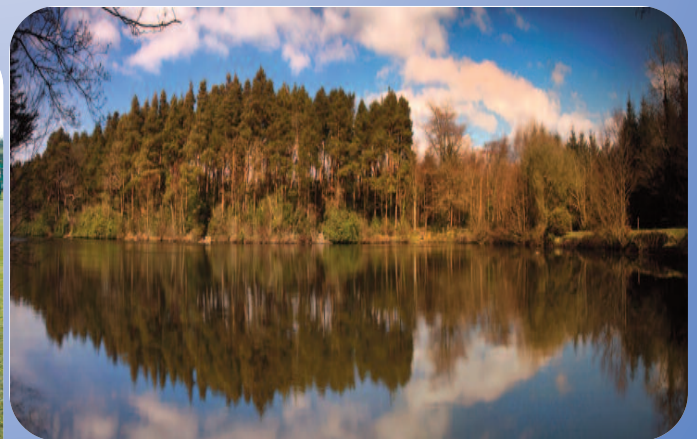


# COMHAIRLE CHONTAE LAOISE LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL



## ANNUAL REPORT 2014



## CONTENTS

<b>Joint Address by the Cathaoirleach &amp; Chief Executive</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Mission Statement</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Council Members</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Housing, Corporate Affairs, Corporate Planning, Human Resources &amp; Information Communications Technology</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Community, County Promotion, Arts, Sports &amp; Libraries</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Environment, Planning, Heritage, Economic Development &amp; Emergency Services</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Transportation &amp; Water Services</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Financial Management</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Portlaoise Town Council</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Mountmellick Town Council</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Other Activities</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>How to Contact Us</b>	<b>57</b>

We are pleased to present the Laois County Council Annual Report for 2014 which outlines the various services provided by the Council and the initiatives undertaken during the year.

This has been another challenging year for Laois County Council. The focus has continued on achieving greater efficiency and value for money. The Elected Members, management and staff have maintained a constructive, positive and flexible approach in meeting financial obligations by transforming services, pursuing value for money and continuing to improve standards while maintaining core services.

Laois County Council plays a key role in the development and economic growth of the communities we serve. Commercial rates in the County remain unchanged illustrating the Council's commitment to supporting existing business and attracting new investment.

The MyPay Centre which will be responsible for payroll and superannuation for the entire local government sector is now well into its implementation phase, with a successful rollout to ten Local Authorities at the end of 2014. Shared Services are an important element of the government's public service reform agenda and can provide much needed cost savings and efficiencies while also standardising and improving services.

2014 also saw the implementation of reforms in local government, such as the transition to Irish Water and the establishment of the Local Enterprise Office. This office is the "first stop shop" for all government supports for entrepreneurs who wish to start or expand their businesses thereby creating jobs within the County.

The provisions of the Local Electoral Boundary Committee Report 2013 were implemented with the abolition of Portlaoise and Mountmellick Town Councils and the establishment of 3 Municipal Districts: Portlaoise, Borris In Ossory – Mountmellick and Graiguecullen – Portarlinton. The membership of the Council also reduced from 25 to 19 members.

The following highlights other achievements and events during the year:

- The opening of new playgrounds in Barrowhouse and Coolrain,
- Our involvement in the development of the new community building at Marian Avenue, Portlaoise,
- The launch of the Age Friendly County Programme,
- The adoption of the Heritage Plan 2014 – 2019
- The establishment of the Local Community Development Committee,
- The acquisition of Shaws building on Main Street, Portlaoise for the development of a new Library,
- Regeneration of an area in Knockmay, Portlaoise to provide a walking track and amenity area.

During 2014, Laois County Council continued to work in the area of environmental awareness through Tidy Town competitions, National Clean up Week, the Green Schools projects and the national Stop Food Waste initiative.

All of the achievements outlined in this Report, could not have been accomplished without the collective input of the Elected Members, management and staff together with the support of the many voluntary and community organisations in the County. We take this opportunity to thank all concerned and look forward to the future working together to ensure the continued improvement of our County.





## MISSION STATEMENT

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

### Mandate

Laois County Council is the Primary Democratically Elected Authority in County Laois. Laois County Council provides an extensive and diverse range of services which impact upon the county's economic, social, environmental, infrastructural, industrial, tourism, and cultural activities. These services include the provision and maintenance of houses, roads, water supplies and sewerage schemes (within the Service Level Agreement under Irish Water), planning and economic 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 Chief Executive, professional, technical, legal, administrative, financial and outdoor employees.

### Council Membership

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



*Elected Members with the County Manager at Laois County Council AGM in June, 2014*

### Council Meetings

Council Meetings in 2014 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 Chief Executive 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 2014.

### Municipal Districts

The first meetings of the Municipal Districts took place on 16th June 2014. Each District elected a Cathaoirleach and continued to meet on a monthly basis during 2014.

## MEMBERS OF LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL

The following Members were elected to Laois County Council at the Local Elections held on 23rd May 2014

### MEMBERS OF BORRIS IN OSSORY-MOUNTMELICK MUNICIPAL DISTRICT



Patrick  
Bracken  
(F.F.)



John  
King  
(F.G.)



Brendan  
Phelan  
(Non-Party)



David  
Goodwin  
(F.G.)



Seamus  
McDonald  
(F.F.)



James  
Kelly  
(Non Party)

### MEMBERS OF PORTLAOISE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT



Mary  
Sweeney  
(F.G.)



John Joe  
Fennelly  
(F.F.)



William  
Aird  
(F.G.)



Jeremiah  
Lodge  
(F.F.)



Catherine  
Fitzgerald  
(F.F.)



Caroline  
DwaneStanley  
(S.F.)



Noel  
Tuohy  
(Labour)

### MEMBERS OF PORTARLINGTON-GRAIGUECULLEN MUNICIPAL DISTRICT



Tom  
Mulhall  
(F.G.)



John Robert  
Moran  
(F.G.)



Padraig  
Fleming  
(F.F.)



Ben  
Brennan  
(Non Party)



Aidan  
Mullins  
(S.F.)



Paschal  
McEvoy  
(F.F.)

**Director of Services:** Anna Marie Delaney

**A/Senior Executive Officer**

**Human Resources:** Evelyn Brownrigg

**Administrative Officer**

**Corporate Affairs:** Irene Delaney

**A/Head of Information**

**Systems:** John Smith

## **CORPORATE AFFAIRS**

### **Corporate Plan**

Laois County Council's Corporate Plan 2009 – 2014 was adopted by the Members of the Council in December, 2009.

The Corporate Plan provided the framework for the implementation of a coherent strategy for the development of the county for the period to 2009-2014 and was prepared following consultation with employees, elected representatives, community, voluntary and environmental interests, external stakeholders and other public bodies operating at local level. Following the local elections in May 2014, work commenced on the preparation of a new Corporate Plan 2014 - 2019. Following extensive consultation, the Draft Plan was adopted by the Members at the December meeting of Laois County Council

### **Customer Charter**

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

### **Highlights**

- 6th March 2014 - Cathaoirleach's Reception in honour of the National Ploughing Association
- 5th November 2014 - Cathaoirleach's Reception in honour of Killeslin Pipe Band in recognition of the 50th Anniversary
- 4th December 2014 - Cathaoirleach's Reception in honour of Paul Cleary, Lord Mayor of Portllington



### **Irish Language Scheme 2009 - 2012**

Laois Local Authorities Irish Language Scheme was confirmed by the Minister for Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and came into effect on 1st December, 2009, for a period of 3 years. The scheme which is available to view on our website, [www.laois.ie](http://www.laois.ie) ceased on 1st December 2012. A new scheme is being prepared.

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

One of the main objectives of this Language Scheme was to ensure that higher standards of public services are available through the Irish Language as the national language and the first official language of the country.

If you wish to contact the Council in Irish, please send an e-mail to [gaelge@laoiscoco.ie](mailto:gaelge@laoiscoco.ie).

### **Higher Education Grants**

In 2014, a total number of 274 renewal applications were approved for grant assistance.

The total amount paid out in 2014 in respect of Higher Education Grants was €1,165,690.00.

### **S.P.C.'s**

A revised Strategic Policy Committee Scheme was adopted by Laois County Council in October 2014 following a public consultation process. The nomination of sectoral representatives to the Committees was nearing completion at the end of 2014 and the first meetings of the Committees are scheduled to take place in early 2015.



## **Health & Safety**

**Health & Safety Officer:** Jim Bolger

Our Safety Management System (SMS) was further enhanced by the establishment of an 'evidence base' in the form of safety inspection records emanating from cross directorate safety inspection programmes. In addition, our Water Services were subject to the Irish Water Health, Safety, Quality and Environmental (HSQE) auditing regime. Monthly reports complete with safety bulletins were circulated. Safety alerts were circulated as appropriate.

Our comprehensive safety training programme once again reflected an emphasis on our statutory training requirements. In-house manual handling training was provided for our operational and administrative employees. Induction training increased reflecting the awarding of the national 'MyPay' service to Laois County Council. National policies and procedures were incorporated into our SMS as appropriate and legislative developments were monitored via our legal database which is available to all employees that have access to our intranet system.

## **Partnership**

The following were the members of the Workplace Partnership Committee as at 31st December, 2014.

### **Management Nominees**

Kieran Kehoe

Joint Chair

Michael Rainey

Bernie Foran

Michael O'Hora

Geraldine Dunne

### **Union Nominees**

Tom Saunders

Joint Chair

Anne Marie Maher

Bernie Kilbride

Tom O'Carroll

Finbarr Dunphy

The Partnership Committee held 6 meetings during 2014.

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

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

### **Applications received/processed in 2014**

Applications on hand at 31/12/2013	1
Applications received during 2014	28

Decisions taken during 2014	28
Applications Withdrawn	0
Applications withdrawn and dealt with outside FOI	0
Applications on hand at 31/12/2014	1

### **Nature of Information Sought**

Personal (to applicant)	12
Non-personal	16

### **Appeals**

There were no appeals in 2014.

### **Source of Requests**

General Public	19
Journalists	4
Solicitors	3
Others	2

### **Putting People First – Action Programme for Effective Local Government**

This Action Programme "Putting People First" outlined government policy for reform and development across the local government system. It included revised structures and the introduction of more effective democratic arrangements to increase efficiency and provide better value for money. Laois County Council is committed to ensuring the effective implementation of same.

### **Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee Report 2013**

The Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee Report 2013 which was published on Thursday 30th May 2013 outlined proposed changes to Local Electoral Areas effective for Local Elections in 2014. These were held on 23rd May 2014 based on the revised boundaries.

### **Register of Electors**

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 a Constituency on the 1st September preceding the coming into force of the Register.

## Register of Electors 2015/2016

Dáil Constituency	Presidential Electors	Dáil Electors
Laois/Offaly	56,433	57,217
European Parliament Constituency	European Electors	Potential European Electors
Midlands-North-West	57,912	602
Local Electoral Areas	Number of Electors	Postal and Special Voters
Borris In Ossory - Mountmellick	19,802	Gardaí 4
Graiguescullen - Portarlinton	19,384	Defence Forces 242
Portlaoise	20,578	Diplomats 3
Total:	59,764	Physically Disabled 27
		Occupation 5
		Special Voters 33

## CONFERENCES ATTENDED IN 2014

Conference	Venue	Date	Delegates	Expend.
Crime Prevention through Partnership	Kinsale	3-5 January	3	€1,736.85
Financing of Local Government	Letterkenny	10-12 January	5	€3,576.45
Volunteering in the Community	Killarney	17-19 January	7	€4,253.46
Branding in Political Elections	Rosscarbery	17-19 January	1	€ 594.89
Local Government Bill 2013	Tralee	17-18 January	1	€ 486.00
Municipal Water	Letterkenny	24-26 January	6	€4,346.57
Local Authorities & Waste Management	Westport	24-25 January	1	€ 496.04
Domestic Water Charges – Preparation & Practicalities	Carlingford	24-26 January	3	€1,684.52
LAMA Spring Seminar 2014	Monaghan	31st Jan to 1st Feb	7	€3,627.99
Hydro Power	Kenmare	31st Jan to 2nd Feb	4	€2,488.11
Mental Health & Suicide Awareness	Dungarvan	31st Jan to 1st Feb	1	€ 370.58
National Programme of Revaluation of Commercial & Industrial Properties	Galway	31st Jan to 1st Feb	1	€ 410.18
Changes in Construction Tendering	Rosscarbery	31st Jan to 2nd Feb	1	€ 521.29
Combatting the fear of crime	Letterkenny	7-9 February	3	€2,183.96
Employment Opportunities in Artisan Foods	Rosscarbery	7-9 February	1	€ 612.63
Local Authority Employment Law	Rosscarbery	14-16 February	1	€ 612.63
AMAI Spring Seminar	Bundoran	14-15 February	2	€1,226.98
Powers of Local Authorities to stem Anti-social behaviour	Tralee	14-15 February	3	€1,552.25
Planning Permission – The Process	Portlaoise	14-16 February	1	€ 268.40
Clare Tourism – 25th Annual Conference	Ennistymon	21-22 February	2	€ 996.78
Wind Turbines – The Pros & Cons	Roscommon	21-23 February	1	€ 526.38
Domestic Water Charges	Rosscarbery	21-23 February	2	€1,044.54
Genealogy – Tracing your ancestors	Limerick	21-23 February	1	€ 337.25
Local Elections – The Process	Killarney	28th Feb to 2nd Mar	2	€ 611.95
Educating to Drive the Economy	Galway	28th Feb to 1st Mar	2	€ 812.99
Budgets & Financing of Local Authorities	Wexford	28th Feb to 1st Mar	1	€ 332.36
ACCC Annual Conference	Cavan	6-7 March	2	€ 836.05
Pylons & Wind Farms	Letterkenny	7-9 March	2	€ 783.65
Charities – Regs & Legislation	Rosscarbery	7-9 March	2	€ 887.17
Sustainable Development & Design	Rosscarbery	14-16 March	1	€ 235.90
Value for Money in Local Government	Letterkenny	14-16 March	1	€ 653.65



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

Role of the Ombudsman	Limerick	21-23 March	1	€ 337.25
Judicial Review of Decision Making	Tralee	28-29 March	2	€1,036.03
Meeting Management Principles	Rosscarbery	21-23 March	2	€1,227.42
Making Communities Heart Safe	Roscommon	21-23 March	1	€ 546.27
Retirement Entitlements & Taxation	Rosscarbery	28-30 March	2	€1,051.82
Environmental & cost effective solutions to waste water	Waterford	11-13 April	4	€1,462.12
MABS & The Insolvency Service	Rosscarbery	11-13 April	2	€1,082.51
Crime & the impact on quality of life	Killarney	18-19 April	3	€1,381.76
Social Clauses in Public Procurement	Westport	25-26 April	2	€1,063.37
Budget 2015 Review	Clonakilty	7-8 November	7	€2,450.00
Meeting Management Principles & Best Practice	Clonakilty	21-22 November	2	€ 700.00
Ireland's Recovering Economy	Cork	28th November	1	€ 309.83
Protected Disclosures Act 2014	Galway	12-13 December	1	€ 335.12
Total:				€52,091.95

### TRAINING ATTENDED IN 2014 BY LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL MEMBERS

Training	Venue	Date	Delegates	Expend
AILG				
Induction Training	Tullamore	25th June	10	€ 646.89
Induction Training	Dublin	19th June	1	€ 58.89
Finance Training	Dundalk	11th September	7	€1,438.75
Finance Training	Carlow	16th September	4	€ 266.13
Finance Training	Malahide	18th September	1	€ 146.31
AILG Inaugural Annual Conference 2014	Cavan	29-30 October	12	€4,452.45
Housing Training	Athlone 2	3rd October	9	€1,009.38
Planning Training	Trim	18th November	9	€1,441.60
LAMA				
LAMA Autumn Training	Buncrana	17-18 October	5	€3,690.32
Irish Water				
Irish Water Regional Briefing	Tullamore	13th October	5	€ 321.96
Overall Total:				€13,472.68

## **Housing & Social Strategic Policy Committee**

**Chair:** Tom Mulhall, M.C.C.

**Members** **Sectoral**

Willie Aird, M.C.C.	Pat Flanagan
Caroline Dwane	
Stanley, M.C.C.	Mick Dowling
James Daly, M.C.C.	Brendan O'Brien
Mary Sweeney, M.C.C.	Michael Kelly
Catherine Fitzgerald, M.C.C.	
Bobby Delaney,	
Mountmellick T.C.	

