



# Laois County Council

## Comhairle Chontae Laoise

In Partnership with the Community



# Annual Report 2009

## CONTENTS

<b>Cathaoirleach's Statement</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>County Manager's Foreword</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Mission Statement</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Council Members</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Housing, Corporate Affairs, Corporate Planning, Human Resources &amp; Information Communications Technology</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Community, Economic Development &amp; County Promotion, Arts, Sports &amp; Libraries</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Environment, Planning &amp; Emergency Services</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Transportation &amp; Water Services</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Financial Management</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Portlaoise Town Council</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Mountmellick Town Council</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Other Activities</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>How to Contact Us</b>	<b>65</b>

## CATHAOIRLEACH'S STATEMENT

It gives me great pleasure as Cathaoirleach to introduce Laois County Council's Annual Report for 2009.

June, 2009 saw the election of a new Council and I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the new Members of the Council. I look forward to working with them in the years ahead to ensure that Laois County Council continues to provide leadership in the promotion and development of the social, economic and cultural life of the county.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the outgoing Members for their hard work and dedication over the years and to wish them well in their future endeavours.

This Annual Report provides an opportunity to highlight the achievements of the Council in 2009 and to outline the wide range of services that we provide for the benefit of everyone in the county. I would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of my fellow elected members and all of the staff in delivering these services.

During 2009, a new Fire Station and Recycling Centre were opened in Portarlinton, while the Council continues to contribute positively to the quality of life of our communities through the successful operation of leisure complexes in Portarlinton and Portlaoise and the continuation of the playground and Libraries programme. Laois also enjoyed great success in the All-Island Pride of Place Awards in 2009.

Laois County Council was again involved in the organisation and promotion of major events in the county in 2009, such as the Rose of Tralee Regional Finals, Magnet Festival, Electric Picnic and Gordon Bennett Rally. As well as enhancing the profile of the county, the hosting of such major festivals impacts positively on the local economy.

The challenge facing the Council is to continue to provide quality services and to promote all aspects of the county's development despite challenging economic circumstances. I am confident that Laois County Council is ready to meet this challenge.



**James Daly**  
**Cathaoirleach**

## COUNTY MANAGER'S FOREWORD

I am delighted to welcome the publication of Laois County Council's Annual Report for 2009, which provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the achievements and challenges of the past year.

Firstly, I would like to welcome the new Members of the Council elected in June 2009 and I look forward to working in partnership with them over the next five years to develop County Laois. Also, I want to thank the outgoing Members for the service they have given to their county.

2009 was a challenging year in terms of the economic downturn and financial pressures on the Council. However, notwithstanding this, the Council took the necessary action to balance our budgets while at the same time developing a more vibrant local economy. Progress continued on the provision of key infrastructure such as the M7/M8 motorway, Water Services Schemes and significant social infrastructure which is improving the quality of life in County Laois.

Laois County Council has provided positive leadership in enhancing the profile and identity of County Laois. Huge progress has been made in tourism and the promotion of the county as a suitable location for major events such as the Regional Finals of the Rose of Tralee and the Electric Picnic.

Economic development continues to be a priority and further progress was made in 2009 in promoting indigenous industry and creating a pro-enterprise environment in the county.

I also want to acknowledge the efforts and dedicated work of all our staff during 2009 which was a difficult year in terms of budgetary cutbacks and reductions in staff resources.

While there are many challenges and difficulties facing us over the next few years, I am confident Laois County Council will continue to give positive leadership to accelerate progress in our county.



**Peter Carey**  
**County Manager**



## MISSION STATEMENT

“The Council will lead the sustainable economic, social and cultural development of our county and deliver quality public services to the communities we serve”

### Mandate

Laois County Council is the Primary Democratically Elected Authority in County Laois. Laois County Council provides an extensive and diverse range of services which impact upon the county's economic, social, environmental, infrastructural and tourism, industrial and cultural activities. These services include the provision and maintenance of houses, roads, 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.

### Council Membership

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



*Elected Members with the County Manager at Laois County Council AGM - June, 2009*

### Council Meetings

Council Meetings in 2009 were usually held on the last Monday of each month in the Council Chamber at Áras an Chontae. There was no meeting held in August.

### Corporate Policy Group (C.P.G.)

The Corporate Policy Group is designed to enhance the democratic mandate and policy making role of the elected members. The C.P.G. is supported by the County Manager and comprises the Cathaoirleach of the Council and the four Chairs of the Strategic Policy Committees (S.P.C.'s). 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 2009.

## MEMBERS OF LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL

The following Members were elected to Laois County Council at the Local Elections held on 5th June, 2009:

### Borris in Ossory Electoral Area



John Joe Fennelly  
(F.F.)



Michael Lalor  
(F.G.)



John King  
(F.G.)



Brendan Phelan  
(F.F.)



John Bonham  
(F.G.)



Martin Phelan  
(F.G.)

### Emo Electoral Area



Raymond Cribbin  
(F.F.)



Paul Mitchell  
(Non Party)



Tom Mulhall  
(F.G.)



James Deegan  
(F.G.)

### Luggacurren Electoral Area



James Daly  
(F.G.)



John Robert Moran  
(F.G.)



Padraig Fleming  
(F.F.)



Ben Brennan  
(Non Party)

### Mountmellick Electoral Area



David Goodwin  
(F.G.)



Patrick Bracken  
(F.F.)



Patrick Bowe  
(Labour)



Seamus McDonald  
(F.F.)

### Portlaoise Electoral Area



William Aird  
(F.G.)



Brian Stanley  
(S.F.)



Mary Sweeney  
(F.G.)



Jeremiah Lodge  
(F.F.)



Kathleen O'Brien  
(F.G.)



Rotimi Adebari  
(Non Party)



Catherine Fitzgerald  
(F.F.)

<b>Director of Services:</b>	Anna Marie Delaney
<b>Senior Executive Officer Human Resources:</b>	Michael Rainey
<b>Senior Executive Officer Corporate Affairs:</b>	Carmel McNicholl
<b>Head of Information Systems:</b>	John Forde

## CORPORATE AFFAIRS

### Corporate Plan

The term of the Corporate Plan 2004 to 2009 expired in 2009. A new Corporate Plan 2009 – 2014 was adopted by the Members of the Council in December, 2009.

The Corporate Plan provides the framework for the implementation of a coherent strategy for the development of the county for the period to 2014 and was prepared following consultation with employees, elected representatives, community, voluntary & environmental interests, external stakeholders and other public bodies operating at local level.

The strategies and objectives outlined in the Plan will enable Laois County Council's Elected Members and Employees to continue to provide leadership in the promotion and development of the social, economic and cultural life of the county. It will enhance the role of the Elected Members while continuing to deliver focused more co-ordinated, efficient, and effective services to the public.

An Annual Progress Report will be prepared and will be submitted to the Members for their consideration.

### Customer Charter

Laois County Council has a Customer Charter which sets out the way in which the Council endeavours to deal with its customers. The document is on display in all public Council Offices and on our website at [www.laois.ie](http://www.laois.ie). The Charter includes a Customer Complaints Procedure which may be availed of by any person not satisfied with the quality of service received.

### Highlights

- 6th March, 2009 – Cathaoirleach's Reception to mark the occasion of the hosting of the 2009 Lions Club International Convention in Portlaoise.

- 28th May, 2009 – Cathaoirleach's Recetion in honour of Coláiste Íosagáin, Portarlinton – 2008 All Ireland B Colleges Senior Football Champions
- 28th May, 2009 – Cathaoirleach's Reception to mark the occasion of the election of Michael Gowing, Portlaoise, as President of Macra na Feirme



- *7th April, 2009 – Cathaoirleach's Reception to honour the 40th Anniversary of Portlaoise Credit Union*

### Higher Education Grants

Laois County Council awards Higher Education Grants under the Local Authorities (Higher Education Grants) Acts, 1968-1992, on behalf of the Department of Education and Science. To be eligible for a grant under the Scheme, a candidate must satisfy the requirements as laid out in the Scheme. The Scheme is advertised annually and the closing date for receipt of completed applications is 31st August of each year.

Details of the Scheme and application forms are usually available in July from the Higher Education Grants Section at [heg@laoiscoco.ie](mailto:heg@laoiscoco.ie), Tel: (057) 8664137, or on our Website at [www.laois.ie/heg](http://www.laois.ie/heg).

Under the 2009 Grants Scheme, Laois County Council awarded 252 new grants and 331 grants were renewed. The maximum maintenance grant available was reduced in the December budget by 5% to €3,250 and Registration fee was increased to €1,500. The Special Rate of Maintenance Grant payable is now €6,355. 43 new awards and 63 renewal awards qualified for payment of this grant.

The total amount paid out in 2009 was €3,017,511.89.



## **Health & Safety**

**Safety Advisor:** Jim Bolger

Laois County Council undertook a comprehensive training programme providing large numbers of relevant employees with the Signing, Lighting and Guarding at Roadworks training. In addition, training for High Speed Carriageways (i.e. Motorways) was also provided for selected employees.

An 'Authorised Driver' system was rolled out to relevant employees and a database developed from same. This initiative was further underpinned by our Driver Safety Policy which was also developed during the year.

Phase II of the roll out of the 'Personal Protection System' was completed in 2009 and this system will serve to enhance the safety, health and wellbeing of employees who work alone or work in remote locations.

## **Partnership**

The following were the members of the Workplace Partnership Committee as at 31st December, 2009.

<b>Management Nominees</b>	<b>Union Nominees</b>
John Daly, Joint Chair	Bill Devoy, Joint Chair
Anna Marie Delaney	Geraldine Campion
Angela McEvoy	Tom Saunders
John O'Donoghue	Tom O'Carroll
Gerry Maher	Valerie O'Reilly

The Partnership Committee held 7 meetings during 2009. The Partnership Process continued to play a central role in staff/management relations in Laois County Council. The 'Handling Significant Change through Partnership' Steering Group held three meetings in 2009, where Union and Management were briefed on issues facing Laois County Council.

A meeting was held with all employees, where the County Manager briefed them on the effect of the budgetary position for 2009.

Project funding in respect of 2009 was received for six projects to the value of €11,000.

The Partnership Committee agreed their Strategic Plan for 2009 – 2011, and a Business Plan for 2009. Stakeholder Consultation Meetings were concluded regarding the proposed DBO for Portlaoise / Mountmellick Improvement Water Supply Scheme

and a submission was made to Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government recommending traditional procurement.

LANPAG Education Grant Scheme –  
10 Applications approved for grant assistance.

## **Activities 2009 - Policies Agreed**

Policy on Protection of Eyes and Eyesight of Employees using VDUs and Drug and Alcohol Policy

## **Freedom of Information (F.O.I.)**

The Freedom of Information Act 1997 commenced on 21st April, 1998 for Government Departments and Offices and certain other Government Bodies and on 21st October, 1998 for Local Authorities and Health Boards.

The Freedom of Information (Amendment) Act 2003 came into force on 11th April, 2003. This Act introduced a number of important amendments to the 1997 Act, notably in relation to Section 19 (Government Records), Section 20 (Deliberations of Public Bodies), Section 24 (Security, Defence and International Relations) and Section 47 (Fees).

All Freedom of Information requests must be processed under the F.O.I. Act, as amended.

## **Applications received/processed in 2009**

Applications on hand at 31/12/2008	1
Applications received during 2009	33
Decisions taken during 2009	34
Applications on hand at 31/12/2009	NIL

## **Nature of Information Sought**

Personal (to applicant)	11
Non-personal	22

## **Appeals**

Appeals to Information Commissioner	1
Appeal to High Court	Nil

## **Source of Requests**

Journalists	1
Business	Nil
Oireachtas Members	Nil
Local Authority Members	Nil
Others/General Public	32



## Register of Electors 2009/2010

The Council is responsible for the compilation of the Register of Electors for County Laois which comes into force on 15th February each year. To be eligible for inclusion in the Register of Electors, you must be at least 18 years of age on the day that the Register comes into force and you must have been ordinarily resident in the State on the 1st September preceding the coming into force of the Register.

Dáil Constituency	Presidential Electors	Dáil Electors
Laois/Offaly	53,557	54,161
European Parliament Constituency	European Electors	Potential European Electors
Leinster	54,361	198
Local Electoral Areas	Number of Electors	Postal and Special Voters
Borris in Ossory	13,727	Gardaí 2
Emo	8,917	Defence Forces 185
Luggacurren	9,524	Diplomats 4
Mountmellick	8,861	Physically Disabled 33
Portlaoise	14,405	Occupation Etc. 2
Total:	55,534	Special Voters 5
Borough or Town Council	Local Government Electors	
Mountmellick Urban	2,886	
Portlaoise Urban	8,017	
Total	10,903	

## CONFERENCES ATTENDED IN 2009

Conference	Venue	Date	Delegates	Expend.
The Local Gov. Planning Service	Westport	9 – 11 Jan	7	€6,144.82
South East River Basin	Clonmel	14 Jan	1	€147.98
Effective Communications for Councillors	Waterford	16 – 18 Jan	3	€564.67
Showcase Ireland	Dublin	21 Jan	1	€176.62
ICLRD Conference	Letterkenny	22 – 23 Jan	1	€799.31
Tourism Conference	Antrim	23 24 Jan	2	€1,524.54
Effective Communications for Councillors	Dungarvan	30 Jan – 1 Feb	2	€1,291.82
Cumman Merriman	Galway	6 – 8 Feb	1	€579.86
AMAI	Letterkenny	13 – 14 Feb	12	€10,451.05
Renewable Energy – Planning the Future	Sligo	15 – 17 Feb	3	€1,856.15
Freedom of Information Seminar	Limerick	20 – 21 Feb	6	€3,075.67
Maximising Your Vote	Clondalkin	26 – 28 Feb	1	€463.11
Understanding Hospital Radio	Dublin	27 – 28 Feb	1	€487.74
20th Colmcille Winter School	Letterkenny	27 Feb – 1 Mar	7	€6,669.29
17th Annual Kerry Environmental Recognition Conference	Ballybunion	4 – 8 Mar	12	€12,341.49
Building Energy Regulations Seminar for Councillors	Galway	13 – 15 Mar	1	€525.08
Planning & Development Control Seminar	Galway	20 - 22 Mar	1	€525.08
The Economic & Social Benefits of Preserving our Cultural Heritage	Listowel	26 – 27 Mar	2	€1,038.97
Sustaining Rural Development	Mitchelstown	27 – 28 Mar	1	€424.06

## HOUSING, CORPORATE AFFAIRS, CORPORATE PLANNING, HUMAN RESOURCES & INFORMATION COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

Conference	Venue	Date	Delegates	Expend.
Annual Conference of Association of County & City Councils	Kilkenny	2 - 3 Apr	1	€320.05
Ethical Development Action				
Annual Conference	Cork	3 Apr	1	€335.65
Public Relations & Media	Letterkenny	3 – 5 Apr	1	€883.96
LAMA Conference	Portlaoise	16 – 17 Apr	12	€3,574.74
How to Run a Winning Campaign	Gormanstown	17 – 18 Apr	1	€373.57
National Planning Conference	Wexford	23 – 24 Apr	1	€925.02
25th Annual Environmental Conference	Carrigaline	7 – 8 May	3	€1,971.80
IPB Vote	Dublin	13 May	1	€150.84
Alcohol & Drug Abuse	Glengarrif	15 – 17 May	2	€1,525.71
National Sustainable Building Conference 2009	Dun Laoghaire	27 May	1	€667.24
Supporting Family Carers	Castlebellingham	29 – 31 May	1	€494.08
Gender Culture & Identity	Limerick	10 – 11 Jun	1	€242.10
Poverty & The Life Cycle in 20th Century Ireland	Dublin	16 Jun	1	€135.41
Byrne Perry Summer School	Gorey	26 – 28 Jun	1	€250.48
From the Canvass to the Council Chamber	Skibbereen	3 – 5 Jul	8	€5,708.33
Effective Local Government Policy				
Making in the Current Climate	Skibbereen	10 – 12 Jul	1	€532.88
Richard Cantillon Summer School	Ballyheigue	15 – 17 Jul	1	€520.92
MacGill Summer School	Glenties	19 – 24 Jul	14	€14,545.35
Effective Communications	Galway	31 Jul - 2 Aug	2	€1,237.20
Renewable Energy & Energy Conservation	Westport	7 – 9 Aug	2	€1,239.30
The Parnell Summer School	Avoca	9 – 14 Aug	3	€2,746.38
Water Resources	Furbo	14 – 16 Aug	1	€581.45
Merriman Summer School	Ennis	16 – 22 Aug	5	€4,130.20
Humbert School	Mayo	20 - 23 Aug	1	€739.09
Irish Language Course for Councillors	Gweedore	28 – 30 Aug	2	€1,657.31
Annual Craft Fair	Dublin	26 Aug	1	€132.46
Planning & The European Law	Waterford	4 – 6 Sept	3	€570.04
Planning & Development (Amendment) Bill 2009	Galway City	18 – 20 Sept	1	€561.52
Governance Training Seminar for Elected Members	Clifden	18 – 20 Sept	2	€1,665.31
Association of Municipal Authorities	Killarney	20 – 22 Sept	4	€2,911.88
Community Folklore				
Recording Conference	Killarney	24 Sept	3	€1,291.56
Seminar on Local Government	Limerick	25 – 26 Sept	4	€1,639.39
7th National Tourism Conference	Carlow	24 – 26 Sept	1	€455.71
Induction Training for Newly Elected Members	Maynooth	30 Sept	1	€87.50
2009 La Touche Legacy Seminar	Greystones	2 – 4 Oct	2	€1,072.27
Southern & Eastern Regional Assembly - 10th Annual Conference	Trim	2 Oct	2	€536.31
Reducing Drug and Alcohol Related Harm	Killarney	8 – 9 Oct	1	€678.28
Business in the Environmental Goods & Services Sector	Killarney	8 – 10 Oct	2	€868.83
Blackwater Valley Tourism Conference	Mallow	8 – 10 Oct	2	€721.14
Challenged Local Authorities				
Promoting Community Development	Co. Galway	16 – 18 Oct	1	€495.57
Dr. Douglas Hyde Conference	Ballaghaderreen	16 – 18 Oct	3	€1,413.48
Research Report on Interculturalism	Dublin	21 Oct	1	€132.46
Voluntary Housing & Sheltered Accommodation for the Elderly	Tralee	23 – 25 Oct	3	€2,042.54

## HOUSING, CORPORATE AFFAIRS, CORPORATE PLANNING, HUMAN RESOURCES & INFORMATION COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

Conference	Venue	Date	Delegates	Expend.
Health & Safety Training Seminar	Carrick-on-Suir	30 Oct – 1 Nov	1	€414.47
Public Policy Making & The Councillor	Westport	30 Oct – 1 Nov	5	€3,102.09
Plan Expo	Dublin	4 Nov	1	€132.56
12th Annual Céifin Conference	Ennis	3 – 4 Nov	2	€1,346.88
LAMA Annual Winter Conference	Limerick	6 – 7 Nov	9	€3,667.60
Local Government Ethics in Public Life - Your Responsibility	Sligo	12 – 15 Nov	8	€4,644.01
Outreach Queens University	Belfast	15 - 16 Nov	1	€446.76
Local Government Planning & the Environment	Galway City	20 – 22 Nov	3	€420.00
Crimes Against Women	Tralee	20 Nov	1	€364.27
Start Your Own Business	Roscommon	23 Nov	1	€188.13
Climate Change Lecture	Dublin	24 Nov	1	€132.46
A National Tourism Conference	Ennistymon	26 – 28 Nov	7	€4,447.62
Finance Budgets for 2010 Plus Representatives Entitlements – The Legal Basis	Bunclody	27 – 29 Nov	2	€911.99
Local Government Budget	Co. Galway	8 – 9 Dec	3	€1,182.50
Alternative Energy - Improving your Carbon Footprint	Bunclody	11 - 13 Dec	1	€496.96
Equality & Diversity	Galway City	11 – 13 Dec	5	€1,993.54
	Tralee	18 – 20 Dec	8	€4,053.16
<b>Total</b>				<b>€139,815.62</b>

### Housing & Social Strategic Policy Committee

**Chair:** John Moran M.C.C.

**Members** **Sectoral**

Willie Aird, M.C.C.	Pat Flanagan
Brian Stanley, M.C.C.	Mick Dowling
James Daly, M.C.C.	Miriam Hamilton
Mary Sweeney M.C.C.	Michael Kelly
Catherine Fitzgerald M.C.C.	
Rosemary Whelan,	
Mountmellick T.C.	

