of the burial grounds as part of the annual works programme.

Performance Indicators 2018

Percentage of local schools involved in the local Youth Council/Comhairle na nÓg scheme	90%
No. of Organisations on the County Register at 31/12/2018 and the proportion of those organisations that opted to be part of the Social Inclusion College within the PPN	12.92

ARTS SECTION

Laois School of Music and Music Generation Laois

Laois School of Music and Music Generation Laois programmes transitioned to the administration of Laois Offaly Education and Training Board mid 2019. A comprehensive programme of participative musical events took place throughout the year and continued support and collaborations will be fostered and developed into the future.

Laois Youth Theatre

Laois Youth Theatre has 2 groups in Portlaoise. Youth Theatre was also supported in Portarlington in association with the Portarlington Afterschools Group and in Mountrath in association with the Mountrath Development Association. Laois Youth Theatre includes

weekly workshops for up to 80 children and young people, led by qualified drama tutors, culminating in an end of year show on 17th May 2019 at the Dunamaise Arts Centre. Members of the Portlaoise Youth Theatre group benefitted from a workshop with renowned Laois Actor Robert Sheehan at the Dunamaise Arts Centre in December.

Dunamaise Arts Centre

Laois County Council continues to support the Dunamaise Arts Centre as one of the main Arts venues in Laois. The Laois Arts Office continue to work collaboratively with the Dunamaise Arts Centre on numerous programmes enriching both programmes.

The Laois Arthouse Stradbally

In 2019, the Arthouse Gallery hosted 4 individual exhibitions, as well as artist residencies, art workshops, tours, and talks. 2019 was a busy year with apartments and studios fully occupied for most of the year.

The Artists in Schools Scheme

This scheme took place in nine schools in 2019. This Scheme allows students to have an in depth experience with a professional artist and gives them the opportunity to experience different art mediums. Schools and projects included:

- St. Josephs Girls N.S. Mountmellick with Dance Artist Aisling Walshe.
- Scoil Naomh Eoin, Killenard with Visual Artist Mary Slevin
- Killadooley N.S. Ballybrophy, with Pottery Artist Finbar O'Hara
- Castletown N.S. Elderfield with Music Tutor Tina Cuddy
- Dunamase College, Portlaoise with Poet/Writer Jean O'Brien
- Holy Family Junior School, Portlaoise with Drama Tutor Saoirse Anton
- Scoil Bhride, Portlaoise, with Artist Paul Woods
- St. Francis Special School, Portlaoise with Visual Artist Marian Whyte.
- Saplings Special School, Killeshin, with Visual Artist Aisling Brennan

Bealtaine Festival – for Older People

The Arts Office presented a programme of events for older people in community and care settings during the month of May 2019.

Midland Collaborative Projects

Laois County Council contributes to the Midlands Arts and Culture magazine, published in 2019, and distributed nationally and throughout the Midlands region.

Summer Arts programme

A series of workshops was held during July 2019 including; Circus Art in MDA Mountmellick, Environment Art in Stradbally, Dance in Portlaoise and a Portfolio Preparation Course for young people aged 15-18, interested in pursuing art at 3rd level.



National Culture Night

Free Arts and Culture events took place on Friday 20th September 2019 in 20 different venues in the county, with large numbers enjoying and taking part in events such as open studios, workshops, exhibitions, music, readings, concerts, film, literary events, and free guided tours.



Leaves Literature Festival

The Leaves Festival of Writing and Music was held from 5th -10th November 2019 with a diverse programme of readings, discussions, music, spoken word performances, workshops and book launches. Well known contributors included John Sheahan (Dubliners) Dermot Bolger and Joe O'Connor and the festival received great media exposure nationally and locally following a co-funded PR and marketing strat-

egy plan with Laois Partnership and Laois Tourism.

Supports to the Arts

The Council continued to support communities and individuals in 2019 through its Arts Act Grants Awards and Tyrone Guthrie Centre Bursary, as well as exhibitions and support of Festivals and community arts events.

Laois Creative Ireland Programme

The Creative Ireland Programme is funded by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and will be delivered over 5 years; 2018-2022. A wide range of projects were funded in 2019 and 21 Community Grants were awarded to individuals, groups and festivals.



Performance Indicators

	2016	2017	2018
(1) No of Arts Grants Allocated	35	41	55
(11) Per 1,000 population	1990	1714	1936
No. of Youth Theatre groups	3	3	3
Summer Arts Workshops	13	8	11
Laois School of Music Participants	320	320	360
Music Generation Laois	3015	4215	3701

SPORT & LEISURE SECTION

The Sport and Leisure Section continued to deliver a successful series of events and activities during 2019. Highlights include;

Laois County Council Recreation, Play & Sport Strategy 2018 – 2022

Following extensive public consultation in 2018 the strategy was approved by members of the Strategic Policy Committee and adopted by members of Laois County Council. Implementation of this strategy which provides a clear vision and direction for the Sport & Leisure Section commenced in 2019.

Leisure and Play Facilities

Both Portlaoise and Portarlington Leisure Centres continue to deliver excellent public leisure services. Portarlington Leisure Centre was awarded the Overall Winner of the Best Leisure Facility in Ireland at the National Quality Awards on Friday 8th November 2019. This top prize for leisure standards is a major achievement for the Centre.



Laois County Council continues to manage twenty community play facilities which require significant annual maintenance and repair programme to maintain a high quality of service. With the objective of improving accessibility to play areas, the Council contacted the Occupational Therapy Department of University College Cork to carry out an accessibility audit of three playgrounds in 2019 and provide recommendations to effectively improve access and play value for users with additional needs.

Bike Week

Funding of €7,500 was secured by the Council from the Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport to deliver the 2019 Bike Week Programme. This funding was used to co-ordinate 18 events with the assistance of Schools & Community groups countywide. Bike Week is a national programme which encour-

aged people to use their bicycles for travel and leisure between 22nd and 30th June. Events included family fun cycles, school cycling events and workplace cycles including Laois County Council's Bikes 'n' Bikes.

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE ACTIVITY PROGRAMME

Summer Brochure

The Sport and Leisure office produced its annual guide to summer activities for families and 10,000 copies were distributed throughout schools and public buildings in County Laois.

Parks Tennis

Laois County Council organised and delivered the National Parks Tennis Programme in Abbeyleix, Mountmellick, Mountrath and Portlaoise with 180 children participating in this programme.

National Recreation Week/National Play Day

National Recreation Week/National Play Day is a joint initiative between the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) and Local Authorities. The Sport & Leisure Section delivered a play and recreation event in Ballinakill with the community and also delivered play activities for the Borris in Ossory area schools during which consultations were completed with the children with a view to building new playgrounds for both areas.

NGB Partnership

Laois County Council continued its partnerships with various national governing bodies of sport to deliver a range of a community based sports programmes throughout the county. One of the key programmes delivered was Games on the Green which was delivered in local housing areas in Ballylinan, Mountrath, Mountmellick, Abbeyleix, Rathdowney and Durrow with 240 children participating over 12 weeks in 2019

Chess Development Programme

The Sport & Leisure Section and library sections worked together to encourage children to take up chess and support the development of chess clubs in branch libraries. In November, the third annual Laois County Council Junior Chess Tournament was held in Portlaoise College with 104 children participating. An Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Willie Aird presented the prizes to the winning school, club and individual players.

Special Projects 2019

Urban Outdoor Adventure Programme

The Section commenced delivery of the Urban Outdoor Adventure Programme, an initiative funded from Dormant Accounts via Laois Sports Partnership. The objective of the programme is to increase access to outdoor adventure activities for young people in urban areas. The programme was delivered in partnership with schools, youth groups, homework clubs and local service providers.

Paddles Up

Laois County Council received funding from Waterways Ireland to deliver a new Canoeing programme "Paddles Up" in partnership with SVT Kayak/Canoe Club. 65 participants took part in a six week programme of instructing and Portarlington hosted a regional finale event.

Town and Village Renewal Projects

The Section successfully assisted community groups in Portarlington and Borris-in-Ossory to secure funding for projects to enhance their local areas. These projects, which include the development of a Slí na Sláinte walking route and amenity area in Borris-in-Ossory and the enhancement of the People's Park in Portarlington, were substantially completed in 2019.

Slí na Sláinte Development

With funding provided by Department of Rural and Community Development's Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) , the Sport & Leisure section launched one new Slí na Sláinte walking route in Mountrath in July 2019 in partnership with Mountrath Development Association. Slí na Sláinte ("Path to Health") is a unique health promotion initiative of the Irish Heart Foundation designed to encourage people to walk for health and leisure by creating mapped measured walking routes in workplaces, communities and schools.



Active Community Hubs

The Section continues to work with Laois Sports Partnership and local communities to provide support for Stradbally/Vicarstown/Timahoe Hub and new Rathdowney/Errill Hub. The aim of the active community hubs is to encourage and support local communities being more proactive in planning & delivering physical activity programmes at local level.

Healthy Ireland Projects 2019 Funding

Healthy Ireland Funding provided funding for the delivery of park activity programmes in three public parks in Mountmellick, Portlaoise and Mountrath in 2019. The Active Parks Programme encouraged adults to participate in a range of exercise activities in an outdoor setting while showcasing Laois County Council's public amenities.

Support of Clubs/Community Groups

During 2019 the Office continued to successfully work with clubs, schools and community groups to apply for and draw down funding to develop their facilities including Sports Capital Grant Scheme/Large Scale Sports Infrastructure Scheme/CLÁR Programme/Town and Village Renewal Scheme/Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme.

Green Flag Award for Parks

The Section worked with other sections to secure the retention of the prestigious Green Flag Award at Páirc an Phobail , Portlaoise and the Peoples Park Portarlington. Flags were awarded at a ceremony in Maynooth University in July 2019.

LAOIS WATER SAFETY**WATER SAFETY AWARENESS 2019**

Laois County Council in conjunction with Water Safety Ireland – Laois Area Committee continued to promote Water Safety Awareness in 2019. Schools & community group visits were conducted, whereby basic water safety awareness talks and ring buoy demonstrations were delivered.

Water Safety Ireland – Laois Area Committee successfully worked in conjunction with a Cruinnú na Nóg event in Mountrath Amenity Park in May 2019. This event increased awareness among children and young people of the dangers of open water .

WATER SAFETY CLASSES 2019

Water Safety Ireland – Laois successfully delivered Spring and Autumn Water Safety Classes during 2019 at Portlaoise Leisure Centre. 130 adults & children participated in Irish Water Safety classes throughout the year.

WATER SAFETY PRESENTATIONS 2019

The Water Safety Certificate Presentation night was held on Thursday 2nd May 2019. Receivers of their awards attended the ceremony in the Laois County Council Chamber and were presented with their certificates by Cllr. John Joe Fennelly, Leas Cathaoirleach of Laois County Council.

PAWS PROGRAMME

Laois County Council in association with Laois Water Safety and Portlaoise Leisure Centre continued to successfully support & deliver the Primary Aquatic Water Safety Programme (PAWS). Forty Primary schools were visited in County Laois during 2019 with Water Safety talks and demonstrations.

RING BUOYS

During 2019 Laois County Council continued to inspect, maintain, erect and replace ring buoys at open water locations countywide.

BALLINAKILL OUTDOOR SWIMMING POOL

Ballinakill Outdoor Swimming Pool reopened on July 12th under the management of Ballinakill Community Development Association. Laois County Council and Water Safety Ireland – Laois provided considerable support to ensure the safety of swimmers. Laois County Council provided safety equipment and Water Safety Ireland – Laois provided lifeguard training for committee members, which ensures a bank of competent voluntary lifeguards who will work alongside professional lifeguards.

LIBRARIES

County Librarian:

Bernie Foran

The Library service continues to play a pivotal role for all communities in the county. They offer an efficient frontline service for all members providing them with access to books, media, online services and internet/wifi. In 2019 our libraries had over 9,500 members, while the number of visits for the year was recorded at over 254,000. The continued investment in adult and juvenile stock has resulted in the issue of approximately 237,000 items including books, audio-books, periodicals, DVDs and local history material.

Library Services

The libraries work with many groups within their communities and offer varied events and exhibitions programmes. This year, there have been 2196 events hosted across the county with over 25,843 people in attendance. Highlights include author visits, knitting groups, cioccal comhrá and book clubs, while the art galleries in both Mountmellick and Abbeyleix remain very popular venues for hosting art, cultural and educational exhibitions.

The public libraries in Laois offer more than just books and have wide ranging services in all branches: these include audio books, DVDS, music, online resources, daily newspapers and magazines, free events and clubs, printing, photocopying, scanning facilities, free WIFI for members and broadband internet services at very reasonable rates. Modern libraries offer a rich cultural and educational environment that provides a space and access for those wishing to enrich their day to day lives.

Summer Reading Challenge

Laois County Library Service again organised a summer reading challenge and participated in the national Summer Reading Programme supported by the LGMA Libraries Development Unit. This initiative was funded by Laois County Council. The event is for primary school children to promote literacy development and encourage non readers to engage with books. It has gone from strength to strength and this year 1656 children registered for the competition.

Service Development

The new national Library strategy "Our Public Libraries 2022 Inspiring, Connecting and Empowering Communities" was launched nationally in Dublin in June. It is a progressive strategy which aims to improve access, use and visibility of the library as a

community hub, and develop the library as a focal point for community and cultural development. Following on from the launch of the national Strategy, a new Library Services Plan for the county is currently in preparation to assist in the delivery of the objectives in the national strategy.

Library Headquarters and Local History

Allmost 4000 volumes are housed in this section consisting of books, journals, newspapers, photographs, maps, slides, microfiche and microfilm. This appeals to a wide range of visitors ranging from students to people researching their local area, Americans and Australians searching for their Laois roots, local historians and others availing of primary source material for future publications and works. Staff continue to improve and add extra content to the local history website www.askaboutireland.ie including narratives about Laois, the local customs and the folklore of the county.

A digitisation project will commence in the local history section in 2020. It will make documents, maps, photos, postcards, workhouse records and such material, available online for the general public at home and abroad. Further information about the Local History Section can be found on the Library webpage <http://www.laois.ie/departments/libraries/services/local-research/local-studies/>

Capital Development

Portlaoise Library: 2019

During 2019 Stage 3 and 4 approvals were granted by the Department of Rural and Community Development for the project which progressed to tender and award. The contract for the construction of the new library was tendered in August 2019 and the successful tenderer is Frank Murray and Sons Ltd. Works are due to commence on the library in January 2020 with a construction period of 20 months. The DRCD announced an additional €1.35m in funding for the library, bringing the total national funding for the project to €3million.

• Open Library

Portarlington Library is continuing to implement Open Library with additional works taking place for Health and Safety . It is expected that the system will commence shortly on a pilot basis . An additional grant from DRCD(€8500)was provided for additional works to doors, lights and CCTV.

- Dormant accounts Funding

Laois County Library Service received funding approval(€13,500) for the following services/projects which are being implemented:

- Autism friendly library services - funding to be spent on staff training, information events, events for children and signage (social stories) and other resources.
- Library of Sanctuary – initially Portlaoise, Places of Sanctuary Ireland is a network of a group of towns, cities and local communities which share the objectives of promoting the integration, inclusion and welfare of refugees by encouraging every sector of society to make a practical commitment to becoming places of welcome and safety.

Laois County Library Services have always been regarded as a place of sanctuary and a space for all cultures and the addition of the “Place of Sanctuary” further underpins our own core values of equality and “access for all”

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

In 2019, Laois County Libraries held a large variety of events and activities in all Branch Libraries throughout the county. Children and Adults enjoyed the numerous events and activities organised by Library staff. The Service continued with a strong programme of activities for children, including Science week, computer classes, chess clubs, Lego workshops and story-telling sessions. Lego animation classes were held in the Abbeyleix, Durrow and Mountrath libraries during the year.

The highlights of the year included Seachtain na Gaeilge, Bealtaine, Summer Reading Challenge, Heritage Week, Children’s Book Festival and Science Week.

