

# Laois Local Economic and Community Plan 2023-2028

## Appendix 3 Socio Economic Statement



Laois County Council

Áras an Chontae, Portlaoise, Co. Laois



**The purpose of the LECP, as provided for in the Local Government Reform Act 2014, is to set out, for a six-year period, the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic development and the local and community development of County Laois, both by Laois County Council directly and in partnership with other economic and community development stakeholders.**



## Contents

<b>Section 1.1: Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
What is a Socio Economic Statement?	2
What is the Local Economic and Community Plan?	2
How does the LECP effect you?	2
Who will deliver the LECP?	2
What are the LECP Guiding Principles?	2
How will the LECP be developed?	3
What is a Goal, Objective and Action?	3
Public Sector Duty	4
Sustainable Development	4
How to let us know your views	4
<b>Section 1.2: High Level Goals</b>	<b>5</b>
High Level Goals	5
<b>Section 1.3: Snapshot of County Laois</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Introducing Laois</b>	<b>6</b>
Demographics and Housing	6
Age Cohort	8
Health and Well-being	9
<b>Employment, Economy and Enterprise</b>	<b>9</b>
Labour Force	9
Live Register Figures: County Laois: 03/02/2023	9
Travel/Commuter Profile	10
Local Enterprise Office	10
Remote Working/Digital Hubs	10
Foreign Direct Investment (IDA Jobs)	10
Farming	10
Small Farms	11
Rural Transport – TFI Local Link	11
<b>Community</b>	<b>12</b>
Education	12
Childcare Services	12
Facilities for Young People in Rural Areas	12
Laois Public Participation Network	13
Climate Change	14
Broadband	14
Post Covid 19/Brexit	14



## Section 1.1: Introduction

### What is a Socio-Economic Statement?

The Socio-Economic Statement contains some background information about the preparation of the LECP. It comprises a profile of County Laois including some key facts, trends, strengths, and opportunities relevant to the economic and community development. It is hoped that this report will start discussions on key issues that affect the lives of everyone in Laois.

The aim of the Socio-Economic Statement is to:

- Explain what the LECP is;
- How will the LECP be planned, developed, and delivered;
- Present proposed high-level goals for review and consultation;
- Seek input from our communities in Laois.

### What is the Local Economic and Community Plan?

The primary aim of the LECP is to set out, for a six-year period, the objectives and actions needed to support and promote the economic development and the local and community development of Laois, both by Laois County Council directly and in partnership with other economic and community development stakeholders. The LECP is an important way to set out how Laois County Council and other stakeholders can work together to ensure that their initiatives, programmes, and projects support an improved quality of life for people living and working in the County.

**‘Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) will affect the economic, local and community development of County Laois.’**

### How does the LECP affect you?

The LECP will have high level goals, objectives and actions which will have a direct effect on the services, supports and amenities in County Laois. A review of the LECP 2016-2021 was undertaken showing what was accomplished in the County because of previous High-Level Goals.

### Who will deliver the LECP?

The LECP is a multi-agency plan, which means that the actions will be delivered by several stakeholders to include Laois County Council. Some actions will have several lead agencies working together to achieve a common goal. Some high-level goals will focus on economic development with others focusing on community development. Other goals will be cross cutting, meaning they will have a dual focus both on economic and community development.

### What are the LECP Guiding Principles?

The LECP is underpinned by several guiding principles:

01

#### Equality

Promote and mainstream equality while respecting diversity.

02

#### Sustainability

Meeting the needs of the present with comprising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

03

#### Simplicity

Avoid duplication of effort, keep structures as simple as possible and communicate clearly.

04

#### Collaboration and Consistency

Maximise collaborative opportunities with stakeholders and partners, while maintaining consistency with higher level policy.

05

#### Commitment and Drive

Agencies, groups and other bodies will be required to make a commitment to drive the implementation of the LECP actions relevant to their functions and interests; and

