



Laois County Council
Comhairle Chontae Laoise



Tuarascáil Bhliantúil

2003

Laois County Council Annual Report

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Mayor's Statement

Is pribhléid mór é domsa mar Mhéara Chontae Laoise an Tuarascáil Bhliantúil do 2003 a chur ós bhur gcomhair.

In the past year Laois County Council continued to be central to the development of the social, economic and cultural life of the County.

In 2003, some of the highlights of my year included Civic Receptions for the magnificent Laois Special Olympians and the triumphant Laois Senior Footballers.

We continued with our successful house building programme with 65 completions and over 200 in progress at year end. The M7/M8 Motorway Order was sent to An Bord Pleanála for confirmation and, if approved, would consist of 42 kms. of Motorway. The Portlaoise Main Drainage Project was further advanced and Ballyroan Sewerage Scheme was completed. Kyletalesha Landfill continued to be upgraded and is one of the best operated in the country.

Work also commenced on the Review of the County Development Plan. Work was completed on the magnificent extension to Áras an Chontae and the building was occupied in December 2003 providing an improved service under one roof for our customers.

2003 saw the end of the dual mandate and John Moloney T.D. , Sean Fleming T.D. and Senator Kieran Phelan resigned their council seats and were replaced by Patrick Bracken, Bill Delaney and Brendan Phelan respectively.



*Joseph Digan M.C.C.
Mayor*

Ba mhaith liom moladh a thabhairt do mo chomh-Comhairleoirí as a dtacaíocht agus a gchomhoibriú le blian anuas. Gabhaim buíochas chomh maith le foireann uile dílis na Comhairle as a gcabhair ag cur ár seirbhísí i dtreo, i rith na bliana.

*Joseph Digan M.C.C.
Mayor*

County Manager's Foreword

The publication of the 2003 Annual Report for Laois County Council is indeed significant for me as it has coincided with my first full year as County Manager. It is also a welcome opportunity to inform the public of the many activities which the Laois Local Authorities have been engaged with during the past twelve months.

2003 has witnessed very significant progress in all areas of activity and in the continuously changing role which Local Government plays in an ever changing society.

Laois County Council has responded in a timely and responsible fashion to the National Spatial Strategy, Regional Planning Guidelines, Motorway infrastructure and the provision of social and cultural facilities for an inclusive society.

The adoption of the Economic & Promotional Strategy and the implementation of the National Spatial Strategy for the development of the Transport Node/Inland Port/Motorway Services at Portlaoise Interchange will have longlasting economic benefit for the County and Council.

During the year the Council actively participated in the preparation of the Regional Planning Guidelines and continued to play a meaningful role in the activities of the County Development Boards and other agencies within the County and Region.

The construction of the €8 m extension to our Civic Offices – Áras an Chontae has again projected Laois County Council as a progressive



*Martin Riordan
County Manager*

and dynamic local authority.

All of the above together with the activities of the community, voluntary and sporting sections are together making Laois a socially inclusive, environmentally sustainable and economical progressive County.

I take this opportunity to thank the Mayor, Councillor Joe Digan and all public representatives for their support and assistance during 2003.

I also thank the Corporate Policy Group and all employees for their continuous support and assistance in furthering the aims and objectives of Laois County Council.

Tá súil agam go léifidh mórán daoine ar fud Chontae Laoise an Tuarascáil Bhliantúil seo agus go dtabharfaidh sé léargas dóibh ar ghníomhaíochtaí leathan na núdarás áitiúil.

*Martin Riordan
County Manager*

Mission Statement - Ráiteas Misin

Our mission is to develop, protect and promote the County in an inclusive and sustainable manner in Partnership with the Community.

Mandate - Údarás

Laois County Council is the Primary Democratically Elected Authority in County Laois.

Laois County Council provides an extensive and diverse range of services which impact upon the County's economic, social, environmental, infrastructural, tourism, industrial and cultural activities. These services include the provision and maintenance of houses, the provision and maintenance of roads, the provision and maintenance of water supplies and sewerage schemes, planning and development services, waste management, environmental protection, recreational activities, libraries, cultural and community development including recreation and sport. The Council is serviced by a large workforce, including the County Manager, professional, technical, legal, administrative, financial and outdoor employees and contractors.

Council Membership and Meetings

Laois County Council consists of 25 Elected Members - four members each from Mountmellick, Emo and Luggacurran Electoral Areas, six members from the Portlaoise Electoral Area and seven members from the Borris in Ossory Electoral Area.

Council Meetings in 2003 were held on the last Monday of each month in the Council Chamber at Áras an Chontae. There was no meeting 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 County Manager and comprises the Mayor of the Council and the Chairs of the Strategic Policy Committees.

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 2003.



Retired Councillors

Local Government (No. 2) Act 2003.

The main purpose of the above Act was to end the dual local authority/parliamentary membership. As a consequence, the following Members retired from Laois County Council in 2003:

Mr. John Moloney, T.D.

Deputy John Moloney was elected to Laois County Council in 1985 representing the Tinnahinch Electoral Area now known as the Mountmellick Electoral Area, having previously been co-opted to the Council in 1981.

Together with his late father, Michael and his late grandfather, John, they have given over 6 decades of public service to the people of Laois.

John was elected Cathaoirleach in 1989/1990 and later to Dáil Eireann in 1997.

John resigned from Laois County Council on 29th September 2003 and was replaced by Cllr. Paddy Bracken who was co-opted to the Council on 20th October 2003.



Mr. Sean Fleming, T.D.

Deputy Sean Fleming was elected to Laois County Council in 1999 representing the Luggacurren Electoral Area.

Sean's family have given many years of public service to the people of Laois with his uncle, Joseph having been elected to Laois County Council in 1955.

Sean was elected to Dáil Eireann in 1997 where he continues to serve the people of Laois.

Sean resigned from Laois County Council on 12th September 2003 and was replaced by Cllr. Bill Delaney who was co-opted to the Council on 29th September, 2003.



Senator Kieran Phelan

Senator Kieran Phelan was elected to Laois County Council in 1991 representing the Borris In Ossory Electoral Area.

Kieran's family have a long association with public life in Laois as his father, Patrick, served as a public representative from 1974 to 1985.

Kieran was elected to Seanad Eireann in 2002 where he continues to serve the people of Laois.


Kieran resigned from Laois County Council with effect from 9th July, 2003 and was replaced by his brother Brendan who was co-opted to the Council on 28th July, 2003.



Mountmellick



Borris in Ossory

			
<i>Ray Cribbin</i> MCC	<i>Michael Turley</i> MCC	<i>James Deegan</i> MCC	<i>Michael Costello</i> MCC

Emo

					
<i>Mary Sweeney</i> MCC	<i>Charles Flanagan</i> MCC	<i>Jerry Lodge</i> MCC	<i>William Aird</i> MCC	<i>Catherine Fitzgerald</i> MCC	<i>John Dunne</i> MCC

Portlaoise

			
<i>Michael Rice</i> MCC	<i>Mary Wheatley</i> MCC	<i>John Moran</i> MCC	<i>James Daly</i> MCC

Luggacurren

Housing, Social and Cultural Tithíocht, Sóisialta agus Cultúrtha

Strategic Policy Committee - Coiste Polasaí Straitéisigh

Chair: Seamus McDonald M.C.C.

Members:
William Aird, M.C.C.
Martin Phelan, M.C.C.
John Bonham, M.C.C.
Jerry Lodge, M.C.C.
John Dunne, M.C.C.
Martin Dunne, T.C.

Sectoral:
Roitimi Adebari, Community / Voluntary / Disadvantaged
Michael Kelly, Development / Construction
Pat Millar, Chamber of Commerce
Bobby Delaney, Environment / Conservation / Cultural
Declan Byrne
Anna Marie Delaney
Sean Ryan
Fionnuala Daly
Gerry Maher

Director of Services:
Senior Executive Officer:
A/Senior Executive Engineer:
Senior Social Worker:
County Librarian:

Report on S.P.C.

During 2003 the Housing, Social and Cultural S.P.C. met in March, June, October and December. At these meetings, reports and recommendations were received and considered from various working groups. The following policy documents were prepared and agreed by the Committee and referred to the C.P.G. following which they were adopted by the Elected Council:

- Policy for Implementation of Part V of the Planning & Development (Amendment) Act 2002
- Disabled Persons Grant Scheme/Essential Repairs Grant Scheme – Amendment to administration of Schemes.

Also discussed were proposals for a draft policy on anti-social behaviour

The S.P.C. is working satisfactorily.

Housing Services

Laois County Council is satisfied that through the implementation of the Local Authority Housing Construction Programme, the Voluntary Housing Programme and various housing options outlined hereunder, a substantial proportion of the total demand for accommodation will continue to be met.

Highlights 2003

- The successful completion and sale of the second Affordable Housing Scheme in Co. Laois at Ridge Road, Portlaoise.
- The completion of a 70 unit CAS project at Kilminchy, Portlaoise.
- Official Opening of Affordable Housing Scheme at Rossvale Court, Portlaoise.

Housing Construction & Acquisition

Laois County Council was allocated a total of 350 housing starts for the period 2000 – 2003.

Housing starts to date are as follows:

2000	97
2001	163
2002	108
2003	65
Total	433

47 new houses were completed in 2003. See below:

No. under construction at 1/1/03	204
No. commenced in 2003	65
No. completed in 2003	47
No. in progress at 31/12/03	222
Completions 2003	
Borris in Ossory	(16 Units)
Mountmellick	(2 Units)
Portarlinton	(12 Units)
Cherrygrove, Portlaoise	(1 Unit)
Rural Dwellings	(5 Units)
Dr. Murphy Place, Portlaoise	(1 unit)
Stradbally	(10 Units)

5 single house purchases and 6 demountables were also completed. A total of 92 allocations were made in 2003, which includes new dwellings, casual vacancies and demountables.

Turnkey Developments

The Council entered into agreements with private developers to acquire Turnkey developments at the following locations: Acragar, Mountmellick (32 social and 32 affordable units) and Graiguecullen, Carlow (15 units)

Land in Council Ownership

In 2003, land was acquired for housing development at Clonaslee and Rosenallis.

Part V – Housing Strategy

During 2003, regular meetings took place with developers in relation to compliance with the Housing Strategy. A number of negotiations are nearing finalisation, and some satisfactory agreements are in place.

Voluntary Housing Sector

A 60-house Loan and Subsidy Scheme project has commenced by Cluid Housing Association in Ballycullenbeg, Mountmellick, and is due for completion in early 2004. A 70 unit Capital Assistance Scheme project was completed in December 2003 at Kilminchy, Portlaoise, by the Sue Ryder Foundation. An 11 bed unit is under construction at present in Stradbally by the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary.

Housing Stock

Total number of dwellings at 31/12/03 – 1301.
33 vacant houses were refurbished and re-let in 2003.

Affordable Housing

In 2003, 74 houses at Bianconi Way, Ridge Road, Portlaoise, were sold to successful applicants under the Affordable Housing Scheme. These houses were sold at cost price, with three bedroom houses costing €122,500 and two bedroom costing €111,000.

Further developments are currently underway at Arles (8 units) and Borris-in-Ossory (4 units).

Activity under Various Schemes

• Extensions to Local Authority Housing: Completed	8
• Improvement Works in lieu of Re-Housing: Commenced	9
Completed	6
• Disabled Persons Grants: Applications Received	165
Paid 63 (Totalling €641,376)	
• Essential Repairs Grants: Applications Received	201
Paid 48 (Totalling €319,968)	
• Tenant Purchase Scheme: Applications Received	102
Houses Sold	22
• Shared Ownership Loans: Applications Received	46
Houses Purchased	27
• Mortgage Allowance Scheme: Applications Received	5
• House Purchase Loans Paid	10
• Reconstruction Loans Paid	10

Housing Rents

Average Weekly Rent:	€27.81
Total Collected in 2003:	€1,763,737.00
% Collected:	84%



Bianconi Way, Portlaoise - Affordable Housing Scheme

Traveller Accommodation

In April 2003 proposed amendments to the 5 Year Accommodation Programme for Travellers were put on public display inviting submissions from interested parties. The proposed amendments were considered and subsequently passed by the Council.

During 2003 the following offers of accommodation were accepted:-

- 8 Standard Local Authority Houses
- 13 Bays on Residential Caravan Parks
- 3 Single Instance Houses

Estate Management

The Community Project Worker and the Estate Management Officer continued to work closely with residents and associations addressing issues such as:

- General Maintenance
- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Signage, Traffic Calming and Estate Improvements

Pre-tenancy courses were provided for all new tenants

Activities in 2003

Estate Management Grants:

In 2003, 20 grants were awarded ranging in value from €200 to €2,500 to a total of €16,250.

Best Estate Competition:

Winners:	Woodview, Stradbally; Balladine, Abbeyleix
Runners Up:	Fr. O'Connor Crescent, Mountrath. Kirwan Park, Mountmellick Rossmore View, Graiguecullen. The Crescent, Ballylinan

Knockmay Regeneration Project

2003 saw the formation of the Knockmay Community Family Resource Centre Ltd. Funding has been approved through the Housing Management Initiative for a temporary Community Development Worker and this person will work closely with the Residents Associations and various agencies involved in the Knockmay area. 106/107 Cherrygrove have been refurbished as a new Community Centre.

Building Control

- No. of inspections of
Private Rented Accommodation: 11
- No. of inspections to ensure Compliance with
Building Regulations: 180



Barrow Way, Spa Street, Portarlinton

Performance Indicators

Performance Indicator	Standard 2002	Performance 2003
Shared Ownership Loans	20 working days	15 working days (Provisional Approval) 15 working days from receipt of deposit (Final Approval)
Reconstruction Loan – Issue of Final Approval	20 working days	20 working days
D.P.G. / E.R.G. – No. of days from notification that works are complete to issue of pay order	15 working days	15 working days
Emergency Repairs	24 hours from receipt of complaint	100%
Urgent Repairs	3 working days from receipt of complaint	100%
Rent and Annuity Collection Levels	86%	84%



Slieve Bloom View, Borris On Ossory

The Arts

Laois County Council provided a varied, comprehensive and wide-ranging programme of events in year 2003.