**A/Director of Services:** Julie Bergin

**Senior Executive Officer:** Michael Rainey

**Senior Executive Engineer:** P J Dempsey

**Senior Social Worker:** Fionnuala Daly

## **HOUSING SERVICES**

The 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 2014**

- Completion of specially adapted bungalow in Castletown.
- Commencement of construction of 6 x 3-bed units in Clodiagh Way, Clonaslee.
- Acquisition of 17 social units in various locations across the County.
- Successful delivery of 200 grants for disabled and elderly people living in the County.
- Completion of Knockmay Park.

### **Report on SPC**

The Housing & Social SPC met in February 2014. The following policy was agreed:

- Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014-2018

### **Social Housing Investment Programme**

In 2014, the initial Social Housing Investment Programme allocation was €250,185. This included pro-

vision for the construction of a specially adapted home in Castletown. In recognition of the Council's effective programme of capital expenditure, this allocation was increased in October 2014 by €1,920,000 for the acquisition of social units including three properties for families with disabled persons.

### **CLSS & Capital Assistance Scheme**

At 31/12/14, 271 units were provided under the Capital Loan & Subsidy Scheme and 251 units were provided under the Capital Assistance Scheme. Under the "Capital Assistance Scheme Call for Proposals" in July 2014, Laois were successful in securing funding for the acquisition of three disabled persons units for Tuath Housing Association and one property in Stradbally for the Muiriosa Foundation.

### **RAS & Leasing**

To date the Housing Section has secured a total of 249 properties under the Rental Accommodation Scheme and 85 properties under the Social Leasing initiative.

### **Traveller Accommodation**

The Housing Section continues to implement the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014-2018. The new Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee held its inaugural meeting on 4th September 2014.

### **Housing Maintenance and Relet**

In 2014, the Housing Section continued to improve the business procedures relating to the maintenance and re-letting of Council stock through effective prioritisation and use of the financial and human resources available. In addition to the Council's own funding, the DoECLG provided an additional €251,800 for the refurbishment of vacant units in 2014.

### **Fabric Upgrade and Improvement Works**



The DoECLG funding for energy upgrades and once-off adaptation grants allowed the Housing Section to also make significant structural improvements to a substantial number of its properties. Attic and wall insulation works were carried out on 512 properties. The original allocation of €270,279 was increased by a further €476,937 bringing the final allocation for 2014 to €747,146.

### **Estate Management**

Estate Management remains a key function for the Housing Section, with 2014 seeing increased levels of interaction with tenants and resident groups. The Housing Section provided a range of supports to various resident groups including grants where appropriate.

### **Private Grants**

In 2014, the DoECLG provided an allocation of €523,320 for Mobility Aid Grants, Housing Adaptation Grants for People with Disabilities and Housing Aid for Older People grants. Following a request for further funding, the Housing Section was provided with additional funding of €302,268 bringing the total allocation to €825,588. Through effective management of the funding available the Housing Section has been able to keep the scheme open for the whole of 2014.

### **Treo Nua Portlaoise Resource Centre**



Treo Nua Portlaoise Resource Centre continues to play an important role in the social, economic and community infrastructure of Portlaoise and is providing essential social and training services to the community. The crèche, after-school rooms, meeting, community and training rooms are all busy providing a range of services, educational courses, physical activity classes and family support services. In 2014, the shop facility opened and is proving to be a welcome addition to the facility.

### **Knockmay Park**

Building on the success of Treo Nua, an area of waste ground at the centre of Knockmay was regenerated in 2013. This area was landscaped and the existing entrances to the park were redesigned to include a 2m wide walking track and small football pitch. Lighting and CCTV cameras were also incorporated into the park. Following consultation with the local residents groups, further works were carried out in 2014 to enhance the park and to remove areas of surface water.

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

In 2014 the Housing Department continued to monitor development and engage with developers in the County to reach agreement for compliance with Part V of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended).

### **Private Sites**

A number of private sites are for sale in Castletown, Ballyroan and Clonaslee.



## **HUMAN RESOURCES**

### **Recruitment Statistics**

A total of 442 people were employed by Laois County Council at 31st December 2014.

During 2014 Laois County Council held 13 competitions, in relation to which the following statistics have been extracted:

Total Applications received

	Male	Female
Applicants	114	41
Successful Applicants	47	20

Permanent Appointments/Promotions 2014

	Male	Female
Appointments	9	2
Promotions	6	2

These competitions related primarily to vacancies in the Fire Service, which due to the nature of the work are exempt from the terms of the current moratorium on recruitment in place since August 2009.

The new local authority shared services centre MyPay based in Aras an Chontae began operation in October 2013. Sanction to fill a number of posts through re-deployment was received from Local Government Personnel, Department of Environment, Community and Local Government during 2014.

### **Work Life Balance Initiatives**

Laois County Council continued to implement work life balance initiatives for staff during 2014. At year-end 4 employees were availing of the Career Break Scheme, 29 employees were availing of the job/work sharing scheme, 37 employees availed of the Parental Leave Scheme and 13 employees availed of the Shorter Working Year Scheme. 11 employees availed of the Unpaid Leave Scheme.

### **National Performance Indicator**

The Council exceeded the 3% minimum National Performance Indicator for expenditure on training and development as a percentage of total payroll costs in 2014. The out-turn was 3.59%.

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

**2013**  
4.01%

**2014**  
3.59%

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

	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>
Certified	4.07%	4.0%
Uncertified	0.35%	0.34%

### **Local Service Indicator**

Number of Training Days provided to staff (excluding Retained Fire Fighters) – 935

### **Industrial Relations**

Despite a difficult year nationally, Laois County Council maintained good industrial relations during 2014 with no major disputes arising. The Council in accordance with both the Public Service Agreement 2010 – 2014 and the Public Service Stability Agreement 2013 – 2016 (Haddington Road Agreement) and in consultation with the relevant Unions, continued to implement measures designed to improve efficiencies and demonstrate cost savings.

### **Employee Training & Development**

Laois County Council is committed to the training and developing 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 Performance Management Development System process. The Programme also incorporates Health & Safety Needs, National FETAC Programme, Third Level Open Learning Programme and various Seminars/Workshops as they arise.

Total expenditure on training was €295,356 (inclusive of expenditure for Fire Services). A very comprehensive training programme was delivered throughout 2014. A sample of the training programmes provided is as follows:-

- Legislative Training
- Courtroom Skills
- Signing Lighting & Guarding at Roadworks
- Safe Pass

- Flood Risk Management
- Fire Prevention & Waste Management facilities
- Stress Management in the Workplace
- IAT Surface Dressing Guidelines Review
- Understanding Public Sector Procurement Rules
- PMDS Briefing
- Managing Safely in Construction
- Water Treatment Plant Operations Assessment
- Manual Handling
- First Aid Training

### **Open Learning Programme**

Laois County Council endeavours, subject to available resources, 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. A sample of the Open Learning programmes facilitated during 2014 are as follows:-

- IPA – Certificate in Local Government
- IPASS – Certificate in Payroll Techniques
- University of Ulster – Civil Engineering
- D.I.T. - MAVIS Programme
- UCD – Certificate in Environment Management

### **Staff Policies**

In line with best practice in Human Resource Management, Laois County Council has developed a range of staff policies - the following which were introduced/revised during 2014:

- Shorter Working Years Scheme 2014
- Acting Up Policy (amended February 2014)
- Policy prohibiting Smoking in the Workplace (updated June 2014)
- Employee Handbook (revised)
- Flexible Hours Scheme (amended May 2014)

### **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.

### **Supporting Diversity**

Laois County Council supports the employment of people with disabilities and meets the target as set out by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. Laois County Council

continued to facilitate a number of work experience placements for people with disabilities.

### **INFORMATION & COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY**

The Information & Communications Technology (I.C.T.) Department, is based at the Council Headquarters at County Hall, Portlaoise. The Department, comprising of 7 staff members, manages the Council's I.C.T. infrastructure including Datacentre, computer and communication installations at County Hall, Area Offices, Libraries, and various other Council properties throughout the county. It provides technical support to all the other Council Departments and is responsible for the implementation, maintenance, management and security of the Council's I.C.T. systems. The Department is committed to a policy of continuous improvement of I.C.T. services within the Council and to the public who avail of the Council's services. Just over 2,700 support calls from all departments within the Council were processed by technical support staff during 2014.

### **Health & Safety**

I.C.T. Department staff attended Health & Safety briefings as required during 2014, and also undertook periodic VDU/workstation safety assessments as necessary, in co-operation with Health & Safety Department Staff. Health & Safety issues are given high priority and will be given greater emphasis in 2015 and beyond,

### **Local Enterprise Organisation**

I.C.T. Department staff managed and implemented connectivity and other technical requirements involved in bringing the Local Enterprise Organisation Offices at Clonminam, Portlaoise on to the Council's computer network, e-mail & database systems.

### **Local Elections 2014**

I.C.T. staff were involved in the provision of computer and telephony facilities at the Local Election count centre in Portlaoise. Staff tested and managed the operation of the computerised systems in use at the centre and assisted the Returning Officer with the production of count results and statistics.

### **Windows XP Operating System**

Support for the Windows XP computer operating system was ended by Microsoft in April 2014. Laois

County Council had a significant number of computers using this operating system and a strategy was put in place in late 2013 to address this problem. A significant investment in computer equipment and staff resources was devoted to resolving this issue during 2014.

## Social Media

### Laois.ie

Laois.ie had 533,916 page views in 2014, over 200,000 sessions and 118,574 unique visitors. This is an average of over 1,460 visits per day. Most visitors use our online planning enquiry facilities, the next most popular section was the online payments facility. Online Library facilities are also very popular with our website users with more and more members renewing and ordering books online, while the Motor Tax Online system continues to attract an increasing number of users. Our online contact / enquiry form continues to attract a steady stream of enquiries on a weekly basis.

### Twitter:

The Council's main twitter page - @LaoisCouncil has 2531 followers.

Laois Heritage Forum - @LaoisHeritage has 1414 followers.

Laois Libraries - @LaoisLibraries has 851 followers.

Music Generation Laois - @MusicGenLaois has 122 followers.

The Arthouse and Library - @ArthouseLibrary has 175 followers.

Midlands Energy - @MidlandEnergy has 92 followers.

Laois Tourism - @LaoisTourism has 403 followers.

James Fintan Lalor School - @JFLSchool has 126 followers.

### Websites

The I.C.T. Department is committed to reducing costs by developing and maintaining more websites in house. Work began in late 2014 on initiatives which will see significant progress in this area in 2015. The Council currently hosts and maintains a total of 14 websites.

### Fix Your Street

www.fixyourstreet.ie is a website that enables users to report issues to their local Council. The website can be used to report non emergency issues such as graffiti, road defects, issues with street lighting, water leaks/drainage issues, and litter or illegal dumping. In

accordance with the commitment in the Programme for Government, issues raised via this website will be responded to within 2 working days.

### Facebook pages:

Laois County Council - [www.facebook.com/Laois-CountyCouncil](http://www.facebook.com/Laois-CountyCouncil)

This is our main Facebook page for the organisation. It is updated with news and information from all departments.

Laois Heritage Forum - [www.facebook.com/laois.heritage.forum](http://www.facebook.com/laois.heritage.forum) is maintained by the Heritage Officer who has found the page very successful in raising awareness of all aspects of built, natural and cultural heritage of County Laois.

Laois Libraries - [www.facebook.com/LaoisLibraries](http://www.facebook.com/LaoisLibraries)  
Our Library Department updates this with news and events from each of the local libraries.

Laois County Fire & Rescue Service - [www.facebook.com/laoisfire](http://www.facebook.com/laoisfire). The Fire section keeps users informed of local incidents, rescues and training events.

Environment - [www.facebook.com/LaoisEnvironment](http://www.facebook.com/LaoisEnvironment)  
Keep Laois Clean – our Environment Section use their Facebook page to keep followers informed of competitions, community events, clean ups and recycling information.

Laois Tidy Towns - [www.facebook.com/pages/Laois-Tidy-Towns/163631410408752](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Laois-Tidy-Towns/163631410408752), another Environment website to highlight the good work done by tidy town groups throughout Laois.

Laois Tourism - [www.facebook.com/laoistourism](http://www.facebook.com/laoistourism) Our Tourism Officer uses his page as a useful marketing tool to promote County Laois.

The Arthouse and Library - [www.facebook.com/thearthouseandlibrary](http://www.facebook.com/thearthouseandlibrary), is maintained by the Arts section to advertise events in The Arthouse Gallery and Library in Stradbally.

James Fintan Lalor School - [www.facebook.com/JamesFintanLalor](http://www.facebook.com/JamesFintanLalor), this Facebook page is used to promote our James Fintan Lalor school, held annually here in Laois.

Laois Community Forum - [www.facebook.com/pages/Laois-Community-Forum/120254797988933](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Laois-Community-Forum/120254797988933), this page provides information for community and voluntary groups throughout Laois.

Laois Arts - [www.facebook.com/LaoisArts](http://www.facebook.com/LaoisArts), this page is used by the Arts section in Laois County Council to endorse events throughout Laois.

Laois School of Music - [www.facebook.com/LaoisSchoolofMusic](http://www.facebook.com/LaoisSchoolofMusic), maintained by our Music Co-Ordinator to highlight and promote the School's good work.

Music Generation Laois - [www.facebook.com/Music-GenerationLaois](http://www.facebook.com/Music-GenerationLaois), used to advertise this fabulous music education service for children and young people in Laois.



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

**Director of Services:** Anna Marie Delaney

**Chair:** John King, M.C.C.

**Members** **Sectoral**

Michael Lalor, M.C.C.  
John Bonham, M.C.C.  
James Deegan, M.C.C.  
Paul Mitchell, M.C.C.  
Padraig Fleming, M.C.C.  
Rotimi Adebari, M.C.C.  
Clare Spollen, T.C.

Brendan O'Brien  
Kathleen Gorman  
Fintan Phelan

## LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

The Local Government Reform Act, 2014 provides for the establishment of Local Community Development Committees (LCDC) in the 31 local authority areas.