### HOUSING SERVICES

**Director of Services:** Anna Marie Delaney

**Senior Executive Officer:** Martin Daly

**Senior Executive Engineer:** P.J. Dempsey

**Senior Social Worker:** Fionnuala Daly

Laois County Council's key objective is to maximise the availability of accommodation to meet different categories of need and to promote the full range of housing options.

### Highlights during 2009

- Successful delivery of 71 social housing units
- Completion of 60 voluntary housing units in Mountrath and Portarlinton
- Completion of work to refurbish and regenerate Oakleaf Place, Knockmay, Portlaoise
- Commencement of work on site of community facility in Knockmay in partnership with the community.

### Report on SPC

The Housing, Social and Cultural S.P.C. met in March, 2009. Following Local Government elections in June, 2009, the Housing & Social SPC met in December, 2009 and formulated a work plan for 2010.

### Rental Accommodation Scheme

The Rental Accommodation Scheme is a government initiative to cater for the accommodation needs of persons who are in receipt of rent supplement for a long period of time and who have a long term housing need. The scheme is intended to provide good quality rented accommodation for eligible persons and it enhances the response of Laois County Council in meeting the long-term housing needs of applicants.



Further information with regard to the scheme is available on [www.laois.ie](http://www.laois.ie). In 2009, 33 leases were acquired under the Rental Accommodation Scheme.

### **Social Leasing Arrangements**

With Departmental approval, Laois County Council entered into leasing arrangements with Cluid Housing Association for the leasing of 42 housing units under a long-term leasing arrangement and 14 units under Rental Accommodation Scheme to applicants on the Council Waiting List.

### **Housing Construction & Acquisition**



*Housing at Camross*

During the year, 71 houses were completed or purchased under this Programme. The breakdown is as follows:

Purchases of new single units	12 units
Purchase of second hand dwellings	11 units
Rural Dwellings	3 units
Part V Units	45 units
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>71 units</b>

The Capital Allocation for 2009 was €13,285,000.

### **Summary of Programme**

Houses under construction at 01/01/2009	61
Houses commenced in 2009	32
Houses completed in 2009	71
Houses in progress at 31/12/2009	22

(The above summary includes new, second-hand purchases and Part V acquisitions.)

### **Knockmay Development Project**

Laois County Council is undertaking the re-development of the Knockmay Estate in Portlaoise. A Masterplan has been prepared and agreed following extensive consultation with all relevant stakeholders.

Phase 1/Pilot Programme at Oakleaf Place was

completed in December, 2009. The physical works included improvements to the houses, demolition and replacement of some dwellings, removal of alleyways, redesign of open spaces and the construction of boundary walls.



*Oakleaf Place, Knockmay*

### **Community Building and Childcare Centre**

The Masterplan identified the need for a community building that will deliver the required services locally and a multi-agency approach was agreed with stakeholders. A key element of the building is the childcare facility, both at pre-school and after school level.

The building will also provide local HSE clinics, Family Resource Services, Local Authority office and multi purpose rooms for meetings, social and educational events. The development is supported by the Family Resource Centre, HSE, Laois Partnership, Pobal, Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government and Laois County Council.

The contract for the construction of the building was signed in November, 2009.

### **Maintenance of Local Authority Stock**

At 31st December, 2009 the Council had 2,003 dwellings in its rented stock, 98% of which were let at the end of the year. During 2009, a total of 3,520 repair requests were received by the Maintenance Section of which 3,018 were completed (85.7%).

### **Part V - Housing Strategy**

In accordance with Part V of the Planning & Development Act 2000, 65 housing units (45 social and 20 affordable) were completed around the County in 2009.

## Voluntary Housing Sector

The Voluntary Sector continues to play a vital role in assisting to meet accommodation needs in Laois. In 2009, Respond! Housing Association completed work on 20 units in Mountrath. Cluid Housing Association completed work on 40 units in Portarlinton.

## Affordable Housing

During the year affordable housing units were completed at the following locations:

Portlaoise	10 units
Mountrath	8 units
Part Vs	20 units
Total	38 units

There are currently houses for sale in Portlaoise.



*Affordable Housing at Maryborough Village, Portlaoise*

## Private Site Scheme

Following the adoption by the Members of Laois County Council of a Sale of Sites Scheme in 2006, a number of private sites were made available in Castletown, Ballyroan & Clonaslee. The purchase price of these sites is:

Castletown	€40,000
Ballyroan	€40,000
Clonaslee	€48,000

but some applicants may qualify for a site subsidy. Interested parties should contact the Housing Department for details.

## Activity under Various Schemes

### Extensions to Local Authority Dwellings:

Commenced	5
Completed	12

### Improvement Works in Lieu of Local Authority Housing:

Commenced	2
Completed	3

### Disabled Persons Grants:

Total No. of Grants Paid	23
(Totalling €)	411,387

### Essential Repairs Grants:

Total No. of Grants Paid	5
(Totalling €)	30,550

### Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability:

Applications received	30
Total No. of Grants Paid	66
(Totalling €)	841,110

### Mobility Aids Housing Grant Scheme:

Applications received	36
Total No. of Grants Paid	36
(Totalling €)	154,847

### Housing Aid for Older People Scheme:

Applications received	20
Total No. of Grants Paid	49
(Totalling €)	274,461

### Tenant Purchase Scheme:

Applications Received	23
Houses Sold	6

### Shared Ownership Loans:

Applications approved	20
Transactions Completed	14

### Mortgage Allowance Scheme:

Applications Received	15
-----------------------	----

## Housing Rents

The Council reviews its Differential Rent Scheme on an annual basis. The average weekly rent in 2009 was €40.68. A total rental income of over €3.96m was received. The percentage collection rate was 94%.

### **Traveller Accommodation**

The Council is obliged to produce a 5 year programme in respect of the management and provision of accommodation for travellers. The current Programme was adopted by the Council in January, 2009 and runs from 2009 to 2013. The Accommodation Programme for the period 2009 – 2013 has been prepared in accordance with the provisions set out in the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998.

It provides for a current (existing) need of 37 families and a projected need of 18 families.

The Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee meets at least four times annually.

### **Estate Management**

The year 2009 saw the continued development of the Council's policy on resident participation in Estate Management addressing issues such as:

- Estate Management
- General Maintenance
- Traffic Calming Measures
- Anti-social behaviour

Pre-tenancy courses and tenant handbooks were provided for all new tenants.

### **Best Estate Competition 2009**

Category A: Laois County Council Housing Estate opened more than 10 years.

1st Prize: Woodview, Stradbally.

Award certificate and cheque for €400.00

2nd Prize: Parnell Crescent, Portlaoise.

Award certificate and cheque for €200.00

Category B: Laois County Council Housing Estate opened between 3 to 10 years

1st Prize : Slieve Bloom View, Borris-in-Ossory

Award certificate and cheque for €400.00

Category C: Laois County Council Housing Estate opened less than 3 years

1st Prize : Churchfield Heights Castletown

Award certificate and cheque for €400.00

### Special Award:

For the Estate which has made the greatest improvement to their estate.

Clanmalire Close, Portarlinton.

Award certificate and cheque for €200.00



*Voluntary Housing at Clanmalire*

In 2009, there were 75 Resident Associations supported by the Housing Department.

### **National Service Indicators (Effective 01/01/2009)**

#### **Progress Report for position 31/12/2009**

#### **H: Housing**

#### **H.1. Housing Vacancies**

Total Number of dwellings in local authority stock:	2003
---	------

Total Number of dwellings excluding those subject to major refurbishment projects:	2003
--	------

Overall % of dwellings that are empty (excluding those subject to major refurbishment):	1.55%
---	-------

% of empty dwellings unavailable for letting:	67.70%
---	--------

% of empty dwellings available for letting:	32.30%
---	--------



**H. 2 Average time taken to re-let dwellings available for letting:**

Time taken from notification of date of vacation of dwelling to the date when all necessary repairs are carried out which are deemed necessary to re-let the dwelling:	18 weeks
Time taken from works above being completed to the date of the first rent debit:	3 weeks

**H. 3 Number of repairs completed as a percentage of the number of valid repair requests received:** 85.6%

**H. 4 Traveller Accommodation**

Total number of traveller families accommodated as a percentage of the targets set in the Local Traveller Accommodation Programme: 2 (160%)

**H.5. Enforcement of standards in private rented sector. (NEW)**

Total number of registered tenancies:	2120
Number dwelling units inspected:	18
Number of inspections carried out:	28
Number of dwellings inspected as % of registered tenancies (i.e. B as % of A):	0.85%

**H. 6 Grants to adapt housing for the needs of people with a disability. (NEW)**

Average time taken (in weeks) to notify applicants of decision under Mobility Aids Grant Scheme on receipt of a valid application:	1
Average time taken (in weeks) to notify applicants of decision under Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability on receipt of a valid application:	2.5

**H. 7 Tenant Training. (NEW)**

Percentage of total new local authority tenants who have completed pre-tenancy training: 65.27%

**Rev: Revenue Collection**

**Rev. 1: House Rent**

(a) Amount collected at year end as a % of amount due:	94%
(b) Percentage of arrears:	
4 - 6 weeks old	10.50%
6 - 12 weeks old	12.93%
over 12 weeks old	66.42%

**Rev. 2: Housing Loans**

(a) Amount collected at year end as a % of amount due:	90%
(b) Percentage of arrears:	
1 month old	3%
2 - 3 months old	14%
More than 3 months old	83%

## **HUMAN RESOURCES**

### **Recruitment Statistics**

A total of 508 people were employed by Laois County Council at 31st December, 2009.

During 2009 Laois County Council held 5 competitions, in relation to which the following statistics have been extracted:

Total Applications received:	23	
	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Applicants	23	0
Successful Applicants	7	0

Permanent Appointments/Promotions 2009:

	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Appointments	6	3
Promotions	8	1

### **Work Life Balance Initiatives**

At year-end, 9 employees were availing of the Career Break Scheme, 27 employees were availing of the job/work sharing scheme, 19 employees availed of the Parental Leave Scheme and 10 employees availed of Term Time.



*Denis McLoughney (right), Water Services, pictured at his retirement with Mary Donohue, Water Services and Peter Carey, County Manager.*

### **National Performance Indicator**

The Council exceeded the 3% National Performance Indicator for expenditure on training and development as a percentage of total payroll costs in 2009. The outturn was 4.10%.

Expenditure on Training & Development as a percentage of total payroll costs:

<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>
4.61%	4.10%

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

	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>
Certified	4.75%	3.81%
Uncertified	0.38%	0.44%

### **Local Service Indicator**

No. of Training Days provided to staff – 1202

### **Industrial Relations**

As a result of strike action by all Public Service Unions across the entire public service, a one-day stoppage took place on the 24th November, 2009.

### **Employee Training & Development**

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

The annual training programme is primarily based on the individual training needs identified through staff Personal Development Plans as part of the PMDS process. The Programme also incorporates Health & Safety Needs, Return to Learning Programme, Third Level Open Learning Programme and various Seminars/Workshops as they arise.

A very comprehensive training programme was delivered throughout 2009. Expenditure on training was €320,000 and sample of the training programmes provided is as follows:-

- Planning Enforcement Training
- First Aid
- Local Government Policy Briefing Sessions
- Safepass
- Assessor Training VDU
- Abrasive Wheels
- Traffic Management Training
- Excel
- Sign Lighting & Guarding
- EC Licence Training

## **Open Learning Programme**

Laois County Council endeavours to facilitate employees wishing to pursue Third Level Open Learning Courses that are relevant to and contribute to the business development of both the Council and the employee's role and responsibilities.

Samples of the Open Learning programmes facilitated are as follows:-

- IPA - Certificate, Diploma & Degree in Local Government Studies
- NUI Galway - Diploma in Irish
- DCU/LGMSB – Masters in Business Administration
- NUI Maynooth - Diploma in First Line Management
- UCD - Certificate in Health and Safety at Work

## **Excellence Through People**



The Excellence Through People accreditation is Ireland's national standard for human resource development. The award is achieved by organisations that have best practice Human Resource Systems in place, particularly in the area of employee training and development, communication, and employee involvement in the decision making processes in the organisation.

Laois County Council first achieved this award in 2005 and is due for review in 2010. This prestigious award is a great achievement on behalf of employees. It is an external validation conducted by FÁS and highlights the commitment and effort of all employees to their own learning and development as well as their involvement, as individuals and as part of a team, in the continuous improvement of the operation of the organisations services and goals.

## **Staff Policies**

In line with best practice in Human Resource Management, Laois County Council has developed a range of staff policies - the following were introduced during 2009:

- Guidelines for the Protection of Children
- Maternity Policy
- Drug and Alcohol Policy

## **Equality**

Laois County Council is an equal opportunity

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

An Equality Action Team, representative of management and employee interests, is in place to examine equality issues, monitor progress and ensure achievement of equality objectives.

## **Supporting Diversity**

Laois County Council supports the employment of people with disabilities and meets its target as set out by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. During 2009, Laois County Council, in conjunction with Midland Employment Support Agency, facilitated a number of work experience placements for people with disabilities.

## **HR, Payroll and Superannuation Project**

The HR, Payroll and Superannuation project in Laois County Council is part of a national project being implemented by 27 local authorities and their Town Councils. This project is being implemented in 2 phases. Phase 1 sees the introduction of critical modules on Organisation Structure, Payroll, Time and Attendance, Superannuation and Recruitment, with a planned completion date of June 2010. Phase 2 will implement the Health and Safety, PMDS and Training modules and is also scheduled for completion by the end of 2010.

## **INFORMATION & COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY**

In 2009, despite budgetary constraints, the ICT department continued to remain at the forefront of leading technological advancement within the local authority area. The main projects the ICT department were involved with can be grouped under two main headings - Network Administration and Geographic Information Systems (G.I.S.) / Software.

### **Network Administration**

This department processed 2,138 support calls from Users during 2009, covering a wide variety of Hardware & Software issues. Calls were logged to our helpdesk system and dealt with in an organised fashion. Reports were generated throughout the



year to further improve efficiencies in this area. A number of significant infrastructural/organisational Projects were completed during 2009 including the following:

We completed the installation of a 50Mb connection with Magnet Networks in 2009. We also began a new agreement with Eircom for a 10Mb connection to provide a resilient connection for the Council's network. In addition, LAN Comms was commissioned to install a redundant firewall to further enhance our fault tolerance.

We continued with standardising our network connections to area offices and currently have 19 of these completed. The remaining sites are awaiting DSL availability and will be standardised in due course.

Ballylinan Library was completed in 2009 with the installation of public internet PC's and connection to the council LAN.

Work completed on new facilities for Portarlington Area Office, Stradbally Area Office and Staff Welfare units in Portarlington and Mountmellick. Works began for welfare facilities in Portlaoise and upgrades to the sewerage plant in Mountmellick.

Antivirus updates were ongoing throughout 2009 along with Backups of our data daily. Some systems were backed up on an hourly basis for more critical data. An LT04 tape library was used to extend the capacity of our backups to cater for the growth in data files such as higher resolution images and video.

Rollout of desktop operating systems was greatly enhanced with the use of our SMS server and over 100 desktops were reinstalled with new software using this tool. The organization also moved its primary office application to the latest version in advance of the expiry of our enterprise agreement with Microsoft.

Tenders were completed to radically change our print/copy/scan facilities in an effort to rationalise these resources to reduce costs. During the initial phase of this process it was discovered Laois County Council prints approximately 2.5 million pages per year, of which 10% are colour. It was confirmed by third parties that these figures were in line with industry standards for an organisation our size.

### Geographic Information Systems (G.I.S.)/Software

G.I.S. remains an important technology in local authorities in analysing data with a geographical aspect. In 2009, improvements were added to several departments. 2009 also saw the rollout of Maproad version 2.2, which included improvements on existing functionality with additional modules added such as Road Traffic and road management.

2009 also saw the deployment of AutoCAD 2010 civil 3D which will allow in-house development and design of roads/road improvements. This product is included in our network license suite of Autodesk.

Laois was again nominated for an award under the local Ireland's eGovernment award. The nomination was recognition of our new intranet site Isteach. The site was created in SharePoint 2007 and will improve communication throughout the organisation with major improvements in design and accessibility. It is hoped the introduction will reduce the paper trail and allow the introduction of workflows which will result in better management of projects.

Training continued for staff members on the content management system which allows each section to upload their own content onto our website [www.laois.ie](http://www.laois.ie). Several enhancements were made on the accessibility side of our website and work will continue over the coming year in conjunction with the National Disability Authority.

2009 saw the end of the enterprise agreement with Microsoft with a buy-out of our existing licences including the full Microsoft Office 2007 suite.

#### [www.laois.ie](http://www.laois.ie)

Did you know that you can avail of many On-line services on Laois County Council's website?

These include Planning On-line, Check the Register of Electors, Renew and browse for Library books, View Council Publications, View the Council's latest news, download a range of application forms and make Credit Card Payments.

Access to these On-line services is available at all Council Libraries and at Council Area Offices, details of which are listed below. Please contact the relevant Area Office for details of opening hours.

Sleaty Road, **Graigecullen** (059) 9165960  
1 Park Lane, **Portarlington** (057) 8636533  
The Old Barracks, **Rathdowney** (0505) 48360

## Community and Economic Development, Culture & Heritage Strategic Policy Committee

**Director of Community & Enterprise, Economic Development & County Promotion:** Declan Byrne

**Chairperson:** Michael Lalor, M.C.C.

**Members** **Sectoral**

John King, M.C.C.	Miriam Hamilton
John Bonham, M.C.C.	Margaret Ryan
James Deegan, M.C.C.	Kathleen Gorman
Paul Mitchell, M.C.C.	Fintan Phelan
Padraig Fleming, M.C.C.	
Rotimi Adebari, M.C.C.	
Alan Hand, T.C.	

## Laois County Development Board



In 2009 Laois County Development Board carried out a review of its Strategy "Realising our Potential" for the period 2009- 2012. Three new objectives listed below were agreed by the Board and a list of actions was drawn up to be delivered over the next three years.

- Enhancing Employment Opportunities for All.
- Promoting Laois as a Child Friendly county.
- Laois will retain and develop the viability of its towns and villages.

Three new Task Groups were established - Economic development Task Group, Children & Young Persons Task Group, Town & Village Viability Task Group.

Following the local elections in June of 2009 the membership of the County Development Board was reconstituted.

## Membership of the Board

### Local Government:

John Moran, MCC., Chairperson Laois County Development Board.  
Peter Carey, Laois County Manager.

Martin Phelan, M.C.C.  
Michael Lalor, MCC.  
James Daly, MCC.  
Paddy Bracken, MCC.  
John Joe Fennelly, MCC.