Laois Youth Theatre - Portlaoise, Mountmellick and Rathdowney

Laois Youth Theatre continues to grow with groups in Portlaoise and Mountmellick and a new group established in Rathdowney in Autumn 2003. Mountmellick Youth Theatre provided a colourful spectacle at the St. Patrick's Day Parade with costumes and dance routines based on the participating countries hosted by Laois during the Special Olympics. Eight lucky members of the Portlaoise branch of Laois Youth Theatre were selected to participate in the National Festival of Youth Theatres at Dublin Castle. Mountmellick Youth Theatre presented a play entitled "Early Man" by Hannah Vincent.

Laois School of Music

Laois School of Music continues to provide music training in a wide range of instruments for students of all ages. Instruments are taught by experienced qualified teachers in addition to other initiatives of the curriculum including outreach programmes for rural community development, music theory classes and Kindermusic for the very young.

Students and Tutors from Laois School of Music held a very successful end of year concert in the Dunamais Theatre. Christmas lunchtime Concerts took place in The Dunamais Theatre in December.



End of year concert, Laois School of Music

Free Lunchtime Concerts

A series of very successful Free Lunchtime Concerts were held in the Dunamais Arts Centre throughout the year.

Classical Music Concert in Emo Court

The Arts Office presented The Vanbrugh String Quartet in a classical music concert held in Emo Court on Tuesday 28th October.



Visiting Writer, during the Bealtaine Laois Festival of Literature



Launch of the Bealtaine Laois Festival of Literature

Bealtaine Laois Festival of Literature

The Bealtaine Laois Festival of Literature was a tremendous success, celebrating writing, storytelling, music and live performance in County Laois. A highlight of the Bealtaine Festival was the Short Story Competition which was adjudicated by the eminent writer and editor David Marcus. The winners were:

- 1) **Tim Booth, Ballinskellig, Co. Kerry**
- 2) **Chuck Kruger, Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork**

Laois County Council Art Act Grant Awards 2003

Laois County Council hosted an Arts Awards Night for recipients of the Arts Act Grants 2003 in Áras an Chontae, on Tuesday 4th March at 7.30pm. Arts Act Grants were awarded to 21 arts organisations and 3 individuals to further their artistic endeavors.

Art Exhibitions

Exhibitions of paintings were held by Laois based artists Máire Behan, Robert Stack, Séamus Morton and Ruth Barry who also works in Laois County Council.

An Arts & Craft Exhibition entitled "Brush Strokes" by the Laois branch of the Irish Wheelchair Association, in celebration of European Year of People with Disabilities.



Summer Arts Programme

The Summer Arts Programme offered a wonderful variety of workshops for all ages, from children's art and drama workshops, creative writing, music appreciation for the very young to pottery classes for adults and children.

Artists in Schools

Twenty Transition Year Students from Scoil Chriost Rí and the CBS, Portlaoise designed and constructed a living willow structure in the Peoples Park, Portlaoise. Various artists worked in primary and post-primary schools throughout the county during the year in the medias of murals, drama, arts and crafts and creative environmental art.

Storytelling

Two extraordinary evenings entitled “Unearthing Tales” took place in the Dunamaise Theatre on the 13th and 14th February to celebrate the completion of the recent Artist-in-Residence project. The Artist-in-Residence, Nuala Hayes explored storytelling in the county. The evening featured the screening of a film entitled “Tales at the Crossroads”. This film was compiled during Nuala Hayes’s residency and captured storytellers from the region. A local storyteller performed stories entitled “Tales of an Old Reprobate “by Joe O’Neill.

Storytelling CD’s “Laois Oral Archive, Tales and Lore” from County Laois and the Slieve Bloom Mountains was launched in November as part of the Sliabh Bloom Storytelling Festival and are available through the Library Services.

Dunamaise Arts Centre

It is hard to believe that it is five years since the Dunamaise Arts Centre opened its doors. Throughout those years the venue has played host to an amazing array of events from performances and exhibitions to seminars, launches and receptions. Since 1999 the Dunamaise programme has featured the best in local, national and international arts. Much of the success of these early years can be attributed to our dedicated staff, the quality of our programme and the significant support of Laois County Council and the Arts Council. However, none of this success would have been achieved without our loyal customers. We hope that you will continue to enjoy what the Dunamaise will offer in the future.



Dunamaise Theatre, Portlaoise

Performance Indicators

Performance Indicators	Performance Standards			
	2000	2001	2002	2003
Art Act Grants No. of Groups/Individuals assisted	13	21	20	24
Laois Youth Theatre No. of members places available	20	40	40	60
Summer Art Workshops No of places available	2 40	5 100	6 120	8 140
Drama Workshops Number of places available	2 40	3 60	3 60	3 60
Laois School of Music No of Students		300	330	330

Sports and Leisure

Play Provision

"Solas na Gréine" the Playground in People's Park, Portlaoise was further developed in 2003 and continues to be used extensively by local families and visitors to Portlaoise.

Consultations began in October 2003 on a five-year "County Play Strategy" in association with Laois Sports Partnership and Laois County Community Forum and the strategy will be launched in early 2004.

Summer Activity Programme

Laois County Council organised and delivered a six-week programme of summer activities. Camp Co Co was run in Portarlington, Portlaoise, Vicarstown, Clonaslee, Rathdowney and Ballyroan. Parks Tennis was run in Abbeyleix and Portarlington. Playdays for younger children were also delivered. Over 800 children participated in these activities.

Laois County Council also produced a directory of summer activities, an excellent resource for children and parents and 4,000 copies were circulated to all schools throughout the county.

Walking Routes

A 5 km Slí na Sláinte has been developed in Portlaoise and will be officially opened in February 2004.

Essential repairs were carried out on the Sliabh Bloom Waymarked Way following the annual route inspection by the Irish Sports Council.

Club Development

The Council's active club development programme continued in 2003, promoting and supporting the development of new and minority sports in Co. Laois, through planning and delivering workshops for clubs, seminars for coaches and athletes and through the provision of advice and assistance to clubs and communities in applying for funding under the Sports Capital Grants programme. 18 clubs were successful in 2003 with a total allocation of €450,000.

Special Olympics World Games 2003

Laois County Council assisted the four host towns of Portlaoise, Portarlington, Mountmellick and Abbeyleix in the organisation and delivery of their activity programmes for the visiting teams.



Laois Sports Partnership

Laois Sports Partnership has completed its second year in operation and Laois County Council are represented on the Board by Ms Ann Marie Maher, Sport & Leisure Officer.

The Sports Partnership launched and awarded €23,950 in its Sport & Physical Activity Grant Scheme in 2003. A Bursary for talented sports people was launched in 2003 and awards will be made in January 2004.

Laois Sports Partnership launched its Strategic Plan and web-site (www.laoissports.ie) in January 2003.

The Buntús Programme continues to be introduced into Primary Schools in County Laois. The Irish Sports Council initiative provides training and equipment to the thirty-six schools which participated during 2003.

The Partnership organised a "Go for Life" Physical Activity Leader training programme over eight weeks with participants from 17 Active Retirement Groups.

Performance Indicators		2003	2003
Performance Indicators	Description 2003	Indicators Set	Achievements
Numbers of Training Courses Organised	2 NGB Coaching courses 2 Summer Camp Leader Training Courses 1 First Aid Training Course 1 Special Olympics Training Course 6 Sports Development Seminars	12	13
Number of Trained Leaders, Coaches & Administrators	Coach/Leaders to be trained at courses detailed above	100	138
Number of participating communities in Summer Camps & other programmes	Camp Co Co – Portarlington, Vicarstown, Portlaoise, Rathdowney, Ballyroan, and Clonaslee, Park Tennis - Portarlington and Abbeyleix, Portlaoise Town Park Play Project Kayakatak – Canoeing Programme	10	10
Number of children participating in programme	Children participated in the programme as detailed above	700	810
No of clubs/groups assisted with Sports Funding Applications	Assistance includes: Attendance at Sports Capital Seminar, Site visits, Facilitating Club Development Plans and Completing Application Forms	30	32

Swimming Pools

Portlaoise Swimming Pool

Contract documents for the refurbishment and extension to Portlaoise Swimming Pool were prepared in 2003 by Malone O'Regan, Consulting Engineers, and sent to the Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation in September 2003.

The proposed development is as follows:-

- The refurbishment of Portlaoise swimming pool and the provision of a fitness centre
- The provision of a playground
- The provision of three all weather seven-a side soccer pitches.

While formal departmental approval to proceed with this capital project is awaited, the Council continued to support the committee with the operation of the existing pool.

Portarlington Swimming Pool

Plans for the refurbishment and extension to Portarlington Swimming Pool have been prepared and contract documents were submitted to the Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation in November 2002, for approval.

It is hoped that approval for this project will be received shortly so that the works can commence early in the new year.

Ballinakill Swimming Pool

Laois County Council continued to support this very worthwhile facility in Ballinakill.

Swimming Pool Committees

It is appropriate to acknowledge the work being undertaken by the three swimming pool committees in Portlaoise, Portarlington and Ballinakill.



Artists Impression of Facade, Portarlington Swimming Pool

Heritage



A selection of the rich heritage of County Laois

Laois Heritage Forum

2003 saw the appointment of a full-time Heritage Officer for County Laois. The Heritage Officer works closely with the Heritage Forum, in implementing the Laois Heritage Plan 2002 – 2006. The aim of Laois Heritage Forum is to promote an awareness and understanding, leading to a greater appreciation and ownership, of the built, natural and cultural heritage of the county.

Membership of the Laois Heritage Forum

Cllr Seamus Mc Donald M.C.C.	Chair, Housing, Social and Cultural Strategic Policy Committee
Eric Lewis	County Community Forum
Teddy Fennelly	County Development Board
Peter Dolan	L.C.C. Planning Section
Martina Bracken	L.C.C. Environment Section
Noreen Byrne	Laois Federation of Tidy Towns
Anne Goodwin	Laois Leader
Mary Lalor	Laois Heritage Society
Mick Dowling	Slieve Bloom Rural Development Society
John Finlay	Farming interest
Tom Egan	Bord na Móna
John Prior	Coillte
Con Maloney	Teagasc

Laois Heritage Plan 2002 - 2006

The Laois Heritage Plan signals a new approach nationally, to look at the needs of each county and to draw up a work plan that responds to these. The key to caring for and appreciation for our heritage is to have knowledge, understanding and concern for it.

The following projects, identified in the Heritage Plan, were undertaken in 2003:

- Survey of Industrial Heritage
- Heritage Interpretation seminar
- Laois style heritage sign design
- Laois Heritage Trail Upgrade
- Contribution to Tidy Towns judging
- Monuments of Laois poster
- Digitisation of burial registers
- St Fintan's Tree, Clonenagh

Other projects undertaken in 2003 include:

- Launch of the Inventory of the Architectural Heritage of Laois, by Minister Pat the Cope Gallagher TD, Minister of State at the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government
- "Give a Hoot about Wildlife" Owl exhibition and children's competition
- Preparation of publication on wildlife guidelines for towns
- Historic Landscape Character Assessment carried out in Laois, as part of a pilot project carried out throughout the Midlands.



Presentation of Monuments of Laois poster to Minister Pat the Cope Gallagher TD by Mayor Joseph Digan



Launch of the Architectural Heritage of County Laois

Library Service

There are three pillars of the public library service. It acts as a resource for Information and Learning, as a resource for Culture and the Imagination and as a resource for Children and Young People. These resources are provided both in print and computer based forms.

Headquarters

The headquarters of the library relocated to the new extension of Áras an Chontae in December. The Local Studies and Primary Schools departments are also housed in this building.

Abbeyleix Library

In December, the Department of the Environment gave approval to the Council to proceed to tender stage for the development of the Market House in Abbeyleix into a fulltime public library. The library will operate on 3 floor levels giving the full range of library services.

Children's Book Festival

A programme of events was organised by library staff in order to encourage children to use their local public library.



Winners in Bookmark Competition 2003

Comoradh Leabhar Na bPaistí

Bhi imeachtaí éagsúla ar siúl ag foireann na leabharlainne chun páistí a spreagadh chun úsáid a bhaint as a leabharlann áitiúil.

Book Fund

Laois County Council allocated €150,000 for the purchase of bookstock in 2003, an increase of €11,329 on the previous year. The Department of Education and Science contributed a grant of €23,041 to the library service towards the primary schools scheme in the county.

Local Publications

Seventeen books by local authors were published in 2003 and these are available in the library service.

Midlands Prison Library

Laois County Library in partnership with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform have set up a library service in the Midlands Prison to cater for the needs of the prisoners. A book fund of €50,000 was provided for this purpose during the year.

Archives

During the year work commenced on the fitting out of a building in Kea-Lew Business Park, Portlaoise for the purpose of storing archives relating to the county. All of the County's archives will be centralised and made available to the public at this location.

In 2003 the archivist worked on

- the transfer of cemetery archives from microfilm to CD Rom
- a survey of business records in the county
- microfilming of the Papers of the Cosby Estate, Stradbally.
- a CD of local stories and interviews compiled by Nuala Hayes, Artist in Residence, called "Tales at the Crossroads"
- cataloguing of Cosby Papers .

Statistics 2003

Library Membership	Adult	Children			Total
	3816	3256			7072
Books issued	Fiction	Non-Fiction	Children	Music/Audio Books	Total
	51,546	37,845	75,305	10,769	175,465

Performance Indicators	Actual '03	Standards
Membership	7,800	7,072
No. of items issued	180,000	175,465
Opening hours (per week) Towns over 5,000 population	35	35
Book expenditure per head Of population	€2.55	€2.55

Corporate Affairs, Human Resources, Economic Development, Information Technology & Tourism

Director of Services:	Louis Brennan
A/Senior Executive Officer	
Corporate Affairs/Human Resources:	Carmel McNicholl
Senior Executive Officer	
Economic Development:	Ian McCormack
Head of Information Systems:	Christy Crawford

regard.

In conclusion, the Mayor, Cllr. Digan formally presented the Taoiseach with a magnificent replica of the Timahoe Round Tower which was a once off creation constructed by Mr. John Tynan, The Oak, Ballyfin on behalf of the Council.

The Taoiseach was very appreciative of the gift and wished the Mayor well.

Corporate Affairs

Corporate Plan 2001 – 2004

In 2003, Laois County Council continued to work to achieve the targets and objectives set out in our Corporate Plan 2001 – 2004.