06

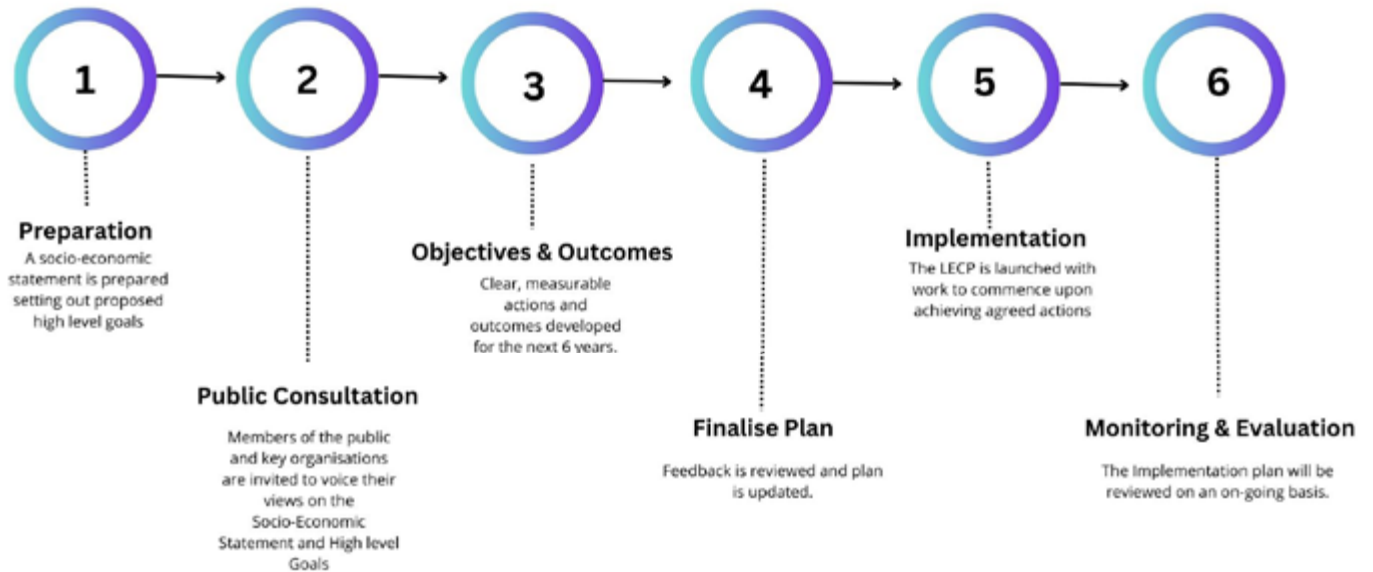
#### Smart Protection

Use of evidence-based and targeted approach, as well as an awareness of existing and emerging funding streams, to achieve a significant multiplier effect on the LECP outcomes.

## How will the LECP be developed?

There are six stages involved in the preparation of an LECP. The new LECP is now at Stage 2, which is the Public Consultation stage. During Stage 1 the Socio-Economic Statement was prepared and now we need your feedback.

Figure 1.1.1: LECP Development Stages



## What is a Goal, Objective and Action?

**What is a goal?** An idea of the future or a desired result that an individual, group or organisation plan and commit to achieve.

**What is an objective?** Identified impact contributing to physical, financial, institutional, social, environmental, or other benefits to society, community, or group of people.

**What is an action?** Specific steps taken to support the achievement of a goal. Actions should be:

- Time bound;
- Achievable; and
- Measurable.



## Public Sector Duty

In developing the HLG's a public body in performing its function, have regard to the need to:

- (i) Eliminate discrimination;
- (ii) Promote equality of opportunity and treatment of its staff and the persons whom it provides services, and
- (iii) Protect the human rights of its members, staff, and the persons to whom it provides services.

In developing goals, we need to consider:

- Are the proposed goals/activities free from any form of discrimination under all the nine grounds identified in the equality legislation?
- Do the proposed goals/activities contribute to achieving equality for groups and their individual members who experience inequality?
- Are there potential barriers or problems under the equality grounds associated with the proposed goals/activities?
- Do we need to seek further input to targeted consultation to achieve equality in the goals/activities?
- Who needs to be involved in the proposed activities to support the participation of equality interest?
- Consider how to measure the impact of goals/activities on individuals/groups under the nine grounds?

## Sustainable Development

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a principal element of the LECP. The UN have set seventeen goals as set out below. SDGs recognise that ending poverty and other deprivations must go together with strategies that improve health, education, reduce inequality and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.

*Do these goals accurately reflect your priorities for the development of County Laois?*

## How to let us know your views

Feedback from individuals and local organisations can help make the process of developing the LECP even stronger. This Plan is for you and your County, and your feedback will help.

It is important that the Goals we set ourselves are focused, locally relevant, realistic but aspirational. We invite your feedback and views on these Goals. Your insight will be vital in ensuring that they reflect these aims, resulting in a Plan which can have a meaningful impact in allowing representatives from the Council, communities, and businesses to work together so that our investments support an improved quality of life for people living and working in the County.

If you wish to provide feedback, submission can be made via <https://consult.laois.ie/en>.

Figure 1.1.2 UN Sustainable Development Goals



## Section 1.2: High Level Goals

The new LECP will have 10 High Level Goals, which after public consultation will set out desire's, objectives, and actions.

Goal	High Level Goals
1	Encourage civic participation and support local communities to lead on their own developments.
2	Develop and promote ways of living and of doing business that support a sustainable environment and resilient communities.
3	Encourage a sustainable culture of innovation and entrepreneurship throughout the county.
4	Help the local economy to diversify in a long-term, sustainable manner, broadening employment opportunities in the county.
5	Recognise and support diversity in the county, promoting equality, integration, and inclusiveness across all sectors.
6	Sustain, develop, and enhance town and village centres as focal points for their communities.
7	Support an integrated and holistic approach to education, training, and employment along with life-long learning.
8	Promote well-being and excellent quality of life within the county.
9	Strengthen and encourage a strong sense of pride in the county and promote our unique identity.
10	Promote the county as a key location for foreign and domestic investment.



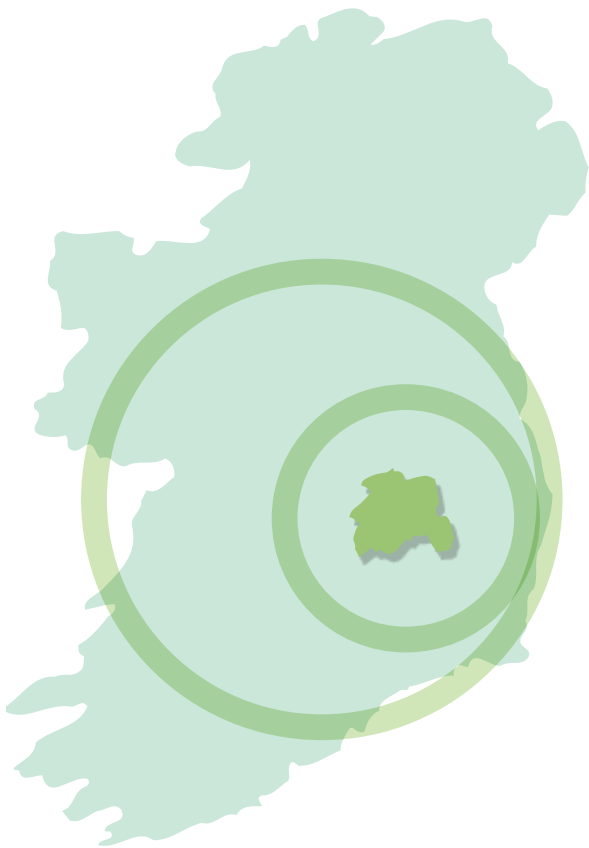
Part of the public consultation process in Portarlington Library