### Local Development:

Maria Callinan, Laois Enterprise Board.  
Lena Ging, County Enterprise Board.  
Anne Goodwin, Laois Partnership Company  
Paddy Buggy, Laois Partnership Company  
Fionn Bardon, Laois Childcare Committee

### State Agencies:

Mary Delaney, HSE Midlands.  
Anne O' Keeffe, Laois VEC.  
Pat Campbell, FAS.  
Con Feighery, Teagasc.  
Barry Egan, Enterprise Ireland.  
Gillian Maunsell, IDA Ireland.  
Eugene Rafferty, Department of Education and Science.  
Chief Supt. Pat Moore, Garda Siochana.  
Kevin Kidney, Failte Ireland.

### Social Partners:

Margaret Ryan, Business Sector.  
Miriam Hamilton, Trade Union Sector.  
Maria Groarke, Laois Community Forum  
Kathleen Gorman, Laois. Community Forum.  
Theresa Carter, Environmental Pillar.  
Michael Bergin, Farming & Agricultural Sector.

During 2009, Laois County Development Board held 4 meetings, and the Task Groups met on a regular basis to review the Boards Strategy and implement the actions identified in the strategy.

At the Board Annual Conference the following made presentations to the Board:

- Fr. Peter McVerry S.J. – Peter McVerry Trust.
- Fr. Sean Healy, Director of Social Justice Ireland.
- Ian Talbot, CEO Chambers Ireland.
- Jim Power, Chief Economist Friends First.

## Social Inclusion Measures Working Group

In 2009 the membership of the S.I.M. Group was reconstituted. The S.I.M. Group is responsible for developing cohesion in the delivery of services to socially excluded groups. The group held a Networking Day to discuss Unemployment and in attendance was a wide range of agencies concerned with the provision of services and

supports for persons facing unemployment in the County of Laois.

### Laois Local Drugs Network

To assist the work of the Midland Regional Drugs Task Force, a Local Drugs Network Committee was established in the county. The committee work to raise awareness of combating substance abuse within the county with a multi agency approach.

Representatives from the following agencies sit on the committee:

Laois County Council, Laois Partnership, H.S.E., Laois V.E.C. An Garda Síochána, Youthwork Ireland, Merchants Quay Ireland, Cull le Cheile, The Block Project and Public Representatives.

### Laois Ethnic Minority Support Group

Since it was established in 2003, Laois Ethnic Minority Support Group have been working with all ethnic groups and communities in the county to offer them supports and an opportunity to engage and participate in cultural events in the county. The group met monthly, and their aim is to promote interculturalism in Laois and to support members of ethnic minority communities in the county.

#### Activities include:

Information sessions for members, Providing/facilitating contacts with agencies, Intercultural events and Democracy training.

### Laois Traveller Interagency Committee

The Laois Traveller Interagency Committee worked throughout 2009 on implementing the Travellers Strategy 2007 – 2009. An Enterprise Worker was employed through FAS to oversee the provision of an enterprise centre for the travelling community and work with its members to prepare travellers to get back into employment.

### Comhairle Na nÓg 2009

Laois County Council hosted the annual Comhairle na nÓg day in Portlaoise College on 19th November, 2009. The Comhairle was attended by 150 students representing all of the secondary schools in the county.

This year, the students discussed the main issues affecting young people in Co. Laois, such as safe

places to hang out, how the current economic climate is affecting young people and their families, as well as issues surrounding racism and physical, mental and emotional health in young people.

The Comhairle was delighted on the day to have a special guest, Mr Tony Bates, Founding Director, Headstrong, address the students. Headstrong is a new initiative working with communities in Ireland to ensure that young people aged twelve to twenty five are better supported to achieve mental health and wellbeing.



*Tony Bates, Director of Headstrong Ireland, addressing Comhairle na nÓg participants*

### Dáil Na nÓg 2009

Dáil na nÓg took place on 20th February, 2009 in Croke Park and was attended by over 200 students from all over Ireland. Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Mr Barry Andrews opened the meeting and he welcomed the opportunity to hear the views and recommendations of the young people on various themes under the headings of mental and physical health, particularly the subjects of suicide, bullying, peer pressure, healthy living, substance abuse and sexual health. Mr John Delaney, St. Mary's CBS, Portlaoise was selected to be the Laois representative for 2009/2010 on the National Dáil na nÓg Council, which works throughout its term to drive forward the ideas and recommendations that were agreed on at Dáil na nÓg.



*Students from Laois, John Delaney, Jennifer McDermott, Laura Birch and Jim Gibbons at the National Dáil na nÓg*



## Laois Community Forum Celebrates

### A Newly elected Forum

Following Local Elections held in June, 2009, elections for a new Laois Community Forum took place over the summer months. These elections were well attended and the community and voluntary sectors were well represented in all the electoral areas.

The newly elected Forum Executive Committee representing the community/voluntary sector in each of the five electoral areas are:

#### Portlaoise:

Phil Mulhare, Sylvia Rouget, Andy Sutton, Maria Groarke

#### Emo:

Paul Donnelly, Margaret Guijit-Lawlor, Michael Cobbe

#### Luggacurren:

Mary Wheatley, Nuala Finnegan, Kathleen Gorman

#### Mountmellick:

Sheelagh Coyle, Matt Barrett, Paddy Buggy (Chairperson)

#### Borris-in-Ossory:

Pat McSpadden, Michael Lynch, Michael G. Phelan, Noreen Byrne, Mick Dowling

### Older People

5 Networking Days were held in association with Laois Sports Partnership and Laois Partnership, which included talks and discussion on issues which affect older people, e.g., nutrition, personal safety, healthcare, keeping active, etc and activities e.g., sit-fit, music, dance, bocchia (bowls) and arts/crafts.



*Community Forum Older Persons  
Activity Day in Portarlinton*

### People with Disabilities

The Forum supported Laois Sports Partnership's program for disability awareness in schools, by its

association with the rollout of a pilot program in Heywood Community School.



*Laois Community Forum and Laois Sports  
Partnership Disability Awareness Training*

[www.laoiscommunityforum.ie](http://www.laoiscommunityforum.ie) was launched in April, 2009.

### Community Forum Youth Projects Grant Awards

Laois Community Forum celebrated its young people through grants awarded for youth projects in June, 2009. 10 Groups were awarded grants to assist with projects which would positively enhance the quality of life for young people in our county.



*Youth Projects Grant Winners 2009*

### Pride of Place 2009

County Laois enjoyed great success at the All-Island Pride of Place Awards 2009, which took place in Newcastle, Co. Down, hosted by Down District Council. Some 400 people represented groups from north and south of Ireland at the ceremony. The awards were presented to all successful groups by Ms. Margaret Richie, Northern Ireland Minister for Social Development. In her address during the evening, the Minister paid tribute to all the participating groups who work tirelessly to create and promote pride in their cities, towns and villages. Winners in their **Category – Population 0-200** - were Camross Community Group who showcased Camross village, its community and activities.



Accepting the award on behalf of the group were Sadie McCartney and Breda Doran.

Runners up in their **Category – Population 0-200 Housing Estate** - were Riverview Apartments, Portlaoise, a turnkey Council Housing development in which the residents, mainly senior citizens, are all actively involved in its upkeep and management. The award was accepted on the night by Councillor Kathleen O'Brien and Anne Smyth.



*Laois Pride of Place Winners 2009*

Laois County Council was delighted to accept on the night the overall Local Authority Award, for the most commitment by a local authority to the Pride of Place initiative. This prestigious award is presented to the local authority that shows a real connection between the elected members and officials of the Council and the community it works with. This was demonstrated to the judges, who particularly remarked on the number of Councillors and officials from Laois County Council who attended the judging days. A special mention was given in respect of the personal involvement of the officials with the community groups and to those mentioned in their presentations to the judges as having assisted their community activities over the years.

Cathaoirleach, Councillor James Daly and Mr Peter Carey, County Manager, congratulated all of the entrants and the prize-winners on their success in this year's competition and thanked them for representing Laois so well at national level.

### Joint Policing Committees

Joint Policing Committees for County Laois and both Mountmellick and Portlaoise towns were established during 2009. They offer Local Authorities, Elected Members, An Garda Síochána, Members of the Oireachtas and community leaders and members of the public, through a partnership model, the opportunity to make a significant impact on the quality of daily life for all members of the community in each Local Authority area. They provide a forum where the Local Authority and the Senior Garda Officers,

responsible for the policing of the county, with the participation of the Oireachtas members and community interests can consult, discuss and make recommendations on matters affecting the policing of County Laois.

### Other Activities

Community & Enterprise Section carried out an audit of facilities in County Laois during 2009 and also participated on the following outside Committees/Programmes during 2009:

- Laois Partnership Company
- Laois Sports Partnership
- Laois Trip
- Laois County Enterprise Board
- Laois County Childcare Committee
- BLOCK and PORT Garda Diversion Projects
- Trick 'r' Street Festival Committee
- Laois Local Drugs Network Committee
- LABEL

### National Service Indicators - December 2009

#### CP: Community Participation & Co-operation

CP1 Percentage of local schools and youth groups involved in the local Youth Council / Comhairle na n-Óg Scheme.

- Secondary Schools event	100%
- Primary Schools event	0
- Youth Groups	75%

CP2 Number of groups registered with the Community & Voluntary Forum. 474

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Economic Development Officer:** Ian McCormack

Laois County Council is actively involved in and has a pivotal role to play in the economic development of the county. The Council is committed to attracting inward investment, fostering a climate of self sustaining development and is eager to ensure that balanced development takes place throughout the county.

#### Economic Task Group

The County Manager chairs a very proactive economic task group which provides a focal point for the economic promotion of the county. Prioritised Actions/Objectives include:

- Development of the National Enterprise Park

- Encourage/facilitate the development of indigenous industry
- Decentralisation
- Promoting County Laois as an events centre
- Promoting the development of high and specialised education fields in the county to attract new industry
- Developing a high level support group to act as advocates for County Laois
- Implement objectives contained in the County Development Strategy review 2009-2012 which focus on enhancing employment opportunities for all.

### Portlaoise Enterprise Centre

Work has been completed on Portlaoise Enterprise Centre and it will be officially opened in the near future. There is a mix of office accommodation and units available at the Centre.



Portlaoise Enterprise Centre is open for business and committed to developing and sustaining a local enterprise culture in the Portlaoise area. Resident Businesses include:

- TSI Flowmeters Ltd
- Automated Control Solutions
- Greenbay Facilities Ltd
- Creative Training Ltd
- Laois County Enterprise Board
- Advanced Renewable Energy Ireland Ltd

A total of 25 people are presently employed at Portlaoise Enterprise Centre.

### Work in Laois Website

The website was formally launched in October, 2009. Work in Laois is an initiative by Laois County Council to assist employers, companies and investors who may wish to pursue a career, locate or invest in a business in County Laois and to promote Laois as a location for business investment.

The Work in Laois website will establish a skills based register where people can provide us with information about themselves so that we promote their skills, either to employers already present or to prospective employers who wish to locate in County Laois. This information will also prove useful to agencies such as IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland in their efforts to attract business to County Laois.

This initiative is part of Laois County Council's objective to act as a catalyst, link and agent for economic development in the county.

### Clonminam Business Park Upgrade

Work commenced on the upgrade of Clonminam Business Park in 2009. Work will consist of footpath replacement, public lighting, landscaping, road marking and repairs and signage installation.



The upgrade, when completed, will contribute to the integrated and coherent development of the area, reinforce the commercial vitality of the area and make an important contribution to attracting and sustaining employment opportunities.

### Industrial Sites

Laois County Council continues to maintain its direct role in facilitating economic development/job creation through the ongoing disposal of sites throughout the county. The Council will continue to make sites available given the county's potential for further development and capacity for new enterprise.

### Laois Expo 2009

Laois County Council participates actively with all Local and National Development Agencies to promote the social and economic development of the county. The Council jointly sponsored the Laois Business Expo 2009, which provided exhibitors with a unique opportunity to:

- Generate contracts and leads and make sales
- Launch or demonstrate new products
- Network with other exhibitors
- Generate interest in products and services and promote brands into the marketplace.

### Portlaoise Interchange

The development of a 250 acre site at Portlaoise interchange seeks to exploit the Economic Development potential of the key transport corridor which runs through the county. This project is a direct result of the National Spatial Strategy which puts Laois and Portlaoise at a distinct advantage in designating it as a Transport Node and Inland Port. Works have been completed on the Togher Link Road and Western Interceptor Sewer which will facilitate developments in this area. Work is ongoing on the preparation of a masterplan and a Motorway Order which will also enhance development in this area. Developments on this site will harness the potential of Portlaoise's geographical position in the centre of the country.

## TOURISM

### Events & Festivals

The Tourism Section in Laois County Council continues to actively promote County Laois as the events destination in Ireland. The county's excellent geographical location and road and rail infrastructure, as well as quality venues and a good accommodation base, makes it an ideal location for hosting major events.

The Tourism Section has a pivotal role in the organisation of the following events:

#### Gordon Bennett Classic Car Run

The Gordon Bennett Classic Car Run took place on the June Bank Holiday weekend and started with a Reception in Laois County Council on the Friday evening. The participants drove the Gordon Bennett Route which was signposted in 2006. The event has gone from strength to strength with a large number of visitors attending, particularly from the U.K. The Event commemorates the biggest Sporting Event of the time in Ireland and runs through counties Laois, Carlow and Kildare.

The Gordon Bennett Event and Route is an invaluable tourism attraction in its own right and links numerous tourism and heritage sites.



*Reception for Gordon Bennett Classic Car Run at Aras an Chontae*

For the first time, the Gordon Bennett festival worked with the Rose of Tralee Irish Regional Finals Festival and took part in the Gala Parade through the streets of Portlaoise. The participants thoroughly enjoyed the event and wish to do this every year as part of their itinerary.

#### Laois International Golf Challenge

The Laois International Golf Challenge took place from 18th to 21st May. The Challenge was officially launched on the 19th March by Irish Soccer legend, Paul McGrath and compered by RTE's Justin Treacy.



*Launch of the Laois International Golf Challenge*

The Challenge was open to all golfers affiliated to a club or with a GUI handicap (or equivalent). It is a fourball betterball competition played over 6 golf courses in County Laois with the final at the Heritage Golf & Spa Resort at Killenard. The Challenge attracted golfers from all over Ireland, Northern Ireland, Wales, U.K, Germany and Sweden. The Event was sponsored by 4 Aces Wholesale, Gala and Laois County Council. The overall winners of the 2009 event were Warren Davies and Marc Hughes from Northern Wales.



It was the first time that the event was won by an international pairing. The 2010 event promises to be even better with a number of promotions carried out in Wales, Northern Ireland and Italy for the first time.

### Rose of Tralee Irish Regional Finals

The Rose of Tralee Regional Finals took place for the third time outside Tralee and was held in Portlaoise in 2009. It was a great success and a fantastic opportunity to showcase the county. The organisers of the International Rose of Tralee work in conjunction with the Tourism Officer and the sponsors and hotels in organising all of the activities during the 5 day event. The Roses participated in tours around the county to view the tourism attractions in Laois. A photo shoot took place at Emo Court and the Roses also visited the Laois Craft Centre. A number of local pubs officially 'twinned' with the Roses which offered entertainment for families and friends.



*Rose of Tralee Contestans and Rosebuds  
at Áras an Chontae*

A Reception was held in County Hall where An Cathaoirleach Tom Jacob welcomed the Roses and the festival to County Laois. For the first time, the Tourism Officer organised 'Rosebuds' representing a large number of national schools in Laois to participate in the Festival.



*'Rosebuds'*

The Gala Parade was organised for the Saturday and involved the Gordon Bennett Vintage Cars, 30 Irish Roses and rosebuds, who travelled through the streets of Portlaoise and ended with a finale at the Civic Plaza with family entertainment and the Portlaoise Gospel Choir.

The Rose of Tralee Irish Regional Finals has been secured for the next 3 years for County Laois (2010 – 2012). Work has been undertaken to organise the 2010 Event which promises to be a much bigger event with carnival, markets, parade, entertainment and family fun.

### Portlaoise Magnet Festival

The Magnet Festival was a new community driven festival, supported by Laois County Council and Fáilte Ireland, which took place in Portlaoise over the August Bank Holiday weekend. There was a great variety of acts secured for the event including



The Sharon Shannon Big Band with Shane Mc Gowan, Damien Dempsey and Dessie O'Halloran. The Festival Also included Michael English as well as Declan O' Rourke, The Wolfe Tones, Jack L and a superb Country Music Evening on Bank Holiday Monday, with artists such as Mike Denver, Ray Lynam and Damien Bowe.

The festival was staged at different venues around Portlaoise – The Portlaoise Heritage Hotel, Sky Venue, the Dunamais Arts Centre, two street stages and the Portlaoise Leisure Centre. The Festival organisers also worked with the Method Project organised by Stuart Dunne (actor and artist). His project 'VINCENT: Questioning the Method' was being filmed in Portlaoise where Stuart painted a picture a day in his studio at 25 Church Street Portlaoise and this provided material for a feature length dramatic film. For this project, Dunne attempted to represent the last 70 days of Van Gogh's life using an intensive style of method acting.



### Halloween Howls

The Halloween Howls Comedy Festival was held in Portlaoise during the October Bank Holiday weekend. This festival has great potential and takes place at an off peak tourism period which is extremely welcome for the county.

### Other Festivals

The Tourism section supported a number of other festivals throughout 2009.

The Tourism section of Laois County Council works on strategic projects to encourage more visitors to the county. The Tourism Officer works with state agencies, the business sector regarding the identification of suitable projects for County Laois. Other projects that were completed in 2009 were:

### Tourism Networking Event

A Tourism Networking Event 'Discover Laois' took place on November 5th and all tourism providers in County Laois were invited to attend. This was a great opportunity for the trade to meet and discuss working on packages and display their tourism products and services. Sean Gallagher, entrepreneur and from RTE's 'Dragon's Den', was the key motivational speaker on the evening.



*Peter Carey, County Manager, Cllr James Daly, Cathaoirleach, Sean Gallagher from RTE's 'Dragon's Den' and Honor Deevey, Tourism Officer, at the Tourism Networking Event*

The event was supported by Laois County Council, Laois Partnership and Fáilte Ireland and received very positive feedback. A 'speed networking event' took place which allowed the activity providers to talk with accommodation providers of ways that they can work together. There was an extremely large attendance and a very good representation of stands and products from all over the county. From the networking event, Laois Tourism has drafted an excellent database of the large number of trade who attended on the evening.

### Laois Tourism website

An application for grant aid for the complete re-design and marketing of the Laois Tourism Website was approved by Laois Partnership. Ongoing work is being carried out on the upgrade of this website as the most important promotional tool for tourism in County Laois.

### ITOA Conference

The tourism officer worked closely with Fáilte Ireland and the Heritage Golf & Spa Resort at Killenard in organising the ITOA Conference in February, 2009. This attracted a large number of Tour operators who visited a number of attractions in County Laois. The feedback was very positive.

### Calendar of Events and Festivals 2010

The following calendar of events and festivals was compiled for 2010.

### Twinning Project with Montebelluno, Northern Italy.

A number of different links have been established with the Montebelluno area of Northern Italy. From a tourism perspective, the Tourism Officer met with one of the largest Golf Tour Operators from Italy in December with the President of Laois Chamber of Commerce. The Golf Operator toured all of the golf courses in Laois and met with representatives from the various golf clubs.