A new Corporate Plan will be prepared in 2004 and the new plan will be informed by experience to date. The Plan will also capture the many Strategic Plans to which local authorities now operate. The theme of social inclusion will also be reflected in the new Corporate Plan.

Extension to Áras an Chontae

The Contract in respect of the extension to Áras an Chontae was signed on the 19th December 2002.

This development was undertaken by public private partnership and the work was carried out by John Sisk and Son, Contractors Ltd.

The building measures approx. 2,000 m. sq. and cost in the order of € 8 million which is financed by the private sector and Laois County Council who will only be responsible for loan repayments on the net cost of the building over the next fourteen years.

The completed building was handed over to Laois County Council on the 15th December 2003 and will be officially opened in early 2004.

Higher Education Grants

Laois County Council awards Higher Education Grants under the Local Authorities (Higher Education Grants) Act 1968 – 1992. To be eligible for a grant under the scheme, a candidate must fulfil conditions such as residence, age, means and nationality. The grants scheme is advertised annually and the closing date for receipt of completed applications is generally mid – August. Details of the scheme and application forms are usually available in July from the Higher Education Grants Section.

Under the 2003 grants scheme, Laois County Council awarded 158 new grants and 275 grants were renewed. This was an increase of 15% on grants processed in 2002, and rose due to increases in the eligible income limits and additional award categories being introduced.

The maximum grant available under the scheme was €2,885 maintenance plus registration fees of €670. The total paid out in 2003 amounted to €1,483,953.

Cabinet Meeting in Emo Court

The Cabinet held it's first meeting following the Summer recess in Emo Court on Wednesday, 3rd September, 2003.

Afterwards the Taoiseach, Mr. Bertie Ahern, T.D. and Government Ministers met with the Mayor of County Laois, Cllr. Joe Digan, Martin Riordan, County Manager, elected representatives and senior officials who appraised Mr. Ahern on progress made in County Laois in relation to the delivery of services under the various government programmes.

In addition, the County Manager also advised the Taoiseach in relation to the Economic and Promotional Strategy for County Laois and the role to be played by Laois County Council in this



Cabinet Meeting in Emo Court



*Presentation by Cllr Joe Digan
to An Taoiseach, Mr B. Ahern T.D.*

Highlights

- 20/03/03 Reception for participants in the St. Fergals Rathdowney – Borromäum Salzburg Student Exchange Project.
- 20/05/03 Launch of book "A Historical Study of the Clonaslee Area" by Transition Year 2003, Clonaslee Vocational School.
- 21/05/03 Reception for the Executive of the T.U.I. Retired Members Association.

10/06/03 Bon Voyage for Laois Participants in the Special Olympics World Games 2003 with special appearance of Mr. Joe Duffy.

11/06/03 Civic Reception in honour of Portlaoise Ruby Club 1st XV on winning the 2003 Towns Cup.

17/07/03 Civic Reception in honour of Laois Participants in the Special Olympics World Games 2003.

01/10/03 Civic Reception in honour of Laois Senior Football Team Leinster Champions.



Champions Past and Present

09/10/03 Reception for participants in The Southern Education & Library Board and The Laois Education Centre Conference "Writing Together".

12/11/03 Reception in honour of the Laois Ladies Football Team 2003, National League Winners 2003.

12/11/03 Reception in honour of Mr. Seamus Graham, Trainer of Three Irish Greyhound Derby Winners.

24/11/03 Reception for winners in Fleadh Cheoil na hEireann 2003.

Human Resources

The following are some of the aims of the Human Resources Department:

- * To recruit, train and develop employees to their full potential in order to meet the organisation's needs
- * To establish and implement new Human Resource Management Policies and/or measures necessary to ensure a positive workplace environment
- * To continue to address employee matters relating to health, safety and welfare in the workplace.
- * To promote the use of the Irish Language in the workplace.

Recruitment Statistics

A total of 425 (Whole-time Equivalent) people were employed by Laois County Council at 31st December, 2003.

During 2003 Laois County Council held 41 competitions,

details of which are given below:

1321 Applications received

	Male	Female
Applicants	317	1004
Successful Applicants	72	116
Appointments	28	25

Retirements/Resignations

After many years of loyal, dedicated service to Laois County Council, the following employees retired during 2003:

John Maguire	Driver
Cait Kavanagh	Assistant Librarian
Gerry McGlinchey,	Director of Services
Patrick Moylan	Light Equipment Operator
Albert Kavanagh	Sewerage Caretaker
Bryan Kiernan	Waterworks Caretaker
Richard La Cumbre	Craftsman
Eileen Broomfield	Branch Librarian
Elizabeth Hovendon	Branch Librarian
Thomas Dunphy	General Operative
Bernard Dunne	Driver
Tom Flynn,	Part-time Fireman

There were 12 resignations from the staff in 2003

Career Breaks/Job/Work Sharing/Parental Leave

At year-end 8 employees were availing of the Career Break Scheme, 16 employees were availing of the job/work sharing scheme and 10 employees availed of the Parental Leave Scheme.

Industrial Relations

Laois County Council is generally characterised by good industrial relations and the Council expresses its appreciation to the Trade Unions involved, namely SIPTU, SIPTU (LAPO) and IMPACT. No days were lost due to industrial disputes in 2003.

Staff Training and Development:

A training assessment of the entire workforce was carried out in 2003 resulting in a comprehensive training programme being delivered at a cost of approx. €200,000.

A sample of training provided is set out hereunder:

TRAINING	TRAINER
First Aid Training	Order of Malta & FAS
Critical Incident Stress	
Management Training	Dr. Eddie Murphy
Workplace Bullying	
Awareness Training	Sean Ruth & Associates
Interviewee Skills Training	IPA
Dealing with Aggression	IPA
Project Management	IPA
Irish Language Classes	Louis O Muireagain
Customer Care Training	H. Training

Fourteen employees completed the Institute of Public Administration Certificate in Local Government and were conferred with their Certificates at a function in the Tullamore Court Hotel on 19th November, 2003. Four employees completed the Higher Certificate in Local Government.

Induction Training was carried out on in July, 2003 and it is proposed to further develop this training in 2004.

Throughout 2003, employees also regularly attended seminars and conferences directly related to their area of work and

expertise.

Laois County Council through the personal development of its employees is striving toward continuous improvement in service delivery and will continue to expand its training function.

Performance Indicator	Performance Standards 2003
Percentage of working days lost to sickness absence	3.5% target
Funding for training as percentage of payroll costs	1.1%
Percentage of employees participating in training and development opportunities	60%
Percentage of employees employed with a disability	3.5%
Percentage of days lost through Industrial Action	0%
Period from date of arrival in Laois County Council in which Induction Training will be provided	6 mths

Partnership

The Workplace Partnership Committee continued their work during 2003.

There were three new nominees on the Partnership Committee during 2003 and the committee members are now as follows:-

Management Nominees

Ian McCormack
Gerry Gibson
Gerry Maher
Declan Byrne
Declan Power

Joint Chairs:

Facilitator:

Union Nominees

John Culleton
Kieran Kehoe
Paddy Dowling
Paddy Macken
Dolores Murphy
Gerry Maher, Paddy Macken
Josephine Kavanagh

Long Service Awards

Through Workplace Partnership, the presentation of Long Service Awards was held for employees of Laois County Council in October, 2003. The awards were received by employees in honour of the many years of loyal service they had given to Laois County Council and their respective communities. The awards were made in the categories from 20 to 40 years service.



Recipients of Long Service Award

PANG

The PANG Committee continued their work during 2003 and also held a review of their work to date. A Calendar of Events was circulated throughout the organisation giving details of events for 2003.

Greening Committee

The Greening Committee continued their work during 2003, dealing with a number of issues identified through green housekeeping measures and introduced a number of environmentally friendly initiatives.

Return to Learning

The Return to Learning Initiative is a joint venture between Laois County Council and Laois V.E.C. and is co-funded by LANPAG and Laois County Council.

Four participants took part in this course during 2003 and received the Certificates of Achievement for successful completion of the course.

Inside Out Working Group

This Partnership Working Group was set up to examine ways of improving communications on an ongoing basis between employees of Laois County Council.

Communications Policy Working Group

The Communications Working Group was established to examine internal and external communications in Laois County Council.

Freedom of Information (F.O.I.)

The Freedom of Information Act 1997 has applied to Local Authorities since October 21st 1998.

The following show the level of activity in relation to requests for 2003:

Applications received/processed in 2003

Applications on hands at 31/12/2002	Nil
Applications received during 2003	36
Decisions taken during 2003	36
Applications on hands at 31/12/2003	Nil

Nature of Information Sought

Personal (to applicant)	8
Non-personal	28

Appeals

Appeals to Information Commissioner	Nil
Appeal to High Court	Nil

Source of Requests

Journalists	3
Business	5
Oireachtas Members	Nil
Local Authority Members	1
Others/General Public	27

Ombudsmans Report 2003

The following statistics concerning Laois County Council appeared in the 2003 Ombudsman's Report.

Valid complaints received/processed in 2003:

On Hands at 31/12/02	8
Received in 2003	19
Resolved or assistance provided	16
Not upheld	2
Discontinued	2
On Hands at 31/12/03	7

Register of Electors 2003/2004

1.	Dail Constituency			Presidential Electors		Dail Electors
	Laois – Offaly			45,531		45,749
	Total:			45,531		45,749
2.	European Parliament Constituency				European Electors	
	Leinster				45,780	
	Total:				45,780	
3	Local Electoral Areas				Number of Electors	
	Borris in Ossory				13,387	
	Emo				7,331	
	Luggacurren				7,522	
	Mountmellick				6,557	
	Portlaoise				11,104	
	Total:				45,901	
4	Town Councils				Number of Electors	
	Portlaoise				7,217	
	Mountmellick				2,468	
	Total				9,685	
5	Postal and Special Voters					
	Dail Constituency of Laois/Offaly					
	Garda Siochana	Defence Forces	Diplomats	Disabled Postal	Disabled Special	Occupation
	5	115	2	27	23	0
Total	5	115	2	27	23	0



Bon Voyage for Laois participants in the Special Olympics World Games 2003.

The Council Members supported and attended the following Conferences in 2003:-

Financing for Local Authorities	Galway	17th January 2003
Merriman Winter School	Bunratty	31st January 2003
General Council of County Councils	Nenagh	7th – 8th February 2003
Association of Municipal Authorities	Letterkenny	14th – 15th February 2003
Colmcille Heritage Trust	Gartan	28th February – 2nd March 2003
Carlow Tourism	Carlow	27th – 28th February 2003
One Off Rural Housing	Nenagh	20th – 21st February 2003
Transport in Ireland	Clonmel	7th – 8th March 2003
Talent Bank Project	Dublin	12th March 2003
Local Authorities on Nuclear Hazards	Cork	20th – 21st March 2003
Dundalk Chamber of Commerce	Dundalk	26th March 2003
Duhallow Conference	Cork	27th – 30th March 2003
Association of Health Boards	Kilkenny	21st – 22nd March 2003
Local Authority Members Association	Letterkenny	24th – 25th April 2003
Placenames Conference	Clare	11th – 13th April 2003
Sherkin Island Marine Station	Cork	1st – 2nd May 2003
Ballymote Community Enterprise	Sligo	9th – 10th May 2003
Mallow Racecourse Conference	Mallow	16th – 17th May 2003
Ratoo Heritage Conference	Tralee	29th – 31st May 2003
General Council of County Councils	Cork	30th – 31st May 2003
I.P.A. Environment Seminar	Dublin	7th & 23rd May 2003
Southern & Regional Eastern Assembly	Kilkenny	23rd – 24th May 2003
Oughterard Show Society	Oughterard	6th – 7th June 2003
Chamber of Commerce	Galway	6th June 2003
Women Making A Difference	Kilkenny	6th June 2003
National Adult Literacy Association	Dublin	13th June 2003
Mid-West Regional Authority	Nenagh	13th June 2003
Association of Local Democracies	Carlow	12th – 13th June 2003
Robert Emmet Summer School	Tipperary	6th – 8th June 2003
Sustainable Energy Ireland	Dublin	18th June 2004
Byrne Perry Summer School	Wexford	27th – 29th June 2003
Douglas Hyde Conference	Ballyhadereen	18th – 20th July 2003
Humbert School	Mayo	1st – 6th July 2003
Parnell Summer School	Wicklow	17th – 22nd August 2003
Merriman Summer School	Ennistymon	17th – 24th August 2003
European Dimension	Cork	4th – 5th September 2003
I.P.A. Training	Dublin	27th September 2003
Benedict Kiely Literary Weekend	Omagh	26th – 27th September 2003
Kilkee Waterworld	Kilkee	4th – 5th September 2003
Sherkin Island Marine Station	Cork	18th – 19th September 2003
Mid-West Regional Authority	Spiddal	11th September 2003
Association of Municipal Authorities	Waterford	11th – 13th September 2003
Strengthening Democracy	Cork	19th – 20th September 2003
Royal Irish Academy	Dublin	25th September 2003
Blackwater Valley Conference	Mallow	25th – 27th September 2003
La Touche Legacy Seminar	Greystones	3rd – 5th October 2003
Dundalk Environment Conference	Dundalk	7th – 8th October 2003
Irish Rural Dwellers	Kerry	3rd – 4th October 2003
Blackwater Valley Conference	Cork	30 – 31st October 2003
Duhallow Conference	Clare	17th October 2003
Enterprise Kiltullagh Ltd	Roscommon	30th October 2003
RAPID Launch	Dublin	6th October 2003
BMW Conference	Donegal	2nd October 2003
Local Authority Members Association	Prague	9th – 12th October 2003
Community Development & Planning	Wexford	14th – 15th October 2003
Ceifin Conference	Shannon	5th – 7th November 2003
Donegal Enterprise Board	Donegal	19th – 21st November 2003
Sustainable Energy Ireland	Sligo	13th – 14th November 2003
Local Authority Members Association	Galway	7th – 8th November 2003
15th Tourism Conference	Ennistymon	28th – 29th November 2003

ICT Department

The year 2003 saw the ICT Department make some major advances which benefited the organisation as a whole.