These Committees replaced the County Development Boards, and while retaining the collaborative nature of County Development Boards, have an enhanced role and different structure.

Local Community Development Committees' key function is to achieve a more strategic, joined up approach to local and community development. They will have oversight and responsibility for local development and community related funding in their county.

Each Committee will develop a six year Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP). This plan will agree the strategic framework for economic and community development resource allocation, and inform other planning processes. This plan will be presented for approval by Council in early 2015.



The LCDC's are based on membership from statutory and non-statutory bodies:

Gerry Murphy, Chief Executive of Laois Co Co  
Councillor John King (Chair)  
Councillor Jerry Lodge  
Councillor Pascal McEvoy  
Evelyn Reddin, CEO, Local Enterprise Office  
Graham Tuohy, Assistant Principal, Department of Social Protection  
Joe Ruane, Area Manager, Health Services Executive  
Joe Cunningham, CEO, Laois/Offaly Education and Training Board  
Anne Goodwin, CEO, Laois Partnership Company  
Joe Thompson, Co-Ordinator, Youth Work Ireland (Laois)  
Conal Bradley, President, Chamber of Commerce  
Michael Bergin, Farming Pillar  
Chris Uys, Environment Pillar  
Sheelagh Coyle, Community Representative  
Paddy Buggy, Community Representative  
Michael Dowling, Community Representative  
Margaret Guijt Lawlor, Community Representative

The first meeting was held on Wednesday 17th September, 2014 and work commenced on developing the Local Economic Community Plan. The Committee took responsibility for overseeing the Local Community Development Programme which ended in December, 2014.



## LAOIS PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORK

On 21st July, 2014 the public were briefed on a new framework called Laois Public Participation Network (PPN). This is a new framework for public engagement and participation and is currently being established within County Laois. The PPN will be the main link through which the Local Authority connects with community, social inclusion and environmental sectors. The aim of a PPN Structure is to facilitate and enable public organisations operating within the wider community to give voice to a diverse range of

views, issues and interests within the local government system.

### LAOIS TRAVELLER INTERAGENCY GROUP

This Group comprises a number of agencies and organisations whose work includes the betterment of life for the travelling community in the county. In 2014, the work of this Group included:

- Roll out of an education programme, in association with Laois/Offaly Education and Training Board, aimed at literacy skills and confidence building to enter mainstream education
- Traveller Primary Healthcare Programme – 4 Traveller Health workers were employed and reached out to over 90 Traveller families in relation to such topics as dental health, mental health and fire safety etc.



### TRAVELLER PRIDE WEEK:

The preview of Home Place – celebrating Traveller Pride took place at the Portlaoise Heritage Hotel at the AGM of the Irish Traveller Movement ahead of the project's local launch on July 16, 2014 at Portlaoise Parish Centre at 2pm.

Home:Place is an interactive installation in a series by visual artist Jayne Louise Kelly and poet David Delaney in collaboration with Laois Traveller Interagency Group (LTIG). Jayne and David work together using mixed media to evoke and encourage the participant to engage with the installation and to encourage stimulation of mind, body and soul. Jayne's intricate and intimate encouragement of her organic work to tell

stories incorporates David's creative concepts and words to merge into one, providing a platform for visitors to engage. The concept was applied by local Traveller groups to create the work that was on display at the launch.



### LAOIS LOCAL DRUGS NETWORK

Laois Local Drugs Network Committee continued to meet in 2014. The work of the network assists in raising awareness of the importance of supporting those awaiting treatment and in recovery from substance misuse within the county. The Network supported projects such as the Portlaoise Street Leagues and the Community Coaching Programme, operated in association with Laois Partnership and Laois Sports Partnership.



### LAOIS AGE FRIENDLY COUNTY PROGRAMME

On the 8th July, 2014 Laois County Council launched its Age Friendly County Programme and has now joined the other counties and cities who have launched the programme since the initiative started in Louth in 2008. The objective of the launch was to kick-start a county wide consultation and awareness raising exercise, which will





inform the Laois Age Friendly County Strategy which will be published in the coming year.

In an age friendly community, policies, programmes, services and infrastructure related to the physical and social environment are designed to enable older people to live in security, enjoy good health and continue to participate in society in a meaningful way.

The process is being led by Laois Age Friendly County Alliance which will be chaired by the Chief Executive of Laois County Council and include relevant organisations such as the HSE, An Garda Síochána, Leader Partnership and other stakeholders.



#### COMMUNITY SMOKE ALARMS SCHEME 2014

In 2014, Laois County Council engaged in the scheme to purchase 400 smoke alarms (2 per residence) and recouped the costs from the Dept. of Environment, Community & Local Government. With the assistance of Community Representatives, Elected Members, Laois Partnership and Laois Traveller Action Group, 90 Traveller families in Laois along with elderly people in Clonaslee, Ballyroan, Ballinakill, Aghaboe, Portlaoise and Stradbally benefited from this year's scheme.

Community & Enterprise Section continued in 2014 to facilitate and provide supports for the:

- Laois Ethnic Minority Support Group
- Laois Mental Health Collaborative Group
- Older Persons
- Marginalised and Seldom Heard in the Community

#### LAOIS COMHAIRLE NA nÓG 2014



Laois Comhairle na nÓg, the Youth Council for the County, enjoyed another successful year in 2014, with the recruitment of several new representatives countywide to the Comhairle.



Laois Comhairle na nÓg strives to represent the young people of Laois to make their voices heard among the adult decision makers in our county, to make our county a better place in which to live, work and visit.



It is their aim to consult with the adult policy making bodies for our county, thereby ensuring protection for young people and the provision of facilities or information for them. There are so many ways in which young people and adults can work together so as to ensure that young people are protected and informed,



## COMMUNITY, COUNTY PROMOTION, ARTS, SPORTS & LIBRARIES

through being consulted. The Comhairle is also tasked with providing feedback to the young people across the county on the issues and consultations. Laois was also represented in 2014 on the National Comhairle na nÓg Executive by Julian Naggie.

Laois Comhairle has been very busy in 2014; a new chairperson was elected, Corey Marum representing Portlaoise College and Youth Cafe and a new Executive, comprising Leighea Flannery (Secretary) and Sean Doyle (Vice Chair).



The AGM was held on 21st October 2014 in Portlaoise Heritage Hotel and was attended by over 140 young people. Issues discussed included articles on The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Members of Laois Comhairle presented an update on their work to the Members of Laois County Council at the October 2014 meeting of the Council. The Members acknowledged and praised the work and encouraged them to continue with same.

### LAOIS CONNECTS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK



One of the highlights of the year took place in October, 2014 when Laois Community Forum hosted a week-long event on Mental Health Awareness called 'Laois Connects'. This was the third year of this initiative which has been extremely successful. Launched by Rugby Player Alison Miller, the week-long event included talks, workshops and seminars on issues relating to mental health. The aim of the week was to raise awareness about mental health issues and to provide a showcase for the supports that exist in the local community. This year, Laois Community Forum published a directory of supports and help services in Laois which was distributed widely. Laois Community Forum hosted the event in collaboration with a number of agencies: HSE, Laois Sports Partnership, Mental Health Ireland, Disability Federation, Laois County Council, Laois Partnership Company, Laois/Offaly ETB. The event was also partnered with a number of organisations – Pfizer, GROW, Shine, Laois Travellers Action Group, Glosna House, Telfords, Ana Liffey Drug Project, Barnardos and the Leinster Express. Key speakers took part in many seminars and workshops around Laois and various activities were organised from walks to yoga to cookery demonstration and art therapy.



### Healthy Towns Initiative



Portlaoise was chosen as Ireland's healthy town for 2014, as part of a joint initiative between the Irish Times and Pfizer Healthcare. For eight weeks, various events took place in the town and around the county

aimed at showing everyone, no matter where you live, ways to improve your health and general wellbeing. 2014 was the third year for the programme.

Key features of 'Healthy Town' included:

- The Irish Heart Foundation provide free one to one health checks. Heart health advice was given on the other risk factors for heart disease, such as smoking, alcohol, physical inactivity, stress and healthy eating. The health checks were provided through local groups thereby ensuring inclusion of all groups, with some open to members of the public.
- Talks and demonstrations from expert speakers on areas including healthy eating, parenting, mental health, relationships, stress management and health promotion.
- Healthy shopping and nutrition tours given by Irish Heart Foundation dietitians in Mulhall's SuperValu Portlaoise.
- Numerous sports and fitness activities throughout the eight week period for people of all ages and abilities.

## LAOIS COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY AWARDS 2014

The heroes of local communities across the County were celebrated by Laois County Council on 15th January when over 235 people gathered in the Dunamase Arts Centre, Portlaoise for the 6th Annual Community and Voluntary Awards. The Awards are hosted to recognise the tremendous contribution made by community and voluntary groups to life in County Laois.

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

The Master of Ceremonies on the night was RTE's Justin Treacy, a native of County Laois. The evening opened with addresses by the Cathaoirleach, Cllr John Joe Fennelly and the Chief Executive of Laois County Council, Gerry Murphy, together with a performance by the Senior Ensemble of Laois School of Music under the direction of Mr. Vincent Hunt.

The judges were thanked for their input having been again impressed this year by the ongoing commitment from so many people who achieve so much with so little. All the communities represented were sincerely thanked and were reminded that every community nominated is already a winner.

Cathaoirleach, Cllr. John Joe Fennelly said 'we acknowledge people like you in communities all over our county and all that you have achieved in these difficult times, when the work of the volunteer is needed now more than ever to help our county rise out of these times with a positive attitude and a skill for working together'.

Awards Runners up and Winners on the night were:

### ARTS - 5 NOMINEES

WINNER: Yarnbombing Mountmellick  
RUNNER UP: Laois Federation ICA Choir



### HERITAGE - 3 NOMINEES

WINNER: Portarlinton Arts & Heritage Society  
RUNNER UP: Mountmellick World War I Research & Commemoration Group





## COMMUNITY, COUNTY PROMOTION, ARTS, SPORTS & LIBRARIES

### ENVIRONMENT - 8 NOMINEES

WINNER: Irish Wildlife Trust Laois/Offaly Branch  
RUNNER UP: Abbeyleix Bog Project



in their fields.



### COMMUNITY SERVICES & SUPPORT - 18 NOMINEES

WINNER: Borris-in-Ossory Social Services  
RUNNER UP: Embrace Farm



Of the 26 nominations for Unsung Hero, Trevor Stanley, a native of Rathdowney, was honoured as the Unsung Hero 2014 and was presented with his award by Cathaoirleach, Cllr. John Joe Fennelly. Cllr Fennelly congratulated all the nominees, who are, as he put it, are heroes in their own community, for the hard work and commitment they put into their local areas and people.



### SPORT & LEISURE - 13 NOMINEES

WINNER: Laois Kayak & Canoe Club  
RUNNER UP: Abbeyleix Park Development



There were 6 nominees in the Young Person of the Year category. Joint Winners on the night were Cailean O'Keeffe and Aoife McNicholl who excelled





### SCHOOLS BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP

In 2014, Laois County Council continued its partnership with 5th year students in Portlaoise College, to encourage school completion through the roll out of a programme entitled "Skills at Work".

25 Students were mentored during the 2013/2014 school year by Council staff, which included a visit to County Hall with a meet & greet with Council employees, a visit to Portlaoise Fire Station and a session with the Council's Human Resources Department in interview skills and preparation of CV's. The programme concluded with mock interviews conducted by Council employees and a feedback session by the students who took part.



### COMMUNITY BUILDING AT MARIAN AVENUE

Laois County Council was also proud to be involved in the development of the New Community Building at Marian Avenue, Portlaoise which was officially opened in December, 2014.



### MEN'S SHED

A contribution was made in 2014 by Laois County Council to the Rathdowney and Portlaoise Men's Sheds Projects.



## REPRESENTATION

Community & Enterprise Section staff represented the County Development Board and Laois County Council on several Boards and Committees and also collaborated with the following agencies/organisations on various projects and initiatives throughout 2014:

- Laois Partnership Company
- Laois Sports Partnership
- Laois Trip
- Laois County Enterprise Board
- BLOCK and PORT Garda Diversion Projects
- Portlaoise Youth Café Consortium
- Rathdowney Youth Café Consortium
- Laois Mental Health Collaborative Group
- LABEL (Laois Third Level Centre)
- Midland Traveller Conflict & Mediation Committee

## TOURISM

The Council continued to promote the County and worked actively with the Board of Laois Tourism, Fáilte Ireland, and the community at large to actively promote Laois as a Festival & Event destination and build its profile as a destination for visitors to return again and again.

A range of festivals and events were planned and organised including:

### National Ploughing Championships Sept 23rd – 25th

Laois County Council was one of the many exhibitors at the Laois Marquee. Laois Tourism, Laois Partnership and new and existing businesses also attended this year's event through the Local Enterprise Office.

County Promotions, art & culture workshops were ongoing over the three days.

### The Rose of Tralee Regional Finals

60 young girls participated in the Rose of Tralee Regional Finals which took place over the June Bank Holiday weekend. A weekend long festival was held with a "Beat on the Street" in Mountmellick Town, as part of the Summerfest Festival. The Roses visited local schools, attended Mass in Abbeylisk, and Castle Durrow and took part in a grand parade in Portlaoise Town on Saturday May 31st with Rosebuds from the Schools across the County, escorted in clas-

sic cars from the Gordon Bennett Classic Car Committee Members. Ms. Teresa Brennan represented Laois at the International Rose of Tralee Festival in August in Tralee.

### The Gordon Bennett Classic Car Run

The Gordon Bennett Irish Classic Car Run 2014 took place over the June Bank Holiday weekend. A Cathaoirleach's reception was held at Aras an Chontae on Friday May 30th to welcome the visitors, particularly the overseas visitors to Laois. The participants drove the historic Gordon Bennett Route over the weekend and the highlight for many was their participation in the Gala Rose of Tralee Regional Parade through the streets of Portlaoise on Saturday May 31st.

### Laois Tourism Office

The Tourist Office continued to operate five days a week with staff employed through Portlaoise Community Employment Scheme. The office provides information for visitors on the events and attractions in the County, alongside timetables for travel and accommodation information.

### New Audio Guides

A new series of digital audioguides of the heritage sites of the county was launched. Produced by Abarta Audioguides for Laois Tourism, with the assistance of Laois Partnership, the guides are available to download for free and are also available in a limited-edition CD box set. The four guides - historic Portlaoise, Portarlinton, the Laois Monastic Trail and the Rock of Dunamase - each feature 8 – 10 tracks full of interesting snippets of information, with atmospheric sound effects and specially commissioned music

### Community Diaspora Grants

Laois County Council in partnership with Fáilte Ireland & IPB Insurance provided funding to Festivals & Events who attracted overseas visitors.

### Best of Ireland Series:

"Laois – A Beautiful Welcome" part of the Best of Ireland Series was published and widely circulated throughout the County, promoting the county, its facilities and the various activities that take place annually.



## Tracks & Trails

Laois featured in the RTE Series "Tracks n Trails" which was broadcast on three occasions throughout the year. The half hour series showcased the walks in the Durrow/Cullahill area.