A number of positive links came from this meeting and the operator has stated that he will organise one of his tournaments in Laois in 2010. We will also host some Italians in the Laois International Golf Challenge in 2010. The tour operator has invited the Laois Golf representatives to travel to Italy in March, 2010.

### Economic Development & County Promotion Strategic Policy Committee

The following documents were produced by the Committee and agreed by the members of Laois County Council:

- Developing a Tourism Culture in County Laois
- County and Town Twinning in County Laois

## HERITAGE

The Heritage Office of Laois County Council works to promote awareness and understanding of the built, natural and cultural heritage of County Laois. This is undertaken with the assistance of the Heritage Council, through the projects detailed in the Laois Heritage Plan.

### Laois Heritage Plan 2007 - 2011

The Heritage Plan contains 50 actions which will be implemented over the coming years, with four key objective areas: Collect information on the built, natural and cultural heritage of the county; Raise awareness and promote enjoyment of heritage; Promote best practice in heritage management and Promote active conservation of heritage in Laois.

The following information relates to projects from the Laois Heritage Plan undertaken with the support of the Heritage Council during 2009. Full survey and research reports are available from the Heritage Office of Laois County Council, or to download at [www.laois.ie/heritage](http://www.laois.ie/heritage).

Collect information on the Heritage of County Laois  
The collection of information on the heritage of Laois is a necessary first step in the conservation and highlighting of this heritage. The following heritage survey was carried out during 2009:

- Phase V of the field-by-field survey of habitats in the county



*River Barrow near Vicarstown, surveyed as part of the Laois Habitats Survey*

### Raise Awareness and Promote Enjoyment of the Heritage of Laois

A major publication on the promotion of wildlife awareness in schools was produced during 2009. The book "Wild Things at School" was published in co-operation with Monaghan and Meath County Councils, and was written by well-known wildlife author Eanna ní Lamhna.



*Launch of 'Wild Things at School'*

It is aimed at primary school teachers and outlines information, activities and stories to work with each age group in school to raise awareness of Ireland's native wildlife.

In 2009, the Heritage Officer worked with numerous individuals, community groups and the County Community Forum to plan heritage projects and provide advice on accessing grant aid and project support. In order to ensure wide dissemination of heritage information, all reports and publications produced during the year have been lodged in the local studies section of Laois County Library and made available to download on the Laois County Council website. Actions undertaken during 2009 to raise awareness of heritage issues included:

- A week-long programme of family events, guided walks, talks, slideshows and fun-days was organised for national Heritage Week;
- A week-long Department of Education-approved course in wildlife and environmental awareness for primary school teachers was held in July;
- Dawn walks in Clonaslee and Durrow were organised to celebrate annual Dawn Chorus Day in May;
- The Laois Collection of oral history interviews continued to be broadcast as a series of programmes on Midlands 103 local radio;
- A series of wildlife events were held during Biodiversity Week in May, including Bat Walks in Emo Court, with the assistance of the Office of Public Works and the National Parks and Wildlife Service

### Promote Best Practice in Heritage Management & Promote Active Conservation of heritage.

A range of groups were assisted with practical conservation projects in areas ranging from wildlife surveys to graveyard management. In addition, assistance was provided in preparing applications for Heritage Council grant schemes from groups around the county.

## Heritage Performance Indicators

Performance Indicator	2009	2008	2007	2006
No. actions from the Laois Heritage Plan implemented: (A maximum of 8 actions per year are part-funded by the Heritage Council)	3	8	8	8
No. meetings of Laois Heritage Forum held: (The Laois Heritage Forum generally meets quarterly, with working groups meeting more often as required)	4	3	3	4
Number of biodiversity surveys carried out:	1	3	3	3
Number of built/ cultural heritage surveys carried out:	0	2	2	1
Number of publications on Laois Heritage produced/supported: (These publications are in addition to project reports produced following surveys etc.)	0	1	1	2
Number of Talks/Training Courses/Seminars organised or supported: (Including events held for Heritage Week)	40	39	12	2

## ARTS SECTION

### Laois School of Music

Laois School of Music maintained its enrolment of 350 students in Portlaoise and 50 students in Durrow. The School Orchestra played at the Irish Association of Youth Orchestras Festival in the National Concert Hall in February. Family Fun Days with music-taster sessions took place in the Dunamaise Arts Centre and Durrow. 100 students took Music exams between the Royal Irish Academy of Music and The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music.

### Laois Youth Theatre

Laois Youth Theatre worked in Portlaoise, Stradbally, Mountrath, Portarlinton and Rathdowney during the year. As well as weekly workshops the programme included a series of workshops in schools, a performance by Portlaoise Youth Theatre of the play Understanding Marcus in Roscommon in April and a free Family Fun Day in the Dunamaise Arts Centre. Tutors also took part in the Skill Sharing workshops during the year.



### The Artists in Schools Scheme

The Artists in Schools Scheme ran in 12 schools in 2009. The Scheme allows students to have an in-depth experience with the professional artist and gives them the opportunity to experience different art mediums. An exhibition of some of this work took place in Áras an Chontae in December and a booklet was also produced.



*Artists Project in the Kolbe Centre*

### Bealtaine Festival – for Older People

The Arts Office presented a programme of events for older people in hospitals and in community venues for active retirement groups. The programme included Storytelling with Liz Weir, a Scottish and Irish Music and Dance show, performances by the Laois School of Music Orpheus Orchestra and the Laois ICA Federation Choir. There were also Creative Writing workshops with Ann Egan and Jean O'Brien.



### Writer-in-Residence

From October to December, Laois Writer - in - Residence Ann Egan worked in Laois on a Literary programme that included - assisting individual writers, creative writing courses for adults and children, workshops in schools and a literary evening "Laois a Sense of Place and Time for Christmas" in December.



*Writer - in - Residence Workshops in Schools*

### Summer Arts programme

The Summer Arts Programme included a total of 18 different weeklong workshops designed for children, and young people, which took place over the summer period.



The workshops were held in different parts of the county and included the following art practices: visual art, pottery, creative writing, drama, dance and kindermusic.



### Durrow Arts Festival

The Arts Office, in association with Durrow Arts Festival Committee, hosted a Music Network concert, Cara O Sullivan and the Degani Ensemble.

### Stradbally Arthouse

The Green light was given by Laois County Council to the Artists Studios and refurbishment of the Library. The contracts were signed in 2009 and work will commence in 2010.

### "Leaves"- Laois Literary Weekend

The Arts Office, in association with the Dunamais Arts centre, organised a literary festival from 18th to 20th September. The Programme included writer's workshops, visits to schools, recording of Sunday Miscellany (broadcasted on 27th September) and performances in the Dunamais Arts Centre.

### Other activities included

- Exhibitions
- Book launch
- Percent for Art Projects included – Mountmellick Library and Art Gallery and Knockmay Regeneration Project.
- Writers Workshops
- Electric Picnic – collaborative events with Poetry Ireland and Greencrafts group.
- Support of projects within the Magnet Festival Portlaoise – including Paperback Project and the Method Project.
- Spring Series of Childrens Art Workshops
- National Poetry Day Events
- Visiting Drama Company to Schools
- South East Arts Network Initiative
- Support of Festivals – Mountmellick Drama Festival, Slieve Bloom Storytelling Festival, Stradfest.
- Midlands Arts and Culture magazine
- Midlands Masterclasses
- Drugs Task Force Drama Project in Colaiste Iosagain, Portarlinton.



*The Method Project, part of the Magnet Festival*



Performance Indicators	2007	2008	2009
No. of Arts Grants Allocated:	43	43	61
Per 1,000 population:	2781	3107	3098
No. of Youth Theatre:	5	5	4
Summer Arts Workshops:	20	20	18
Drama Workshops:	1	1	1
Laois School of Music - No. of Students:	350	400	400

## SPORT & LEISURE SECTION

### National Trails Day – Hikes & Bikes, Emo

To celebrate National Trails Day, Laois County Council with Laois Sports Partnership organised a Hikes & Bikes Event in Emo Court on 4th October.



This was a family affair with a Family Cycle, Family Hike and a Junior Cycle. The event was attended by 280 participants and catered for all ages and abilities.



### Stepping Out in Portlaoise

“Stepping Out” in Portlaoise is a joint initiative by the Sport, Leisure & Play Section and Laois Sports Partnership to promote walking as a physical activity. The pilot programme has led to the formation of a walking and social club, aimed

primarily at non-walkers. The Stepping Out Club gives people the opportunity to find a walking buddy, be part of an active group, start or renew an interest in walking or maybe lose some weight. Portlaoise Stepping Out Club leads walks every Tuesday & Thursday night from Portlaoise Leisure Centre and welcomes new members with open arms.

### Children's Activity Programme

In 2009, Laois County Council organised and delivered a very successful Easter and Summer activity programme throughout the county. Parks Tennis, Easter & Summer programme was delivered at Abbeyleix, Portlaoise and Portarlinton, with our six week Camp Co Co Summer programme being delivered at Portarlinton, Vicarstown, Castletown, Rathdowney, Ballyroan and Portlaoise. Over 800 children participated in these activity programmes

### Trick'r Street Celebrates National Recreation Day



On Halloween night, Portlaoise Halloween Festival Committee delivered a ground breaking event for teenagers and their families – Trick 'r Street. Crowds were held spellbound by the spectacular ghoulish street parade co-ordinated by Bui Bolg from Portlaoise town centre to O' Moore Park, where 7,000 people were treated to free performances by a variety of artists including the chart toppers 'The Coronas'. Presenters from RTE 2 and DJ from 2FM joined in the fun and the night concluded with a spectacular fireworks display.

### Playground Markings

School Playground Markings was further developed in 2009, with a further six schools in Laois availing of funding. The aim of the playground markings scheme is to increase the level of school based physical activity and play as well as increasing the number of children who are active.

### Laois Swim Club

Laois Swim Club, supported by Laois County Council and Laois Sports Partnership, commenced

in September, 2009 in Portlaoise Leisure Centre. Instructors are on hand to teach children the fundamentals of swimming in a fun and entertaining way.

### New Playgrounds Opened

Darú na nÓg (Young Durrow) was officially opened in Durrow on 18th February, 2009 by an Leas-Cathaoirleach of Laois County Council, Councillor John Bonham, assisted by Calvin O'Brien, a 6th class student at Our Lady's Meadow Primary School, whose entry was chosen to name the playground "Darú na nÓg", Young Durrow.

The playground was designed to accommodate children up to 12 years and its location, at Kilkenny Road, Durrow, is centrally accessible. Some fantastic features include a 30mtr cable run, multi unit play area complete with climbing ropes and a fireman's pole. In addition there are a variety of swings, seesaws and slides. A mega sand play area has been incorporated into the playground and many features are fully assessable to children with a disability.

Ríocht an Spraoi (Kingdom of Fun) was officially opened in Mountmellick on 3rd July, 2009. An Cathaoirleach of Laois County Council, Councillor James Daly, officially cut the ribbon assisted by Hannah Timmons a 4th class student at Derrymalogue National School, whose entry was chosen to name the playground "Ríocht an Spraoi", Kingdom of Fun.



Mr John Maloney T.D., Minister for Equality, Disability & Mental Health and Ms Rosemary Whelan, Cathaoirleach of Mountmellick Town Council joined in the opening ceremony. The Mountmellick playground is the 10th playground to be opened by Laois County Council, demonstrating the commitment of Laois County Council to its Play Policy "Playing for Keeps" and the National Play Policy.

The provision of a Multi-Use Games Area site has given a new lease of life to the Smith's Field area. The MUGA is a 35m x 17m enclosed unit with artificial sand based grass surface which is suitable for basketball, soccer, tennis and volleyball.

### FAI/Laois County Council Fusion Intercultural Family Day

Laois County Council and Laois Sports Partnership, in partnership with the FAI, Laois Partnership Co. Ltd. and Mountmellick Development Association, with funding received from Department of Integration, hosted an integrated family fun day in Portlaoise Leisure Centre during the August Bank Holiday weekend.

The event was organised as many of the non-Irish families living in Laois have never had the opportunity to sample the variety of leisure activities available locally. Activities on the day for both adults and children included Swimming, Eclectic Dance Classes, Soccer Competitions, Penalty Shoot Out and Intercultural Music Performances. Younger children enjoyed the indoor and outdoor inflatables, puppet show, face painting, hair braiding, as well as use of the pool and playground.

Ethnic flavoured foods were available on the day for everyone to sample.



### FAI Community Development

#### Knockmay Council Estate Programme

In 2009, as a follow on from the initial Council Estates programme, a Futsal (indoor soccer) league was set up for the children of Knockmay estate. Boys and Girls participated in the league for an hour and a half a week for eight weeks. This helped the



children use the skills they had learnt from the initial training they received. Children were rewarded for good behaviour and good attendance.

### Soccer Tots

Following the success of the Soccer Tots programme in 2008 the programme was expanded to a second venue and was held twice during the year in both Portlaoise and Portarlington.



The programme catered for up to 180 children between the ages of 3 and 7 and ran for 8 weeks each time with a number of children in the older categories joining clubs in their local area.



### Kiln Lane Council Estates Programme

After contact with Councillor John Joe Fennelly and a number of young adults in Kiln Lane, it was proposed to set up a Council Estates programme. A programme was implemented to give a soccer activity to the children of the area. The programme ran for 8 weeks and children were coached in soccer skills and games.

### Soccer Sisters Easter Camp, Durrow

Soccer Sisters is a programme to encourage girls aged from 7-12 years to get involved in soccer with the hope of forming soccer teams from the group. An Easter camp was run in Durrow in 2009 after the

huge interest shown in the camp in 2008. 26 girls attended the centre in Durrow. The participants received coaching from FAI Qualified coaches. After the camp finished, Durrow Lions soccer club decided to set up an Under 12 Girls soccer team. A Soccer Sister's blitz day was run in Portlaoise Leisure centre with two teams travelling from Cork to play the girls in a fun packed day of activities with prizes for all girls taking part.



### Portarlington Late Night Soccer

In association with Port Project, which is the Garda Diversion programme in Portarlington, the Late Night Soccer League was run in Portarlington Community centre on a Friday night from 9.30 to 11.30 p.m. over 8 weeks. Up to 35 individuals took part in the programme, both male and female, making it the most successful Late Night Soccer programme so far. Children were rewarded for good behaviour and attendance. Prizes were awarded to the top 3 point scores.

### Camross Late Night Soccer

In association with the Camross Youth Café, the Late Night Soccer League was run in Camross Community centre on Friday nights from 8.30 to 10.30 p.m. over an 8 week period. Up to 22 individuals took part in the programme. Participants were rewarded for good behaviour and attendance. Prizes were awarded to the top 3 point scores.

### Portlaoise Late Night Soccer League

In association with the Block Project, which is the Garda Diversion programme in Portlaoise, the Late Night Soccer League was run in Portarlington Community centre on Friday nights from 9.30 to 11.00 p.m. over an 8 week period. Up to 30 individuals took part in the programme and participants were awarded for good behaviour and attendance. Prizes were awarded to the top 3 point scores.

### Street League Soccer

Street League Soccer was organised in Laois by a number of different agencies to have an organised soccer activity for men in Laois that were unemployed, asylum seekers or for people in drug or alcohol rehabilitation.



The league ran for 10 weeks and was a huge success with the finale run in conjunction with the Fusion Intercultural day in Portlaoise. The winners of the competition will go on to represent Laois in the All Ireland finals of the Street League Soccer.

### LIBRARIES

County Librarian: Gerry Maher

#### Introduction

The public Library Service performs an essential role in our communities by providing access to information, knowledge, lifelong learning and leisure reading in an inclusive manner. The Laois library service is delivered through a network of 8 part-time branches and 4 full-time branches. The service is currently engaged in a major infrastructural development programme meeting the objectives set out in the Library Development Plan 2007-2011.

#### Abbeyleix Library

In June, 2009 Abbeyleix Library won the Royal Institute for Architects in Ireland (RIAI) award for Best Building in the Conservation/Restoration category of the 2009 awards.



It also won the OPUS award for Best Architect and Builder at the PLAN/EXPO in the RDS in November, 2009 and it won the Heritage Award in the 2009 Tidy Towns Competition. The design of the building as a Library and Art Gallery has proven to be an outstanding success with over 38,000 visits in 2009.

#### Ballylinan Library

A new premises for Ballylinan library was confirmed in 2009. The premises in Gracefield Shopping Centre is a ground floor unit centrally located in the middle of the village and is currently being fitted out with new shelving and new book stock. The library will be fully automated and will have 2 Internet PC's. The Library will open to the public in early 2010.

#### Mountmellick Library

During 2009, the construction of the new library continued and is due for completion in 2010. The development, which will be 690 square meters, will involve the refurbishment of part of the Courthouse and an extension to the rear and side of the present building.

#### Stradbally

The contract for the renovations of Stradbally Courthouse was signed in December, 2009. The project involves the refurbishment and extension of the courthouse and library and construction of 5 new artist's studios.

#### Local History/Studies

Library staff have improved and added extra content to the local history website [www.askaboutireland.ie](http://www.askaboutireland.ie). It includes a large selection of postcards of County Laois e.g. old streetscapes and famous landmarks. There is also added narrative about local customs and folklore. The link from the Library Web Page is: [www.laois.ie/leisureandculture/libraries/localresearch](http://www.laois.ie/leisureandculture/libraries/localresearch). Some well known books on Local history have been digitised and are now available online. They are "Statistical Survey of the Queens County" by Coote and "The History of the Queens County" by O'Byrne.

#### FÁS eLearning and Computer Learning

Laois County Libraries, in partnership with FÁS, has introduced the 'FÁS eLearning at the Library Project' to libraries in Laois. This new learning programme has been developed by FÁS for people with little or



no IT skills as well as for those with some basic IT skills.

The project is running very successful in Abbeylax, Mountrath and Portlaoise Libraries with waiting lists for all courses.

Computer classes were also given by Library staff in Portarlinton and Abbelyleix. Library Staff gave classes on basic IT skills, e-mail and how to browse the internet. These classes were extremely well attended.

Laois County Libraries provides online services for library users through the website - [www.laois.ie/leisureandculture/libraries](http://www.laois.ie/leisureandculture/libraries), online newspapers, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Health Research and Credo Reference.

Laois County Libraries provides free internet access to the following websites: [www.itsyourmoney.ie](http://www.itsyourmoney.ie), [www.laois.ie](http://www.laois.ie), [www.change.ie](http://www.change.ie)

WIFI is now available in Portlaoise, Mountrath, Abbeylax, Portarlinton and Rathdowney Libraries.

### Bookfund

The Bookfund for 2009 was €140,000. Due to Budget cutbacks in the Department of Science the schools library grant has been discontinued.

### Events and Activities

Laois County Library held a large variety of events and activities in all Branch Libraries throughout the county in 2009. Children and Adults throughout the county enjoyed the numerous events and activities organised by library staff. This year's programme was hectic and fun filled with author visits, art competitions, music recitals, book clubs, Computer classes and storytelling.

The highlights of the year include Library Ireland week, Heritage Week, Darren Shan Visit and Children's Book Festival.

### Mountrath Library

Mountrath Library continued with events and children's activities during 2009. Monthly class visits and Book displays continue with arts and crafts for younger readers. For Childrens Book Festival there were author visits by Susan Connolly and Kieran Mark Crowley. Éanna Ni Lamhna visited in October

and talked to children and teachers about her new wildlife book. Adult and children's book clubs are held every month in the library.



*Author Éanna Ni Lamhna at Mountrath Library*

### Durrow Library

In March, 2009 there was an exhibition of objects made from wood called "The Work of Trees" in the library. A Composting Demonstration and a talk on "How to Create a Natural Garden" was given by Anne Marie Kelly.