Development of New Systems

1. A Parking Ticket System was developed to automate the process from the issuing of tickets by wardens using handheld technology to the office administration. Vodafone selected Laois County Council as a national case study for this application.
2. Online Water Quality System – In 2003, Laois County Council became the first local authority in the country to make available the Online Water Quality System which allows the public to identify the surface water sampling station nearest to their house or farm and to get live water quality data.
3. Acquifer Protection System – This system allows resident engineers to quickly and accurately assess the aquifer risk for on-site sewerage systems, landfill, sludge disposal etc.
4. Housing Land Availability – This system uses GIS maps of planning applications, County Development Plan zonings, waste and water services to identify land available for housing within the next 2 to 8 years.
5. Online Planning System – Laois County Council developed an application that allows the public to view details including exact location and site maps for each planning application. This innovative application was the first of its kind in the country using Geomedia products. To date, no other local authority has managed to develop a similar system



Presentation of Innovation Award by LGCSB in recognition of the development of the Council's Intranet site.



Intranet

The Intranet was deployed across the entire organisation during 2003 and is used as a mechanism to distribute and collaborate on information. Laois County Council picked up a National Award for 'Best Innovation' in the LGCSB Local Authority Intranet Awards in 2003.

The Intranet GIS Corporate Browser, piloted and partially developed in Laois County Council, was fully implemented in the Spring of 2003. This system has undergone ongoing development over the year 2003, making it the most advanced Geomedia Intranet System in the country.

Network Certification

The Laois County Council Network has been examined by the LGCSB and meets the requirements for certification. We will be the 9th county to achieve this standard and formal confirmation is expected to issue in the near future.

Modernisation of Financial Systems

In 2003 work commenced on the second phase of this project, which involved the conversion of the existing debtor systems for use on the new Agresso application. The Project went live on its scheduled date in early June.

Economic Development

Industrial Sites / Units

Laois County Council continues to maintain it's direct role in facilitating economic development / job creation by the ongoing disposal of industrial sites at Portarlinton and Mountrath and throughout the County.

All available sites in the Clonminam Industrial Estate / Business Park have now been allocated and marketing of the commercial units in the Kea Lew Business Park will commence in 2004. The Rathdowney Advance Factory is now occupied and development proposals for the land banks at Durrow and Rathdowney are under active consideration.

Economic & Promotional Strategy

Laois County Council commissioned A. & L. Goodbody Consultants to develop an Economic and Promotional Strategy for County Laois which highlighted the need to develop the motorway interchange at Togher in a strategic and prioritised manner. Braniff Associates were engaged to examine the urban related interchanges, particularly Togher and to critically appraise, evaluate and identify land that formed the basis of a variation of the County Development Plan for the town of Portlaoise by the Members of Laois County Council in November 2003. The next step in the process is to promote this vision and turn it into a reality.

Tourism

Laois County Council have appointed a Tourism Officer who will work with all stakeholders in the Tourism sector to market and develop a profitable, sustainable industry that is attractive to people. A Tourism / Marketing Strategy will be prepared in consultation with local businesses and organisations and Laois County Council will continue to work closely with the Laois County Tourism Committee in conjunction with Midlands East Regional Tourism Organisation.

Enterprise

Laois County Council is committed to developing a culture of enterprise in County Laois. The Council will, where possible, play a leading role in encouraging / facilitating industrialists and entrepreneurs to locate in County Laois in an effort to maximise employment opportunities while also supporting an environment which will underpin the growth and development of existing industries.

Laois County Council continues to provide support and will continue to participate actively with all local and national development agencies to promote the social and economic development of the County and is actively investigating the possibility / feasibility of developing Enterprise Centres in partnership with local community and private enterprise in Portarlinton and Portlaoise.

Performance Indicators			
Performance Indicators	2001	2002	2003
No. of Developed Industrial Estates	4 Portlaoise Stage 1 Portlaoise Stage 2 Portarlinton Doonane	4 Portlaoise Stage 2 Portarlinton Doonane Mountrath	4 Portlaoise Stage 2 Portarlinton Doonane Mountrath
Enterprise Units: Laois County Council disposed of one unit in Kea Lew Business Park and is actively marketing the remaining units.			



Heywood Gardens, Ballinakill

Transportation and Infrastructure Iompar agus Infreastruchtúr

Strategic Policy Committee - Coiste Polasaí Straitéisigh

Chair: Catherine Fitzgerald M.C.C.

Members:

Brendan Phelan M.C.C.

Charles Flanagan, M.C.C.

James Daly, M.C.C.

Michael Turley, M.C.C.

John Joe Fennelly, M.C.C.

Joseph Digan, M.C.C.

Sectoral:

P.J. Fitzpatrick, Community /
Voluntary / Disadvantaged

Phillip Coonan,
(Chamber of Commerce)

John Kelly (Trade Union)

Martin Keane

(Farming/Agriculture)

Director of Services - Transportation: Gerry Gibson

A/Director of Services - Infrastructure: Sean Mullins

Senior Executive Officer:

John Daly

A/Senior Engineer, Roads:

Peter Kenny

A/Senior Engineer, Infrastructure:

William Walsh

Project Co-Ordinator:

Martin Daly

Report on S.P.C.

There were 4 meetings held in 2003.

Various policies were discussed and the following were adopted:

- Policy on procedures for dissemination of information to the public on urban road projects.
- The placing of the Water Services Investment Programme – Assessment of Needs 2004-2012 on the agenda for full Council meeting on 29th September.
- Policy for checking adequacy of water lines prior to taking estates in-charge.
- Provision of pumping stations for private developments

Roads

Introduction

Laois County Council is responsible for and maintains the 2,278 km of roadway and 14km of Motorway in the County.

In 2003, Laois County Council received a total allocation of €18,275,272 in respect of expenditure on National and Non-National Roads in Laois. Of this, €1,641,803 was financed from Laois County Council's own funds, with the remainder coming from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and the National Roads Authority.

In line with previous years, Laois County Council in 2003 carried out maintenance works on national, regional, and local roads in the County. These works included salting the roads during icy periods, drainage works, verge trimming, footpath repairs, erection and replacement of signs, relining, the provision of studs, bridge repairs and the replacement of safety barrier/fencing.

2003 saw the completion of the fourth year of the Multi-Annual Road Works Programme adopted by Laois County Council in the year 2000. Restoration works were carried out to 71 roads and surface dressing to 74 roads throughout the County (see tables at

end of section).

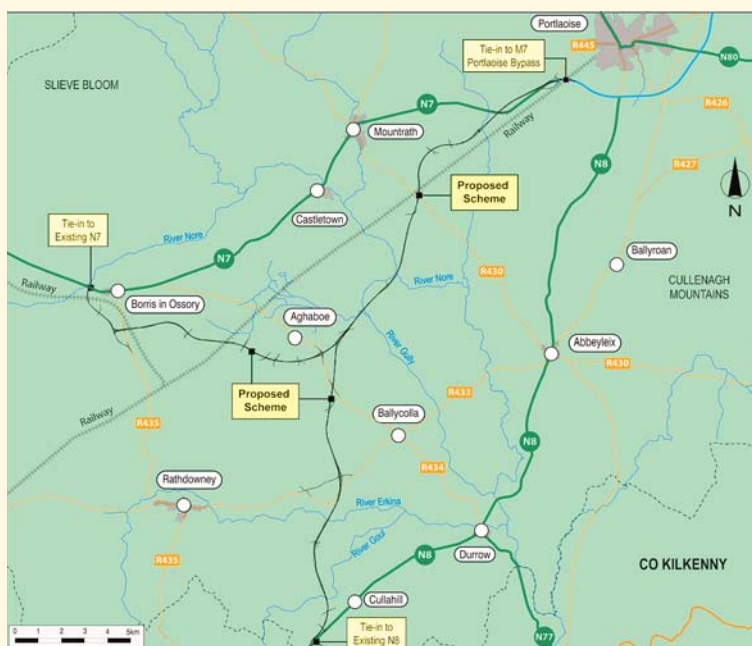
Projects

1. M7 Portlaoise to Castletown/M8 Portlaoise to Cullahill Motorway Scheme

The Motorway Order and Environmental Impact Statement for the M7/M8 Motorway Scheme were published in December 2003.

The project is one of the five largest road projects in the country, consisting of 42km of motorway and requiring a total investment of €405 million.

If approved by An Bord Pleanála, Laois County Council would then be authorised to provide the motorway in association with the N.R.A. to be funded as a public private partnership project.



Portlaoise Western Circular – Knockmay Link (PWCK)

This road will eventually form part of the Portlaoise Western Circular Route which will connect the Mountmellick Road (N80) with the Abbeyleix Rd (R922). Complete design for this scheme was carried out in-house. Construction of the section of road from the Ballyfin Road to the Mountrath Road was completed in 2003 to a very high standard by Council staff.

Portlaoise Western Circular – Clonminam Link (PWCC)

This section of the P.W.C. comprises a 1.05 km road from the top of Fr. Browne Ave to the Mountrath Road, R445. It will be a single 2-lane carriageway and includes a new bridge crossing of the main Dublin – Cork/Limerick railway line. Land acquisition was concluded in 2003 and preliminary design of this scheme is well advanced.

New Roundabout at Fr. Browne Avenue.

The construction of this important junction was successfully completed by Central Area staff in 2003. This roundabout greatly enhances both the safety and capacity for all road-users at this location.

4. Portarlinton

Portarlinton Land-Use and Transportation Study

The draft final report on the study went on public display in June and submissions were received from the public.

Kilmullen Bridge

Design of a new Bridge crossing of the main Dublin – Cork/Galway/Limerick railway line at Kilmullen and 5 options for a newly realigned approach to this new bridge was initiated.

5. Mountmellick

Mountmellick Inner Relief Road

In July 2003, the N.R.A. approved the Route Selection Report and a variation of the County Development Plan was passed by the Members of Laois County Council. A draft Preliminary Design for the scheme was completed by the Consultants.

6. Ballinakill Village Renewal Scheme

The construction of this scheme is 80% complete. This work was carried out by the staff in the Western Area.

7. Low Cost Accident Remedial Measures Schemes (LCARMS)

In 2003, 11 of these schemes were designed and completed by the Council at a cost of €125,500.

8. Traffic Calming Schemes

Schemes for Mountrath, Durrow and Ballylinan were at design stage in 2003.

Public Lighting

A total of 3086 lights are maintained by the Council and in 2003 the cost was €468,699.

Community Involvement in Roadworks Schemes

This scheme continued in 2003 and a total of 4 projects were

successfully undertaken in conjunction with local communities.

Local Improvement Schemes

An allocation of €174,303 was received from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in 2003 in respect of the above which financed 21 projects in the county.

Taxis and Hackneys

In 2003 Laois County Council had a total of 90 valid hackney licences, 6 limousines licences, and 54 taxi licences of which 11 are wheelchair accessible taxis.

Road Safety

School Wardens

Laois County Council has 6 full time and 2 part-time wardens providing safe access to and from school at busy locations.

Safe Cycling Programme

Three National Schools took part in this programme, which ran over 6 weeks and provided 110 children with comprehensive training in all aspects of Cycling Safety.

Parking Bye-Laws in Portlaoise

A further review of the Parking Bye-Laws for Portlaoise Town was initiated in 2003. The review proposed the following changes:

- extension of disc parking to areas around the town
- provision of additional loading bays in the town
- provision of additional wheelchair spaces in the town
- 1/2 hour free spaces to be abolished.

2003 also saw the introduction of 23 pay and display machines into Portlaoise Town. These machines provide a much more user-friendly and efficient system to the public than the previous system of paper discs.

Work also commenced in 2003 on the introduction of handheld



terminals for the traffic wardens, Safe Cycling Programme

Water Services

Portlaoise Main Drainage Project

Work continued on the advancement of the Portlaoise Main Drainage Project in 2003. Five number consortia were short listed for the Design, Build and Operation of the treatment plant over a contract period of 22 years. Contract documents were prepared and sent to the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government for approval.

Network surveys were completed and negotiations with landowners commenced for the laying of the sewer network.

The following advance works were completed:

- Increase capacity at the treatment works.
- Interim storm sewer upgrade at Knockmay/Moutmellick Road.
- Advance work at Harpers Lane roundabout.

Schemes Completed in 2003

Ballyroan Sewerage Works

This provided a new 600 p.e treatment plant and sewer network for the village.

Portlaoise Water Emergency Works

This increased by 3000 m³/day the water supply to Portlaoise.

Schemes in Planning in 2003

Portarlinton Water Supply Augmentation

Preliminary Report was advanced through Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government and approval received to prepare tender documents for stage I – development of ground water sources, storage reservoir and distribution network.

Portlaoise Water Supply Augmentation and Mountmellick Water Supply

The EIS for this scheme was approved by An Bord Pleanála. Preliminary and Polluter Pays Principle Report finalised and submitted to Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government for approval to proceed to tender.

Grouped Town Main Drainage

The Preliminary Report for the grouped towns – Clonaslee, Durrow, Mountrath, Rathdowney, Stradbally and Abbeyleix has been submitted to the Department of Environment, Health and Local Government for approval.

Mountmellick Sewerage Extension

The position of client representative to prepare design brief to advance the scheme was advertised and awarded in 2003.

Emo/Ballybrittas/Killenard Village Sewerage Scheme

Consultants have been appointed to prepare a Design Review Report and Polluter Pays Principle Report.

Small Water and Wastewater Schemes

The Council received a capital allocation of €350,000 for small schemes in 2003. This money together with internal resources funded the following schemes:

- Borris-in-Ossory Water
- Castletown Water

- Drim to Castletown Watermain
- Ridge Road Portlaoise Water Supply Network Improvement
- Meelick to Ballyroan Water Supply Network
- Danganroe Watermain Extension
- Emo Watermain
- Rathdowney Sewerage

Serviced Land Initiative

The Council received approval for expenditure of €600,000 under the S.L.I. scheme for treatment works at Ballylinan to cater for 2000 pe.

Applications have been lodged with the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government for funding under the scheme for Killenard Sewerage and Graiguecullen Pumping Station.

Water Conservation

Laois County Council received approval to carry out water conservation study with approved budget of €1.7m. A brief has been prepared for client representative to carry out this water study. The aim of the study is to reduce unaccounted for water to Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government acceptable guidelines.

Water Services Pricing Policy

A working group was set up to aid the implementation of Water Services Pricing Policy to meet Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government 2006 deadline. This group developed the true cost of provision of water services in Laois for 2002 and formulated policy regarding the metering of all non-domestic customers in the county.