## Section 1.3: Snapshot of County Laois

### Introducing Laois

Laois is an inland County in the South Midlands of Ireland with a population of 91,657 living in a network of attractive towns and villages, ranging from the capital town of Portlaoise to the historic market towns of Abbeyleix and Stradbally. The other main towns in the County include Portarlinton and Mountmellick to the North, Graiguecullen to the South and Rathdowney to the West. Laois is a gateway to the South and Mid-West of Ireland where the M7/M8 Motorways interchange and is serviced by three train stations (Portarlinton, Portlaoise and Ballybrophy).

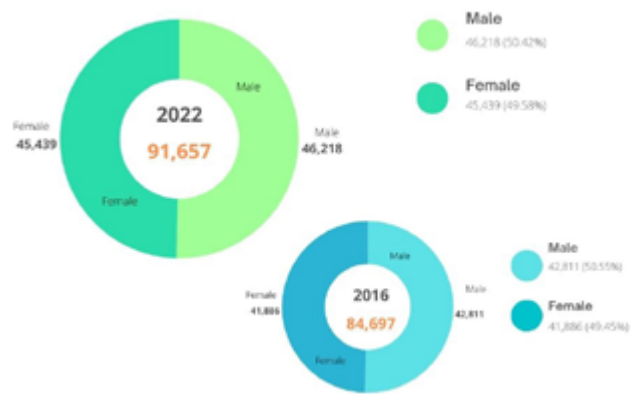
Figure 1.3.1 Laois Location on Map of Ireland



### Demographics and Housing

The **population** of Laois is 91,657 (46,218 are males and 45,439 females<sup>1</sup>). Over the past quarter of a century County Laois has experienced a significant population growth. The population of the County increased by 8.2% between 2016 and 2022 and the population of the County in 2022 was 73% higher than it was in 1996.

Figure 1.3.2 Prelim Actual Change in Population 2016-2022



- The Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 references the National Planning Framework which projects that the population of County Laois will increase from 84,500 in 2016 to a high of between 95,500-97,500 in 2031.

<sup>1</sup> <https://data.cso.ie/table/FP001>





Regions and Counties	2016	2026	2031
<b>MIDLANDS</b>			
Westmeath	89,000	96,500-98,500	100,000-102,500
<b>Laois</b>	<b>84,500</b>	<b>92,500-94,000</b>	<b>95,500-97,500</b>
Offaly	78,000	85,000-86,500	88,000-90,000
Longford	41,000	44,500-45,500	46,000-47,000
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>292,500</b>	<b>318,500-324,500</b>	<b>329,500-337,000</b>

Source: Extract from NPF Implementation Roadmap, p. 13

- According to the 2016 Census, the population identifying as non-Irish living in Laois accounted for 11.8% of the population in comparison to 11.6% nationally. Portlaoise has one of the highest levels of non-national residents at 22% of the population.<sup>2</sup>
- According to Census 2016 72,275 persons identified as been born in Ireland with 3,677 of UK birth followed closely by Poland at 2,452.<sup>3</sup>
- Laois has a deprivation level of -2.53, marginally below average (Pobal 2016) based on 2016 population stats of 84,697. Deprivation has increased since 2006 when the level was -1.23. The County is made up of three electoral areas which are further divided in 100 electoral divisions. 56% of the electoral divisions are marginally below average and just 4% are disadvantaged. The division of Dangans (-10.06), Rathdowney (-10.71), Mountmellick Urban (-11.54) and Doonane (-11.22), are the most disadvantaged areas within the County (Pobal 2016).<sup>4</sup>
- Preliminary results from the 2022 Census indicate that there has been an increase of 5.8% in housing growth between 2016 and 2022. This is equivalent to an almost 1% increase in housing stock on an annual basis for the period. The vacancy rate stands at 7.6% with the proportion of houses vacant in 2016 and 2022 standing at 2.3%.<sup>5</sup>
- There are 1805 households recorded on the County **Laois Housing List** in 2022 having been approved for social housing support. In the year ending 31/12/2022, 313 households were housed/nominated to be housed by Laois County Council.

<sup>2</sup> [Volume-1-Written-Statement-of-Adopted-LCDP-2021-2027.pdf \(laois.ie\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> <https://data.cso.ie/table/SAP2016T2T1CTY>

<sup>4</sup> <https://maps.pobal.ie/WebApps/DeprivationIndices/index.html>

<sup>5</sup> [Housing - CSO - Central Statistics Office](#)

## Age Cohort

The average age of a person within the County is 34.3 years as against a national average of 37.4 years with Laois being the fifth most youthful County in the country<sup>6</sup>. This relative youthfulness is seen as an advantage in terms of the future growth of the County. In the last three decades Laois has experienced rapid growth with the

population of the County increasing by over 75% since the 1991 census. While the growth of the County is welcomed it has not been without its benefits and challenges. Individuals under the age of 18 represent 29.87% of Laois population compared to 26% for the state (CSO 2016).