### Abbeylax Library

Abbeylax Library had a hugely successful Children's Book Festival with an Author visit by Darren Shan. The visit by the well known children's author was held in Dunamais Theatre in Portlaoise with tickets distributed to library users and avid fans.



*Author Darren Shan at Abbeylax Library*

In June, 2009 the library was involved in Abbeyfest with puppet shows and face painting for younger readers. Heritage Week was once again a huge success with Irish History Live and a local history talk by Tom Cox. In October, Eanna Ni Leamhna also gave a talk on wildlife.

The Art Gallery continues to be a premier location in the county for art exhibitions with 11 exhibitions held in 2009.

### Portlaoise Library

Portlaoise Library had a busy year of events and these included the Edible Book Festival in April, monthly adult book clubs, competitions and an author visit by Kieran Mark Crowley for Childrens Book Festival. In 2009 a local group called Grow Tour Own started group meetings in Portlaoise Library once a month. The group gives advice on how to grow your own vegetables and fruit and attracts 40-50 people per month. The Animal Magic show brought toads, owls and snakes to the great amusement of local children. Heritage week highlights included local history talk by Jude Stynes and a talk on Family Archives by archivist Sinead Holland.

### Prison Service

Laois County Library works with prison staff to provide a library service in both the Midlands and Portlaoise Prisons. This service expanded yet again in 2009 when the completion of a new block in Portlaoise Prison necessitated a new library to facilitate its inmates. This is the third library being run as part of the service.

These libraries provide books, newspapers and magazines and various multi-media items as well as a space which is modelled as closely as possible on the public library. The library service works with other disciplines in the prison to promote a variety of educational, cultural and leisure activities and to foster literacy, reading and habits of lifelong learning.

The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform provided €16,859 for the purchase of library stock as well as €20,000 for books for the new library. The Department also recouped the salaries of the two prison library staff to Laois County Council.

	Midlands Prison	Portlaoise Prison
Hours Open	834	1133
Visits	3018	3862
Items borrowed	3654	1451

## National Service Indicators

### L: Library Services

#### L. 1 Public Opening Hours

Average number of opening hours per week for full-time libraries:	34.7
Average number of opening hours per week for part time libraries (where applicable):	7.68
Percentage of full time libraries that have Lunchtime openings:	100%
Percentage of full time libraries that have evening openings:	100%
Percentage of full time libraries that have Saturday openings:	100%

#### L. 2 Number of visits to full time libraries per 1,000 population: 62.89

L. 3 (i) Annual expenditure on stock per head of population county wide:	2.08
(ii) Number of items issued per head of population (county/city wide) for:	
- books	3.01
- other items	0.79

#### L. 4 Number of Internet sessions provided per 1,000 population: 187

Local Indicator: Library Membership - 8,831

## Planning & Development and Environment Strategic Policy Committee

**Director of Services:** John Daly

**Chairperson:** John Joe Fennelly, M.C.C.

### Members

Ray Cribbin, M.C.C.  
Tom Mulhall, M.C.C.  
Patrick Bowe, M.C.C.  
Patrick Bracken, M.C.C.  
David Goodwin, M.C.C.  
Stephen Lynch, T.C.

### Sectoral

Michael McEvoy  
Sheelagh Coyle  
Jason Redmond  
Senan Gardiner

## ENVIRONMENT

**Senior Engineer:** John O'Donoghue

### Report on Strategic Policy Committee

The Environment & Water Services Strategic Policy Committee (S.P.C.) held meetings during 2009 to discuss and approve strategy and policy documents such as the Draft Climate Change Strategy, the Draft Policy for Sustainable Development and Draft Policy on Water Conservation. The Committee also received a progress report on the Litter Management Plan 2008 – 2011, outlining the objectives and measures of success under the various categories.

Following the Local Elections in 2009, the new Planning & Development and Environment Strategic Policy Committee was established with membership as outlined above.

### Community Initiatives

#### Clean Up Laois Week

Clean up Laois Week ran from 30th March to 3rd April, 2009. Organised in conjunction with An Taisce's Spring Clean and now in its sixth year, this is one of the Council's largest clean up initiatives. 300 packs, consisting of litter pickers, gloves and bags, were distributed free of charge to registered groups including Tidy Towns, Community Groups, Schools, Scouts, local businesses and individuals.

The total amount of rubbish collected by the Environmental Enforcement Officers during the week was approximately 20.59 tonnes.

### Tidy Towns

Laois Federation of Tidy Towns was established in 1998 and at present has 26 registered groups. These groups have been conserving and enhancing the local environment in their community and are an invaluable resource. Laois County Council is actively working with the Tidy Towns Committees to help invest in their future and ensure continued growth and development.

Assistance was provided to the groups in the form of the Tidy Towns Grants, Summer Wheelie Bin Scheme, participation in Clean Up Laois Week, the Laois Federation of Tidy Towns Competition and Awards.



*Mountrath - Tidy Towns Award Winners 2009*

### Grants

Under the Community Grant Scheme, funding was awarded to 48 groups for various projects to benefit the environment and enhance local amenities. An additional 43 projects were funded under the Community Project Fund. This fund allocates €1,500 to each elected member of Laois County Council to finance worthwhile projects in their own areas.

10 groups received financial assistance under the Local Agenda 21 Environmental Partnership Fund, which is a joint initiative between Laois County Council and the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and aims to contribute to environmental awareness and sustainable development.

In association with the Laois Federation of the I.C.A., Laois County Council arranges the 'Art from Waste' competition for primary schools annually. 55 entries were received and judged in 2009 with the presentation of prizes in December.



## Environment Awareness & Education

### Environment Awards

The 2009 Awards saw Laois County Council acknowledge and reward various community groups throughout the County for their involvement in the Laois Federation of Tidy Towns, the Inter Community Litter Challenge and the Community Action Project.



*Newtown - Overall Winners of the 2009 Art From Waste Award*

### Schools Programme

Tidy Primary Schools competition was a great success. 41 primary schools participated and 15 were designated litter free. Also, 2009 saw the number of Awarded Green Schools jump to 42 - Congratulations to all involved.

During the summer of 2009, a week long primary school teacher training course was held by Laois County Council's Environment Awareness Officer. The course, which received approval from the Department of Education and Laois Education Centre, illustrated how teachers can include environmental issues in their daily curriculum.

### Compost Awareness Week

During Compost Awareness Week in March, 2009, both the Environment Awareness Officer and County Horticulturalist visited 5 different venues in County Laois to promote composting. This affords an opportunity for people to learn more about the benefits of composting.

### Meeting the Sustainability Challenge

Building on the work undertaken in 2007 by the Council on greening their internal procedures, a public consultation was conducted in 2008 based on

Laois County Council's 'One Shared Sustainable Vision for County Laois'. Following further public consultation in 2009, a Policy for Sustainable Development was adopted by the elected members, which is hoped will help all of us to contribute to achieving sustainability within our county over the next 3 years (2009-2012). Together, we can make a positive difference to everyone who lives and works in County Laois.

### Green Your Business

The EcoCert scheme is a partnership between Laois and Offaly County Councils, Waterford City Council, the Environmental Protection Agency and environmental consultants Econcertive. EcoCert is an innovative new programme which was launched at a series of Green Business Seminars during European Week of Waste Reduction in November. It will help small businesses and other organisations to simultaneously reduce their costs and improve their environmental performance.

### Green Eyes Photo Competition

The Environment Section of Laois County Council announced details of 'Green Eyes', a new competition for amateur photographers. The purpose of the competition is to encourage participants to think twice about our environment and find ways to reduce our day to day impact. Photographs were invited on one of five possible themes including Litter, Waste, Water, Energy and Climate Change and there were three competition categories aimed at Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and Adults.

### Litter Management

Litter is one of the main threats to an unspoiled environment in all its forms – ranging from large-scale indiscriminate dumping to incorrect disposal of chewing gum. Abandoned vehicles, unauthorised signage, inappropriate/improper use of bring bank facilities, dog fouling and cigarette/cigarette-related litter are also very visible forms of pollution which devalue from our living and working environment, makes it less attractive for leisure, tourism and investment and generates a negative impression of our county.

Despite investment of considerable resources in street cleansing and litter control, education and awareness and enforcement at a local level, Laois has a continuing and visible litter problem. It is the

view of this Council that this challenge is best addressed by working in partnership with key stakeholders (Tidy Towns Committees, Voluntary Groups, Schools, Business Community and other public bodies) in our community to combat this problem. Its success is also dependent on maximising resources and seeking a fundamental change in behaviour of each and every citizen.

During 2010, Litter Management staff will continue to enforce their duties under the relevant legislation with the focus on increased foot patrol. In 2009, 376 on-the-spot fines issued for varying offences with 204 paid within the year. Unpaid fines (92) were referred for legal proceedings, resulting in 25 successful convictions results. Landowners are responsible for keeping lands free of litter and 25 Section 9 Notices were served for this purpose.

The Staff encourage public participation in reporting litter complaints by distributing merchandise promoting the confidential freephone litter hotline i.e. keyrings, stubbis, cartidi bins, signage and our latest initiative, the three-tiered car wallet. In 2009, 857 complaints were received from the public in this Section – 626 were litter-related.

## Anti-Litter Initiatives

The Environment Section continues to promote, encourage and participate in initiatives throughout the year, building on from previous years' experience, to ensure maximum participation and a positive outcome.



*Portlaoise Against Litter Clean-Up Week 2009*

We recognise the importance of educating children from a young age on the importance of litter control and to encourage adults in sustaining a litter-free environment i.e. Tidy Primary Schools Competition, Inter-Community Litter Challenge, Community Litter

Action Programme, PAL activities, Clean-Up Laois Week and anti-litter promotion initiatives.

## IBAL

Portlaoise town is currently ranked in 15th place out of 60 towns/cities rated for litter management in what is considered as Ireland's largest litter survey. IBAL's (Irish Business Against Litter) remit covers all areas with a population of over 6,000 and surveys are conducted throughout the year. Sites are graded by An Taisce according to international standards.

With the cooperation of the Street Cleansing staff, the Tidy Towns Committee, PAL Committee and the Environment Section, every effort will be made during 2010 to sustain this rating.

## Environmental Protection

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



- Implementing environmental monitoring programs
- Implementing and enforcing regulations
- Issuing, monitoring and enforcing discharge and emissions licenses
- Investigating pollution incidents and finding sources of pollution
- Responding to environmental complaints from the public.
- Preparing environmental policy

## Water Quality

Laois is covered by the South East River Basin District and the Shannon International River Basin District. Draft River Basin District Management Plans were published on 22nd December, 2008 and a public consultation process was held up to 22nd June, 2009. These plans are currently being finalised.

When published these plans will detail the actions necessary to comply with their objectives and implementation of these plans will formally commence after their adoption.

In 2009, Environmental Protection staff continued with the monitoring of Laois surface and ground waters under the Water Framework Directive monitoring program. Extensive analyses of rivers in the county were also carried out under the Small Stream Risk Scores monitoring program.

A total of 177 farm inspections were carried out in 2009. These inspections were carried out in focussed catchments including the Triogue, Mountrath, Goul Glenlahan and Ballyroan catchments. Analyses of river water samples in the catchments assisted in identifying areas where pollution may have been occurring.

A total of 59 complaints concerning water pollution were received and investigated in 2009. As a result of these complaints, 30 Notices were issued under Section 12 of the Local Government (Water Pollution) Acts 1977 to 1990. The Council is currently taking legal proceedings against a number of parties for non compliances with statutory notices.

Activity	No.
Water Framework Directive Monitoring Program (Carried out by EPA):	184
Small Stream Risk Scores:	100
Farm Surveys River Catchment Monitoring:	139
Samples taken as a result of Complaints:	36
Sampling of Licensed Discharges:	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>483</b>

Table: No. of samples tested in 2009.

A license under Section 4 of the Local Government (Water Pollution) Act 1977 is required where trade or sewage effluents are discharged to surface waters or to groundwater. Five new licenses were issued in 2009 giving a total of 13 licenses in the county.

### Air Quality

Two air emissions licenses exist in the county. Only one however is operational. 51 complaints were received and investigated in 2009 concerning air quality. The nature of these complaints varied between burning of refuse, dust from construction and quarrying activities and odours.

### Noise Pollution

22 complaints were received in 2009 concerning noise. 10 of these complaints were domestic in nature. In these cases the Council encourage people to discuss the problems such as dogs barking and loud music first with the person responsible for these loud noises and come to an agreed solution. The other twelve complaints were of various natures such as licensed premises, building works, commercial and agricultural.

### Waste Management

A total of 44 recycling bring banks were in place throughout the county by the end of 2009. Portarlington Civic Amenity Centre (Recycling Centre) was opened to the public in June, 2009. The contract for the management and operation of the facility was awarded to AES Ltd. for 2 years with effect from June, 2009. The facility is open on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday of each week.



Portarlington Recycling Centre

### Landfill

Cell 14 was being filled during 2009. There was approximately 15,000 tonnes remaining capacity in cell 14 at the end of 2009. Capping works were completed in two mini cells of cell 14 in mid 2009.

Outline approval was granted by the EPA in 2008 for new cell 15 which will be situated east of the lined cells 13 & 14. Construction works commenced in October, 2009 and will be completed in June, 2010 to allow for continuous waste acceptance.



## Public Parks

Despite the heavy rain over the last year the Parks still continue to attract visitors. The adult fitness equipment has benefited many people who use the different pieces of equipment to help exercise muscles and aid in the recovery process from illness or surgery. The Parks are full of wildlife with ducks and swans enjoying the tranquillity on the lake.

The National Learning Network students completed their work experience modules by carrying out elements of their course in Horticulture in the Peoples Park. The participants learned about pruning, composting and general garden maintenance.

The Sponsorship Scheme for maintenance of the roundabouts on JFL Avenue and on the Carlow Northern Relief road in Graiguecullen continues with our landscaped roundabouts receiving favourable mention from Tidy Towns Competition adjudicators.

During National Tree week many schools, resident associations and Tidy Towns groups received sapling trees from Laois County Council. These saplings were provided by the Tree Council of Ireland in conjunction with sponsors O2 and Coillte.



*Students from the National Learning Network on Work Experience*

## Performance Indicators

### E. Environmental Services

#### E. 3 Percentage of households provided with segregated waste collection for:

- |      |                 |         |
|------|-----------------|---------|
| (i)  | Dry recyclables | 95.3% * |
| (ii) | Organics        | 2.6% *  |

#### E. 4 Household waste collected from kerbside and household waste collected from recycling facilities, which is sent for recycling:

- |       |   |      |
|-------|---|------|
| (i)   | Percentage of Household Waste (collected at kerbside) which is sent for recycling:  | 28%  |
| (ii)  | Tonnage of Household Waste (collected at kerbside) which is sent for recycling:   | 4703 |
| (iii) | Tonnage of Household Waste recycled, which arises from waste collected from recycling facilities (i.e. bring banks, Civic amenity sites, transfer stations and other recycling facilities): | 3142 |

#### E. 5 Household waste collected which is sent to landfill:

- |   |   |        |
|---|---|--------|
| - | tonnage                                 | 11,585 |
| - | Percentage of household waste collected | 71.5%  |

\* Based on householders who avail of kerbside collection in the county

## E. 6 Recycling Facilities

Category	Column A	Column B	Column C	Column D
	Number of Bring Sites	Number of Civic Amenity Cites	Total Number of Facilities	Number of Locations Per 5,000 Population
Glass	44	2	46	3.43
Cans	44	2	46	3.43
Textiles	6	2	8	0.60
Batteries	-	2	2	0.15
Oils	-	2	2	0.15
Cardboard	-	2	2	0.15
Magazines	-	2	2	0.15
Plate Glass	-	2	2	0.15
Metal	-	2	2	0.15
Plastic	-	2	2	0.15
WEEE	-	2	2	0.15
Newspaper	-	2	2	0.15
Wood	-	2	2	0.15
Flourescent Lamps	-	2	2	0.15
Hedge Trm.	-	2	2	0.15
Tyres	-	2	2	0.15

## E. 7 Litter Prevention & Environmental Protection

### Number of Litter Wardens

- total number of full time litter wardens:	3
- total number of part-time litter wardens:	3
- number of litter wardens (both full and part time per 5,000 population:	0.45
- Number of on the spot fines issued:	376
- Number of on the spot fines paid:	204
- Number of notices issued (under Sections 9, 15, 16, 17 and 20 of the Litter Pollution Act 1997):	19
- Total number of prosecutions taken (all prosecutions under the Litter Acts 1997-2003:	92
- Number of prosecution cases taken because of non-payment of on-the-spot fines:	92
- Total number of prosecutions secured (all prosecutions under the Litter Acts 1997-2003):	25
- Number of prosecutions secured (relating to non payment of on-the-spot fines):	25
- % of areas within the Local Authority that are:	
Unpolluted (i.e. litter-free):	10.1%
Slightly polluted with litter:	81.2%
Moderately polluted with litter:	8.7%
Significantly polluted with litter:	0.0%
Grossly polluted with litter:	0.0%

## E. 8 Environmental Complaints and Enforcement

- Total number of cases subject to complaints concerning environmental pollution (relation to waste, litter, water pollution, noise pollution, air pollution):	857
- Number of complaints investigated:	857
- Number of complaints resolved where no further action was necessary:	725 (19 pending)
- Number of enforcement procedures taken:	113

## E.9 Percentage of Schools participating in Environmental campaigns:

- Primary schools	69%
- Secondary schools	82%

### PLANNING

<b>Director of Services:</b>	John Daly
<b>Senior Planner:</b>	Angela McEvoy
<b>Senior Executive Officer, Planning:</b>	Kieran Kehoe

### Report on Strategic Policy Committee

A new committee was appointed in July, 2009 following the local elections. This committee now has responsibility for Planning and Environment Policy. An introductory meeting was held in late 2009 to familiarize the members with the work of the committee.

### Planning Department

The overall objective of the Planning Department is to implement the provisions of the Planning Acts and provide appropriate support measures in order to promote the physical, social and economical well being of the County so that living standards are protected and raised and work opportunities fostered and created having regard to the principles of sustainability.

The Planning Department can be broken down into 5 separate areas:

- (i) Development Management
- (ii) Forward Planning
- (iii) Planning Enforcement
- (iv) Building Control
- (v) Taking in Charge of Estates

### (i) Development Management

The number of planning applications received in 2009 was 799. However, it should be noted that 153 of the total applications received were invalid and required the applicant to submit a new application.

The following table gives a breakdown of valid planning applications received and decisions made during 2009.

Number of valid applications received	646
Number of decisions made	632
Number of applications granted	557
Number of applications refused	75

### 2009 Performance

Invalid applications returned to applicant	19%
Referrals to Area Offices (working days)	14

### Validation of Planning Applications

There were 833 planning applications validated in 2009 of which 692 were valid and 141 were invalid. While 17% of the planning applications were invalid, the main reasons were for public notices being out of date, agents name omitted from maps/drawings and distances not shown on site layouts.

29 applications were appealed to An Bord Pleanála in 2009.

### Customer Service Initiatives

2009 saw the continuation of the scanning of planning applications as they are received by the Planning Authority. Throughout 2009, the public



were able to access all planning applications on-line within two weeks of the Planning Authority receiving them.

391 Pre-planning meetings were held in 2009, at which members of the public had an opportunity to discuss planning matters with a planner prior to submitting a planning application.