Creative Ireland

- As part of Creative Ireland the Library Service hosted a Reader in Residence Programme. The Service was delighted to welcome Frances Quinn to libraries and schools across Laois as part of the Reader in Residence programme 2019 which delivered a programme of activities designed to promote reading, story telling, foster a habit and enjoyment of reading and library usage in children, young people and families.
- The Lego Animation Project continued in

2019 allowing participants to draw on both their technical and creative sides, with groups working together to plan, script, shoot, voice over and produce their own LEGO movies. Aimed at encouraging older children and young adults to make use of their Libraries, the studio was also able to hold a screening of all nine of their short movies made by over 70 children at 45 different sessions by young people from across Laois and into Kilkenny, in the Dunamase Arts centre on the 30th of November 2019.

- Digital Archive Project – funded By Creative Ireland. The Laois County Archives holds collections of both public and private records pertaining to Laois. An online platform is required to ensure wide access to the records for researchers and historians. The Archive project has researched and put in place the appropriate software for the scanning, storage, display and retrieval of the digitised archives of County Laois.

Mountrath Library

Mountrath Library had another very successful summer programme hosting a wide variety of events, including ‘Yoga For Kids’ in June. Children participated in themed art and crafts sessions and also enjoyed a Pirate Treasure Hunt. Sessions were fully booked and feedback for all was extremely positive. Heritage week was a huge success with a great attendance at Vintage Games with Cormac Bowell. Mountrath Historical Society presented a montage of ‘Times Past and Pastimes’ in the Library.

Children’s Book Festival brought much excitement and highlights included author visit by E.R. Murray. At Halloween and Christmas, children’s activities included, Storytime and Crafts and a Halloween Spider Hunt Obstacle Course. During the year classes from Scoil Bhride N.S., St. Fintan’s Boys, Castletown N.S., came to the Library as did LCA Students from Mountrath Community School. Adult groups continue to meet regularly: Knitting Group meets every Friday morning from 10.30-1pm; Adult Book Club meets (1st Thursday of the month) at 6.15pm; Local Historical Group meets (2nd Thursday of the month) at 6.15pm and Ciorcail Comhrá (Irish Conversation Group) meets (3rd Thursday of the month) at 6.15pm.

The Library book displays for the year included: Nutshell Irish History Series, Tom Joyce Art Demonstration for Bealtaine Festival, Gardening Display, Pokemon, New Children’s Books and Farm Themed Books.

Abbeyleix Library

Abbeyleix Library continues to hold weekly chess classes for children and monthly art classes. The Art Gallery, with its impressive road frontage, continues to be a premier location in the county for art exhibitions. The Adult Knitting club is still a huge success while the Children's Chess Club has gone from strength to strength. The Lego Club established in 2016 has grown in popularity and takes place on Saturday mornings.

Other events of note this year were a talk on Nutrition by Caitriona Bolger in August, a War of Independence talk given by historian Brian Hanley in September and a Regina McGinley talk on Kevin O'Higgins in October. Trudi Killeen, Michelle Dunican, Aishling Hennessy, Mount Henry Art Group and Midlands Art Group were some of the art exhibitors during the year.

Once again, summer in the Library was a hive of activity as record breaking numbers of children signed up for the 'Summer Reading Challenge'. Some events held during the summer for children included a Slime Making Workshop, the Summer Movie Club and Under the Bed Monsters Storytime. Author Helena Duggan visited during Children's Book Festival and European Storytelling with Simone Schuemelfeder. All of this activity, coupled with regular class visits from local schools and 2nd level students availing of study facilities, ensures that Abbeyleix Library remains an integral part of the community.

Portlaoise Library

Portlaoise Library continues to be an important hub in a growing community providing a full schedule of clubs and events along with book and media loans, study space and busy IT facilities. A Laois Writers Group and an Essay Writing Group were setup in 2019, both conducted by staff member Thomas Scott. The Baby Book Club continues to be successful and this monthly club averages around 50 participants.

Both the Summer Reading Challenge and Children's Book Festival brought huge excitement to the Library with events such as a Code Breaking Workshop and a Bully – Proof Kids Talk by Stella O'Mahony. Numerous art and crafts sessions, Book Clubs and mindfulness colouring events took place for adults and children alike throughout the year. The monthly Genealogy Club is going from strength to strength.

Other miscellaneous events of interest in 2019 included Laois Secondary Schools Second Year Debating in February and a Secondary Schools Debating Final in April. In March, the Library celebrated 25

years in Lyster Square. Another highlight of the year was a history talk in June by Turtle Bunbury on the Massacre of Mullaghmast, 1577. During Heritage Week Jim Fleming and Michael Rafter spoke about 'Laois and Laois People During The War of Independence'.

Culture Night in September was marked by a visit by Anne Griffin and a Laois Writers' Event 'Language of Love'. Other events were a visit from Dublin Zoo staff for pupils of Scoil Bhride, Portlaoise in November and children's Christmas movies were shown throughout December.

Mountmellick Library

Mountmellick Library had another exciting year with a large number of events taking place for both adult and children alike. Popularity of ongoing events continues to grow especially the Book Clubs, Adult Colouring Groups, Crafty Angels Crocheters, Art Gallery launches, Storytime and Quick crafts for Kids. In 2019 Mountmellick Baby Book Club meetings continued to be extremely popular. Yoga classes for children were also introduced in 2019.

August was an extremely busy month with numerous activities held especially relating to Heritage Week. Michael Moylan presented an Irish History Live show on The Tudors and The Plantation of Laois and Offaly for children. Melanie Lorien held a Straw Crafts Workshop for children and Aga Grandowich & Juanita Browne conducted a Wildlife Art Workshop and Children's author, Tatiana Feeney visited the Library. During the summer months Space Crafts, a Pirate Treasure Hunt and a Little Gem Puppet Show were held in the Library. There were visits from the Dog Trust, author Debbie Thomas and Nation Creation Workshop.

October and the annual Children's Book Festival witnessed a lot of activity . Author Shane Hegarty spoke to boys from Scoil Phadraig Naofa, Mountmellick. Other events included Harry Potter Potions Workshop and Halloween crafts. A 'First Fostering Ireland' information session was a first for the library and well attended. Christmas time was marked with events such as a Coffee Morning with Carols from the Men's Shed.

Portarlington Library

Portarlington library begun 2019 with a series of Character Drawing Workshops with Conor Brennan. These included Harry Potter, Pokemon and Star Wars characters. The Irish Heart Foundation Mobile Health Unit attended the library, as part of the Healthy Ireland programme. Nessa Darcy conducted a Biodiversity Workshop with Colaiste Iosagain in January also.

Junior and Adult Book Clubs with Aoife Anton, staff member, continued throughout the year, as did the Knitting Club's fortnightly sessions. Class Visits from local secondary and primary schools were frequent throughout 2019. Digital Skills Smart Device classes, held by Third Age Ireland were also held throughout the year.

Portarlington library has been designated to become an Open Library, under the Local Government Management Association My Open Library policy. Work will continue on this project throughout 2020 on a phased basis. Ultimately opening hours for the public will be more than doubled their current amount.

The library held many activities as part of the Summer Stars Reading promotional programme for Children. These included, Slime Making, Family Reading Time, Hogwart's Hunt, Dogs Trust Workshop, Paper Rocket Workshop and Start a Diary Wimpy Kid Style. During Heritage Week a Bee Crafts Workshop was held for children and a talk on The War of Independence by historian Brian Hanley.

EU Direct Centre in Portlaoise Library

Portlaoise Library is now one of 8 EU Direct (EDIC) Information Centres in the Country. The information Centre which is based in the Public area of the Library acts as a one stop shop for people who want information about the EU, such as policies, information or citizens rights. The centre also hosts EU events and related activities. In 2019 the centre held many EU themed events and talks promoting the centre and Europe. One highlight was a talk by Daniel Keohane on 9th April entitled 'Ireland, The EU and Brexit'. Daniel Keohane is the Head of Policy at European Movement Ireland.

WIFI

WIFI is available in Portlaoise, Mountmellick, Durrow, Stradbally Mountrath, Abbeyleix, Portarlington and Rathdowney Libraries.

Self Service Check-In Kiosks

Self Service Check-In Kiosks are now available for use by Library members in Abbeyleix, Mountmellick, Mountrath, Portarlington and Portlaoise libraries.

BOOKFUND

The Bookfund for 2019 was €90,000

Performance Indicators 2018

Library Visits

No. of library visits per head of population	3.66
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No. of items issued to borrowers in the year	198,752
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Cost per Capita

27.16

Tidy Towns & Community Groups:

The Council continues to work with community groups in keeping the county clean and tidy.

a) **Tidy Towns**

In the 2019 National Tidy Towns Competition awards were received by Abbeyleix (Gold Medal), Portlaoise (Silver Medal), Ballinakill (Endeavour Award), Ballacolla and Castletown. The Midlands & East School Award was received by Portlaoise Educate Together.

b) **Good Environmental Practice on the Farm**

In 2019, Laois County Council held their inaugural agricultural competition entitled Chairman's Award for Good Environmental Practice on the Farm, to recognise farmers for the excellent work and good environmental practices which are carried out on a daily basis on farms.

c) **Community Grants Scheme**

Under the Community Grant Scheme 2019, funding was awarded to 95 groups for projects to benefit the environment and enhance local amenities.

2019 Awards & Achievements:

a) **IBAL Anti-Litter League – Cleaner than European Norms**

Portlaoise achieved 7th out of 40 towns/cities surveyed. Eight out of the ten town sites inspected achieved the top litter grade (Grade A) in Portlaoise. The town has maintained the progress made in recent years.

b) **LAMA Awards**

Laois County Council is nominated as one of the four finalists for the Best Waste Management Programme 2019 – The Couch & Mattress Amnesty.

INFRASTRUCTURE, WATER SERVICES, ENVIRONMENT, EMERGENCY SERVICES & SPECIAL PROJECTS

Transport, Water Services, Environment and Emergency Services Strategic Policy Committee

Director of Services: Simon Walton

Senior Engineer: Adrian Barrett

Chair: Paddy Bracken, M.C.C.

Members

Sectoral
John Joe Fennelly, M.C.C. Owen Conroy, Agricultural/Farming
William Aird, M.C.C. John Killeen, Development/Constr.
Ben Brennan, M.C.C Lisa Beatron Trade Union
Noel Tuohy, M.C.C Vacancy Environment/ Conservation

In 2019 the Roads Department received road grants and budget funding of €20.4m. This comprised funding from a number of sources including the Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport, Transport Infrastructure Ireland and from Laois County Council's own resources in revenue & capital funding to advance maintenance and capital projects throughout the county. This also included funding for Local Improvement Schemes, an allocation of €456,000 for 7 Community Involvement Schemes, strengthening works at R434 Derrin Cross to Mannin Cross Roads due to severe weather with an extra allocation of €318,000, an increase of €184,000 in Restoration Improvement for the L3896 at Rossmore and Specific Improvement Grants totaling €720,000.

Roads Area staff supported by Road Design carried out pavement strengthening and surface dressing of regional & local roads under the roads programme. 31.32km of our road network was strengthened while 29.45km of the network was surface dressed.

Road Design Office

Laois County Council completed a large number of maintenance and improvement schemes in 2019 which included, the new Southern circular route extension, safety improvement works, enhancements to signage, line markings, pavement works together with installation of bollards, public lighting, and junction improvement works.

The following outlines the works completed and associated funding.

Portlaoise Southern Circular Route Extension

Works on the Portlaoise Southern Circular Road Extension continued in 2019 with the construction of the off-line works at the rear of the Aldi lands at Kylekiproe and the offline works at Abbeyleix Road Roundabout. Traffic Management was then utilised to construct the online section of the new Abbeyleix Road junction and the tie in at O'Moore Park.

In late summer 2019, the contractor THM completed the tie in works at the Kylekiproe section of the scheme and commenced surfacing works throughout the project.

The scheme was officially opened by Minister for Justice Equality and Law Reform, Mr Charlie Flanagan in the presence of Cathaoirleach of Laois County Council, Cllr. Willie Aird on Friday 1st November 2019.



N80 Maidenhead Realignment Scheme

Clonmel Enterprises Limited was awarded the €4.3 million contract for the N80 Maidenhead Realignment Scheme and works commenced on Thursday 22nd August 2019. A reduced statutory speed limit of 60km/hr is in place for the duration of the works which will be enforced by An Garda Siochána. Works are progressing on topsoil stripping, installation of culverts, drainage and site clearance. This contract is supervised and administered by Laois County Council staff.

The Main Works Contract commenced on site on 26th August 2019 with initial temporary fencing and site clearance taking place. The large cut fill section of works began on the southern end of the scheme in September and progressed at pace until 8th November when works in this area were suspended due to the poor weather and worsening ground conditions. The works completed in 2019 also included excavation of peat to a pond area carried out under archaeological supervision from the TII Project Archaeologist and the Contractors Archaeologist.

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A mammal crossing was also installed after identification of several badger setts on the lands. In the later months of 2019 the Contractor focused on getting drainage pipelines installed along the online section of road in the middle of the scheme as well as commencing installation of Eir and spare ducting.

2020 will see works recommence in the cut fill section with installation of a livestock underpass at the southern end and a culvert for the Coolanowle Stream at the northern end of the scheme being the main items for Q1 in 2020. Surfacing and phasing of the tie in at both ends and in the middle crossing point of the scheme will be the challenge for the second quarter of 2020.

Áras an Chontae

Implementation of works to facilitate a new one way system in order to improve traffic flow and reduce risk by removing the exit located closest to James Fintan Lawlor Avenue was carried out

TII Defects – Expenditure €411,087

N80 Green Rd junction – drainage improvements
N80 Laught or Common – repairs to pavement
N80 Stradbally – verge repairs
N80, N78 and N77 – Manhole covers and frames replaced
N80 Kyletalesha - – repairs to pavement
N80 Arles – repairs to damaged kerbs and footpaths
N80, N78 and N77 – cutting grass at junctions to improve sightlines
N80 Park Upper – removal of dead tree which was roadside hazard

HD17 - RSI's Schemes National Secondary Roads

N80 Simmonsmill Cross – removal of tank which was a roadside hazard
N80 Coolhenry – removal of trees which were roadside hazards
N78 Ballylynan – removal of tree which was roadside hazard
N77 Durrow – public lighting and footpath improvements
N80 Market Square, Portlaoise – new pedestrian crossing and upgrade of lights and tactile paving on existing pedestrian crossing
N80 Abbeyleix Rd Roundabout - new pedestrian crossing and upgrade of lights and tactile paving on existing pedestrian crossing
N80 Mountmellick Rd Portlaoise – undergrounding of overhead power cables and public lighting improvements

CLÁR

The CLÁR programme (Ceantair Laga Árd-Riachtanais) is a targeted investment programme which provides funding for small scale infrastructural projects in rural areas which have suffered the greatest levels of population decline. The aim of CLÁR is to support the sustainable development of identified CLÁR areas by attracting people to live and work there. The funding works in conjunction with local funding and on the basis of locally identified priorities.

The following works have been carried out under the Clár scheme:

Ballyfin – Speed radar sign installed, improved public lighting and road markings

The Paddocks School – Car park upgrade

New Pedestrian Crossings – Expenditure €40,000

- The Swan
- Kyle Centre

RSRM Schemes – Expenditure €186,000

The following works were carried out under the RSRM schemes

Acragar, Mountmellick - L2120

The works included road widening to remove a pinch point in the road, relocation of utility poles from the road edge to a safe location, construction of a footpath, public lighting and fencing giving direct access to the GAA pitch. This scheme improved safety for both road users and pedestrians by eradicating the pinch point in the road and allowing direct access to the GAA pitch for pedestrians who previously would have had to cross the road twice.

Clonaslee

The works at Clonaslee involved a road crossing and new footpath. These works were implemented due to concerns for the safety of school children and pedestrians crossing the road in the absence of a footpath.

Primary School, Timahoe - L3838

Removal of hedgerow opposite primary school to improve visibility around the bad bend in the road.

Sleaty Road, Graiguecullen - L3976-133

Create super-elevation on bend, provide roadmark-

INFRASTRUCTURE, WATER SERVICES, ENVIRONMENT, EMERGENCY SERVICES & SPECIAL PROJECTS

ings and signage and cut back hedge.