Figure 1.3.3 Population of males and females by age for Laois 2016

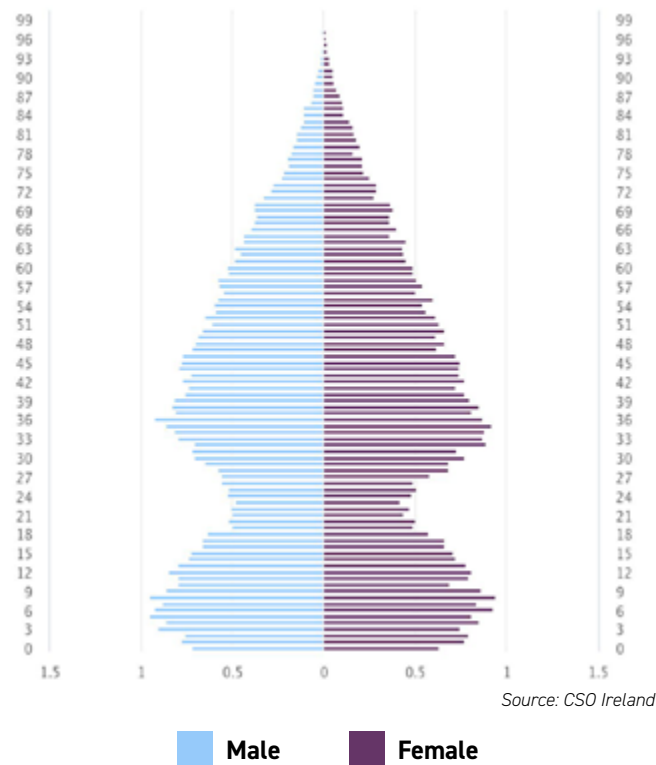
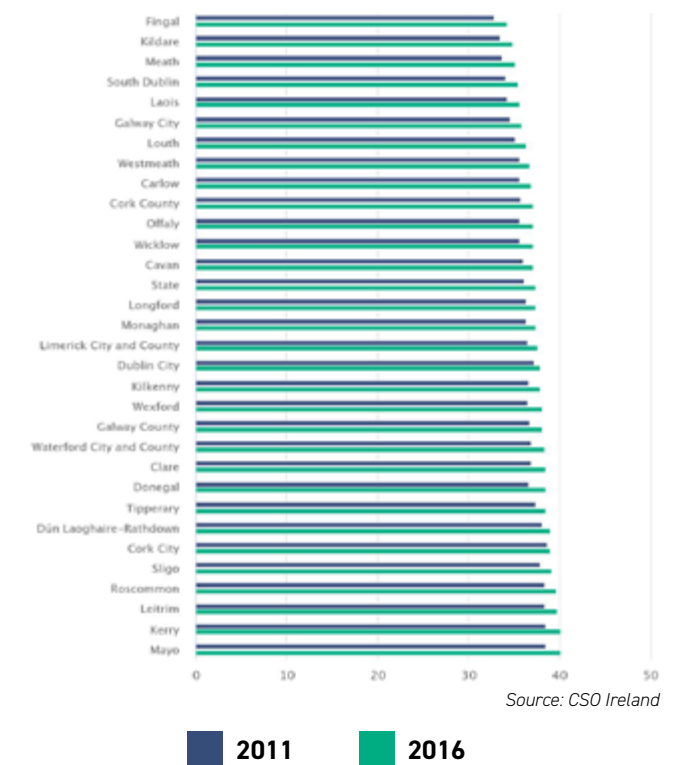


Figure 1.3.4 Average age by county, 2011-2016



<sup>6</sup> <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp3oy/cp3/aad/>

## Health and Well-being

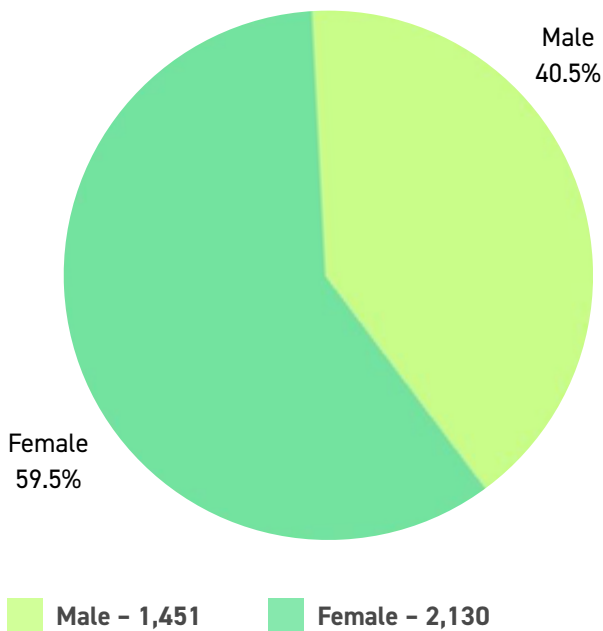
11,393 people in Laois are registered as having at least one disability which equates to 13.5% of the County population (CSO 2016 – 5,750 males and 5,643 females<sup>7</sup>).

### Population of Laois by general health and gender:<sup>8</sup>

Health	Total	Males	Females
Very good	50,132	25,218	25,004
Good	23,413	11,688	11,725
Fair	6,805	3,394	3,411
Bad	1,145	598	547
Very bad	198	100	98
Not stated	3,004	1,903	1,101

Currently there are 3,581 carers in Laois (2,130 females, 1,451 males) 4.2% of the total population of the County.