“Over-the-counter” validation in respect of one off houses was introduced in January, 2009, whereby members of the public can attend at the planning office between the hours of 9.30 a.m. and 12.30p.m. to have their planning application validated. Over the counter validation was also introduced later in the year for larger applications by appointment in the afternoons. This has cut down on the amount of invalid applications and streamlined the planning process.

15 Section 5 Certificates were issued by Laois County Council in 2009.

The Planning website continues to be a very popular attraction with over 80,000 hits last year.

## (ii) Forward Planning

### Introduction

Forward Planning plays a pivotal role in the physical, economic and social development of County Laois. The Laois County Development Plan 2006 – 2012, adopted in January, 2006, is intended to provide a strategic framework and policy context within which the Local Authority makes its planning decisions.

As a Planning Authority, we have a duty to make a Development Plan for our functional area and to review it every six years. The new replacement development plan must be prepared within a two year timeframe i.e. by January, 2012. The plan will then be in place until 2018.

The legal basis for the making of a Development Plan is laid out in the Planning and Development Acts 2000 - 2009. The Development Plan is particularly important because of its role as a guide to future development in the County. All development must comply with the requirements of the Plan.

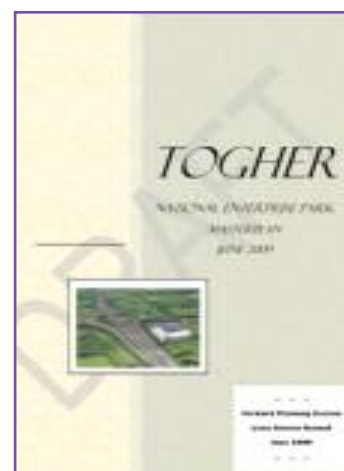
The Review of the Laois County Development Plan 2006 - 2012 commenced on the 31st December,

2009. An issues paper was circulated to initiate the process.



The section is pro-actively involved in the preparation of land use plans at all levels down to village and master planning. The Forward Planning Section is carrying out extensive Public Consultation in conjunction with the County Community Forum during the preparation of all Plans. This allows for all interested parties to have a valued input into the development of their own area, village, town, etc. In addition it maximizes public participation in the planning process and enhances local democracy.

A Masterplan for the Togher Area was developed in conjunction with the Road Design Section of the Council, National Roads Authority and the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in 2009. The masterplan establishes a framework that will be used:



- To assess any future planning applications in the study area, and
- To provide advice on the nature of acceptable development, potential uses and their impact on the physical infrastructure, particularly the local road network, and design issues.

The vision is to develop a flagship National Transport Node and Inland Port which has the potential to be a major boost to the economy of Portlaoise and to contribute to the growth of the county and the region as a whole and by realising the objectives of the NSS and the MRPG.

Masterplans were also endorsed at Area Council level for the following areas:

- Portarlington Town Centre
- Rathdowney - Knockiel
- Rathdowney Town Centre
- Abbeyleix - Westlands



## Town Renewal Scheme

Five towns in Laois County qualify for tax incentives under the Urban and Town Renewal Schemes. The qualifying towns are Portlaoise, Mountrath, Mountmellick, Portarlington and Rathdowney.

## Conservation

The Conservation Grant Scheme is funded by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government annually and administered by Laois County Council.

In 2009, €73,000 was allocated to 17 successful applicants. The scheme is very important in promoting the conservation of the protected structures in the county and continues to be implemented by Laois County Council.

An owner or occupier of a protected structure may request the local authority to issue a Section 57 / Declaration indicating the types of works that could be carried out without affecting the character of the structure or any element of the structure which contributes to its special interest.

These works would not require planning permission. 16 such Section 57's / Declarations in relation to

Protected Structures in County Laois were issued in 2009.

## Derelict Sites

In 2009,

- 22 no. S.8.2 notices issued (notice of intention to place on register),
- 11 no. S.8.7 notices have been served (notice of entry onto register),
- 9 no. S.11 notices have been served,
- 9 no. files closed [41%] as satisfactory remedial works carried out,
- 4 no. properties [18%] where remedial works are underway

A Presentation was given to the Emo Electoral Area meeting on 4th December, 2009, outlining the current situation on dereliction in that area.

## (iii) Planning Enforcement

### Introduction

The Planning Authority, in accordance with the statutory requirements under the Planning and Development Acts, 2000 - 2007, seeks to ensure compliance to planning permissions and also to prevent unauthorized development.

### Unauthorised Development

Unauthorised development is development that it is not authorized by a grant of planning permission or is not considered exempt under the Planning & Development Regulations 2001, as amended. Developments that are carried out in non compliance with the conditions of a planning permission granted are also considered unauthorized development.

### Functions

The Planning Authority investigates all written complaints of unauthorised development where they appear to be well founded. A standard complaint form is available on-line. The identity of the complainant is protected in line with Council policy and also recommended by the Development Management Guidelines published in June 2007 by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

## General Procedural Steps

On receipt of a bone fide written complaint, an investigation is carried out and a decision taken on validity of the complaint. The following Enforcement steps maybe initiated.

**Warning Letter** – A Warning Letter may be issued within 6 weeks from receipt of written representation. The Warning Letter informs the developer / owner it has come to the attention of the Planning Authority that unauthorized development may have been, is being, or may be carried out and allows for submission to be made within four weeks.

**Enforcement Notice** – An Enforcement Notice is served where a satisfactory resolution is not achieved following the issue of Warning Letter. The Enforcement Notice gives a timeframe for compliance with requirements and where the requirements are not met within the given timeframe legal proceedings may be initiated against the developer/owner. The Planning Authority are entitled to recover all costs, both administrative and legal, incurred by them in pursuit of unauthorized development. An Enforcement Notice can be issued in urgent cases even if a Warning Letter has not been sent.

## Developments in Enforcement

The public are now more involved in the Enforcement System as the Planning Authority is obliged to consider and respond to complaints. A number of enquiries from the Office of the Ombudsman is further evidence of increased public involvement.

There are strong legal powers available to enable the Planning Authority deal with offenders and the fines that can be imposed on conviction of offences relating to the carrying out of unauthorized development can be considerable.

There has been a significant increase in the number of complaints received during 2009 and this is indicative of the willingness of members of the public to participate in the enforcement process.

## Licensing of Outdoor Events

An outdoor event is defined as a public performance which takes place wholly or mainly in the open air or in a structure with no roof or a partial, temporary or retractable roof, a tent or similar temporary structure

and which consists of music, dancing, displays of public entertainment or any activity of a like kind.

The organisers of such events are required to obtain a licence from the Planning Authority where the audience comprises of 5,000 or more people.

**Examples:** Electric Picnic held in Stradbally in 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009.

## (iv) Building Control

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

Number of Valid Commencement Notices Received:	507
Number of Buildings covered by Valid Commencement Notices:	675
Number of Buildings Inspected:	162
Number of Buildings Inspected as a % of buildings covered by valid Commencement Notices:	24%

## (v) Taking-in-Charge of Estates

Laois County Council commenced the process of taking in charge of estates upon request from developers and/or residents associations. The Planning Authority ensures that prior to advertising for taking in charge, the estate must be in compliance with the planning permission under which the development was conditioned. Laois County Council updates its taking in charge policy document in line with Ministerial guidelines.

There were 8 estates taken in charge in 2009.



## Planning and Building Control - Service Indicators

## Planning Applications – Decision making

Individual Houses	31/12/09
Number of applications decided	218
Number of decisions which were decided within 8 weeks	119 (55%)
Number of decisions which required the submission of further information	98
Number of decisions where an extension of time was agreed to by the applicant under section 34(9) of the Planning and Development Act 2000	0
Average length of time taken (in days) to decide a case where further information was sought	72
% of grants	80.73%
% of refusals	19.26%
% of cases where the decision was confirmed, with or without variations, by An Bord Pleanala	66.66%
% of cases where the decision was reversed by An Bord Pleanala	33.33%
New Housing Development	31/12/09
Number of applications decided	31
Number of decisions which were decided within 8 weeks	16 (52%)
Number of decisions which required the submission of further information	15
Number of decisions where an extension of time was agreed to by the applicant under section 34(9) of the Planning and Development Act 2000	0
Average length of time taken (in days) to decide a case where further information was sought	77
% of grants	93.54%
% of refusals	6.46%
% of cases where the decision was confirmed, with or without variations, by An Bord Pleanala	50%
% of cases where the decision was reversed by An Bord Pleanala	50%
Other: Not Requiring EIA	31/12/09
Number of applications decided	380
Number of decisions which were decided within 8 weeks	273
Number of decisions which required the submission of further information	105
Number of decisions where an extension of time was agreed to by the applicant under section 34(9) of the Planning and Development Act 2000	1
Average length of time taken (in days) to decide a case where further information was sought	74
% of grants	92.11%
% of refusals	7.89%
% of cases where the decision was confirmed, with or without variations, by An Bord Pleanala	71.42%
% of cases where the decision was reversed by An Bord Pleanala	28.58%

Other: Requiring EIA 31/12/09

Number of applications decided	3
Number of decisions which were decided within 8 weeks	3
Number of decisions which required the submission of further information	0
Number of decisions where an extension of time was agreed to by the applicant under section 34(9) of the Planning and Development Act 2000	0
Average length of time taken (in days) to decide a case where further information was sought	0
% of grants	66.66%
% of refusals	33.34%
% of cases where the decision was confirmed, with or without variations, by An Bord Pleanála	0%
% of cases where the decision was reversed by An Bord Pleanála	100%

Enforcement 31/12/09

Total number of cases subject to complaints that were investigated	195
Total number of cases subject to complaints that were dismissed	44
Total number of cases subject to complaints that were resolved through negotiations	57
Number of enforcement procedures taken through warning letters	230
Number of enforcement procedures taken through enforcement notices	71
Number of prosecutions	3

Opening Hours and Consultations 31/12/09

Average number of opening hours per week	32.5
Number of pre-planning consultation meetings held	391
Average length of time (in days) from request for consultation with local authority planner to actual formal meeting for pre-planning consultation	7 (working days)
Buildings inspected as a % of new buildings notified to the Local Authority	25%

LAOIS COUNTY FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Fire Service

The operational service responded to 745 incidents in 2009. Of these 391 were fires and the remaining were special service calls; 64 road traffic accidents, 45 incidents of flooding, 17 hazardous substances in transport and 228 other miscellaneous incidents.



Portarlington Fire Station, officially opened in June 2009

A new two bay fire station was officially opened in Portarlington in June 2009.

Two new Class B fire appliances were delivered and another Class B appliance has been ordered. The programme of updating fire brigade equipment was continued with the purchase of crash rescue equipment, communications equipment and training aids.

Major Emergency Management

Controllers of operations facilities were purchased. The facilities will provide a working area for the “on-site” Controller of Operations Team in the event of a major emergency. All necessary equipment and communications were also purchased and are located in the Major Emergency Incident Support Vehicle. All necessary works were completed to the Council Chamber area to accommodate the inter-agency Local Co-ordination Group, Local Authority

Crisis Management Team, An Garda Síochána and Health Service Executive support teams.

Additionally, all necessary equipment and communications were also purchased.



*Major Emergency Management  
Controller of Operations Tent*

A Major Emergency Exercise was carried out on the 27th March, 2009. The exercise focused on Local Authority members of the Local Co-ordination Group/Crisis Management Team and selected members of the Controller of Operations Team.

### Training

As well as basic training for new entrants to the service, fire brigade staff underwent specialist training in the following areas: road traffic accident instructor course, Compressed Air Foam Systems, working at heights, breathing apparatus, driver training and compartment fire behaviour training. Dr. Eddie Murphy was retained to provide Critical Incident Stress Management Service (CISM) to fire service personnel.



### Health & Safety

To mitigate against one of the Fire Services main risks, a new working at heights system was successfully piloted by Mountrath Fire Crew. This system will be rolled out to the remaining seven stations in 2010.

### Fire Safety Certificate and Planning Applications

In 2009, Fire Safety Certificates for 67 commercial developments were processed and advice was

provided to the Planning Section in respect of 103 planning applications.

### Laois Civil Defence

Laois Civil Defence is a volunteer based organisation whose members are proud to serve as a high quality back-up service, supporting the primary emergency services and the local Community.

Volunteers are multi-skilled and the main programmes of activity undertaken by the organisation are:

#### First Aid

Provision of first aid and ambulance service.

#### Rescue Skills

Urban rescue, open country search for missing persons with Laois having the only K9 H.R.D. search and rescue dog within the local authorities. Water based search and recovery.

#### Fire-fighting

Pump and ladder drills, pumping floodwaters and supply water to the Community.

#### Warden Service and Radiation Monitoring

Radiation detecting and monitoring.

#### Welfare Skills

Provision of hot meals, drinks and psychosocial support.

#### Radio Communications

Operation of two independent radio systems U.H.F., V.H.F. and Marine Band Radio. These systems are operated from our specialised Operational Support Unit.

### Emergency Response

#### Responding to Major Emergencies

During 2009 we assisted at events such as the St. Patrick's Day Parade, Electric Picnic and any civic functions hosted by Laois County Council.

Training centres are located at Stradbally, Durrow and Mountmellick. If you are interested in the above and are aged between 16-65, contact us to find out more on (057) 8664000 or email

lpreston@laoiscoco.ie or visit our website at [www.laoiscivildefence.org](http://www.laoiscivildefence.org)



### Transportation & Water Services Strategic Policy Committee

**Director of Services:** Gerry Gibson  
**Chairperson:** Martin Phelan, M.C.C.

Members	Sectoral
Brendan Phelan, M.C.C.	Francis Gorman
Ben Brennan, M.C.C.	Pat Culleton
Jeremiah Lodge, M.C.C.	Noreen Byrne
Kathleen O'Brien, M.C.C.	Miriam Hamilton
Seamus McDonald, M.C.C.	
Matthew Keegan, T.C.	

### ROADS

**Senior Engineer, Roads:** Michael O'Hora

#### 2009 Road Grant Allocations

In 2009, Laois County Council received a total allocation of €118,105,423 for National & Non - National roads in the county. Of this, €12.6m was available for expenditure on Regional and Local Roads.

#### Specific Improvement Schemes

Laois County Council received funding from the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government for the following schemes in 2009:

##### Kilmullen Bridge - €2,160,000

The scheme involves the realignment of the R420 Portarlinton to Monasterevin Road and includes a bridge over the main Dublin/Limerick-Cork railway line. In December, 2005, An Bord Pleanála held an oral hearing in respect of draft compulsory purchase order for this scheme.

The scheme was approved in 2006 and lands were acquired in 2007 and 2008. Contract documents were signed with the successful contractors John Cradock Ltd. in March, 2009 and a bridge agreement with Iarnród Éireann was finalised January, 2009.

This scheme was completed in January, 2010.

##### Meelick Bridge - €101,000

Construction commenced on the Meelick Bridge,

Timahoe Road, Portlaoise in May 2009. The work consisted of the repair of a 5 metre single masonry arch bridge.



This scheme was completed in September 2009.

#### Road Safety Remedial Measures

In 2009, Laois County Council received €313,500 to carry out 12 Road Safety Remedial Measure Schemes at various locations throughout the county on Non- National Road Schemes. These schemes involved the re-alignment of junctions at R422/L2095 Mullaghanard Cross, Rosenallis and the provision of lining, road markings and signs to improve road safety at other locations throughout the county, including Schemes at R433 Middlemount, Rathdowney, R425/R445 Ballyclider Rd -Dublin Rd Junction, R428 Blackford Bridge.

#### Road Safety

Both the 'Drive for Life Program' catering for secondary school students and the 'Safe Cycling Program' designed for young cyclists continues in the county's schools (1200 children). High visibility vests were distributed to 5 National Schools this year and 200 adult vests were distributed among various activity groups. A number of local schools were visited by the Roads Safety Officer to promote road safety education. 400 local national school pupils used the School Road Safety Authority shuttle bus in May.

#### Maintenance of National Roads

Pavement improvement works were carried out in 2009 on N80 Mountmellick, N80 Coote St., Portlaoise, N80 Kyletalesha, N7 Mountrath to Derragh, N7 Borris-in-Ossory and N77 Durrow. The works comprised the planing out and re-construction of failed sections of pavement. The value of these works was €548,000.

### Maintenance of Non-National Roads

In line with previous years, Laois County Council carried out maintenance works on Regional, and Local Roads in the county. These works include, drainage works, verge trimming, footpath repairs, erection and replacement of signs, relining, the provision of studs, street cleaning and litter collection and the replacement of safety barriers/fencing.

In 2009, under the Multi-Annual Roadworks Programme 2008-2010, Strengthening and Surface Dressing works were carried out to Regional and County Roads throughout the county. A total of 47km of Regional and County Roads were strengthened and a further 81km were surface dressed in 2009.

### Development Charge Funded Schemes

A number of schemes funded through Development Charges were progressed in 2009.

#### N80 Clonreher Tie-In

This scheme comprised the realignment of the N80 to tie into the Fairgreen Roundabout on the N80/Portlaoise Western Circular Road Junction. O'Connor Sutton Cronin designed the scheme. Ward & Burke Construction Ltd. were awarded the contract in March, 2009 for €909,696. The scheme was completed on time and on budget in December, 2009.

#### Togher Link Road -Phase 1

The Togher Link Road Scheme connects the National Enterprise Park to Fr. Browne Avenue and the Clonminam Link.



Phase 1 of the scheme comprises approximately 150m of new carriageway, tying the existing

Clonminam Estate Road to a roundabout in the National Enterprise Park built by a private developer.

Part 8 approval for the scheme was secured in July, 2005. O'Connor Sutton Cronin designed the scheme and tenders were invited in 2008. In late 2008, John Cradock Ltd. was awarded the contract for €561,785. The scheme was completed in April 2009.

#### Crossneen Bends in Graiguecullen

David Walsh Contractors completed this scheme in June, 2009 at a cost of €1,050,000.

#### Portlaoise Northern Orbital Route

Work was carried out in 2008 on ground investigations and topographical surveys along the route. Detailed design of this scheme is complete. It is expected that sections of this road will be delivered through development of zoned lands. Consultation is ongoing with the NRA to progress this scheme further.

#### Portlaoise Southern Circular Route

The CPO process was commenced and approved by ABP in December 2008. The scheme will be developed by private developers within the context of planning permissions granted along the route of the scheme. Aldi (Ireland) Ltd. has commenced development of their site under planning permission and will construct the Kylekiproe Connector section of the route that passes through their lands.

#### Borris Road Realignment

Part 8 approval was obtained for this scheme in 2007. Consultants were appointed in early 2008 to undertake the detailed design, which was completed in 2009. The CPO for this scheme is expected to commence in 2010. Works on a new roundabout for access to the new schools' site commenced following the signing of an access licence agreement between the Council and the Minister of Education and Science in November, 2010. This phase of work is expected to be completed in June, 2010 and subsequent phases will follow subject to funding, including the upgrade of the Colliers Lane / Dublin Road junction.

#### Rathdowney Village Traffic Improvements

Construction commenced in November 2008 and Phase 1 was completed in 2009 at a cost of €600,000.

## Other Schemes

A number of other Part 8's have been brought forward in areas where road objectives in towns are affected by proposed developments viz:

- R445, Mountrath Road, Portlaoise – Approved at January, 2009 meeting
- R445, Dublin Road, Portlaoise – Approved at adjourned April, 2009 meeting held on 11th May, 2009
- Portlaoise Southern Orbital Route/ Meelick Road – Not approved at October, 2009 meeting

## Local Improvement Schemes

An allocation of €354,000 was received from the Department of Transport in 2009 in respect of the above and 17 projects were completed. Local Improvement Schemes apply to private roads in Laois. A Grant of 85% of the total cost of the works is provided if the scheme costs in excess of €25,393. Where schemes cost less than this amount a grant of 90% is provided.