Public Conveniences

In 2003 the Council spent €53,520 on the maintenance of the superloo at Mountrath and public toilets at Portlaoise and Stradbally.

Burial Grounds

77 voluntary groups received a total of €47,088 in 2003 under the grant assistance to Voluntary Cemetery Committees scheme

Performance Indicators	Standard 2003/2004	2002/2003
% of drinking wter (PWS) samples to compliance with statutory requirements	90%	98.8%*
Period for processing application for permission to make a connection to public water and sewer	3 wks	86%
Examine public health complaints and dangerous structures complaints.	2 working days	97%

* There were 20 public water supplies and 12 group water schemes monitored in Laois in 2002 collectively supplying water to a population of approximately 65,000 people.

Overall compliance with the drinking water standards in public water supplies was above average at 98.8%. Compliance with the faecal coliform standard in public water supplies was excellent with no faecal coliforms detected in any of the 313 samples analysed.

for maintenance of cemeteries.

Rural Water Programme

The Laois Rural Water Monitoring Committee, which was established to review and monitor progress on the Rural Water Programme, held 4 meetings in 2003.

Following the Council's approval of the first stage of the Rural Water Strategic Plan in 2001, work on developing the second stage, which is the implementation of the first stage strategy, continued on an on-going basis in 2003.

Capital allocations made to the Council under Rural Water Programme in 2003

Category	€
New Schemes/Upgrade of Schemes	950,000
Take-Over Upgrades programme	300,000
Bundling/DBO – water treatment	100,000
Small Schemes	350,000
Total	€1,700,000

New Schemes/Upgrade of Schemes

New Schemes	€	Upgrade of existing schemes	€
Bealeady	32,291.06	Cullohill	96,103.00
Kilbride	40,394.30	Errill	4,375.52
Lower Lea	26,034.12	Derrynaseera	8,500.00
Tierhoughar	16,049.41	Raheen	185,425.37
Ballymullen	31,371.24	Ballacolla	18,939.78
The Rock	187,219.29	Heath	218,536.23
Kilbricken	15,724.14	Aghmacart	509.49
Ballybrophy	146,628.62	9 small schemes (UV treatment)	11,422.86
		Garrintaggert	1,981.87

Total grant-aid of €1,041,506.30 paid to 17 schemes serving 1,389 connections.

Take-Over Upgrades Programme €

Ratheniska	101,977.22
Killenard	177,346.85
Bundle of 5 Schemes (<i>Ralish, Upper Crubbin, Kyleclonhobert, Clonreher, Castlecuffe</i>)	39,725.00

Total grant-aid of €319,049.07 paid on 7 schemes serving 729 connections.

In 2002, grant aid amounted to €251,763 on two schemes.

Water Treatment – Bundling/DBO

(Allocation in 2003 = €100,000)

Laois County Council has joined with Carlow, Kilkenny, Wexford, Wicklow Kildare and South Tipperary County Councils to form the South Leinster DBO Bundle for the provision and operation of water treatment facilities. The following schemes in Laois are participating in the bundle:

- Barrowhouse
- Ballypickas
- Ballacolla
- The Swan

Consultants are currently examining all participating schemes with a view to preparing preliminary proposals.

Small Schemes

Scheme	Expenditure€	Grant€
1. Borris-in-Ossory W.S. Ph. 1	212,281	159,211
2. Castletown/Mountrath W.S.- Source development at Knocks	98,698	74,023
3. Castletown/ Mountrath W.S. Network Upgrade Drim to Castletown	85,125	63,843
4. Ridge Road, Portlaoise Upgrade Watermain	26,000	19,500
5. Meelick to Ballyroan Network upgrade	9,020	6,765
6. Danganroe Watermain Ext.	12,700	9,525
7. Rathdowney Sewerage	12,660	9,495
8. Emo Water Main Upgrade	14,599	10,949
Total:	471,083	353,311

Total expenditure of €471,083 (grant of €353,311) on 8 schemes serving 1,698 connections.

In 2002, expenditure incurred amounted to €373,595 on two schemes.

Subsidy towards operational costs of Group Water Schemes in 2003

In 2003, subsidy towards operation and maintenance costs was paid to the following group water schemes:

Scheme	€	Scheme	€
Garrintaggert No. 2	304.77	Killenard	6,891.55
Knockardagur No. 2	203.18	Knockahonagh	189.00
Upper Crubbin	228.21	Aghmacart	507.95
Ratheniska	7,979.94	Knockardagur	256.73
Ironmills	177.33	Aghafin	1,371.33
Ralish	443.57	Graiguenahown	406.36
Barrowhouse	3,275.28	The Heath	28,784.53
Ballybuggy	507.95	Cullohill (2001)	5,321.56
Donaghmore	1,325.78	Ballinclough	609.48
Ballypickas	7,259.22	Errill	10,675.37
Ballacolla (00,01)	52,240.50	Attanagh	4,792.24
Cullohill (2002)	5,072.94	Derrycarrow	203.18

The total subsidy payments amounted to €139,027.95 to 24 schemes, serving 2,110 connections.

In 2002, €72,135 was paid to 16 schemes.

Water Quality in Group Water Schemes

Priority is being placed on bringing water quality in existing group schemes to the standard required by the current Quality of Water Intended for Human Consumption Regulations. This objective is being approached through:-

- Participation of schemes in the South Leinster (DBO) Bundle for the provision of water treatment
- Connection of privately sourced schemes to the public main where feasible.
- Take-over of the scheme by the Council.
- Capital funding for upgrades of schemes which have water quality problems.
- Fitting of Ultra Violet water treatment appliances on privately sourced group schemes with quality problems.

Non-National Roads Restoration Programme
List of Surface Dressing and Reconstruction Projects funded from Restoration Maintenance and Improvement Grants

Surface Dressing - Mountmellick Area

Road Category	Road Number	Work Category	Year in which work	Length of work	Total area of work	Estimated cost of work	Justification of Work eg Level of Usage (AADT),
R	R 423	SD	2003	1,500	10,500	20,536	Strahard
R	R 423	SD	2003	1,500	10,500	20,536	Brockra, Ballyfin
R	R 423	SD	2003	1,500	10,500	20,536	O'Moores Forest Mountmellick
L	210D	SD	2003	1,800	7,200	14,082	Clonehurk
L	215E	SD	2003	1,500	4,500	8,801	Camira
L	206A/206	SD	2003	2,000	10,000	19,558	Cloonaghmore
L	204B/204	SD	2003	2,200	10,340	20,223	Brogherla - Wranglestown
L	20D/204D	SD	2003	1,500	4,500	8,801	Coolagh/Clonlyon
L	32B	SD	2003	1,800	8,100	15,842	Kilcavan-Roskeen Cross
L	215	SD	2003	2,000	10,000	19,558	Mullaghenard-Camira
L	31	SD	2003	2,000	10,000	19,558	Moneyquid

TOTAL **€188,031**

Surface Dressing - Emo Area

Road Category	Road Number	Work Category	Year in which work	Length of work	Total area of work	Estimated cost of work	Justification of Work eg Level of Usage (AADT),
L	77	SD	2003	1,000	4,000	7,823	Stradbally - Timogue Cross
L	79	SD	2003	1,500	6,000	11,735	Timogue - Ballycoolan
L	67	SD	2003	1,500	6,000	11,735	Morette Castle - The Heath
L	59B	SD	2003	1,500	6,000	11,735	Coolroe
L	63	SD	2003	2,000	8,000	15,646	Cappakeal - Rossmore
L	41C	SD	2003	1,200	4,800	9,388	Ballykillane - Coolachy
L	56	SD	2003	2,000	8,000	15,646	Jamestown - Killenard
L	44C	SD	2003	1,000	4,000	7,823	Hand Rd, Morette
L	58	SD	2003	1,500	6,000	11,735	Ballybrittas - Rath
L	53B	SD	2003	1,200	4,800	9,388	Morette (N7 - Picnic Area)
L	47	SD	2003	1,500	6,000	11,735	Ballymorris Cross - Doolough Cross
L	73E	SD	2003	1,500	6,000	11,735	Ratheniska
L	62C	SD	2003	2,000	8,000	15,646	Moyanna - Tonafarna

TOTAL **€151,770**

Surface Dressing - Borris-In-Ossory Area

Road Category	Road Number	Work Category	Year in which work	Length of work	Total area of work	Estimated cost of	Justification of Work eg Level of Usage (AADT),
R	R 434	SD	2003	1,500	10,500	20,536	Ballacolla-Dairyhill
R	R 440	SD	2003	1,500	10,500	20,536	Blackhill Rd Camross
R	R 433	SD	2003	1,500	10,500	20,536	Oldglass-Ballacolla Manor X
R	R 433	SD	2003	1,500	10,500	20,536	Colemans Rd - Abbeyleix
R	R 433	SD	2003	1,500	10,500	20,536	Rathdowney - Eglish
R	R 434	SD	2003	1,500	10,500	20,536	Ballacolla - Coolderry
L	142	SD	2003	1,500	7,500	14,669	Cannonswood-Gurteen
L	136	SD	2003	1,500	7,500	14,669	Morans X - Gurraun
L	150	SD	2003	1,500	7,500	14,669	Rathdowney - Harristown
L	163	SD	2003	1,500	7,500	14,669	Kyledellig (Palmerhill - Kilcotton)
L	164D	SD	2003	1,500	7,500	14,669	Garryduff Lane
L	166	SD	2003	1,500	7,500	14,669	Clough-Boherard
L	163	SD	2003	1,500	7,500	14,669	Kyledellig - Palmerhill
L	175A	SD	2003	1,500	7,500	14,669	Cromogue Lane
L	177	SD	2003	1,500	7,500	14,669	Derrybeg - Trumera
L	155	SD	2003	1,500	7,500	14,669	Skirke-Garron X
L	154E	SD	2003	1,500	7,500	14,669	Castle Fleming - Coolowley
L	194E	SD	2003	1,500	7,500	14,669	Rock Road - Moneymore
L	198A	SD	2003	1,500	7,500	14,669	Lacca Church - Tinnakill
L	198	SD	2003	1,500	7,500	14,669	Garaffin Rd Camross
L	157C	SD	2003	1,500	7,500	14,669	Skirke- Kennedys X
L	193A	SD	2003	1,500	7,500	14,669	Glebe Rd. Coolrain
L	156	SD	2003	1,500	7,500	14,669	Bannans X - Grogan
L	154	SD	2003	1,500	7,500	14,669	Catlefeming - Coolowley
L	153 b	SD	2003	1,500	7,500	14,669	Graiguefalla
L	153	SD	2003	1,500	7,500	14,669	Templequain - Ballagh
L	139	SD	2003	1,500	7,500	10,786	Ballykealy - Cullahill

TOTAL **€427,382**

Surface Dressing - Portlaoise Area

Road Category	Road Number	Work Category	Year in which work	Length of work	Total area of work	Estimated cost of	Justification of Work eg Level of Usage (AADT),
R	R 422	SD	2003	1,500	10,500	20,536	Kilmainham
R	R 427	SD	2003	1,000	7,000	13,691	Cashel
R	R 425	SD	2003	2,000	14,000	27,381	Ballycarnan/Ballyknocken
R	R 445	SD	2003	2,000	12,000	23,470	Kilminchy - Ballydavis
L	186A	SD	2003	2,400	15,360	30,041	Ballyfin Road
L	34A	SD	2003	2,000	10,600	20,731	Kyletalisha
L		SD	2003	1,500	4,500	8,801	Killeen
L	182	SD	2003	1,500	5,250	10,268	Raheenabrogue
L	74C	SD	2003	1,500	6,000	11,735	Ballyknocken
L	37C	SD	2003	1,500	5,250	10,268	Hawthorne Nurseries, Road
L	123A	SD	2003	1,500	6,000	11,735	Cloncullane

TOTAL €188,657

Surface Dressing - Luggacurren Area

Road Category	Road Number	Work Category	Year in which work	Length of work	Total area of work	Estimated cost of	Justification of Work eg Level of Usage (AADT),
R	R 429	SD	2003	2,000	12,000	23,470	Killeen-Maganey
L	96B	SD	2003	1,500	6,000	11,735	Coolrain - Herondale
L	124	SD	2003	2,500	10,000	19,558	Boleybeg Cross - Graiguenasmutton
L	120B	SD	2003	1,500	6,000	11,735	Tampa Lane
L	75C	SD	2003	1,500	6,000	11,735	Raheenduff
L	131A	SD	2003	1,600	6,400	12,517	Aghnacross
L	85	SD	2003	1,500	6,000	11,735	Ballylinan - Skehana
L	82	SD	2003	1,500	6,000	11,735	Fallaghmore - Ballyadams
L	88	SD	2003	1,500	6,000	11,735	Barrowhouse - Tankardstown
L	83	SD	2003	1,500	6,000	11,735	Fallaghmore - Loughlass
L	98A	SD	2003	1,500	6,000	11,735	Ballyhide - Springhill Lower
L	116	SD	2003	1,500	6,000	11,735	Slatt Upper

TOTAL €161,160

Road Reconstruction - Mountmellick Area

Road Category	Road Number	Location	Work Category	Year	Length of work in Metres	Total Area of work in sq. metres	Estimated Cost
R	R 423	O'Moore's Forest/Derrycloney	RR	2003	1,000	7,000	75,822
R	R 422	Rosenallis	RR	2003	1,000	7,000	75,822
R	R 423	Brockra, Ballyfin	RR	2003	1,000	7,000	75,787
R	R 422	Mountmellick Debbicott	RR	2003	1,000	7,000	75,787
L	L 211	Clonaheen	RR	2003	1000	5500	49,943
L	L 40A	Clontirrey Lane	RR	2003	1,000	4,000	36,322
L	L 217A	Clonduff	RR	2003	1,000	3,000	27,242
L	L 207A	Ballymacrory	RR	2003	1,100	3,300	29,965
L	L 34	Kyletalisha (Derrygile)	RR	2003	1,000	3,500	31,782
L	L 187	Irey	RR	2003	1,000	4,500	40,862
L	L 35A	Derrydavey	RR	2003	1,000	3,500	31,782
L	L 186	Ballyfin	RR	2003	1,000	5,400	49,035
L	L 31	Castlebrack-Roskeen	RR	2003	1,000	4,300	39,046
L	L 215D	Nutgrove - Rinn	RR	2003	1,000	3,000	27,242
L	210 J	Knocks Ballyfin	RR	2003	1,000	3,500	31,782