Village Junction, Ballinakill - R432 / L1736

Provide increased signage and road markings at road junction

Clonreher, Portlaoise - L2110-29

Remove hedge line from inside curve of bend, install post and rail fence to TII specification on new fence line to improve visibility for drivers

PARR Schemes: – Expenditure €430,000

The following works were carried out under the Parr Scheme

N80 Mountmellick Road Resurfacing

N80 Ballymacken Stradbally Road

Minor Pavement Scheme – Expenditure €90,000

N80 Kyletalesha – Geotechnical investigation ongoing

Capital Pavement Works 2019 – Expenditure €600,000

The following works were carried out under the Capital Pavement Works programme

N80 Emmet St Mountmellick

N80 Tullamore Rd Mountmellick

N80 Oughaval

N80 Milltown

HD28 Mechanical Abrasion Sites – Expenditure €132,000

N77 Tinwear

N77 Clonaddadoran

N78 Kilcruise

N78 Ballycorman

N78 Ballylynan

N80 Laught or Common

N80 Grange Upper

N80 Simmonsmill Cross

N80 Stradbally

HD28 Pavement Resurfacing Sites – Expenditure €540,000

N80 Derrycloney

N80 Grange

N77 Abbeyleix North
N77 Abbeyleix South
N77 Tinwear
N80 Derrymoyle
N80 Ballickmoyle
N80 Beladd
N80 JFL Ave

Public Lighting

Public lighting upgrades to LED lanterns were carried out on 1200 lights in 2019. These upgrades were funded by TII at a cost of approximately €1,350,000. Maintenance works also continued on the stock of over 9500 public lights across the county.

Upgrades of LED lights were also carried out on local roads, 11,000 lights were upgraded at a cost of €580,000.

Winter Maintenance

Call-out operations were carried out on 48 occasions during the 2018/2019 winter season treating 468km of the salted network in Laois. So far there has been 64 call-outs during the 2019/2020 winter season.

CAPITAL PROJECTS



Engineering and Environmental Consultants were procured and appointed for the project level development of the scheme which is currently progressing through stage 1. Website for the scheme developed, topographic surveys commenced, advance works contract issued for the treatment of invasive species, 1st public engagement day held and a number of the ecological reports commenced.

Portarlington Flood Relief Scheme

Brief prepared and tender issued for the appointment of Engineering and Environmental Consultants for the project level development of the scheme.

Clonaslee Flood Relief Minor Project

Brief prepared for the appointment of Engineering and Environmental Consultants for the project level development of the scheme.

J17 National Enterprise Park

Final design completed, compulsory purchase order published, contractor procured and appointed and construction commenced for the provision of roads and services infrastructure to facilitate and promote enterprise and employment growth.



Graigecullen-Portarlington Municipal District (Eastern Area)

In the Eastern Area, a total road surfacing length of 8.44km was completed by Restoration Improvements Works (Strengthening).

A total road surfacing length of 8.51km was completed by Restoration Maintenance Works (Surface Dressing)

Safety Improvement Works

Several Safety Improvement Works were completed most notably on the L3838 opposite the primary school in Timahoe, removal of hedgerow and installation of new boundary fencing to improve sightlines



Bridge Rehabilitation Works

Bridge rehabilitation/repair works were carried out on several bridges, most notably Shanragh Bridge and Bilboa Bridge.

Towns & Villages Renewal Scheme

Under the 'Towns & Villages Renewal Scheme', safety improvement works were also carried out at the junction of the L3838 with the R426 in Timahoe which involved the realignment of the existing boundary wall at the junction and the installation of a new pedestrian crossing.



Borris in Ossory/Mountmellick Municipal District (Western Area)

In the Western Area, a total road surfacing length of 12km was completed by Restoration Improvements Works (Strengthening).

A total road surfacing length of 12.2km completed by Restoration Maintenance Works (Surface Dressing).

Bridge Rehabilitation Works

Significant bridge rehabilitation works were completed at Donore Little Bridge, Shanahoe. The abutment walls were undermined resulting in loss of support to the arch, spandrel and parapet wall at the upstream end of the structure. The façade of the bridge was taken down. A new foundation was laid upon which the abutments were constructed. A new arch was struck using tradition techniques. The bridge was repaired with lime mortar pointing on both sides of the bridge. All the works were undertaken by Laois County Council direct labour staff.



In addition to Donore Little Bridge mentioned above, Council staff also repaired several other bridges in the area using traditional techniques, including Kilbricken Bridge and Rathmakelly Bridge,

Drainage Programme

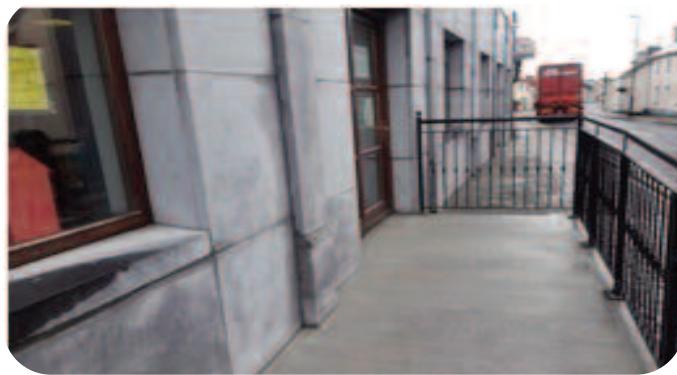
Drainage Schemes were delivered at a number of locations around the Municipal District in 2019 on Regional Roads in Ballacolla and Durrow.

Strengthening Schemes

Circa 1500m of the Regional Road, R434 near Derrin Cross was strengthened.

Footpath Works

The footpath and access ramp layout at the entrance to Mountrath Library was modified to enhance safety for those using the facility.



Towns Enhancement

Improvements were carried out in Mountrath on the R440 approach. These works provided improved safety and also enhanced the area.

Cullahill Mountain Slope Strengthening works

A sloped embankment adjacent to the L5757 on Cullahill mountain was affected constantly by erosion and/or stability problems attributed to rainfall. Laois County Council explored various methods of slope stabilisation and protection. Three problem sites were identified. All sites appeared to be slip lane failures.

The remedial works involved slope strengthening works by soil nailing and the construction of concrete edge beams at the three different sites. The slope was prepared for the placement of a geocell erosion control system. Depending on the individual sites, a vehicle restraint system or the construction of earthworks bunds were provided.

Portlaoise Municipal District (Central Area)

In the Central Area, a total road surfacing length of 6.6 Km was completed by Restoration Improvements Works (Strengthening).

A total road surfacing length of 6kms completed by Restoration Maintenance Works (Surface Dressing).

River Nore - Removal of vegetation, deadwood and debris

In its examination of the River Nore channel in South Laois, it was concluded that deadwood/debris within the watercourse and overhanging trees on the river banks are contributing to upstream flooding. The Council in conjunction with the South Laois Drainage Group, applied for and obtained funding from the Office of Public Works (OPW) in 2017 to carry out works on the River Nore in South Laois.

Further remediation works were carried out in 2019, with Laois County Council also securing additional funding in 2019 under this scheme.

Footpath Programme

Over €150,000 of footpath works were carried in the towns of Portlaoise and Abbeyleix in 2019.

Portlaoise Town Planting

This Municipal District maintains containers, beds and hanging baskets at over 300 locations around Portlaoise Town. These locations are planted with winter bedding in November and with summer bedding in May each year.

The Municipal District also works closely with Portlaoise Tidy Towns with the planting and maintenance of these hanging baskets in the Main Street and Lyster Square in the town. The hanging baskets are on display from June to October each year.

Community Involvement Schemes

Road surfacing, footpaths and drainage works were carried out in St. Brigid's Place, Portlaoise.

Local Improvement Schemes

Road surfacing works were carried out in Clonshaughey, Mountmellick, Co.Laois.

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Drainage Programme

820m of drainage works were delivered at a number of locations around the Municipal District in 2019 at the following locations:

- Knightstown, Mountmellick, Portlaoise, Co. Laois
- Ballyking Lane, Ballyroan
- Brittas, Mountmellick, Portlaoise, Co. Laois
- St Brigid's Place
- Hophall
- Coliers Lane
- Bogh lone Mountrath Road, Portlaoise
- Market Square Portlaoise

Road Safety Schemes

Works to enhance road safety were carried out in Ballinakill Village Junction where the junction layout was changed to improve driver safety.

Other works included the erection of 30m of fencing in Higgins Park, 10m in Esker Hills and 1000m of surfacing on the R445 on the Mountrath Road Portlaoise.

Other Road Safety initiatives included the installation of Speed Radar Signs (€17,000) at the below locations:

- Summerhill
- Bog Road Ballyroan
- Greenmill Lane
- Ballacolla Road Abbeyleix

850m of bollards were also installed on the footpaths at schools on Harpurs Lane and on the approach to the Holy Family Schools campus.

Bridge Repairs

Repairs were carried out to Doory Bridge, where repairs were made to the parapet wall.

Traffic Calming

€22,000 of traffic calming works were carried out in the town of Portlaoise in 2019. The majority of these works, related to the installation of traffic calming ramps in residential areas around the town, including Woodgrove, Summerhill, Kilminchy and Highfield Meadows.

Other Works

Works were also completed to build a gabion wall structure and install new footpath at the rear of Glen-

brook Estate Ballyroan

The Portlaoise Municipal District Road Office also carries out other tasks on an annual basis such as;

- Maintenance and developments of Pairc an Phobail and the Triogue Linear Park
- Street cleaning and litter collection
- Renewal of road markings
- Drainage maintenance, cleaning and repairs
- Verge trimming at junctions on regional roads
- Control of invasive plant species in public areas
- Grass Cutting and weed control in Portlaoise town centre
- Tree Surgery works in public areas
- Road surface repairs
- General maintenance of infrastructure such as railings and barriers.
- Service of Hedge cutting notices
- Issuing of Public Notices (including hazards on the road such as muck/soil)

The office also works with groups such as Tidy Towns, Downtown Traders, Farmers Market, Christmas Market and Christmas Lights Committees.

Performance Indicators 2018

PCSI Rating

Ratings in pavement surface condition Index (PCSI)

Road Class	1-4	5-6	7-8	9-10
Regional	8%	29%	35%	28%
Local Primary	14%	33%	25%	12%
Local Secondary	12%	34%	23%	11%
Local Tertiary	14%	19%	15%	13%

Regional Road Grants Works

Regional Road Strengthened using Regional Road Grants 5.9km

Road improvement Grant spent on Road Strengthening €1,271,049

Regional Road resealed using Regional Road Grants 4.7km

Road improvement Grant spent on Resealing €271,144

Local Road Grants Works

Local Road Strengthened using Regional Road Improvement Grants 21.9km

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Road improvement grant spent on Local Roads Strengthening	€2,449,897
Local Road resealed using Regional Road Grant	23km
Road Improvement Grant spent on Local Roads (Resealing)	€780,075

WATER SERVICES

Senior Engineer: Michael O'Hora,

Capital Investment Programme

Irish Water continues to fund all Water Services Capital Projects. Laois County Council in conjunction with Irish Water has completed various schemes to support the socio-economic development of the County.

Networks

The framework contractor for Network Improvements and Water Conservation completed water network upgrade works in Ballyfin, Mountmellick and Durrow. First Fix, Find and Fix, Lead replacement and DMA validation works continue throughout the county.

Programs

Production borewell complete and pump tests underway to bring into production an additional borewell in Durrow (Fermoyle). Plant upgrades underway in Ballyroan, Portarlington and Borris in Ossory Wastewater Water Treatment Plants(WWTPs). Design is on-going on the Laois Disinfection Program; National Certificate of Autorisation Progamme upgrades – these are plants where design population equivalents are less than 500 e.g. Swan WWTP, Rosenallis WWTO; Bobs Bar, Durrow pump station decommission and Abbeyleix (5 Wells) Treated Water Storage upgrade.

One project that deserves special note is the successful upgrade to Ballyroan Wastewater Treatment Plant

Water Services Laboratory

Laois County Council's Water Services Laboratory is an INAB accredited facility and continues to conduct testing and sampling of drinking water, wastewater & river water quality. Existing customers include Irish Water for all public Water and Wastewater schemes in Laois, all Private Drinking Water Supplies in Laois, Local Authority Water Programme Offices for river water quality and all Offaly County Private Drinking

Water Supplies. Work will continue to maintain the existing customer base and seek and secure new business from neighbouring Local Authorities, LAWPRO and LCC's Environment Section in 2020.

Rural Water

A significant number of people in Ireland rely on private drinking water services (water supplies and not provided by Irish Water). The Rural Water Programme, through Exchequer funding administered by the Local Authorities, delivers improvements to private drinking water services in areas where there are no public (Irish Water) water services.

The strategic objective of the Rural Water Programme is to improve quality, reliability and efficiency of water services to rural dwellers where Irish Water Services are not available thus supporting rural communities and the agricultural sector.

The Multi Annual Programme 2019 – 2021 (MARWP 2019-21) continues on from the MARWP 2016-2018 and introduced a new funding category - Community Connections (Water & Wastewater) Networks. This is a pilot project to facilitate the expansion of the coverage of existing public water supply and wastewater collection systems in rural areas.

The following table sets out the funding allocation received by Laois under this programme.

Multi-Annual Rural Water Programme (MARWP) 2019-2021.

MARWP Allocations for 2019-2021

Measure	Description	Overall Funding 2019/2021	Funding 2019	Funding 2020/2021
1.	Source Protection	€6,200	€6,200	-
2.	Public Health compliance	€326,600	€255,600	€71,000
3.	Water Conservation	€304,813	€260,188	€44,625
4.	New Group Water Schemes	€41,400	€41,400	-
5.	Transition of Existing Group Schemes	€145,000	€45,000	€100,000
7(b)	Community Connection Network - Wastewater	€67,500 €891,513	€67,500 €675,588	- €215,625

Measures 1, 2, 4 and 5 largely relate to water quality (the focus of the current programme) and Laois County Council secured €519,000, including for the provision of a new group water scheme at Baunree, Kilbricken.

Funding for the provision of a community waste water connection at Goodwin Estate, Rosenallis under Measure 6(b), was one of 6 such schemes approved nationally and contract documents are being prepared for this scheme.

The programme of the takeover of publically supplied group water schemes continued with the following schemes taken over in 2019:

• Moyanna	GWS
• Ballyrider	GWS
• Moyadd	No3

Works for the takeover of The Rock GWS are ongoing.

Other works carried out in 2019 include the extension of Vicarstown GWS; water treatment upgrade for Iron-mills GWS and water conservation works on Ballacolla, Ballypickas, Derrynaseera and Heath group water schemes.

- The total MARWP expenditure for 2019 was €159,400.
- €455,057 was processed in respect of subsidies to group water schemes.
- €95,046 was paid out to 48 applicants in respect of well grants.

National Rural Water Review Group Project-Local Authority Services Delivery to Rural Water:

Rural Water Working Group approved in principle the business case for a National Shared Service in March 2019.

Dangerous Structures

There are 15 no. files open on the Dangerous Structures Register. All files are being monitored & progressed.

Developer Provided Water Services Infrastructure - Funding Programme

A new multi-annual funding programme was launched by the DHPLG to enable local authorities to take in charge residential estates with Developer Provided Water Services Infrastructure. The first cycle of the

programme is called the Multi-Annual Developer Provided Water Services Infrastructure Resolution Programme 2019-2021 which aims to progressively resolve, on a priority basis, legacy DPI in housing estates. A completed application was submitted to the Department for the approval of 2 No. schemes in Laois in September – viz a viz Killenard Lodge and Bruach na hAbhann, Killleen. Killenard Lodge Estate was connected to the Irish Water's Public Supply in early November 2019.

Portlaoise Public Toilet Upgrade

Detailed design is almost completed and the project is due for completion during Q2 2020.

Ballyroan Wastewater Treatment Plant

For several years Ballyroan Wastewater Treatment Plant had been failing its license conditions with poor treated effluent being a regular occurrence as is evident in the photo below.



The requirement for a capital upgrade of the existing treatment plant had been formally communicated to Irish Water by Water Services. The Environment Section and the EPA were very concerned about damage to the receiving water which is upstream of the Nore freshwater pearl mussel habitat.