Figure 1.3.5 Carers in Ireland



## Employment, Economy, and Enterprise

### Labour Force

According to Census 2016, the total labour force residing in Laois was 39,609 which is equivalent to 62% of the total population of the County. This was an increase of 5.34% (+3,239) from the previous census in 2011. Portlaoise is the primary centre of employment in the County with 8410 jobs in 2016.<sup>9</sup>

### Live Register Figures: County Laois: 03/02/2023

As of 3rd February 2023, the number of persons on the live register in Ireland stood at 184,736. 3,264 of these were in County Laois (1.77% of the national figure) or 3.6% of the total population on the County. This is a decrease of 750 persons (19%) from the 2014 persons recorded in December 2018.<sup>10</sup>

The breakdown from the Department of Social Protection by location is as follows:

<b>Live Register Figure County Laois 03/02/2023</b>	<b>3,264</b>
<b>Live Register Figure Portlaoise 03/02/2023</b>	<b>1,643</b>
Percentage Under 25 Years	9%
Percentage Over 25 Years	91%
<b>Live Register Figures Portarlinton 03/02/2023</b>	<b>1,194</b>
Percentage Under 25 Years	9%
Percentage Over 25 Years	91%
<b>Live Register Figure Rathdowney 03/02/2023</b>	<b>427</b>
Percentage Under 25 Years	9%
Percentage Over 25 Years	91%
<b>National Live Register Figure 03/02/2023</b>	<b>184,736</b>

<sup>7</sup> <https://data.cso.ie/table/SAP2016T12T2CTY>

<sup>8</sup> <https://data.cso.ie/table/SAP2016T12T3CTY>

<sup>9</sup> [Volume-1-Written-Statement-of-Adopted-LCDP-2021-2027.pdf](https://www.laois.ie/Volume-1-Written-Statement-of-Adopted-LCDP-2021-2027.pdf) (laois.ie)

<sup>10</sup> Department of Social Protection Portlaoise Branch

## Travel/Commuter Profile

- The 2016 Census reported 35,795 residents of Laois commute to work (33,245) or third level study (2,550) daily. Of those commuting to work 52% (18,613) commute to a location within the County and 48% (17,182) leave the County. Dublin is the most popular destination outside of the County (13%) followed by Kildare (13%) and Carlow (7%). Therefore, out of a total workforce of 39,609 approximately 43% leave the County for work and third level study daily.
- Most commuters drive, 73% of those that commute to work and 30% of those that commute to Third Level study drive. The next most popular modes of travel for workers is walking (6%), and for third level students on foot (23%) and bus (17%) were the next most popular.<sup>11</sup>
- The highest portion of commuters (25%) work in the Wholesale or Retail sector with Education, Human Health, and Social Work activities the next highest at 20%. 8% work in public Administration, defence, and compulsory social services activities. Just over 44% of commuters are highly educated holding a Third Level or Higher qualification.<sup>12</sup>
- Census 2016 confirmed an increase in average commute time, Laois having the highest share of workers in any County with a commute of 90 minutes + with 2,107 people (6.7%). The average travel time to work was 31.9 minutes. There was also a growing distance between people and their jobs with the average at 25.11 kms for Laois workers.<sup>13</sup>
- The percentage change in primary school students travelling as car passengers to school increased by +16.2% between 2011-2016 while this figure was +29.3% for secondary school students for the same period.<sup>14</sup>

## Local Enterprise Office

The 2022 survey of Laois Enterprise Office clients showed a net employment gain of 79 new jobs in 2022, an increase of 32 on 2021. A total of €2.17 million has been paid out by Laois LEO for the period January 2018 to December 2022 to support the creation of 308 jobs in the County.<sup>15</sup>

## Remote Working/Digital Hubs

Laois is home to six state of the art innovation hubs in Portlaoise (2), Rathdowney, Mountmellick, Mountrath and Portarlinton. Laois is ideally placed to take advantage of the new changed working environment and promote Laois as a centre for remote working. Through the CUBE, Low Carbon Centre of Excellence, Laois will be able to capitalise on opportunities presented by the transition to a low carbon economy.<sup>16</sup>

## Foreign Direct Investment (IDA Jobs)

There are four IDA supported firms located within the County, with an associated employment of 121 people. The equivalent figure for, say, Westmeath is 22 companies employing 3,686 people. Nationally IDA supported firms employ 245,096 people across 1,549 companies.

## Farming

A Census of Agriculture was conducted in 2020 and the average monetary value of the agricultural output at farm-gate prices for County Laois was €24,849. This is a Median figure and does not consider costs, direct payments, VAT, or taxes on products. Farms with output between €15K-€25K had 86.3% of farms between 10 and 50 hectares.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>11</sup> [Volume-1-Written-Statement-of-Adopted-LCDP-2021-2027.pdf \(laois.ie\)](#) Section 6.3.4

<sup>12</sup> Socio Economic Profile of Laois 2019 – Page 177

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp6ci/p6cii/p6td/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp6ci/p6cii/p6stp/>

<sup>15</sup> Local Enterprise Office to LCC Monthly Management Team Report – December 2022

<sup>16</sup> [www.midlandsireland.ie](http://www.midlandsireland.ie)

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-coa/censusofagriculture2020detailedresults/standardoutput/>

### Small Farms

- Land Utilisation in Laois 12,0574.9 hectares<sup>18</sup>
- Agricultural Holdings in Laois 5,491 over 1 acre, 1-5 acres - 512, 5-15 acres - 661, 15-30 acres 797, 30-50 acres 1005, 50-100 acres 1495, 100-200 acres 807, 200+ acres 214.<sup>19</sup>
- As per CSO as of 2022 the average farm age was 56.3 years for all farm sizes. However, this differed depending on farm size (<https://data.cso.ie/table/AVA30>):
  1. Less than 10 ha – 58.6 years
  2. 10ha or more but less than 20ha – 58.1 years
  3. 20ha or more but less than 30ha – 57.6 years
  4. 30ha or more but less than 50ha – 55.5 years
  5. 50ha or more but less than 100ha – 53.6 years
  6. 100ha or more – 53.2 years
- Persons in Laois working in Agriculture, forestry, and fishing = 2,431 (2,193 males and 238 females)