## ARTS SECTION

### Arts Plan 2014-2017

The New Laois Arts Plan 2014-2017 was published and officially launched by the Director of the Arts Council, Orlaith McBride, on the 7th May 2014.

### Laois School of Music

Laois School of Music and Music Generation Laois have moved premises to the old 'Tech' school on Railway Street, Portlaoise. It is a very positive step to finally have a long-term base as the School of Music enters into its 14th year of tuition. Enrolment was maintained at 300 pupils with potential for further expansion in the new building. The Continuous Professional Development sessions for LSM and MGL tutors, in association with DIT Conservatory of Music, funded by Laois Partnership Co., ran over the course of the year and were a great success, giving LSM an established link with Ireland's National Conservatory.

### Music Generation Laois



The Music Generation Laois programme continues to grow and over 1500 children accessed music tuition through the programme in 2014. In addition to weekly lessons, children and young people participated in a range of concerts, workshops and masterclasses, including the Big Sing, hosted by Music Generation National Office in the Mansion House, Dublin. In July, a series of traditional music workshops in Portlaoise concluded with a Music Network workshop with Scottish Musicians Christ Stout and Caitriona McCay.

Music Generation Laois secured performance opportunities at Electric Picnic 2014 for young musicians from Laois, building a stage, and also hosting singers and musicians from Music Education Partnerships throughout the Country. Music Generation Laois programmes include a School of Rock and Pop, a Choral/Singing Programme, The Music Box a programme for children with special needs, an Uilleann Pipe, Brass and Harp programme, and a 'Stampede' (world drumming) programme.

### Laois Youth Theatre

Laois Youth Theatre programme included weekly workshops, performances and exchanges for up to 70 children/young people facilitated by qualified drama tutors. Plays took place in the Dunamaise Arts Centre in April 2014, showcasing the talents of Stradbally and Portlaoise Youth Theatre. Portarlington After-Schools Theatre group continues to flourish.



### Dunamaise Arts Centre

Laois County Council continues to support the Dunamaise Arts Centre as one of the main Arts venues in Laois.

### The Arthouse Stradbally

The programme included artist residencies, workshops, tours, open studio events and exhibitions. Highlights included 3 month artist residencies on community project utilizing the Percent for Art Scheme. In July Nick Miller, painter and member of Aosdána, completed a very successful 10 day residency in the Arthouse, with events running alongside it, in association with the IMMA.

### The Artists in Schools Scheme

The Artists in Schools Scheme ran in nine schools in 2014. This Scheme allows students to have an in depth experience with the professional artist and

gives them the opportunity to experience different art mediums.



### Bealtaine Festival – for Older People

The Arts Office presented a programme of events for older people over the month of May including a series of tours and workshops with the resident artists and visiting artists at the Arthouse in Stradbally.

### Midland Collaborative Projects

Two Midlands Arts and Culture magazines were published in 2014 and distributed throughout the Midlands region.

### Summer Arts programme

A series of 3 day art workshops were held throughout the county incorporating socially inclusive projects in Mountmellick and Mountrath.



### National Culture Night

Culture Night on Friday 19th September was a huge

success with free events all around Laois, which included workshops, exhibitions, drama performances, concerts and lots more for all ages.

### The James Fintan Lalor School

The second James Fintan Lalor School took place in October and included the staging of a specially commissioned exhibition by Brendon Deacy entitled “Siorraí”, inspired by the writings of James Fintan Lalor and commissioned by the Arts Office.

### Leaves Literature Festival

The annual Leaves Literature Festival which took place in November included a packed programme of childrens’ workshops, adult writing workshops, book launches, readings and music.

### Other activities included

- Arts Act Grants Awards
- Tyrone Guthrie Centre Bursary
- Exhibitions
- Percent for Art Projects included – Nick Miller “Sitting Project” & Artist Residencies
- Participation at the Electric Picnic & National Ploughing Championships;
- Support of Festivals and community arts events

### SPORT & LEISURE SECTION

The Sport and Leisure Section of Laois County Council continued to deliver a series of events and activities during 2014. Highlights include:

#### Play Provision

#### Playground openings – Barrowhouse & Coolrain

Barrowhouse Community Playground, “Clós Súgartha Pháirc an Bhearbhu”, located in the grounds of Barrowhouse GAA Club, was officially opened on 11th April 2014 by Ms Alison Miller, member of the successful Irish Women’s Rugby Team. The facility was developed by Barrowhouse Community Council in association with Laois County Council with funding provided by Laois Partnership Company.

Friday 9th May 2014 saw the official opening ceremony of Coolrain Community Playground & Amenity Area, at the foothills of the Slieve Bloom Mountains. The playground, was uniquely designed by Crawford Contracts Group LTD, Northern Ireland. The Play-



ground name “Spraoi ag an Seanmhuileann” was chosen, reflecting the history of the site where an old mill was located adjacent to the River Tonet. Cllr Michael Lalor was assisted by local children from the area in cutting the ribbon.

Both playground developments are an excellent example of the work of communities, who not only identified a need in their area but also worked tirelessly to be able to address that need in difficult and challenging times. It exemplifies what can be done when communities and agencies work together to provide facilities that will benefit not just the children of Barrowhouse and Coolrain but also the children of the surrounding communities. Both facilities are now under the management of Laois County Council.



### Bike Week 2014

Laois County Council successfully secured funding from the Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport to co-ordinate a series of events with the assistance of Community groups countywide.

Demonstrating the social, health and environmental benefits of cycling, the week aims to get people all over Ireland to give cycling a go, whether for fun, as a means of getting around or just to visit friends.



As the biggest nationwide cycling event in the Ireland, Bike Week encourages thousands of people to join in events, rethink their everyday journeys and switch to

cycling as the most convenient way to get around. The events were held from 14th – 22nd June 2014 and catered for all ages and abilities and were attended by over 680 participants throughout Laois.

Family Fun Cycles were held in Clough, Rathdowney, Mountrath, Durrow and Abbeyleix. South Laois Tourism and Ossory Cycling Club held the ‘Ballagh Challenge’ 100km for experienced cyclists or 40km for leisure cyclists on Sunday 22nd June, starting from The Square, Durrow

Camross NS, Rath NS & Portarlinton Girls NS all participated in cycling events during Bike Week while Laois Sports Partnership supported a number of events including Come ‘n’ Try Tandem Cycle & Safe Cycling Workshops. Staff from workplaces in Laois, including The Midlands and Portlaoise Prison and Laois County Council organised opportunities for staff to enjoy a lunchtime cycle during Bikeweek.

### Children’s Activity Programme

Laois County Council organised and delivered a very busy summer activity programme in 2014. Parks Tennis was delivered in Abbeyleix, Rathdowney, Portlaoise and Portarlinton with 200 children participating in this programme.



### National Play Day 2014

Laois County Council in partnership with Heritage House, Abbeyleix delivered a free event that saw 50



children & their parents construct a cardboard medieval city on the grounds of Heritage House to celebrate National Play Day in July 2014.

Another unique event was the Family Fun Day at Rockview Walkways, Ballyroan delivered in partnership with Laois Friends of Special Needs. The event was very well attended, the rain was never too far away but it didn't deter the enthusiasm of the 300 plus participants.

The central focus on both events was 'inclusive play' with funding provided by Department of Children & Youth Affairs .



### National Recreation Week 2014 - "Dare to Try"

This is a joint initiative between the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) and Local Authorities and was aimed at young people aged 12 to 15 years. The theme for 2014 events was 'Dare to Try' with the overall purpose to highlight the importance of recreation for young people and to encourage an inter agency approach to achieving some of the main goals of the DCYA's National Recreation Policy.

National Recreation Week 2014 events in Co Laois included an Adventure Hike, Canoeing and Cycling.



### Games on the Green Initiative

Laois County Council have entered into partnerships with FAI, Leinster Rugby & Laois GAA to part fund the employment of Development Officers to deliver sport in the community programme.

The Games on the Green programme saw Development Officers deliver coaching sessions to children in estates across the County. The programme is aimed at children between the ages of 6 and 12 years of age on a weekly basis for 12 weeks. Development Officers assisted by local volunteers implemented fun coaching sessions to increase the physical activity of the children in a safe environment. All community programmes are free of charge and open to both boys and girls. The estates covered in the 2014 football programme were St. Brigid's Estate & Knockmay (Portlaoise), Kiln Lane, Moonbaun (Mountrath), Kilnacourt and Peoples' Park (Portlaoise). In total 500 children participated in the programme which culminated in a Grand Finale held at Portlaoise Leisure Centre in July 2014 with Uachtarán CLG Liam O'Neill in attendance.



### WALKING FOOTBALL/GAELIC GAMES/RUGBY

This was a new project started at the end of 2014 in association with St Fintan's Psychiatric Department

and Triogue Centre, Portlaoise. An adapted version of the games is used for individuals that have reduced or limited mobility. The programme was used to assist the participants to get active in a social environment. A review was completed near the end of the programme and the feedback was extremely positive both from participants, nurses and carers.

### Soccer Tods Programme

Soccer Tods was introduced to provide soccer activity for boys and girls aged between 3 and 6 years of age. Since the start of the programme it has shown to increase the development of children. The programme is over an 8 week time period and 226 participants took part in 2014 in Portlaoise and Portllington. The programme works on the basic skills of soccer and is non-competitive. A number of the children who have taken part in Soccer Tods in the past have moved on to take part in other football programmes including Games on the Green, Summer Soccer Schools and Soccer Sisters.

### Women/Girls Soccer

#### Soccer Sisters Programme

Soccer Sisters programme is devised by the Women's Unit of the FAI to help give girls aged 7-12 the opportunity to take part in soccer. Many girls within Laois are currently not being catered for by clubs. Thanks to 'Soccer Sisters' and drop in session more girls are getting the opportunity to play soccer. Linking in with clubs is vital as a number of clubs have taken on teams from the girls that attended the programme. A 'Soccer Sisters' week-long camp was run in Ballylynan in association with St. Anne's FC and in Portlaoise Leisure Centre with 32 girls taking part.

### Football for All

The FAI Football for All programme is one of the programmes delivered for individuals with special needs. There are many opportunities for individuals from primary school right up to adults. Within Laois the FAI Development Officer works with different groups including National Learning Network, St. Francis Special School, Rehab Care, Oak House. National Learning Network have progressed to participating in monthly blitz which are run by the FAI in Graigecullen, with teams coming from Laois, Offaly, Carlow, Kilkenny and Kildare

### Portlaoise Street League



The Street Leagues were run over 9 weeks from June until August. Teams played on a weekly basis in the league with a one day cup competition. 2014 saw the highest numbers yet with 143 participants taking part on a weekly basis. The winning and runner up team received prizes at the presentation day and will now represent Laois in the All Ireland Street League Finals in Tallaght in April 2015. The Portlaoise Street League has been one of the most successful programmes with players from the league having represented Ireland at International level.

### COACH EDUCATION

2014 saw an increase in the number of coaches that took part in coach education courses including a large number of code of ethics courses. Courses were completed in a number of clubs along with Portlaoise College who had 28 students complete their Kick Start 1 certificate and 4v4 coach education workshop.

### LIBRARIES

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. It is delivered through a network of 4 full-time branches and 6 part-time branches. It continues to provide an excellent space for sections of the local community and offers more than just books. They have a wide range of services in all branches which include broadband internet services at very reasonable rates, printing, photocopying and scanning facilities, free WIFI for members, audio books, DVDS, music, online resources, daily newspapers and magazines, free events and clubs. Modern libraries offer a rich cultural and educational environment that provides a space and access for those who wish to enrich their day to day lives.



## Events and Activities

Laois County Libraries held a large variety of events and activities in all Branch Libraries throughout 2014. Children and Adults enjoyed the numerous events and activities organised by library staff. This year's programme was hectic and exciting with author visits, art competitions, art launches and exhibitions, music recitals, book clubs, computer classes and story-telling.

The highlights of the year include Library Ireland Week, Heritage Week, Culture Night and Children's Book Festival.

## WIFI

WIFI is available in Portlaoise, Mountmellick, Mountrath, Abbeyleix, Portarlinton and Rathdowney Libraries.

## Bookfund

The Bookfund for 2014 was €75,000.

## Mythical Maze Summer Reading Challenge

Once again, the Summer Reading Challenge proved a big success. Over 800 children of all ages completed the challenge, each reading 6 books throughout July and August. Irish Author, Alan Nolan, launched the challenge and ran a series of workshops. He returned to present the successful participants with their medals in October. The Summer Reading Challenge is a great initiative which further promotes literacy and reading in children and encourages reading for all ages.



## Local History/Studies

The Local Studies and Archives Section continues to be well used, internationally via email queries and by local historians and members of the public. Over the

past number of years 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.

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, "The History of the Queens County" by O'Byrne and "The Manor of Glenmore".

## Library Events - Highlights

All of the libraries hosted a great selection of events throughout 2014.

For Heritage Week, Mountrath, Rathdowney, Portarlinton, Abbeyleix, Mountmellick and Portlaoise Libraries had a visit from Irish History Live and children listened to Michael Moylan recount tales of World War I while Neil Richardson, historian and author of "A coward if I return a Hero" engaged adults with his seminar on World War I in Abbeyleix, Portlaoise and Mountrath libraries.

Science Week was also celebrated this year with a talk on Ingenious Ireland taking place in Portlaoise Library and lab workshops in Mountmellick Library.

## Mountrath Library



Mountrath Library continued with events and children's activities including monthly class visits and book displays along with arts and crafts for younger readers. The weekly Knitting club is held every Friday morning and is proving very popular. Adults and children's bookclubs are held every month and the Camera club which launched in November is proving to be a huge success.

### Abbeyleix Library

Abbeyleix Library continues to have weekly art classes for children and monthly events. The Art Gallery continues to be a premier location for art exhibitions with 8 exhibitions during the year featuring Níav Reilly, Trudi Killeen and Ciaran O'Brien. Once again, Children's Book Festival was a great success with class visits and Author visits including Claire Hennessy and Kieran Mark-Crowley. The weekly chess club for children continues to grow, and there has also been a great take-up on Spanish and German classes.

### Portlaoise Library

Portlaoise Library had a busy year of events and these include monthly adult book clubs, knitting classes, weekly class visits by local and surrounding schools, weekly Irish Classes "Ciorcal Comhrá" and competitions. Niamh Boyce held creative writing classes throughout May, while local artist Conor Brennan held a series of drawing workshops in August. An Irish Evening was held in March with Irish dancing, singing and music with an attendance of over 100. Another successful series of talks on the Architectural Heritage of Laois were held throughout July and August and these continue to grow in popularity. For Children's Book Festival there were Story sessions, Craft workshops, and visiting authors included Anna Carey, Kieran-Mark Crowley and Claire Hennessy.

### Mountmellick Library

Mountmellick Library had a busy schedule of events in 2014. The library has become a great success since opening and is now a central attraction to the community in Mountmellick and surrounding areas. Weekly class visits, bookclubs for adults and children, knitting club, storytime and weekly games clubs are held. Highlights of the year included; Papermaking workshops with artist Caroline Keane in May, Carnation Theatre performance in August, Sylvia Plath Lecture by Dr. Arthur Broomfield in September, Author visits for Childrens Book Festival and Christmas craft sessions.