Ballyroan WWTP Outfall – Drought Conditions & Poor Effluent Summer 2018

The progress of the Irish Water Capital Program was proving very slow. In January 2019 Laois County Council Water Services suggested to Irish Water that Laois could solve this problem by using an old steel tank which was originally used in Portlaoise back in 2003 and which was stored in Mountmellick. The Sequence Batch Reactor was ready for commissioning and testing by mid June 2019 and after successful test results were confirmed the Sequence Batch Reactor went into full operation on the 27th of June 2019 and tankering ended.



The following are Laois County Council's Laboratory results for the before and after the upgrade and it shows the now high quality compliant discharge to the river.

Ballyroan WWTP Licence Parameters	Licence Results mg/L	Old Treatment Plant Results April 2019 mg/L	Sequence Batch Reactor Results July 2019 mg/L
Ammonia	1	25	0.2
CBOD	10	37.9	2.6
COD	125	133	44
Suspended Solids	25	66	<5

High Quality Final Treated Effluent From SBR Commissioned 27th June 2019

Because of the success of this low cost solution, Irish Water have now requested Laois to repeat this by adding another SBR using a second redundant steel tank which is currently being shot-blasted and spray painted before delivery to site. By reusing old assets, Laois County Council Water Services is supporting the objective for Circular Economy.

Performance Indicators 2018

% Drinking Water in private schemes in compliance with statutory requirements	95.95
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ENVIRONMENT

Senior Engineer: Michael O'Hora

The key aims of the Council's Environment Department are to promote sustainable development, to provide an environmentally efficient waste management infrastructure, to implement the Eastern Midlands Waste Management Plan and to maintain proper regulatory and monitoring systems for environmental protection and control of pollution.

The Environment Section is responsible for a range of statutory and non-statutory functions, which include:

- Environmental Complaint Management
- Waste Management
- Environmental Protection – Water, Air & Noise
- Litter Management – Prevention & Control
- Recycling & Civic Amenity Sites
- Planning

Each year as part of Laois County Council's commitments and obligations under EU & State rules, an RMCEI Plan (Recommended Minimum Criteria for Environmental Inspections) is developed outlining Laois County Council's inspection objectives. The RMCEI contains non-binding criteria for the planning, carrying out, following up and reporting on environmental inspections. Its objective is to strengthen compliance with EU environment law and to contribute to its more consistent implementation and enforcement in all Member States.

Environmental Complaint Management

The Environment Section operates an Environmental Complaints Management System and a free-phone litter/dumping reporting facility. Complaints are categorised and referred to the appropriate personnel for investigation. The following is the breakdown of complaints received in 2019:

Type	Complaints Investigated	Active	Resolved
Litter	660	660	58
Waste			602
Enforcement	133	133	28
Management & Infrastructure	23	23	0
Air	45	45	5
Water	24	24	5
Noise	19	19	1
Veterinary	12	12	18

Waste Management

Laois County Council's Waste Management (Storage, Presentation & Segregation of Household & Commercial Waste) Bye Laws 2018. These Bye-Laws place obligations on waste producers in households and commercial premises regarding storage, presentation, segregation of waste, contamination prevention and demonstration of proof that their waste is disposed of by an approved waste operator or brought by the waste producer to an authorised waste facility. Door to door household waste inspections commenced in November 2019.

Brown Bin Compliance

Under the EU Food Waste Regulations 2015, waste operators must provide and collect a food waste bin for all customers in agglomerations of over 500 people. The Regulations also places a duty on householders to segregate their food waste for collection. The Environment Section is in continuous communication with the authorised household waste collectors to promote and improve the roll out and operation of the brown bin service. Environment staff carried out 776 household waste inspections around the county and issued 1,035 advice letters.

Waste Enforcement

The Waste Enforcement Section is committed to maintaining and improving the high quality environment it has provided for the people of Laois through the enforcement of Waste Legislation and Regulation. The Section has had a successful year in resolving waste complaints and working closely with colleagues in the Planning Enforcement Section. In 2019, 133 waste enforcement related complaints were received.

The Environment Section is responsible for reviewing and issuing new Waste Facility Permits and Certificate of Registrations. In 2019, 15 Waste Facility Permit and Certificates of Registration were registered in Laois.

Waste Enforcement worked with the Waste Enforcement Regional Lead Authority (WERLA) in tackling national waste enforcement priorities in 2019 and will be focusing on national waste enforcement priorities for 2020 as directed by Eastern and Midlands Region WERLA. The National Waste Priorities 2020 - Improving Waste Management & Protecting Our Environment include:

- Waste Collection – Household & Commercial
- Continued Brown Bin roll-out
- Tackling Significant Illegal Waste Activities (Illegal Dumping & Unauthorised Movements of Waste)
- Construction & Demolition Waste Activities
- Multi-Agency Sites of Interest
- End of Live Vehicles
- Tracking of Waste Flows

Anti-Dumping Initiatives 2019

A number of projects were completed under the Anti-Dumping Initiative – Not in Our Nature, which was funded by the Department of Communications, Cli-

mate Action and Environment. The initiatives included:

a) Green Space Enforcement Race against Illegal Dumpers/Illegal Waste Collectors
Laois County Council staff and the Gardaí carried out several vehicle checkpoints in 2019. Fixed penalty notices were issued. Information was provided on the Council's Website about combating unauthorised waste collectors and illegal dumping.

b) Couch & Mattress Amnesty
Laois County Council received funding from the Department towards a Couch & Mattress Campaign, where members of the public could bring couches, armchairs and old, dirty mattresses to three specified locations around the county to be recycled, free of charge. A total of 1,150 couches, 1,325 armchairs and 2,403 mattresses were collected during this period for recycling.



c) Green Space Clean-Ups
There were a number of serious illegal dumping problems in a number of urban areas of the county. Clean-ups of these problem areas were carried out.

Clean-Up Laois Week

Our largest and longest running annual anti litter initiative, Clean-Up Laois week was held in April 2019 in association with our sponsor, AES(Ireland) Ltd

Clean-Up Laois Week, run in conjunction with An Taisce - National Spring Clean, represents a partnership approach to tackling the ongoing litter problem. Approximately 100 groups registered last year for the initiative, which resulted in a total of 63 tonnes of waste being collected.

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During the year the Council also appointed contractors to clean up a number of major litter/waste black spots around the county and approx 280 tonnes of waste was collected and disposed of.

Environmental Protection

Environmental Protection staff are involved in the implementation of legislation and policy regarding river water and groundwater quality, air quality and noise pollution as they apply in County Laois.

a) Water Quality

Laois County Council continued in 2019 to implement the national 'River Basin Management Plan 2018-2021'. This plan aims to improve water quality over the period 2018-2021, with a focus on 726 specific water bodies in 190 prioritised Areas for Action. The Council collected 415 river water samples for the EPA Surveillance and Operational monitoring programmes and took 129 investigative river water samples in 2019.

51 Nutrient Management Plans concerning the spreading of Sewage Sludge in the county were submitted to the Council for approval in 2019.

The Council continued to monitor discharge licenses to rivers and groundwater in 2019 under Section 4 of the Local Government (Water Pollution) Acts 1977 to 1990. A total of 50 samples were taken and analysed to ensure compliances with licenses. Ten licences were operational in 2019.

The Council also inspected septic tanks in accordance with the EPA's National Inspection Plan 2018 – 2021: Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems. A total of 24 inspections were carried out in 2019, as required by the Plan. 7 Advisory Notices were issued in 2019, as a result of these inspections.

Laois County Council investigated all complaints received concerning water pollution in the County. 25 water complaints were received in 2019.

b) Air Quality

There was 1 active Air Emissions License in the county in 2019. 45 complaints were received and investigated in 2019 concerning air quality. The nature of these complaints included agricultural odour problems and smoke

nuisance. 1 notice under Section 26 of the Air Pollution Act, 1987 was served in 2019. 84 smoky coal inspections were carried out in 2019.

c) Noise Pollution

19 noise complaints were received in 2019. Some of these complaints were domestic in nature and in these cases the Council encourages neighbours to discuss the problem between themselves and to come to an agreed solution. Other complaints concerned commercial/industrial activities in the County.

Litter Management - Prevention & Control

Laois County Council has 3 full-time Litter Prevention and Control Officers.

The Council issued 142 litter fines in 2019 and commenced legal proceedings in 23 cases for non-payment fines.

Recycling & Civic Amenity Sites

The Council operates 43 bring sites (bottle banks) together with the two Civic Amenity Sites at Kyletelesha Landfill, Portlaoise and Portarlington. Operation of sites and the range of facilities provided are reviewed on a regular basis.

Planning:

The Environment Section assesses applications received for planning permission for compliance with Environmental legislation and best practice.

The typical issues that are considered from an Environmental perspective are:

- The proper management of C&D/Site Clearance Waste
- Nutrient Management Plans
- Farmyard Management/Nitrates Directive
- Noise Impact Assessments
- Quarry Operations
- Anaerobic Digestion Plants

Midlands Energy Agency Overview of Energy Usage in 2019

The main energy users in Laois County Council are public lighting and buildings. The remainder of energy consumption relates to natural gas, oil and fuel for fleet vehicles.

INFRASTRUCTURE, WATER SERVICES, ENVIRONMENT, EMERGENCY SERVICES & SPECIAL PROJECTS

<p>The SEAI Annual Report 2019 on Public Sector Energy Efficiency Performance reports that Laois County Council made a 43.2% saving by the end of 2019 against the 33% target by 2020.</p> <p>Actions Undertaken in 2019</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued to work with Carlow, Kilkenny Energy Agency as our Energy advisors to the Midlands Energy Program Participated in the Better Energy Communities Programme 2019 in such projects as: <p>(i) Mountmellick Fire Station - Installation of a new smart heating control system to allow for improved energy efficiency and greater control of the heating system within the building.</p> <p>(ii) Dixons Transport - Installation of Solar PV panels</p> <p>(iii) Kilmartins N6 Service Station - Upgraded all of their food & beverage fridge cabinets with higher efficiency units with curtains to minimise the energy wasted to the near environment from refrigeration and maintain optimal conditions for their products</p> <p>In 2019 Laois County Council continued its programme of Street light replacements and replaced 1301 existing Sox and Son lights with LEDs. Total kWh savings to Laois were in the order of 336,524 kWhs.</p> <p>The Council continued in its participation of the OPW Optimising Power at Work Programme at County Hall. Gas and Electricity Meters have been installed to monitor energy usage and an ongoing energy awareness programme is running.</p>	Litter Pollution													
	% area unpolluted or litter free	22												
	% area slightly polluted	78												
	% area moderately polluted	0												
	% area significantly polluted	0												
	% area grossly polluted	0												
<p>% of Schools that have been awarded green flag status</p> <p>Health & Safety</p> <p>Health & Safety Officer: Jim Bolger</p>														
		52.63												
<p>The CORE Health and Safety module was reflected in the further development of our Safety Management System (SMS). Our initiative relative to cross-county safety auditing continued which was best exemplified by an audit of the Portlaoise Municipal District. In keeping with our programme of work we continued with our schedule of safety inspections across all our Directorates. Our Water Services Department continued to measure safety performance through Irish Waters' Health, Safety, Quality and Environmental (HSQE) auditing programme.</p> <p>There was a significant increase in the provision of safety induction training as many more new employees were engaged throughout the year. Ensuring the Council met with its statutory obligations the provision of 'manual handling' and 'safe pass' training was prioritised.</p>														
<p>Performance Indicators 2018</p> <table> <tr> <td>Total No. of households availing of a 3 bin service at 31/12/2018</td> <td>9,064</td> </tr> <tr> <td>% of households availing of a 3 bin service</td> <td>31.26</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total No. of Pollution cases that were the subject of a complaint during 2018</td> <td>917</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total No. of Pollution cases closed during 2018</td> <td>918</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total No. of Pollution cases on hand at 31/12/2018</td> <td>23</td> </tr> <tr> <td>% Local Authority Area within the 5 Levels of</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Total No. of households availing of a 3 bin service at 31/12/2018	9,064	% of households availing of a 3 bin service	31.26	Total No. of Pollution cases that were the subject of a complaint during 2018	917	Total No. of Pollution cases closed during 2018	918	Total No. of Pollution cases on hand at 31/12/2018	23	% Local Authority Area within the 5 Levels of		Keeping abreast of legislative developments is essential for our safe operation and accordingly the Council ensures that our legislative database is available to all employees that have access to the intranet.	
Total No. of households availing of a 3 bin service at 31/12/2018	9,064													
% of households availing of a 3 bin service	31.26													
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Total No. of Pollution cases closed during 2018	918													
Total No. of Pollution cases on hand at 31/12/2018	23													
% Local Authority Area within the 5 Levels of														
<p>Laois Civil Defence</p> <p>Laois Civil Defence is a volunteer based organisation whose members are proud to serve as a high quality back-up service, supporting the primary response agencies and the local community. Volunteers are multi-skilled and the main programmes of activity undertaken by the organisation are:</p>														

INFRASTRUCTURE, WATER SERVICES, ENVIRONMENT, EMERGENCY SERVICES & SPECIAL PROJECTS

- First Aid
Provision of first aid and ambulance service.
- Rescue Skills
Urban rescue, open country search for missing persons with Laois being one of the counties providing drones for aerial search
- Fire-fighting
Pumping floodwaters and supplying water to the community.
- Radio Communications
Operation of four independent radio systems U.H.F., V.H.F., Marine Band Radio and Tetra. These systems are operated from our aliased Operational Support Unit.

Laois County Fire & Rescue Service

Chief Fire Officer: Declan Power

The Fire Service continued to provide a quality service in the areas of Fire Prevention, Fire Brigade Operations, Community Fire Safety Awareness and Major Emergency Planning.

Laois County Fire & Rescue Service attended 635 emergency incidents consisting of 263 fires, 265 special service incidents and 107 false alarms.

To enhance equipment standards the programme for replacement and updating of equipment was continued in 2019. New breathing apparatus sets & cylinders, gas-tight chemical protective clothing, communications equipment and specialist rescue equipment was provided.

An extensive program of training for operational fire fighters was completed involving over 600 person days.

To enhance safety, health and welfare for fire crews the Standard Operational Guidelines program to implement a set of SOGs for fire brigade operations continued in 2019. In addition Health, Safety & Welfare Management Programme was approved by Senior Management and was reviewed 31 times throughout the year.

61 fire safety certificate applications and 86 licensing applications were received, with 139 planning applications also referred to the Fire Service during the year. 41 premises were inspected and 59 full during performance inspections were carried out on premises throughout the County. The during performance inspections covered public assembly type premises including large occupancy venues, public houses, night clubs etc

Extensive planning and liaison was carried out on large outdoor licensed events including the Electric Picnic Music Festival in Stradbally. 30 during performance inspections were carried out during the Electric Picnic weekend and numerous other inspections were carried out throughout the year on smaller licensed and unlicensed events.

The Fire Safety Primary Schools Programme was carried throughout the county between October and December 2019. All eight fire stations were involved. 64 primary schools were visited and fire safety advice / information was received by 1905 students.

The program for National Fire Safety Week was held between the 7th and 14th October. Fire stations throughout the County arranged open nights, which included presentations on fire safety attended by the public and groups from the local communities. Laois County Council Fire and Rescue Service with Local Link participation, ran a smoke detector in the home competition in local newspapers, radio, facebook , Twitter and on our www.laois.ie and subsequently installed smoke detectors in 356 homes throughout the County .

Laois County Council Fire and Rescue Service participated in 169 fire safety consultations with members of the public and fire safety consultants throughout 2019.

Laois County Fire & Rescue Service took part in the 2019 National Extrication & Trauma Challenge held in Sligo in April, winning the extrication challenge for the second consecutive year. The team then attended the World Rescue Challenge in France in September as national champions..

All Major Emergency Management facilities were maintained and all relevant plans, sub-plans and procedures were updated throughout the year.