TOTAL € 698,221

Road Reconstruction - Emo Area

Road Category	Road Number	Location	Work Category	Year	Length of work in Metres	Total Area of work in sq. metres	Estimated Cost
R	R 422	Emo Village	RR	2003	1000	6000	64,961
R	R 424	Clonanny	RR	2003	1000	6000	64,961
L	L 69	Park - Ballymaddock	RR	2003	1000	4000	36,322
L	L 76B	Money Upper	RR	2003	800	3200	29,058
L	L 44A	Ball Alley Cross - Cottage Farm	RR	2003	800	3200	29,058
L	L 57E	Killaglish	RR	2003	1300	5200	47,219
L	L 67A	Morette - Killone (Mill Lane)	RR	2003	1500	6000	54,483
L	L 52A	N7 Cappakeal - Emo Park	RR	2003	600	2400	39,954
L	L 57D	Canal Road - Courtwood					
		- Fisherstown	RR	2003	1200	4800	43,586
L	L 44	Shaen Hospital, Coolbanagher	RR	2003	1000	4000	36,322

TOTAL €445,924

Road Reconstruction - Borris-In-Ossory Area

Road Category	Road Number	Location	Work Category	Year	Length of work in	Total Area of work in sq. metres	Estimated Cost
R	R 434	Ballacolla-Dairyhill	RR	2003	1,000	7,000	75,787
R	R 434	Mannin X-Larrys X	RR	2003	1,000	7,000	75,787
R	R 434	Ballacolla-Durrow	RR	2003	1,000	7,000	75,787
R	R 430	Abbeyleix-Mountrath (Shanavalla)	RR	2003	1,000	7,000	75,787
R	R 440	Blackhills Rd	RR	2003	1,000	7,000	77,743
R	R 435	Donoughmore - Rathdowney / Ryan's	RR	2003	500	3,500	32,634
L	L 127A	Ballypickas	RR	2003	1,000	5,000	36,322
L	L 149A	Clonmeen - Abbey X	RR	2003	1,000	7,000	45,403
L	L 143	Dereen-Ballybooden (Durrow)	RR	2003	1,000	5,000	45,403
L	L 141	Cannonswood-Boston	RR	2003	1,000	5,000	45,403
L	L 138	Ballykeally-Ballagh	RR	2003	1,000	5,000	45,403
L	L 128	Ballinakill-Clohogue	RR	2003	1,000	5,000	45,403
L	L 172A	Watercastle-Tucks X	RR	2003	1,000	5,000	36,322
L	L 191D	Crannagh-Larchill(Gormans)	RR	2003	1,000	5,000	45,403
L	L 191A	Cock of Coolrain-Caher X	RR	2003	1,000	5,000	45,403
L	L 193	Caher 3 Roads-Clonoghil (Phelan)	RR	2003	1,000	5,000	45,403
L	L 161	Kildellig-Ballybrophy	RR	2003	1,000	5,000	45,403
L	L 194C	Clononeen-Brooklawn	RR	2003	1,000	5,000	45,403
L	L 167	Larrys X-Pike of Rushall	RR	2003	1,000	5,000	45,403
L	L 187D	Redcastle, Mountrath	RR	2003	1,000	5,000	45,403
L	L 173B	Boston Lane, Abbeyleix	RR	2003	1,000	5,000	36,322
L	L 171D	Killeany	RR	2003	1,000	5,000	45,403
L	L 164A	Curraun-Aghaboe	RR	2003	1,000	5,000	45,403
L	L 126 A	Green Rd. Abbeyleix	RR	2003	1,000	5,000	45,403
TOTAL							€ 1,203,536

Road Reconstruction - Portlaoise Area

Road Category	Road Number	Location	Work Category	Year	Length of work in Metres	Total Area of Work sq. metres	Estimated Cost
R	R 425	Ballycarnan	RR	2003	1000	6000	64,991
R	R 426	New Road, Portlaoise	RR	2003	1000	7000	75,787
R	R 425	Ballyroan	RR	2004	1000	9000	99,923
L	L 36	Ballytegan (Ridge Road)	RR	2003	1000	5500	49,943
L	L 75	Pass-Cullenagh	RR	2003	1500	5250	20,213
L	L 179	Ardlea	RR	2003	1100	4400	21,514
L	L 486	Ballyfin Road	RR	2003	1000	3000	27,242
L	L 185	Coolnamona	RR	2003	1000	4000	19,558
L	L 39 A	Ballintaggart	RR	2003	1000	4000	36,322
L	L 70C	Rocklane, Dunamase	RR	2003	1000	3000	27,242
TOTAL							€ 442,735

Road Reconstruction - Luggacurren Area

Road Category	Road Number	Location	Work Category	Year	Length of work in sq. metres	Total Area of work in sq. metres	Estimated Cost
R	R 430	Slatt Upper - Fairymount	RR	2003	1,000	6,000	64,961
R	R 426	Blacksticks - Knocklead	RR	2003	1,000	6,000	64,961
R	R 431	Garrendenny - Mayo	RR	2004	1,000	6,000	66,637
L	L 133	Knock Chapel - Graiguenahown	RR	2003	1,500	6,000	54,483
L	L 124	Graiguenasmuttan - Garryglass	RR	2003	1,000	4,000	36,322
L	L105B	Coolane	RR	2003	800	3,200	29,058
L	L 90	Ballyfoyle	RR	2003	1,000	4,000	36,322
L	L 112	Ashfield	RR	2003	800	3,200	29,058
L	L 108 B	Impeys Road, Kilcruise	RR	2003	1,500	6,000	54,483
L	L 100	Rossmore - Carlow Bounds	RR	2003	1,500	6,000	54,483
L	L 114	Shanrath Cross - Kellystown	RR	2003	800	3,200	29,058
L	L 94 A	Coolanowle - Ballingall	RR	2003	800	3,200	29,058
TOTAL							€ 548,884

Environment and Community Comhshaol agus Pobal

Strategic Policy Committee - Coiste Polasaí Straitéisigh

Chair: Raymond Cribbin. M.C.C.

Members:
Mary Wheatley, M.C.C.

Michael Lalor, M.C.C.

Mary Sweeney, M.C.C.
Michael Rice, M.C.C.
Paddy Bracken, M.C.C. TC

A/Director of Services: Sean Mullins
A/Senior Engineer: P.J. Dempsey

Sectoral:
Donald Scully,
(Agriculture/Farming)
Ger Lynch,
(Environmental / Conservation
/Cultural)
Christy Mooney (Trade Union)



Annual Laois Federation of Tidy Towns Awards- Presentation of Endeavour Award to Mountmellick Tidy Towns

The Council continued to support Tidy Towns and initiated a new grants scheme for Federation members. 25,000 was provided and a total of 20 committees received financial assistance. The Summer Wheelie Bins Scheme provided bins to 18 committees for the months of May to September.

Report on S.P.C.

Under the chairmanship of Councillor Ray Cribbin, the committee met four times during 2003 to discuss environmental policy issues in the County.

Environmental Awareness

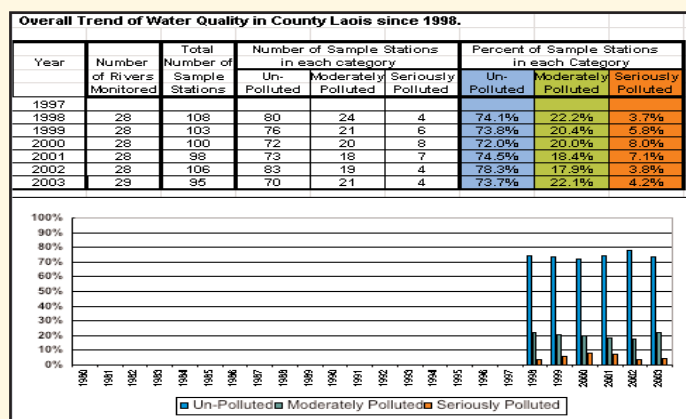
Clean up Laois Week

Clean up Laois Week took place from the 7th –11th April. The Council assisted by providing litter pickers, gloves and bags. In addition, 40 skips were provided to local committees and associations.

Environmental Protection

The Environmental Protection Section continued its work in the areas of river and groundwater sampling and analysis, farm inspections, education and awareness measures and advisory and management duties relating to proposed and new regulations. Staff from this section also dealt with complaints of an environmental nature and monitored licensed discharges to surface waters.

The surface water monitoring data is now available to members of the general public on <http://www.laois.ie>.



Source: River Water Quality in Laois EPA Kilkenny

Community Initiatives

In 2003, community grants were awarded to 39 groups throughout the County. The Council provided these grants to promote a partnership approach and to enable local groups such as resident's associations to carry out amenity works in their locality.

The Environmental Partnership Fund

The Environmental Partnership Fund aims to contribute to awareness of issues relating to sustainable development and to assist environmental awareness projects. Laois County Council and the Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government provided grant aid to 6 projects in 2003 under this scheme.

Waste Management

Waste Management is a statutory function of the local authority. Responsibilities include education, waste permits, control of waste disposal and operation of the county landfill site.

Landfill Site

The landfill at Kylealeasha is frequently inspected by the Environmental Protection Agency and in September 2003 was confirmed as one of the best operated landfill sites in the country.

The total quantity of waste landfilled in 2003 was 37,978 tonnes including 3,331 tonnes disposed of by domestic customers..

In June 2003 waste placement commenced in the first engineered and lined cell.

Construction of site infrastructure such as waste inspection and quarantine areas, green waste composting area and cleaning unit commenced in 2003.

Bring Banks

During 2003 an additional 22 bring bank sites were provided in the county, increasing the number of sites from 18 to 40. Each site has bins for the collection of clear, green and brown glass and aluminium cans. Textile recycling bins are also provided at some sites. The signage at the majority of sites was also upgraded.

Waste Regulation & Enforcement

The Waste Management Section is responsible for the granting and renewal of waste permits in County Laois. In total ten waste permits were issued in 2003.

30 Enforcement Notices were served in 2003, and one conviction was secured for offences under Section 39 of the Waste Management Act, 1996.

The new Packaging Regulations came into effect in 2003. Currently, 39 companies/businesses in County Laois are registered with REPAK and 1 company is registered with Laois County Council as a self-complier.

Recycling

Laois County Council continued to offer a free recyclable collection facility at the landfill civic amenity area for a wide range of waste streams. Plastic bottle recycling was introduced in 2003. See table for 2003 recycled waste.

Tonnage of Waste Collected for Recycling in 2003 in County Laois by Waste Stream

Waste Stream	Landfill Site CA Site Tonnage Recycled 2003	Dual Collection Systems (Household & Commercial) Tonnage Recycled 2003	Bring Sites Tonnage Recycled 2003*	Total Laois Tonnage Recycled 2003*
Newspapers	115.47	1,167.00	0.00	1,282.47
Magazines	44.44	182.00	0.00	226.44
Cardboard	70.34	5,252.00	0.00	5,322.34.
Cartons/Tetrapak	0.00	24.00	0.00	24
Aluminium/Cans	1.78	49.00	15.00	65.78
Glass	94.15	0.00	370.00	464.15
Plastic Bottles and Film	0.50	143.00	0.00	143.50
Waste Oil	6.79	0.00	0.00	6.79
Textiles	13.08	0.00	15.95	29.03
Batteries	30.97	0.00	0.00	30.97
Green waste	74.61	0.00	0.00	74.61
White Goods	29.67	0.00	0.00	29.67
Wood	0.00	69.00	0.00	69
Gas Cylinders	0.76	0.00	0.00	0.76
Scrap Metal	283.21	69.00	0.00	352.21
Fluorescent Tubes	0.224	0.00	0.00	0.224
Paint	1.82	0.00	0.00	1.82
Pesticides	0.078	0.00	0.00	0.078
Aerosols	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.03
Total Tonnage Recycled	767.92	6,955.00	400.95	8,123.87
* Conservative estimate.				

Litter Management

Litter

Action against Litter continues to be a priority with Laois County Council's environmental campaign. The Council employs two Litter Wardens who monitor litter around the county, levy litter fines and collect illegal dumping. During 2003, 221 on the spot litter fines were issued and 35 prosecutions were taken against offenders. The anti-litter hotline 1800 32 32 30 continued in an effort to encourage the confidential reporting of illegal dumping.

Education

Litter awareness is included as part of the Environmental Education Programme. This was delivered on an ongoing basis to schools and community groups through Council's Environmental Awareness Officer.

P.A.L.

Laois County Council, Laois Chamber of Commerce, Laois Tourism, Laois Vintners Association, Portlaoise Tidy Towns and the Garda Siochana are all part of a joint initiative to try and create a litter free Portlaoise. The objectives of the project include establishing a joint approach to a sustained litter free Portlaoise, developing a stronger sense of pride in creating a litter free environment, identifying selected areas in tackling litter and assisting in identifying litter "black spots" within the area.

Fire and Rescue Services

The Central Fire Station at Dublin Road, Portlaoise was officially opened on the 23rd June 2003 by Martin Cullen TD, Minister for the Environment, Heritage & Local Government. Built at a cost of 1,860,000 and funded by the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government. this modern building enhances the environment of the town of Portlaoise and has attracted much favourable comment and praise. New appli-



Portlaoise Fire Brigade at opening of the new central Fire Station

ances purchased during the year include a new Class B fire appliance, an Emergency Tender and a Water Tanker. Laois County Fire & Rescue Services responded to 676 incidents during 2003. In addition the Fire Prevention Unit dealt with 91 applications for Fire Safety Certificates and 125 licences were issued under Section 24 of the Fire Services Act, 1981.

Civil Defence

Laois Civil Defence provides assistance to the community and other emergency services where necessary and also co-operates with the Radiological Protection Institute within the framework of the National Emergency Plan for dealing with radiological emergencies. Members were involved in many different areas of community activity in the County during 2003.

Veterinary Services

Laois County Council is required to provide ante and post mortem inspections on all animals slaughtered for human consumption in the 12 licenced abattoirs in the county. In 2003 4209 cattle, 9907 sheep and 311 pigs were slaughtered in Laois.