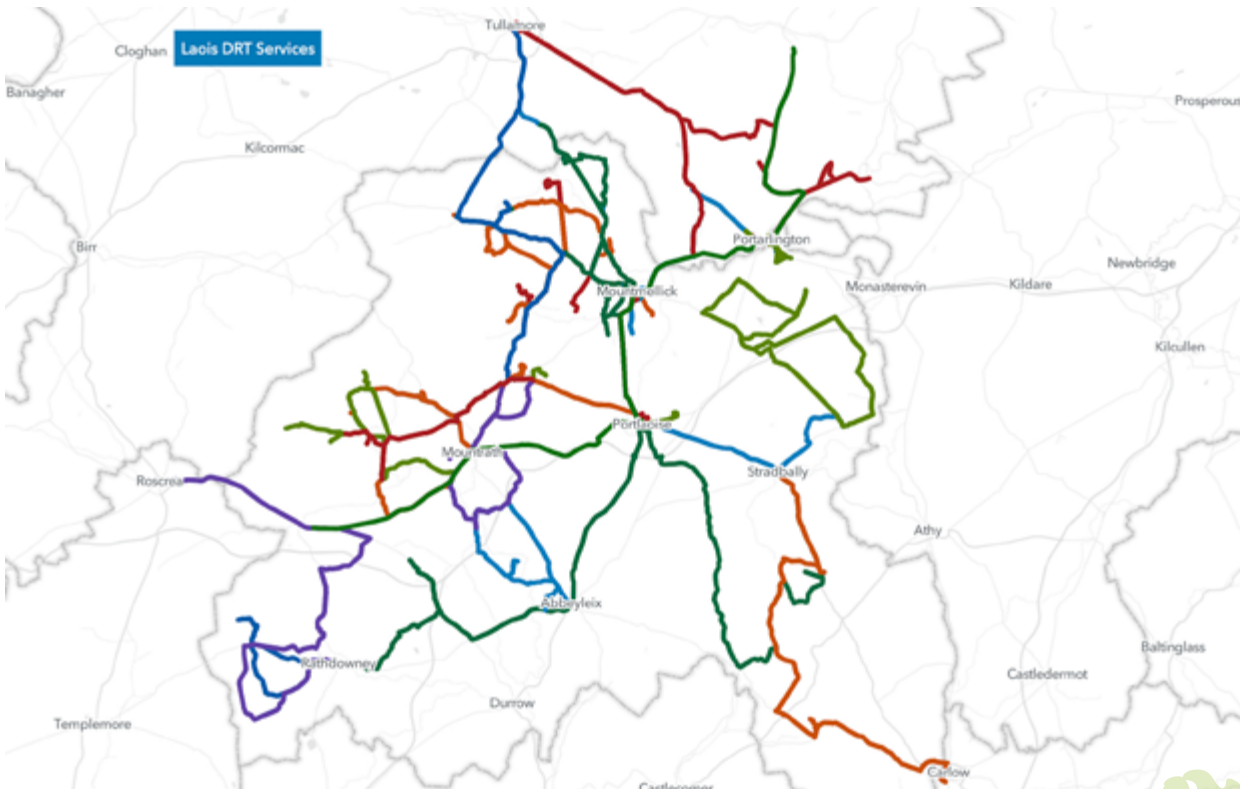
### Rural Transport – TFI Local Link

TFI Local Link Laois Offaly bus services connect communities across Laois as part of the Transport for Ireland Network. TFI Local Link operate two types of services: Regular Rural Services (RRS) which operate on a fixed route between towns and villages and run on a scheduled timetable, and Door-to-Door Bus Services (DRT) which operate along the same routes with the option to divert to collect and drop off passengers at their home with frequencies ranging from once a week to daily. These services are managed and administrated by the TFI Local Link office.

TFI Local Link Laois Offaly currently operates across Laois, four RRS Routes and over 30 DRT services which together are delivered by 15 local operators.

DRT services cover several towns in Laois, see map below: (Link to map [here](#))

Figure 1.3.6 Local Link Laois DRT Services



<sup>18</sup> <https://data.cso.ie/table/AVA44>

<sup>19</sup> <https://data.cso.ie/table/AGAL1>



In recent years, the National Transport Authority has invested significantly in developing the network of regular public transport and in Co. Laois we have. Three RRS services now serving:

- [823 Birr to Portlaoise](#) – operates 7 days per week (commenced October 2022)
- [834 Roscrea to Portlaoise](#) – operates 7 days per week
- [858 Portlaoise to Thurles](#) – operates 7 days per week

## Community

### Education

- Education is critical to achieving the full socio-economic potential of the County. There are 66 primary schools in the County catering for 9,883 students (this includes two Special Needs Education Schools) and 10 post primary schools in the County catering for 4,954 pupils. Both figures equate to 17.5% of the population.<sup>20</sup>
- The Laois Offaly Education and Training Board (LOETB) promotes adult education through Portlaoise and Portarlinton Further Education and Training Centres offering QQI Level 5 and 6 Courses and Adult Learning Services.<sup>21</sup>
- The Laois LEO office offers business information and advice, business skills training and mentoring support to support businesses in the County (CDP).<sup>22</sup>