Performance Indicators 2018

Cost per capita of the Fire Service

Cost per Capita	€48.93
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Average time taken in minutes to mobilise fire brigades in full-time stations in respect of fire	N/A
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Average time taken in minutes to mobilise fire brigades in part-time stations (retained fire service) in respect of fire	5.48
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INFRASTRUCTURE, WATER SERVICES, ENVIRONMENT, EMERGENCY SERVICES & SPECIAL PROJECTS

Average time taken in minutes to mobilise fire brigades in full-time stations in respect of all other (non-fire) emergency incidents	N/A
Average time taken in minutes to mobilise fire brigades in part-time stations (retained fire service) in respect of all other (non-fire) emergency incidents	5.11
Percentage of attendances at scenes % of cases in respect of fire in which first attendance at the scene is within 10 minutes	36.29%
% of cases in respect of fire in which first attendance at the scene is after 10 minutes but within 20 minutes	52.92%
% of cases in respect of fire in which first attendance at the scene is after 20 minutes	10.80%
% of cases in respect of all other emergency incidents in which first attendance at the scene is within 10 minutes	33.45%
% of cases in respect of all other emergency incidents in which first attendance at the scene is after 10 minutes but within 20 minutes	50.91%
% of cases in respect of all other emergency incidents in which first attendance at the scene is after 20 minutes	15.64%

Housing, Regeneration and Planning Strategic Policy Committee

Director of Services:	Joe Delaney
Chair:	Thomasina Connell, M.C.C.
Members	Sectoral
Mary Sweeney, M.C.C. Caroline Dwane Stanley, M.C.C. Catherine Fitzgerald, M.C.C Paschal McEvoy, M.C.C.	Michael Kelly Jr. (Development/ Construction) Bobby Fitzpatrick (Business/ Commercial) Michael Cobbe (Community/Voluntary) Sheelagh Coyle (Social Inclusion)
A/Senior Executive Officer:	Nicola Lawler
Senior Social Worker:	Fionnuala Daly

HOUSING SERVICES

The Core Objective for Housing is to ensure that all our citizens enjoy an adequate standard of housing accommodation appropriate to their needs, and as far as possible, in a location and tenure of their choice and to provide a responsive and supportive housing service for those in need of assistance.

Highlights during 2019

- Delivery of 95 units under Rebuilding Ireland which exceeded our given target of 86.
- Acquisition of 36 units for social housing in various locations across the county.
- Successful delivery of 207 grants for disabled and elderly people living in the county.
- The Vacant Homes Office took possession of 10 vacant houses in 2019 and the CPO process has been initiated in respect of a further 19 vacant houses.

Report on SPC

The Housing Strategic Policy Committee met 5 times, in February, March, June, September and December 2019 at which various issues were discussed and noted by Members.

Rebuilding Ireland Programme 2018 – 2021

The provision of housing is a core function of Laois County Council. In addition to the management of approximately 2206 units the Council is also tasked with delivering 627 new units by 2021. This will be provided through a variety of means including direct build, acquisitions, Part V units, leasing and in partnership with Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs).

- A total of 36 housing units were acquired in 2019.
- 13 capital schemes in Stradbally, Durrow, Rathdowney, Mountmellick, Ballyroan, Bally morris, Ballybrittas, Mountrath, Hillview and Harpur's Lane, Portlaoise are being progressed through the Department's Capital Stage Approval process.

Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan

The RBI Home Loan was introduced 1st February 2018 in all local authorities, including Laois. Since then 74 home loans have been approved and 67 declined.

Housing Assistance Payment

HAP commenced in Laois on 1st December 2016. The HAP office exceeded their target on a weekly basis throughout 2019. There were 889 tenancies active by 31st December 2019 with 77 of these having transferred from rent supplement. All HAP properties must be inspected within 8 months from the time that the first HAP payment is made to the landlord. A total of 632 inspections were made in 2019 which exceeds the target set down by the Department.

The new Homeless HAP Place Finder role was created in December 2018 to support homeless households in securing a HAP tenancy. In 2019, 49 homeless were accommodated through HAP.

Traveller Accommodation

The Members of Laois County Council approved the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024 at the September 2019 meeting. The programme set new targets for the provision of traveller specific accommodation for the five year period.

Estate Management

Estate management remains a key function for the Housing Section which provided a range of supports to various resident groups including grants where appropriate.

HOUSING, REGENERATION AND PLANNING

Private Grants

In 2019, grants totalling €1,785,700.00 were paid out under the Housing Adaptation Grant Schemes for Older People and People with a Disability. Through effective management of the funding available, the scheme remained open for all of 2019.

Housing Needs Assessment

A Housing Needs Assessment was carried out during the months of May and June 2019 and was completed and signed off on by the 11th July 2019. A total of 164 households were assessed. 809 households qualified for social housing support on the assessment date of the 11th June 2019. 58 households were determined not to qualify for social housing support.

Performance Indicators 2018

H1: Social Housing Stock

No of dwellings in the ownership of the Local Authority at 01/01/2018

2086

No. of dwellings added to the Local Authority owned stock during 2018 (whether constructed or acquired)

65

No. of Local Authority dwellings sold in 2018

5

No. of Local Authority dwellings demolished in 2018

0

No. of dwellings in the ownership of the Local Authority at 31/12/2018

2146

No. of Local Authority owned dwellings planned for demolition under a D/HPLG approved scheme

0

H2: Housing Vacancies

% of the Total Local Authority Dwellings that were vacant on 31/12/2018

0.79

Average Re-letting time and cost; Maintenance Cost by Unit

Average Time from date of vacation of dwelling to the date in 2018 when a new tenancy had commenced.

12.56 wks

Average cost expended on getting

the re-tenanted dwellings ready for re-letting

€6,414.29

Average per Unit Expenditure in 2018 on Repair and Maintenance of LA Housing

€533.86

H5: Private Rented Sector Inspections;

Total no. of registered tenancies in the local authority area at the end June 2018

4,109

No. of dwellings inspected in 2018

327

% Inspected dwellings in 2018 not compliant with standard regulations

96.94%

No. of non compliant dwellings that became compliant during 2018

11

H6: Long-term Homeless Adults

Number of adult individuals in emergency accommodation that are long-term homeless as a % of the total number of homeless adult individuals in emergency accommodation at end of 2018

85.71

No. of adults classified as homeless and in emergency accommodation on night of 31/12/2018

7

Approved Housing Bodies

Approved Housing Bodies (AHB) provide and manage social rented housing to people who are listed on the Laois housing list. The Council has a very positive working relationship with the Approved Housing Bodies who are active in the County.

PLANNING

Senior Planner: Angela McEvoy

Senior Executive Planner: Donal Kiely

The overall objective of the Planning Department is to implement the provisions of the Planning Acts and provide appropriate support measures in order to promote the physical, social and economical well being of the county so that living standards are protected and raised, and work opportunities fostered and created, having regard to the principles of sustainability. The Planning Department can be broken down into 5 separate areas:

- (i) Development Management
- (ii) Forward Planning
- (iii) Planning Enforcement
- (iv) Building Control
- (v) Unfinished Housing Estates

(i) Development Management

The number of planning applications received in 2019 was 737. However, it should be noted that 159 of the total applications received were invalid and required the applicant to submit a new application. The main reasons for invalidation of planning files were: public notices out of date, or not erected on site, previous permissions expired, agents name omitted from maps/drawings, no north point shown on maps and distances not shown on site layouts.

2019 Performance

The following table gives a breakdown of valid planning applications received and decisions made during 2019:

Number of valid applications received:	578 (Valid Applications)
Number of decisions made:	535 (Decisions Made)
Number of applications granted:	517 (Decisions to Grant)
Number of applications refused:	18 (Decisions to Refuse)
Invalid applications returned to applicant:	21.5% 159 (Invalid Applications)
Referrals to Area Offices (working days):	within 14 days achieved
Applications appealed to An Bord Pleanála in 2019:	17

Customer Service Initiatives

2019 saw the continuation of the scanning of planning applications as they are received. Throughout 2019, the public were able to access all planning applications on-line within two weeks of being received

399 pre-planning meetings were held in 2019, at which members of the public had an opportunity to discuss planning matters with a planner prior to submitting a planning application. The planners also facilitated the public by holding a number of pre-planning meetings on site.

48 Section 5 applications were processed by Laois County Council in 2019.

The Planning website continues to be a very popular attraction with 119,676 hits last year.

Licensing of Outdoor Events

An outdoor event is defined as a public performance which takes place wholly or mainly in the open air or in a structure with no roof or a partial, temporary or retractable roof, a tent or similar temporary structure and which consists of music, dancing, displays of public entertainment or any activity of a like kind. The organisers of such events are required to obtain a licence from the Planning Authority where the audience comprises of 5,000 or more people.

One such outdoor events occurred in County Laois in 2019 – the annual “Electric Picnic” music festival which has been held in Stradbally attracting over 55,000 people in September 2019.

(ii) Forward Planning

Forward Planning plays a pivotal role in the physical, economic and social development of county Laois. The Laois County Development Plan 2011-2019, provides the strategic framework and policy context within which the Local Authority makes its planning decisions.

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region was made on the 28th June 2019. The process of commencing a review of the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023 on foot of the adoption of the RSES will commence on the 6th January 2020.

HOUSING

2 year progress report on the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023

The Laois County Development Plan 2017 - 2023 was formally adopted by the Elected Members on the 26th June 2017 and came into effect on the 24th July 2017. There have been no variations to the Plan since its adoption. Under Section 15(2) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended "the Chief Executive of a planning authority shall, not more than 2 years after the making of a development plan, give a report to the members of the authority on the progress achieved in securing the objectives referred to in subsection (1)".

In addition, there is a requirement under Section 95 (3) (a) of the Act[s] for the Chief Executive to carry out a review of the progress achieved in implementing the Housing Strategy.

A progress report was submitted to the Elected Members in July 2019.

Conservation

Two separate grants schemes for Protected Structures were run by Laois County Council in 2019, with funding from the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

Built Heritage Investment Scheme 2019

- €60,000 allocated to Laois County Council by DCHG
- Allocated to 7 projects across the county

BHIS 18/ LS01 Abbeyleix Old Church, Abbey Leix Demesne €10,000

BHIS 18/ LS02 Town Hall, Parnell Street, Mountmellick Co. Laois €10,000

BHIS 18/ LS03 St. Paul's Church, French Church Street, Portarlington €10,000

BHIS 18/ LS04 Thatched House, Raheenahoran, The Heath, Portlaoise €6,000

BHIS 18/ LS05 Tinakill House, Raheen, Mountrath €5,000

BHIS 18/ LS06 St. Fintan's Church, The Square , Durrow Co. Laois €12,000

BHIS 18/ LS07

Oatlands, Green Road, Ballyroan, Co. Laois €7,000

Structures at Risk Fund

The following projects were successful in getting grants in 2019

- Roundwood House,
- Stradbally Hall
- Midland House, Portlaoise.

Section 57 Declarations

A total of 8 no. section 57 Declarations in relation to works to Protected Structures at various locations throughout County Laois were processed in 2019.

Local Authority Development (Part 8 Projects)

Part 8 consent for the following Local Authority projects was granted during 2019:

1. Hepburn Court Redevelopment, Ballyfin Road, Portlaoise (January 2019)
2. Construction of fire tower and a new single storey garage attached to existing fire station at Mountrath Fire Station, Shannon Road, Mountrath, Co Laois (January 2019)
3. Regeneration works at O' Moore Place, Mountmellick Road, Portlaoise (January 2019)
4. Housing Development of 10 dwellings at Pattison Estate , Mountmellick (January 2019)
5. Housing Development of 20 dwellings at Gleann na Glaise, Ballyroan (February 2019)
6. Housing Development of 39 dwellings at Abbeyleix Road, Portlaoise (September 2019)
7. Housing Development of 22 dwellings at Seandoire, Cork Road Durrow, Co Laois. (October 2019)
8. Housing Development of 6 dwellings at Harbour Court, Mountmellick (November 2019)

(iii) Planning Enforcement

The Planning Authority, in accordance with the statutory requirements under the Planning and Development Acts 2000 as amended, seeks to ensure compliance with planning permissions and also to prevent unauthorised development.

Work was continued in 2019 by the Enforcement Team to ensure that any breaches of planning law were investigated and followed up.

HOUSING, REGENERATION AND PLANNING

In 2019, 37 enforcement cases were listed for court proceedings and while some cases are still ongoing, 12 cases have been successfully resolved during 2019.

The Planning Authority served 103 enforcement notices, 349 warning letters and investigated 191 new complaints all of which highlight the active pursuit of planning non-compliance and unauthorised development by our Enforcement Section.

Derelict Sites

The Council is implementing its powers under the Derelict Sites Act 1990 targeting those properties which are on the Derelict Sites Register. Working with the owners of those properties, the outstanding issues are being dealt with and those properties that are no longer deemed 'derelict' are removed from the Register.

Total number of new files opened in 2019: 21

Total number of files closed in 2019: 90

Total number of active files 31/12/2019: 122

Vacant Sites

16 sites were entered onto the Vacant Sites Register at the 1st January 2019. These related to sites within Portlaoise, Portarlington, Mountmellick and Graiguecullen. 9 of the sites were appealed to An Bord Pleanala. 2 sites were removed from the Register by An Board Pleanla and 3 were confirmed to remain on the Register. A decision was yet to be made on the remaining 4 sites at end of 2019. Valuations will be sought on these sites in 2020 to allow for the Vacant Site levy to be applied.

(iv) Building Control

The Building Control Section deal with all commencement notices received, and carries out inspections on the buildings to ensure they comply with the various Building Control regulations.

Number of valid commencement notices received 225

Number of commencement notices for Change of Use /Alterations/Renovations/ Extensions 51

Number of Commercial Building Notices (15 No of commercial buildings covered) 15

Number of Dwellings covered by valid commencement notices:	392
(Of which 123 no. are "one off" dwellings)	
Number of buildings inspected	78
Number of buildings inspected as a % of buildings covered by valid Commencement notices:	19.1%

(v) Unfinished Housing Estates

Laois County Council is responsible for the taking in charge of estates. In 2019, 14 estates as outlined in the table below were taken in charge . Traditionally this occurred when a request was received from the developer of the estate and/or the owners of the houses within the estate. However, in recent years, where the developer has failed to complete the estate, Laois County Council has intervened to complete the estate and this work, where possible, is funded from the bond. This policy of actively pursuing the developer and Bond holder will continue in 2019.

The following estates were taken in charge in 2019:

1. Westlands, Portlaoise
2. Summerhill, Portlaoise
3. Chantiere Gate, Portlaoise
4. Woodgrove, Portlaoise
5. Woodgrove Lawns, Portlaoise
6. Fruithill Manor, Graiguecullen
7. Springhill Court, Graiguecullen
8. Cluinin, Mountrath
9. Knockiel Drive, Rathdowney
10. Davitt Court, Mountmellick
11. Mill Lane, Mountrath
12. Doireann Alainn, Ballylinan
13. Highfield Manor, Graiguecullen
14. Whitethorn Grove

The Planning Department endeavour to liaise with the residents of unfinished estates to keep them fully informed of progress.

Broadband 2019

The Broadband Officer continues to work with the Department of Rural and Community Development - (DRCD) on the following projects :

- The provision of Broadband Connection Points (BCP's) @ 12 locations within the County in conjunction with the rollout of the National Broadband Plan;

HOUSING, REGENERATION AND PLANNING

- Laois County Council were awarded four (4) WiFi4EU vouchers in Q4 of 2019. The WiFi4EU initiative promotes free access to Wi-Fi connectivity for citizens in public spaces including parks, squares, public buildings, libraries, health centres and museums in municipalities throughout Europe. Work on activating these vouchers will continue in 2020.

The Broadband Officer continued to work with infrastructure and network providers in the roll out of connections in both rural and urban areas during 2019.

Rural Mobile Networks Enhanced and Extended Project

The Dense Air project (Mobile Networks Enhanced and Extended) in relation to the provision of Wi – Fi to the Donaghmore Famine Museum and 4 residential homes as part of a pilot scheme was launched and went live in September 2019. The project was launched by Minister Sean Canny, T.D. Minister of State for Community Development, Natural Resources & Digital Development. The connections have been made to the 5 premises and this has allowed for online payments in the Museum and the development of an App for visitors. This has allowed home owners run successful businesses and also the opportunity to work from home.

Local Digital Strategy

Work commenced on the preparation of a Local Digital Strategy in 2019. Internal sections and external groups were consulted to ascertain the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to inform the strategy development in 2020. It is anticipated that a Strategy will be developed in Q2 2020.