Dog Control

The service is provided for Laois County Council by the ISPCA. A Dog Warden is employed and a pound operated at Ballacolla. Laois County Council maintain a database of all dog licences issued in the County. 3570 dog licences were issued in 2003.

Performance Indicators

Performance Indicators	2002	2003
<i>Dog Control</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of Licences Number of Fines 	3101 127	3120 130
<i>Bring Facilities</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of bring bank sites Batteries, oils etc 	20 1	41 1
<i>Home Composters</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of composters sold 	383	500
<i>Green Schools</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of Green Flag Schools No. of schools participating 	4 27	6 30
<i>Waste Regulation & Enforcement</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No of waste permits issued No of renewal waste permits issued No of Section 18 Notices issued No of Section 55 Notices issued 	1 nil 56 5	6 4 21 3
<i>Packaging Regulations</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No of Article 22 Notices issued 	nil	5
<i>Litter</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No of Litter Fines issued No. of prosecutions 	241 53	221 35
Litter control marks for National Tidy Towns Competition which measures street cleaning operations, enforcement and anti-litter awareness.		
Litter Control (Average % per town/village)		
<i>Population < 200</i>	79.5	79.5
<i>Population 201-1000</i>	72	72.5
<i>Population 1001-2500</i>	57	58.3
<i>Population 2501-5000</i>	50	50
<i>Population > 5000</i>	35	32.5



*Overall winners in the Art from Waste Competition
- Presentation Convent National School in Portarlinton*

Planning and Development Pleanáil agus Forbairt

Strategic Policy Committee - Coiste Polasaí Straitéisigh

Chair: John Moran M.C.C.

Members:
David Goodwin, M.C.C.

Michael Costello, M.C.C.

Bill Delaney M.C.C.
Martin Rohan, M.C.C.

James Deegan, M.C.C.
P.J. Bracken T.C.

Director of Services:
Senior Executive Officer:
A/Senior Planner:

Sectoral:
Dominic Hartnett,
(Community / Voluntary /
Disadvantaged)
Margaret Ryan, (Chamber of
Commerce)
Billy Moylan, (S.I.P.T.U.)
John Finlay, (Agriculture /
Farming)

Gerry Gibson
John Daly
Donal Kiely

Report on S.P.C.

The Strategic Policy Committee met on 4 occasions during the year and examined the following policy areas:

- (i) National Spatial Strategy
- (ii) Regional Planning Guidelines
- (iii) Economic / Promotional Strategy for County Laois
- (iv) Development Contribution Scheme

Regional Planning Guidelines

The National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020 sets out Government policy in relation to achieving balanced regional development.

In order to implement the Strategy, the Midland Regional Authority prepared Draft Regional Planning Guidelines in 2003.

The guidelines, when adopted, will establish a framework at Regional level to co-ordinate and integrate the Development Plans of the Local Authorities in the region.

Furthermore, by setting out regional development priorities, the Guidelines will establish a policy framework through which the activities of public authorities and agencies can be co-ordinated to achieve the objectives of the National Spatial Strategy.

County Development Plan

The present County Development Plan was adopted in 2000. Work commenced on the review of the Development Plan in 2003, with a view to commencing the formal preparation of a new Plan in early 2004.

During 2003, the Council varied the Plan to provide for the following policy objectives:

- (i) Provision of Mountmellick Inner Relief Road.
- (ii) Mixed-use zoning of lands at Togher, Portlaoise.
- (iii) Policy on Telecommunications Antennae.

Urban and Village Renewal Programme 2000-2006

In 2003, Urban and Village Renewal projects were carried out in Portlaoise, Durrow, Rathdowney and Clonaslee.

The improvements to the towns and villages included the development of river walks and amenity areas, planting of trees and shrubs and the development of focal points for local communities.

Town Renewal Scheme 2000

Properties within the towns of Mountrath, Mountmellick, Portarlinton and Rathdowney have been designated for the purpose of the Town Renewal Scheme

Laois County Council continues to liaise with developers and property owners in order to achieve the maximum benefits from the Town Renewal Scheme.

Shop Front Grants Scheme

Grants were allocated to 3 successful applicants to assist in carrying out works to enhance their shop fronts.

Conservation Grants Scheme

An allocation of 40,000 was received from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. 5 No. Grants were allocated to property owners to assist in the conservation of protected structures in 2003.

Derelict Sites

The Council continued to take action to ensure that land and buildings do not cause dereliction.

Relevant Statistics

Number of Valid Applications Received in 2003	1,206
Number of Decisions made in 2003	978 <i>Granted</i> 102 <i>Refused</i>
Total Income Received from Planning Application Fees in 2003	€757,860.88
Total Income Received from Development Charges in 2003	€4,058,654.25

Performance Indicators

Number of Applications determined	1,080
Percentage of Grants	90.5%
Percentage of Refusals	9.5%
Number of applications appealed	23
Percentage of applications appealed	2%
Number of appeals decided	18
Percentage of planning decisions appealed upheld by An Bord Pleanála	61%
Percentage of planning decisions appealed and overturned by An Bord Pleanála	39%

Laois County Development Board

Membership of the Board

A number of membership changes to the County Development Board took place in 2003 and the current membership is as follows:

Local Government

Mr. Ray Cribbin MCC, Laois County Council, Chair
Mr. Martin Riordan, County Manager
Mr. Joe Digan, Mayor of Laois
Ms. Catherine Fitzgerald MCC, Laois County Council
Mr. Seamus McDonald, MCC, Laois County Council
Mr. John Moran MCC, Laois County Council
Mr. Tom Jacob TC, Portlaoise and Mountmellick Town Councils

Local Development Agencies

Ms. Ann Goodwin, Laois LEADER Co.
Ms. Julia Booth, Laois LEADER Co.
Ms. Maria Callinan, CEO, Laois County Enterprise Board.
Ms. Anne Flynn, Laois County Enterprise Board.
Mr. Pat Fitzpatrick, Mountmellick Development Association.
Ms. Diane Burke, Portlaoise Community Action Project.

State Agencies

Ms. Brid Moody, IDA Ireland.
Mr. Aidan Waterstone, Midland Health Board.
Mr. Pat Campbell, FAS
Mr. Con Feighery, Teagasc.
Mr. Larry Kavanagh, Laois VEC.
Mr. Nick Mernagh, Enterprise Ireland.
Mr. Norman Black, MERTA.
Mr. Denis Galvin, Dept. Social & Family Affairs.
Chief Supt. Kevin Donohue, Laois/Offaly Garda Division

Social Partners

Mr. Teddy Fennelly, Employers & Business.
Mr. William Moylan, Trade Unions.
Mr. Michael Bergin, Farming & Agriculture
Mr. Eric Lewis, Community/Voluntary Sector
Mr. Michael Cobbe, Community/Voluntary Sector .
Ms. Fionn Bardon, Laois County Childcare Committee

Director of Community and Enterprise - Declan Byrne

The Board, under the Chairmanship of Cllr. Raymond Cribbin, held five meetings in 2003 to monitor the implementation of its ten year Economic, Social and Cultural Strategy.

A special meeting facilitated by Fr. Sean Healy and Sr. Brigid Reynolds of CORI took place in The Heritage Hotel, Portlaoise in September 2003 to examine the interdependence between national and local policy making.

At the December Board meeting, held in Castle Durrow, the Board reviewed the progress of Laois County Council in implementing economic, social and cultural actions of the Strategy, for which they are the lead agency.

Presentations to the Board were made by :

Ms. Muireann Ni Chonnaill, Arts Officer - role of the Arts Office, the Arts Plan, Arts Programme and its relevance to the Board's Strategy.

Ms. Catherine Casey, Heritage Officer – Laois Heritage

Mr. Louis Brennan, Director of Services - Economic development and promotion of the county.

In addition to the Board meetings, working groups of the Board also met on a regular basis and continued working on the implementation of the Strategy.

Task Groups of the Board

The partnership approach of the County Development Board process has been further enhanced by the establishment of a number of Task Groups, as follows:-

Children's Task Group

Chair, Cllr. Catherine Fitzgerald, addresses issues for children under the age of 12 in Co. Laois, including consultation with children, play, pre-school, education and services for children.

Safe Environment Task Group

Chair, Chief Superintendent of An Garda Síochána deals with issues of safety to ensure a safer local environment for all.

Education and Training Task Group

Chair, Mr. Pat Campbell of FÁS, examines all aspects of training and education in the county, particularly ICT supports.

Economic Development Task Group

Chair, Mr. Louis Brennan, Laois County Council oversees the implementation of the Economic / Promotional Strategy for 35 County Laois prepared by A. & L. Goodbody Consultants.

Tourism Strategic Group

Chair, Mr. Louis Brennan, Laois County Council, is developing and implementing a marketing strategy for tourism in Co. Laois.

Membership of these groups are drawn from varying interests within the county, each of which brings its organisation's and community's expertise, insights and vision to the process.

Other Areas of Activity

During the year the Board continued to support the work of the Social Inclusion Measures Working Group, Laois County Council Anti Poverty Network, Laois Rural Regeneration Partnership, Laois TRIP, LABEL, the County Community Forum and other special project groups.

Social Inclusion Measures Working Group (SIM)

During 2003 this group continued its work of co-ordinating the delivery of services to socially excluded groups. Work has commenced on the development of a poverty profile of the county and a booklet providing information on services available to socially excluded target groups.

Laois County Council in-house Anti Poverty Network

During 2003 the group considered individual issues including:

- Access to Library Services
- The promotion of quality infrastructure in areas of disadvantage
- Access to the Laois School of Music
- The Laois Corporate Plan
- The promotion of social inclusion within Laois
- Effective communication with those experiencing literacy difficulties

Laois Rural Regeneration Partnership

Laois Rural Regeneration Partnership examined a number of issues affecting rural viability during the year and supported the sourcing of funding for the Laois TRIP Rural Transport Initiative. It also made a presentation to the Director of Communications Regulations in relation to proposals regarding postal services in rural areas.

Laois TRIP

Laois County Development Board in association with Laois Rural Regeneration Partnership sourced funding for the development of a rural transport initiative in the Slieve Bloom area to meet the transport needs of those with no alternative means of transport available to them. Laois TRIP provided 28 services in December 2003 and its passenger count at December was over 1,200. The routes have now been extended to provide services for passengers in the Errill and Rathdowney areas.



Laois TRIP, was officially launched by Dr. James McDaid, T.D., Minister of State, Department of Transport, on 12th December 2003 at the Community Centre in Clonaslee, Co. Laois. The Minister travelled on one of the Laois TRIP services to see first hand the impact Laois TRIP has on the people of the area before arriving at the Community Centre, where he was greeted by the Mayor of Co. Laois, Mr. Joe Digan.

LABEL- Laois Third Level Initiative

Laois County Development Board in conjunction with Laois County Council, Laois VEC, County Enterprise Board and Laois Teachers Centre sourced funding from the BMW Regional Authority to develop a third level outreach centre in Portllington. This centre will provide third level education programmes to adults returning to education, with courses commencing in 2004.

Laois County Community Forum

Laois Community Forum met regularly in 2003 and members continued to represent the community and voluntary sector on a range of organisations across the county. Projects carried out during the year included the Disability Networking Day and Play consultation workshops. The Community Forum produced reports on a number of areas of concern to community groups in the county: - disability issues, financial services in the county, changes in CE schemes, to inform the work of its representatives.

Area Fora meetings were held in the five electoral areas to examine community safety issues in conjunction with the Gardaí.



Area Fora Meeting with an Gardaí Síochanna, October 2003'

Comhairle Na nÓg

In May and June 2003, the Board, through the Children's Task Group, facilitated Comhairle na nÓg for teenagers in Áras an Chontae. Primary school age children were also consulted

through a separate event (Comhairle na bPáistí). Facilitators from eleven organisations were trained by the ISPCU Consultation Unit to run the consultation workshops. Four young people were selected and participated in a national Dáil na nÓg in Croke Park, Dublin.



Participants in Comhairle na bPáistí with Mayor Joe Digan, 10th of June 2003

Special Projects

Second Level Schools Programme

Laois County Council, in conjunction with the Laois Education Centre and the Transition Year Support Team continued the education programme for transition year students in County Laois.

All six secondary schools participated in the activities arranged, which included talks on the work of the County Council and the election process and visits to Council meetings and utilities. A visit by a selection of students to an Urban District Council meeting in Omagh took place in May 2003.

Funding from the Combat Poverty Agency

Laois County Council in association with Mountmellick Development Association, Portlaoise Community Action Project and Laois County Community Forum sourced funding from the Combat Poverty Agency in 2003 to consider certain services of Laois County Council and assess their impact on socially excluded groups in the county. The project involved a wide consultation process, and as a result an action plan has been developed to improve service delivery and address any negative impact of this on people experiencing social exclusion. This action plan will be implemented in 2004.

Financial Management Bainistíocht Airgeadais

Head of Finance: Peter Scully
Financial/Management Accountant: Gerry Murphy

The Finance Department has responsibility for a wide range of Core Services within Laois County Council.

These include Motor Taxation, Revenue Collection, Accounts Payable, Payroll and Superannuation, Internal Audit, Estimates Preparation, Financial Management and all ancillary matters.

Rates

For the year 2003 the rate collection achieved was 88.24%
The Ratable Value Multiplier for 2003 was 51.1303 and in respect of Town Charges was:

Town	
Portlaoise:	1.6084
Mountmellick:	2.0100

Water Charges

The total number of commercial users in 2003 was 1909 of which 1578 were metered and the remaining 331 were charged on the basis of rateable valuation.

The charge for metered water is 4.30 per 1000 gallons or 0.95 per 1000 litres. In addition a Meter Rental of 50.00 per year is payable.

Prompt Payments of Accounts

Following the introduction of the Prompt Payment of Accounts Act as amended by the European Communities (Late Payment in Commercial Transactions) Regulations 2002, commercial suppliers are entitled to payment of interest on amounts owed to them after

- a) the date specified under the terms of a written contract
- or
- b) 30 days of receipt of the invoice or delivery of goods, whichever is the later, where there is no written contract or if the contract does not specify a payment date.

Laois County Council complies with the terms of the Prompt Payments Act as amended. To ensure compliance with the Act and Regulations invoices are date stamped on receipt in the Accounts Payable section and outstanding invoices approaching their due date are examined weekly. In cases where late payment interest is payable, a statement detailing the interest calculation is sent to the supplier with payment.