## Community Involvement in Roadworks Scheme

This scheme continued in 2009 with an allocation of €220,000 provided and a total of 9 projects were successfully undertaken in conjunction with local communities.

## National Service Indicators

### R: Roads

R.1 Number of kilometres of local and regional roads improved and maintained under the Restoration Programme per annum:

128.27

Number of kilometres of local and regional roads constructed under the specific improvements grants scheme per annum:

0.48

## WATER SERVICES

**Senior Engineer, Water Services:** Brendan Clarke

The Water Services functions are divided into four sections:

- Ongoing Operation and Maintenance of Water and Wastewater Schemes
- Capital Investment Programme
- Rural Water Programme
- Provision and Maintenance of Cemeteries

Water Services also provides support to the Planning Department and consults with the public on planning issues relating to water and wastewater services.

## Ongoing Operation and Maintenance

The Water Services Section is responsible for the provision and maintenance of adequate water supplies and wastewater treatment and disposal facilities which comply with both the EU Drinking Water Directive and EU Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive. Laois County Council currently supplies approximately 24,000 cubic meters of water per day. The volume of unaccounted for water currently stands at 34%, which is better than the national average.



*Portlaoise Waste Water Treatment Plant*

## Water Quality

Laois County Council has statutory functions with regard to the monitoring of drinking water supplies in the county as laid out in the EC (Drinking Water) Regulations, 2000.

The overall compliance by Laois with the drinking water standards in public water supplies was in line with the national average. In general, compliance with the majority of parameters was good.



### Waste Water

Construction is complete on the 5000PE Temporary Upgrade to the Portarlington Waste Water Treatment Plant.

### Discharges to Sewers

Under the Local Government (Water Pollution) Act 1977 and 1990 and its regulations, a licence is required by any company that discharges trade effluent (including cooling waters) to a sewer. At the start of 2009, there were 21 licences in force. A new approach to licence applications was developed to make the process less onerous on small businesses. As a result of the fresh approach, 78 new licences were issued during 2009 bringing the total of licences in force to 99 by the end of 2009.

### EPA Waste Water Discharge Licence

The Waste Water Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations, 2007 (S.I. No. 684 of 2007) require the Environmental Protection Agency to authorise all local authority waste water discharges. The purpose is to reduce and prevent the pollution of waters and follows on from the requirements of the Water Framework Directive. Rather than employing consultants, Laois County Council has dedicated two technical staff members to the preparation of the licences. In 2009, applications have been made for:

Ballylynan	Borris in Ossory	Durrow
Rathdowney	Stradbally	Ballinakill
Ballyroan	Castletown	Clonaslee
Arles	Ballacolla	Ballybrittas
Camross	Capalug	Clough
Coolanagh	Coolrain	Emo
Errill	Newtown Doonane	Kileen
Rosenallis	Swan	Timahoe

The total cost of the licensing programme for 2009 was €309,000.

### Capital Investment Programme

#### Capital Project Office

Following Department approval and establishment of the Water Services Capital Projects Office, the Project Office team has expanded to three engineers, one technician and one administrative staff member. The Capital Projects Office is responsible for delivering the major Water and

Wastewater schemes that the Department for the Environment Heritage & Local Government has approved under the Water Services Investment Programme 2007-2009.

### Portarlington Water Supply Scheme Improvement Scheme

An advance contract was completed to supply a significant amount of water to Portarlington from new wellfield sources at La Bergerie and Doolough. The detailed design of the main scheme was completed in 2009 and is under approval by the Department for the Environment Heritage & Local Government. Five companies were chosen under prequalification process and construction stage is envisaged for 2010.

### Portlaoise & Mountmellick Water Supply

Production drilling contract of 9 remaining wells completed in August, 2009. Pump Testing completed September, 2009. Site investigation contract was advertised October, 2009 and expected to commence works in the first quarter of 2010. Contract documents are scheduled to be issued to Laois County Council for approval in the third Quarter of 2010.

### Portlaoise Sewerage Improvement Scheme

Murphy International Ltd. completed the construction of the Sewerage Improvement Works (Network) contract during 2008. Three new pumping stations have also been constructed.

The Design-Build-Operate contract, for construction of the Portlaoise Waste Water Treatment Plant, commenced in 2007. Construction was substantially completed in 2009 and 20 years operational contract is commenced.



*Portlaoise Waste Water Treatment Plant*

### Laois Grouped Towns Sewerage Scheme

The contract documents for the treatment plants contract were submitted to the Department of the Environment Heritage & Local Government in 2008 for approval to proceed to tender. Contractors were shortlisted in April, 2009. Laois County Council is currently awaiting Department approval to proceed to tender.

The Department has suggested the possibility of looking at putting in an Integrated Constructed Wetland in Clonaslee and site investigation works are scheduled for completion in the first quarter of 2010.

Network contract documents were finalised and submitted to Department in February 2009 for approval. Laois County Council is currently awaiting Department approval to proceed to tender with this scheme.

### Laois Grouped Villages Sewerage Scheme

The final Feasibility Study Report for the Laois Grouped Villages Sewerage Scheme was completed and submitted to the Department in 2007. Laois County Council is currently awaiting Department approval to proceed with this scheme.

### Mountmellick Sewerage Improvement Scheme

A review of scope of the Mountmellick Sewerage Extension project was carried out in 2007. A Phase 1 scope focused on refurbishment and performance improvements to the existing pumping stations and wastewater treatment plant. This was designed and tendered during 2008 and construction started in March, 2009 and ended in December, 2009.

### Portarlinton/Emo/Ballybrittas/Killenard Sewerage Scheme

Following the submission of a revised brief to the Department, approval was obtained for the inclusion of Emo, Ballybrittas and Killenard in the Portarlinton Sewerage Scheme.

Consultants N. O'Dwyer appointed in March, 2008. Survey works contracts (Flow and Rainfall Survey, Archaeology Study, Flow and Load Surveys, Lidar survey, Impermeable Area Survey and CCTV/SUS Survey) commenced in August, 2008. The draft Preliminary Report issued in October, 2009.

### Graigecullen Water Supply Scheme

Hydro geologist EDA appointed in 2007 to prepare Preliminary Report identifying suitable locations for

exploration boreholes and tender documents for the drilling contract. The second production well drilled on lands in the fourth Quarter of 2009. Pump testing to commence in the second Quarter of 2010. EDA report due thereafter. Construction stage for additional 1850m<sup>3</sup> storage envisaged in the Autumn, 2010.

### Durrow Water Supply Improvement Scheme

Phase 2 of Attanagh water supply now commencing design, to supply Durrow/Ballinakill. Design model to be constructed to evaluate solutions.

### Rural Water Programme

The Council's Rural Water Programme comprises of the following measures:

- Group Water Schemes
- Small Public Water and Sewerage Schemes
- Grants for Individual Well Water Installations

### Group Water Schemes

A group water scheme provides a private water supply to 2 or more houses by means of a common or shared source of supply and distribution system.

The Council assists groups by working in partnership with them and by:

- Providing advice and guidance on the formation and operation of group schemes
- Providing technical advice on source and supply issues, distribution networks, water quality and treatment, scheme design etc.
- Enabling groups to take a water supply from public water mains where this is feasible
- Providing advice and assistance on tender procurement and evaluation
- Grant aiding group scheme up to 85% of the approved cost, subject to a limit of €6,475 per house
- Supervision of construction standards
- Providing an annual subsidy towards the operation and maintenance costs incurred on the scheme by the group

There are currently 62 operational Group Water Schemes in Laois.

### Summary of Grants paid in 2009

**New Group Water Schemes**                      **€290,100**  
To Moyadd G.W.S., Moyanna G.W.S, Clonanny G.W.S, Ballycleary G.W.S.

## TRANSPORTATION & WATER SERVICES

### Subsidy Grants €399,450

To the various G.W.S.s in the county.

### Taking In Charge of Group Water Schemes €184,600

To Slatt/Wolfhill G.W.S., Attanagh G.W.S., Reary G.W.S., Ratheniska G.W.S.

### Advance DBO Works €334,700

In respect of Ballacolla Network Phase 3, Ballacolla/Killeaney, Ballacolla Metering, Ballypickas.

### Upgrade of Existing Group Water Schemes €567,100

To Cullohill G.W.S., The Heath G.W.S., Aughmacart G.W.S., Errill G.W.S., Coolgorragh G.W.S.

### ECJ Priority Interim Works €10,000

To The Heath G.W.S.

**Total: €1,785,950**

### Small Water & Sewerage Schemes

Funding is provided for capital projects for the provision of upgrading of small water and sewerage schemes that complement existing rural water measures.

In 2009, €675,000 was spent on the following schemes:

Abbeyleix Water Supply, Ballyroan Water Supply, Mountrath/Castletown Water Supply, Gallows Hill Reservoir, Rosenallis Water Supply, Provision of Chlorine Monitors and Pumphouse Upgrades

### Individual Water Supply Grant Scheme

A grant of 75% of cost subject to a maximum grant of €2,031.58 is payable for upgrading a private individual water supply when no alternative group or public supply is available. Grant aid of €80,000 was paid under this Scheme in 2009.

### Rural Water Monitoring Committee

The Rural Water Monitoring Committee was set up in 1998. The Committee meets quarterly to agree and monitor the Rural Water Programme. The Committee is comprised of representatives from the I.F.A., the I.C.M.S.A, the County Federation of Group Water Schemes, the National Federation of Group Water Schemes and members and officials of Laois County Council.

### Provision and Maintenance of Cemeteries

Laois County Council continued to operate twenty seven cemeteries throughout the county at Abbeyleix, Annatrim, Ballacolla, Ballinakill, Ballyadams, Ballyfin, Ballylinan, Barrowhouse, Borris-in-Ossory, Camross, Castletown, Clonaslee, Emo, Durrow, Killenard, Killeshin, Mountmellick, Mountrath, Moyanna, Portlaoise, Raheen, Rathdowney, Rosenallis, Shanahoe, Sleaty, Stradbally and Timahoe.

Cemetery Registrars are employed for each Council Cemetery with responsibility for the sale of plots and the maintenance of the burial ground register. An important part of the section is the maintaining of records. In 2008 the transfer of manual data from registers to electronic format commenced and continued in 2009.

### Capital Programme

Work totaling €67,000 was contracted under Disability Funding for works to cemeteries at Abbeyleix, Ballyadams, Ballyfin, Barrowhouse, Camross, Castletown, Clonaslee, Emo, Mountrath, Raheen and Timahoe.

### Cemetery Grants

The Council encourages the work of the local burial ground committees by means of a grant each year. A total of 113 grant applications were received in 2009 and €82,400 was paid out. Valuable work is being carried out by these voluntary committees in the upkeep of local cemeteries.

Cemeteries are categorised and grants paid out on the following basis:

- Category A: Council Cemeteries
- Category B: Smaller Council Cemeteries
- Category C: Non Council Cemeteries
- Category D: Cemeteries no longer in regular use

### Public Conveniences

A total of €84,000 was spent on the maintenance and upkeep of the public toilets in Portlaoise, Mountrath and Stradbally.

### Dangerous Structures and Places

The Council is empowered to deal with structures or places which pose a danger to the public or which pose or are likely to pose danger to any person or property. A Notice may be served on the owner of such place/structure requiring works to be carried out. If necessary, the Council can also carry out the works and recoup the costs.



**Head of Finance:** Gerry Murphy

**Financial/Management Accountant:** Julie Bergin

The Finance Department is responsible for the following services:

Motor Tax, Accounts Payable, Revenue Collection, Payroll and Superannuation, NPPR, Internal Audit, Preparation of Annual Budgets and Financial Statements, Financial Management and all ancillary matters.

## Commercial Rates

The General Annual Rate on Valuation was 64.63. The rateable Valuation multiplier for Portlaoise and Mountmellick was;

Portlaoise:	66.63
Mountmellick:	67.43

## Water Charges

In 2009, the total number of commercial users was 2,747, of which 2,609 were metered. A fixed charge applied to the remaining customers. The water Metering Project continued during 2009 for all non domestic customers. The charge for metered water in 2009 was €1.08 per 1000 litres and €1.37 per 1000 litres for waste water. In addition there was a standing Meter rental charge of €60 per annum.

## Prompt Payment of Accounts

Following the introduction of the Prompt Payments 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

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

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

## Late Payment Statistics 2009

Total number of late payments in excess of €250	2
Value of late payments in excess of €250	€2,700
Average length of late payments	76
Proportion in € of all late payments to total payments (€2,700/€240,236,249)	.0011%
Total amount of Late Payment interest paid	€52.74

## Financial Management Systems – Improvements

The Development Contributions system has been further updated with a 'Debt follow up' system. This automatically issues reminder letters to customers and transfers accounts to our solicitor. Also reports have been designed to ensure accurate reporting of statistical information on development contributions.

The 2010 Budget and the Annual Financial Statements 2009 were prepared under the new costing system.

## NPPR – Non Principal Private Residence

The Local Government charges act 2009 introduced a €200 annual charge on non principal private residences. This is payable by the owners to NPPR on behalf of the local authority in whose area the property concerned is located. Payment can be made through the NPPR website [www.nppr.ie](http://www.nppr.ie) or it can be paid by submitting the NPPR registration form and payment to the cash office of your local County Council.

The liability date for the NPPR charge is 31st March 2010. The due date is 31st May 2010. Penalties of €20 per month will be incurred after 30th June 2010.

To date there are 3008 Non principal private residences on the list with receipts of €611,300.

## Motor Taxation

The Motor Tax Department continues to provide services widely availed of by the public. The NVDF (National Vehicle Driver File) System caters for all motor tax and driver licences.

The total number of transactions carried out by Laois MTO in 2009 was 75,249.

## New CO2 Rates

Motor tax for new vehicles registered on after the 1 July, 2008 will be determined on the basis of seven CO2 bands. Taxes will range from €104 a year for the greenest cars to €2000 for cars with the highest emissions ratings. Motor tax rates will be graduated as one moves up the CO2 bands.

## Vehicle Licences

The total receipts for 2009 were €12,070,810, compared to €12,576,685 in 2008. The number of vehicle licences (discs) issued in 2009 was 56,095, compared to 56,812 in 2008.

## Driving Licences

Receipts for 2009 were €117,365 (including duplicates) compared with €196,660 for 2008. The number of driving licences issued in 2009 was 8,620, compared with 11,262 in 2008. A Theory Test is mandatory for all first applicants for Learner Permits. The telephone number to call for a Theory test is 1890 606 106.

## Vehicle Testing

Certificates of Roadworthiness for commercial / goods vehicles were issued in respect of 6,340 vehicles during the year, compared to 5,887 for 2008. All commercial/goods vehicles require a DOELHG test every year.

## NCT (National Car Test)

Testing of private vehicles is ongoing since January,

2000. The Laois Centre is at Lismard Business Centre, Timahoe Road, Portlaoise. Initial test is after 4 years and then every 2 years thereafter. Vintage cars are the only vehicle exempt from this test.

## Opening Hours

The Opening Hours of the Motor Tax Office are 9.30 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. Monday to Friday, including lunchtime.

## Service Indicators at 31/12/2009

### % of Motor Tax transactions which:

#### Are dealt with over the counter:

86% (58,138) of Laois MTO Transactions

#### Are dealt with by post:

14% (9,518) of Laois MTO Transactions

#### Are dealt with on-line:

36.86% (24,767) of vehicle owners eligible to pay Tax on-line

(30.57% figure for on-line overall business)

**Average number of Public Opening hours per week:** 30.28 hours

### Number of Vehicle Licence Postal Applications and % of overall postal applications which were dealt with:

a) on the same day:	99.52%	(9,472)
b) on the 2nd or 3rd day:	0.21%	( 20)
c) on the 4th or 5th day:	0%	( 0)
d) over 5 days:	0.27%	( 26)

### Number of driver licence applications (with monetary value) and % of such applications which were dealt with:

a) on the same day:	68%	(5,118)
b) on the 2nd or 3rd day:	31.72%	(2,387)
c) on the 4th or 5th day:	0.3%	( 2)
d) over 5 days:	0.25%	( 19)

## FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

### Revenue Collection

31/12/2009

31/12/2008

#### Housing Loans

Amount collected at year end as a percentage of amount due:

90%

94%

b) Percentage of arrears:

(i) 1 month old

3%

4%

(ii) 2 – 3 months old

14%

20%

(iii) more than 3 months old

83%

76%

#### Commercial Rates

Amount collected at year end as a percentage of amount due:

84%

90%

#### Non-Domestic Water Charges

Amount collected at year end as a percentage of amount due:

59%

47%

### Annual Financial Statements

#### Revenue Account

Gross Expenditure  
2009

Income  
2009

Net Expenditure  
2009

#### Programme Group

	€	€	€
Housing & Building	10,261,020	10,115,170	145,850
Road Transportation & Safety	15,962,525	11,635,026	4,327,498
Water & Sewerage	10,500,745	4,080,054	6,420,691
Development Incentives & Controls	4,699,533	921,080	3,778,452
Environmental Protection	9,545,511	5,472,450	4,073,060
Recreation & Amenity	4,202,844	899,333	3,303,511
Agriculture, Education, Health & Welfare	5,817,462	5,251,113	566,349
Miscellaneous	4,221,308	2,782,061	1,439,246
<b>Total Expenditure/Income</b>	<b>65,210,947</b>	<b>41,156,288</b>	

Net cost of programmes to be funded from Rate & Local Government Fund	24,054,659
Rates	8,917,227
Pension Levy	956,298
Local Government Fund - General Purpose Grant	16,624,008
Surplus for Year before Transfers	2,442,874
Transfers from/(to) Reserves	(2,435,107)
Overall Surplus for Year	7,767
General Reserve @ 1st January 2009	(529,372)
General Reserve @ 31st December 2009	(521,605)

#### Capital Account

Balance @ 01.01.09	(13,281,290)
Grants	134,402,055
Other Income	18,312,843
Transfer from/to Revenue	2,435,107
Expenditure	160,229,760
Balance @ 31.12.09	(18,361,045)



**Manager:** Gerry Gibson

**Town Clerk:** John Clarke

**Town Engineer:** Tom O'Carroll

## Annual General Meeting

At the Annual General Meeting of Portlaoise Town Council held on 15th June, 2009 Councillor Kathleen O'Brien was elected as Mayor. Councillor Jerry Lodge was elected as Vice Mayor.

## Members on Boards/Committees

### Community, Economic Development, Culture & Heritage Committee

Councillor Rotimi Adebare  
Councillor Alan Hand

### Transport & Water Services Committee

Councillor Jerry Lodge  
Councillor Kathleen O'Brien  
Councillor Matthew Keegan

### Housing & Social Policy Committee

Councillor Willie Aird  
Councillor Brian Stanley  
Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald

## Monthly Meetings

Portlaoise Town Council meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month.

## Main Services Provided

Housing maintenance and repair, School Warden Services, Community & Environmental Initiatives, Public Convenience, Civic Receptions & Town Twinning.