Performance Indicators 2018

New buildings inspected

New buildings inspected as a percentage of new buildings notified to the local authority 12.21%

No. of local authority planning decisions which were the subject of an appeal to An Bord Pleanála that were determined by the Board in 2018 7

% of the determinations that confirmed (with or without variation)

the decision made by the local authority 100%

Performance of Enforcement cases closed as resolved

Total no. of planning cases referred to or initiated by the local authority during 2018 that were investigated 134

Total no of cases closed during 2018 130

% closed cases dismissed under Section 152(2), or statute barred or exempted development 35.38%

% closed cases resolved to the Local Authority's satisfaction through negotiation 2.31%

% closed cases due to enforcement proceedings 62.31%

Total Number of Planning cases being investigated as at 31/12/2018 142

Applications for Fire Safety Certificates

% of applications for fire safety certificates received in 2018 that were decided within two months of their receipt 62.86%

% of applications for fire safety certificates received in 2018 that were decided within an extended period agreed with the applicant 28.57%

HERITAGE

The Heritage Section continued to deliver a successful series of projects, events and activities on the heritage of Laois in 2019. Highlights included:

1. Historic Portlaoise Projects

The regeneration of Fitzmaurice Place was completed during 2019 with conservation of part of the Fort Protector at the historic core of Portlaoise. This work was part of a Historic Towns Initiative project started in 2018, and received Urban Regeneration and Development funding during 2019. Further work to the

historic core of the town will continue through 2020.



Old Saint Peter's graveyard in Portlaoise, one of the earliest place of worship in the town, is part of the Adopt a Monument Scheme, and during 2019 in partnership with Portlaoise Tidy Towns, the historic iron railings around the grave of the Jacobs' family in the graveyard were conserved, with the help of Creative Ireland and the Heritage Council. Work in 2020 will focus on the 16th century bell tower, boundary walls, iron work and grave memorials, with biodiversity enhancements.

2. Laois Heritage Plan Projects 2019

Projects undertaken in 2019 with the support of the Heritage Council include

Heritage Awareness

Heritage Week took place on 17 – 25 August 2019 and with over 60 events across the county ranging from a walk through the prehistoric landscape of the Heath to bat walks and history talks. For Science Week in November, in addition to events at Libraries and schools, an outreach project with the National Museum of Ireland and Midlands Science saw a Viking Discovery Day in Portlaoise for schools and families and a evening presentation on Bog Bodies by National Museum staff.

Connecting Communities

This project draws together communities and their local heritage, with a focus in 2019 on Timahoe:

- The School of Irish Archaeology were at the Timahoe Heritage Festival in June, with two days of archaeology workshops for young people. The Timahoe Heritage Guide was reprinted for the event also.

- Archaeological research and land management is ongoing. A landscaper carried out significant management of the vegetation on site and a topo graphical survey has been completed. All work was supervised by Dave Pollock Archaeologist and the National Monuments Service.

Heritage Publications

The Guide to Swifts was published and launched in June, in association with BirdWatch Ireland. A Heritage Guide to the Heath was published with Archaeology Ireland magazine, and launched during Heritage Week. The Buildings of Ireland: Central Leinster book on the architecture of Laois, Offaly and Kildare was launched in October 2019. Funding through the Heritage Council was provided for research for this book in past years.



3. Conservation Projects

A number of practical conservation projects were undertaken at historic sites in Laois during 2019. This involved conservation of masonry at three medieval church sites:

- Killabban Medieval Church near Ballylinan – an ongoing conservation project at the 15th century church continued in 2019, in partnership with the local community, funded through the Municipal District.
- Kilteale Church near the Rock of Dunamase – the arch in the east end of this medieval church was on the verge of collapse and was conserved in 2019 with Municipal District support.
- Kilmanman Church outside Clonaslee has suffered from weather damage in recent years and a masonry conservation project was commenced with support from Creative Ireland.



tion with built and natural heritage, the biodiversity crisis etc, and will set the agenda for action on heritage at local level.

A new Laois Heritage Plan for 2020 to 2025 will be written and adopted by Laois County Council during 2020. This will be the fourth Heritage Plan for the county.

4. National Biodiversity Action Plan Actions

A project to raise awareness of pollinators and everyday biodiversity was undertaken with the support of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht through the National Biodiversity Action Plan. A set of nine radio ads with information on different actions that could be undertaken to protect bees was recorded and broadcast on Midlands 103. A booklet on promoting garden biodiversity was commissioned and will be published in 2020.

5. Conservation Grants

Two conservation grant schemes for historic properties ran in 2019, the Historic Structures Fund for larger scale conservation works and the Built Heritage Investment Scheme for smaller works and maintenance. In total ten projects in Laois were funded, with seven under the BHIS and three major conservation projects under the larger Historic Structures Fund. Buildings in Portlaoise, Portarlington, Mountrath, Mountmellick, Stradbally, Ballyroan, Abbeyleix, Durrow and The Heath were conserved and the total grant budget was €140,000. The schemes will run again in 2020.

6. National and Local Heritage Plans Heritage Ireland 2030

During 2019 public consultation on the draft National Heritage Plan, Heritage Ireland 2030 was undertaken in Laois. The final plan is expected to be published by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in early 2020. The new plan will contain the most recent national thinking in relation to topical issues such as climate change and its interac-

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Head of Finance: Gerry Murphy

Financial/Management Accountant: Julie Bergin

The Finance Department is responsible for the following services:

Motor Taxation, Accounts Payable, Revenue Collection (Rates, Fire charges, Rents, Loans, Development Contributions), NPPR, Preparation of Annual Budgets and Financial Statements, Financial Management and all ancillary matters.

Commercial Rates

The General Annual Rate on Valuation was €0.2217

Prompt Payment of Accounts

The Council complies with the terms of the Prompt Payments Act as amended by the European Communities (Late Payment in Commercial Transactions) Regulations.

Total number of late payments in excess of €250:

Nil

Performance Indicators 2018

5 year summary of revenue account balance

2014	€-393,286
2015	€-297,863
2016	€-198,369
2017	€-128,095
2018	€- 68,333

5 year summary of % collection levels for major revenue sources

The individual % figures for each of
 (a) Rates, (b) Rent & Annuities and
 (c) Housing Loans 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018

	2014,	2015,	2016,	2017,	2018
Rates	69%	75%	76%	75%	76%
Rent &					
Annuities	95%	96%	95%	96%	96%
Housing Loans	62%	64%	65%	68%	72%

MOTOR TAXATION

This Section provides a service for all motor tax transactions and any issues pertaining to ownership and other queries. Online taxation currently equates to 58% of overall motor tax business in Laois. A small percentage continue to utilise the postal service option. Since November 2018, owners of small public service vehicles (taxis, hackneys & limousines) can now tax remotely on the Department's online website www.motortax.ie. The total transactions carried out by this office in 2019 is 39,243.

Rates

Motor Tax for vehicles registered after 1 July 2008 is determined on the basis of CO2 bands or cubic capacity of engine, whichever is less. Taxes range from €120 a year for the greenest cars to €2,350 for cars with the highest emissions ratings. Motor tax rates are graduated as one moves up the CO2 emissions. The rates were last revised in January 2016 with two main changes i.e significant reductions for heavy goods vehicles with an unladen weight from 4,001kg to 12,000kg, and from 12,001kg.

Vehicle Licences

Gross income for the year is €5,809,117 a reduction of €606,576 compared with €6,415,693 in 2018. The noted fall in income is expected from steady increase in online tax renewals and less taxation on newer vehicles.

Off the Road Declarations

If a vehicle is not going to be used in a public place, a statutory declaration must be completed in advance of the vehicle being taken off the road and whilst in current tax. Exceptions are first time registrations in the State or change of ownership in which a 21 day timeframe applies. A vehicle can be declared off the road for a period not less than 3 months and not greater than 12 months. In 2019, 610 SORD applications were processed.

Trade Plates

Trade Plates are special registration plates obtained by motor traders/repairers in order to transport vehicles on the road that may not yet have been registered or taxed. An annual charge of €353 is applicable. In 2019, 33 such plates issued with 1 replacement set of plates.

Trailer Cards

New and imported trailers must be registered with their local Motor Tax office. A trailer card will issue for the trailer/semi-trailer at a cost of €60 which should be renewed annually. 39 issued in Laois in 2019 with a further 8 replacement cards.

Vehicle Testing Procedures

Certificates of Roadworthiness for commercial/goods vehicles are carried out by the Commercial Vehicle Test Centres. Customers receive a pass statement at the garage and a new style CRW by post. The NDVF system is automatically updated with CRW details.

Vehicle Registration Procedures

The Revenue Commissioners appoint the National Car Testing Services (NCTS) to carry out vehicle registration functions on their behalf. Contact enquiries at 01 4135994 or for online bookings at 01 4135975/www.nct.ie/vrt.

Vehicle Testing (NCT & CVRT)

Testing of private vehicles continues to be carried out at the various test centres located around the Country. In Laois, the test centre is located at Lismard Business Centre, Timahoe Road, Portlaoise, Co. Laois.

Changes were implemented by the RSA from May 2018 regarding the Commercial Vehicle Roadworthiness Test System which mainly impacts vintage, converted, imported vehicles and fast tractors. Check out www.cvrt.ie for further information.

Performance indicators at 31st December 2018

% of Motor Tax transactions dealt with at the public counter	
35.63%	
% Motor Tax transactions dealt with by post	3%
% Motor Tax transactions dealt with online	61.37%
Average number of public opening hours per week	28.5 hours
Number of Vehicle Licence postal applications % of overall postal applications which were dealt with:	
a) On the same day	
98.71%	
b) On the 2nd or 3rd day	0.75%
c) On the 4th or 5th day	0.00%
d) Over 5 days	0.54%

Property Management Section

The Property Management Section carried out the day-to-day property management functions of the Council while also maintaining the Property Interest Register system. Acquisitions and disposals of property and land are administered through this section in cooperation with the relevant sections along with any leasing arrangements. Land Registry searches were also all carried out in 2019 together with the mapping and recording of historical land and property assets of the Council. The Fixed Asset Register is continuously updated to reconcile with the Property Interest Register.

Revenue Collection

Housing Loans	31.12.2018	31.12.2019
a) Amount collected at year end as a percentage of amount due	72%	75%
b) Percentage of arrears:		
(i) Less than 1 mth	1%	25%
(ii) 1-2 Mths	2%	17%
(iii) 2 – 3 months old	2%	12%
(iv) more than 3 months old	95%	46%

Rents

a) Amount collected at year end as a percentage of amounts due	96%	96%
b) Percentage of arrears		
(i)Less than four weeks	10%	11%
(ii)4-6 weeks	10%	10%
(iii)6-12 weeks	15%	13%
(iv)greater than12 weeks	65%	66%

Commercial Rates

Amount collected at year end as a percentage of amount due	76%	80%
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Annual Financial Statement 2019

Revenue Account	Gross Expenditure 2019	Income 2019	Net Expenditure 2019
Expenditure by Division	€	€	€
Housing & Building	13,472,523	14,466,914	(994,391)
Road Transportation & Safety	19,393,728	13,932,826	5,460,903
Water & Sewerage	4,185,030	4,222,794	(37,764)
Development Incentives & Controls	7,072,803	3,645,849	3,426,953
Environmental Protection	7,639,099	1,701,188	5,934,911
Recreation & Amenity	4,745,818	1,060,046	3,685,772
Agriculture, Education, Health & Welfare	2,080,972	1,565,135	515,837
Miscellaneous	10,669,709	8,083,680	2,586,029
Total Expenditure/Income	69,259,680	48,681,431	

Net cost of programmes to be funded from Rates & Local Government Fund	20,578,250
Rates	13,237,004
Pension Levy	-
Local Government Fund - General Purpose Grant	9,052,793
Surplus for Year before Transfers	1,711,547
Transfers from/(to) Reserves	(1,638,205)
Overall Surplus for Year	73,343
General Reserve @ 1st January 2019	(68,334)
General Reserve @ 31st December 2019	5,009

Capital Account

Balance @ 01.01.2019	6,098,765
Grants	23,040,938
Other Income	6,302,185
Transfer from/to Revenue	1,171,673
Expenditure	(28,964,834)
Balance @ 31.12.2019	7,648,727

Enterprise, Economic Development and Tourism Strategic Policy Committee

Head of Finance/Director of Economic Development: Gerry Murphy

Head of Local Enterprise (Local Enterprise Office) Evelyn Reddin

Chair: Conor Bergin, M.C.C.

Members

	Sectoral
Aisling Moran	Pat Hennessy, Agriculture/Farming
Seamus McDonald	Pat Culleton, Development/ Construction
Aidan Mullins	Bernie Everard Business/ Commercial Deirdre O'Connell - Hopkins Trade Union P J Phelan, Community/Voluntary

The Business Support Unit of the Council incorporates the Local Enterprise Office and the Economic Development Team to form a central point of contact for existing and prospective businesses. The Business Support Unit aims to nurture a pro-business environment which supports enterprise and promotes Laois nationally and globally as a location of choice for business and investment.

During the year, the BSU worked closely with stakeholders in the county to promote Laois as a place to do business and are delighted to have been associated with some exciting job announcements during the year.

In February, Pat McDonagh, founder of Supermac's and owner of SO Hotel Groups, announced 100 new jobs with the re-development of the Killeshin Hotel and the new plaza outlet at J17 National Enterprise Park which is currently under construction and expected to open in May 2020.

In April, Greenfield Global Inc, Canada's largest producer of alcohol and fuel ethanol, and one of the largest alcohols and solvents companies in North America, announced plans to establish an EU manufacturing headquarters in Portlaoise. The project is expected to create 75 high-quality jobs over the next five years. The new 3,800-sq-m manufacturing headquarters in Portlaoise is currently being constructed

on the IDA Ireland Business and Technology Park and is expected to be operational in the second quarter of 2020. An estimated 100 jobs are expected to be created during the construction and fit-out phase of the project.

Laois Taste



Laois TASTE was a co-funded project with the Department of Agriculture Food & the Marine, Laois County Council, Local Enterprise Office Laois & Laois Partnership, working with local food & beverage producers to stimulate the local food & drink sector in the county.

The Project consisted of 4 elements:

Development of a Laois food Brand 'Laois You're WELCOME to TASTE' which promotes Laois' unique offering as a food destination and provides a recognisable logo to differentiate local produce from its competitors. The brand will also enable the recently formed Laois Food & Drinks group to properly brand and market their activities from the outset.

Introduction of a Provenance Scheme – the scheme fosters relationships between local producers and hotels, cafes and food retailers. It includes the production of a local producers' directory which has been distributed to restaurants, cafes and food retailers throughout the county.

October 2019 was designated as 'Laois TASTE Month', and a number of different events were organised to showcase what Laois has to offer in terms of locally produced food and drink. Over 200 people attended a 'Meet the Maker' event in the Killeshin Hotel on 17th October 2019. The evening consisted of a cookery demonstration by Medley Chef, Andrew Rudd and Darina Allen gave the keynote speech. This event gave people the

opportunity to meet the makers of locally produced food and drink . The other events held throughout the month of October facilitated food businesses to make connections and network.

The final element of the project was the production of two promotional videos. The aim of these videos was to enhance Laois' reputation as a food destination showcasing produce from the various producers and from the local farmers market. These videos are being used on websites and social media channels to further promote and market the Laois Food & Beverage Sector to a wider audience.

Laois Chamber of Commerce



Key stakeholders including the Council's Business Support Unit, Local Enterprise Office Laois, Chambers Ireland and local businesses had been working together for over a year to re-establish the Laois Chamber of Commerce. The newly established Laois Chamber was officially launched on 24th September, 2019 under the guidance of new CEO Bernie Everard and President of Laois Chamber, Martin Crowley. This marks a major achievement for businesses in county Laois which has been without a Chamber for the past number of years. The new Chamber of Commerce is located in Lyster Square, Portlaoise adjoining the Public Participation Network building.

Connect2Laois Website

Laois County Council's "Connect2Laois" website is centred around marketing Laois as a place to do business. The website contains numerous networks - a local business network and a diaspora network. It also hosts a database of lands available for enterprise development in Laois and portrays key location towns in the County. Laois County Council also have a "Connect2Laois" newsletter which complement the website and further promotes the enterprise potential of the county.

Town & Village Renewal Scheme

2019 saw the official opening of two new digital hubs in Laois. Bloom HQ officially opened in May 2019 while the Beale Centre in Mountmellick opened in July 2019.