The procedures detailed above can only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance against material compliance with the Act.

The standard payment periods specified in written contracts are generally:

Housing Contracts	10 working days
Roads Contracts	28 days
Water Contracts	14 days/1 month

Laois County Council did not pay any late payment interest in 2003

Motor Taxation General

The introduction of the NVDF (National Vehicle Driver File) system now caters for all motor tax and driver licences.

On-Line taxing went live in three counties on a pilot basis in December, 2003. These were Clare, Galway and North Tipperary. It is hoped that the remainder will go live early in the new year.

The Motor Tax Office moved to its new premises on 17th



December, 2003. It is situated directly behind the existing Council building and has ample car parking for its customers.

Vehicle Licences

The total receipts for 2003 were 10,343,765.50 compared to 8,815,510.50 in 2002. The rates of duty increase by 12.5% from 1st January, 2003. The number of vehicle licences (discs) issued in 2003 was 53,296 compared to 49,870 in 2002.

Driving Licences

Receipts for year 2003 were 150,750 (including duplicates). The number of driving licences issued in 2003 was 9,111.

A Theory Test is mandatory for all first applications for provisional licences. The telephone number to call for a test is 1890 606 106.

Vehicle Testing

Certificates of Roadworthiness for commercial/goods vehicles were issued in respect of 2665 vehicles during the year.

NCT Test (National Car Testing)

The Laois Centre is at Lismard Business Centre, Timahoe Road, Portlaoise.

Customer Service

Use of the credit card facility is well established. Every effort is made at all times to minimise delays in processing data both at the public counter and through the postal system. The greater portion of all postal applications were "turned around" by return post. The facility of on-line taxing will be a further step in simplifying renewal of taxation.

Hours of Opening

9 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. Monday to Friday including lunch time.

Performance Indicators

Percentage of postal applications which are dealt with:

		2002	2003
(a)	on the same day	88%	90%
(b)	on the third day or less	12%	10%

Processing of enquiries

(General and Garda)	4 working days	3 working days or less
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Annual Financial Statement

Revenue Account

Expenditure by Programme Group	Expenditure	Receipts	Net Expenditure
Housing and Building	5,055,744	3,671,287	1,384,457
Road Transportation and Safety	13,357,345	9,270,972	4,086,373
Water Supply and Sewerage	5,037,718	1,998,825	3,038,893
Development Incentives and Controls	2,468,284	1,172,616	1,295,668
Environmental Protection	5,702,141	5,183,343	518,798
Recreation and Amenity	2,728,407	585,754	2,142,653
Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare	2,650,985	2,392,547	258,438
Miscellaneous Services	4,910,303	2,369,818	2,540,485
Total Expenditure/Receipts	41,910,927	26,645,162	

Net Cost of Programmes to be funded from County Rates and Local Government **15,265,765**

Local Government Fund	12,142,991
County Rates	5,242,415
Surplus / (Deficit) for Year before Transfers	2,119,641
Transfers from / (to) Reserves	(987,685)
Overall Surplus / (Deficit) for Year	1,131,956
General Reserve at 1st January	(2,419,431)
General Reserve at 31st December	(1,287,475)

Capital Account

Expenditure by Programme Group	Expenditure	Receipts
Housing and Building	36,285,596	41,665,010
Road Transportation and Safety	11,833,134	11,588,211
Water Supply and Sewerage	5,521,635	5,694,783
Development Incentives and Controls	609,025	3,514,166
Environmental Protection	2,465,692	1,728,662
Recreation and Amenity	953,790	477,393
Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare		
Miscellaneous Services	1,099,676	65,155,335
Total Expenditure/Receipts	58,768,548	65,155,335
Surplus / (Deficit) for Year	6,386,787	
Balance at 1st January	(9,648,831)	
Balance at 31st December	(3,262,044)	

Portlaoise Town Council Comhairle Bhaile Portlaoise

Manager:
Town Clerk:

Peter Scully
Fiona Purcell



Portlaoise Chamber of Commerce and Trade

During the year the Town Council worked in partnership with Portlaoise Chamber of Commerce and Trade.

Some of the issues the Town Council and the Chamber worked in partnership on were:

- Promotion of Portlaoise (Launch of a Brochure)
- Christmas Lights
- Town Twinning
- Tidy Towns
- Tidy Estates Competitions
- Security

Annual General Meeting

At the Annual General Meeting of Portlaoise Town Council, held on Tuesday 1st July, 2003, Councillor Elaine Dunne was elected as Mayor. Councillor Kathleen O'Brien was elected as Vice Mayor.

Representation on Other Bodies

Councillors Joseph McCormack and Thomas Jacob were nominated as delegates to attend the Annual Conference and Seminar of the Association of Municipal Authorities of Ireland.

Councillor Kathleen O'Brien was appointed delegate to attend the Annual General Meeting of Irish Public Bodies Mutual Insurances Ltd.

Councillor Martin Dunne represents Portlaoise Town Council on the Housing, Social and Cultural Strategic Policy Committee.

Monthly Meetings

The first Tuesday of each month.

Main Services Provided

Housing, School Meals, School Warden Service, Community and Environmental Initiatives, Civic Receptions and Town Twinning.

Budget 2003 – 89,308

During the year the Town Council provided support to the following:

1. Portlaoise Tidy Towns
2. Tourism Promotion
3. Community/Environmental Fund

Applicant	Grant
• Portlaoise Tidy Towns Committee	1,000.00
• New Park Residents Association	150.00
• Laois Special Olympics Club	500.00
• Downs Residents Association	150.00
• Portlaoise Christmas Lights Committee	300.00
• New Road Residents Committee	150.00
• National Association for Parent Support (Portlaoise Branch)	250.00
• O' Moore Place Residents	200.00
• O' Moore Place Childcare	200.00
• DunMasc Residents Association	150.00
• Portlaoise Macra Na Feirme	150.00



Highlights During 2003

Health Service in Portlaoise

The Town Council continued to strongly support the development and improvement of the health services in the area.

Other Activities

- The Town Council supported and encouraged the continued development of the Town.
- The IDA and Enterprise Ireland were successfully lobbied for increased employment opportunities in Portlaoise.
- Co-operation with the Gardai was strengthened through regular attendance at Town Council Meetings.
- The Town Council supported the continuing efforts to attract a third level educational institution to Portlaoise.
- Further representations were made by Portlaoise Town Council and additional decentralisation of Government Departments was secured.
- During the year, the Town Council supported and welcomed various developments in Portlaoise, particularly:

- (1) Public and Private Housing Developments i.e. allocation of the first Affordable Housing Scheme in the County at Ridge Road and the commencement of 40 Social Housing Units at Colliers Lane
- (2) Road and footpath improvements throughout the town as well as the installation of traffic management mechanisms, cycle lanes and resurfacing
- (3) Bealtaine 2003
- (4) Improvement of the service by Iarnrod Éireann to Portlaoise
- (5) Completed construction of the new Fire Station

Conferences

The Town Council supported and was represented at the following conferences:

- The Annual Conference of the Association of Municipal Authorities of Ireland
- The Annual Seminar of the Association of Municipal Authorities of Ireland.



Mountmellick Town Council Comhairle Bhaile Móinteach Milic



Manager:
Town Clerk:

Declan Byrne
Dominic Reddin

Business at Monthly Meetings

Annual General Meeting

At the Annual General Meeting of Mountmellick Town Council held on 3rd of July 2003 Councillor Patrick Bracken was elected Cathaoirleach. Councillor Helen Hanson was elected Leas Cathaoirleach.

Representations on Other Bodies

Cathaoirleach Patrick Bracken and Councillor Michael Gormley were nominated as delegates to attend the Annual Conference and Seminar of the Association of Municipal Authorities of Ireland.

Councillor Marc Connolly was appointed delegate to attend the Annual General Meeting of the Irish Public Bodies Mutual Insurances Ltd.

Special Olympics

The Town Council supported the Special Olympics Committee and members actively participated with the organising at every level.



Contract signing for the refurbishment of Mountmellick Courthouse.

Town Clerk/Area Engineer

During the year new administrative /management arrangements were established in order to improve the services being provided to the Town Council and Mountmellick Electoral Area. An engineer (currently Mr. Trevor Hennessey) was delegated specifically to Mountmellick and commenced attending Town Council and Area meetings. A new Town Clerk/Administrator (currently Mr. Dominic Reddin) was appointed. Mr.Reddin will be based at the Mountmellick Courthouse when the new offices are completed.

At the October Meeting the Members welcomed both officers, and they thanked Mr. Ger Scully former Town Clerk for his work.

Cathaoirleach's Receptions

During the year the Cathaoirleach and Members honoured the following:

- Mr. Joe Melia representing Pattisons Estate Residents Association with a financial contribution in recognition of their work in their estate over the past number of years.
- Mairead and Shane Furlong on their recent success in the All Ireland Fleadh Cheoil. Both were presented with a citation by the Cathaoirleach on behalf of the Members.

Mountmellick Courthouse

During 2003 all the preliminary work in relation to Mountmellick Courthouse Project was carried out. This included the statutory planning process, a report on the architectural significance of the courthouse, the preparation of the contract documents, tendering process and selection of contractors. Work is now due to commence and it is estimated that it will be fully completed by mid 2004. The Architects for the project are Milligan & Reside and the main contractor will be Garoon Construction Ltd. Mountmellick.

Facilities and Events

During 2003 the Town Council continued its support of the work of the Voluntary/Community Groups. The Council supported the work of the Christmas Lights Committee, The Mardi Gras Committee and the Christmas Tree Committee. The Town Council in its role as the premier body also continued to support Mountmellick Development Association and the various private housing and industrial developments currently in progress.

Monthly Meetings

The Monthly Meetings of Mountmellick Town Council are held on the first Thursday of every month.

Other Activities Gníomhaíochtaí Eile

Social Club

2003 was yet another successful year for Laois County Council's Social Club. The Social Club currently has a membership of 210 people who contribute 1.00 per week. Numerous events were organised by the Social Club during 2003 and the main events were as follows:-

Table Quiz

A Table Quiz was held on 28th January 2003 in Whites Pub. First prize went to the Arts Office and second prize went to the Planning Department. All proceeds and winnings were donated to Laois Hospice and Laois Cancer Research.

Golf Outing

The Annual Golf Outing was held by kind permission of Mountrath Golf Club at their course on 16th June 2003.

First Prize:	Tommy Finn, Fintan Dunne and Liz O'Hara
Second Prize:	Des Byrne, Patricia Campion and David Corcoran
Third Prize:	John Culliton, Anne Marie Kirrane and David Doyle

Chernobyl Children's Project

38 Children visited County Laois during the summer from Belarus a region affected by the Chernobyl disaster. The Social Club, sponsored by the Canteen Committee and the Management arranged an informal party for them and their host families on 2nd July 2003. There was a disco, face painting, children's entertainment and the children received small presents.

Harvest Barbecue and Soccer Blitz

The PANG group and the Social Club organised a Soccer Blitz followed by Harvest Barbecue on 21st August 2003 in the Rugby Club, Togher. Teams from County Councils in Kilkenny, Kildare, Offaly and Laois competed, with Kildare being the overall winning team.

Cruise on the Shannon

The Social Club organised a cruise on the Shannon on 19th September 2003. The boat left Dromineer at 4.30 p.m. Music and full bar on board. The evening ended after a meal in Garykennedy.

Annual Mass

The Annual Mass for deceased members and staff of Laois County Council was held on 10th November 2003 at 7.30 p.m. in the Council Chamber. Refreshments were provided in the canteen afterwards.

Senior Citizens Party

The Senior Citizens Party took place on 20th November 2003 in the canteen. Over 100 people attended with plenty of food and drink provided and a great night was had by all.

Kiddies Christmas Party

The Kiddies Christmas party took place on Saturday 6th December 2003 and was attended by over 100 children. Bob the Builder, Bear in the Big Blue House, Fairy Princess and of course

Santa and one of his elves were all in attendance. The arrival of Santa in a Fire Engine created great excitement.



Christmas Party

Laois County Council's Annual Christmas Party was held in The Heritage Hotel on Friday 19th December 2003. Over 100 staff and elected members attended and enjoyed the craic.

Other Events

Other events included Greyhound racing, Irish night and cards nights.

Golf Society

Joan Dowling was the popular Captain of the Society in 2003. Her prize was won by Pat Keenan, who completed a very successful year by also winning the Golfer of the Year Title. The Kennedy Cup was won by Niall Culliton at the staff outing in Callan.

Coiste Gaelige

Irish Language Officer Máirín Uí Scolaí has set up a committee to assist Comhairle Chontae Laoise in making adequate provision for the use of Irish within the organisation.

Resulting from a number of meetings the following actions on the use of Irish were identified as appropriate means of promoting the Irish Language:

- Irish classes for employees
- Bilingual signs at Áras an Chontae
- Irish Table Quiz
- The use of Irish on the Council's Website



Useful Directory

Eolaire Úsáideach

Aras an Chontae Portlaoise

Tel: (0502) 64000
Fax: (0502) 22313
E-Mail: corpaffairs@laoiscoco.ie
Opening Hrs: 9.00 am to 5.00 pm (incl Lunch Hour)
Web: www.laois.ie

Cash Office Block 2 Áras an Chontae

Opening Hrs: 9.00 am to 3.30 pm (incl Lunch Hour)
Tel:(0502) 74308

Planning Office Áras an Chontae

Opening Hrs: 9.30 am to 4.00 pm (incl Lunch Hour)
Tel:(0502) 64039

Motor Tax Office Block 2 Áras an Chontae

Opening Hrs: 9.00 am to 3.30 pm (incl Lunch Hour)
Tel:(0502) 64009
Fax:(0502) 21184

Sports & Leisure Office Block 2 Áras an Chontae

Tel:(0502)74347
Fax:(0502)74382

Arts Office Block 2 Áras an Chontae

Tel:(0502) 74342
Fax:(0502)74382

Library Headquarters Block 2 Áras an Chontae

Tel:(0502) 74315
Fax:(0502)74381

Western Area Courthouse, Borris in Ossory

Tel:(0505) 41123
Fax:(0505)41188

Eastern Area Courthouse, Stradbally

Tel:(0502)25227
Fax:(0502)25227

Central Area Mountrath Road, Portlaoise

Tel:(0502)64168
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Notes