The Art Gallery was fully booked for 2014 with exhibitions by Joe Ryan, Gemma Lalor and Caroline Conway, as well as local art groups from Geashill and Mountmellick.

### EU Direct Centre in Mountmellick Library

In 2014 Mountmellick library was nominated as one of 8 EU Direct(EDIC) Information Centers in the Country. The Information Centre which is based in the Public area acts as a one stop shop for people who want information about the EU, such as policies, information or citizens rights. The centre also hosts EU events and related activities. In 2014 over 30 EU themed events and talks were held in Mountmellick library promoting the centre and Europe. In October, the local Europe Direct Soapbox Competition was held in the Dunamaise Art Centre. The winner Daniel Williams went on to represent Mountmellick in the National Finals taking home First Place.



### New Library Projects

- Laois County Council acquired the Shaws Building, Main Street, Portlaoise for a new Library. A detailed application for funding has been submitted to the DOECLG
- Portarlinton Library received grant aid towards the refurbishment and upgrading of the existing Courthouse Building. Construction work was tendered in 2014 with works scheduled to commence in 2015.



## Planning & Development and Environment Strategic Policy Committee

**Director of Services:** Kieran Kehoe

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

### Members

Ray Cribbin, M.C.C.  
John Moran, 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  
Caroline Goucher

## ENVIRONMENT

**Senior Engineer:** Henry Ritchie

### Community Initiatives

#### Clean Up Laois Week

In association with An Taisce's National Spring Clean, "Clean up Laois Week" took place from 7th to 11th April 2014. Now in its 11th year, this initiative continues to be a successful event. AES sponsored the pick-up lorry and driver again this year. Litter pickers, hi-viz jackets, bags and gloves were distributed among the many groups, schools and individuals who became involved in clean-ups in their own areas. The Environmental Enforcement Officers were available to assist with the collection of the smaller clean-ups. In total, 31.96 tonnes of rubbish was collected as a result of this initiative.



#### Grant Schemes

Under the Community Grant Scheme 2014, funding was awarded to 78 groups for projects to benefit the environment and enhance local amenities. The Community Project Fund provides financial assistance for each elected member to assist with worthwhile proj-

ects in their own areas and 33 applications were processed in 2014. 19 Tidy Towns Committees received funding under the Tidy Towns Grants initiative. In partnership with the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, 6 grants were allocated to promote sustainable development at community level under the LA21 Environmental Partnership Fund. These projects will focus on training, education and awareness activities as well as school garden and biodiversity projects.

### Tidy Towns



Overall winners: Clough - Laois Federation of Tidy Towns Competition

Laois County Council is actively working with Tidy Towns Committees to help invest in the 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, Clean up Laois Week and the Laois Federation of Tidy Towns Competition and Awards. There are currently 32 committees in the Federation and the annual Federation competition has proved to be very prestigious as it allows towns and villages of varying standards to compete with each other where they might not otherwise be afforded this chance at National level. Judging in the competition was carried out by Environment Section staff and in 2014, 23 Committees took part in the competition.

Marks awarded at national level continue to improve each year and results for 2014 proved very positive with winners in the silver and bronze medal categories and an Endeavour Award. Congratulations and well done to all the hard working Committees, the individuals and volunteers involved, who make an invaluable contribution to the enhancement of the County.



### National Tree Week

Once again local communities around County Laois availed of free native species trees supplied by Laois County Council as part of National Tree Week. Over 60 groups made up of schools, Tidy Towns, local development groups and resident associations participated in the scheme. The importance of trees in our community and their positive contribution to our environment and biodiversity in our County cannot be ignored. The Tree Council of Ireland and their sponsors for 2014, SSE Airtricity and Coillte promote the importance of growing and protecting trees in our environment, this years theme being "The sound of Trees".

### Litter Management

The Environment Section continues to work in partnership with key stakeholders such as local tidy towns committees, voluntary groups, schools and the business sector in our community to combat the litter problem. We promote the freephone confidential litter hotline 1800 323230 via advertisement and anti-litter merchandise and encourage members of the public to play their part and report incidences of litter/illegal dumping in the community. During 2014, 172 litter fines issued for varying offences. 36 unpaid fines were sent to our legal team to initiate legal proceedings – 27 resulted in successful convictions in court. A further 9 Section 9 Notices were served on landowners for failing to keep their private lands clean and free of litter. Numerous warning letters for abandoned cars and unauthorised signs around the county also issued during the course of the year. The Litter Wardens carried out the appropriate number of surveys in accordance with the National Litter Pollution Monitoring System (NLPMS) collecting key information on the composition, scale and nature of littering which is used to clearly identify problem areas at an early stage. Portlaoise town continues to be assessed under the IBAL National Anti-Litter League. The rating for Portlaoise town improved and at the end of the year the town was rated 26th out of 40 towns/cities surveyed and listed as "Clean to European Norms".

### Gum Litter Taskforce



The Environment Section participated in a local GLT awareness programme incorporating an element of awareness, enforcement and conducting surveys for monitoring purposes.

### Waste Enforcement

The Waste Enforcement Section is committed to maintaining and improving the high quality environment for the people of County Laois through the enforcement of Waste Legislation and Regulation. This Section has had a successful year in resolving waste complaints and meeting the requirements of its Environmental Inspection Plan.

A Review of Waste Facility Permit sites and the issuing of new permits within the required timeframe is a priority for the Section. The Waste Facility Permit Register in 2014 contains 30 sites which hold a valid Waste Facility Permit/Certificate of Registration authorisation.

The Section works closely with its colleagues in Planning Enforcement to resolve cases where there is a breach of legislation. In line with the regional unauthorised waste enforcement group, set up as part of the Enforcement Network, information on the operations of illegal waste collectors and the illegal activities of holders of waste collector permits may be exchanged where appropriate.

Scheduled routine and non routine inspections are carried out. Non Routine Inspections include all complaints relating to waste including complaints concerning burning. Inspections also include Planning Permission inspections as they arise. This Section received 76 waste complaints in 2014 all of which were successfully dealt with. 5 District Court cases were heard under Section 32 (1) for non-compliances of

Section 55 Notices in 2014. 61 Planning Referrals were inspected and appropriate conditions forwarded to Planning.

## Environment Awareness Initiatives

The various environmental awareness campaigns undertaken in 2014 had a specific focus on promoting sustainability and environmental best practice. Working with various groups in the County, the following initiatives were successfully completed:

- 'Green Schools' teacher seminars and school workshops on a variety of topics including litter and waste, energy, water conservation, sustainable travel and biodiversity.
- Media project for secondary schools and vocational training centres.
- Local Agenda 21 grants were awarded in association with the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government to 17 recipients with a specific focus on biodiversity, energy and waste management.
- The 'Stop Food Waste' national initiative saw us work with a group of parents from Scoil Bhride NS, Knockmay, Portlaoise – the first of its kind in the country!
- Tidy Towns Best Practice Study Tour – another new project for 2014.
- CCTV Monitoring at Bring Banks: targeting illegal dumpers.

The importance of protecting and conserving our environment was also the focus of our information stand at the National Ploughing Championships, Ratheniska, Co Laois. During our time at this event, over 1,500 people visited our stand to speak with us about composting, recycling and our innovative schools programmes.

## Midlands Energy Agency

Laois County Council undertook a range of initiatives to improve our energy performance, including:

- LED retrofit of 192 lights on N77 and N80 National Routes at Portlaoise. Project cost €147,000 with SEAI grant 50% under Better Energy Communities programme. Match funding provided by NRA. Annual Energy saving 73218kWh; cost saving €12,212.
- 6kW Daikin heat pump installation completed in Durrow Library by Keltic Renewables replacing oil fired boiler. Reduces heating bill by 50% or €450 pa. Capital cost €7,300
- Participating in the OPW Optimising Power @Work Programme at County Hall. Gas &

electricity meters installed to monitor energy usage and Energy awareness programme commenced with staff.

- Participated in Office of Government Procurement (OGP) National electricity competition with new contract awarded to Airtricity in November 2014.
- SEAI Advice Mentoring & Assessment (AMA) audit on Mountmellick Library as part of SEAI partnership Energy Management programme.
- Reduced the MIC for Stradbally library change tariff to achieve savings.
- Provided technical expertise to Midlands Regional Authority for EU STEP project. Attended the STEP Open Day event in Brussels where MEA made a presentation entitled "Financial Supports enabling technical solutions to Public Lighting retrofits".



## PLANNING

**Director of Services:** Anna Marie Delaney

**Senior Planner:** Angela McEvoy

### Planning Department

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

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

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

#### (i) Development Management

The number of planning applications received in 2014 was 448. However, 99 of the total applications received were invalid and required the applicant to submit a new application. The main reasons for the invalidation of planning files were public notices out of date, or not erected on site, previous permissions expired, agents name omitted from maps/drawings, no north point shown on maps and distances not shown on site layouts.

The following table gives a breakdown of valid planning applications received and decisions made during 2014:

Number of valid applications received: 349  
 Number of decisions made: 306  
 Number of applications granted: 284  
 Number of applications refused: 22

#### 2014 Performance

Invalid applications returned to applicant: 22%  
 Referrals to Area Offices (working days): 14  
 8 applications were appealed to An Bord Pleanála in 2014.

## Customer Service Initiatives

2014 saw the continuation of the scanning of planning applications as they are received by the Planning Authority. Throughout 2014, the public were able to access all planning applications on-line within two weeks of the Planning Authority receiving them.

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

34 Section 5 Certificates were issued by Laois County Council in 2014.

The Planning website continues to be a very popular attraction with 70,300 hits last year.

#### (ii) Forward Planning

Forward Planning plays a pivotal role in the physical, economic and social development of County Laois. The Laois County Development Plan 2011- 2017, provides the strategic framework and policy context within which the Local Authority makes its planning decisions.

The roll-out of a key objective of the County Development Plan 2011-2017 will be completed within Q1/Q2 of 2015, namely preparation of;

- County Recreational/Walking Strategy

Another key objective of the County Development Plan 2011-2017 which has commenced and which will be progressed in 2015 is;

- Tree Protection Orders

The review of the existing County Development Plan 2011-2017 will commence in Q4 of 2015.

## Conservation

A total of 7 no. Section 57 Declarations in relation to works to Protected Structures at various locations were processed in 2014.

## Part VIII Development

Part 8 consent for the following project was granted



during 2014:

- Upgrade of Portarlington library facility at Main Street, Portarlington

## Dereliction

### Current Status and Review

As a consequence of the economic downturn in recent years, Derelict Sites has become an issue which Laois County Council are addressing proactively. A significant number of Derelict Sites were identified in 2014 and are being progressed, using the Derelict Sites Act, 1990. In particular work continued in 2014 in addressing issues of dereliction at Hepburn Court, Ballyfin Road, Portlaoise and at Chapel Street, Ballinakill.

Total Number of Files opened for 2014: 26

Total Number of Files closed as a result of Dereliction being addressed: 20

Total Number of Files: 121

### (iii) Planning Enforcement

The Planning Authority, in accordance with the statutory requirements under the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2013 as amended, seeks to ensure compliance with planning permissions and also to prevent unauthorised development.

Work continued in 2014 by the Enforcement team to ensure any breaches of planning law were investigated and followed up. Council Staff attended court 26 times in respect of enforcement prosecutions and while some cases are still ongoing, 12 cases were successfully resolved during 2014.

The Planning Authority served 29 enforcement notices, 71 warning letters and investigated 101 complaints all of which highlight the active pursuit of planning non-compliance and unauthorised development by our Enforcement Section.

### Licensing of Outdoor Events

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

licence from the Planning Authority where the audience comprises of 5,000 or more people.

One such outdoor event is the “Electric Picnic” which has been held in Stradbally yearly since 2004.

### (iv) Building Control

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

Number of valid commencement notices received: 122

Number of commencement notices for Change of Use/Alterations/Renovations etc: 15

Number of Agricultural Building Notices 6

Number of buildings covered by valid commencement notices: 114

Number of buildings inspected: 18

Number of buildings inspected as a % of buildings covered by valid Commencement notices: 16%

### (v) Unfinished Housing Estates

Laois County Council is responsible for the taking in charge of estates. Traditionally this occurred when a request is received from the developer of the estate and/or the owners of the houses within the estate. However, in recent years, where the developer failed to complete the estate, Laois County Council intervened to complete the estate and this work is usually funded from the bond. In 2014 the DOECLG provided funding under a Special Resolution Fund to complete works in a number of estates. Laois County Council received €368,259 funding to carry out works on the following estates:

1. Corrig Glen, Portarlington
2. Rahin Towers, Ballylinan
3. Clúinin, Mountrath
4. Killeen Gardens, Maganey
5. Aughnaharna Court, Portlaoise





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

## 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 delivery of the projects detailed in the Laois Heritage Plan.

## Laois Heritage Plan 2014 - 2019

The third Heritage Plan for Laois was adopted in January 2014 and implementation commenced in 2014. Following public consultation in Autumn 2014, the review of membership of the Laois Heritage Forum was completed. The Heritage Plan is a partnership plan written and implemented by the Heritage Forum, a group representing all groups with an interest in heritage in Laois.

The current plan contains 50 actions which will be implemented over the coming years, under five key objective areas:

- Increase understanding of the heritage of Laois
- Record the Heritage of Laois
- Protect and promote active conservation of the heritage of Laois
- Promote community participation on heritage plans and projects
- Promote enjoyment and accessibility of heritage

## Projects from the Heritage Plan 2014-2019 which were delivered in 2014.

The following projects from the Laois Heritage Plan were undertaken with the support of the Heritage Council, Laois Partnership and others during 2014.

### 1. Increase understanding of the heritage of Laois

In 2014, 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.

## Events

Events held during 2014 to raise awareness of heritage issues included:

- A week-long programme of over 60 family events, guided walks, talks, slideshows and fun days was organised for national Heritage Week in August;
- The Heritage Office assisted with the develop



ment of the Laois Heritage Society Schools Heritage Project, a competition for primary and secondary schools, organised in association with the Laois Education Centre;

- The Heritage Officer was involved with the organisation of the Laois Marquee for the National Ploughing Championships and attended the event. Free workshops on a variety of themes, including wildlife, science, architecture, archaeology, music and art were offered to the public throughout the three days, and were very successful.
- Science Week in November was very successful with a range of events and public talks. Schools workshops were held in Mountmellick and Mountrath Libraries with the assistance of Discover Science and Engineering. Primary schools from each town took part in invention workshops and Lego robot building, so lots of fun was had amongst the learning.
- The Heritage Officer contributed to the development and launch of a Laois Partnership project to deliver Local Biodiversity Action Plans to seven communities across Laois, with the assistance of Ballyroan-based ecologist Dr. Fiona MacGowan.



- Support was given to a range of groups for heritage related events, e.g. BirdWatch Ireland Laois Branch, Irish Wildlife Trust Laois Offaly Branch, Abbeyleix Bog, Laois Heritage Society etc.
- The James Fintan Lalor School took place at the Dunamase Arts Centre in Portlaoise on 17th and 18th October 2014 and was very successful. The venue was full for both days and all aspects of the event were well received by the public, press, speakers and all involved etc.

## Book on the Rock of Dunamase

A book on the heritage of the Rock of Dunamase is being written for publication in 2016. This is the first phase of a three-year project. Text and reconstruction drawings have been delivered. Further research and photography will take place in 2015.