Bloom HQ was conceived with a dual purpose in mind - to combine a hi-tech co-working space with a community space to promote better work/life balance. The facilities include extensive office space, meeting rooms and training areas which are complimented by a health and fitness centre with a modern gym offering a range of classes including; martial arts, fitness training, yoga, mindfulness, stress management, drama, musical theatre and more.

The Beale Centre is a state of the art co-working facility with 44 desks, meeting rooms, relaxation area, canteen and privacy booths. In conjunction with these facilities, the centre also offers free parking, an on-campus restaurant, an on-campus crèche, a nearby river walk and community park. Both hubs received funding from Laois County Council and from the Department of Rural & Community Development through the Town & Village Renewal Scheme.

Incentives and Supports for 2019

2019 was a busy year for the Business Support Unit with a large volume of businesses applying for the Shop Front Grant Scheme, Business Incentive Scheme and Rates Reduction Scheme. 16 businesses were approved for the Shopfront Grant Scheme which gives businesses the opportunity to improve/repair their shop facade and a further 16 businesses were approved for the Business Incentive Scheme which provides grant relief on commercial rates for eligible vacant properties.

J17 National Enterprise Park

The J17 National Enterprise Park is a strategic land bank which occupies approximately 192 hectares to the South West of Portlaoise town. In 2017, Laois County Council acquired approximately 32 ha of these lands and in 2018 Arup Consultant Engineers completed an updated masterplan for the Enterprise Park. This masterplan will ensure the integrated and coordinated development of land at this location to ensure it is a viable economic zone which will be a major boost to the economy of Portlaoise and will contribute to the growth of the county and the region . Two companies have already acquired sites at this location–Glanbia Cheese EU Limited and Alpha Drives Ltd. Glanbia Cheese EU Limited are on programme to be operational/ in production by mid 2020.

The provision of roads and services infrastructure has been tendered and are currently under construction with phase 1 and 2 due for completion in the second quarter of 2020 and Phase 3 due for completion by the end of the third quarter in 2020.

The BSU will continue to market and promote this location to international and national companies in 2020.

Portlaoise Town Team



The Business Support Unit worked closely with the Portlaoise Town Team to achieve the objectives set out in the Portlaoise Town Team Action Plan. The marketing sub-committee of the Town Team launched a number of initiatives in 2019 including the new map of Portlaoise Town. The Unit also co-funded a number of marketing initiatives by Downtown Portlaoise throughout the year to support the various events being held in the town.

Portlaoise Farmers Market

The Business Support Unit worked closely with the Farmers Market in 2019. A working group was established to develop and promote the farmers market in Portlaoise. Initiatives included the purchase of branded gazebos, other marketing material designed to enhance the appearance of the market and the re-location of the market to Peppers Lane which is seen as a more convenient and popular location for both traders and customers alike.

Local Enterprise Office (LEO)

The Local Enterprise Office (LEO) which is an office of the local authority, acts as a "First Stop Shop" for anyone seeking information and support on starting or growing a business in Laois. Our role, as LEO Laois, is to drive the development of local enterprise, putting local micro and small business at the heart of job creation. LEO Laois support business start-ups and works to increase the job potential of new and existing micro and small businesses with information,

advice, training, mentoring, seminars and selective financial support. The LEO plays a key role in supporting entrepreneurship and enterprise development along with other key stakeholders in the county to ensure a more co-ordinated approach to enterprise support.

2019 was a very productive year for LEO Laois. A total of €358,091 in developmental grant aid, trading online vouchers and technical assistance for micro export grants was approved for 53 businesses. 2019 saw an increase in participants on training courses and a higher demand for mentoring. All of these supports were promoted to, made available for, and tailored specifically towards the needs of small, micro and start-up businesses in Laois.

Supporting our clients

LEO can provide different types of grant assistance to eligible Laois businesses to help fund start-up costs, expansion plans, entry into new markets and job growth. In 2019, €280,214 was approved in grant aid to 15 Laois companies with potential to create 72 additional full-time jobs.

Business training is one of the most important supports offered to local enterprises which are tailored to meet specific business requirements. In 2019, a total of 54 training programmes were delivered with 539 participants.

298 mentoring assignments were managed, between experienced mentors and client companies in specific areas such as finance, social media, marketing, health & safety, strategic planning, etc

Informal networking with other business owners is one of the most important supports entrepreneurs can avail of. In recognition of this, LEO held a business networking event in 2019 which saw over 100 Laois business owners meet, share ideas and listen to some engaging speakers.

Promoting Entrepreneurship

During the year LEO co-ordinated a series of enterprise programmes and events that promote entrepreneurship across all sectors which included:

- Local Enterprise Week

This initiative features a series of activities designed to support the ambitions of aspiring entrepreneurs and small business owners. As part of our on-going commitment to enterprise in the county, a series of free seminars/one-to-one mentoring clinics were held during Enter

prise Week from the 3rd -8th March, with over 100 local entrepreneurs taking part in the various events.

- Local Enterprise Village

31 small businesses were supported by their Local Enterprise Office to exhibit their products and services inside the Local Enterprise Village at Ballintrane, Fenagh, Co Carlow. The 3 day event in September 2019 attracted almost 300,000 visitors. LEO clients were also supported with specialist training and photography services to enable them to maximise selling and marketing opportunities during the ploughing championships. Laois was represented by Sile Headen from Machado Mens Grooming Products, who manufacture a natural range of products including shaving lotions and balms.



- National Women's Enterprise Day

National Women's Enterprise Day is an annual date recognising the important role of women in business. Over 120 female entrepreneurs from Laois, Offaly, Longford and Westmeath attended National Women's Enterprise Day on Thursday 17th October in Gloster House, Birr, Co. Offaly. Nationally over 1,700 female participants attended events around the country.

- National Enterprise Awards

The National Enterprise Awards Competition is designed to recognise and reward the commitment, dedication and entrepreneurial spirit of small businesses at local and national level. Hanlon Woodcraft Ltd represented Laois in the final of the 2019 Awards. Hanlon Woodcraft is a kitchen and furniture manufacturing business based in Ballacolla, Co. Laois. Hanlon Woodcraft were selected based on their sustainable growth strategy which has seen the business grow on a continuous basis since its founda-

tion.

Meet The Buyer On The Street

The Local Enterprise Office network organised an event "Meet The Buyer On The Street" in Limerick Institute of Technology on Thursday 23rd May in conjunction with the Irish Food and Drinks Quality Awards. 90 key industry buyers from supermarkets, hotels and food service outlets in Ireland and Britain were in attendance at the event giving them an opportunity to meet with the participating producers. Laois were represented by Ballykilcavan Brewing Company (Stradbally), Le Skinny Chef (Portlaoise) and The Jungle Food Company (Mountmellick).

Building for the Future

An important part of our work is the fostering of an enterprise culture in Laois and encouraging people to consider entrepreneurship as a viable career option. LEO strongly encourages youth entrepreneurship through various programmes to support and nurture the next generation of business owners and leaders.

- Student Enterprise Awards

Over 300 students from 7 Laois second-level schools took part in the 2018/2019 Student Enterprise Programme. This programme encourages students to research, set-up and run their own business with the help of a student enterprise co-ordinator.

The national final of the Student Enterprise Awards took place on the 3rd May in Croke Park. Laois were well represented by "Hurlz Stands" from St Mary's CBS in the senior category who designed an innovative wall mounted stand to hold hurds and helmets. Laois was represented in the intermediate category by "Rudaí Beaga" from Dunamase College. "Hurlz Stands" came second in the senior category, a first for Laois.



- Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur

Aimed at 18 to 35 year olds, Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur (IBYE) is a €2 million investment competition run by the network of Local Enterprise Offices. The competition is an initiative of the Department of Business, Enterprise & Innovation and supported by Enterprise Ireland.

64 local entrepreneurs entered the 2019 competition with 3 companies representing Laois at the Regional Finals held in Westmeath – Dr. Diane Cooper, True Fitness (Best Idea); Aisling Kirwan, Integrileads (Best Start Up) and Amie Colgan, Nuvo Personnel (Best Established Business).

Dr. Diane Cooper went on to represent Laois at the National Finals in Google Headquarters on the 15th September. Dr. Cooper is a founding Director of True Fitness and has developed a new business idea 'Know Your Insulin' point-of-care testing device which will allow for the global measurement of insulin resistance.



Collaborating with Stakeholders

Collaboration is the key to enterprise success and LEO worked closely with many stakeholders in 2019, including:

- Microfinance Ireland

In 2019, LEO assisted 9 companies with their Microfinance loan applications. Microfinance Ireland was established to deliver the Government's Micro-Enterprise Loan Fund. It provides loans up to €25,000 to commercially viable businesses that employ fewer than ten people, with an annual turnover of less than €2million.

- Trading Online Vouchers

Designed to assist small businesses to trade more online under the National Digital Strategy,

the Trading Online Voucher Scheme offers companies training and advice, along with financial assistance of up to €2,500. The scheme is funded by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, and delivered by the Local Enterprise Offices nationally. 29 approvals to the value of €62,073 were secured by LEO Laois under the Trading Online Voucher Scheme, supporting the creation of 45 new jobs in 2019.

Brexit Support

A key issue for LEO going forward will be assisting small businesses impacted by Brexit. Working in partnership with Enterprise Ireland, Local Authorities and other state agencies, LEO offers a range of supports to help micro-enterprises and small businesses prepare for the challenges.

In 2019, these supports and programmes were focused on innovation, export market diversification, competitiveness and information sharing as follows:

- Technical Assistance Grants for Micro Exporters

Technical Assistance Grants for Micro Exporters (TAME) provides an incentive for LEO clients to explore and develop new market opportunities. These grants, with a maximum value of €2,500, are used to part-fund expenditure to investigate and research export markets and to increase the number of LEO clients developing new export opportunities. 9 Laois companies were approved for assistance under TAME in 2019 totalling €15,804.

- Prepare Your Business for Custom

On 21st March LEO hosted a one day seminar on "Preparing Your Business for Customs". This event was aimed at local businesses who currently trade directly with Britain or who use Britain as a landbridge to trade with other countries. The event looked at all potential legal and customs requirements that might arise from the various future trading relationships that might be implemented with Britain post-Brexit and advised all participants of practical steps they could take to ensure that their business was prepared for any eventuality that might arise.

- Revenue Brexit Information Seminar

LEO supported the Revenue Commissioners

FINANCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

to deliver a Brexit seminar in Portlaoise. The purpose of this seminar was to advise businesses of potential impacts of Brexit and to show them how to address challenges that might arise.

- Brexit Advisory Clinic

One-to-One mentoring was availed of by 6 Laois companies seeking advice on the best way to prepare for Brexit.

- Lean for Micro

The Lean for Micro Programme helps LEO clients to adopt ‘lean’ business principles within their businesses to increase performance and competitiveness. LEO supported 6 Laois companies through this programme in 2019.

- Export to the Netherlands Programme

2 Laois companies travelled to the Netherlands as part of our “Export to the Netherlands” Initiative which was a joint initiative with Longford, Westmeath & Offaly LEOs with the objective of giving participating companies the opportunity to explore new export markets. Each of the businesses have scheduled to return to the Netherlands privately in early 2020 to build on the connections made during the trip.

- Business Advisor Funding

LEO received additional funding to engage dedicated Business Advisors to work exclusively with LEO portfolio clients who are growing, failing to reach their potential or losing market share as well as with other micro enterprises identified as a risk from Brexit. 23 Laois companies are currently taking part in this programme.

Other successes in 2019 included:

- 10 LEO companies took part in a Management Development programme run in conjunction with Offaly LEO with the objective of getting Laois companies stabilised, ready for growth and more competitive.
- LEO Laois were successful in competing for and securing €143,000 under the LEO Competitive Fund to deliver an intensive growth programme for established food and drinks

producers in Laois, Offaly, Westmeath and Longford.

- LEO was centrally involved in the work to re-establish a Chamber of Commerce in County Laois. 2019 saw the employment of a Chief Executive Officer for the Chamber with its formal re-launch in September

- LEO delivered a unique digital business seminar on the 26th November which covered e-commerce, the social media landscape and website development tools. The session was led by Seanie Walsh, Creative Director of Los Angeles based Business Rockstars. Seanie is recognised as one of the world’s leading Click Funnels experts and has been a successful e-commerce and social media entrepreneur.

- 2019 marked the 5th birthday of the Local Enterprise Office. Over the past 5 years LEO has become one of the most significant supports for indigenous businesses in Laois. Our financial, mentoring and training supports have provided local entrepreneurs with the resources and skills to create local jobs and contribute to the growth of the Laois economy.

Performance Indicator 2018

Economic Development

No of jobs created with assistance from the LEO during the period 01/01/2018 to 31/12/2018	67
No. of trading online vouchers approved by the LEO in 2018	23
No. of those trading online vouchers that were drawn down in 2018	16
No. of participants who received mentoring from 01/01/2018 to 31/12/2018	211

TOURISM

In 2019, the Council continued to promote the county of Laois, supporting a range of festivals and events and working with state agencies and supported the Board of Laois Tourism in their activities.

The Tourism Grants Scheme

A total of €77,000 was allocated to festivals/events and parades through the Council's Tourism Grant Scheme in 2019 including: The Old Fort Festival, Durrow All Ireland Scarecrow Festival, The Gordon Bennett Classic Car Run, Ramble in Eireann High Nelly Heritage Cycle and the Folly Festival. The Council also supported a range of smaller festivals and St Patricks Day Parades throughout the county.

The "Buds & Blossoms" Laois Garden Festival

For the fourth year running, the Laois Garden Festival took place on Saturday June 8th and Sunday June 9th in Spink Community Grounds with garden experts Kevin Hughes, Bob Anderson and Dermot O' Neill, giving talks. A wide range of plant, food and crafts were also on display. Specialist nurseries from around Ireland were also present at the event which is growing each year. As part of the weekend of festivities, top gardens throughout Laois opened their doors and gave guided tours and workshops.

The Old Fort Festival

The Annual Old Fort Festival took place from Friday June 28th to Sunday June 30th. The Festival combines the history and heritage of Portlaoise with music, food and family entertainment in one unforgettable weekend. New for 2019 was the addition of a dedicated live music stage, similar to the Electric Ireland stage at Electric Picnic. The Laois Music Centre which is set within the Old Fort Protector makes for the perfect backdrop for entertainment wrapped up in this wonderful heritage festival.

Scarecrow Festival July 28th – August 5th

The 10th Annual Scarecrow Festival took place in Durrow from Sunday July 28th to Monday August 5th. Large crowds attended the event again this year with plenty of activities for families, including arts and crafts, workshops, music and the scarecrow collection.

The Gordon Bennett Classic Car Run

The Classic Car weekend was another great success with over 100 vintage cars and their owners participating in what is now a highlight of the Festival Year in Laois. Three days of journeying across the county and to neighbouring counties were enjoyed by all with visitors from various parts of the UK and Northern Ireland.

The Folly Festival, Cullahill

For the second year running this newly organised festival took place in the picturesque village of Cullahill on the weekend of Friday 19th and Saturday 20th July. With a great variety of music over the two days the festival also had a magician, a fun dog show, The Great Folly Bake, family fun, a cookery demonstration with Michelin-trained TV chef Kwangai Chan and the 'Feast of Irish Beef'.

Laois Tourism

The Council continued to support the Board of Laois Tourism in 2019 following the launch of the Tourism Development Plan for Laois in 2018. The Council will continue to support the Tourism Board and the trade in developing Laois as a tourism destination under Ireland's Ancient East.

The Council in partnership with the Board of the Dunamaise Arts Centre have recently relocated the Tourism Information Office to the Dunamaise Arts Centre which will be better placed to provide tourists with information on the county and what it has to offer.

Sieve Bloom Mountain Bike

Construction work on the first phase of the Slieve Bloom Mountain Bike Trail (4km) was completed by Coillte in December 2019. This will provide recreational, health and tourism benefits to both Laois and Offaly. This is a collaborative project between Coillte and Laois and Offaly Local Authorities.