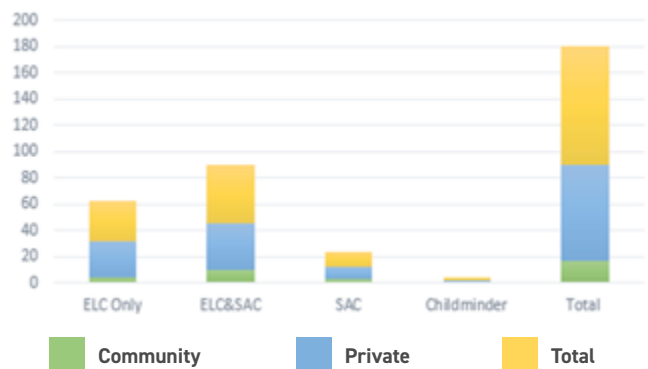
### Childcare Services

- There are currently 91 childcare services in Laois<sup>23</sup> - Community Childcare: accounting for 18 Services and 73 private services.

Broken Down by: ELC Only (sessional only):

- 32 Services (4 Community and 28 Private);
- ELC and SAC: (full day combined ) 45 Services (10 Community and 35 Private);
- SAC: (standalone school age only) 12 Services (3 Community and 9 Private);
- Childminders: 2 Tusla Registered (0 Community and 2 Private).

Figure 1.3.7 Laois Childcare Services



### Facilities for Young People in Rural Areas

Portlaoise is the Regional Head Office for **Youth Work Ireland Laois** who aims to empower young people in Laois to be the creators of their own futures. YWI have several programmes which include Electric Youth, Positive Laois, Splatter, Laois Integration Choir and Online classes. YWI currently have two centres in Portlaoise, James Fintan Lawlor House and the other in Kilminchy and run youth clubs in the following towns in the County:<sup>24</sup>

1. Vicarstown
  2. Ballinakill (re-opening soon)
  3. Ballylinan
  4. Barrowhouse
  5. Lithuanian Club (based in Portlaoise)
  6. All Abilities (Portlaoise)
  7. Emo (closed now)
  8. Ballyroan (opening soon)
  9. Portarlinton
  10. Ukrainian (being set up now)
- **Ossory Youth** operates two youth clubs located within South Laois in Rathdowney Youth Café and Borris-in-Ossory Youth Club<sup>25</sup>.
  - **Faroige** in Laois operates several projects in Laois including volunteer led clubs based in Camross, Portlaoise, Ratheniska and Timahoe.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>20</sup> [https://www.gov.ie/en/directory/category/495b8a-schools/?school\\_roll\\_number=&county=7918e8-laois&school\\_level=POST+PRIMARY&school\\_level=PRIMARY&school\\_level=SPECIAL+EDUCATION](https://www.gov.ie/en/directory/category/495b8a-schools/?school_roll_number=&county=7918e8-laois&school_level=POST+PRIMARY&school_level=PRIMARY&school_level=SPECIAL+EDUCATION)

<sup>21</sup> <https://laois.ie/wp-content/uploads/Volume-1-Written-Statement-of-Adopted-LCDP-2021-2027.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> <https://laois.ie/wp-content/uploads/Volume-1-Written-Statement-of-Adopted-LCDP-2021-2027.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> Laois Childcare Committee

<sup>24</sup> Youth Work Ireland Laois Branch

<sup>25</sup> Ossory Youth Kilkenny Branch

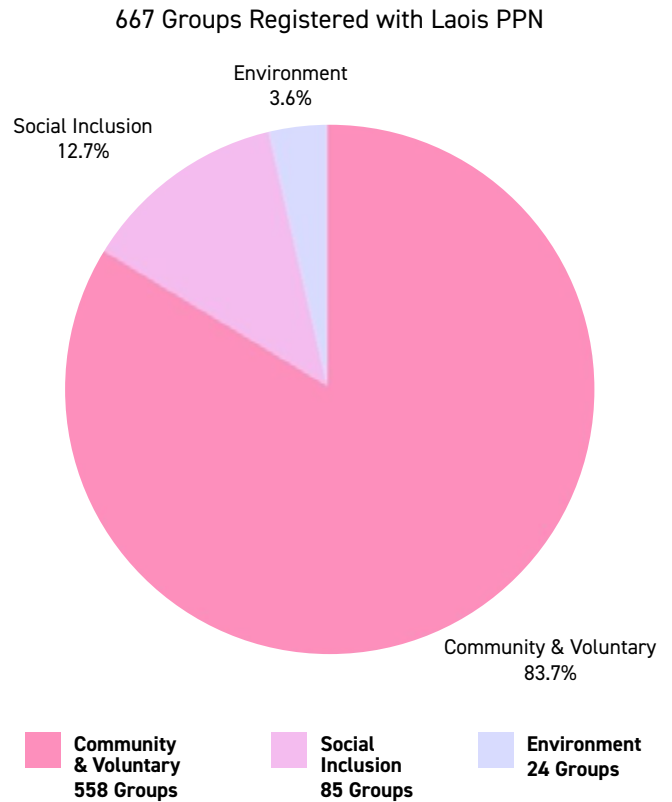
<sup>26</sup> Faroige Kilkenny Branch

## Laois Public Participation Network

The aim of the PPN is to facilitate and enable public organisations operating within the community a voice to the diverse range of views, issues, and interests within the Local government system.