## Guide to the Architecture of Mid-Leinster

A book in the prestigious "Pevsner Guide" series, published by Yale University Press, on the architecture of Laois, Offaly and Kildare - the Laois element of this project is complete, all photos and maps were delivered on schedule and on budget. Work is ongoing to survey Kildare, and the "Buildings of Mid Leinster" volume will be published in 2016.

## 2. Record the Heritage of Laois

The collection and presentation of information on the heritage of Laois is a necessary first step in the conservation and highlighting of this heritage. The following heritage projects were carried out during 2014:

### Audit of Laois Castles

Following the demolition of Coolbanagher Castle, after damage caused during Storm Darwin in January 2014, Laois Heritage Office undertook an audit of the 29 Tower Houses remaining in Laois, to document their location, ownership and current status. This project will assist in developing future management plans for these sites, in association with their owners.

## 3. Protect and promote active conservation of the heritage of Laois

### Donaghmore Workhouse

The Conservation of the Dining Hall at Donaghmore Workhouse was completed and the building formally opened in July 2014. The project was funded by Laois Partnership. A future plan for the entire site at Donaghmore Workhouse is now required.



### Borris in Ossory Courthouse

Funding was obtained from the Department of Arts Heritage and the Gaeltacht to do some conservation work at Borris in Ossory Courthouse. This focused on cleaning of stonework using a conservation technique, and repair of railings and rainwater goods. It is hoped to carry out further small works to improve the appearance of this prominent building in 2015.

#### 4. Promote community participation on heritage plans and projects

### Timahoe Round Tower

With the assistance of the Heritage Council the Community at Timahoe commissioned a Conservation Report for the site. This was completed by Margaret Quinlan and team, and will now be used to guide further management of this important historic site.



### Lea Castle



The Community at Portarlinton commissioned a Conservation Report on Lea Castle, also with Heritage Council funding. This report is now complete and will be published in Spring 2015. This project is ongoing, in partnership with the landowner.

### Abbeyleix Bog

A conservation management plan was commissioned for this site in 2014, with funding from the Heritage Council. The Heritage Officer sits on a Technical Advisory Group for this community-led management project.

In addition to these major projects, a range of groups were assisted with practical conservation projects in areas ranging from wildlife surveys to graveyard management.

#### 5. Promote enjoyment and accessibility of heritage

### Audio Guide to Heritage sites in Laois

There has been a very positive response to the Story of Laois audioguides and CDs, created in partnership with Laois Tourism and funded by Laois Partnership. Guides include the Rock of Dunamase, Monastic Laois, the Laois Heritage Trail and guides to the historic towns of Portlaoise, Portarlinton and Abbeyleix. The guides can be downloaded for free at [www.abar-taaudioguides.ie](http://www.abar-taaudioguides.ie)

### Laois Heritage Communications Strategy

The Laois Heritage Communications Strategy was adopted in December 2014, and will guide our future work on promoting awareness of the heritage of Laois and its value.



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Laois County Council continues on an ongoing basis to promote the economic development of County Laois. Actions undertaken in support of the economic development of the County are compatible with the objectives of the County Development Plan 2011-2017.

The Local Community Development Committee was established in 2014. This Committee will formulate local policy documents relating to community, social and economic issues and support specific projects by way of funding programmes. A Local Economic and Community Plan is under preparation, and will set out the objectives and actions needed to support both economic development and local and community development within County Laois over a 6 year period. The Plan will be completed by 31st December 2015.

In addition, the Midlands Regional Authority and the Greater Dublin Regional Authority were merged to form the Eastern and Midlands Region, effective from 1st January 2015. This new organisation will produce a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy. These changes underpin the more central role local authorities are assuming in relation to economic development.

Laois County Council introduced the Portlaoise Business Incentive Scheme on 31st October, 2014, to encourage the use of vacant commercial premises within a designated area of Portlaoise. This incentive scheme will assist new commercial businesses to set up in the Main Street area of Portlaoise which is the traditional retailing, commercial and social heart of the town and encourage the use of vacant commercial premises. The intent of the scheme is to provide a grant incentive for new businesses to locate in premises that have been vacant for a period exceeding six months and to encourage diversity of retail opportunities within a designated area. This grant can provide the financial assistance that makes it attractive for new business to consider setting up in areas where there are a number of vacant shop units. The scheme will remain in place for a trial period of 2 years, after which the Council will review it.

There are also 4 subgroups in place to deal with the economic regeneration of Portlaoise Main Street. They focus on marketing and promotion, financial assistance, traffic and environment.

## Local Enterprise Office

In May 2013, a Service Level Agreement was signed by Enterprise Ireland and Local Authorities for the integration of County Enterprise Boards with Local Authorities. The Local Enterprise Office Laois was subsequently established on the 14th April, 2014 following the dissolution of the former County Enterprise Board.

The Local Enterprise Office is the 'first stop shop' for all Government supports for anyone who wants to start or expand their business and create jobs within the County. It provides the following supports:

- Direct financial supports to micro businesses
- Advice on a range of alternative funding options
- Offer business information, advisory services and enterprise supports
- Deliver high-quality training to meet the needs of SMEs
- Mentor SMEs with experienced experts
- Guide SMEs to the services most relevant to support their growth and development
- Connect SMEs with appropriate State resources
- Connect SMEs with Enterprise Ireland
- Organise key enterprise events
- Facilitate business networking

### Review of 2014:

- €237,125 approved in grant aid with potential to create 21 full-time jobs and sustain 11
- 40 Annual Business Reviews on LEO Clients
- 51 training courses with 425 participants
- 45 business clients received one-to-one mentoring
- 30 free one-to-one clinics (Social Media, Business Planning, Finance, Marketing) ran with 166 clients
- 21 Female entrepreneurs attended training
- Laois Women in Business Network formed with 50 plus membership
- 30 Applications received under the Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur Competition
- 3 County Winners: Best New Idea – Mary Rose Simpson, My Ladybug, Best Start Up – David Finn, The Parlour (Portlaoise), Best Established Business – Heidi Higgins, Heidi Higgins Design, Portlaoise, Laois' Best Young Entrepreneur – David Finn, The Parlour.
- The 3 county winners represented Laois at the Regional Finals in November.
- €19,559 approved in Business Development

Support Grants – 9 Trade Fair Grants, 4 Web site Development Grants, 2 Marketing Grants, 1 Technical Training Grant.

- 2 Microfinance Applications received and processed. 2 approvals, 2 MFI mentors as signed.
- 8 applications received under the Trading On line Voucher Programme, 4 approved, 1 information event held.
- 8 Second Level Schools involved in the Student Enterprise Awards Programme, with over 250 students taking part
- 33 Primary Schools involved in the Enterprise Promotion Workshop Programme with over 400 students taking part
- Newsletter distributed to database of 2,500.
- Exhibited 3 days at National Ploughing Championships
- Exhibited at Rathdowney Enterprise Week
- Liaised with Laois Third Level/Carlow IT/Athlone IT
- Portarlington Education Centre – 8 courses provided to 80 students

## LAOIS WATER SAFETY

### Water Safety Awareness Week 2014

Laois County Council in conjunction with Laois Water Safety Area Committee delivered a number of key events during Water Safety Awareness Week in May 2014. School & community group visits were conducted, with basic water safety awareness talks and ring buoy demonstrations delivered. Laois Water Safety joined the celebration of 40 years of swimming in Portarlington with the presence of the IWS Mobile Information Unit. Laois Water Safety presented the Arthur Drennan Perpetual Cup for lifeguard skills to a team of lifeguards from Portarlington Leisure Centre.



## WATER SAFETY CLASSES & SWIM WEEK 2014

Laois Water Safety successfully delivered Spring and Autumn Water Safety Classes during 2014 at Portlaoise Leisure Centre. 180 participating adults and children received Irish Water Safety Certificates during the year. A successful Swim week programme with kayak skills was also delivered in Ballinakill Outdoor Swimming Pool with 25 children attending in August 2014.

### Paws Programme

Laois County Council in association with Laois Water Safety and Leisure Centre continued to successfully support & deliver the Primary Aquatic Water Safety Programme (PAWS) to 50 primary schools.

### Ring Buoys

During 2014 Laois County Council continued to maintain and inspect ring buoys at open water locations county wide. Significant loss of ringbuoys occurred as a result of the January 2014 storms but all were re-instated. Additional ring buoys were installed in Rathdowney at two locations at the request of the local community.

### National Ploughing Championships

Laois Water Safety Area Committee members and instructors operated the Irish Water Safety Stand at the National Ploughing Championships over 3 days where record numbers visited the stand and observed basic life support demonstrations.

## LAOIS COUNTY FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

### Acting Chief Fire Officer: Declan Power

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

To enhance equipment standards the programme for replacement and updating of equipment was continued in 2014. Our stock of fire fighting foam was renewed. New breathing apparatus sets and cylinders, traffic management equipment, road traffic collision and specialist rescue equipment, thermal imaging camera, gas detectors, high pressure lifting bags, vehicle mounted collision warning signs and fire ground communications equipment were provided.



An extensive programme of training for operational fire fighters was completed involving over 400 person days.

To enhance Safety, Health and Welfare for fire crews the Standard Operational Guidelines program continued in 2014. In addition the Health, Safety & Welfare Management programme was approved by Senior Management and reviewed regularly.

39 fire safety certificate applications and 102 licencing applications were received, with 68 planning applications also referred to the Fire Service during the year. 179 premises were inspected. 3 closure notices which were served on premises in 2013 with serious fire safety issues still remain in place as remedial works have not been carried out to the satisfaction of the Fire Authority.

Extensive planning and liaison was carried out with the organisers of the two large outdoor events in the County during 2014 - Electric Picnic Music Festival in Stradbally (approx 41,000 attended) and the National Ploughing Championships in Ratheniska (approx 230,000 attended) to ensure the safety of all involved. An extensive programme of inspections was put in place for the National Ploughing Championships in Ratheniska – all 1300+ exhibitors received inspections before and during the event.

The programme for National Fire Safety Week included presentations on fire safety to the public in fire stations, attended by people and groups from the local communities, advertising in local newspapers and local radio, use of social media sites facebook, twitter and leaflets. Check lists for fire safety were also delivered to homes.

The Primary Schools Fire Safety Programme was delivered by operational fire-fighters from all 8 fire stations to over 2000 3rd class pupils in 66 primary schools throughout the County.

The Major Emergency Plan was maintained and updated throughout the year. Training was provided to Council staff in the following areas; Information Management (initial course and refresher course), On-Site Co-ordination, and Media Liaison.

## 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 and water based search and recovery.

### Fire-fighting

Pumping floodwaters and supplying water to the community.

### Warden Service and Radiation Monitoring

Radiation detecting and monitoring.

### Welfare Skills

Provision of hot meals and drinks.

### Radio Communications

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

### Emergency Response

Training centres are located at Stradbally, Durrow and Mountmellick. If you are interested in the above and are aged between 18-65, contact us to find out more on (057) 8664106, e-mail [lpaston@laoiscoco.ie](mailto:lpaston@laoiscoco.ie) or visit our website at [www.laoiscivildefence.ie](http://www.laoiscivildefence.ie)



## Transportation & Water Services Strategic Policy Committee

**Director of Services:** Kieran Kehoe

**Chairperson:** Kathleen O'Brien, M.C.C.

### Members

Brendan Phelan, M.C.C.  
Ben Brennan, M.C.C.  
Jeremiah Lodge, M.C.C.  
Kathleen O'Brien, M.C.C.  
Seamus McDonald, M.C.C.  
Matthew Keegan, T.C.

### Sectoral

Francis Gorman  
Pat Culleton  
Noreen Byrne  
Brendan O'Brien

## ROADS

**Senior Engineer, Roads:** Henry Ritchie

### 2014 Road Grant Allocations

In 2014 the Roads Department secured funding from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTaS) and the National Roads Authority (NRA) as well as Laois County Council's own funds to advance maintenance and capital projects throughout the county.

**Funding was provided by the Department of Transport for the following schemes under the Regional and Local Road Investment Programme through the National Roads Authority:**

### Specific Improvement Schemes

Laois County Council received Specific Improvement Grant funding of €1,732,000 from the Department of Transport for the following schemes in 2014

#### Borris Road - €1,500,000

This funding was in respect of Phase 4 of the Borris Road Scheme which included the construction of the re-aligned road between Forest Park and the CBS schools. The scheme was completed in 2014 and is now fully open to traffic.

**Funding was allocated to the following schemes as part of the Specific Improvement Grants Programme:**

Poormans Bridge Rehabilitation  
Clonllyn Bridge Rehabilitation  
Mountoliver Bridge Rehabilitation  
Bauteogue Bridge Rehabilitation

## Road Safety Remedial Measures

Road Safety Remedial Measures (RSRM) were identified at nine sites on regional and local roads across all Areas and €190,000 funding was allocated to these projects.

The above schemes involved junction improvements, traffic calming measures, public lighting improvements, footpaths, pedestrian crossing facilities and the provision of signage.

Schemes to enhance Road Safety at seven locations on National Secondary Roads were funded by the National Roads Authority and completed in 2014. These safety schemes included works on:-

- N77 at Tonduff and The Tiles at Abbeyleix;
- N80 at Maidenhead at Arles; N78/N80 Simmons Mill Crossroads;
- N80 at Park, Stradbally,
- N80 Coolhenry to Dermoyle, Graiguecullen and
- N80 Windy Gap, Stradbally

## 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 barrier/fencing.

In 2014, Strengthening and Surface Dressing works were carried out to Regional and County Roads throughout the County.

Winter Maintenance operations were carried out on 60 occasions during 2013/2014 winter season on the 400km of treated network in Laois with approximately 2,250 tonnes of salt spread during the period.

## Road Safety:

### Cycle Safety Training

Cycle Training was carried out by two companies

- A. Cycletrax/SouthEast
- B. Cycling Safety and Skills School

1062 primary school students, from 18 national schools took part in the Safe Cycle Training Programme.



30 children took part in a one day cycle workshop, during National Bike Week. This workshop was run in partnership with Knockmay After School Project, An Gardai Siochana and Laois Sports Partnership.

### Drive For Life Programme

This Road Safety and Awareness Program has become an annual event for secondary school students from St Fergal's College, Rathdowney, St Mary's CBS, Portlaoise, Colaiste Iosagain, Portarlinton.

### Road Safety Talks/Visits

The Road Safety Officer visited Educate Together primary school to speak with 330 pupils regarding general road safety issues, the current difficulties with drop off and collection time within the Summer Hill campus and the roads and foot paths adjacent to the campus.

A road safety talk was given at the Health and Safety Keep Safe Event, with 120 primary school pupils throughout the County in attendance.

Road Safety In partnership with Green School's Travel Flag – An Tasice – WOW- Walk to School on Wednesday.

### Road Safety Inspection

Site inspections continued at schools, following concerns raised by principals, teachers, parents and members of the public.

### Hi-Visibility Vest

Hi-visibility vest's, arm bands, stickers and school bag dangles were supplied to children during school visits to various organisations during the year, including Cycle Clubs, Playschools, Scouts and Girl Guide's.

### School Warden

A relief school warden was appointed to provide cover for Portlaoise and Mountmellick.