## Budget 2009 - €109,550

In 2009, Portlaoise Town Council provided support to the following:

- St Patrick's Day Parade Committee
- Portlaoise Tidy Towns
- Rossvale Court Residents Association
- Liogard Residents Association
- Triogue Manor Residents Association
- Fairgreen Residents Association
- Esker Hills Residents Association
- Westlands Residents Association

- St Peters Church Community Hall
- Portlaoise Multiple Sclerosis Association
- Parents Together Association
- Portlaoise Athletic Club
- O'Moore Place Childcare Project
- Portlaoise Christmas Lighting Association

## Conferences

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

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

## Highlights during 2009

The Town Council supported and welcomed various developments in Portlaoise, particularly:

- Provision of public car park at the Peoples Park.
- The commencement of the Knockmay Regeneration Project.
- The hosting of the regional Rose of Tralee finals.
- Performance of Portlaoise in the IBAL Anti-Litter League Awards.



*Irish Business Against Litter Awards Ceremony 2009*

- The implementation of CCTV facilities in Portlaoise.
- The return of the Magnet Festival to Portlaoise.
- Public, Voluntary & Affordable Housing Developments.
- Road and footpath improvements throughout the Town.

## Receptions

A Civic Reception was held to honour Pat Critchley in recognition of his many outstanding achievements to date including the success of his autobiography 'Hungry Hill'.

<b>Manager:</b>	Declan Byrne
<b>Town Clerk:</b>	Pamela Tynan
<b>Town Engineer:</b>	Dermot Leonard

### Local Elections 2009

Local elections to elect a new Council were held on 5th June, 2009. Two members of the outgoing Council decided not to seek re-election. Fifteen candidates in all contested the Election with the following members being elected:

Councillors Patrick Bracken, Patrick Bowe, Michael Gormley, Stephen Lynch, Bobby Delaney, Marc Connolly, Denis O' Mara, Rosemary Whelan and Ollie Payne. Seven of the outgoing Council were re-elected, and two new Councillors.

The Annual General Meeting of Mountmellick Town Council was held on the 15th June, 2009, at which Councillor Rosemary Whelan was elected as Cathaoirleach and Councillor Ollie Payne was elected as Leas Cathaoirleach.

### Mountmellick Town Council Footpath Proposals 2009

Work on the following footpaths, as agreed by the Town Council, was completed successfully in 2009:

Footpaths at Pattison Estate, Irishtown, Emmett Street, Garoon and Debbicot.

### Establishment of Mountmellick Joint Policing Committee

Mountmellick Joint Policing Committee was established in 2009. The first in-committee meeting took place in March, 2009 and was followed by public meetings in May and September, 2009. The committee consists of the 9 Elected Members, 2 Garda Officials, 3 persons representing the Community and Voluntary Sector and the Town Manager and Town Clerk.

### Neighbourhood Watch Information Evening

A neighbourhood watch Information evening, organised as a result of the Mountmellick Joint Policing Committee, took place in November, 2009. This was a successful evening with a number of groups and committees attending to avail of this service offered by An Garda Síochána.

### Mountmellick Pay and Display Parking

A new Traffic/Litter Warden commenced employment in January, 2009. He is responsible for enforcing the Pay and Display and Parking Bye-Laws in Mountmellick.

The following improvements were achieved during 2009:

- New roundabouts at O'Moore Street and Lord Edward Street
- A raised pedestrian crossing with lights on Parnell Street
- Marked parking bays along Patrick Street
- A new boardwalk at Convent Bridge

### New Playground for Mountmellick

The new Mountmellick Playground was officially opened in Smiths Field in July, 2009, by the Cathaoirleach of Laois County Council, Councillor James Daly in the presence of Minister John Moloney and other dignitaries. This facility was welcomed by the community and has proved to be an excellent facility for the children of the town and surrounding areas.



*Official Opening of Mountmellick Playground  
in July, 2009*

### Business Meetings

As in previous years, there was exceptional attendance by the Members at meetings during the year, at which they made representations regarding key issues of concern. These included environmental works, traffic management, roadworks and footpath repairs, signage, public lighting, etc.

### Mountmellick Library

Mr Gerry Maher, County Librarian attended the November meeting of Mountmellick Town Council and gave a presentation to the members on the services that will be available in the new Library which is due to open in early 2010.

The new library will be the largest library in county Laois and will provide the following services: book lending, internet access, computer training courses in association with FÁS, book clubs, an art gallery, information talks, reading challenges, author visits, online services, school visits etc.

The library will open for 31 – 32 hours per week, including two late evenings and Saturday mornings.

### Representation on other Bodies

#### Place Names Committee

Councillor Bobby Delaney represented the Town Council on the Place Names Committee for County Laois.

#### Mountmellick By-Laws Committee

Cathaoirleach Rosemary Whelan, former Cathaoirleach Denis O'Mara, Councillors Michael Gormley, Marc Connolly, Patrick Bowe and Patrick Bracken represented Mountmellick Town Council on the By-Laws Committee, addressing all traffic management issues in the town.

#### Irish Public Bodies Mutual Insurances

Councillor Marc Connolly represented Mountmellick Town Council on the Irish Public Bodies Mutual Insurances committee.

#### Strategic Policy Committees

Councillor Denis O'Mara was the representative on the Environment & Water Services SPC and Councillor Marc Connolly was the representative on the Housing Social and Cultural SPC to June 2009.

At the November meeting of Mountmellick Town Council, Councillors Rosemary Whelan and Marc Connolly were nominated to represent Mountmellick Town Council on the new Strategic Policy Committees currently being established for the 2009 – 2014 period.

### Association of Municipal Authorities of Ireland

Councillors Patrick Bracken and Michael Gormley represented Mountmellick Town Council at the Spring Seminar and the Annual Conference of the Association of Municipal Authorities of Ireland. Councillors Patrick Bracken and Patrick Bowe represented the Town Council at the Autumn Seminar of the AMAI.

### County Development Board and Laois Partnership Committee

Councillor Patrick Bracken was nominated in September, 2009 to represent Mountmellick Town Council on the County Development Board and Laois Partnership Committee. It was agreed that Mountmellick Town Council hold the position on the County Development Board and Laois Partnership Company for the first 2.5 years on behalf of both Mountmellick Town Council and Portlaoise Town Council.



### Social Club

2009 was another very successful year for the Social Club which currently has a membership of 266. Numerous events were held in 2009.

### Monthly Draw

On the first Friday of every month a Draw takes place for Social Club members. The prizes are as follows: 1st - €50 2nd - €30 3rd - €20

### Table Quiz

The Social Club held the in-house section Table Quiz in April, which was a great success. The Quiz Trophy found a new home in Fire Services with the winning team comprising Declan Power, Shea Brennan, Anthony Tynan and Ciaran Duffin.



*Fire Services - Table Quiz Winners 2009*

### Summer Party

The Summer Party was held in Áras an Chontae on 18th June, with Eunice and her staff preparing and serving the food which as usual was first class. A great crowd attended.



*Staff enjoying the Summer Party*

### Joe Dolan Tribute Band

This took place in the Dunamaise Theatre on 25th September. A good crowd of social club members attended and had a great night.

### Halloween Party

A fancy dress Halloween Party was held in Sky Venue on 30th October with entertainment provided by 'Glitter Bugs'.

The event was attended by over 100 people and a great night was had by all.



### Annual Mass

The Annual mass for deceased members and staff of Laois County Council was organised by the Social Club in the Council Chamber. Invitations were issued to all retired and current staff members of the Council. The mass was very well attended and refreshments were provided in the canteen afterwards.

### Kiddies Christmas Party

The Kiddies Christmas Party was held on 12th December in the canteen. There was a big crowd of over 160 children. There was great entertainment, especially the Santa puppet show which mesmerized the kids! Santa and one of his elves arrived by Fire Engine, thanks to John Ging. Thanks to all who helped make it a fantastic day.

### Christmas Party

The Annual Christmas Party was held on 18th December in the Killeslin Hotel, Portlaoise, with the band After Dark providing the music and disco on the night provided by DJ Brochan. The party was a great success with 125 members attending.

### Golf Society

Declan Power captained the Golf Society in 2009. His Captain's day was held in The Heath Golf Club in July and a great day was had by all. The Captain's Prize was won by Mick Drennan. The Kennedy Cup was won by Declan Power at the Staff outing held in Naas. Golfer of the Year was won by Jim Scully.

**APPENDIX I - Details of election expenditure incurred and donations received  
by candidates in the June, 2009 Local Elections.**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Expenditure €</b>	<b>Donations Received</b>
James Daly	Laois County Council	4,631.00	Nil
Kathleen O'Brien	Laois County Council & Portlaoise Town Council	1,350.00	Nil
William Aird	Laois County Council & Portlaoise Town Council	4,910.85	Nil
Michael Lalor	Laois County Council	820.00	Nil
Brendan Phelan	Laois County Council	3,088.56	Nil
Mary Sweeney	Laois County Council & Portlaoise Town Council	3,490.00	Nil
Jeremiah Lodge	Laois County Council	1,398.53	Nil
Rotimi Adebare	Laois County Council & Portlaoise Town Council	1,624.50	Nil
Brian Stanley	Laois County Council & Portlaoise Town Council	1,377.00	Nil
Catherine Fitzgerald	Laois County Council & Portlaoise Town Council	2,217.06	Nil
John Bonham	Laois County Council	541.00	Nil
Ben Brennan	Laois County Council	1,335.00	Nil
Ray Cribbin	Laois County Council	2,865.00	Nil
James Deegan	Laois County Council	2,617.44	Nil
John Joe Fennelly	Laois County Council	2,644.08	Nil
Padraig Fleming	Laois County Council	3,204.93	Nil
David Goodwin	Laois County Council	1,925.30	Nil
John King	Laois County Council	559.44	Nil
Paddy Bracken	Laois County Council & Mountmellick Town Council	1,885.96	Nil
Pat Bowe	Laois County Council & Mountmellick Town Council	6,631.59	Nil
Tom Mulhall	Laois County Council	4,072.51	Nil
Paul Mitchell	Laois County Council	2,789.45	Nil
Seamus McDonald	Laois County Council	1,342.98	Nil
John Moran	Laois County Council	1,620.00	Nil
Martin Phelan	Laois County Council	720.00	Nil
Colm Callaghan	Laois County Council	156.75	Nil
Aaron Delaney	Laois County Council	812.50	Nil
Ray Fitzpatrick	Laois County Council	2,950.00	Nil
Michael G. Phelan	Laois County Council	3,413.66	Nil
M.J. Walsh	Laois County Council	4,418.60	Nil
Colm Callaghan	Laois County Council	156.75	Nil
Winifred Champ Cox	Laois County Council	2,811.00	Nil
Thomas Cushen	Laois County Council	2,650.50	Nil
Frances Emerson	Laois County Council	2,570.00	Nil
Mgt Guijt Lawlor	Laois County Council	3,834.81	Nil
Paschal McEvoy	Laois County Council	2,040.18	Nil
Aidan Mullins	Laois County Council	1,473.10	Nil
Willie Murphy	Laois County Council	2,040.18	Nil
Colm Callaghan	Laois County Council	156.75	Nil
Nuala Finnegan	Laois County Council	456.40	Nil
Marie Johnston	Laois County Council	1,185.30	Nil
Richard Miller	Laois County Council	2,439.93	Nil
Laurence Phelan	Laois County Council	5,189.93	Nil
James Scully	Laois County Council	100.00	Nil
Colm Callaghan	Laois County Council	165.19	Nil
Patrick Delaney	Laois County Council	3,453.27	Nil
Joe Digan	Laois County Council	957.50	Nil
Michael Gormley	Laois County Council & Mountmellick Town Council	2,722.00	Nil
Pat Lalor	Laois County Council	250.00	Nil
Rosemary Whelan	Laois County Council & Mountmellick Town Council	789.55	Nil
Patrick Buggy	Laois County Council & Portlaoise Town Council	2,924.80	Nil
Colm Callaghan	Laois County Council	164.75	Nil
Tom Jacob	Laois County Council & Portlaoise Town Council	2,960.00	Nil
Matthew Keegan	Laois County Council & Portlaoise Town Council	1,150.00	Nil
Joseph McCormack	Laois County Council & Portlaoise Town Council	510.20	Nil
Michael Moloney	Laois County Council & Mountmellick Town Council	6,565.00	Nil
Jim O'Brien	Laois County Council & Portlaoise Town Council	7,378.60	Nil
Liam Phelan	Laois County Council & Portlaoise Town Council	2,368.76	Nil

**APPENDIX I - Details of election expenditure incurred and donations received  
by candidates in the June, 2009 Local Elections.**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Expenditure €</b>	<b>Donations Received</b>
Aoife O'Meara	Portlaoise Town Council	1,405.92	Nil
Ala Olsevska	Portlaoise Town Council	648.53	Nil
Alan Hand	Portlaoise Town Council	1,542.87	Nil
Jeremiah Lodge	Portlaoise Town Council	1,048.50	Nil
Denis O'Meara	Mountmellick Town Council	842.98	Nil
Oliver Payne	Mountmellick Town Council	Nil	Nil
Stephen Lynch	Mountmellick Town Council	698.87	Nil
Bobby Delaney	Mountmellick Town Council	Nil	Nil
Joe Dunne	Mountmellick Town Council	842.98	Nil
Fiona Lynch	Mountmellick Town Council	1012.52	Nil
Adam Goode	Mountmellick Town Council	1110.28	Nil
Marc Connolly	Mountmellick Town Council	912.98	Nil
Talitha Horan	Laois County Council & Mountmellick Town Council	2,908.88	Nil
Ron Lalor	Mountmellick Town Council	Nil	Nil
Tony Walsh	Laois County Council	1,058.53	Nil
Adam Haughton	Laois County Council	1095.48	Nil

**APPENDIX II**

**Title, purpose and number of members of each Committee and Joint Committee and the number of meetings of each Committee, Joint Committee and Joint Policing Committee held during 2009.**

The following members were elected to the Committees/Outside Bodies outlined hereunder at the Annual General Meeting of Laois County Council held on 19th June, 2009.

**COMMITTEES**

<b>Name of Committee</b>	<b>Members Elected</b>	<b>Number of Meetings</b>
Rural Water Monitoring Committee	Councillor Ben Brennan Councillor John Bonham Councillor Tom Mulhall	3
Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee	Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald Councillor Brian Stanley Councillor Pat Bowe Councillor William Aird Councillor Mary Sweeney Councillor Kathleen O' Brien Councillor Paul Mitchell Councillor John King	3
Kyletelisha Landfill Monitoring Committee	Councillor Patrick Bracken Councillor James Daly Councillor Martin Phelan	3
Laois School of Music Steering Committee	Councillor Mary Sweeney	3
Audit Committee	Councillor John Bonham Councillor Jerry Lodge	3
Joint Policing Committee	Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald Councillor Seamus McDonald Councillor Brendan Phelan	5



	Councillor Patrick Bracken Councillor Ray Cribbin Councillor James Deegan Councillor Tom Mulhall Councillor Michael Lalor Councillor Mary Sweeney Councillor David Goodwin Councillor Paul Mitchell Councillor John King Councillor James Daly	
Placenames Committee	Councillor Ben Brennan Councillor Ray Cribbin Councillor John Bonham Councillor Kathleen O' Brien Councillor David Goodwin	0
<b><u>OUTSIDE BODIES</u></b>		
<b>Name of Committee</b>	<b>Members Elected</b>	
Barrow Drainage Board	Councillor Pat Bowe, Councillor David Goodwin	
River Goul Drainage Committee	Councillor Brendan Phelan, Councillor Martin Phelan	
Dungar Joint Burial Board	Councillor Brendan Phelan	
Portarlinton Joint Burial Board	Councillor Ray Cribbin, Councillor Patrick Bracken Councillor Brian Stanley, Councillor Tom Mulhall Councillor Paul Mitchell, Councillor James Deegan	
Association of County & City Councils	Councillor Seamus McDonald Councillor David Goodwin Councillor Martin Phelan	
Regional Board of Failte Ireland (East & Midlands)	Councillor Martin Phelan	
Midland Regional Authority	Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald, Councillor Brendan Phelan Councillor James Deegan, Councillor Martin Phelan Councillor James Daly, Councillor John Bonham	
E.U. Operational Committee	Councillor James Daly, Councillor John Bonham	
B.M.W. Regional Assembly	Councillor James Deegan, Councillor James Daly	
Laois Arts Theatre Company Ltd	Councillor Rotimi Adebare Councillor Kathleen O' Brien Councillor Mary Sweeney	
Abbeyleix Heritage Trust	Councillor John Bonham	
Local Authority Members Association	Councillor Michael Lalor	
Laois County Enterprise Board	Councillor Pat Bowe, Councillor Tom Mulhall Councillor James Daly, Councillor William Aird	
Laois Partnership Company Ltd	Councillor Tom Mulhall, Councillor Michael Lalor	
Laois Transport for Rural Integration Programme	Councillor Michael Lalor	

## APPENDIX II

Name of Committee	Members Elected
South East River Basin District Advisory Council	Councillor Tom Mulhall, Councillor John King
Shannon River Basin District Advisory Council	Councillor Tom Mulhall, Councillor Martin Phelan
Anti-Poverty Strategy Steering Group	Councillor Rotimi Adebare, Councillor Kathleen O' Brien Councillor Mary Sweeney
Portarlington Leisure Centre	Councillor Ray Cribbin, Councillor Paul Mitchell Councillor Tom Mulhall
Portlaoise Leisure Centre	Councillor Brian Stanley, Councillor William Aird Councillor Mary Sweeney
Portlaoise Enterprise Centre	Councillor Jerry Lodge, Councillor William Aird Councillor Mary Sweeney
Portarlington Enterprise Centre	Councillor Paul Mitchell, Councillor James Deegan
Midlands Energy Agency	Councillor John Bonham
Homeless Forum	Councillor Mary Sweeney, Councillor Kathleen O' Brien
Laois County Development Board	Councillor James Daly, Councillor John Moran Councillor Michael Lalor, Councillor Martin Phelan Councillor John Joe Fennelly
Dublin Mid-Leinster Regional Health Forum	Councillor Ben Brennan, Councillor Kathleen O' Brien Councillor William Aird
Laois Advocacy Against Domestic Abuse Limited	Councillor Mary Sweeney
Midland Regional Drugs Task Force	Councillor William Aird
LABEL	Councillor Paul Mitchell

## APPENDIX III

### PAYMENTS TO MEMBERS 2009

Monthly Allowance	€118,689.35
Conference Allowance	€ 98,785.00
Representational Payment	€438,046.20
S.P.C. Allowance	€ 21,254.04
Telephone Allowance	€ 8,377.25

## HOW TO CONTACT US

[www.laois.ie](http://www.laois.ie)

E-Mail: [corpaffairs@laoiscoco.ie](mailto:corpaffairs@laoiscoco.ie)



Áras an Chontae, Portlaoise	Tel: (057) 8664000
Accounts Payable, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8664063
Arts Office, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8674342
Cash Office, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8674308
Central Area Office, Mountrath Road, Portlaoise	Tel: (057) 8664168
Civil Defence HQ, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8664000
County Development Board, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8674338
Driving Licences, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8664110
Environment, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8674322
Graigecullen Area Office, Sleaty Road, Graigecullen	Tel: (059) 9165960
Higher Education Grants, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8664137
Housing, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8664110
Human Resources, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8664219
Landfill Site, Kyletalesha, Portlaoise	Tel: (057) 8620653
Library Headquarters, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8674315
Motor Tax Office, Block 2, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8664009
National Roads Project Office, Clonboyne, Portlaoise	Tel: (057) 8664850
Planning, Block 1, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8664039
Portarlington Area Office, 1 Park Lane, Portarlington	Tel: (057) 8636533
Register of Electors, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8664105
Roads, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8664142
Sports & Leisure, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8664007
Water Charges, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8664119
Water Services, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8664120
Western Area, The Old Barracks, The Square, Rathdowney	Tel: (0505) 48360