Rock of Dunamaise

Laois County Council pursued possible options for the provision of a car park and appropriate interpretive signage at the Rock of Dunamaise. A Visual Impact Assessment of the area around the Rock of Dunamaise to assist in selecting the best site for the installation of parking was carried out in early 2019. On the recommendation of the National Monuments Service, a Geophysical Study was carried out in two locations at the Rock to identify the likely extent of subsurface archaeological remains in each of these sites. The

Council will continue to work on this project throughout 2020.

Tourism Destination Towns Fund

In September 2019, Laois County Council made an application to Fáilte Ireland for assistance of (€500,000) under the Tourism Destination Town Scheme. In response to the application, the Council have been advised by Fáilte Ireland that its application requires further refinement and development in order to qualify for funding in Round 2 in the Spring of 2020. A revised application will be resubmitted in early 2020.

My Pay, Local Government Shared Services Centre/Payroll & Superannuation

Director of Services: John Forde

The project is currently running on schedule and within budget. There are currently 86 employees based in the Shared Services Centre. Waves 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 have been completed on schedule with Laois, Offaly, Longford, Roscommon, Westmeath, Leitrim, Galway, Carlow, Monaghan, Cavan, Kildare, Meath, Kilkenny, Louth, South Dublin, Tipperary, Kerry, Wicklow, Sligo, Mayo, Clare, Fingal Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown and Donegal County Councils along with Limerick and Waterford County and City Councils, Cork and Galway City Councils and the LGMA are now live.

The following are the statistics on the project up to the end of December:

Value of Payments	€3,929m
Number of Payments	3,928,897
Number of Pay Groups Paid	8,799
Number of Payroll Runs	4,891

Work is well underway to bring Cork and Wexford County Councils on board in 2020 as part of Wave 6. Work is ongoing with Dublin City Council with a view to bringing them on board in 2021.

The Superannuation element of the project has commenced.

- There are currently 20 Local authorities live for pension services with a plan in place to bring the remainder on board by 2021.
- MyPay is now administering the new Single Public Service Pension Scheme for the Local Authority Sector.

MyPay successfully maintained the ISAE 3402 standard. This is an internationally recognised standard for service organisations.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Social Club

2019 was another very successful year for the Social Club. Membership currently stands at 325 and this number is continually growing as new staff members join and enjoy the many events organized by the committee throughout the year.

Monthly Draw

On the first Friday of every month a draw for 3 prizes of €50 takes place for Social Club members. December 2019 saw the return of the very popular Bonny Baby Competition.

Summer Barbecue

The Annual Barbecue held in June was another success and was attended by nearly 100 people.

Ecumenical Service

An ecumenical service was held in place of the annual mass in the Council Chamber in November for deceased members and staff of Laois County Council. All retired and current staff members of the Council were invited with many attending. Refreshments were provided in the canteen afterwards.

Christmas

The staff Christmas party was held on Friday 13th December in the Midlands Park Hotel. Staff enjoyed a lovely meal followed by dancing and was a huge success. For the children, a trip to Lullymore Heritage Park was arranged with a visit to Santa and trip on the Santa train making the day lots of fun for our Members' little people .

The last day Christmas draw was also a great success with the prize fund being increased again this year. It was also a Christmas Jumper Day with all monies raised donated to Acquired Brain Injuries Ireland.

Retired Members

Presentations were made to staff members on their retirement.

Other Events

Discounted tickets were provided for members for the following events:

- Bloom
- Subsidised packages to Dublin Zoo, National Stud/Japanese Gardens, National Aquatic Centre

Some of the other events held were:

- Aintree Grand National Draw
- Easter Egg giveaway
- Scratch card giveaways
- Valentines Day chocolates with proceeds to Muscular Dystrophy Ireland

APPENDIX I

TITLE, PURPOSE AND NUMBER OF MEMBERS OF EACH COMMITTEE AND JOINT COMMITTEE AND THE NUMBER OF MEETINGS OF EACH COMMITTEE, JOINT COMMITTEE AND JOINT POLICING COMMITTEE HELD DURING THE PERIOD JANUARY TO MAY 2019

COMMITTEES

Name of Committee	Members Elected	Number of Meetings
Local Community Development Committee	Councillor Paschal McEvoy Councillor Pauline Madigan Councillor John King	5
Joint Policing Committee	Councillor Padraig Fleming Councillor Paddy Bracken Councillor Seamus McDonald Councillor Paschal McEvoy Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald Councillor John Moran Councillor John King Councillor Tom Mulhall Councillor David Goodwin Councillor William Aird Councillor James Kelly Councillor Noel Tuohy Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley	1
Heritage Forum	Councillor Padraig Fleming Councillor William Aird	1
Placenames Committee	Councillor Pauline Madigan Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald Councillor Tom Mulhall Councillor James Kelly Councillor Mary Sweeney Councillor William Aird	2
Audit Committee	Councillor John Moran Councillor Pauline Madigan	2
Laois School of Music	Councillor Mary Sweeney	2
Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee	Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald Councillor Paschal McEvoy Councillor Mary Sweeney Councillor Tom Mulhall Councillor John King Councillor Pauline Madigan Councillor Paddy Bracken	2
Kyletesha Monitoring Committee	Councillor Paddy Bracken Councillor Seamus McDonald Councillor William Aird	None
Rural Water Monitoring Committee	Councillor Paschal McEvoy Councillor Padraig Fleming Councillor Tom Mulhall	1

APPENDIX I

TITLE, PURPOSE AND NUMBER OF MEMBERS OF EACH COMMITTEE AND JOINT COMMITTEE AND THE NUMBER OF MEETINGS OF EACH COMMITTEE, JOINT COMMITTEE AND JOINT POLICING COMMITTEE HELD DURING THE PERIOD JUNE TO DECEMBER 2019

COMMITTEES

Name of Committee	Members Elected	Number of Meetings
Local Community Development Committee	Councillor Paschal McEvoy Councillor Conor Bergin Councillor John King	4
Joint Policing Committee	Councillor Padraig Fleming Councillor Paddy Bracken Councillor Seamus McDonald Councillor Paschal McEvoy Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald Councillor Aidan Mullins Councillor Ben Brennan Councillor John King Councillor Tom Mulhall Councillor Thomasina Connell Councillor Aisling Moran Councillor Conor Bergin Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley	2
Heritage Forum	Councillor Padraig Fleming Councillor William Aird	2
Placenames Committee	Councillor Paddy Bracken Councillor Noel Tuohy Councillor John King Councillor Tom Mulhall Councillor Mary Sweeney Councillor Aisling Moran	3
Audit Committee	Councillor Aisling Moran Councillor Padraig Fleming	2
Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee	Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald Councillor Paschal McEvoy Councillor Mary Sweeney Councillor Tom Mulhall Councillor John King Councillor James Kelly Councillor Paddy Bracken	2
Kyletalesha Monitoring Committee	Councillor Paddy Bracken Councillor Thomasina Connell Councillor Aisling Moran	1
Rural Water Monitoring Committee	Councillor Padraig Fleming Councillor Conor Bergin Councillor Tom Mulhall	1

APPENDIX I

OUTSIDE BODIES - JANUARY TO MAY 2019

Name of Committee	Members Elected
Association of Irish Local Government	Councillor John Joe Fennelly Councillor Paschal McEvoy Councillor David Goodwin
Laois & Offaly Education & Training Board	Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald Councillor Padraig Fleming Councillor Paschal McEvoy Councillor Mary Sweeney Councillor John King Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley
AGM of Irish Public Bodies Mutual Insurances Ltd	Councillor John Joe Fennelly
Laois Arts Theatre Company Ltd	Councillor Paschal McEvoy Councillor Pauline Madigan Councillor Mary Sweeney
Board of Abbeyleix Heritage Trust	Councillor John Joe Fennelly
Local Authority Members Association	Councillor Seamus McDonald
Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly	Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald Councillor Paddy Bracken
Laois Partnership Company Ltd	Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald Councillor William Aird
Portarlington Leisure Centre	Councillor Paschal McEvoy Councillor Padraig Fleming Councillor Tom Mulhall
Portlaoise Leisure Centre	Councillor Pauline Madigan Councillor William Aird Councillor Noel Tuohy
Portlaoise Enterprise Centre	Councillor Pauline Madigan Councillor William Aird Councillor Mary Sweeney
Portarlington Enterprise Centre	Councillor Paschal McEvoy Councillor Tom Mulhall
Board of Treo Nua Ltd	Councillor Noel Tuohy
Dublin Mid-Leinster Regional Forum	Councillor Padraig Fleming Councillor William Aird Councillor John King
Laois Advocacy Against Domestic Abuse Limited	Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald
Midland Regional Drugs Task Force	Councillor Paschal McEvoy
LABEL- Laois Third Level Initiative	Councillor Pauline Madigan

APPENDIX I

OUTSIDE BODIES - JUNE - DECEMBER 2019

Name of Committee	Members Elected
Association of Irish Local Government	Councillor John Joe Fennelly Councillor John King Councillor Aisling Moran
Laois & Offaly Education & Training Board	Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald Councillor Padraig Fleming Councillor Willie Aird Councillor Mary Sweeney Councillor John King Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley
AGM of Irish Public Bodies Mutual Insurances Ltd	Councillor Tom Mulhall
Laois Arts Theatre Company Ltd	Councillor Noel Tuohy Councillor Thomasina Connell Councillor Mary Sweeney
Board of Abbeyleix Heritage Trust	Councillor John Joe Fennelly
Local Authority Members Association	Councillor Seamus McDonald
Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly	Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald Councillor Aisling Moran
Laois Partnership Company Ltd	Councillor Padraig Fleming Councillor Tom Mulhall
Portarlington Leisure Centre	Councillor Aidan Mullins Councillor Padraig Fleming Councillor Tom Mulhall
Portlaoise Leisure Centre	Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald Councillor Thomasina Connell Councillor Noel Tuohy
Portlaoise Enterprise Centre	Councillor John Joe Fennelly Councillor William Aird Councillor Mary Sweeney
Portarlington Enterprise Centre	Councillor Paschal McEvoy Councillor Tom Mulhall
Board of Treo Nua Ltd	Councillor Noel Tuohy
Dublin Mid-Leinster Regional Forum	Councillor Padraig Fleming Councillor Paschal McEvoy Councillor Thomasina Connell
Laois Advocacy Against Domestic Abuse Limited	Councillor Mary Sweeney Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald
Midland Regional Drugs Task Force	Councillor Thomasina Connell
Music Education Partnership	Councillor Padraig Fleming
Laois School of Music Steering Committee	Councillor Mary Sweeney

MEMBERS EXPENSES SUMMARY

JANUARY – DECEMBER 2019

Conferences	€10,459.48
Training	€43,878.61
Phones	€ 595.42
Monthly Expenses	€86,615.14
SPC Chair Allowance	€24,000.00
Representational Allowance	€324,763.62
Cathaoirleach's Allowance	€20,006.02
Leas Cathaoirleach's Allowance	€ 3,986.06
Municipal District Chair Allowance	€19,240.84
Municipal District Allowance	€18,935.06
OVERALL	€552,480.25

Section 19 of the Local Elections (Disclosure of Donations and Expenditure) Act 1999 (“the 1999 Act”)

Details of election expenditure incurred and donations received in respect of each candidate at the 2019 Local Elections

Candidate Name	Municipal District	Aggregate Elections	Donations Received
Timothy Adejumo	Portlaoise	€1808.50	None
William Aird	Portlaoise	€2225.00	None
Thomasina Connell	Portlaoise	€5555.32	None
Tom Duffin	Portlaoise	€5.00	None
Dominic Dunne	Portlaoise	€1349.70	None
Caroline Dunne Stanley	Portlaoise	€2220.00	None
John Joe Fennelly	Portlaoise	€1510.17	None
Catherine Fitzgerald	Portlaoise	€1470.00	None
John Gormley	Portlaoise	€2172.00	None
Naeem Iqbal	Portlaoise	€3980.18	None
Donal Kelly	Portlaoise	€2776.17	None
Pauline Madigan	Portlaoise	€1710.17	None
Noel O'Rourke	Portlaoise	€2449.59	€1000
Judith Preston Grace	Portlaoise	€2960.30	None
Mary Sweeney	Portlaoise	€2871.30	None
Noel Tuohy	Portlaoise	€2150.00	None
Conor Bergin	BOI-Mountmellick	€2679.15	None
Paddy Bracken	BOI-Mountmellick	€1510.17	None
Ollie Clooney	BOI-Mountmellick	€2780.06	None
Fergal Conroy	BOI-Mountmellick	€1509.40	None
Brian Furlong	BOI-Mountmellick	€1262.50	None
Declan Good	BOI-Mountmellick	€2237.32	None
David Goodwin	BOI-Mountmellick	€1460.00	None
Gerard Hogan	BOI-Mountmellick	€585.00	None
Lorna Holohan Garry	BOI-Mountmellick	€2657.00	None
James Kelly	BOI-Mountmellick	€4400.00	None
John King	BOI-Mountmellick	€1420.00	None
Seamús McDonald	BOI-Mountmellick	€2260.17	None
Liam O'Neill	BOI-Mountmellick	€1978.92	None
Brendan Phelan	BOI-Mountmellick	€3850.00	None
Eoin Barry	Graigue-Portarlington	€4104.63	None
Ben Brennan	Graigue-Portarlington	€3400.00	None
Padraig Fleming	Graigue-Portarlington	€3555.00	None
Paschal McEvoy	Graigue-Portarlington	€1660.17	None
Aisling Moran	Graigue-Portarlington	€5898.51	None
Tom Mulhall	Graigue-Portarlington	€1164.00	None
Aidan Mullins	Graigue-Portarlington	€1500.00	None
Deirdre O'Connell-Hopkin	Graigue-Portarlington	€3907.95	None
Vivienne Phelan	Graigue-Portarlington	€4797.40	€1635

APPENDIX 1V

TRAINING 2019

Training	Venue	Date	Delegates	Expend
AILG				
AILG – Module 1	Mullingar	19th February	6	€1,025.71
	Athlone	17th February	1	
AILG - Annual Training Conference	Longford	21st & 22nd Feb	11	€3,909.76
AILG – Module 2	Arklow	23rd March	7	€1,342.69
AILG – Module 3	Mullingar	11th July	10	€1,740.18
AILG - Autumn 2019	Monaghan	11th & 12th Sept	12	€7,537.61
AILG – Module 4	Dundalk	12th October	6	€3,390.29
	Limerick	10th October	3	
AILG – Module 5	Athlone	21st November	12	€2,615.67
LAMA				
LAMA Spring Training	Carrick-on-Shannon	7th & 8th March	14	€6,662.67
LAMA Autumn Training	Ennistymon	17th to 19th Oct	13	€8,541.10
IPBMI AGM	Dublin City	3rd May	1	€125.23
10th Annual Tourism Workshop	Dromoland	22nd & 23rd Nov	11	€6,297.66
Arrears (Circular Letter LG01/2018)				€690.04
Overall Total				€43,878.61

CONFERENCES ATTENDED IN 2019 BY LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL MEMBERS

Conference	Venue	Date	Delegates	Expend
A Guide to EU	Carlingford	8th to 10th Feb	2	€868.70
Local Elections 2019	Letterkenny	15th to 17th Feb	6	€3,601.36
30th Colmcille Heritage Trust	Gartan	22nd & 23rd Feb	3	€1,576.80
Mac Gill Summer School	Glenties	21st to 26th July	3	€1,440.00
Budget 2020	Carlingford	11th to 13th Oct	1	€700.00
Ireland & Plastic Waste	Clonakilty	25th to 27th Oct	2	€1,059.27
Entitlement to Health Services	Clonakilty	15th to 17th Nov	2	€816.66
Irish Social Welfare System	Clonakilty	6th to 8th Dec	1	€210.91
Arrears (Circular Letter LG/01/2018)				€185.78
Overall Total				€10,459.48

HOW TO CONTACT US

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Accounts Payable, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8664117
Arts Office, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8664033
Cash Office, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8674308
Civil Defence HQ, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8664106
Environment, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8674318
Housing, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8674301
Human Resources, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8664075
Landfill Site, Kyleatesha, Portlaoise	Tel: (057) 8620653
Library Headquarters, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8594982
Motor Tax Office, Block 2, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8674385
Planning, Block 1, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8664032
Register of Electors, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8664105
Roads, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8664242
Sports & Leisure, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8664041
Water Services, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8674358