## WATER SERVICES

**Senior Engineer, Water Services:** Michael O'Hora

Irish Water was established on 1st of January, 2014 under the Water Services Act 2013. From that date Laois County Council continued to provide public water and wastewater services, in collaboration with Irish Water, through a Service Level Agreement (SLA) and in accordance with an agreed Annual Service Plan (ASP). All public water and waste water contracts were transferred from Laois County Council to Irish Water on 1st January 2014.

Funding for the operation and maintenance of public water and wastewater schemes is provided for by Irish Water through the SLA. The transition involved reorganisation of our service delivery structures and staff are committed to the successful implementation of the change process, while maintaining high levels of service delivery. New IT systems, procurement systems and reporting systems have been introduced and staff in Water Services have been trained in the use of these new Irish Water systems. In April 2014 a centralised call centre based in Cork was established, to deal with all Water Services related queries, which will in turn be passed on the Local Authorities for action.

### Public Water and Wastewater service delivery

#### Ongoing Operation and Maintenance

Laois County Council currently supplies approximately 24,000 cubic meters of water per day on behalf of Irish Water, through the provision and maintenance of adequate water supplies (92 water sites) and wastewater treatment and disposal facilities (78 waste water sites), which comply with both the EU Drinking Water Directive and EU Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive.

Unaccounted for Water (UFW) in County Laois at 45% is comparable with the national figures. While the progression of watermain rehabilitation contracts will reduce mains leakage on a number of schemes, the introduction of domestic water metering will potentially provide the biggest impact on UFW.

### Drinking Water Quality

Irish Water has statutory functions with regard to the monitoring of public drinking water supplies as laid out in the EU (Drinking Water) Regulations, 2014. Results of analysis of drinking water in 2014 shows that Public Water Schemes in Laois had a 100% microbi-

ological compliance rate and 99.3% chemical compliance rate.



*Five Well, Abbeyleix - recommissioned in 2014*

Under the regulations, Laois County Council is also the Supervisory Authority for Private Group Water Schemes and Small Private Water Supply Schemes. The EPA Annual report for 2014 results show that Private Group Water Schemes were 100% compliant with microbiological and chemical parameters. Small Private Water Supplies Schemes had a 100% chemical compliance rate and 92% microbiological compliance rate.

### Water Metering Project (Domestic Customers)

Water meter installation was carried out in the county in 2014 by GMC/Sierra Ltd on behalf of Irish Water and 16,779 domestic water meters were installed.

### Discharges to Sewers

There are 111 Section 16 Discharge Licences issued under the Local Government (Water Pollution) Act 1977 and 1990, to businesses to discharge trade effluent to sewers and the Council monitor these on a regular basis throughout the year.

### EPA Waste Water Discharge Licence

Laois County Council operates Wastewater Treatment Plants on behalf of Irish Water in accordance with Certificates of Authorisation or Discharge Licences from the EPA under the Wastewater Dis-

charge (Authorisation) Regulations 2007. These licences and certificates stipulate conditions to ensure compliance with water quality standards and EU Environmental Directives. To date discharge licences have been granted for ten plants and four licences remain to be issued. Certificates have been obtained for fifteen small treatment plants in the county.

### Environmental Protection

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

### Water Quality

Laois County Council continued in 2014 to implement the South Eastern River Basin District and Shannon International River Basin District Management Plans 2009 - 2015. The current plan will now extend to 2017, after which a revised plan will come into operation.

Fifty five Nutrient Management Plans concerning the spreading of Sewage Sludge in the County were submitted for approval in 2014.

The Council continued to monitor discharge licences to rivers and groundwaters in 2014 under Section 4 of the Local Government (Water Pollution) Acts 1977 to 1990. A total of fifteen samples were taken and analysed to ensure compliance with licences. Eleven licences were operational in 2014, one was revoked and two are expected to commence in 2015. The Council also inspected septic tanks in accordance with the EPA's National Inspection Plan 2013-2014 for Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems. A total of forty one inspections were carried out, as required by the Plan.

Laois County Council investigated all complaints received concerning water pollution. One Notice was issued under Section 12 of the Local Government (Water Pollution) Acts 1977 to 1990.

### Air Quality

There were no active Air Emissions Licences in 2014. Twelve complaints were received and investigated in 2014 concerning air quality. The nature of these complaints included agricultural odour problems and smoke nuisance.



### Noise Pollution

Three noise complaints were received in 2014. One of these complaints was domestic in nature and in these cases the Council encourages neighbours to discuss the problem between them and to come to an agreed solution. The other two complaints concerned commercial activities.

### Water Services Capital Investment Programme

From 2014, Irish Water will fund all Water Services Capital Projects. Projects currently in progress will be completed, but commencement of new projects will be at the discretion of Irish Water.

The overriding purpose of the Laois County Water Conservation Project is to conserve water by the identification and rehabilitation of those areas of the water main infrastructure yielding the greatest sustainable water savings. In December 2013, the first Stage 3 watermain replacement/ rehabilitation contract commenced with the replacement of 13km of watermain in Portlaoise, Mountmellick, Timahoe, Luggacurren and Ballyroan. The one year contract value of €1,960,444 was awarded to David Walsh Civil Engineering Ltd. and works commenced in early 2014. New watermain have been completed in Portlaoise, Timahoe and Luggacurren. Pipelaying is currently progressing in Mountmellick and the contract is due for completion in February 2015.

The 'Laois Grouped Towns Sewerage Scheme (DBO Contract)', two year contract of €11,439,869, was awarded in June 2013 to Response Engineering Ltd /Ward & Burke Ltd joint venture. This scheme involves the construction of new wastewater treatment plants in five Towns (Abbeyleix, Durrow, Stradbally, Rathdowney, Mountrath). New plants have been constructed and are now operational in four of the towns and it is expected that Stradbally will be operational by March 2015.



*Abbeyleix Waste Water Treatment DBO*

The 'Laois Grouped Towns Sewerage Scheme (Network Contract)' awarded in October 2013 to Ward & Burke Ltd. This two year contract valued at €7,359,233, involves the construction of new sewer networks in six towns (Abbeyleix, Durrow, Stradbally, Rathdowney, Mountrath, Clonaslee). Pipelaying has been completed in four of the towns, whilst works are continuing in Rathdowney and Durrow. The overall contract is due for completion by April 2015.

The 'Portlaoise/Mountmellick Water Supply Improvement Scheme Contract No. 6 RAL' awarded in October 2013 to Ward & Burke Ltd was completed in March 2014. This contract involved the construction of 3.5km of watermain, development of a well at Coolbanagher, a new booster station at Derryguile and associated telemetry works which has improved the security and quality of the water supply for the Portlaoise and Mountmellick areas.

The preparation of designs/tender documents are also progressing for a number of projects:-

- Portarlinton Water Supply Improvement Scheme Advanced Contract at La Bergerie wellfield
- Portarlinton Wastewater Treatment Plant Inlet works upgrade Contract,
- Portarlinton Sewerage Scheme Network Contract, Mountmellick Sewerage Scheme Network Contract.

### Rural Water Programme

The Rural Water Monitoring Committee continued to meet quarterly in 2014 to agree and monitor the Rural Water Programme. Laois County Council administers the programme of improvement or upgrade works for existing and new Group Schemes. Funding of €496,400 received from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government allowed for extensive works to be carried out in the Group Water Sector in 2014.

Ballacolla Group Water Scheme continued its network upgrade programme, replacing 2kms of critical main by directional drilling and providing a supplementary source by re-drilling an old trial borehole. Pumphouse upgrades were carried out by Graiguenahoun, Derrynaseera, Errill and Barrowhouse Group Water Schemes. Ballypickas, Donaghmore and Barrowhouse Schemes completed meter upgrades. Cullohill G.W.S. installed a new nitrates monitor and Crannagh G.W.S. completed a hydrant and valve upgrade. Recent network improvement works on the Aughmacart G.W.S. led to the introduction of a usage based charging system.

Works were completed on the new water and waste water schemes at Derrymoyle Graiguecullen.

Works were carried out on eleven separate schemes in 2014, including mains replacement on the Pallas Big and Ballyadams Group Water Schemes.

Grant funding was provided for specific source protection measures. This grant scheme aims to assist group water schemes to complete the first element of developing a source protection plan. Five group water schemes were identified in Laois by the National Federation of Group Water Schemes. Zones of contribution reports are currently being prepared by the Geological Survey of Ireland for Ballacolla, Barrowhouse, Donaghmore, Errill, and The Heath group schemes.

The South Leinster DBO capital replacement commenced in September and new chlorine residual monitors were installed in Ballypickas and Donaghmore Group Water Schemes.

All of these works have progressed the Council's aims to assist the group schemes in the County maintain a high quality water supply in line with the EU drinking water quality standards and also to reduce energy and operating costs.

The Council's Rural Water Programme also processed approximately €571,000 in subsidies to Group Water Schemes in 2014. Over €50,000 was paid in Well Grants in 2014. All payments in respect of well grants and subsidy payments are recouped from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government.

### Public Conveniences

A total of €72,721 was spent on the maintenance and upkeep of the public toilets in Portlaoise and Mountrath

### Dangerous Structures and Places

Under the Local Government (Sanitary Services) Act 1964, Local Authorities are empowered to serve Notice on property owners, where in the opinion of the Council a property or place is dangerous, requesting them to carry out remedial action to make the property safe. Failure to comply with the Notice can result in the matter being referred to the Courts. In cases of emergency the Council is empowered to render such properties safe and to recoup the costs.

A Register of Dangerous Places/Structures is maintained by the local authority and there are currently 41 open files on register in Co. Laois.

### National Service Indicators

#### E. Water - January to December 2014

E.1	Unaccounted for Water (UFW) as a % of total water supplied under the water supply schemes that the Local Authority is responsible for.)	44.5%
-----	---	-------



**A/Head of Finance:** Julie Bergin

**Financial/Management Accountant:** Vacant

The Finance Department is responsible for the following services:

Motor Taxation, Accounts Payable, Revenue Collection, (Rates, Water, Fire charges, Development Contributions), 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.

## Water and Waste Water Charges

In 2014, the total number of commercial users was 2,949, of which 2,817 were metered. The charge for metered water in 2014 was €0.96 per 1,000 litres and €1.45 per 1,000 litres for waste water. A fixed charge applied to the remaining customers. In addition, there was a standing meter rental charge of €60 per annum.

The Water Services Act 2013 provided for the establishment of Irish Water as an independent subsidiary within Ervia. The Local Authority now acts as an Agent for Irish Water for commercial water charges.

## Prompt Payment of Accounts

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

Total number of late payments in excess of €250:  
Nil

## MyPay Update

The project is currently running on schedule and within budget. There are currently 31 employees based in the shared services centre. Waves 1 and 2 have been completed on schedule with Longford, Roscommon, Westmeath, Leitrim, Galway, Carlow, Monaghan and Cavan County Councils now live alongside Offaly and Laois County Councils.

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

Value of Payments	€69.5m
-------------------	--------

Number of Payments	85,123
Number of Pay Groups Paid	509
Number of Payroll Runs	195

An initial Wave 3 meeting, attended by representatives from Kildare, Kilkenny, Meath, Louth and South Dublin County Councils was held on 12th November 2014. The implementation in Kildare is expected to be live in late January 2015. Work is well underway to bring Meath County Council on board in mid February 2015.

The Superannuation element of the project has commenced and the “as is” process mapping has been completed. Workshops have been held in a number of Local Authorities on the “to be” process mapping and data requirements. The process of drawing up an implementation plan for approval.

## Motor Taxation

Through the National Vehicle Driver File (NVDF) System, this Section continues to cater for all motor taxation transactions for the County which is widely availed of by the public both at the counter, by postal services and also via online. The online transactions increased in 2014 and now represents 43% of the overall business conducted in Motor Tax. The total transactions carried out by Laois Motor Taxation Office in 2014 was 58,526.

## CO2 Rates

Motor Tax for vehicles registered after the 1 July 2008 is determined on the basis of CO2 bands or cubic capacity of engine, whichever is less. Taxes range from €120 a year for the greenest cars to €2,350 for cars with the highest emissions ratings. Motor tax rates are graduated as one moves up the CO2 emissions.

## Vehicle Licences

The total receipts for 2014 was €10,456,834 compared to €11,369,224 in 2013. The number of vehicle licences (discs) issued in 2014 was 46,749 compared to 50,582 in 2013.

Since 1st October 2013, the existing arrangements whereby a person made an off-the-road declaration in the Garda Station ceased. In future, if a vehicle is not going to be used in a public place, a declaration must be made in advance of the vehicle being taken off the road and while the vehicle is still in tax. A ve-

hicle can be declared off the road for a period not less than 3 months and not greater than 12 months. In 2014, 1,967 SORD applications were processed.

- |    |                       |            |
|----|-----------------------|------------|
| b) | on the 2nd or 3rd day | 0.36% (19) |
| c) | on the 4th or 5th day | -          |
| d) | over 5 days           | 0.21% (11) |

## Revised Vehicle Testing Procedures

Since September 2013, the function of issuing Certificates of Roadworthiness for commercial/goods vehicles was taken over by the commercial vehicle test centres. Customers will receive a pass statement at the garage and a new style CRW by post. The NDVF system is automatically updated with CRW details.

## Revised Vehicle Registration Procedures

The Revenue Commissioners have appointed the National Car Testing Services (NCTS) to carry out vehicle registration functions on their behalf. They can be contacted at 1890 927 787 or on line at [www.nct.ie/vrt](http://www.nct.ie/vrt).

## NCT (National Car Test)

Testing of private vehicles is ongoing since January 2000. The Laois Centre is located 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.

## Service Indicators at 31st December 2014

% of Motor Tax transactions which:

Are dealt with over the counter:

90.71% (50,915) of Laois MTO Transactions

Are dealt with by post:

9.29% (5,214) of Laois MTO Transactions

Are dealt with on-line:

42.74% (41,903) Represents 43% of all tax applications.