- **Number of PPN member organisations registered and the breakdown per pillar<sup>27</sup>**
  - Number of Groups registered with Laois PPN as of 14/02/23 – 667
  - Community and Voluntary – 558
  - Social Inclusion – 85
  - Environmental – 24
- **The 12 committees PPN members are representatives of are as follows:**
  - LCDC – 5 seats
  - 4 SPC's
    - Enterprise, Economic Development and Tourism SPC – 1 seat
    - Climate Action and Community SPC – 3 seats
    - Housing Regeneration and Planning SPC – 2 seats
    - Transportation, Environment and Emergency Services SPC – 1 seat
  - Joint Policing Committee – 3 seats
  - Laois Heritage Forum – 3 seats
  - Laois Sports Partnership – 2 seats
  - Local Link – 1 seat
  - Laois Partnership – 3 seats
  - Laois Childcare Committee
  - Laois Placenames Committee – 1 seat

Figure 1.3.8 PPN Member Organisations



<sup>27</sup> Laois Public Participation Network

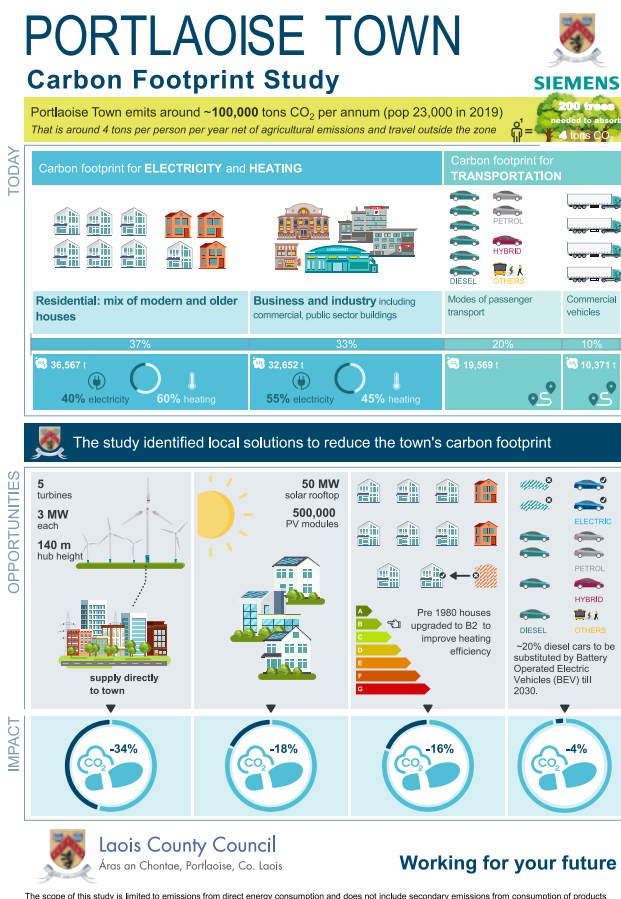


## Climate Change

The **Ireland 2040 Plan** identifies the town of Portlaoise as a national demonstration project for implementing sustainable and community driven urban renewal. Furthermore, Portlaoise has been allocated funding to advance towards the status of 'Low Carbon Town' as part of the Ireland 2040 demonstration project.<sup>28</sup>

The **CUBE** in Portlaoise is a Low Carbon Centre of Excellence and will function as a focal point for the development of new business and economic activity and in turn will support the transition to a low carbon economy. It is anticipated that 260 jobs will be created both within the Cube and because of its support services to business and industry.<sup>29</sup>

Figure 1.3.9 Portlaoise Carbon Footprint Study



## Broadband

The delivery of broadband within the County is enabled through Laois County Council engaging with the following stakeholders:

1. National Broadband Ireland (NBI) who applied to LCC for 254 licences to provide pole network for the rollout. NBI are currently engaging with LCC in relation to hedge cutting, ducting, new poles, and rollout.
2. WIFI 4 EU is a project developed by the EU that intends to bring free wi-fi to local communities in public places and under this initiative equipment, installation, maintenance, and support has been delivered in Portlaoise, Portarlinton, Stradbally, Abbeyleix, Ballinakill, Ballyroan, Mountmellick, Mountrath, Camross and Borris-in-Ossory.
3. Broadband Connection Points (BCP's) have been launched in six rural locations within the County under the National Broadband Plan: Community Centres in Vicarstown, Emo Old School, Shanganamore, Ballyroan and Oisín House Rossmore, Killeshin and Donaghmore Workhouse Museum.
4. Vex Robotics is a programme that offers schools a robotics and gaming programme and has been secured to two schools in Barrowhouse and Ballyroan with further roll out in two community centres also. This supplies equipment to a group of children between age 10 to 14 years to build and operate robots and develop a project to take part in a regional competition.

## Post Covid 19/Brexit

With an unrivalled central location, an educated workforce, robust infrastructure, low cost of doing business and strong transport links, Laois is a well-resourced and strategic hub for business, both Indigenous and international.

Steady progress is being made by the County in attracting talent and economic activity. The marketing and promotion of Laois in collaboration with the Laois Chamber of Commerce, the IDA, Enterprise Ireland, and the business community will continue to be one of our main goals going forward.

Laois County Council in partnership with our Economic and Community partners and stakeholders will continue to support and promote the County with the LCEP 2023-2028 and beyond.

<sup>28</sup> [https://laois.ie/wp-content/uploads/Portlaoise\\_infographics\\_vfinal.pdf](https://laois.ie/wp-content/uploads/Portlaoise_infographics_vfinal.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> <https://laois.ie/wp-content/uploads/Volume-1-Written-Statement-of-Adopted-LCDP-2021-2027.pdf> Volume-1-Written-Statement-of-Adopted-LCDP-2021-2027.pdf (laois.ie)





