

Media Release

Monday 29th March 2021

Carbon Footprint Report Launched for Portlaoise

Portlaoise releases 100,000 tonnes of CO₂ annually

Today Laois County Council launched the Carbon Footprint report for Portlaoise. This is the first Carbon Footprint report of its kind for a county town in Ireland and was commissioned by Laois County Council as part of the Low Carbon Town initiative supported by Government in Project Ireland 2040. As such, it fixes a reference point for emissions both in time and in quantum for Portlaoise and will serve to underpin the community wide effort to tackle climate change.

The report concludes that Portlaoise, with a population of about 23,000 people, produces the equivalent of 99,159 tonnes of carbon dioxide each year. That is over 4 tonnes of CO₂ per person per year net of aviation and agriculture.

The report sets out options and opportunities to reduce carbon emissions by up to 72%. The study confirms that in order to achieve this target and the nationally agreed target of 7% per annum there must be an investment in local renewable energy generation, an investment in deep retrofitting of homes and a big shift towards electric vehicles, public transport, cycling and walking throughout the decarbonised zone of Portlaoise. In addition the report underscores the value of biodiversity and tree planting in urban areas and the necessity to re-use existing building stock in the town centre.

The report methodology is easily transferrable to other towns and rural areas.

Cathaoirleach of Laois County Council Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald welcomed the report; - *“The Government has set a target of halving the country’s carbon*

footprint by 2030. This report sets out the scale of that challenge for Portlaoise and the county. This report will inform the conversation on how best to plan for our low carbon future”

Chief Executive of Laois County Council John Mulholland stated ;

“This is one of the most important reports prepared by Laois County Council for some time. It provides real clarity on the path ahead towards tackling the climate change issue and it sets out unambiguously the choices for our community over the next decade. In launching this report it is important to acknowledge the ongoing support of local business, stakeholders and communities in taking on some of the work associated with the low carbon challenge. We are grateful to have the active support of the Portlaoise Town Team , Portlaoise Tidy Towns and local transport companies in leading a very active community response. I would also like to acknowledge the support of the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government under the Urban Regeneration Fund in assisting to deliver the Low Carbon Town Project. Laois County Council will continue its engagement with the public on how to meet the government’s target of 50% reduction in CO₂ for Portlaoise and the County”.

The report is available on the Council website at <https://laois.ie/about-the-council/climate-action/>

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Notes for Editors

1. Replacing 20% of diesel cars by battery electrical vehicles (BEVs) would reduce the carbon footprint by 4% for Portlaoise town.
2. Upgrading pre 1980 houses to B2 energy efficiency levels could save as much as 16% of the Carbon footprint for the town

3. The provision of 15 MW of wind generated electricity capacity has the potential to reduce the carbon footprint by 34%
4. The housing stock in Portlaoise is on average newer than the national average, and as such is more energy efficient than the national average.
5. Existing Community and private sector initiatives in Portlaoise include:
 - a. O'Moore Park Stadium in Portlaoise will be the GAA's first "green stadium" following improvements in LED lighting and a range of bio-diversity initiatives
 - b. Portlaoise Rugby Football Club have launched their "green infrastructure plan"
 - c. Laois-Offaly Local Link plan to provide some of their services with an Electric Bus provided by a local bus hire company
6. To achieve the targeted reductions in CO₂ will require a combined effort from Communities, from Households, and from Businesses.
7. Laois County Council has achieved a 43% improvement in its own energy efficiency since 2009 (as against a 30% national target)
8. Laois County Council is currently tendering for energy efficiency upgrades to 60 of its Council houses, with a further 120 houses to go to tender later this year. All new Council houses are "A" rated homes.
9. In line with "compact design" principles Laois County Council has advanced plans to build over 110 houses in the town centre of Portlaoise; the two locations are at the old CBS site near the Railway Station and the old Convent site.
10. Laois County Council is upgrading all street lights in Portlaoise to high efficiency LED lights. This will save around 1 million kilowatt hours per year and 300 tonnes of CO₂ each year.
11. For Households interested in energy savings in the home, Laois Partnership independently have organised a free Webinar on Energy savings in the Home on 9th and 10th April, details at <https://laoispartnership.ie/laois-householders-energy-saving-action-on-climate-change-free-webinar/>