Average number of Public Opening hours per week  
28.60 hours

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

a) on the same day 99.42% (5,184)



## Revenue Collection

	31.12.2013	31.12.2014
Housing Loans		
a) Amount collected at year end as a percentage of amount due	67%	62%
b) Percentage of arrears:		
(i) Less than 1 mth	4.3%	0.65%
(ii) 1-2 Mths	1.8%	1.58%
(iii) 2 – 3 months old	2.1%	1.68%
(iv) more than 3 months old	91.8%	96.08%
Rents		
a) Amount collected at year end as a percentage of amounts due	94%	95%
b) Percentage of arrears		
(i) Less than four weeks	11.6%	11.5%
(ii) 4-6 weeks	10.6%	11.0%
(iii) 6-12 weeks	16.3%	14.9%
(iv) greater than 12 weeks	61.5%	62.6%
Commercial Rates		
Amount collected at year end as a percentage of amount due	70%	69%
Non-Domestic Water Charges		
Amount collected at year end as a percentage of amount due	60%	n/a

## Annual Financial Statement

Revenue Account	Gross Expenditure 2014 €	Income 2014 €	Net Expenditure 2014 €
<b>Programme Group</b>			
Housing & Building	10,157,592	11,720,679	(1,060,583)
Road Transportation & Safety	13,268,331	9,641,568	4,203,261
Water & Sewerage	5,409,090	5,361,326	6,969,647
Development Incentives & Controls	3,733,463	1,089,753	2,917,261
Environmental Protection	6,321,192	1,579,064	4,684,593
Recreation & Amenity	3,594,583	357,693	2,812,872
Agriculture, Education, Health & Welfare	1,978,961	1,494,882	513,239
Miscellaneous	9,127,804	3,855,220	3,536,678
<b>Total Expenditure/Income</b>	<b>53,591,016</b>	<b>35,100,216</b>	

Net cost of programmes to be funded from Rates & Local Government Fund	18,490,801
Rates	12,602,815
Pension Levy	927,553
Local Government Fund - General Purpose Grant	7,631,324
Surplus for Year before Transfers	2,670,891
Transfers from/(to) Reserves	(2,571,150)
Overall Surplus for Year	99,741
General Reserve @ 1st January 2014	(493,027)
General Reserve @ 31st December 2014	(393,286)

## Capital Account

Balance @ 01.01.2014	(4,388,777)
Grants	10,694,463
Other Income	3,481,463
Transfer from/to Revenue	2,571,150
Expenditure	(16,139,268)
Balance @ 31.12.2014	(3,780,969)

## PORTLAOISE TOWN COUNCIL

**Manager:** Michael Rainey

**Town Clerk:** Pamela Tynan

**Town Engineer:** Farhan Nasiem

Portlaoise Town Council was abolished under the

Local Government Reform Act 2014.

The last meeting of Portlaoise Town Council took place on Tuesday 13th May 2015 in Portlaoise. Town Council meetings were held on the first Tuesday of each month up to the final meeting.

## MOUNTMELICK TOWN COUNCIL

**Manager:** Ian McCormack

**Town Clerk:** Pamela Tynan

**Town Engineer:** Dermot Leonard

Mountmellick Town Council was abolished under the Local Government Reform Act 2014.

The last meeting of Mountmellick Town Council took place on Thursday 15th May 2015. Mountmellick Town Council meetings were held on the first Thursday of each month up to the final meeting.

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

### Social Club

2014 was another very successful year for the Social Club which currently has a membership of 251. Numerous events were held in 2014.

### Monthly Draw

On the first Friday of every month a draw takes place for Social Club members.

### Summer Barbecue

A Barbecue was held on 17th June in County Hall with 60 people attending.

### October Social Evening

A very enjoyable Social evening was held in the Square Bar on Friday 3rd October.

### Annual Mass

The Annual Mass for deceased members and staff of Laois County Council took place 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.

### Members Kiddies Christmas Party

The Social Club Members Kiddies Party was held this year in O'Loughlin's Hotel on Sunday morning 7th

December. It was a great success. The kiddies were entertained by Santa, his Elf and Jecca the Clown.

### Annual Christmas Party

The party was held on Friday the 12th December this year in O'Loughlin's Hotel. 85 staff attended and a great night was had.

### Other Events

Some of the other events held were: Samaritans Easter Egg draw, Grand National Draw, Easter Egg Draw and Hunt, Packages to Dublin Zoo, National Stud/Japanese Gardens and Tayto Park, Subsidised Tickets for National Ploughing Championship, End of Year Draw

### Golf Society

Eddie Kelly captained the Golf Society in 2014 and his Captain's Prize was held in Rathdowney. There was a good turn out on the day and his prize was won by Pat Farrell. The Kennedy Cup was played this year in conjunction with the Pang Trophy in Gowran Park Golf Club and was won by Larry Dunne. The Pang Trophy was won by Alec Bland, Declan Power & Fintan Kealy. The golfer of the year competition was won by Ken Farrell. Cathal Farrell is the incoming Captain for 2015.

We are always looking for new members - enquires to Cathal Farrell, Eddie Kelly or Larry Gittens.

## APPENDIX I

### TITLE, PURPOSE AND NUMBER OF MEMBERS OF EACH COMMITTEE AND JOINT COMMITTEE AND THE NUMBER OF MEETINGS OF EACH COMMITTEE, JOINT COMMITTEE AND JOINT POLIC- ING COMMITTEE HELD DURING 2014

The following members were elected to the committees/outside bodies outlined hereunder at the Annual General Meeting of Laois County Council held on the 19th of June 2009 and at subsequent meetings thereafter.

#### COMMITTEES – JANUARY TO MAY 2014

##### COMMITTEES

Name of Committee	Members Elected	Number of Meetings
Rural Water Monitoring Committee	Councillor Ben Brennan Councillor John Bonham Councillor Tom Mulhall	1
Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee	Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley Councillor William Aird Councillor Mary Sweeney Councillor Kathleen O' Brien Councillor Paul Mitchell Councillor John King Councillor Lisa Delaney	2
Kyletelisha Landfill Monitoring Committee	Councillor Patrick Bracken Councillor James Daly Councillor Martin Phelan	1
Laois School of Music Steering Committee	Councillor Mary Sweeney	1
Audit Committee	Councillor John Moran Councillor Jerry Lodge	1
Joint Policing Committee	Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald Councillor Seamus McDonald Councillor Brendan Phelan Councillor Patrick Bracken Councillor Ray Cribbin Councillor Ben Brennan Councillor Tom Mulhall Councillor Michael Lalor Councillor Mary Sweeney Councillor David Goodwin Councillor Paul Mitchell Councillor John King Councillor James Daly	1
Placenames Committee	Councillor Ben Brennan Councillor Ray Cribbin Councillor John Bonham Councillor Kathleen O' Brien Councillor David Goodwin	None



## APPENDIX I

Barrow Drainage Board	Councillor David Goodwin Councillor Lisa Delaney	2
River Goul Drainage Committee	Councillor Brendan Phelan Councillor Martin Phelan Councillor John King	None
Dungar Joint Burial Board	Councillor Brendan Phelan Councillor Seamus McDonald Councillor Michael Lalor Councillor John King	1
Portarlinton Joint Burial Board	Councillor Ray Cribbin Councillor Patrick Bracken Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley Councillor Tom Mulhall Councillor Paul Mitchell Councillor James Deegan	None
Heritage Forum	Councillor Martin Phelan Councillor John Bonham Councillor Michael Lalor	1

### TITLE, PURPOSE AND NUMBER OF MEMBERS OF EACH COMMITTEE AND JOINT COMMITTEE AND THE NUMBER OF MEETINGS OF EACH COMMITTEE, JOINT COMMITTEE AND JOINT POLIC- ING COMMITTEE HELD DURING 2014

The following members were elected to the committees/outside bodies outlined hereunder at the Annual General Meeting of Laois County Council held on the 6th June 2014

#### COMMITTEES – JUNE TO DECEMBER 2014

#### COMMITTEES

Name of Committee	Members Elected	Number of Meetings
Local Community Development Committee	Councillor Paschal McEvoy Councillor Jerry Lodge Councillor John King	3
Joint Policing Committee	Councillor Pdraig Fleming Councillor Paddy Bracken Councillor Seamus McDonald Councillor Paschal McEvoy Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald Councillor John Moran Councillor John King Councillor Tom Mulhall Councillor David Goodwin Councillor William Aird Councillor James Kelly Councillor Noel Tuohy Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley	None
Heritage Forum	Councillor Pdraig Fleming Councillor William Aird	3

Placenames Committee	Councillor Jerry Lodge Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald Councillor William Aird Councillor Mary Sweeney	None
Audit Committee	Councillor John Moran Councillor Jerry Lodge	2
Laois School of Music	Councillor Mary Sweeney	1
Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee	Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald Councillor Paschal McEvoy Councillor Mary Sweeney Councillor Tom Mulhall Councillor John King Councillor Jerry Lodge Councillor Paddy Bracken	3
Kyletalesha Monitoring Committee	Councillor Paddy Bracken Councillor Seamus McDonald Councillor William Aird	None
Rural Water Monitoring Committee	Councillor Paschal McEvoy Councillor Pdraig Fleming Councillor Tom Mulhall	2
Barrow Drainage Board	Councillor Seamus McDonald Councillor David Goodwin	2
River Goul Drainage Committee	Councillor John Joe Fennelly Councillor Pdraig Fleming Councillor John King	1

**OUTSIDE BODIES(January to May 2014)**

<b>Name of Committee</b>	<b>Members Elected</b>
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 Adebari Councillor Kathleen O' Brien Councillor Mary Sweeney

## APPENDIX I

Abbeyleix Heritage Trust Local Authority Members Association	Councillor John Bonham Councillor Michael Lalor
Laois County Enterprise Board	Councillor Lisa Delaney 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
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 Caroline Dwane 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 Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald
Midland Regional Drugs Task Force	Councillor William Aird
LABEL	Councillor Paul Mitchell



## APPENDIX I

Laois Tourism Co. Ltd

Councillor John Bonham

### **OUTSIDE BODIES(June to December 2014)**

#### **Name of Committee**

#### **Members Elected**

Association of Irish Local Government

Councillor John Joe Fennelly  
Councillor Paschal McEvoy  
Councillor David Goodwin

Regional Board of Failte Ireland  
(East & Midlands)

Councillor Padraig Fleming

Laois & Offaly Education & Training Board

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald  
Councillor Jerry Lodge  
Councillor Paschal McEvoy  
Councillor Mary Sweeney  
Councillor John King  
Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley

Laois Tourism Company Ltd

Councillor John Moran

Laois Arts Theatre Company Ltd

Councillor Paschal McEvoy  
Councillor Jerry Lodge  
Councillor Mary Sweeney

Board of Abbeylax Heritage Trust

Councillor John Joe Fennelly

Local Authority Members Association

Councillor Seamus McDonald

Border, Midland & Western Regional Assembly

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald  
Councillor Paddy Bracken

Laois Transport for Rural Integration Programme

Councillor Seamus McDonald

Portarlington Leisure Centre

Councillor Paschal McEvoy  
Councillor Padraig Fleming  
Councillor Tom Mulhall

Portlaoise Leisure Centre

Councillor Jerry Lodge  
Councillor Mary Sweeney  
Councillor William Aird

Portlaoise Enterprise Centre

Councillor Jerry Lodge  
Councillor William Aird  
Councillor Mary Sweeney

Portarlington Enterprise Centre

Councillor Paschal McEvoy  
Councillor Tom Mulhall

Midlands Energy Agency

Councillor John Joe Fennelly

Board of Treo Nua Limited

Councillor Mary Sweeney

Dublin Mid-Leinster Regional Forum

Councillor Padraig Fleming  
Councillor William Aird  
Councillor Mary Sweeney

Laois Advocacy Against Domestic Abuse Limited

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald  
Councillor Mary Sweeney

## APPENDIX I

Midland Regional Drugs Task Force

Councillor Paschal McEvoy

LABEL – Laois Third Level Initiative

Councillor Jerry Lodge

## APPENDIX II

### PAYMENTS TO MEMBERS 2014

Monthly Allowance	€ 98,578.10
Conference Allowance	€ 65,564.63
Telephone Allowance	€ 726.99
Representational Allowance	€355,495.21
SPC Allowance	€ 24,000.00
Chairs & Vice Chairs Allowance	€ 36,071.70
Municipal District Chairs	€ 9,750.00
County Development Board Chair	€ 2,500.00
TOTAL	€592,686.63

## APPENDIX III

### Section 19 of the Local Elections (Disclosure of Donations and Expenditure) Act 1999("the 1999 Act")

Details of election expenditure incurred and donations received in respect of each candidate at the 2014 Local Elections

Candidate Name	Municipal District	Aggregate Elections Expenditure	Donations Received
Rotimi Adebari	Portlaoise	€2,239.89	Nil
William Aird	Portlaoise	€ 800.00	Nil
Sharon Bailey	Portlaoise	€1,317.94	Nil
Caroline Dwane Stanley	Portlaoise	€2,759.90	Nil
Osaro Fajimiyo	Portlaoise	€ 615.74	Nil
John Joe Fennelly	Portlaoise	€1,800.00	Nil
Catherine Fitzgerald	Portlaoise	€1,580.70	Nil
Ray Fitzpatrick	Portlaoise	€ 892.00	Nil
Stephen Greene	Portlaoise	€ 650.00	Nil
Jerry Lodge	Portlaoise	€1,041.00	Nil
Joseph McCormack	Portlaoise	€ 385.32	Nil
Kathleen O'Brien	Portlaoise	€3,650.00	Nil
Jim Ring	Portlaoise	€1,290.00	Nil
David Ryan	Portlaoise	€3,675.00	Nil
Mary Sweeney	Portlaoise	€4,449.00	Nil
Noel Tuohy	Portlaoise	€4,121.42	Nil
Paddy Bracken	BOI-Mountmellick	€2,200.00	Nil
Pat Cooper	BOI-Mountmellick	€6,055.50	Nil
Bobby Delaney	BOI-Mountmellick	€ 400.00	Nil
Lisa Delaney	BOI-Mountmellick	€3,098.95	Nil
Joseph Digan	BOI-Mountmellick	€3,500.00	Nil
Rhoda Dooley Brogan	BOI-Mountmellick	€2,325.40	Nil
John Finlay	BOI-Mountmellick	€2,718.00	Nil
David Goodwin	BOI-Mountmellick	€1,995.80	Nil
Donal Keenan	BOI-Mountmellick	€ 691.00	Nil
James Kelly	BOI-Mountmellick	€4,720.00	Nil
John King	BOI-Mountmellick	€2,800.00	Nil
Michael Lalor	BOI-Mountmellick	Nil	Nil
Seamus McDonald	BOI-Mountmellick	€2,000.00	Nil
Brendan Phelan	BOI-Mountmellick	€3,300.00	Nil
Gerard Phelan	BOI-Mountmellick	€ 800.00	Nil
Michael G. Phelan	BOI-Mountmellick	€8,600.00	Nil
Ben Brennan	Graigue-Portarlinton	€6,500.00	Nil
Gráinne Corcoran	Graigue-Portarlinton	€ 300.00	Nil
Ray Cribbin	Graigue-Portarlinton	€2,240.00	Nil
James Daly	Graigue-Portarlinton	€4,948.40	Nil
Padraig Fleming	Graigue-Portarlinton	€4,569.28	Nil
Keith Lennon	Graigue-Portarlinton	€3,600.00	Nil
Paschal McEvoy	Graigue-Portarlinton	€4,300.00	Nil
Richard Miller	Graigue-Portarlinton	€2,300.00	Nil



### APPENDIX III

Candidate Name	Municipal District	Aggregate Elections Expenditure	Donations Received
John Moran	Graigue-Portarlington	€4,381.80	Nil
Tom Mulhall	Graigue-Portarlington	€2,600.00	Nil
Aidan Mullins	Graigue-Portarlington	€2,683.65	Nil
Willie Murphy	Graigue-Portarlington	€2,590.00	Nil
Kevin Scully	Graigue-Portarlington	€1,063.50	Nil

## 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) 8664117
Arts Office, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8664033
Cash Office, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8674308
Civil Defence HQ, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8664106
Environment, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8674318
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) 8664041
Motor Tax Office, Block 2, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8674385
Planning, Block 1, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8664032
Register of Electors, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8664105
Roads, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8674352
Sports & Leisure, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8674363
Water Charges, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8664119
Water Services, Áras an Chontae	Tel: (057) 8674355